"Twelve Who Shaped San Diego"

"Twelve Who Shaped San Diego" 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.

In San Diego, planning was always of deep concern and interest to the residents of this community. And we have been able through the leadership of not only some of our pioneers but people who have followed them to be able to preserve the unique quality of this area, and I think that George W. Marston may have set the tempo for the entire region.

Peter Hamlin (PH): George Marston came to San Diego as a young man. He established himself in business and became one of the leading businessmen in the rapidly growing city. Throughout his life he maintained an interest in the proper planning of the community. His legacy includes many of the beautiful parks which are so important to our present-day city. The life of George Marston is the subject of this twelfth program in the series "Twelve Who Shaped San Diego." My name is Peter Hamlin and joining me is San Diego Historian Dr. Claire Crane. And Claire, I would like to start by asking you about George Marston's importance. What were some of the things of particular importance that he contributed to San Diego?

(CC): Well, certainly Marston should be remembered for what he did for the parks in San Diego. Presidio Park and the Serra Museum for example, are his total gift to the city. But he was active also in the development of Balboa Park and he played a part in the 1915 exposition which did so much to develop the buildings in Balboa Park. And he gave the nucleus of several hundred acres for the Anza Borrego State Park over in the desert. But more important I think, was his vision of overall urban planning for San Diego. George Marston brought John Nolen to San Diego first in 1908. Nolen was an eminent urban planner and landscape architect and he provided the very first comprehensive city plan that San Diego ever had, and then he was invited to come back in 1926. The Nolen plan that was drawn up then really formed the basis for our present development. So in these ways Marston's mark on San Diego has been very great. Parks and Planning also the road system because he was interested in the development of roads that were convenient routes with attractive vistas. So all of these things are really George Marston's legacy to us.

(PH): In the biographical format of the program I would like to start by asking how he came to San Diego. Why did he come here?

(CC): Oh, he came to San Diego as did so many people because of its marvelous climate and reputed healthful environment. His
father was asthmatic and the Marston family, first of all George and his father came to San Diego in 1870. They had lived in Wisconsin and they knew Alonzo Horton there and so it was natural when thinking about coming to the west coast that they would come to San Diego because of Horton. And as a matter of fact George Marston’s first job in San Diego was as a clerk in the Horton House. He was then a young man of about 20 years old.

(HE): We spoke with George Marston’s daughters about those early days and about his early impressions of San Diego. We hear first from Mrs. Elizabeth Bade and then Ms. Mary Marston.

(EB): He loved the city. He thought it was beautiful — the bay and the climate after Wisconsin winters. He lived at the Horton House with his father the first winter and he got a job as a clerk in the Horton House. He enjoyed it, the characters that were there, the Spanish people. There was a women who didn’t pay her bills for the whole time.

(MM): And it was my father’s job to tell this Spanish lady that she would have to leave if she didn’t pay for her keep. As she came down the stairs she saw father in the office and she turned on him and said you are nothing but a worm.

(HP): Soon after those colorful first days in San Diego young George Marston began to pursue a career in business. Now here the story is picked up by George Marston’s grandson Hamilton Marston.

(HM): He started in the dry goods business as a clerk for a man named Joseph Nash who had begun a store in Hortons addition in its very earliest period. When Nash sold the business in 1873, my grandfather and Charles Hamilton, who was later to become his brother in law, were two clerks working for Nash, and they bought him out. They operated the business as Hamilton and Marston until 1878 when they separated the business. Hamilton took the groceries and the hardware of a general store operation and my grandfather took the dry goods. My grandfather then managed the Marston dry goods business very closely and energetically for a number of years. It was a period of growth in general except for the brief period after the collapse, after the great boom of the 80’s. A period of strong growth in the Southwest in San Diego, and my grandfather’s management of the business was adroit. He was a man who wanted to have the business expand with the city and to do a very good kind of business and he did. The business went ahead in a very strong way under my grandfather’s management. I think my grandfather’s relationships with the community and with his employees were on the very highest level. On a level that I’m sure was also achieved in many other businesses in that period. That was a period when in the United States there was a growth in the size and complexity of business and I’m sure that many of the personnel policies that we take very much for granted today were growing up and were really a matter of initiation and experiment.
And I think my grandfather had a roll as strong as anybody else may of had in the development of thoughtful and considerate personnel policies.

(PH): And evidence of those considerate personnel policies can be found in a group called the Marstonites, comprised of former employees of George Marston's store. Mrs. Mercedes Bun got the idea in 1969 and the group has been meeting ever since. In fact, Mrs. Bun has been keeping a large scrapbook with pictures, newspaper clippings, and other memorabilia from the days when she worked for George Marston.

(MB): We put some of our ads here which you can see. The feature news--Mary Marston is at $5 and they were gorgeous hats and our beautiful winter coats. The highest price we have here in this ad is $135 which you couldn't even touch now. And shoes a four day sale at $5. Hosiery at .68 cents. It's unbelievable when see that and you wonder what are we doing now. This again is one of the times in the early spring of the year we had tulips all throughout the store. They were just gorgeous.

(PH): Mercedes Bun has fond memories of her days with Marston's and her boss George Marston.

(MB): At Christmas time he always would have a large Christmas tree by the door through which we were to leave and he would always hand us a box of chocolates. He tried to have some sort of entertainment for us a, singer or whatever. He was there and he would shake hands with every one of us as we went out. That's why I said to you awhile ago that we felt like one large family, we just felt so at home. He was a person so down to earth he treated us all like real human beings. He was interested in our lives. He did so many things for everybody. You know if they were ill he would try to help them. That's why I say that everyone loved him.

(PH): This year is a very special one for the Marstonites they are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Marston store. George Marston's business changed its size and location as it grew. In its heyday it stood at C Street between 5th and 6th downtown. Mrs. Bun remembers it as a store with a nationwide reputation.

(MB): It was an expensive store, it was the elite store of the city. At that time no one would think of walking into Marston's without gloves and a hat on, you know what I mean, you just felt that way. But at the time that I worked it was that way it was the most elegant the most elite store, the best store in the world.

(PH): Mercedes Bun, a former employee of Marston's and a founder of a group of fellow Marston employees who called themselves the Marstonites. Claire, what about that store could you tell us a little more about.
Well, I think certainly it is significant that a store which is no longer in existence has such an active group celebrating this year the 100th anniversary of the founding of this store. That tells you something about what it meant to the people who worked there. Also, it was a real social center in San Diego. It was the heart of downtown, this was before there were suburban shopping centers and things like that. So when people went downtown Marston's was the place to go to shop and also to have lunch. Many people would go downtown, sort of make a day of it. Go shop at Marston's, have lunch meet their friends there. It was a real social center of San Diego.

One other aspect of George Marston's career aside from business is his political career or let's say his attempt to become mayor of the City of San Diego. Claire, I would like to ask you about George Marston's entrance into politics what got him interested in running for mayor in the first place?

He evidently was drafted. He was asked to run because he was over 60 years old at this time, and he had never played an active role in politics in the sense of running for office. He had served on many boards and commissions and had been active in that sense. But this was the first time that he had ever run for office. And a group of civic minded people came to him -- several groups as a matter of fact. There was a women's group and there were downtown businessmen's groups. They asked him if he would run in 1913 because they knew that the mayor would be the official host of the exposition that was going to open in 1915 and they thought that George Marston would be the very best person to be that official host. That is why he allowed his name to be put up for mayor in 1913. Of course, he was also interested in trying to implement the concepts of urban planning and park development that he had for so long been interested in, like the city beautiful movement. This was something that started around the turn of the century as a result of the exposition in Chicago in 1893. One of the outstanding things about that exposition was the comprehensive plan of the exposition buildings themselves, the way the circulation was worked out and the siting in location in landscaping of the buildings. That image, the white city and the city beautiful movement were important in the early part of the 20th century in stimulating urban planning and aesthetic considerations all over the United States. Marston's role in San Diego is a very very good example of that and his bringing of John Nolen to San Diego in 1908 and then the concepts of developing a civic center downtown which didn't get off the ground and the overall planning of San Diego and the park development. These were things that he wanted to attempt to implement.

Wasn't there a progressive political movement at the time as well? We've spoken about this in earlier programs.

Yes, that was an important part too, I think, of the
background. One of the important themes in the progressive movement really was to clean up politics, reorganize city governments throughout the United States and eliminate things like special interests, and to take a much more rational approach to things like planning and transportation. So this fitted right in with Marston's own aesthetic interests.

(PH): The catch phrase for that mayoral election is a very famous one in San Diego history: smokestacks vs. geraniums.

(CC): Yes, actually that phrase was used as a campaign slogan in the 1917 election when Marston ran again. He lost in the first election in 1913, he lost again in 1917 to Louis Wilde who either coined that phrase or at least allowed it to be used in conjunction with the campaign while presenting himself as the candidate who was going to bring smokestacks, industry jobs, development to San Diego and tagging George Marston as geranium George who was only interested in planting flowers in the parks. The election really was fairly close. Marston attempted to disassociate himself from the vision that all he wanted to do was to plant flowers. He said of course I'm interested in comprehensive urban planning, and industry is very important but Wilds was successful in presenting himself as the candidate who really was going to bring more jobs and industry to San Diego.

(PH): From his grandfather's accounts of that campaign Hamilton Marston explains what happened.

(HM): I think that my grandfather's defeat in the two elections, in the 1913 - 1917 period may well have been due largely to a tactual situation rather than one of long term strategy and city planning. The opposition in that period were able to fasten on the people who asboused in favor of long term planning for the community. This included major commercial interests as well as the people who might be considered environmentalists at the present time by making the point that they were an elitist group. The newspaper headlines of that period refer to them as a silk stocking elitist wealthy group that had ideas of charm and for gardens and that kind of thing. It was a clever tactic by which the people who's interest included the long term commercial interest of the community categorized by the opposition as an elitist group of unrealistic do-gooders. The people who coined the phrase geraniums or smokestacks gave the impression that this economically orientated group of people with a long-term interest in the economic development of the community were actually the geranium growers while the group that had the strong appeal to short-term quick economic realization called themselves the smokestack faction.

(PH): Claire, let me ask you how many smokestacks did Louis Wilde bring to San Diego after he was elected. Did he really bring a lot of jobs here?
Well, actually it wasn’t because of Wilds that San Diego’s economy picked up, but because of World War I. This broke out in 1917 and so San Diego became the beneficiary of the increased naval development and construction and other defense expenditures for the next few years. Wild was a very dynamic aggressive promoter and he was full of ideas, many of them very far out about how to develop San Diego’s economy. A couple of the really kooky ideas included his promotion of an oil well drilling scheme on Kearney Mesa called the Jazz Cat Oil Well, and the development of silkworm culture in the South Bay area. Needless to say neither one of these really produced anything and didn’t bring any smokestacks to San Diego, and Wild was very disappointed in San Diego’s apparent lethargy. And so when he finished his term as mayor in 1921 he went to Los Angeles and he left San Diego with this angry statement which was quoted in the newspapers. He said "Los Angeles is full of youth, vision, imagination, optimism, curiosity, boosters and brains. San Diego is full of old tight wads, pessimists and vacillating visionary dreamers."

The loser in the election George Marston was interested in the idea of planning and of course that was one issue in the campaign. And in particular when we talk about planning we talk about the Nolen Plan. I wanted to ask you if you could talk a little more about that: was the plan ever adopted by the city and in what form was it adopted, and what kinds of impacts has it had on the present look of San Diego?

The Nolen Plan or plans, we really should say, have had a great impact on San Diego. There were two plans, the first one in 1908 was not very detailed not very comprehensive. It was more in the form of suggestions, and Nolen for example in that plan emphasized the development of the waterfront area. He thought that San Diego should utilize this in the way that some European cities had done and put civic buildings, cultural facilities and so on along the waterfront. Another of the things that he recommended very very strongly in that 1908 plan was the development of an attractive and comprehensive road system that would join together a whole series of parks. Nolen thought that Balboa Park -- it was still called City Park in those days and hadn’t really had much in the way of development or planning at all -- he thought that that was a great big piece of land that someday could be developed but he advocated putting smaller parks, many parks throughout the city. He felt that they would form breathing spaces in what eventually he knew would become a crowded urban development, and he thought that these could all be joined together by handsome roadways. It was just the beginning of the automobile age. So I think that the emphasis on the waterfront on our road system and on the development of parks, not only Balboa Park but of many parks that these are part of the legacy of the early 1908 Nolen Plan. Then he was invited to come back to San Diego in 1926 and at that time the plan that he drew up was more detailed. For example he advocated certain specific uses of the waterfront. He suggested that the
airport be located there on the waterfront that the Marine Corp Recruit Depo and Naval Training Center be increased and added to and that the commercial and industrial development of the waterfront all be south below market street as it were and that recreational and civic uses be concentrated in the present embarcadero area. The location of what is now the County Administration Building for example, this was part of Nolen’s concept that there should be a whole grouping of civic buildings right there on the waterfront in the most attractive spot. And the County administration Building is there as part of that plan but other buildings were not grouped around it. The other thing that was an important part of that 1926 Nolen Plan was the joining together of Balboa Park and the waterfront with a great paseo, a mall, and this was brought up time and again in elections. The Cedar Street Mall, the Date Street Mall depending on where it was going to be located. Unfortunately there were never quite enough voters to pass the bonds that would have made it possible.

(PH): So it was sort of a mixed impact. Some of the things have carried over and other things have been lost to history as plans that never quite made it.

(CC): Yes, but I think that the overall concept of having a comprehensive urban plan would include a good circulation, transportation system many parks, and emphasis on aesthetic as well as industrial and commercial development. These are the legacies of the Nolen Plan.

(PH): Another civic project in which George Marston became interested was the public library. Marston had himself never finished his formal education. He learned from books and it was this love of reading that may have spurred his interest in the idea of a free library for the City of San Diego. We turn once again to his daughter Ms. Mary Marston.

(MM):...were readers, his mother read, his father read and they read good books, and I remember somebody saying that he always liked to talked to Mr. Marston (that’s our grandfather) because he had such a cultivated mind. Well, my grandfather began going to work at 14 and never went to school after that and educated himself entirely by reading.

(PG): And Rhoda Cruz who is a senior librarian at the San Diego Public Library points out that George Marston played a most important role in the development of the library.

(RC): Yes, he most certainly did. He was one of the founders of the free public library. And of the free reading room which preceded it and at various times he served as a trustee. Whenever shall I say hit his name in research, I’m just fascinated he was a man of such wide interests. When I was looking forward to talking with you, and going through some of the books we have about him
some of the things I have pulled out here tell of his interest in the library in general. There's one thing where he argued for the placing of the library on the site where it is now. He tried desperately to get the whole block for the library to push that idea and unfortunately was not successful. But when George Marston was pleading for this site he felt it was the choicest site available for the library and he said so and he urged it. I mean he was a man with a strength of his convictions.

(PH): Among George Marston's most visible contributions today are many parks in San Diego County. Naturally an interest in parks would be a vital part of Marston's notions of city planning and his daughter Mary Marston says another reason was his own great love of nature.

(MM): I think he himself was just so fond of the outdoors and loved beautiful parks. Whenever he went to a city he always went to see the park and whenever he took me to New York City he always took me on a ride immediately in Central Park and he was interested in Central Park in New York and in the park in San Francisco and he just thought that parks were very beautiful and necessary and an integral part of the city.

(PH): Claire, what role did George Marston play in the development of Balboa Park?

(CC): Marston was chairman of the Park Committee in 1902 and there had been practically no development of what was still called City Park at that time. Julius Wangenheim tells in his reminiscences of taking an English friend on a tour around San Diego and he took him to see City Park and the Englishman was shocked to see that there was virtually no development in this huge area, 1,400 acres and practically no trees, no roads. So Wangenheim thought that there ought to be a committee, and under the Chamber of Commerce then they set up this park committee. This was long before the city government itself took on the responsibility and in those days it was all private citizens, most of them working through organizations like the Chamber of Commerce and not only did they promote ideas but they provided all the funds. George Marston brought Samuel Parsons from New York. Parsons had been one of the major planners of Central Park and other parks in New York. He brought him to San Diego at his own expense in 1902 and Parsons made the first general approach to the planning of what we now call Balboa Park. He decided where some of the major roads should be and he also believed that any kind of development of buildings should occur only at the edges of the park. Parsons and George Marston went along with him as did many other people who felt that there shouldn't be any development in the center of the park. So actually when the exposition came in 1915 and in fact the major architect Bertram Goodhue felt the development should take place right in the middle of the park that there should be this beautiful wall of Spanish city by a bridge over the canyon and so on, Marston
was not in favor of that, and the other landscape architects by then the Olmstead Brothers were not in favor of it either. The Olmsteads actually resigned which George Marston went off on a trip to Europe but when he came back he accepted the fact that this was the decision to place the buildings in the center of the park. Then in his great humanity went along with it and raised money and you know, worked hard to make the exhibition a success. But I think one of the first things that he did, not only with money and the bringing of Samuel Parsons to make these plans for the development of the park, but he actually went out himself and worked at the southwestern corner of Balboa Park right near, oh just about the intersection of Sixth and about Date Street. Some of the biggest and oldest trees are there because they were planted in that very early part of the 20th century. In 1924 that area was named Marston Point. It has a stunning view of downtown San Diego, and of course these lovely trees, and its a fitting memorial to George Marston.

(PH): George Marston was also instrumental in the development of the Anza Borrego Desert State Park.

(MM): What he did was to persuade people to sell their land to the State for a park and I know he was years and years working on one woman who held some very strategic land for the park. She didn’t want to sell but she finally was persuaded by father to sell.

(PH): In terms of his own individual effort probably George Marston’s greatest accomplishment for a park development is Presidio Park and the Serra Museum. The project required a tremendous investment in both money and patience for it was a long time before the Serra Museum and Presidio Park were finally dedicated as the beautiful and historic area familiar to San Diegans today.

(MM): He was interested especially in the preserving the most important historical spot in California.

(PH): Fearing that development in the area would not move along the lines of a historic park dedicated to California’s birthplace, Marston and a few others acquired the property. Marston was the only one with the continuing interest in the idea, and he soon bought out the others.

(MM): So he commenced working on a plan for a park. It was very largely his idea the way it was developed but he did have help from Mr. Nolen and from Mr. Horit and from other landscape men. Mr. Carmel of Los Angeles. Every now and then, whenever he would take a new step in the development, he would ask advice. But a great deal of it was his plan and he was very fond of it. I think it was Mr. Nolen who suggested that there should be something very definite at the top of the hill where the Presidio really stood and
he said you might have a building. It could be a museum or just a building for some purpose and that rather pleased Father. He had William Templeton Johnson draw up plans for it. Well, Father had very definite ideas of what it should look like and he changed the plans and he got Mr. Johnson to make it according to his idea how it should be.

(PH): It was 1929 when the Serra Museum was dedicated. Claire, was there any significance to the date that the dedication ceremony actually occurred?

(CC): Yes, of course, it was very carefully chosen. The dedication was held on the 16th of July in 1929. It was the 160th anniversary of the founding of San Diego as a settlement and, of course, the founding of the very first European, the first Spanish settlement in California. The 16th of July was the historic date on which Father Serra said the first mass in that location on Presidio Hill. Of course the actual expedition to San Diego had arrived somewhat earlier. They came by sea as well as by land and they had drifted in, but the 16th of July was the date when the survivors got together and Father Serra said mass and dedicated the site and so it is still celebrated as San Diego’s official birthday.

(PH): Now that celebration on July 16, 1929 drew great crowds to see the new San Diego landmark and to pay tribute to George Marston. Zelma Locker is an author and she’s also a retired city librarian. She was here in San Diego to attend the dedication the Serra Museum.

(ZL): Yes, I was there I didn’t live in San Diego at that time but most of the rest of my family did. They had come out here from the midwest and that hysteria of the 1920’s when all of Iowa was moving to California and the current joke was "whats the capital of Iowa? Long Beach." Well I came here in 1931. I was visiting my family at the time. My mother didn’t drive, and my father had a new Olds. My car back in Iowa was an old Model T Ford so I loved to drive my father’s car and we took in many things and I was interested in California history even then as far as that was concerned. So, we were there for the afternoon. The festivities were a day-long affair—there was a mass in the morning a band concert at noon and then the dedications, speeches, pageants so on in the afternoon. And it was a very oh, there were fireworks at night to. They called it illuminations I think at that time. It was a very hot day; if you get together two people who were there on that day in 1929 the first thing that would be said was do you remember how hot it was? And they had erected some seating there on the Serra Museum grounds but most of us sat on the ground. The newspapers afterwards said there were 10 to 12,000 people present and they were concentrated in that space between the Museum and the drive down below it and then on the hillside up above to the left if you’re standing up on the Museum arcade. There were photographs
taken at that time too. Mr. Marston, George Marston said a few words. He was very retiring man; he never liked to talk about himself. It's interesting to note that there was no planting on Presidio Hill at that time. The photographs showed up as bare hills—no trees; well the ones there had been some trees just set out but they were just tiny things that were not visible in a photograph. They certainly didn't dominate the place as the plannings do today and if you look in the photographs across Mission Valley to the place where Alcalar Park is now and a little further east of that to Linda Vista, those are just brown bare hills that show up in the photograph just gently curving lines against the horizon and it's hard for us to realize that today.

(Ph): Zelma Locker also remembers meeting George Marston at that ceremony.

(ZL): He was a very retiring man a very modest man. Of course we know from the things that he did that he was a man of great vision and a man of great historic interest. He could anticipate that those historic sites should be left and preserved even though there were some people who didn't want the park at the time and in the years immediately afterwards. I have tremendous respect for him.

(Ph): The Serra Museum atop Presidio Hill is actually so impressive that many people mistake it for something else.

(ZL): Interestingly enough, and sadly enough, there are many people living in San Diego today who think that's the old mission. I've heard it over and over again, and of course in the California Room I had to disillusion people many times on that score. But it was so well done as such a faithful reproduction of mission style. That's why people think that.

(Ph): Zelma Locker, author and former head Librarian of the California Room at the San Diego Public Library. Of course a man like George Marston who was so prominent in community affairs is remembered by a large number of people. Orien W. Todd Jr. who spent his entire business career here in San Diego recalls serving on the YMCA board at the same time as George Marston.

(OT): I remember him as the president of the board of directors on which I served. He was a very imposing man, he wore a high collar and I think probably among the greatest things that you’ve got to say about George Marston besides a great humanitarian that he was, at the age of 90 he just was a very independent individual in his own right. He was having a doctor check on him here but the doctor told me he had to go to Los Angeles to another doctor and it all turned out later to become a game, he wanted to ice skate and they wouldn’t let him ice skate down here at the little ice rink we had because of his age so he went to the doctor in Los Angeles and they found out later that he wasn’t going to any doctor in Los Angeles he was going up there to ice skate. They weren’t going to take him
away his chance to ice skate and he was in his 90’s. And so this was the other side of him.

He also was outgoing (unable to understand) anything good for San Diego he was right in there pitching. And his store--some giant stores in the nation some of them still exist like Marshall Fields in Chicago, like Neiman Marcus in Texas. Well, everybody in the United States knew George Marston and the Marston company and it had the highest respect there never was a finer department store anywhere in the United States.

(PH): Orien W. Todd Jr. People remember different things about George Marston from the point of view of personal recollections and also a chronicle of Marston’s achievements, we’re most fortunate to have a two-volume biography written by his daughter Ms. Mary Marston. It’s called George White Marston: A Family Chronicle and its available in area libraries. The two books contain a full account of his life and a vivid portrait of an important San Diegan. Ms. Marston shares with us now a few memories of what her father was like.

(MM): He was very religious. He was rather strict in some ways with his children. He brought us up carefully and yet he was so full of fun and humor that he? overly serious. He was fond of going to the Sunday school and being the superintendent. He enjoyed it. He enjoyed the children and doing things for them and with them. Even Boris said we liked to go to Sunday school because Mr. Marston was the superintendent.

(PH): We eluded earlier to George Marston’s love of ice skating. He had interest and ability in many other sports as well.

(MM): As he got older he became very much interested in playing golf; after he was 70 he played golf every Saturday afternoon. And he was a very good player. He was a good baseball player when he was a young man and he was good at any sport that he took up and he was very good at golf. Oh yes he loved to swim and he swam races on New Years Day in that cold water until the doctor told him he must not do it anymore. He was getting too old for that. So he stopped. He skated from the time he was a boy and there was a Frenchman who came down from Canada who taught him fancy skating when he lived in Wisconsin. And of course he hadn’t skated from the time he was well anyway 18 until he came to San Diego until the exposition put a little rink in San Diego and he began to skate there. And he said that some gentleman came up to him and said wouldn’t you like to have us; we’ll take you around the rink Mr. Marston wouldn’t you like to have us; And Father said why that would be very nice. He started off with them and then he said just let me go by myself and off he went sailing around cutting figure 8’s, you know and all sorts of things astonishing these two men who had offered to help him.
(PH): Well there is yet another of his interests that his daughter remembers and that was his love of music.

(MM): He was very fond of music and music rested him very much. After lunch he would go to the piano, sit down play and sing a little. He would sing Spanish songs he was very fond of them and negro spirituals and even children songs—Mother Goose songs. He just relaxed that way and had a good time for a 1/2 an hour and then he would be ready to go back to the store and his work. He had a very good baritone voice but he could sing tenor and he had a beautiful touch on the piano although he had had very few lessons but he just he was a natural player.

(PH): In the area of music George Marston was particularly fond of the songs of Sir Harry Lauder you may have come across some of these in the old 78’s in the attic. Its easy to understand why a man with George Marstons good nature humor would be attracted to songs like this.

(MM): When Harry Lauder came to San Diego my father was entranced by his magnetism of songs. Father got a great many of his songs and practiced them with the aid of a Scotch maid we had to tell him how to pronounce some of the words and he used to sing them and he did it so well that people begged him to do it. So he had a costume made they were very interested at the Marstons’ store on making him a proper costume of kilts which he wore when he gave these songs. One of his favorites was "Oh I Loved to lie in bed on a Sunday morning" which was something he never had done himself but he made it sound very real. And another was "Roaming in the Gloamin'" and I don’t remember other names but he had a least a half-a-dozen or perhaps a dozen of them and he sang them and his brother-in-law Mr. Hamilton said we thought he did it better then Harry Lauder himself.

(PH): Well we’ve had a chance to examine a few of George Marston’s individual achievements and we’ve had a look at the personality behind. As we conclude our program we’re going to take a broader view of the context of these accomplishments in the development of San Diego. Lee Grissom, the Executive Vice President of San Diego Chamber of Commerce says that one important part of San Diego’s history that sets us apart from any other city is the fact that our planning efforts go clear back to the beginning of the 20th century, in large part the result of Marston’s interest in the subject.

(LG): And San Diego planning was always of deep concern and interest to the residents of this community and we have been able, through the leadership of some of our pioneers—but people have followed then—to be able to preserve the quality of this area and I think that George W. Marston may have set the tempo for the entire region. His work with the Chamber, not only his presidency of the Chamber on two different occasions, but also his work on
the Park Committee led directly to the decision to bring John Nolen to San Diego and to do what was called the Nolen Plan. The Nolen Plan kind of served as a precursor and opportunity for the later Chamber presidents to draw from it and to start talking about things like the Panama Exhibition in 1915 and 16 but I would have to say that George Marston was a prominent planner not only in terms of his dedication while he was active in the community but also because the concepts that he planted as a seed in the community that have continued to develop. Obviously things like some of the Balboa Park projects, but I would have to include the Serra Museum and Presidio Park and just the deep interest that this community has in that subject. If I’m not mistaken there are 35 parks in San Diego that have a direct lineage back to the Marston Plan. They include Mt. Soledad, the Kate Sessions Park is a site that was originally envisioned, Torrey Pines, La Jolla, just a number of them.

(PH): The legacy of George Marston also extends to his family, all of whom have followed in his footsteps in making important contributions to San Diego. Lee Grissom begins by talking about his son, Arthur Marston.

(LG): His activities with the Chamber centered on the development of water which of course in an arid region such as San Diego exists... the population mass we now have and the quality of life we enjoy simply wouldn’t have been possible without that dedicated service. Its just incredible what Arthur Marston was able to do in leadership in that area. You hear alot about Phil Swing or you hear a lot about Heilburns and Ed Fletcher, but the tremendous dedication of Arthur Marston was very important as well.

(PH): It was mentioned in a previous program that it was George Marston’s daughter Mary and grandson Hamilton who offered money for the support of a new study of the San Diego region. The Lynch-Appleyard report called Temporary Paradise? is in a real sense a successor to that first Nolen Plan.

(LG): The things that were important to me in that report was recognition that we truly are an international region enjoying both common opportunities and common problems with our colleagues in Tijuana and we really hadn’t looked at that or perhaps had overlooked the opportunities that we have and particularly the opportunity to come together and serve as a truly remarkable region in this world. We have the opportunity, I think, move towards the end of the century into the next one to become an international city almost unparalleled and with two cultures but working together. I think that’s important and that was brought out in the Temporary Paradise? report. Also the fact that some of our architectural styles like Cape Cod, as an example, or Georgian as some of these things had been transplanted into San Diego but we really turned our backs on the unique architectural opportunities and materials that exist in this area and I think Kevin Lynch in
particular was very articulate in bringing that out. Some of our very great architects like Irving Gill as, an example, recognized the use of native materials. But later generations have turned away from that particularly as we’ve become a community of newcomers or transplanted residents and we’ve brought the things from our previous location to San Diego. Its an effort that we do need at least intellectually to look at the unique aspects of this region and to develop architectural styles compatible to that. But there were a number of other things in Temporary Paradise?—that recognition that San Diego is innerlaced by a series of canyons; those are unique topographical areas and should really be preserved without question. The opportunity that San Diego has with the innerface between the water and the land, the fact that we haven’t exploited that in the best sense of that term to the advantage of the community. And so all those I thought made Temporary Paradise? a very important cornerstone for rethinking the city planning in this area and therefore it is the latest example of the legacy of the Marston family to the sensible planning of this region.

(ph): Claire, I think its very interesting that the daughter and grandson of George Marston have been responsible for sponsoring that, in a sense, the successor to the first Nolen Plan and I wanted to ask you a little bit more about the Lynch report. We asked earlier what the effect of the Nolen Plan had been on San Diego and I’d like to ask you a little bit about the Lynch Apple report in the same light. What have they said and what effect have they had or do you think they will have?

(CC): The Lynch Appleyard report which came out in 1974 pointed out many of the things that Lee Grissom mentioned emphasizing the fact that we have some unique geographic features and vistas and that it’s very important that we take account of these and that we attempt to preserve them. As a matter of fact they called their report Temporary Paradise? and put a question mark at the end of that title because they wanted really to warn us that unless we do something about planning and about implementing the plans that we may lose some of these things, we may lose this paradise. You know it would only be temporary. The old issue of smokestacks vs. geraniums really comes up again currently in this controversy over industrial development vs. the environment and its the same kind of false issue when its polarized that way. As our present mayor Pete Wilson says you can’t have one without the other—the kind of high technology industry that we want, the kind of corporate headquarters and research and development firms that we want to come and locate in San Diego. These firms are attracted by the kind of environment that preserves air quality of parks and beaches and so on so we really need to develop both of these at the same time. The Lynch Appleyard report has provided the philosophical background for San Diego’s managed residential growth program and it has also directed a lot of public attention onto alternative uses for the land right around San Diego Bay. Does the airport need to be there? Does the Marine Base need to be there and so on and so
forth. They raise these questions and brought them to public opinion.

(PH): In conclusion I’d like to ask you to make a few remarks about George Marston and the importance that he has had on San Diego. We’ve had a look at a few of the things that he has done. What would you say to conclude the program about these many incredible achievements that George Marston has been responsible for?

(CCl): The first thing that really comes to my mind is the great humanity of George Marston. When I first began to learn about Marston he seemed unapproachable—in many ways a great civic benefactor, certainly somebody who did important things but somehow he seemed rather aloof and formal when I just knew about some of the things that he had done. But then as I began to learn more, and I hear some of these delightful recollections about him from people who knew him and I realized not only was he an important civic benefactor and a man of, I think, really great vision for what this area could become, but he was also a man with a charming sense of humor and a great zest for life and that was certainly illustrated, I think, in the stories about his love of ice skating you know that he continued to ice skate up into his 90’s. He had a great deal of warmth and compassion and genuine interest in a great many people. These kinds of qualities came out in the relationship that he had with his employees at the store, for example, and I think these qualities underlie his civic activities in promoting park development and comprehensive urban planning and the Public Library.

It was because Marston truly enjoyed people, and he sought to provide a beautiful environment in which the greatest number of people could enjoy themselves, that I think we should pay tribute to him. Of all the many things that George Marston was involved in certainly Presidio Park personifies his most important legacy to all of us because of his role in assembling this land, 30 or 40 acres, really providing a master plan for its layout designed by John Nolen and providing the handsome mission style museum building designed by Templeton Johnson in which the San Diego Historical Society has its offices and exhibits. When Marston dedicated the Museum he referred to the area as Plymouth Rock of the Pacific. He felt that this was as important a location to represent our Hispanic and Roman Catholic heritage although Marston was not a Roman Catholic, but he felt that this location represented the same kind of important historic and cultural legacy to the United States Plymouth Rock with it Protestant, Anglo Saxon immigrant tradition on the east coast. The total achievement, this marvelous development of Presidio Park, took George Marston about 1/4 of a century and probably about 1 million dollars and it symbolizes so many things that were important about him—his love of the outdoors, his trees and his plants, and his interest in our Hispanic heritage, his interest in the preservation interpretation
of history. And his desire that his area should be developed and
given to the public. When he gave this marvelous gift to the city
having spent so much time and money, all the landscaping, the roads
and buildings constructed, and he gave it to the city in 1929. The
city, because of the Depression in the following year was unable
to pick up the bills for maintenance and so until 1940 George
Marston continued to pay for all of the maintenance and upkeep of
Presidio Park which he had already donated. It's a beautiful
symbol I think of one man's vision and dedication and civic spirit,
and its a handsome visual reminder to all of us that San Diego is
indeed the place where California began.

(PM): Dr. Claire Crane, San Diego Historian and chief historical
consultant for this series of programs on local history. With our
program on George Marston we bring to a close our series of
biographical studies of twelve men and women who were important to
the history of this city and we have brought the chronological
history up to World War II. Next week in our final program we'll
be speaking with two San Diegans who have been close observers of
the history San Diego from the 1940's to the present. Our guests
will be Neil Morgan, columnist for the Evening Tribune and author
of many books on San Diego, and Harold Keen, channel 8 newsmen and
reporter for San Diego Magazine. We hope you can join us for the
final 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. A resource packet is available
with the series. Send 2 dollars to KPBS-FM, San Diego, CA 92182
and ask for the San Diego History Resource packet. We also look
forward to any comments you might have about the series. The
address again is KPBS-FM San Diego, California 92182. "Twelve Who
Shaped San Diego" is heard Tuesday afternoons 12:30 with a repeat
broadcast Wednesday evenings at 8:00. I'm Peter Hamlin series
producer thanking you for joining us. The program is a production
of public radio station KPBS-FM and is made possible with a grant
from the National Endowment for the Humanities.