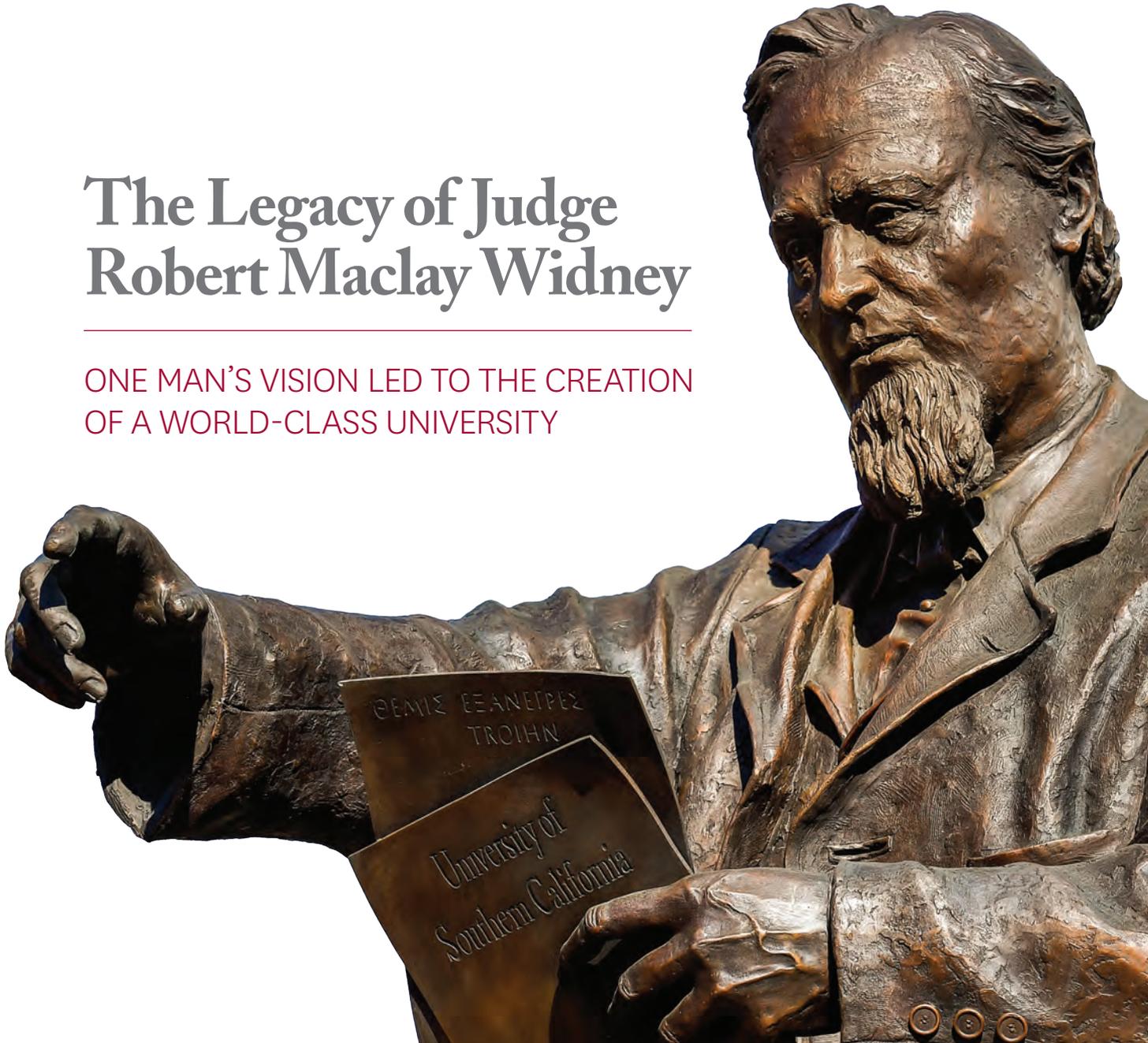


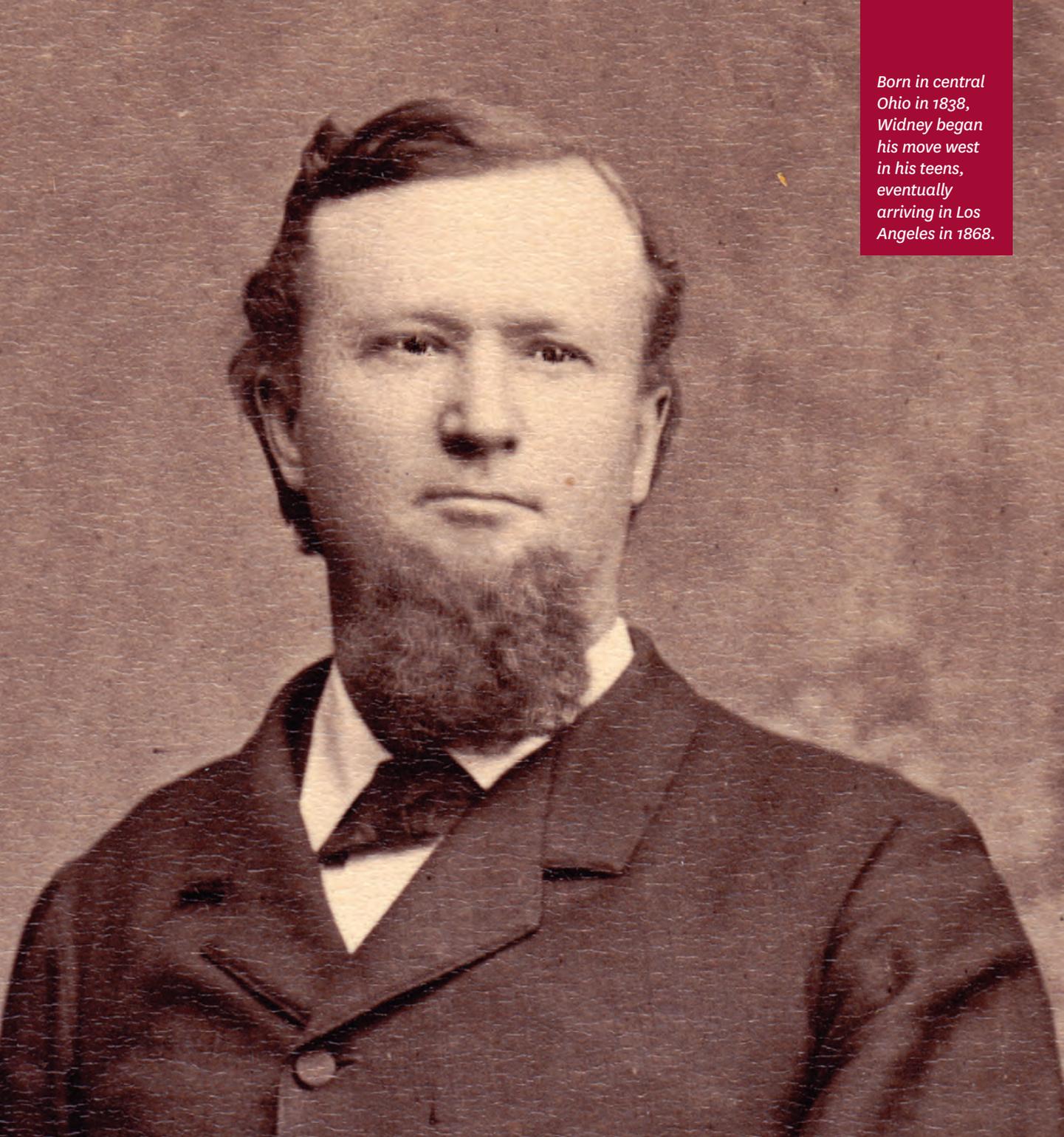


# The Legacy of Judge Robert Maclay Widney

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ONE MAN'S VISION LED TO THE CREATION  
OF A WORLD-CLASS UNIVERSITY





*Born in central Ohio in 1838, Widney began his move west in his teens, eventually arriving in Los Angeles in 1868.*

## THE LEGACY OF JUDGE ROBERT MACLAY WIDNEY (1838-1929)

You might rightly call Judge Robert Maclay Widney the founder of the University of Southern California.

More than any other individual, Widney was responsible for the birth and growth of USC in the early days of Los Angeles. In the 1870s, a time when many believed their village was just another rough-and-tumble frontier town in the American Wild West, Widney instead saw unlimited potential in Los Angeles — and recognized the importance of higher education to the future of the burgeoning city.

This, he said, is where the next great world city — and next great

world university — will arise.

A true polymath, Widney worked tirelessly for more than a decade to make plans and secure land for USC, despite threats from a prolonged drought and economic downturns. In early October 1880, 53 students and 10 faculty members commenced classes in the campus's first building — now known as the Widney Alumni House.

Widney's dream of a university for Southern California — the first private university in the state — finally came true, opening the doors of opportunity for tens of thousands of Trojans for more than a century.

## JUDGE WIDNEY, CITY BUILDER

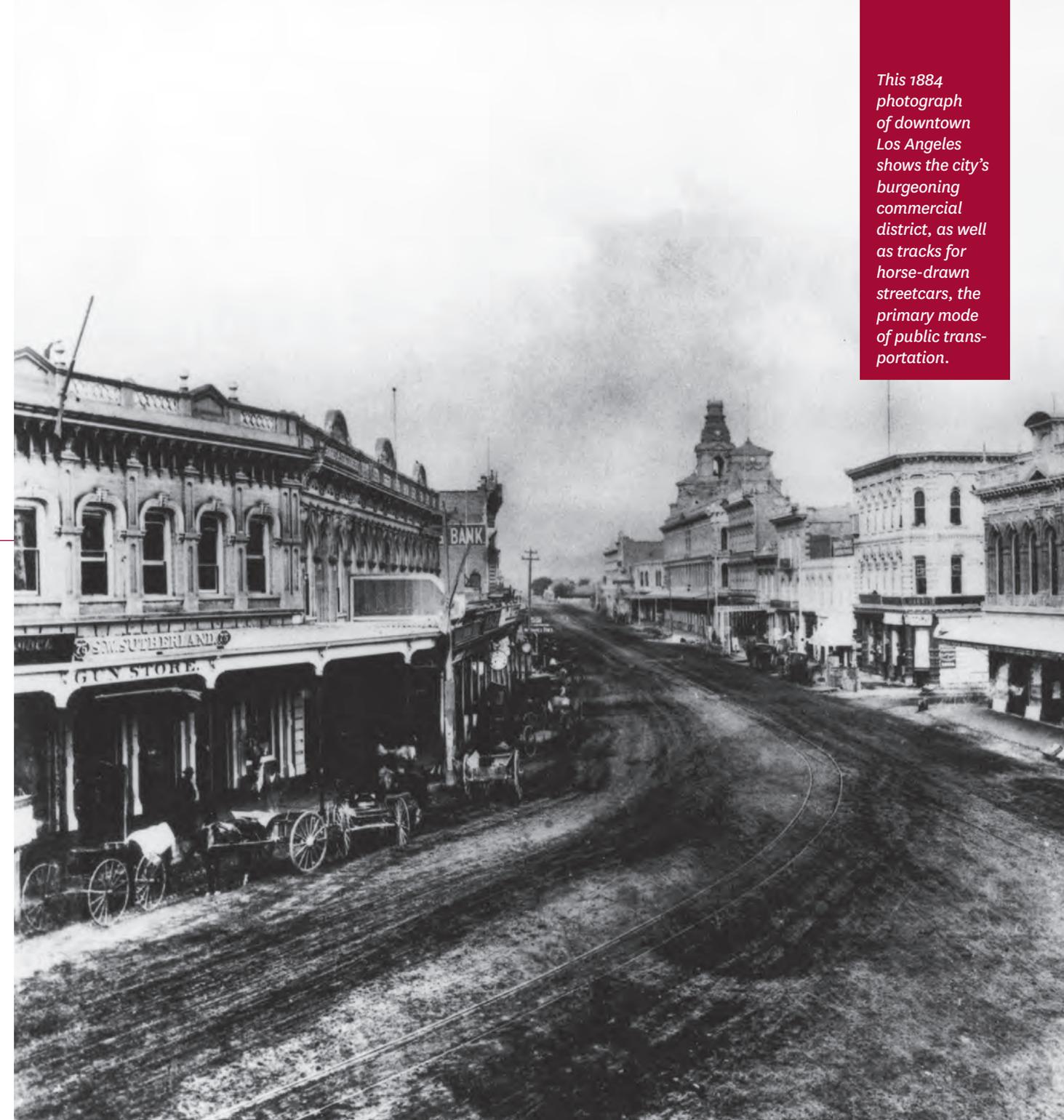
Widney was not only the founder of Southern California's first university, but he was also a chief architect of Los Angeles.

A Renaissance man with a rigorous intellect, Widney possessed unbridled ambition. He had taught several diverse subjects at his alma mater, the College of the Pacific, while simultaneously studying law. He was admitted to the bar, worked as a mining engineer, wrote a book (*The Plan of Creation*, published in 1881) and experimented as an inventor, earning a patent for a fruit grader and separator (U.S. Patent 788,618, 1905).

Widney demonstrated the same dedication and tirelessness in building Los Angeles. Among his myriad contributions to the city, he lured the Southern Pacific Railroad to Los Angeles and established the city's first horse-drawn trolley, the Spring and Sixth Street Railroad, which ran from the central plaza to what is today the intersection of Sixth and Figueroa streets. He organized the city's first chamber of commerce and first light and power company. A major real estate developer, he co-founded the city of Long Beach, as well as Pacoima, San Fernando, Ontario

and Victorville. He created the plans used to build San Pedro Bay's first breakwater, laying the groundwork for the growth of the Port of Los Angeles. He also helped form the Los Angeles County Bar Association, served as president of the University Bank of Los Angeles and wrote extensively on the need for a national currency bill.

When Widney died in 1929 at age 90, the Los Angeles City Council unanimously adopted a resolution honoring him, memorializing him as one of the city's most influential pioneers and civic leaders.



This 1884 photograph of downtown Los Angeles shows the city's burgeoning commercial district, as well as tracks for horse-drawn streetcars, the primary mode of public transportation.



*One thousand people — nearly a tenth of the city's population — turned out to witness the laying of the cornerstone for USC's first structure — today's Widney Alumni House.*

*When USC first opened its doors in 1880, the "city" still lacked paved streets, electric lights, telephones and a reliable fire alarm system.*

*Today, USC is home to more than 39,000 students and nearly 3,800 faculty, and is located in the heart of one of the biggest metropolises in the world.*



## A UNIVERSITY IS BORN

In the late 1870s, after more than a decade of persevering, Widney secured the land for the University of Southern California from real estate partners Ozro W. Childs, John G. Downey and Isaias W. Hellman. He drafted USC's articles of incorporation and was elected president of its first board of trustees. He also managed USC's endowment investment as the university's chief investment officer and bolstered the endowment by donating \$100,000 — an extraordinary amount in that age.

Widney had inspired a deep connection between the people of Los Angeles and the fledgling

university, and donations of labor, land and lumber poured in from the community. One thousand people — nearly a tenth of the city's population — came to witness the laying of the cornerstone of USC's first building in September 1880. A month later, the building opened its doors to its first students.

Over the next few decades, USC and Los Angeles grew steadily: The city swelled from a village of 10,000 residents into one of the nation's 10 biggest metropolises, and USC produced many of the professionals who formed the region.

Before Widney's death in 1929, his daughter Frances and her husband took him on an automobile tour of Los Angeles. After spending hours traversing the city, they arrived at the USC campus, now teeming with students and faculty. Throughout the day, Widney had said almost nothing. But after seeing USC, he turned to his daughter and said, "All my life, I have been telling people about the incredible future of Los Angeles. But in my wildest dreams, I never conceived anything as wonderful as this university!"

## COMMEMORATING USC'S FOUNDER

On August 29, 2014, USC celebrated the legacy of the university's founder at the unveiling of a sculpture of Judge Widney on the University Park Campus. The sculpture was installed at the entrance of the Widney Alumni House, USC's first building, which now bears his name. Among the special guests at the event were 10 living Widney descendants and their families,

who presented USC President C. L. Max Nikias with two family heirlooms: a top hat and cape owned and worn by Judge Widney's brother, Joseph Widney, who founded USC's medical school in 1882 and served as the university's second president.

Today, the statue stands as living testimony of Widney's vision in creating a dynamic global university in Southern California.



*USC President C. L. Max Nikias unveiled the statue of Judge Robert Maclay Widney in a ceremony before the Widney Alumni House. Descendants of USC's founder were present to celebrate this momentous event.*



*Sculptor Christopher Slatoff shown working on the mold of the Judge Widney statue in his art studio.*

## CREATING A LIVING TESTIMONY: CHRISTOPHER SLATOFF

Artist Christopher Slatoff is renowned for his large-scale public art pieces that appear throughout California, as well as in Asia and Europe.

Slatoff studied in France and the United States, ultimately earning his Bachelor of Fine Arts in sculpture from California State University, Long Beach. He teaches at Art Center College of Design, serves as sculpture chairman of the California Art Club and is artist in residence

at Fuller Theological Seminary. He also lectures and teaches workshops at the Getty Center and Getty Villa.

A passionate advocate of art education for underserved communities, he has established several after-school art programs and has worked as an artist facilitator at Metropolitan State Hospital. In 1986, he received a California Artist in Residence grant to work with special needs children in public schools.

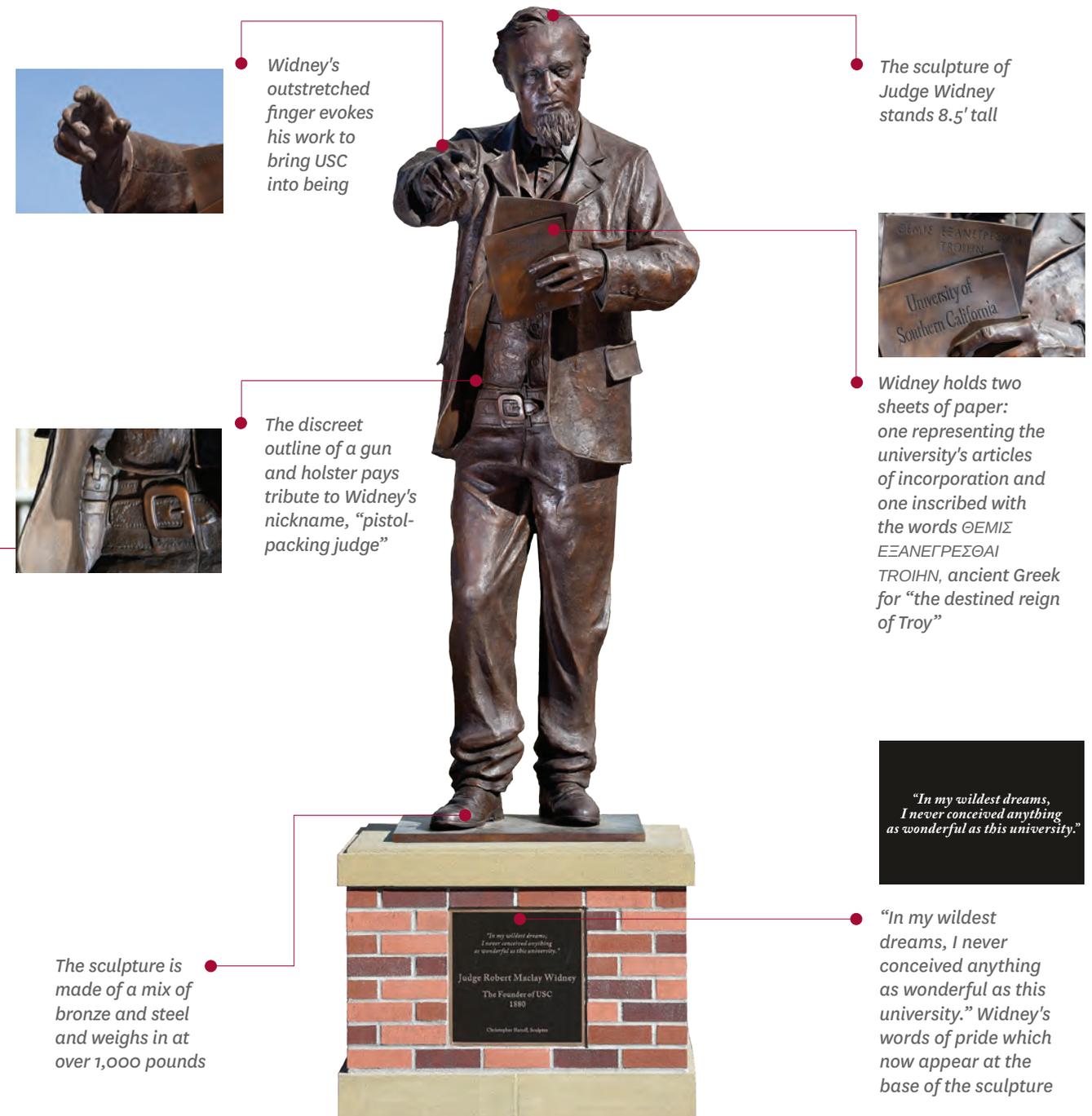
## THE BLUE PRINT BEHIND THE SCULPTURE

To make the Judge Widney statue, sculptor Christopher Slatoff created a life-size model of the sculpture, which was transported to the renowned Artworks Foundry in Berkeley, California. At the foundry, various molds of the sculpture were created and then cast in bronze. After months of detailed refinements, the piece was completed and carefully moved to USC.

- The sculpture stands eight-and-a-half feet tall, weighs more than 1,000 pounds and is made of a mixture of bronze and steel.

- Look closely and you'll see the outline of a gun in a holster partially concealed by Widney's coat — a tribute to his nickname of the "pistol-packing judge."
  - Widney holds two sheets of paper: one that reads ΘΕΜΙΣ ΕΞΑΝΕΓΓΡΕΣΘΑΙ ΤΡΟΙΗΝ, which means "the destined reign of Troy" in ancient Greek, and one that reads "University of Southern California," which represents the university's articles of incorporation that Widney drafted.

- The sculpture's outstretched finger was inspired by Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam" fresco in the Sistine Chapel. The sculpture's extended hand evokes Widney's work to bring USC into being.
  - *"In my wildest dreams, I never conceived anything as wonderful as this university."* Widney's words of pride appear at the base of the sculpture, etched permanently on its plaque, a touchstone for generations of Trojans.



Widney's outstretched finger evokes his work to bring USC into being

The sculpture of Judge Widney stands 8.5' tall



Widney holds two sheets of paper: one representing the university's articles of incorporation and one inscribed with the words ΘΕΜΙΣ ΕΞΑΝΕΓΓΡΕΣΘΑΙ ΤΡΟΙΗΝ, ancient Greek for "the destined reign of Troy"

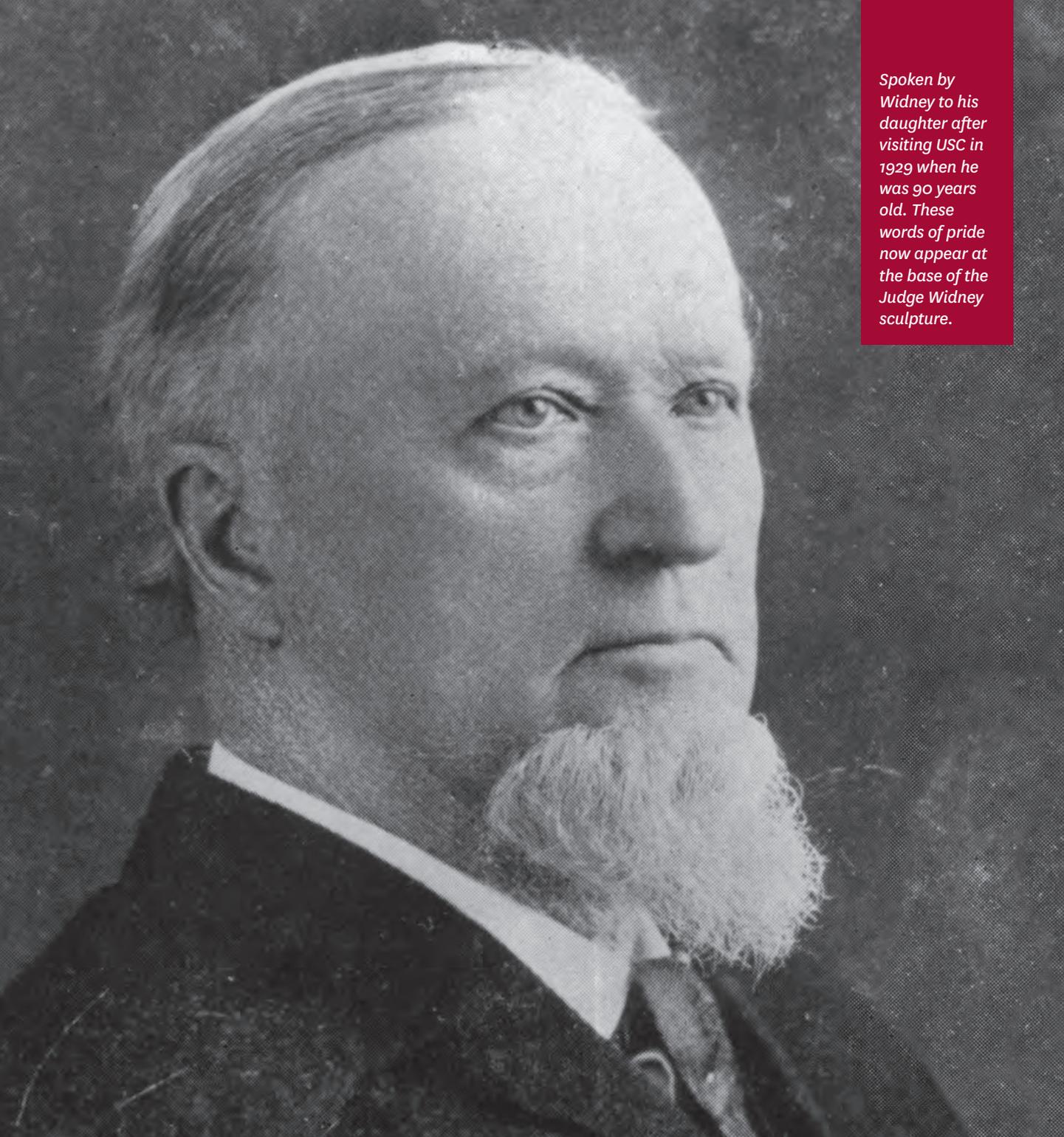


The discreet outline of a gun and holster pays tribute to Widney's nickname, "pistol-packing judge"

The sculpture is made of a mix of bronze and steel and weighs in at over 1,000 pounds

*"In my wildest dreams, I never conceived anything as wonderful as this university."*

"In my wildest dreams, I never conceived anything as wonderful as this university." Widney's words of pride which now appear at the base of the sculpture



Spoken by  
Widney to his  
daughter after  
visiting USC in  
1929 when he  
was 90 years  
old. These  
words of pride  
now appear at  
the base of the  
Judge Widney  
sculpture.

*“All my life,  
I have been telling people  
about the incredible future of Los Angeles...”*

*In my wildest dreams,  
I never conceived of anything  
as wonderful as this university.”*

— JUDGE ROBERT MACLAY WIDNEY



**USC** University of  
Southern California

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