

News Release



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CONTACT:

Sybil MacDonald (323) 692-0655
sybil@marketing-comm.com
Nicole Possert (323)255-5792
aguild@pacbell.net

Excavations at Downtown's Los Angeles State Historic Park
Uncover City's First Transcontinental Rail Artifacts
-- Revealing Clues to Industrial Past

LOS ANGELES -- The California Department of Parks and Recreation offered a rare glimpse today of significant archaeological resources from one of the most bustling and active industrial sites in the City, circa 1875- 1920s. A team of State Park scientists is researching findings at several excavation sites located on the grounds of downtown's Los Angeles State Historic Park (LASHP) that show the City's first transcontinental rail yard that connected Los Angeles to the eastern United States.

Beneath Los Angeles State Historic Park (LASHP), archaeologists have been investigating historic building remnants and cultural artifacts associated with the original 1875 operation of Southern Pacific's Railroad River Station. Uncovered findings include three of the archaeological excavations exhibited today that feature artifacts from the River Station's Roundhouse, the train turntable with massive redwood beams, and the original and completely intact foundation. The rail station began operating in 1875 initially as a passenger train then as freight lines that spurred the industrialization of Los Angeles.

"This original transcontinental railroad line and other archaeological findings discovered at Los Angeles State Historic Park, underscore the historical significance of this downtown park in the industrial development of this City," said Ruth Coleman, Director of California Department of Parks and Recreation. "The ongoing work of our State Park's scientific team will allow for a better understanding of the full history of the site and offer educational opportunities for visitors as we plan the future design of a premiere park facility for Los Angeles."

The LASHP excavation is part of State Park's ongoing research and planning for the future build-out of the park. It is necessary to unearth sites like this in order to map their exact location and inspect them to determine their significance so that these historic sites might be incorporated into the final design of the park as educational and interpretive exhibits.

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Once a site has been identified, excavated, and researched, key artifacts will be collected and the sites will be reburied because reburial is the best way to insure preservation and protect against theft and vandalism. This comprehensive environmental assessment will help inform the upcoming long-term park design that is currently being developed for LASHP.

Visitors to LASHP will be able to learn about the cultural and industrial history of the site through newly installed interpretive panels visible throughout the venue.

The 32-acre Los Angeles State Historic Park is the largest park in downtown Los Angeles. LASHP is located next to the Los Angeles River and directly adjacent to the Metro Gold Line Chinatown station. The “interim” park opened two years ago with 13 acres of developed park amenities including a 1-mile perimeter walking path, wildlife habitat with occasional wetlands and some of the best views of the downtown skyline. LASHP has actively served tens of thousands of urban park users since opening. The site, formerly known as “the Cornfields,” is located at 1245 North Spring Street. LASHP is open daily from dawn until dusk with State Park ranger supervision throughout the day. The park features free public parking. For more information, visit the website at www.parks.ca.gov/LASHP.

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Editor’s Note: Selected images from today’s press conference are available for press access at www.parks.ca.gov/LASHP