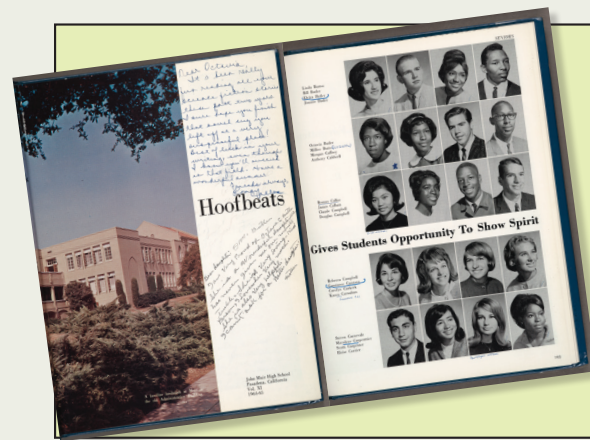


A Guide to Octavia E. Butler's Pasadena



John Muir High School

Butler graduated from John Muir High School in 1965. Her yearbook is annotated with well-wishes from students and faculty. She marked her senior portrait with a star, first in the second row on this page.

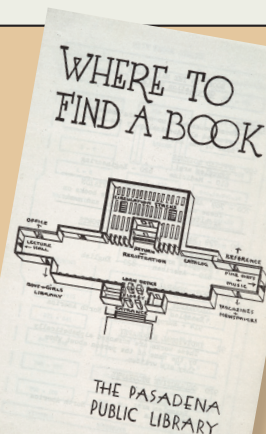


La Pintoresca Branch Library

The La Pintoresca Branch Library is located in a neighborhood that would have been very familiar to Butler. Her junior high school was just to the north, and she lived within walking distance of the library at different points in her life.

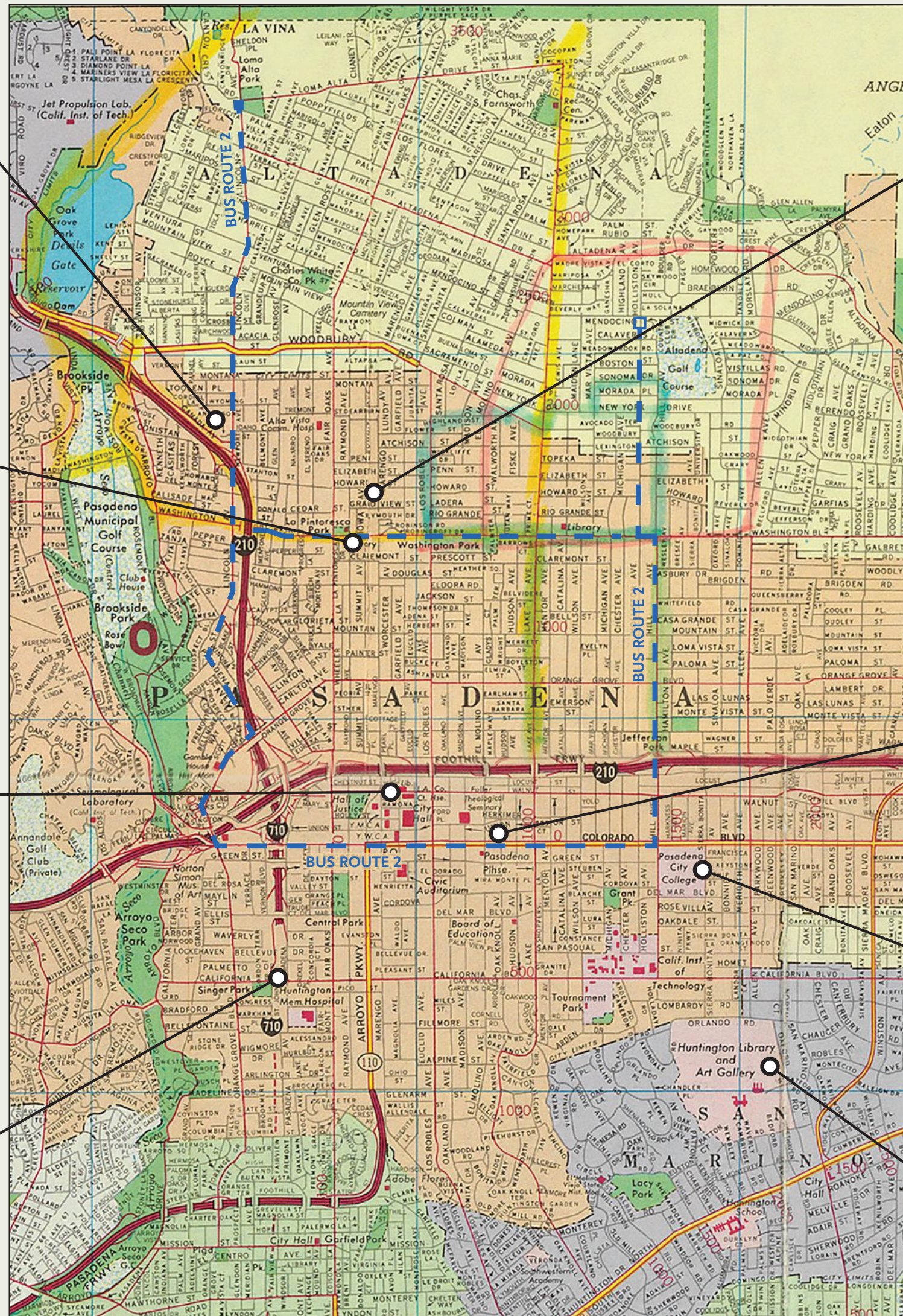
Pasadena Public Library

Butler's love of libraries started early. She recalls begging her mother for her own library card after a school trip to the Pasadena Public Library, so that she could select her own books. Mrs. Butler immediately and happily complied.



Former site of James A. Garfield Elementary School

Butler attended James A. Garfield Elementary School, which was located on the northeast corner of California Boulevard and Pasadena Avenue. According to her graduation program from 1959, young Butler read a poem at the event. Garfield Elementary closed in 1972, and the site was later developed as the Orangewood Center shopping complex.

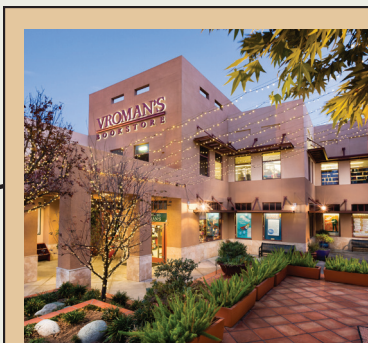
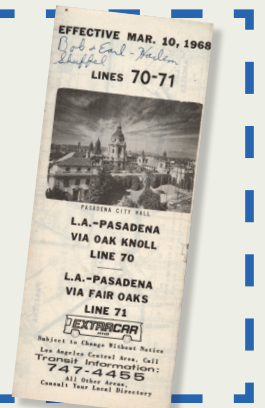


Washington Junior High School

Butler attended Washington Junior High School. Now called Washington STEAM Multilingual Academy, the school named the library after their famous alumna in 2020 and installed a mural celebrating her.

Riding the Bus

Butler never drove; instead she rode buses as her primary mode of transportation. People on board and places out the window fueled her active imagination. The 70 and 71 bus lines to Los Angeles were a frequent route; there are multiple schedules for them in Butler's papers. Pasadena Bus Route 2 on Lincoln, Colorado, and Hill would have passed numerous in-town destinations, including Vroman's Bookstore.



Vroman's Bookstore

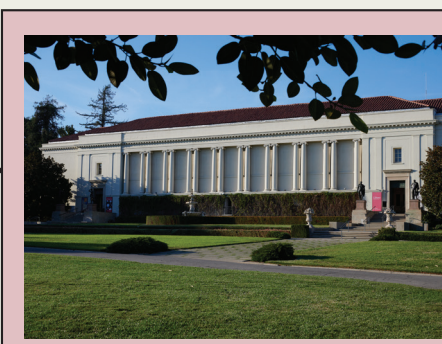
Independent bookstore Vroman's, founded in 1894, was a favorite place for Butler to shop. Later, she spoke there as a featured author. She collected books avidly, and her personal library is reported to have numbered in the thousands.

© Vroman's Bookstore, 2021, courtesy of Russell Gearhart.



Pasadena City College

Butler earned her associate of arts degree from Pasadena City College. While a student there, she also first earned money for her writing, winning a \$15 prize in a college literary contest for her first-place short story "To the Victor."



The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens

Butler first lectured at The Huntington in 1989 and later bequeathed her papers to the Library. Since opening for research, the papers are among the materials most frequently consulted by visiting scholars.

Experience Butler's Pasadena on Foot Walking Loop (2.5 miles total)

If you want to experience Butler's Pasadena on foot, we recommend the following route: Begin at the corner of Atchison Street and Mar Vista Avenue. Walk north on Mar Vista (toward the mountains). Turn left (west) on Mendocino Street. Cross Lake Avenue. Turn left (southwest) at El Molino Avenue and head downhill, back toward Atchison, where you will turn right to close the loop. There is more to notice on El Molino, or you can take Lake Avenue, which has a consistent sidewalk with crosswalks and signals.

Butler walked these streets often. Can you imagine her here? Look up at the mountains and then at your surroundings—the mix of urban and suburban. What makes you curious? Consider today's headlines. What concerns you? What excites you? What do you imagine this neighborhood might have looked like 30 years ago when Butler last lived here? What do you imagine it might look like in the future, 30 years from now?



MENDOCINO ST.

MENDOCINO ST.

WOODBURY RD.

EL MOLINO AVE.

LAKE AVE.

MAR VISTA AVE.

NEW YORK DR.

ATCHISON ST.

WASHINGTON BLVD.

Octavia's Walks

By Lynell George

Octavia Estelle Butler's ambitious works of science fiction and "dark fantasy" travel through vast galaxies and porous seams in time. For all of those explorations into far-flung realms, Butler herself navigated her physical world as far as her feet or bus pass could carry her. Born and raised in Southern California, where car culture reigned, Butler navigated her hometown Pasadena with ease and efficiency—a spin by the post office; a quick detour to buy a newspaper to check on the state of the world. If a more complicated task loomed—grocery shopping, a research trip to downtown L.A.'s Central Library—she'd hop on a bus and use the commute to read, eavesdrop, or plot what "trouble" she might give her latest protagonist once back at her typewriter.

Walking was essential to her process: Time to absorb and imagine. Frequently, she started out before daybreak. Her route pitched north, toward the San Gabriel Mountains, then laced through residential streets—wide skirts of lawns, quilts of flower beds, old-growth trees—oak, sycamore, pine. In pocket-sized notebooks, she inventoried the cycle of life on display: What was blooming, what was fading—and how this changed year-to-year. Always considering cause and effect, micro and macro, Butler's "walk thoughts"—as brief as three words, as tender as poetry—sometimes made their way into her daily fiction pages. As she reminded herself, time and again: "Writers use everything."

Lynell George is the author of *A Handful of Earth, A Handful of Sky: The World of Octavia E. Butler*.

Butler's Pasadena

Acclaimed speculative fiction author Octavia Estelle Butler (1947–2006) was born in Pasadena. She and her extended family lived in the diverse neighborhoods just south of the San Gabriel Mountains, located at the upper edge of the map on the other side. Butler attended local public schools and also spent time in the houses where her mother worked as a housecleaner and domestic. After spending much of the 1970s and 1980s living in Los Angeles, she purchased a house further east in Altadena, where she lived until 1999, when she decamped to a Seattle suburb.

This guide to her Pasadena allows you to visit the public places and streets where she came of age and found inspiration for many years. The underlying map reproduced here depicts a portion of a map from the Octavia E. Butler Papers in the Huntington Library. The yellow, blue, and pink highlighter annotations are Butler's, though the exact significance of these markings is unknown.

This map of Butler's Pasadena was produced in conjunction with The Huntington's "Mapping Fiction" exhibition, which explores the ways authors and mapmakers have built compelling fictional worlds. To access a digital version of this map, or to learn more about this exhibition, scan the QR code below or visit huntington.org/mapping-fiction.

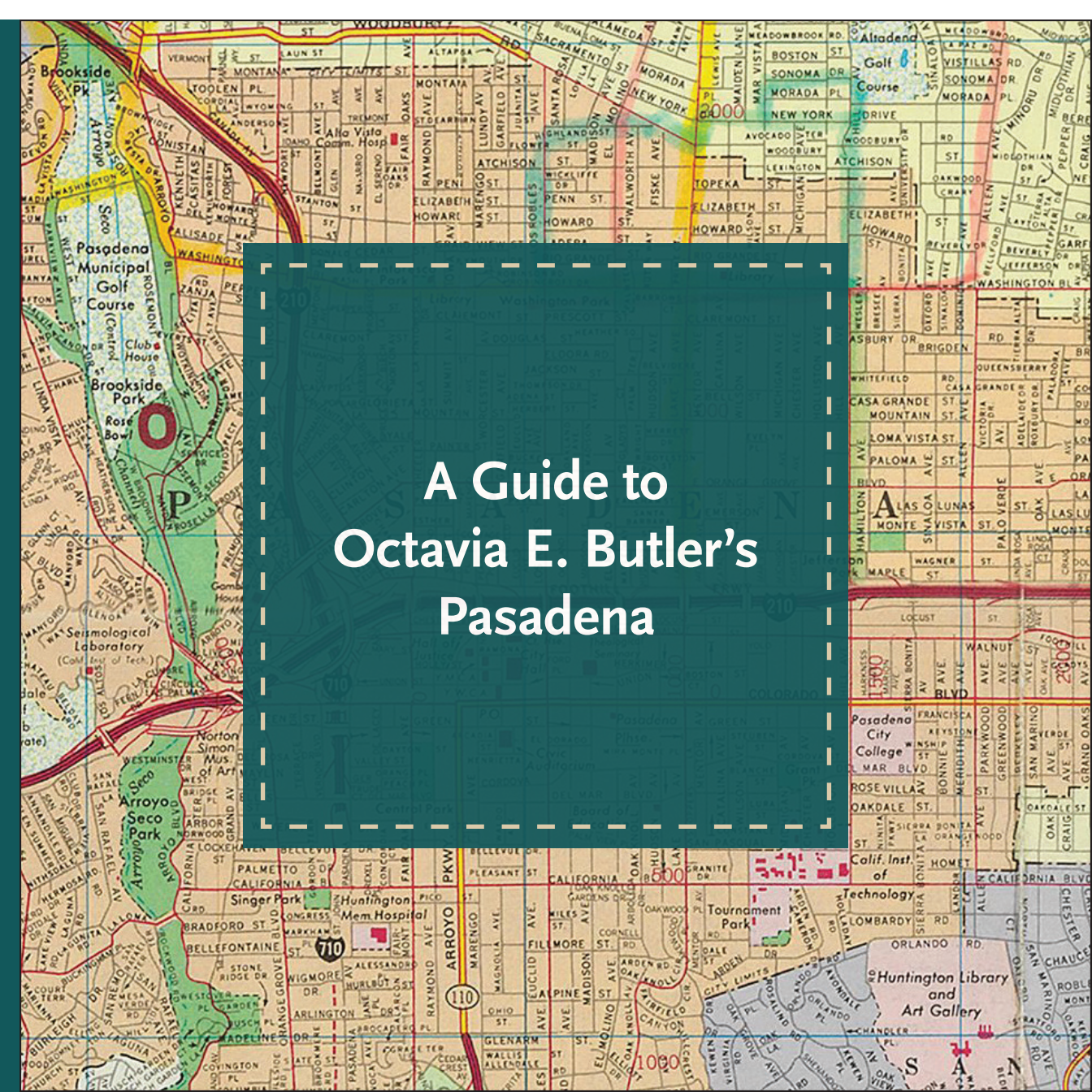


Sponsored by the Office of the President in collaboration with the Library as part of the Inspired by Octavia E. Butler program series.



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