(EF): He had so little as a child. His father never gave him anything, he never inherited a cent and he wanted to do better by his children than he had been done by. He was a very competitive individual. He made each one of us children competitive with each other. He instilled that in us.

(PH): Ed Fletcher came to San Diego as a young man. In his lifetime he was active in the development of water supply systems for this region. He was a highway promoter and land developer and later in life a State Senator. Ed Fletcher is the subject of this eleventh program in the series "Twelve Who Shaped San Diego." I'm Peter Hamlin and joining me is Dr. Claire Crane, San Diego Historian and Chief Historical Consultant for this series. Now Claire the first thing I'd like to ask you about is the importance to San Diego's Development that Ed Fletcher had, and also where, where does he fit in? We're now on the eleventh biography of our twelve, and where exactly does he fit into the growth and development of the City of San Diego?

(CC): Fletcher was a tremendously important developer particularly of course, in the county because of what he did in developing water systems which serve the County and also the City of San Diego and the land developments that were associated with those. He was also important as a developer of roads in the area and, and then he played a role, after he was sixty years old, he began his political career which is quite remarkable too. Then he served twelve years in the State Senate. And while he was there he was responsible for important legislation dealing with of course water, one of his favorite subjects, and land, another subject, and introduced the legislation that made it possible subsequently for the city to develop Mission Bay Aquatic Park. The finest of it's kind anywhere in the world.

(PH): To begin our story of Ed Fletcher, we turn to Ed Fletcher Jr. his eldest son, who became involved with his father's company back in 1917. His father first came to San Diego at the age of fifteen, the year was 1888.

(EF): Well, the reason he picked on San Diego was because he had a sister living here. He had decided to leave Massachusetts because his father was coming back from Florida and was going to farm him out as an apprentice, under the laws of Massachusetts. At that time until a son was twenty-one years old, a father could farm him out as an apprentice and take all his wages. And Dad decided that he had had enough of that, he was going to leave, and he bought a scalper's ticket for twenty dollars and I don't know whether you know what a scalper's ticket is or not. People out here would advertise in the paper in the east that they would furnish transportation if they'd come out and look at real estate. And then the people decide oh they don't want it after they sent them a ticket, then he'd buy that ticket from somebody at a
scalper's price. The ticket cost them nothing but Dad bought one for twenty dollars and came to California. First thing he did was go up to the San Diego Savings, the San Diego Trust and Savings Bank and deposited five dollars that he had, that was all that was his total capital, with empty Gilmore who was the teller at that time and he just said well this is where I'm going to stay and he found out in talking to him that Gilmore came from Maine so he was a New Englander just like Dad and although Gilmore was considerably older, they liked each other and so Dad struck him up for a job and he scratched his head, he said "By golly I got a dirty basement up at the house." He told him where to go up on Sixth Street where Gilmore lived and go up there and clean out that basement for him. For me that was the first job he had.

(CC): Ed Fletcher in his memoirs says "my next job, the following Monday morning after working for the Gilmores was for five dollars a week. Working for the firm of Johnson and Patterson Plumbers. I was an awkward over-grown boy, he says, and broke eighteen lamp chimneys on Tuesday, Friday I put a two inch brass water faucet high on a shelf and not too securely. Mr. Johnson came along and just happened to be underneath when a jar of the rack forced the water faucet to fall and hit him squarely on the head. We carried him out unconscious and bleeding. That Saturday night I was fired and sobbed most of the way home."

(PH): Well it's interesting you were saying how chance circumstances happened to mould the development of history and that caused him to go into a different line of business, didn't it?

(CC): Yes, as a matter of fact perhaps that was a lucky accident that he didn't stay in the plumbing business because he was then hired on to work for a produce merchant and in the process of going out into the back country to make contracts for produce, he became aware of the tremendous significance of water, and the possibilities of developing land if it were well irrigated.

(EF): He used to go out, get his bicycle, take it down to the depot, put it in the baggage compartment and he'd go to Oceanside, on the train. He'd get out and he'd cover Oceanside, various stores there and pick up you know, orders for materials and stuff and produce. He'd go out to the farms and buy up their crops, their honey, their hay, their grain and it was while he was riding his bicycle all during those formative years, that he realized that certain streams ran late in the year. So he knew just where the water was, because he'd have to ford these creeks. He knew where the cold weather hit because the sumac would get frozen, he knew where the land was going to be the most valuable because it wouldn't freeze the crops. So that's how he got interested in water.

(PH): He soon found out through later business associations that land and water development were intimately related.
The Southcoast Land Company was in fact the 1907's and 8's along in there, Dad went up to Del Mar and built the Stratford Inn Hotel. He was the manager of the Southcoast Land Company, built the Stratford Inn Hotel, built the swimming pool which was enclosed you know, bath house and the power plant because they didn't have electricity there. They put in their own power plant, then he went up to his ranch in Santa Fe and drilled some wells and poked the water in the pipeline, clear down and up to the top of hill back up to Del Mar and the very first summer Dad sold over a million dollars worth of lots. He used to bring people down from LA by the car load, by you know a full train load and serve them their luncheon and take them up in the hills and show them lots. My father, of course, would buy the land up cheap when it didn't have any water and because he knew he was going to bring water to it. And like building Lake Hodges Dam he interested the Southern Santa Fe Railroad to W.E. Hodges of the Santa Fe Investment Co. and Rippley who was president of the railroad at that time. They put up money because Dad showed them how putting water on that 8500 acres that they owned in Rancho Santa Fe that it would become valuable and it did. And of course the City of San Diego was running short of water and so he built a pipeline from Lake Hodges clear into La Jolla and a pumping plant there at Torrey Pines to stave off a drought from San Diego and of course we furnished water for months. When Otay Dam went out we furnished all the water that the City had from the Old San Diego Flume or the Cuyamaca Water Company from Lake Murray. So all those things showed that water is King. Water and roads those were Dad's pet projects - water and roads.

And so Fletcher with his intimate knowledge of the county began to develop that formula for successful land development. Claire, I'd like to discuss how Fletcher originally got into the actual water supply business, that was about 1910 wasn't it?

Well as far as getting into what he renamed the Cuyamaca Water Co., that was in 1910. He was interested even earlier in the development of the San Luis Rey River and also of the San Dieguito River and later on Henshaw Dam was built on the San Luis Rey River and Lake Hodges on the San Dieguito River. But the San Diego River of course was the City of San Diego's only source of water for a good many years. It was, wells were drilled into the San Diego River and as Elizabeth MacPhail tells in her book about Alonzo Horton and the story of New San Diego a company named Hokin Smith would take the water out of the San Diego River and put it in barrels and drive through town and sell it to people. It was sold in barrels and buckets and she quotes someone in her book as saying the water was terrible. "First we boiled it, then we strained it, then we boiled it again, and then we drank something else." So the San Diego River was San Diego's only source of water in those years and when the population grew so tremendously after the railroad was completed in 1885, a company was started called the San Diego Flume Co. The flume, a flume is a wooden structure that is an aqueduct.
essentially. And this company in 1889 constructed a dam up at Cuyamaca and then built this wooden aqueduct, the wooden flume, which ran for thirty-five or forty miles, bringing water by gravity from Lake Cuyamaca, which is the head waters of the San Diego River down into town, and that was the only source of water then for a number of years until the city of San Diego then made an arrangement to purchase water from the Southern California Mountain Water Co. which had been developed by Babcock and then later was owned by John D. Spreckles. At first the City of San Diego was just purchasing water from that system and in 1906 the city gave an exclusive contract to the Southern California Mountain Water Co. and as a result the Flume Co. lost its biggest customer and virtually went bankrupt. But the assets were still there, the flume was still there, the water was still running and Fletcher in 1910 bought up that system.

(EP): About that time he met James A. Murray from Butte, Montana and Mr. Murray had a lot of money and with Dad’s knowhow they bought the S.D. Flume Co. for I think it was $125,000 from the English bond holders. And that was one of Dad’s first big steps going into debt. And from then on he owed a million dollars or a million and a half for the next thirty years. He could never get out from under it.

(PH): There is an anecdote from a Fletcher family vacation in those early years that further demonstrates the quality of the water at that time which further interested Fletcher in the need for better water in San Diego.

(EP): We stayed on Central Ave. in Lemon Grove, and in those days you couldn’t drink the water without first boiling it and then running it through a sieve and then straining it. Because you’d get polliwogs and you’d get gartersnakes and they’d come right out of the faucet. That made Dad mad, he said but the Lemon Grove Mutual Water Co. can do nothing about it because that’s the water from the flume so that was the start of his development I guess. He got the idea we had to have better water.

(MUSIC): All day I faced the barren waste without the taste of water - cool water - water . . . cool water, clear water.

(PH): Ed Fletcher bought the Flume Co. and it was renamed the Cuyamaca Water Co.. The Cuyamaca Water Company was later in the vortex of an important water rights case which has been important to the development of water rights law in San Diego. And to fully understand that case, it’s necessary to return to the early days of the Southwest under the Spanish flag. Because of our history we inherit two legal systems -- the British and the Spanish -- with different points of view on the subject of water rights. Dr. Iris Engstrand, Professor of History at the University of San Diego explains that the early Spanish settlement of this area has had a whole range of influences of San Diego’s development.
(IE): Probably the most important area was the river or the water supply, which was in common for the people living in the town. Each person had the same right to the water and also the people in the outer lying areas. Their irrigation system was such that you could divert the river, you had a right of passage over someone else’s land in order to irrigate your own fields. But it was a sharing in common in contrast to the English system which we know of as riparian water rights, where the people on the river own the water. Here all the people shared equally.

(PH): It was the Cuyamaca Water case, eventually decided by the Supreme Court, that determined certain water rights for the City and the Cuyamaca Water Co., owned by Ed Fletcher. Claire, I’d like to ask you what was the issue in this case. What two sides were represented? What was at stake?

(CC): Well in an extremely over simplified way of saying what the basic issue was Iris Engstrand has pointed out the difference between these two legal systems and the Spanish system in regard to water is summarized as first in time, first in right. That is, those who have the first claim, the first time the first chronological claim have the prior rights. Where as Anglo-Saxon law is based on what is called riparian rights. That is to say if you own the land along side the river, then you have a claim on the water of the river there. Rather than somebody who may have had an earlier claim but does not happen to own the land, the watershed right along the river itself. So in part this was the issue at hand. And the city attorney of San Diego, Cosgrove and later his assistant city attorney, Shelly Higgins, and incidently it’s in Shelly Higgins delightful book called, This Fantastic City, San Diego, that I got most of this information and it’s very very entertainingly told in Shelly Higgins book. They contended that the City of San Diego was the legal heir of the Old Pueblo of San Diego and that the pueblo in turn was the heir you might say of the first settlement, the Presidio and Mission. And they contended therefore that the City of San Diego had the paramount and prior right to all of the water of the San Diego River from source to mouth, and while they said that, that they did not want to use all of the river, that they would not deny access to it, to other people. They wanted to establish legally that the city had the paramount and prior right because Cosgrove contended that if they established that, they would then be able to sell the bonds which would enable them to build the El Capitan Dam and to develop an extensive and expensive water system. But he felt that they had to establish their paramount right although they would not deny other people like the Helix Irrigation District and the Cuyamaca Water Co. the right to get water from it, and this battle went on for about 20 years. Well about 10 years I guess. It began in the 1920’s and was not finally concluded until 1930. Fletcher had by this time sold out the most of the Cuyamaca Water Co. assets to the La Mesa, Spring Valley and Lemon Grove District. And it was actually the district which owned the dam site for El Capitan Dam,
which was something that Fletcher had located, the Judge did say
that the City of San Diego did have the paramount and prior right,
except that these other companies, in particular the Spring Valley,
La Mesa and Lemon Grove irrigation district had the right to take
a certain amount of water out of the system and that they would
always be guaranteed that they would get that amount of water.

(PH): William Jennings was a lawyer for the side of the Cuyamaca
Water Co. and he remembers Ed Fletcher, a colorful man, he says was
the consummate promoter.

(WJ): Well I would say that that describes him very well. He was
a promoter. Fletcher was an optimist, everything was always gonna
go right as far as Fletcher was concerned. And going right meant
that there would always be some water that he’d get from some
source, to fill the needs of his family and his real estate
holdings. And you have to admire the man; I always liked him. He
was a very likeable chap. Tall, dignified, character. But he
could get down and bargain and divide up the water that he had no
rights to, at all. And supply an area with it. I was fortunate he
knew my father and when I first came down here to San Diego from
the Los Angeles area where I went to school, I went to work, among
others, for what was called the La Mesa, Lemon Grove, and Spring
Valley Irrigation District. And that happened to be a pet of
Fletcher’s. He owned practically all of the undeveloped land in
the district. And he was a great one to operate it and if he
needed to bend a rule a little bit, he would bend it a little bit
because what was more important than this area get it’s water.
Well so he was the lifesaver for all of us that were dependent upon
the water here. And we quarreled with him and bickered with him
because being the person who was responsible for it all, he also
wanted to run it. One of the things that he wanted to do was to
tell everybody how much they could have, what the price should be
and everything else. He was the little king of this water-arid,
western California. But nevertheless he was a man of a great deal
of energy and the daring to try anything. I mean tell him well,
"gosh, Colonel we can’t get by with that, you know. I mean there is
some limitation to what we can do." Oh no! Not if we need the
water! If we need the water we can get it and we can use it. And
so we always had some as long as we listened to the Colonel, which
was until he died. I used to be a member of his firm, The Higgs,
Fletcher Law Firm. And I found myself greatly in conflict with the
firm because I was always a supplier of water for public use, to a
large number of people, and I had the idea that I had a trust
interest in preserving the water and preserving the water right and
all that sort of thing. So anybody who felt that way was gonna run
afoul of the Colonel now and then. And I ran afoul every now and
then.

(PH): William Jennings saw the Cuyamaca case to it’s conclusion.
He was the attorney for the Helix Water District for many years, he
also was involved in the county water authority and the California
Water commission and developed a reputation as a top authority in water rights law. By the way, Lake Jennings is named for him. It’s his feeling that the question of water rights is still a difficult one, one that is still far from a definite and final solution.

(WJ): There are as many opinions upon who has the basic right to the water as there ever were, and the thing that most of us I think have learned is not to advance any claims for the water. The water, we all have a use of right, a right to make use of it as long as it’s available. If we over use it then we run out of water. Just think of the distance that the water is brought from the original Colorado River to the City of San Diego, unbelievable troubles and problems and we’ve made great steps toward preserving that water supply and litigating and planning and working out conflicting rights to it. But it’s likely to blow up in our faces anytime, just any time. Because water is the life blood of this country and we’ve got a very small and limited supply of it.

(EPH): San Diego Attorney William Jennings. The realization of the fact that water continues to be a problem in this area has struck home again and again. First there’s the recent western drought and there has been a legal dispute between California and Arizona over rights to the Colorado River Supply which currently brings San Diego about 95% of our water. City Attorney John Witt and Asst. City Attorney Robert Tease explain that case.

(RT): Arizona established it’s right, to take the waters of the Colorado River as opposed to California’s right which, as you know, used the Colorado River for all these many years. And the decision in that case brought about our Feather River Project and our now extensive California water system and our right to take the waters of the Colorado River gradually being reduced to a level which won’t sustain us if we don’t develop the Northern River Water Sources.

(JW): As Bob has pointed out because of Arizona’s victory in Arizona v. California, we will be continually receiving a diminished supply from the Colorado River. But I think that the rights as between the two states have been settled by that case. The rights to the San Diego River Water were settled in the Cuyamaca Water Company case way back in the 1920’s. The Los Angeles River’s been recently settled. That we, there was a dispute involving Camp Pendleton as to water.

(RT): In the Fallbrook area and that one has gone to litigation and been decided in the I guess the late 50’s or early 60’s and all I can say is that another dispute may arise as to a different water course. But as to those water courses I think we’ve got it pretty well nailed down. I should point out that probably, maybe in the future, San Diego’s water problems will be solved by making sea water conversion economical when Arizona will take it’s full
entitlement of the Colorado River is also speculative. In order to take their full amount they’ll have to develop the Central Portion of Arizona over the next couple of years, and how many people will be living there, is one for the good Lord to meditate upon I suppose. Because whether it will entice people to move to the central portions of Arizona simply because they’ve got Colorado River Water... I don’t know.

(PH): Asst. City Attorney Robert Tease. Before him we heard City Attorney John Witt. Even if the flow of water from the Colorado continues other problems are foreseen. The water is currently pumped over the mountains to San Diego. The cost of energy for this pumping will be substantially higher when the contracts are renegotiated in 1985. And so the cost of that water will also be much higher. Before leaving the subject of water rights we must mention one group that has consistently complained of unfair treatment in water rights cases, the American Indian. Many cases that have been contended still remain unresolved according to Roy Cooke, who teaches American Indian Studies at San Diego State University and Grossmont College. But there is one recently resolved legal case that has been successfully brought through the courts by the El Capitan Indians. Roy Cooke tells us that this case involved the El Capitan Indians and the Helix Irrigation District.

(RC): And the Capitan Grande Band maintained for many, many years that there was a section of the land which had been taken and has been used for these last 30 years, and no restitution or money was ever given for it. They said they bought a certain amount of land and they just took that piece. Well there was a ruling that not only would their fishing rights be recognized but also that yes, that land was taken illegally. And a judgment was ruled against the water district and in favor of the El Capitan band of Mission Indians. That is a precedent setting case and to my knowledge it’s one of the first ones especially in Southern California which has come out with any sort of success or any at least for Indian people.

(PH): Roy Cooke adds that this case points out what many native Americans have been saying for a long time, there’s no need for new laws but existing laws and treaties must be defended. Well the water issue is a complex one, there are conflicting claims on the parts of different groups, different municipalities, and among advocates of different uses of water. And the importance of water to San Diego is made even greater by the fact of our semi-arid climate. For these reasons the San Diego Historical Society has begun work on a project that would make material relating to water development more easily available to researchers. They also hope to publish and display our water history for the better understanding of the community at large. Tom Scharf is involved as managing editor of publications and Charles Hughes is the archivist for the San Diego Historical Society who begins the description of the
project, the subject it covers and the role of Ed Fletcher, whose papers will be an important part of their work.

(CH): If they didn’t have the water resources, then they couldn’t sell the land and that’s how he gets involved in both aspects of it then. He had to make the water development pay off by developing the land but you couldn’t develop the land without having the water resources available. We think water development is a very important aspect of San Diego’s history and development so we’re going to be developing a program in which we would be creating a water resources archives for the San Diego area as a whole and these documents then would be deposited in this archives, arranged, sorted, indexed, cataloged and made available to researchers of water development. In this way we hope to increase the understanding and appreciation of the importance for the conservation of water resources in the community.

(PH): Aside from making this material available to researchers does the Historical Society have any particular plans for projects here to somehow do something with the material after it’s indexed?

(CH): Well, one of our main projects is going to be a traveling exhibit which we hope to exhibit in a number of different schools around the counties showing the history of the development of water in San Diego. Also several articles which will probably appear in our quarterly magazine, The Journal of San Diego History, and then we hope to do a very large book, I don’t know how large, but we’d like to have one of Southern Californians historians or leading experts on the history of water development write it. And we would illustrate it with a number of the photographs which we have so far been collecting from the Fletcher Collection and other collections on the history of water development in San Diego and probably all of Southern California really. And this in combination with the travelling exhibits and things would hopefully enlighten a lot of people as to the history of water in San Diego. It’s very hard for a lot of people who come from the East Coast to visualize what San Diego would have looked like if not for the present development of water that we have.

(PH): Ed Fletcher was a promoter, a dynamic individual with a natural born gift of a salesman. His land developments had led him to an interest in San Diego’s water supply. But roads were another key to the success of his land holdings. Russell Crane is a member of the San Diego Highway Development Association. It was begun by Fletcher, and some others in 1935 and the group continues to meet today. Russ Crane was with the Fletcher Company for 21 years, as an Administrative Assistant to Ed Fletcher. In fact, he was for a time charged with the duty of driving Col. Fletcher to various places in the county, which turned out to be the source of many stories about Fletcher.

(RC): I mean he was almost like a school teacher, really he would
explain, explain to you as he went along. What, how this happened, and why this happened, why they did this and why they did that and he would hum little old tunes once in awhile. I'll never forget one day I was driving him, he was six foot two or three and he was sitting in the front seat and often times in automobiles you know those front seats aren't built for a 6'3" and he crossed his ol' leg over and started to pound out a tune on top of my foot which was on the accelerator and if you don't think we didn't go down the road at a pretty healthy speed.

(PH): Many of our present day roads and highways go back to Ed Fletcher.

(RC): On these roads he had a tremendous sense of what could be done and what couldn't be done. And when they built the concrete ribbon of road, twenty feet wide which is the highway that goes from San Diego through Ramona and Santa Isabel to Julian. Well I knew darn well that if they started it and maybe they would get as far as Ramona and they'd run out of money and that's all she wrote. So what he actually did is he got them going from both ends so as they were running out of money they were getting closer together so they went out and by public subscription they got more money and finished the road, otherwise the road would never have been completed. That's the way they did a lot of those things in those days. The route in Springs Grade Rd. on Highway 80 which was the one that really got the road going over the mountains into Yuma. They actually built that mountain Springs Grade Rd. with public subscription for money. They had a big picnic out there with cars and people sitting on the back of the cars and they auctioned off and got the money. People pledged the money to build that Mountain Springs Grade Rd. and those were things that they could never do today, but that's how they did things in those days.

(PH): There's one anecdote about Ed Fletcher that shows his early interest in the direct route to Arizona. This was back in 1912 long before a proper road had even been considered for this route. And most people were content with getting there via Los Angeles.

(RC): This was kind of funny. This was one of the things he used to talk a lot when we were driving around together. I thought it was quite interesting that there used to be an automobile race from San Diego to Phoenix and the only stipulation with the race was the first one to Phoenix won the race. So they always started off in front of the Grant Hotel and the Plaza in downtown San Diego on Broadway. And of course when they fired off the gun for the race everybody went down Broadway and went out, went on out and up Rose Canyon and on up towards Los Angeles and across that way which was where the roads were to get to Phoenix. Col. Fetcher went down to the end of the street and made a U turn and came back and roared through the crowd and went on out the back way through El Cajon and through and out through Ramona and down the San Felipe Wash. and across the desert, across the sand dunes. He knew how big the
river was at Yuma. He either waded across the river or else he took the tires off and went across on the railroad track and then on the other side he put the tires back on and they went over and then across the desert to Phoenix and won the race by 10 hours. And so after that they had to make stipulations of how the race, the direction the race, would go.

(CC): Didn’t Col. Fletcher develop a plank road through the desert just to show that it was, that this was a better route, a shorter route?

(RC): Yeah, that wood was brought down on big barges from Northern California and was a turned over here at Benson Lumber and it was shipped to the valley and the plank road was made. There’s a piece of plank road now that you can see on the Caltrans property about a block up from Taylor Street on Juan St. and it’s very interesting for people to go by and see that was just the width of one car and every so many feet or 1/4 of a mile they would have a off ramp were people could look ahead and see a car coming they could pull off and not have to get into the sand.

(PH): You’ve examined Ed Fletcher’s interest in highways and in water development in San Diego. Claire I want to ask you about a rivalry that began in the early years between John D. Spreckles and Ed Fletcher, and I understand the rivalry had to do with both highways and water development.

(CC): Yes, it certainly did and of course they had political differences as well. Spreckles was one of what was called the old guard or stand pat republicans and Fletcher along with George Marston and other people was active in developing the progressive wing of the Republican Party in San Diego and although Fletcher himself did not become active as a candidate in politics until later on. He initially got started with the campaign in 1910 when Hiram Johnson was running for Governor of California on a platform of "I’m going to kick the Southern Pacific Railroad out of California politics." And of course Spreckles was tied in with the Southern Pacific Railroad among other things so that was one source of their rivalry and of course the water system that Spreckles had developed in this southern border area of San Diego county had been purchased by the City. And this bankrupted the Flume Co. which Fletcher later bought up so they had conflicts over water, and in the Fletcher memoirs and elsewhere you read about the conflicts that they had over road development too. Spreckles wanted of course more roads developed through the Southern area of San Diego County because this would benefit his vast property holdings in that area in the Jamul, Otay and Tecate areas. Fletcher on the other hand had property interests in the northern part of the county and so he was more interested in getting roads developed there and yet although they had a good deal of rivalry in a lot of things they also often worked together and I think one of the interesting things about that earlier period in our history is that
sometimes that was possible for people to be what you might call friendly enemies. Fletcher says this himself in his memoirs. He says it was a joy to live in San Diego at that time we often fought each other politically but we also frequently worked together when it was in the best interests of the City and he gives examples, for instance, of how they all worked together -- Fletcher, Marston, Spreckles and a lot of other people to helped put on the exhibition in 1915 that was so important to San Diego's development.

(PH): In the 1930's Ed Fletcher was persuaded to go into politics as a candidate but he didn't forget about his vast land holdings. In fact they provided part of the reason for his interest in running for state office in the first place. This is how Ed Fletcher, Jr. tells it.

(EIF): Frankly, I think business was so poor and although the job only paid $100 a month as a state senator and you had to furnish your own car it was an honorary job he felt he could go up there and create some laws that would help to save the property that was going to levy for some taxes that was his primary interest. Of course he had to pay an awful lot of taxes himself. In helping himself he was going to help all of these people that were losing their properties because they couldn't pay their taxes, so he helped put through those laws, the moratorium on taxes and the tenor payment plan and the four year payment plan and he did a lot to help people to save their property.

(PH): One important part of San Diego's history in which Fletcher played a part as a State Senator was the development of Mission Bay. He sponsored several pieces of legislation that facilitated the development of the park. The entire effort was spearheaded by Glen Rick who served on the City's planning department from 1927 to 1955 with only a brief period away from San Diego. It was around 1929 when Mission Bay was made a State Park Glen Rick saw its development from a hardly navigable river delta to the recreational park that you can see today.

(GR): In the 1930's I had drawn some sketches of Mission Bay and in 1943 and 44 the City Council felt that this town was going to be a ghost town after the war. It was feeling pretty well held by a number of people. In fact, articles in national magazines said that San Diego was undoubtedly going to be a ghost town and they thought San Diego's industry would be a folded at the end of the war. Well, Maynaughts called a meeting at the Chamber of Commerce and some citizens and I was asked to give a talk about Mission Bay as a possible job producing-item that could be developed after the war. San Diego needed Mission Bay and the only way to get it was to ask the State Legislature to transfer the tidelands and submerged lands to the City of San Diego. Shortly after that the City decided that the development could take place only if we had some money, and a 2 million dollar bond issue was proposed. Fortunately that bond issue placed with a 71% vote in favor of it.
(PH): And had the land then was already transferred by the state to?

(GR): It took place about the same time. About the same time the federal legislation in the Rivers and the Harbors Act called for the development of San Diego River flood control and Mission Bay was in the fine print. So fortunately at the right time some of the development was caused by help outside the City of San Diego along with its own bond issue. There were several bond issues passed later.

(PH): Now what was Ed Fletcher's role at this time as a state senator?

(GR): Ed Fletcher was a senator and he introduced the bill that transferred the tidelands and submerged lands to the legislature and it was approved by the legislature and signed by Governor Warren. But I think probably one of the most important things that he had to do on Mission Bay was that he owned a half interest in the rock quarry in Mission Gorge, and the city owned the other half. When I went to Ed Fletcher to secure permission to use the rock which the army engineers had said was the best rock we could get as to density and heaviness, and that they wanted permission to allow the contractor to use that rock but he had to get permission from the owner. Ed asked me, what is the City requesting for its royalty on the rock? I said 5 cents a ton. He said that's alright with me. Well, he received several thousands of dollars and as a result he took his wife on a trip around the world with the proceeds.

(PH): Among the benefits to San Diego, this park development are navigable waters where before only sailboats could sail and only with difficulty, and an increase in shore area.

(GR): That probably is a cardinal principal of development of bay area when you consider that there was probably 11 miles or less of shore line when we started on it and developed the islands and peninsulas. Ed developed over 30 miles of shore line which is you say the important thing.

(PH): In addition there are navigable waters.

(GR): Yes, absolutely when Mission Bay was started as such there were very few navigable areas where you could sail a boat that had a keel few powerboats would get around alright but's all, and sometimes even then you got stranded on sand bars.

(PH): Glen Rick who was to a great extent behind the development of Mission Bay Park. Claire, we are going to conclude our program on Ed Fletcher with a very colorful story about an episode in his
career in the State Senate and it has to do with the Cabrillo statue which is now at the tip of Point Loma as a part of Cabrillo National Monument. How did the statue get there?

(CC): I think that’s one of my favorite stories really. The statue had been sculpted in Portugal and was on exhibit at the New York World Fair in 1939 it was then to be sent to San Francisco for exhibit in its World Fair in 1939 but it didn’t get there in time to be put up for the fair so then it was stored in the garage of some Portuguese American woman who lived in San Francisco. As Ed Fletcher tells the story in his memoirs he is so gentlemanly that he never wants to give away her identity so I can’t tell you what her name is. I don’t know. At any rate there it was in the garage and it weighed 14,000 pounds and so of course it wasn’t exactly the kind of thing she was to happy to have in the garage. Fletcher thought that the statue really ought to be in San Diego and the Governor of California at that time was a democrat, Culver Olson, and Fletcher was a Republican, and so they have political differences. They also had a difference in that Fletcher wanted the statue here in San Diego and Olson, according to the Fletcher memoirs, was going to send it back to the city of Oakland. Fletcher regarded this as Olson’s way of trying to obtain the votes of the Portuguese Americans who lived in Oakland and he thought that after all since this was the first place that Cabrillo had landed that the statue really ought to be here.

(PH): Well with the governor’s opposition Fletcher was not able to pass legislation through both houses to move the statue to San Diego. But he was able to convince the Senate to pass such a resolution unanimously. Well then he got the Secretary of State to put the great seal of the State of California on this document and on a letter he had received from the State Park Commission and then he took these two very impressive official looking documents and brought them to the woman at whose house the statute had been kept and showed them to her.

(CC): She was still a little bit reluctant but Fletcher was very persuasive and he already had a big truck there and a crane or whatever you would need to get something that weighs 7 tons onto the truck. And while they were actually loading this statue onto the truck the telephone rang. Somebody had leaked the story. Apparently the telephone rang as he describes it in his memoirs, and there was a phone call from somebody in Oakland threatening a law suit. And the lady was in tears but Fletcher with his great persuasion said everything is going to be alright, they drove off with the statue. Fletcher, again with his tremendous persuasiveness that he had, called up a friend of his who happened to be President of the Santa Fe Railroad and arranged for the railroad station to be kept open until they got down there with the statue, got it on the train and shipped it to San Diego.

(PH): Ed Fletcher Jr. remembers this episode although like many
others he was kept somewhat in the dark about it.

(EF): Well, first I knew about it I got a phone call from my Dad from Sacramento telling me that he was writing me a letter sending me a memo, and that coming down on a freight car was a big box that had to be unloaded in San Diego and up to that time I didn't know what it was all about. And evidently he said to get ahold of Roscoe Hazard, he'll know what to do. So I got a hold of Roscoe Hazard and then as far as that was concerned what developed later was in the papers and I learned about it more from the papers than first-hand from my Dad later on.

(CC): When it got to San Diego it was sent to the Naval Training Center and it was absolutely under guard for quite a period of time because Governor Olson was furious and he attacked Fletcher verbally in the newspapers there were articles accusing Fletcher of stealing the statue, and Olson got his friends in the Legislature to introduce bills to try to get the statue back. And Fletcher took the high ground and said, well possession is nine-tenths of the law. He also got a letter-writing campaign going including a campaign from school children and a lot of other people saying oh this is where it ought to be after all Cabrillo first landed here in San Diego and so finally Olson gave up and the statue then was on the Naval Training Center and was dedicated there in 1940. And then in 1942, which was the 400th anniversary of Cabrillo’s landing, the statue was moved to its present location out at the Cabrillo Monument, and it’s still there.

(PH): The one thing I never understood is how did it get to stay there because this was a semi illegal venture, wasn’t it?

(CC): I think the legalities were clouded and I think that Fletcher’s persistence and the fact that it was here simply wore down Governor Olson. There was a legal question also. Since the Government of Portugal had given the statue to the State of California, the Governor contended that as the Governor, you see, as the Chief Executive Officer he had the right to decide where it would go but Fletcher had gotten a legal opinion saying that if it was given to the State then the legislature, you see, representing the people of the State should have the right to decide where it would go and he had gotten a unanimous resolution through the Senate of the State of California.

(PH): There is a postscript to the story as we’ve heard it told there were quite a few people who didn’t know quite what was coming off and among them for many years was the artist who created the statue in the first place. Ron Sivera, bibliographer at the UCSD Library later visited the sculptor in Portugal.

(RS): When I was in Portugal after a year in Brazil I met the sculptor of the famous statue. I looked him up, this Senor Dubre, and I was telling him what a fabulous statue I thought it was and
how I had seen it when I was a young fellow, a sailor on Point Loma. He says oh that’s where it is. He didn’t know where it was. He only knew that it went to San Francisco he didn’t know that it ended up in San Diego.

(PH): Claire, as we come to the end of this program I have to observe as you were saying the other day that it’s incredible to look at the huge number of enterprises that Fletcher was involved with and it’s hard to imagine how he did it all. On top of that of course we have to remember that on this program we’ve talked about only a fraction of all of the activities that he was involved with. I think that this incredible range of activity demonstrated by men like Fletcher points out a very basic difference between Fletcher’s time and our own. Russell Crane, I think, had some interesting thoughts on those differences which also shed a light on the motivations of men like Ed Fletcher.

(RC): Well I think pace is alot faster today and people are doing so much more. They don’t have the time. They’re watching television and have a lot of things on their time--their boats and their hobbies and so forth but the business men of that era had more time on their hands and they were really trying to better themselves along with... and they realized that if the city prospered they would prosper. And so they were trying to better the city and they had real problems because very few people who look out of their windows today and see all the trees and shrubbery out there and don’t realize we live in a semi-arid area and without the water that we have here we would just dry up and blow away really because we have very little rain. Our rain is equivalent to what they have in Arizona and some of these other places. We’ve made it what it is. It was the pioneers like Col. Fletcher and Spreckles and Heilburn and these people that really made this area and were unselfish in their work.

(CC): I think this certainly is one of the ways of looking at Ed Fletcher as one of the Twelve Who Shaped San Diego. He’s a combination, as of course so many of them were a combination, an unselfish civic-minded visionary really devoted to the good of the city as a whole and the county as a whole in Fletcher’s case and on the other hand you know, shrewd business man George Marston called him the Prince of Promoters. He knew a good thing when he saw it, he knew how to make a good deal and he was an investor who certainly made money out of these projects himself. He had as we’ve mentioned earlier this tremendous amount of energy and along with it went this enthusiasm this optimism this belief not only in his own projects but certainly in the future of the City. Fletcher, this land and water developer came here to San Diego as a virtually penniless youth in around 1889 and became a millionaire a huge property owner. This is a set from the Horatio Alger story you know, of how you can rise from rags to riches if you work hard and keep your eye on the ball and you know what you are looking for. And I think his experiences and at that very early time of
riding through the back country either on his bicycle or horse and buggy when he saw the sources of the water and realized that water was crucial to the development of the area and he also was a shrewd enough businessman to reason that whoever owned the watershed was going to someday be a wealthy man. So over a period of years he acquired control of most of the watershed land that bordered these various rivers San Luis Rey, San Dieguito, San Diego. In an epic legal battle that lasted throughout the 1920's the City of San Diego as we heard, finally achieved a court determination that awarded the city the paramount right to the water of the San Diego River although the other companies still exercise their right to a certain amount of the water that comes from the river. Fletcher of course still owned the land you see that bordered on those areas and was able to make a fortune in subdividing and selling off that land. I made a list and I'm sure that it isn't even complete but I've made a list of some of the major things that Ed Fletcher was involved in developing all within a period of about 25 years, that is from about 1905 until roughly 1930 and then of course the Great Depression put an end to most kinds of development.

He either developed himself or was very active in the development of you know, using other people, investors and so on and so forth the following communities: Pine Hill, Warner Hot Springs, Del Mar, Solana Bead, Rancho Santa Fe, Grossmont, Mt. Helix, and of course Fletcher Hills. And I must say that one of the things that impressed me too about driving through many of those areas is that Fletcher knew how to plan roads well so that you don't just have this repetitive unimaginative arid pattern that characterizes so many other early subdivisions. It's what Alonzo Horton used for downtown San Diego for example. Fletcher, whether he figured this out on his own or whether it was as a result of the contact that he had with John Knowland the urban planner, because Knowland and Marston and Fletcher often went into the back country together and perhaps it was through that association that Fletcher acquired this kind of interest in laying out attractive contour roads so that the topography would be respected and it makes the subdivisions much more interesting.

Its also remarkable I think that his political career didn't really begin until he was 62 years old and rather surprising that here he was a Republican running during the 1930's when the era of Franklin Roosevelt, the New Deal and the democrats were of course the most popular party at that time and yet Fletcher was able to win elections four different times and in one of those campaigns he was elected in the primaries winning the primary election of not only the Republican and Democratic parties but the prohibition and the socialist parties as well. For the next 12 years he served in the California Senate and his most noteworthy contributions there I think were of course the Legislation in connection with water and his development his legislation that made it possible for San Diego to develop Mission Bay.
One other thing that he did which is not well known is that he established the first state race relations Commission in the United States while he was serving in the California Senate and he worked with Dennis Allen who was a black postman in San Diego. Dennis Allen had founded the race relations Society in SD in the 1920’s and constantly worked to try to make it easier for blacks to get jobs in San Diego. And Fletcher worked with Dennis Allen during the early 1940’s to help open up jobs for blacks at Convair because the management at Convair had made it very clear that they were not really interested in hiring blacks so it took a big effort in order to bring this about and this is as I say one of the lesser known things that Fletcher was involved with. But I think it tells us something about the total kind of involvement that he had with so many different projects.

(PH): Dr. Claire Crane San Diego Historian and Chief Historical Consultant for this series of programs on local history. Our next program is the last biography of the twelve. Its the story of a man whose accomplishments can be appreciated by every San Diegan. George Marston was a successful businessman with a keen interest in the community. The physical splendor of this city our landscaped parks, the Serra Museum, Presidio Hill, the efforts of planning the city that have allowed it to retain so much of its natural beauty. These are in large part the legacy of George Marston. His life is the subject of the next program in the series Twelve Who Shaped San Diego.

Twelve Who Shaped San Diego is a series of radio programs on local history. Biographies of twelve great men and women who have left their mark on today’s San Diego. The programs are heard Tuesday afternoons at 12:30 with a repeat broadcast Wednesday evenings at 8:00. A resource packet is available with the programs send $2.00 to KPBS-FM San Diego, California 92182 and ask for the history resource packet. We’d also like to hear any comments you might have about this series. That address again is KPBS-FM, San Diego, California 92182. I’m Peter Hamlin series producer thanking you for joining us. Twelve Who Shaped San Diego is a production of public radio station KPBS-FM and is made possible by a grant by the National Endowment of Humanities.