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JOURNAL OF THE CALIFORNIA GARDEN & LANDSCAPE HISTORY SOCIETY

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*Eden: Journal of the California Garden & Landscape History Society* (ISBN 1524-8062) is published quarterly. Subscription is a benefit of CGLHS membership.

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**California Garden & Landscape History Society**  
P.O. Box 220237, Newhall, CA 91322-0237  
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### SAVE THE DATE

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Ross, California

Opposite: The meeting of Arts & Crafts, stained glass window by J. Edgar Mitchell, 1904. Laing Gallery of Art, Newcastle upon Tyne, England.  
Above: Marston Department Store employees enjoyed an annual picnic at George Marston's home.



Gravetye Manor in the Sussex countryside, home and garden of William Robinson. Photo by Nancy Carol Carter.



# English Roots to California Glory

An Arts and Crafts Garden Journey

by Nancy Carol Carter



Above: Hestercombe Gardens in Somerset is a restored masterpiece created by the Arts & Crafts collaboration of gardener Gertrude Jekyll and architect Edwin Lutyens. Photo by Nancy Carol Carter.

This article examines the British origins of the Arts and Crafts movement, with special emphasis on how Arts and Crafts gardening ideas were received in the United States, were spread across the country, and brought to a full and glorious realization in California.

The ideas of the British Arts and Crafts movement crossed the Atlantic Ocean as the twentieth century approached. The United States was becoming a powerful country, moving onto the global stage and confronting issues of national identity. These political and social factors influenced the reception of the Arts and Crafts movement and its interpretation. While taking on a different gloss, the movement attracted widespread interest and gained acceptance in the United States. Early adopters founded special societies, started new craft guilds, published specialized journals, and established utopian communities that stamped their own interpretation on Arts and Crafts ideals.

As Arts and Crafts awareness spread across the American continent it developed distinct regional variations and tended to slough off the political and social reform agenda so central to Arts and Crafts sensibilities in

Britain. In its modified form, the Arts and Crafts movement that had leapt an ocean and permeated a continent exercised significant influence on American design, perhaps to place more profoundly and lastingly than in the nation's gardens.

The Arts and Crafts garden, in its earliest stateside inception, was perceived to be synonymous with a "wild garden," an ill-defined landscape description used extensively in American garden literature during the first decades of Arts and Crafts inspiration. American garden designers skillfully moved the Arts and Crafts garden beyond this simplistic perception, leaving behind Victorian formalism but retaining some structure in the naturalistic designs that integrated the living spaces of home and garden.

California's climate and the state's ready acceptance of the bungalow made it an ideal fit for the indoor/outdoor Arts and Crafts designs that both simplified the garden and gave it new prominence as an extension of the home. With creative use of an abundant plant palette and an appreciative openness to design influences, the Arts and Crafts garden flourished in California.

## BRITISH ORIGINS: THE IMPERATIVE OF ELEVATING PUBLIC TASTE

A significant precursor of the Arts and Crafts movement exists in the 1836 report by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Art and Manufactures. It concluded that the British export economy was threatened by the production of low-quality manufactured goods of poor design. The report specifically criticized "the rampant and indiscriminate use of ornamentation" in British design. Soon after this report, Government Schools of Design were founded<sup>1</sup> as one step toward improving the competitiveness of British manufactured goods on the world market.

Most critics saw no measurable improvement in the British products shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Rather, displays were of low standards and bad taste with a tendency toward "crass over-decoration." British designs were condemned as "indolent and servile" by Matthew Digby Wyatt, architect, art historian and Secretary of the Exhibition.<sup>2</sup> Distressed by the lack of progress in elevating British design standards, Prince Albert (1819-1861) worked with noted designers, artists and art critics to articulate progressive principles of design to be taught in government schools.<sup>3</sup> For the first time, British government design schools adopted the classic design elements associated with beauty in nature: variety, fitness, simplicity, and contrast.<sup>4</sup>

As royalty and art theorists analyzed principles of design, British businesses focused on their bottom line. More and more items of daily use were being mass-produced and sold to willing buyers, despite criticisms of shoddy workmanship and bad design. Profit-making industrialists lacked incentives to elevate the design of manufactured products, but the national call for higher standards was persistent and growing.

Social critics began to couple their long-existing concerns about workers in the dehumanizing production lines of the Industrial Revolution with disdain for the uninspired design of everyday products and public spaces. An increasing number of commentators believed that national style reflected the values of society and that "a nation's art was a symptom of its moral health."<sup>5</sup> By this righteous way of thinking, there was a moral imperative to elevate public taste. Factory workers and all of society would benefit. In fact, the very soul of the nation depended upon it. While often overlooked, this effort to advance art as a core societal value underpins the subsequent Arts and Crafts movement.

## IDEAS AND PEOPLE OF ARTS AND CRAFTS

The Arts and Crafts movement grew out of an amalgam of ideas, motivations and public concerns shared in varying degrees by a large group of social critics, architects, poets, artists and writers in mid-nineteenth century Britain. Areas of common ground amid the varied and shifting strands of the movement include: (1) a belief in the centrality of art in a civilized society; (2) the efficacy of simple living amid beauty; (3) the social and individual value of high-quality craftsmanship; (4) the use of natural and vernacular materials in crafts and building; (5) reverence for an idealized medieval past; (6) socialist politics; and (7) the need to reform societal ills growing out of the Industrial Revolution.

Architects and artists are closely associated with the formative period of the Arts and Crafts movement. Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852), known as "God's architect," contemplated questions of design and function and became convinced that the Gothic, having originated in a Christian world, was a true and moral style. He worked in a Neo-Gothic style and looked to nature for



Above: A sturdy pergola runs the length of the Hestercombe Garden, creating a separation from the adjoining pastureland. Photo by Nancy Carol Carter.

design inspiration.<sup>6</sup> Gothic architecture and craftsmanship was later championed by the adherents of Arts and Crafts. London retains prominent examples of the style, including the Palace of Westminster (Houses of Parliament), the Royal Courts of Justice and St. Pancras railway station, all built before 1870.

Members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood also looked back on earlier times for inspiration. Founded in 1848, this association of artists reacted to declining national aesthetics and the social ills of the Industrial Revolution by pledging seriousness, sincerity, and truth to nature in their art. They were inspired by late medieval and early Renaissance European art before the time of Raphael (1483-1530),<sup>7</sup> a painter and architect of the High Renaissance in Italy. The Pre-Raphaelites articulated ideas that became important to the Arts and Crafts movement. Some critics assailed their colorful and richly detailed art, but influential champions like John Ruskin (1819-1900) celebrated it. This social critic and public intellectual wrote about the relationship of art, society and labor in industrialized Britain. He became the philosopher of the Arts and Crafts movement and was a leading exponent of medieval architecture as a model for honest craftsmanship and high-quality materials.

Ruskin particularly influenced William Morris (1834-1896) who began his studies at Oxford in 1853, along with Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898). Both young men abandoned their divinity studies for the higher calling of art under the influence of Ruskin's writings and the persuasion of painter and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), a founder of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The long association of Morris, Burne-Jones and Rossetti created a permanent bond between the Pre-Raphaelites and the larger Arts and Crafts movement.<sup>8</sup>

The indefatigable and multi-talented William Morris evolved into the leading practitioner and implementer of Arts and Crafts ideals. He pursued social reform through socialist writings and activism<sup>9</sup> and by organizing groups such as the Artworkers' Guild. He sought to bring art and fine design to the



fore and worked to reverse the dehumanizing effects of factory work by reigniting a culture of fine individual craftsmanship. Victorian artificiality was rejected in favor of medieval and folk designs or those inspired by nature. With partners, Morris founded a company to produce well-designed and carefully crafted decorative arts for every British home, a disappointingly impractical concept since hand-crafted products were unaffordable for the working class. It was affluent buyers who secured William Morris' international reputation for excellent design and quality products. In time, cheaper imitations of the Morris style did reach larger numbers whose consumer tastes were influenced by the popularity of genuine Morris products.

The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, founded in 1887, belatedly provided a name for a flourishing artistic movement encompassing a wide range of pre-existing societies, guilds and workshops. By the 1880s Arts and Crafts thinkers were envisioning idealized ways of living and a design ethic that influenced all aspects of the home: the architecture, home furnishings and decorations, textiles, ceramics, fine arts, and the garden.<sup>10</sup> Within the Arts and Crafts ideal, the home was to be a work of art<sup>11</sup> with the garden as an integral part of the picture. This would be

a different garden than the one that had gained popularity during the first fifty years of Queen Victoria's reign.

Publication of *The Wild Garden* in 1870 and *The English Flower Garden* in 1883 by garden journalist William Robinson (1838-1935) fueled a reconsideration of the British garden and a new appreciation of the old-fashioned cottage garden. Robinson's disdainful rejection of popular Victorian garden features and his celebration of native wildflowers, hardy exotics and naturalistic garden plantings both influenced and fed into Arts and Crafts thinking. Of equal or greater importance as a garden writer, Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) was closely associated with key Arts and Crafts figures and championed the movement. She wrote prolifically and in an appealing style, publishing 13 books and hundreds of articles. Jekyll, more than anyone, brought gardening into Arts and Crafts and vice versa. Her influence was just short of pervasive after she became the garden advisor to *Country Life* magazine<sup>12</sup> and teamed with architect Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944). This famous design duo worked on hundreds of estates across Britain, demonstrating over and over again the means of achieving an idyllic unity of home and garden with an application of Arts and Crafts principles.<sup>13</sup>

Above: Working with San Diego architect Irving Gill, Kate Sessions extended the garden of this home down into a canyon. Local stone forms the retaining walls and stairways. Photo by Rachel Cobb.

## SPREADING THE WORD TO AMERICA: MISSIONARIES AND ACOLYTES

Arts and Crafts ideas and artistic sensibilities made their way to the United States through a lively cross-Atlantic exchange. As the movement matured in Britain, proselytizers visited America to bring word of new ideas in architecture, art, and design, along with larger concepts involving social justice and new ways to think and to live. Aestheticism, as advocated by Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) during his successful 18-month lecture tour in 1882-1883, set the scene for a reconsideration of art. Arts and Crafts luminaries followed with a message that more directly tied art to the aims of society. Artist and William Morris devotee Walter Crane (1845-1915) made an extended American tour. Charles Robert Ashbee (1863-1942), founder of a London Arts and Crafts Guild and School of Handcraft, crossed the Atlantic eight times to speak in cities across the United States. Charles Francis Annesley Voysey (1857-1941), an architect and designer whose work was known through influential international publications such as *The Studio: An Illustrated Magazine of Fine and Applied Art*, also traveled to speak in America.<sup>14</sup>

The power of Arts and Crafts messengers on the lecture circuit was magnified by newspaper reports and magazine stories about their talks. By the 1890s, Americans had considerable exposure to the British Arts and Crafts movement. In addition to the lecture tours, there was "an influx of British books and magazines" into the United States.<sup>15</sup> Charles L. Eastlake's *Hints on Household Taste* (1868) was an early arrival from England. The book increased the popularity of Gothic design in the United States. Notably, the writings of William Morris and John Ruskin were available across the country. Morris' books were popular enough to justify an American publisher after 1895.<sup>16</sup>

Domestic acolytes proliferated after the founding of Arts and Crafts societies in most major American cities. Their public exhibits further spread the gospel. Across the country, art pottery makers, craft guilds, and utopian communities sprang up.<sup>17</sup> These developments coincided with a newly inexpensive process for making paper. Affordable paper spawned a proliferation of new publications. The message of Arts and Crafts was shared through the newsletters of societies and guilds and delivered widely through the new medium of

mass-market magazines. At this same time, the popular magazine was taking on increased cultural authority. To an unprecedented degree, articles in magazines were influencing the way people thought and how they lived.<sup>18</sup>

The first issue of *House Beautiful* in 1896 published articles by a leading cast of Arts and Crafts thinkers, including William Morris, Walter Crane, Charles Robert Ashbee and Charles Francis Annesley Voysey.<sup>19</sup> The magazine was established one year after Unitarian minister and social reformer William C. Gannett published a crusading book on life style, *The House Beautiful*. Money could not buy good taste or a happy and attractive home, he warned. The focus must be on a simple and restful style that values harmony over splendor, while always avoiding the superfluous.<sup>20</sup>

Eugene Knapp and Henry Blodgett founded the magazine known as *House Beautiful* to expand upon Gannett's message, describing their journal as "the only magazine in America devoted to simplicity, economy and appropriateness in the home" and to "the moral side of beauty." The poor taste and despoliation of the rich were scathingly denounced in the pages of *House Beautiful* in favor of zealous support for the Arts and Crafts idea that homes should be dedicated to human needs and comforts, not built as ostentatious showplaces.<sup>21</sup> The direct inspiration of William Morris' writings is unmistakable in both the *House Beautiful* book and magazine. The Arts and Crafts leader's ideas had so permeated American thinking by the turn of the twentieth century, that *Ladies Home Journal* approvingly announced that the country was experiencing "a William Morris craze."<sup>22</sup> Although having an architectural focus, *House and Garden* magazine came along in 1901 and helped to shape gardening design ideas for the bungalow, which was picking up in popularity.<sup>23</sup>

The two most lasting names in the American Arts and Crafts movement—Stickley and Roycroft—were working colonies with aims akin to Morris and Company in England. They produced handcrafted, high quality goods intended to bring beauty and serviceability into the home while elevating public taste. Gustav Stickley (1858-1942) was the most important American diffuser of Arts and Crafts ideals. His upper New York State workshops produced a wide array of items for the home, but specialized in handcrafted furniture influenced by the simple and practical designs of the Shakers. His journal, *The Craftsman* (1901-1916), was a beacon of Arts and Crafts sensibility in the United States. Lovingly written and illustrated, the first issue described the life and work of William Morris; the second was devoted to John Ruskin.<sup>24</sup> *The Craftsman* strove to infuse ordinary life with art. It linked disparate practitioners of the Arts and Crafts

creed across America and echoed some of the social and political reform forcefulness modeled by William Morris.

Near to Stickley's workshops, the Roycroft community in East Aurora, New York, was founded by the flamboyant former soap sales executive, Elbert Hubbard (1856-1915). Hubbard first worked in fine printing, inspired by the products of William Morris' Kelmscott Press. Roycrofters later moved into the production of high quality furniture and household goods, all widely advertised and sold through mail order. Hubbard's claim to have visited Morris at Kelmscott Manor has been disputed,<sup>25</sup> but his successful promotion of Arts and Crafts ideals is unquestioned. He launched *The Philistine* in 1895, a publication to rival *The Craftsman*, and traveled widely to lecture on the communal craft work of Roycroft and larger social issues. Elbert Hubbard's dynamic Arts and Crafts evangelism and publication of *The Philistine* were cut short by his death on the *Lusitania*, a Cunard passenger liner attacked and sunk by a German submarine in 1915.<sup>26</sup>

Gardening advice was very much a part of the bounty of Arts and Crafts literature flowing across the Atlantic. While gardens were not a primary William Morris topic, he had decided views on the making of a home garden and the value of private and public gardens as "positive necessities if citizens are to live reasonable and healthy lives in body and mind."<sup>27</sup> His famous first home, Red House,<sup>28</sup> emphasized the careful siting of the building to preserve an existing apple orchard and the informality and functionality of a garden closely linked to the house. The Red House garden was designed for games and lounging, to delight the senses with old-fashioned cottage flowers, and for food production and beekeeping. Morris specifically rejected the Victorian use of newly imported exotic plants as garden trophies and the display beds of vivid hothouse plants arranged in complicated patterns.

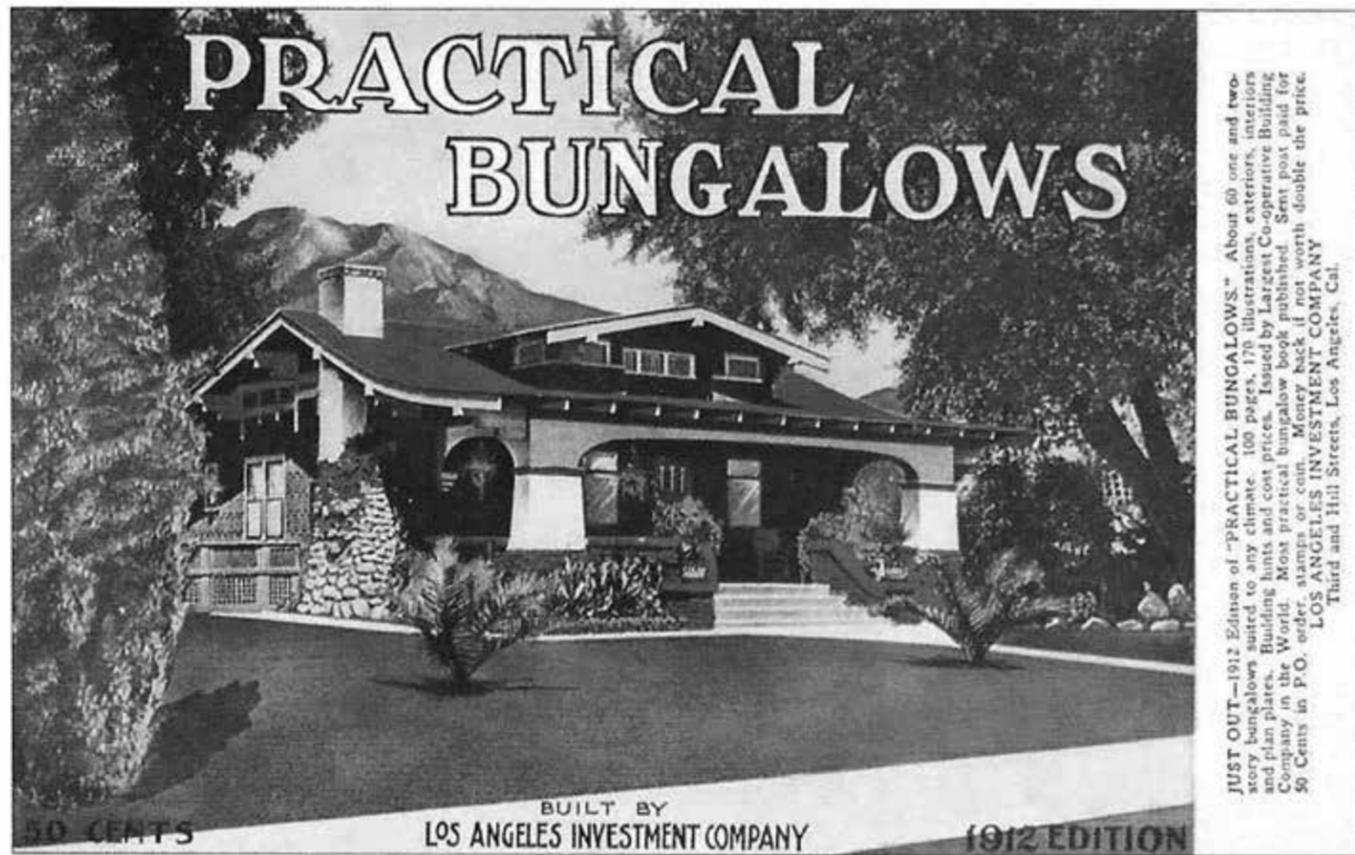
William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll, the two most important garden writers in Britain, made successful literary crossings of the Atlantic and significantly influenced gardening in the United States. With no entrenched domestic gardening traditions to provide resistance,<sup>29</sup> these strong English voices coincided with—and reinforced—a sharp rise in American interest in gardens at the end of the nineteenth century. One historian identifies the new-found American interest in gardens as nothing less than a revolution in popular culture.<sup>30</sup> As with many cultural shifts, the backstory for this surge in gardening is one of national politics and identity.



Edwin Lutyens made masterful use of local stone in the Hestercombe garden. Photo by Nancy Carol Carter.



Embellishment of a mythical past added to the romance of California. Architect Hazel Waterman helped to create this tourist attraction, "Ramona's Marriage Place" at the Estudillo hacienda in Old Town San Diego.



Above: Elbert Hubbard's magazine *The Philistine* and Gustav Stickley's *The Craftsman* helped to spread the message of Arts & Crafts across the United States.

## GARDENS AND THE AMERICAN CHARACTER

The strong new interest in gardens struck the United States during a period of momentous change. Domestic concentrations of wealth and political power were being challenged by the Progressive movement. International strength and American prestige were boosted by victory in the 1898 Spanish-American War and by President Theodore Roosevelt's Nobel Peace Prize, awarded for his successful arbitration ending the Russo-Japanese War of 1905.

As these developments unfolded, Americans were gaining a better sense of their own country. Albert Bierstadt's luminous paintings of Yosemite Valley, the Rocky Mountains and other western landscapes revealed a previously unappreciated vastness and natural beauty. Artist Thomas Moran also painted the American West majestically, notably helping to preserve Yellowstone as the first National Park (1872) by so skillfully capturing its exotic nature on canvas. Improved photographic and color printing methods, and more images in the illustrated press, increased public appreciation for the grandeur and untapped possibilities of

their country.<sup>31</sup> A disconcerting piece of news in 1890 did, however, raise questions about the future. The superintendent of the federal census announced that the United States no longer had a frontier line.<sup>32</sup> The uncertain meaning of a closed frontier created something of a national identity crisis. Historian Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932) theorized that the existence of a frontier had shaped national character and values in a positive way. Western expansion, according to the Turner Thesis, accounted for the American qualities of optimism, rugged independence, adaptability, ingenuity and self-reliance. On the frontier, American democracy and egalitarianism were reinforced and a people unique in the world were forged. Turner's ideas gained wide acceptance and filtered out to the general public,<sup>33</sup> raising concerns about the future of national values.

What could replace the frontier experience with all its nation-defining and character-building benefits? For many, the answer to this large question was a back-to-nature movement. Was it not time to accept the maturing of a post-frontier society and forge a new national identity? Advocates suggested that a closer relationship with the natural world would renew the American spirit.<sup>34</sup> In short order, the writings of Henry David Thoreau,<sup>35</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman and John Muir experienced a surge of renewed popularity.

At the practical level, sweeping "back-to-nature" themes translated into small-scale and achievable activities like conservation work, public park advocacy, scouting, and a renewed interest in home gardening. The right garden, magazine readers were told, could bring nature to your doorstep and serve as a restorative environment.<sup>36</sup> This is how garden design and plant choices became a widespread—if unlikely—part of a national conversation evoked by the closing of the American frontier. With the revolution in the scale and power of print media, Americans were absorbing advice on every aspect of modern life, including how to reunite with nature within the confines of a small home garden,<sup>37</sup> a theme entirely compatible with the simultaneous infusion of Arts and Crafts ideas on home making and life style.

The well-known title of William Robinson's 1870 book *The Wild Garden* (already in a fourth edition by 1894) was seized upon by garden writers and the popular press as a shorthand description of the new kind of gardens Americans should be creating.<sup>38</sup> The subtleties of Arts and Crafts thinking eventually permeated American garden making<sup>39</sup> and continues to be its dominant influence, but when Arts and Crafts first crossed the pond, William Robinson's "wild garden" terminology resonated more loudly that any more substantive message. Distinct cultural and intellectual developments in the United States narrowly channeled the garden reform message to suit the needs of a society redefining itself and seeking a garden style to fit.

In popular literature, a wild garden was understood to be one that aligned with traditional American values while rejecting foreign influences and the tendency of the super-rich to despoil nature. The unprecedented numbers of immigrants entering the country during the late nineteenth century was worrisome to a segment of society and may account for a touch of xenophobia in magazine articles insisting that natural and purely American gardens would best bolster the virtues that made the United States great. As a re-creation of the frontier landscape, a wild garden was a source of strength and challenge. The maker of such a garden was surely a special kind of American and not the sort to crassly imitate a foreign style.<sup>40</sup> William Robinson's Britishness was apparently forgiven.

As American gardeners gained a more nuanced understanding of Robinson's message in *The Wild Garden*, with its emphasis on hardy plants and a mix of formal and naturalistic features in garden design, Wilhelm Miller's *What England Can Teach Us About Gardening* made a practical contribution. Miller proposed substitutes for plants listed in the books of William Robinson and other British garden writers, but not suited to growing conditions in the United States.<sup>41</sup> William Robinson was understood

to contribute to the preservation of wildflowers and endangered native plants in his own country by making them popular garden specimens. Robinson's endorsement of such plant categories for the home garden dovetailed with a long-term American interest in native flora.<sup>42</sup>

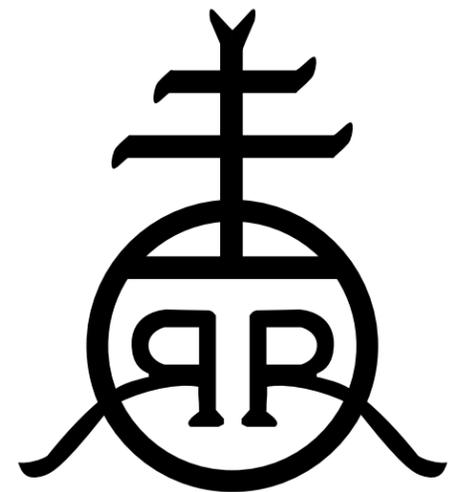
When Gertrude Jekyll's readable and instructive garden books found an American audience and her ideas entered popular garden magazines, the British Arts and Crafts garden message surged to new heights. Jekyll (1843-1932) is recognized as the most important interpreter of Arts and Crafts in the garden. Distilled in the lucid prose of her 13 books and hundreds of published articles is the application of color theory from her art school training, a focus on plants, and the practical experience of designing more than 200 gardens.<sup>43</sup> Her books are reprinted and available today and still offer enjoyable reading and useful information for gardeners.

While certain features such as pergolas, arbors, topiary, and mixed borders of hardy plants may come to mind when thinking about Arts and Crafts gardens, there is no checklist or set of rules for what an Arts and Crafts garden must contain or how it must look. That is because, as garden historian Judith Tankard explains, "Arts and Crafts is an approach to design rather than a style."

Arts and Crafts makes limited demands: the design must create a companionable relationship between house and garden.<sup>44</sup> Any Arts and Crafts construction must make the best use of the natural site and be created with a reverence for local building traditions and materials. Within these basic guidelines, Arts and Crafts homes and gardens may take on very different appearances. There is openness to a wide diversity of style influences (e.g., Japanese, Spanish, Colonial Revival, Prairie School, and others). Additionally, gardens will naturally vary due to features of local climate, topography and growing conditions. As an approach to design, the Arts and Crafts garden tent is a roomy one, able to contain the elegant work of Beatrix Farrand in Washington, D.C. as handily as it encompasses an arid San Diego canyon-side garden created by Kate Olivia Sessions.

## ARTS AND CRAFTS BLOOMS IN CALIFORNIA

William Morris asserted that architecture would lead to all the arts,<sup>45</sup> a neat summary of the way in which regional variations in the Arts and Crafts movement were sparked by architectural trends. The earliest Arts and Crafts architects looked back to the medieval



Above: San Diego horticulturist and Arts & Crafts gardener Kate Olivia Sessions (1857-1940). Courtesy of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden Archives.

The Roycroft "brand" marked the fine furniture and handmade products of Elbert Hubbard's Arts & Crafts Campus in East Aurora, New York.



period as a time of superior craftsmanship and launched a Gothic revival movement. The earliest converts to Arts and Crafts on the East Coast of the United States similarly began designing neo-Gothic buildings. In other regions, architects found inspiration closer to home. In the Midwest, Frank Lloyd Wright saw a way forward in the horizontal lines of the American prairie. In California, the northern redwood forests induced architects to focus on the greater design possibilities of an abundant local construction material, while Southern California fell under the spell—at least for a time—of a mythically romantic Spanish and Mexican backstory.

Helen Hunt Jackson's sentimental and wildly popular novel *Ramona*, published in 1884, reinforced the sense of California as a special place, different from other parts of the United States (a seed already planted by the reports of early explorers and the excitement of the 1849 Gold Rush). Southwest Museum founder<sup>46</sup> Charles Fletcher Lummis' ongoing celebration of a romanticized Native American and Hispanic history added to California's allure. In the popular imagination, Mission life had been idyllic and the California rancho a place of easy outdoor living where genteel hospitality was offered in comfortable houses and beautiful gardens. The myth of California as a retreat from the excesses of progress, a

place with a past much better than the present, made it "deeply vulnerable to the message of William Morris," Robert Winter explains in a graceful introductory essay to his book on the Arts & Crafts architects of California.<sup>47</sup>

As *Ramona* was reaching countless readers, a landmark in California landscape history was taking shape. When Frederick Law Olmsted developed the design for a new university in Palo Alto with founder Leland Stanford, the country noticed. Olmsted's 1888 plan for the Stanford University campus furthered the notion of California uniqueness and was in keeping with key Arts and Crafts ideas, being regionally sensitive and conceived with a respect for the *genius loci* or spirit of the place.<sup>48</sup>

Nearby, San Francisco was living up to its reputation for social experimentation by fomenting a lively Bay Area Arts and Crafts community, the first of several centers of early interest in California.<sup>49</sup> In 1894, three years before similar organizations were established in Boston and Chicago, the Guild of Arts and Crafts of San Francisco was founded by architects and artists. It aimed to educate and elevate public taste.

The city's Ruskin Club was organized in 1895, the same year that one of California's earliest Arts and Crafts buildings was constructed: the Swedenborgian Church, built in San Francisco's Pacific Heights neighborhood.

The artistic inspiration for the rustic building came from its minister, Joseph Worcester (1836-1913), who had already designed and built his own home across the bay in Piedmont, a bungalow recognized by most architectural historians as the first Arts and Crafts structure in California.<sup>50</sup> Worcester hired architect A. Page Brown to complete formal designs for the Swedenborgian Church and Brown employed a young assistant, Bernard Maybeck,<sup>51</sup> whose later work defined Northern California Arts and Crafts architecture and fine building craftsmanship.

Poet and naturalist Charles Keeler of Berkeley and his wife Louise (artist and book illustrator) were prominent in early Arts and Crafts circles of the Bay Area. After Maybeck designed their home in the north Berkeley hills, Keeler organized the Hillside Club to promote thoughtful development of his neighborhood, envisioning one large Arcadian garden into which new wooden homes would be carefully sited. His 1904 book, *The Simple Home*, is still referenced. This short book carried many of the ideas of British Arts and Crafts pioneers William Morris and John Ruskin. It was widely read and, as the first California iteration of Arts and Crafts ideology, was profoundly influential.<sup>52</sup>

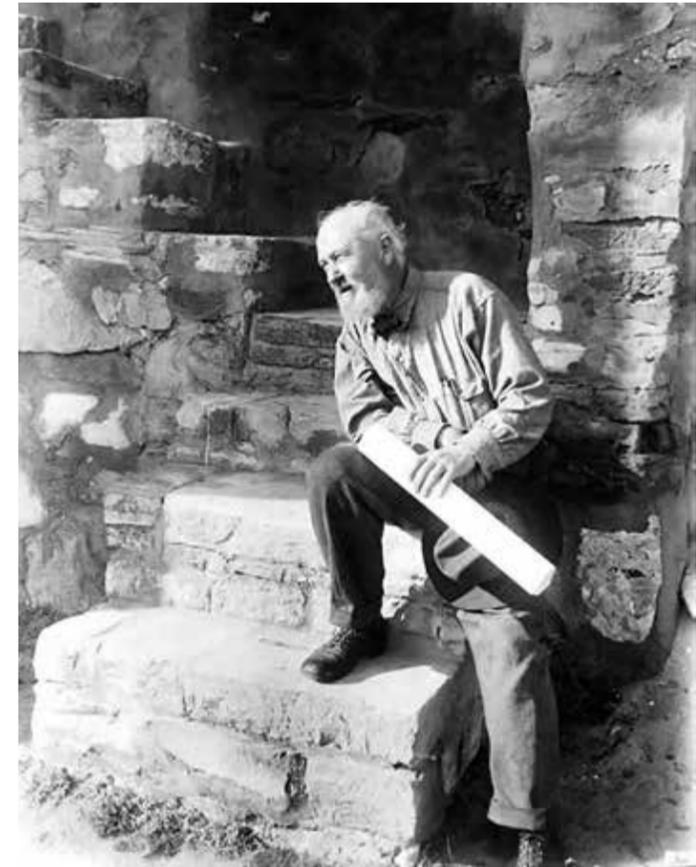
Keeler (1872-1937) distrusted the Machine Age in which he found himself and called

for the elevation of art as a societal value with architecture and the simple, sheltering home leading the way. A chapter of his book is devoted to the home garden. Amid some flights of fancy, Keeler takes a practical look at California garden making, distinguishing between Northern and Southern growing conditions and asserting the value of mixing native and appropriate exotic plants. His descriptions of a single rose vine embowering a house and geranium hedges reaching eight feet in height may have lured more than one gardener to California. In Keeler's book, historian Kevin Starr found a California "garden ideology" that made the garden an "enactment of the poetry and romance of California life."<sup>53</sup>

How directly Keeler's book sparked the bungalow craze is unmeasured, but this housing style is closely associated with California and the expression of indoor/outdoor design principals that ripened in the state as nowhere else. In Southern California, a second center of Arts and Crafts strength developed along the Arroyo Seco, becoming particularly strong in Pasadena where a thriving colony of architects and artists worked. The Arroyo Guild of Fellow Craftsmen published one issue of a journal in 1909. Pasadena architects embraced the bungalow, taking it to new mastery, incorporating Swiss and Japanese influences, and developing variations like the bungalow court and the California Craftsman style. Much of the popularization of the bungalow was achieved through pattern books of Southland designs.<sup>54</sup>

Pasadena architects Charles Sumner Greene (1868-1957) and Henry Mather Greene (1870-1954) achieved lasting fame with their elevated work in the Arts and Crafts genre while, further to the south, the work of architects Irving Gill and Richard Requa was gaining notice in San Diego. As to the gardens connected with these architects, Greene and Greene designed houses that "interacted thoroughly with their surrounding gardens," with "carefully framed views" and abundant outdoor living spaces.<sup>55</sup> Irving Gill teamed on several projects with San Diego nursery owner and garden maker Kate O. Sessions to harmonize house and garden. Unlike many architects before him, Gill welcomed plants into and onto his buildings, "treating the natural world not as an adversary...but as a valued collaborator."<sup>56</sup> Richard Requa wrote a two-part article on the necessity of planning the garden along with the house in 1910<sup>57</sup> and brought plant specialists and garden designers into his projects.<sup>58</sup>

While magazines and other publications had long offered advice on creating the Arts and Crafts garden, Californians were presented with a localized guide in 1914. Eugene O. Murmann, who had already written about California bungalows, self-published *California Gardens: How to Plan and Beautify the City Lot*,



*Suburban Grounds and Country Estate, Including 50 Garden Plans and 103 Illustrations of Actual Gardens from Photographs by the Author.*<sup>59</sup> A striking feature of his book is the invitation to borrow garden styles from Japan and elsewhere, but without introducing rigidity. An unpretentious naturalness remained the goal for the Arts and Crafts garden, which was also beginning to be influenced by the first generation of professional landscape architects. The American Society of Landscape Architects was founded in 1899 and the first university training of landscape architects soon began at Harvard. The intimacy of house and garden was not jettisoned by the trained professionals, nor was this notion entirely lost when Modernist architecture emerged. In fact, Gustav Stickley's advice to "let the garden and house float together as one harmonious whole" is nowhere better realized than in some Mid-Century Modern designs that open one entire side of the house to an enclosed back garden.

The Arts and Crafts movement in the United States, along with urbanization and a growing middle class, helped gardening to become a national pastime and, for some, a passion. In 1913 the Garden Club of America was founded as a national organization. More gardens—and gardeners—were made a few years later when home food production in Victory Gardens became a patriotic duty during

Opposite: In Kate Sessions' most celebrated Arts & Crafts canyon garden c. 1912, a built-in bench invites visitors to enjoy a shady rest. Photo by Rachel Cobb.

Above: Bernard Maybeck (1862-1957) worked in a variety of styles, but is best known as Northern California's leading Arts & Crafts architect.

World War I. Gardening changed over the decades, but the fundamentals of American “gardening taste” continued to reflect the Arts and Crafts notion of naturalistic and livable gardens (the antithesis of the Victorian gardens they replaced). As one writer observed in 2008: “we are all Robinsonians now, even if we don’t know it.”<sup>60</sup> She meant that we have adopted and maintained an approach to our gardens that would meet the approval of *Wild Garden* author William Robinson and that the gardening changes made by the Arts and Crafts movement live on.

Garden historian Judith Tankard is among those who acknowledge the continuing impact of the Arts and Crafts movement. While the movement itself was short-lived, exerting its strongest powers from 1880 to 1920, its influence on home and garden design has been long-lasting. “There’s scarcely a garden in Britain or America that doesn’t owe something to the movement’s ideas,” Tankard states. “It all boils down to making the best use of your site, linking the garden to the house, respecting regional traditions and using local materials.”<sup>61</sup>

Jere Stuart French’s book on landscape architects and the gardens of California<sup>62</sup> does not consciously discuss “Arts and Crafts gardens,” but it makes California gardens synonymous with the basic garden tenets of the Arts and Crafts movement. The title page reprints an inscription at the entry to the rose garden in Exposition Park, Los Angeles: “The garden is the outdoor continuation of the house.” In a preface to the book, French says, “we use our California garden as we would use any room. It is private, useful and, we trust, attractive. It serves our many needs, and . . . is a means of making our lives more peaceful, more balanced.”<sup>63</sup> Arts and Crafts movement founder William Morris could not have said it better—this is exactly his thinking on how a garden should be designed and used.

When trying to explain how California took so easily to Arts and Crafts, Charles Fletcher Lummis credited the open mindedness of the progressive, adventurous, and dynamic people who had pulled up stakes elsewhere and moved as far to the west as possible in the United States. Garden historian Victoria Padilla takes that explanation a step further: having reached the last frontier, these adventurers sought new horizons in their home gardens. After all, this was the magic land of California! They had arrived at a place that seemed to offer a shot at recreating the Garden of Eden.<sup>64</sup> 

*Nancy Carol Carter is a horticultural historian who has published widely and is the associate editor of California Garden magazine. Her current research focuses on Balboa Park, Kate O. Sessions and landscape architect Paul G. Thiene.*

“ . . . it all boils down to making the best use of your site, linking the garden to the house, respecting regional traditions and using local materials.”  
—Judith Tankard

## Endnotes

1. Sara J. Oshinsky, “Design Reform,” in Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dsrf/hd\\_dsrf.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dsrf/hd_dsrf.htm) (October 2006) (accessed July 23, 2015).

2. Isabelle Ancombe and Charlotte Gere, *Arts and Crafts in Britain and America* (London: Academy Editions, 1978), 21, citing Matthew Digby Wyatt, Society of Arts, *Lectures on the Results of the Great Exhibition of 1851, 1852-53, Lecture XIX*, 223.

3. Oshinsky, “Design Reform.” These principles stated “that decoration is secondary to form” and that form is dictated by function.” The admonition that “ornament ought always be secondary to utility” further drove home the message of greater simplicity.

4. Ancombe and Gere, *Arts and Crafts*, 21-24. It was proudly noted that although some American design was better than the British, the Americans had not yet formulated such quasi-scientific principles of aesthetics.

5. Oshinsky, “Design Reform”; Ancombe and Gere, *Arts and Crafts*, 7.

6. The influence of religion on Pugin’s adopted style is captured in the title of a biography. Rosemary Hill, *God’s Architect: Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

7. Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood members William Holman Hunt (1827–1910), John Everett Millais (1829–1896), and Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882) depicted the natural world in bright detail and aspired to raise moral issues through their art. Jennifer Meagher, “The Pre-Raphaelites,” in Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–). [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/praf/hd\\_praf.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/praf/hd_praf.htm) (October 2004) (accessed July 23, 2015).

8. Sarah Rutherford, *The Arts and Crafts Garden* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2013), 7.

9. Morris became politically active with groups opposing British involvement in the Middle East and went on to found the Socialist League. Among his political writings was the pamphlet “Chants for Socialists.” His verses were popularly sung or recited at meetings. Christopher Waters, “Morris’ Chants and the Problems of Socialist Culture,” in Florence S. Boos and Carole G. Silver, eds., *Socialism and the Literary Artistry of William Morris* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 127-145, 127-28.

10. Rutherford, *The Arts*, 7.

11. “The Arts and Crafts Movement.” Victoria and Albert Museum. <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/the-arts-and-crafts-movement> (accessed July 23, 2015).

12. Rutherford, *The Arts*, 12.

13. All the house and garden commissions of Jekyll and Lutyens are documented in: Jane Brown, *Gardens of a Golden Afternoon: The Story of a Partnership: Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll* (London: Allen Lane, 1982).

14. Ancombe and Gere, *Arts and Crafts*, 24-36.

15. Judith B. Tankard, “The Influence of British Garden Literature on American Garden Design During the Country Place Era,” in *Masters of American Garden Design IV: Influences on American Garden Design 1895 to 1940*, Proceedings of the Garden Conservancy Symposium held March 11, 1994 at the Paine Webber Building in New York, New York, Robin Karson, ed., 17.

16. Ibid.

17. Rosalind P. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Phaidon Press, Inc., 2006), 213-24.

18. Virginia Tuttle Clayton, “Wild Gardening and the Popular American Magazine, 1890–1918,” in *Nature and Ideology: Natural Garden Design in the Twentieth Century*, Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1997), 131-142), 131-32.

19. Ancombe & Gere, *Arts and Crafts*, 33.

20. The text of Gannett’s book is digitized at: [hhttps://archive.org/stream/housebeautiful00ganngoog#page/n39/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/housebeautiful00ganngoog#page/n39/mode/2up). Ostentatious and boring garden displays at the homes of the wealthy had previously been attacked in the pages of the June 1894 *Atlantic Monthly* in an unsigned essay [Viola Roseboro], “The Contributors’ Club: Nature and the Rich,” in *The Once & Future Gardener*, Virginia Tuttle Clayton, ed. (Boston: David R. Godine, 2000), 161-63.

21. Frank Mott, *The History of American Magazines, Volume 5* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1968), 155-57; Diane Harris, “Making Your Private World: Modern Landscape Architecture and House Beautiful, 1945-1965,” in *The Architecture of Landscape, 1940-1960*, Mark Treib, ed., (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 180-204, 180.

22. *Ladies Home Journal* reached one million subscribers in 1903 and doubled its readership in another seven years. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts*, 211-18.

23. Paul Duchscherer and Douglas Keister, *Outside the Bungalow: American’s Arts & Crafts Garden* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 5.

24. Ancombe & Gere, *Arts and Crafts*, 31. Trained as a stonemason and furniture maker, Stickley met British Arts and Crafts proponents and visited Gothic cathedrals on a European trip in 1898. The Shaker influence is an example of the “Americanization” of Arts and Crafts. Stickley furniture and *The Craftsman* remain iconic in the twenty-first century.

25. A 2006 history of the Arts and Crafts Movement states that the “odd ball” Hubbard probably made up the story of meeting Morris. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts*, 224.

26. Ibid.

27. *Selections from the Prose Works of William Morris*, ed. A.H. R. Ball (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931), 157.

28. In building Red House, Morris worked closely with architect Philip Webb (1831-1915) who became influential for “creatively adapting

vernacular building styles and materials to new architectural designs.” Called the “first modern house,” Red House helped to define Arts and Crafts design by considering the home and garden as a unified whole. Duchscherer and Keister, *Outside the Bungalow*, 4.

29. There had not been a great deal of progress in the 50-60 years since Andrew Jackson Downing lamented the lack of American gardening standards and traditions in 1838. Downing’s concerns are recorded in Ann Leighton, *American Gardens of the Nineteenth Century “For Comfort and Affluence”* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 148.

30. Clayton, “Wild Gardening,” 131-33.

31. Scenic exceptionalism was signaled by the preservation of Yellowstone in 1872 and Yosemite in 1864 as National Parks, but few Americans had actually seen these national treasures or could abstractly envision them.

32. “Closing the American Frontier,” Digital History. [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?FsmID=2&psid=3154](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?FsmID=2&psid=3154) (accessed July 28, 2015). Thomas Jefferson had predicted that the newly acquired western lands of the United States would not be settled for hundreds of years, but the Trans-Mississippi West was populated within 87 years of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803.

33. “The Turner Thesis.” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frontier\\_Thesis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frontier_Thesis) (accessed July 28, 2015). Myths and romanticized notions of individual efforts in continental conquest have always had currency in American thought, despite revisionist demonstrations of the central role of the federal government in facilitating western settlement with sponsored exploration, published reports and surveys, trail-making, land grants to railroad companies, suppression of Indian nations, legal maneuvers to claim Indian land titles and, in the early 20th century, massive irrigation and reclamation projects.

34. The American quest for a national identity that is “grounded in the mystical relationship to the heavenly wilderness of the continent” is discussed by Michael Conan in Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Twenty-Five Years of Studies in Landscape Architecture at Dumbarton Oaks From Italian Gardens to Theme Parks* (Washington, D.C. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996), 12.

35. Clayton, “Wild Gardening,” 142, 149-50.

36. Virginia Tuttle Clayton, *The Once and Future Gardener: Garden Writing from the Golden Age of Magazines: 1900-1940* (Boston: David R. Godine, 2000), xxiii.

37. Clayton, “Wild Gardening,” 131-33.

38. One garden historian believes that *The Wild Garden* “had a more profound influence on American garden-making” than any other William Robinson book. Tankard, “The Influence of British Garden Literature,” 19.

39. Beatrix Farrand, for example, is considered to be an important interpreter of Gertrude Jekyll in America, but she did not publish widely and

did not appear in a popular magazine until 1907.

40. Clayton, “Wild Gardening,” 153.

41. Wilhelm Miller, *What England Can Teach Us About Gardening* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1911). Miller is reliant on William Robinson’s home, Gravetye Manor, as an example of fine English gardening.

42. The plant collections gathered by the Lewis and Clark expedition and later explorers of the American west were “eagerly received” by the American public. John C. Fremont collected hundreds of new wildflower species on his western explorations, as did Thomas Nuttall. Leighton, *American Gardens*, 37, 39-40, 54-68. Another writer has a different view, stating that foreigners were more taken with American wildflowers than the domestic population. Clayton, “Wild Gardening,” 140.

43. The life and legacy of Jekyll are summarized in Duchscherer and Keister, *Outside the Bungalow*, pp. 11-14; a fuller treatment of her work is: Richard Bisgrove, *The Gardens of Gertrude Jekyll*. London: Frances Lincoln, 1992.

44. Judith Tankard, “Designing an Arts & Crafts Garden,” *Old House Online* (December 9, 2009). [www.oldhouseonline.com/articles/designing-an-arts-crafts-garden](http://www.oldhouseonline.com/articles/designing-an-arts-crafts-garden) (accessed July 22, 2017).

45. Morris wrote: “Architecture would lead us to all the arts, as it did with earlier men: but if we despise it and take no note of how we are housed, the other arts will have a hard time of it indeed.” *Selections from the Prose Works of William Morris*, 111.

46. Charles Fletcher Lummis (1859-1928) was a Harvard drop-out who famously quit his newspaper job in Ohio and walked to Los Angeles where he became famous as a newspaper and magazine editor, American Indian rights activist, city librarian, preservationist, poet and creator of El Alisal, an organic home built among native trees and flowers using local boulders.

47. “Introduction: The Myth of California Expressed in Arts & Crafts Theory,” in Robert Winter, *Toward a Simpler Way of Life: The Arts & Crafts Architects of California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1-6.

48. Michael R. Corbett, “The Making of a California Landscape 1870s to 1990s,” in Steven A. Nash and Bill Berkson, *Facing Eden: 100 Years of Landscape Art in the Bay Area* (San Francisco : Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 3-29, 9.

49. Arts and Crafts flourished in California with regional variations. A collection of 2013 essays argues that Northern California and Southern California approached Arts and Crafts in significantly different ways and contends that the Northern California movement was “more a sibling” than a child of the British movement. Stephanie Doughlass, *Pugin to Pasadena: Essays Examining a Fractured Arts and Crafts Timeline Through the Theory and Practice of Architecture* (n.p., Xlibris Corporation, 2013).

50. Leslie M. Freudenheim, “The San Francisco Guild of Arts & Crafts,” The Arts and Crafts Society. [www.arts-crafts.com/archive/societies](http://www.arts-crafts.com/archive/societies) (accessed October 19, 2017).

51. Bernard Maybeck (1862-1957) studied architecture at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris before moving to Berkeley, California. He was a university instructor and practicing architect who worked in several styles. As a luminary of the American and California Arts and Crafts movement, his work has been thoughtfully studied in many publications and some of his most important works have been preserved.

52. Keeler’s 55-page book has been reprinted with an introduction of almost equal length. Early Bay Area Arts and Crafts architecture and the work of Bernard Maybeck are discussed in the original. The new introduction describes the work and interests of Louise and Charles Keeler, who were friends with many early Arts and Crafts personalities. Charles Keeler, *The Simple Home*, San Francisco: P. Elder, 1904. Reprinted with a new introduction by Dimitri Shipounoff (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1979).

53. Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream 1850-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 406.

54. “Pasadena Arts and Crafts Architecture, 1895-1908.” [www.livingplaces.com/Pasadena\\_Arts\\_and\\_Crafts\\_Architecture.html](http://www.livingplaces.com/Pasadena_Arts_and_Crafts_Architecture.html) (accessed October 15, 2017).

55. Duchscherer and Keister, *Outside the Bungalow*, 137.

56. Ariel Swartley, “So Beautifully, Naturally Spare,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 16, 2006.

57. Richard Requa, “Importance of the Garden in Home Planning, Part I and Part II” *California Garden* (August 1910), 13; (September 1910), 10-12.

58. David Streatfield devotes an entire chapter of his seminal history of California gardens to these and others garden makers in the California Arts and Crafts movement. “Chapter 3: Arts and Crafts Gardens,” in David C. Streatfield, *California Gardens: Creating a New Eden* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1994), 65-86.

59. Murmann’s book was republished as a guide for restoring bungalow gardens under the title *California Gardens of the Arts and Crafts Period* (Atglen, PA: Schieffer Publishing, 2008).

60. Ursula Buchan, “William Robinson: How the Wild Child of Victorian Britain Came of Age,” *The Telegraph*, October 23, 2008.

61. Ibid.

62. Jere Stuart French, *The California Garden and the Landscape Architects Who Shaped It* (Washington, D.C.: Landscape Architecture Foundation, 1993).

63. Ibid, 3, 11.

64. Victoria Padilla, *Southern California Gardens* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 106. Padilla does not directly discuss the Arts and Crafts movement in her history of Southern California gardens, but a roughly overlapping time frame (1880s through the mid-1930s) is identified as the period of the “greatest interest in ornamental horticulture in Southern California.”



*Documenting  
the Historic  
Marston  
House  
Gardens*

*The  
Southwest  
Interprets  
English  
Romantic*

by Vonn Marie May

A typical garden party at the Marston House, circa 1928.



Above: West elevation with porte-cochère, circa 1908.

Opposite: Formal garden, circa mid 1930s.

## INTRODUCTION

Recently a team of landscape-savvy volunteers from the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) San Diego Chapter and Save Our Heritage Organization (SOHO) documented the historic gardens at the George White & Anna Gunn Marston House using the federal program known as HALS, the Historic American Landscape Survey.

Besides the author of this article, landscape historian Vonn Marie May, the Marston gardens HALS team included Amy Hoffman, PLA, ASLA; Jason Bingham, Landscape Designer; Gail Garbini, PLA, ASLA; Amie K. Hayes, Historic Resources Specialist, SOHO; Michelle Landis, PLA, ASLA; and Joy Lyndes, PLA, San Diego Chapter ASLA HALS Liaison.

The HALS documentation technique was born out of the HABS/HAER program (Historic American Building Survey/Historic American Engineering Record) started by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt during the Depression Era of the 1930s. Over time, these documentation instruments have become vital “as-built” primary records of the nation’s historic resources.



## THE MARSTON HOUSE GARDENS

Nestled at the northwest edge of Balboa Park, the Marston House Gardens provide a uniquely Californian interpretation of the Picturesque English Romantic and Arts & Crafts period landscape designs that were nationwide design movements of the day. The grounds capture the level topography of western mesa tablelands that fall gently into an undulating native canyon, once culminating in a seasonal streambed below (now California State Route 163). The landscape design surrounds the main house and its attendant garden structures, with a rich exotic plant collection originating from distant continents and hemispheres.

## PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

The period of significance encompasses the full occupancy of the Marston family from 1905-1987, beginning with the completion of the house’s construction in 1905 and ending

with the death of daughter Mary Marston (1879-1987). George White Marston (1850-1946) and Mary are the two notable family members most associated with the design and implementation of the Marston House Gardens. Nationally recognized New York landscape architect Samuel Parsons, Jr., and his landscape engineer partner George Cooke were responsible for the physical design of the early 1905 period in close consultation with Kate O. Sessions, the pioneer San Diego horticulturist. During a significant improvement in the late 1920s, John Nolen, another nationally recognized landscape architect and friend of George W. Marston, developed a new design for the grounds with special emphasis on the formal garden on the north side.

The Marston House was designated as Historic Site #40 by the City of San Diego on December 4, 1970. It was later listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 16, 1974, accompanied by HABS recordation initiated by Mary Marston. The Marston gardens were separately designated as Historic Site #287 by the City of San Diego on August 22, 1990. The Marston gardens represent the lasting legacy of one of San Diego’s most important civic patrons, George White

Marston. The intact home and grounds reflect the genteel taste of the Marston family, who, in the early twentieth century, elevated landscape settings by example toward an aesthetic that continues to convey its relevance in our temperate and floral landscapes of today.

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

“Friend of his fellowmen, lover of all growing things” reads the plaque placed at the Junipero Serra Museum meant to honor San Diego’s most endearing and respected city father, George White Marston. He was, among many titles, a businessman, city planner, civic visionary, husband and father, and gentleman who loved and cultivated beauty that was expressed in all growing things. During his lifetime, Marston was responsible for greening and protecting significant numbers of acres. His most noted concerns include the early development of Balboa Park and the monument to Father Serra on Presidio Hill, two projects in which he was intimately and generously involved. Other interests also included the restoration of Mission San Diego,



the creation and protection of Torrey Pines and Anza-Borrego Desert state parks, the preservation of the Pacific Highway from San Diego to Santa Ana, and the early urban plans for San Diego in 1908 and 1926. He responded to the needs of a newly shaping city while he managed a very successful business, travelled frequently, and maintained a genteel family life.<sup>1</sup>

Determined and knowledgeable, Marston sought out the most capable designers and craftspeople for his projects and transformed flat mesas and hillsides of dusty chaparral into world class park environments. He envisioned and worked toward a far-sighted and well-planned San Diego and in his lifetime became acquainted with and formed lasting friendships with some of the most revered professionals in the country. As the history of his personal garden on Seventh Avenue is revealed, it is difficult to separate this intimate project from his large-scale involvements. Many of the same designers who helped shape the garden were peers and friends of his, who participated in several of his projects. What we see throughout his life is how the love for his family and city and his affinity for the aesthetic created San Diego's first citizen, and, as his friend John Nolen wrote, "The Pioneer of City Planning for San Diego."<sup>2</sup>

In the fall of 1905 the family moved from their downtown residence on Ash Street into their beautiful new home on Seventh Avenue, designed by the architectural firm of William S. Hebbard and Irving J. Gill. The house was originally situated on ten acres of gently sloping land immediately adjacent to the City Park, now known as Balboa Park,

and overlooked the Cabrillo Canyon. Soon after the home was completed the remaining property was parceled out to family members, which left a little over four acres for the house, garden, and adjacent canyon. It was by no mistake that the property Marston captured was contiguous to the City Park.

Concurrent with the planning and construction of his home was the movement to address the unplanned and fallow City Park. The park had suffered from municipal and private encroachments: free range for domestic livestock, pistol ranges, a dog pound, and arbitrary plantings. It exhibited an overwhelming need for some sort of a park master plan. George Marston and pioneer horticulturist Kate Sessions had been the leading personalities in understanding the plight of the park, and with their collective sensitivities persuaded the Chamber of Commerce to establish a park, improvement board of which Marston subsequently chaired the park plans committee.<sup>3</sup> At his own expense Marston commissioned landscape architect Samuel Parsons, Jr. from New York to initiate the first master plan in 1903-1904.<sup>4</sup> Parsons came to San Diego in December of 1903 and was followed by his partner George Cooke in July of 1904. Cooke would eventually become the first designer of the Marston family garden.

Park improvements were a reality by 1905 and it became necessary for Kate Sessions to move her thirty-acre growing grounds from the northwest section of the park, adjacent to the Marston property, to make way for new roads. She left in her wake a partially landscaped frontispiece to the Marston home that potentially enhanced the views both to and from the home. Remnant plantings from her nursery site such

as exotic palms (*Butia* and *Phoenix spp.*), stands of sugar gum (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*), a stunning variety of a coral tree (*Erythrina falcata*), and a specimen cork oak (*Quercus suber*), species that still stand today.<sup>5</sup> Marston's relationship with Sessions was one of lifelong mutual admiration. On many occasions in paying tribute to her he remarked: "Botanically speaking, I would call Miss Sessions as perennial, evergreen and ever-blooming," and "Queen Mother of the Whole Floral Kingdom," he added. "Let the state have its [Luther] Burbank, we have our Sessions."<sup>6</sup> Since Sessions was the last word in all horticultural matters in San Diego she struck up an immediate professional relationship with both Parsons and Cooke and became an important and vital resource to them.<sup>7</sup> She knew plant characteristics and what would and would not survive in San Diego.

George Cooke took up residence in San Diego by 1907. Having an engineering background as well as being trained as a gardener, his primary tasks were to implement landscape designs and roadways through City Park and in several areas within San Diego County. In Mary Marston's family chronicle, she writes that things began to happen when Cooke was on the job. "George Cooke came [and] the dirt began to fly!"<sup>8</sup> Having the expertise of Cooke so readily available and personally underwritten, Marston requested his services on the family garden. An outline was drawn which delineated roadways, paths and initial tree plantings. The first trees were planted in 1906 after having to blast holes in the hardpan of the mesa top.<sup>9</sup> Cooke's preliminary design of the garden was in accordance with what Parsons was designing for the western edge of the park along Sixth Avenue. Both men

were practitioners of the Picturesque, English Romantic school of landscape design that had become the nineteenth-century American model for most major city parks in the Northeast and was demonstrated in the works of Frederick Law Olmsted and A. J. Downing.<sup>10</sup>

The picturesque design began to take shape as a large expanse of curvilinear sloping lawn surrounding the house on the west, south and eastern sides was installed. Long swaths of multi-layered shrub massing delineated the edges of the lawn with single-species tree clusters arching toward and framing the architecture. The lawn at first was a South American substitute, *Lippia repens*, which was far more drought tolerant and easier to maintain than conventional grasses.<sup>11</sup> The Lippia grass, however, was removed by 1912 and replaced with bluegrass, later dominated by bermuda. Records are not readily available on most of the garden elements, but this was probably the year that Marston installed an underground cistern to ensure water availability for nearly two acres of thirsty lawn as well as the rest of the grounds. A long drought period had swept through the Southwest until late 1915 and desperate measures by individuals with resources may have been necessary.

The plant palette chosen was one to equal the subtle yet masterful architecture of the emerging architectural style of Irving J. Gill. Stately deodar cedars (*Cedrus deodar*), vertical and lush Canary Island pines, (*Pinus canariensis*), and the canopy of native live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) complemented the home and grounds and created a composite scene of tranquil elegance. Seeing a photograph of the Marston garden for the first time one might not believe it to be a southern California landscape. The large dark wood members of estate style architecture, Boston ivy climbing the detailed red brick, and the entire image embraced by cool-climate, majestic, evergreen trees conjured a picture from quite a different region. However, a second glance would reveal the Eucalyptus in the skyline, the splash of intensely flowering bougainvillea, and many other exotic, fair weather semi-tropicals that display a botanical eclecticism that is possible in San Diego.<sup>12</sup> Conspicuously absent from the garden today are palm trees. During California's late nineteenth century horticultural boom, to which palms were a major contributor, it was very common to see these unique accent trees everywhere. Queen palms (*Arecastrum romanzoffianum* or *Cocos plumosa*) had a very brief role in the northeast part of the garden. Juvenile fan palms (*Washingtonia spp.*) appear near the porte cochere, seen in an early photo, but all have since been removed. Perhaps in this setting they seemed somehow inappropriate. Too soon after the first efforts of landscape construction on the garden began, George Cooke was accidentally killed on a mountain grade while working for the county highway commission. He was laid to

rest in his newly adopted home town in which he had only resided one year. Cooke's widow requested that Marston speak at the funeral, and he eloquently eulogized:

"Our city has recently awakened to the need of preserving its beautiful gifts of nature and of developing higher forms of civic comfort and well-being. And this was the man to whom we looked for counsel and service. He had come to us at the right time, he had secured our confidence and had decided to cast his lot with us. By natural ability, long training and experience, practical sagacity, and tireless industry he was preeminently fitted for the public service to which he was called."<sup>13</sup>

Work on the garden continued with the balance of the design and plant selection being accomplished by Marston and his wife Anna, always with the assistance of Sessions. In the north garden a vegetable patch with citrus trees was planted. A perimeter brick wall, turfed paths, and a rose arbor that extended north to the gate between the properties were also built. Functional elements for a relatively self-sufficient estate such as an incinerator, tool shed and hot house were situated outside the garden wall to the west, concentrating the maintenance tasks in one area. The maintenance areas were clustered around the carriage house/stables, built at the same time as the house in 1905. On the eastern edge of the property a network of cobble paths with low retaining walls and a play area down the slope were constructed. The range of landscape treatment went all the way down to the streambed in the canyon, which is now the Cabrillo Freeway. Marston was pleased with the rustic additions he made, which followed the principles of the Arts and Crafts movement. He wrote to his daughter Mary at one point, "I had the stream artistically recurved." The transition from the more refined garden to the chaparral canyon was enhanced by Marston as he planted more ornamental native species of sumac, (*Rhus integrifolia*) and toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), and broadcasted wildflower seed, further demonstrating his innate sense and respect for what we now know as biotic plant communities or native habitat.<sup>14</sup>

During this early time of home construction and garden planning, Marston was also very involved both personally and financially in the first urban plan for San Diego, generated in 1908 by John Nolen of Cambridge, Massachusetts.<sup>15</sup> An extremely progressive goal at the time, the plan addressed public plazas, a civic center, a planned bay front, streetscaping, and a system of parks and open space. Unfortunately for San Diego other issues prevailed, compromising some of the basic principles of

Nolen's vision; however, the events produced a strong civic minded relationship between Marston and Nolen that would later surface in significant projects.

As the family settled into their home and watched the grounds refine and mature, San Diego was about to go through one of its most significant historic events with the 1915-1916 Panama California Exposition. Marston was preoccupied for quite a few years with the phenomena spawned from this event and the afterglow that California went through from following two international expositions in both San Francisco and San Diego. Afterward, as the interests of a growing city accelerated, particularly downtown and on the waterfront, the need for a comprehensive urban plan became apparent once again. Marston and others re-commissioned Nolen in 1926 to generate another study which would later become the model for early twentieth-century San Diego planning.

As Nolen visited San Diego during this time, Marston also engaged his firm to provide design services for a memorial park and museum on Presidio Hill honoring Father Junipero Serra's first mission site, another significant contribution to the City later becoming a major regional landmark. During a flurry of planning, land acquisition, and negotiations on both the Serra Museum and the urban plan, George and Anna Marston felt the need for an upgrade of their private grounds, especially in the north garden, and asked Nolen to generate preliminary sketches for its improvement.

At first Nolen, who at the time commanded a national reputation and a full schedule based in Cambridge,<sup>16</sup> dispatched a young 24 year old landscape architect from California named Thomas D. Church to visit, photograph, and sketch a beginning plan for the garden.<sup>17</sup> The first plan was well received but in need of critical review by Nolen. Correspondence between Church, Nolen, and Marston continued for a short time and then Church seems to leave the picture. He went on to become one of the country's most innovative landscape architects, practicing mostly in California from the 1930s through the 1950s.<sup>18</sup>

Nolen maintained a very busy schedule at that time in his career and was making plans to sail to Vienna, Austria, for an international town planning conference. Following a more concentrated review of Church's conceptual plan, Nolen assigned his associates Hale J. Walker, as project designer for the garden, and Justin Hartzog as his assistant.<sup>19</sup> Walker took charge of the project and generated many sketches and details for the family to consider. Borrowing from Church, Walker wrote to Marston with his first design narrative:

"The garden as a whole should express the feeling of an outdoor

living room, and as in a living room one usually has two especial points of interest—the hearth with places to sit grouped about it, and, if one is fortunate enough, a view from windows . . . The hearth in the living room becomes the wall fountain in the garden.”<sup>20</sup>

At the time, Miss Mary, the eldest daughter of George and Anna, expressed a strong desire to become involved with the garden planning. During the design process her father often deferred to her and stated in his letters to Nolen and Walker that decisions should include her.<sup>21</sup>

What becomes apparent throughout the correspondence between the principals is that designing a garden in Southern California from Cambridge, Massachusetts, was every bit as difficult as it would seem. In the midst of the two-year period from concept to construction completion, the major players in this scenario travelled extensively. Nolen journeyed to Europe twice and in between had come to San Diego, Miss Mary had sailed to Spain after visiting Chicago and New York, Hale Walker came to San Diego and then went on to Europe, and George Marston travelled to New York and Cambridge. During the construction implementation phase and the selection of actual garden ornamentation, Miss Mary, who by this time was taking the lead in the planning, was corresponding with Walker from Chicago, the *S.S. Olympic*, and an address in Madrid, Spain.<sup>22</sup>

The correspondence between George and Miss Mary and Nolen and Walker was continuous, supportive, and very friendly. Many letters were status reports on the Presidio Hill

project and political strategies in presenting and defending the 1926 urban plan, which was at the heart of the matter for Nolen. Yet, the garden discussions would tend to change the tone of the reports by becoming more intimate and full of imagery during concept and quite specific during construction. Side issues and other projects of Nolen’s were shared, as well as book titles on social and land planning issues that Marston and Nolen enjoyed exchanging.

Walker worked diligently on the garden’s architectural elements: the tea house, garden walls, gates, the pergola/ overlook, and the wall fountain (the hearth). He frequently coordinated through correspondence with Kenneth Gardner, Marston’s on-site supervising landscape architect. Mary returned from Spain with iron trimmed hanging pots, tall iron candelabras and other garden ornaments. Following her arrival home, the garden began to manifest an even more distinct image. She was able to locate tile-topped soft green metal furniture through P. P. Caproni and Brother of Boston, a company that traded with the Marston Department Store, instead of the French Deauville style recommended by Walker.

The proposed wall fountain figurine was one of the most frustrating aspects of ornament acquisition. Since the Nolen staff was familiar with their suppliers on the Eastern seaboard, ordering and shipping became a monumental task especially with the small lead dolphin that both Nolen and Walker had selected. It took nearly six months to take delivery of the piece due to miscommunication and manufacturing delays, while a gaping hole in the

north garden wall awaited its arrival. Mary had also made a modification in the paving for the walks, fearing the possibility of a poor installation. Elaborate details and specifications called for a textured, colored concrete walk with irregular sized stone-like pavers.<sup>23</sup> She chose to substitute the pavers with local Ramona granite flagstone and planted turf in between the joints, resulting in a more natural and regional refinement.

During this time, the Presidio Hill project was under construction. Project architect William Templeton Johnson, a master of Mission Revival architecture,<sup>24</sup> became involved in designing some of the wood detailing on the capitals of the garden tea house, the matching benches, and the corbels over the wall fountain.<sup>25</sup> The design that repeated on each piece was a carving of the sickle-shaped leaves and pods of the blue gum eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*). Probably the most widely planted eucalypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in California, this significant tree was, oddly enough, not planted in the garden. Other modifications to the plan were made; the pergola was originally to have neoclassical round columns but they were changed to square brick pillars, more in keeping with the house’s architecture. Local tile pavers were used for the floor of the tea house as well as decorative tile inlays from Mexico embedded in the back wall.

Generic plant treatments such as hedges or shrubbery and accents were part of the layout, but most of the horticultural element was handled from the San Diego end, applying a modified Sessions plant palette. Creeping fig (*Ficus repens*), false acacia (*Robinia*

*pseudoacacia*), jacaranda (*Jacaranda acutifolia*), cup of gold vine (*Solandra guttata*), and *Bignonia* spp, were some of the signature plantings Sessions used frequently. An unusual and rare tree was planted on the west side of the new garden called a Moreton Bay chestnut (*Castanospermum australe*). The seedling was brought back from Australia by Marston’s son-in-law Will Bade, a naturalist and early Sierra Club member, who was married to his daughter Elizabeth. The garden became a botanical collection as well as a visual pleasure for the family.

Reminiscing and walking the site with John Gallo, a gardener for the Marston’s during the early 1930s, made it possible to imagine how much the gardens and the grounds meant to the family. He remembered working for very warm and caring people and making top wages of \$.50 per hour. The head gardener at the time was a man named Jim Cowie, originally from Scotland, who managed a full-time staff of five men, six days a week, and as Gallo said, “we did everything from scratch.” That meant generating their own mulch, raising plants from seed (in the new lath house), producing their own flatted stock for seasonal revolving color, and many other prudent garden practices. He remembered covering some particularly vulnerable plants with burlap during a cold spell and eating lunch in the shed when it rained. The garden always maintained an area for cut flowers for bouquets in the house; Cowie supposedly grew 14” diameter dahlias and planted the Queen Elizabeth roses, which became Miss Mary’s favorite. Gallo recalled the family having to discontinue placing bouquets in the dining room looking out over the south

terrace because of the birds hitting the glass.<sup>26</sup> Under the expert care of Mr. Cowie the garden won the honor of “Best Large Garden” in both 1930 and 1931 given by the San Diego Floral Association, one of the oldest continually run garden organizations in the country

Many people visited the Marston home and many garden events took place over the decades (two of the daughters were married in the garden) until Miss Mary’s death in 1987 at the age of 107. Yet, no event was as spontaneously perfect as George and Anna’s 50th golden anniversary held after the completion of the formal garden. Marston wrote to Nolen, “We felt so well pleased with the appearance of the garden that we had our fiftieth wedding celebration there May 3rd. [1928]”<sup>27</sup> Nolen replied, “... congratulations to you and Mrs. Marston for what you have accomplished in building up such a splendid family, all of which has been so well balanced by work and success outside the home.”<sup>28</sup> Mary’s account of that day reads like a christening:

“On May 3, 1928 we celebrated father’s and mother’s golden wedding anniversary. The day was so beautiful it seemed to have been made for a garden party. The new formal garden, where the reception was held, was gay with spring borders and with fabulous quantities of yellow roses in pots and baskets sent by friends. East of the garden the canyon slope was carpeted with golden California poppies. No formal invitations were sent, but it was made known that we would be at home that afternoon in the

garden. Between three and four hundred guests came, among them eighteen persons whom father and mother had known for fifty years ...All day, letters, telegrams, and even cablegrams poured in. A beautifully printed testimonial of regard from the five hundred members of the staff of the Marston store was received. Perhaps the greatest satisfaction of the day to father and mother was in having all their children and grandchildren with them. Writing to a friend, father said: “It was one of the happiest days of our lifetime.”<sup>29</sup>

The landscape design and choice of specific species of plant material is as much an interpretation of the times and style as is the architecture. This site is a successful and well preserved composite of the Marston legacy and we are fortunate now to experience the gardens in their full maturity and design vision. As is the phenomenon, in landscapes the ‘filling-in’ or plant maturity takes time, and what we plainly see now is what was in the minds of George Cooke, Kate Sessions, John Nolen, Hale J. Walker, Miss Mary, and, of course, George White and Anna Gunn Marston.

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## End Notes

1. “As Santa Barbara found itself in good hands, horticulturally speaking, so was San Diego also fortunate enough to count among its citizens one whose chief concern was the betterment of his community. This was George Marston, an extraordinary civic figure. Having attained considerable wealth as the owner of the city’s leading department store, Marston shared his profits with the city to which he felt indebted.” Victoria Padilla, *Southern California Gardens* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1961), 96.
2. Mary Gilman Marston, comp., *George White Marston: A Family Chronicle 2* (Los Angeles, 1956), 29.
3. Elizabeth Macphail, *Kate Sessions: Pioneer Horticulturist* (San Diego 1976), 68.
4. “Samual Parsons, Jr. had been superintendent of New York City Parks in 1885. Eventually he went on to be landscape architect to the City of New York and commissioner of parks. Primarily a defender of parks, he was for years a well known and highly respected figure in New York. In private practice he did residential projects in some thirteen states, as well as parks throughout

the country. A prime mover in establishing the American Society of Landscape Architects, he was its president in 1902 and 1906-07.” Norman T. Newton, *Design on the Land* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), 390.

5. MacPhail, *Kate Sessions*, 70.

6. *Ibid.*, 115, 120.

7. In an article recounting K.O.S.’s works for Kate Sessions Day at the 1935 California Pacific Exposition a writer recalled, “When George Cooke, first park superintendent and Parson’s partner, arrived in July 1903, Miss Sessions became his warm friend and advisor.” *San Diego Union*, 22 September 1935, 2:1.

8. “In July, [1903] George Cooke, Mr. Parsons’ partner came - and then the dirt began to fly! Mr. Cooke was on the grounds at six in the morning, superintending the grading at Sixth and Date. . . He studied the planting to be plotted later with Mr. Parsons in New York. He was familiar with California and semi-tropical plants, having worked with them in Kew Gardens (London) when a young man.” Marston, *Family Chronicle*, 2:15.

9. In an excerpt from a memorandum

by G.W. Marston regarding the construction of the new home on Seventh, Marston also noted: “In March and April 1906 the first trees were planted. Pepper trees on Seventh Street from Upas to Brookes, pines at the house and stable entrances, several eucalypts in the rear of the house, the acacia near the stable, three Cedar Deodoras in front of the house, also shrubs and roses.” Marston, *Family Chronicle*, 2:22.

10. “The English influence of Repton emerged under the landscape architect A.J. Downing (1815-1852); but it was left to Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) to initiate the sequence of public parks, of which Central Park, New York (1857) was an early example, that were to capture the imagination of the urban cities of the north.” Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe, *The Landscape of Man*, (London 1975), 279.

11. “Kate recommended, ‘creeping lippia’ . . . as a ground cover in place of Bermuda grass. It is easier to cultivate, is evergreen and especially good for terraces and slopes by the seaside. Furthermore, the more it is walked on the better.” Macphail, *Kate Sessions*, 66.

12. “If the ‘bones’ and structure of the garden reflect English landscaping

traditions, in contrast to many other Southern California gardens, the house and the use of plant materials are pure California eclecticism. Irving Gill was an independent and creative architect during the early days of the Craftsman movement. He and Kate Sessions often worked closely together, and many of their trademarks exist today in this garden: *Ficus repens* is used on the south terrace as plant tracery, Boston ivy is on the eastern side of the house for color, and *Bougainvillea* of an unusual coral pink scrambles over the porte cochere and the kitchen arbor.” Elinor Bade “The Marston Garden,” Typewritten, (San Diego, 1981).

13. Marston, *Family Chronicle*, 2:22.

14. Alice W. Heyneman, ‘Marston Garden,’ *California Garden* (December 1961/January 1962), 10:1.2.

15. Marston, *Family Chronicle*, 2:28.

16. “John Nolen was a pioneering practitioner, author and educator in modern city and regional planning. The first American to identify himself exclusively as a town and city planner, he was at the forefront of the planning profession’s evolution in the first two great eras of societal reform in the newly urbanized and industrialized United States: the

Progressive movement (1900-1917) and the New Deal (1930s).” John L. Hancock, “John Nolen”, in Diane Maddex, ed., *American Landscape Architecture: Designers and Places* (Washington D.C., 1989), 70.

17. John Nolen to G.W. Marston, 3 June 1926, John Nolen Collection, University Archives, Cornell University Libraries, Ithaca, New York.

18. “Thomas Church transformed landscape design from the manipulation of an eclectic range of styles dependent on past models to a completely modern design mode. His influence was considerable, especially in which he excelled-gardens. By the end of the thirties, Church’s designs had become completely abstract and were designed to produce a visual endlessness with a multiplicity of visual foci. His work is especially notable for the masterly way in which he drew from historic precedents without slavishly copying them and from nonrepresentational forms of modern art.” David Streatfield, “Thomas Church,” in Maddox ed., *American Landscape Architecture*, 112-114.

19. “Community planning during the Depression featured . . . three greenbelt towns—(1935-38) Greenbelt, Maryland (Hale Walker),

Greenhills, Ohio (Justin Hartzog and William A. Strong), and Greendale, Wis. (Elbert Peets and Jacob Crane)—sponsored by President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal administration. They remain among the best-known versions of garden city planning in America, although most of the greenbelt acreage in the three eventually succumbed to development pressures.” Arnold R. Alanen, “New Towns and Planned Communities,” in Maddox, ed., *American Landscape Architecture*, 179.

20. Hale J. Walker to G.W. Marston, 26 August 1926, Nolen Collection.

21. “Most of the planting has been done, but we are leaving several matters for decision until Mary arrives.”, Marston to Walker, 1 July 1927, Nolen Collection.

22. Miss Mary G. Marston to Walker, 23 March 1927, Nolen Collection.

23. “An arrangement of stepping-stones using the random rectangular pattern is shown on the accompanying plan for use on the Garden Terrace, as indicated on the general garden plan.” Walker to George Marston, 15 January 1927, Nolen Collection.

24. “San Diego Architect William Templeton Johnson has probably had more impact on the look of San Diego than any other architect.” Dirk Sutro, *Los Angeles Times*, 6 October 1988. “The profession of architecture has been well served by Mr. Johnson. His contributions to design, research, literature, education, and public service fulfill the exacting criteria of vital architecture.” American Institute of Architects honoring Johnson as a Fellow. Washington, D.C., 25 September 1939.

25. “I am also gratified that you have called in Templeton Johnson to execute the garden plan.”, Nolen to George Marston, 23 March 1928, Nolen Collection.

26. Site visit and interview with John Gallo, 13 October 1989 and 9 May 1960.

27. Marston to Nolen, 31 May 1928, Nolen Collection.

28. Nolen to Marston, 16 June 1928, Nolen Collection.

29. Marston, *Family Chronicle*, 2:229. General Reference for Botanical information, Liberty Hyde Bailey *Hortus Third*, (London 1975).

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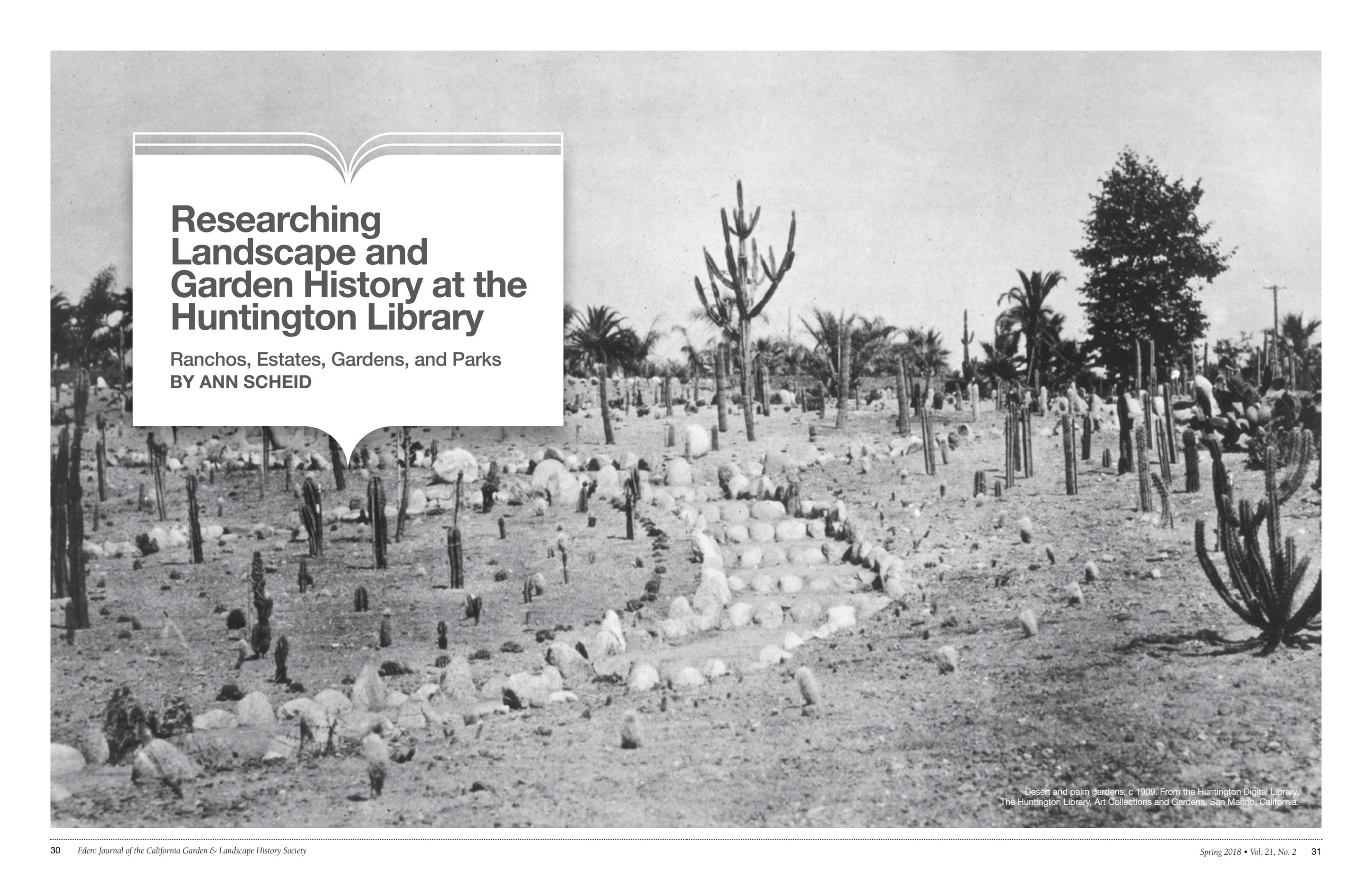
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# Researching Landscape and Garden History at the Huntington Library

Ranchos, Estates, Gardens, and Parks  
BY ANN SCHEID

Desert and palm gardens, c 1909. From the Huntington Digital Library,  
The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Gardens, San Marino, California.

**T**he Huntington Library is world-famous for its collections of rare books and manuscripts documenting English and American literature and history. Less well-known are its holdings on the history of California and the West. This concentration of manuscripts, books, maps, photographs and ephemera is where historians of California gardens and landscape can unearth buried treasures.

Located as it is in one of the outstanding gardens of California, the Huntington is naturally the source for archival and photo collections that document the history of its extensive grounds from its beginnings as the Shorb Ranch through its development under Henry Huntington and later changes since the opening of the gardens to the public in the 1920s. The papers of William Hertrich, the German-trained gardener who became director of the estate grounds, provide fundamental information about the beginnings and development of the garden, especially from a horticultural point of view. The papers contain correspondence, photographs, and plant lists. The archives of the Huntington house photographs of the grounds and of specific plants (many of these are mounted in albums), adding visual documentation to the story. Notable are the many stunning early photos of mature trees, now gone, that lined the roads that still form the basis of circulation in the gardens. The Huntington's Digital Library online provides early photos of the grounds, including the cactus garden, the rose garden and the Japanese garden.

Ironically, one of the most important landscape architects in the country resided at the Huntington from the late 1920s until the mid-1940s. As the wife of the Huntington's director, Max Farrand, Beatrix Farrand might have been expected to have played a role in the design of the Huntington's grounds. Instead, she carried on her major landscape projects in the East, commuting cross-country, while doing some work locally, most notably the design of the campus of Occidental College. The Max Farrand Papers give insight into the lives of the couple in California, providing interesting biographical information about their local contacts, friends, and social events.

Familial ties between the Huntington family and the Bixbys, owners of Rancho Los Alamitos in Long Beach, resulted in the gift of the Rancho Los Alamitos collection, including business records, publications, tract maps for Long Beach subdivisions, and photos of the Rancho tracking the development and urbanization of the ranch lands. This collection is complemented by the papers of Florence Yoch, Pasadena-based landscape architect for the Rancho Los Alamitos gardens.



Opposite: Pasadena's Busch Gardens were a major tourist attraction in the early 1900s. Brewing magnate Adolphus Busch tamed the wild Arroyo Seco in his backyard by terracing the slopes and planting lawns, exotic trees and bedding plants. And then he opened it to the public. Postcard image.

Only recently catalogued, the Florence Yoch Papers at the Huntington comprise her professional papers documenting some one hundred projects with photographs, drawings, office records, travel journals, research materials and writings. Together with her partner Lucile Council, Yoch completed over 200 projects between 1918 and 1972, including major residential gardens, institutional landscapes, and a botanical garden in Mexico, as well as the design of several well-known movie sets. Consult the Online Archives of California for a complete description of the collection.

Besides the ranches of Shorb and the Bixbys, Sunnyslope Ranch, located east of present-day Pasadena, is also represented by papers and photo albums. Owned by Leonard J. Rose and the birthplace of Guy Rose, well-known California Impressionist painter, the ranch played an important role in early California agriculture, especially in developing vineyards using dry farming methods and in wine production.

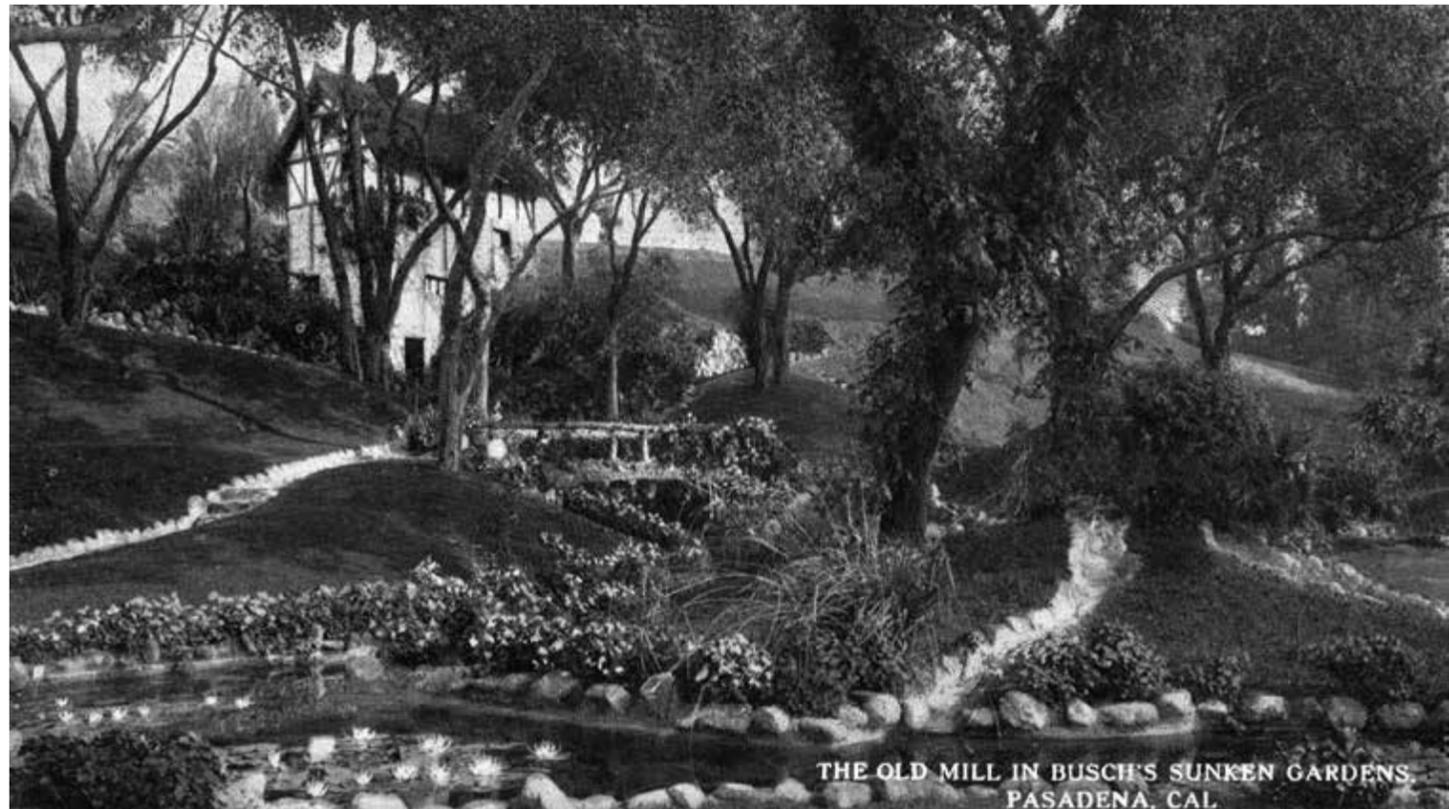
The Huntington's holdings are particularly rich in photographs of early Southern California gardens and landscapes, some dating from

the late nineteenth century. These include the Historical Society of Southern California Collections, which document Los Angeles and surrounding suburbs and landscapes from the 1880s through the 1930s. Parks, streetscapes, trees, and large residences set in their gardens are included among the 3,500 photographs. An even larger collection of more than 10,000 photos is that of the Automobile Club of Southern California, with a strong concentration on the 1920s and 1930s. The Auto Club promoted the tourist industry and motoring in the region with photos in their publication, *Touring Topics*. Indexes and an almost complete collection of issues of *Touring Topics* can also be found on the Huntington's shelves.

Charles Francis Saunders, naturalist, horticulturist, and garden designer, and his wife Mira assembled over 10,000 photographs (most from the 1910s-1920s) documenting Saunders' travels in California and the Southwest, missions, natural wonders, and flora. Some of these photos illustrate his many books and articles on landscapes, plants and gardens. Notable books by Saunders include a book on Carmelita, one of Pasadena's early

parks, originally owned by horticulturist Jeanne Carr, mentor of John Muir, and now the site of the Norton Simon Museum. Manuscripts of Mira's articles for the Pasadena Star-News on local gardens, parks, and trees, with accompanying photographs, are also in the collections as well as photos of the Saunders' own garden, an Arts and Crafts garden adapted to the arid climate.

William M. Clarke's architectural negative collections (1920-1950) of about 4,500 photos stem from his work for *Architectural Digest* and other architectural publications. As a professional photographer, Clarke photographed buildings and settings for major institutions, such as Caltech, USC, Scripps College, Huntington Library, and commercial developments and buildings such as the I. Magnin stores and the Hope Ranch tract in Santa Barbara. Landscape architects represented in the Clarke collection include Katherine Bashford, Ralph Cornell, Lucile Council, Beatrix Farrand, A.E. Hanson, Paul Howard, Edward Huntsman-Trout, Benjamin Morton Purdy, Paul Thiene, and Florence Yoch. The collection includes an even longer



THE OLD MILL IN BUSCH'S SUNKEN GARDENS, PASADENA, CAL.



A WALK IN BUSCH'S SUNKEN GARDENS, PASADENA, CAL.

Above and opposite: Thousands of tourists strolled through Busch Gardens, which also became the setting for many Hollywood films, especially in the 1930s. Postcard image.

list of the region's major architects of the early twentieth century.

The Maynard Parker Collection documents the post-war generation with 58,000 images. A photographer who worked for Elizabeth Gordon, the formidable editor of *House Beautiful*, as well as for other shelter and architectural magazines, Parker (active 1930-1974) recorded the work of the burgeoning Modernist movement in Southern California as well as the work of the Greene brothers, whose functional architecture was embraced by the modernists. Parker's photographs include the West Coast states, as well as occasional jobs in the Midwest, Southwest and East Coast. His methodical process of photographing architecture and landscape, proceeding through the spaces in a logical manner and adding subtle lighting to reveal details, sets his photos apart from those of most of his contemporaries. Among the landscape architects whose work he documented are: Katherine Bashford; Douglas and Maggie Baylis; Arthur and Marie Berger; Thomas Church; Joseph Copp; Garrett Eckbo; Eckbo, Royston & Williams; C. Jacques Hahn; Lawrence Halprin; Edward Huntsman-Trout; Fred Lang; Ruth Shellhorn; Tommy Tomson; Harriet Wimmer; and Florence Yoch. Key images from this collection can be found online in the Huntington Digital Library at [www.huntington.org](http://www.huntington.org). Besides photos, the collection contains Parker's correspondence with clients, editors,

other photographers and many persons of historical interest.

A large collection devoted to a specific topic is the Busch Gardens Collection, a recent donation by researcher Gary B. Cowles, who compiled a collection of biographical information, images and published articles about this early tourist attraction in Pasadena. Cowles plumbed the depths of local libraries, archives, and collections and even traveled to St. Louis to visit the Anheuser-Busch archives. While it consists primarily of secondary materials, the Cowles collection most likely contains almost all that there is to find about the subject.

The Huntington holds major collections of photographs and papers documenting the development of Los Angeles and the region. Although not specifically devoted to gardens and landscapes, these collections are worth delving into since they often provide images and information about architecture, tract development, urban planning and design, streetscapes, parks, trees, and notable estates. The B. D. Jackson photo collection provides a visual history of the growth of Los Angeles and many of the San Gabriel Valley's suburban communities, Pasadena, Hollywood, Glendora, La Canada, La Crescenta, and Glendale in the 1920s-1930s as well as an overview of Jackson's career as a landscape and scenic view photographer in California and the western United States.

The Alfred M. Ellis collection was compiled

to illustrate his talks on California history. Focused on the Los Angeles area, the images show the growth and development of the region around the turn of the twentieth century (1850s-1920s). Ernest Marquez, a native Angeleno and descendant of Californios, became a collector who frequented flea markets, book fairs, thrift shops and second-hand bookstores, acquiring thousands of photographs and ephemera documenting the history and development of the Los Angeles region, especially the area of Santa Monica and its surroundings, the site of Rancho Boca de Santa Monica, once owned by his forefathers.

Numerous small family albums preserved at the Huntington document scenes of Altadena, Pasadena, South Pasadena, Los Angeles, and other areas of Southern California. The James F. Crank collection contains a late 1900s album of photographs of the Fair Oaks Ranch (now Pasadena/Altadena). A rare album of photographs from Bakersfield depicts the William S. Tevis estate and its Mission Revival architecture from the 1910s by architect Henry A. Schulze. Paging through these often anonymous albums can uncover such surprises as a snapshot of a group of craftsmen proudly standing under a drooping pepper tree beside a product of their skills: the dining room buffet of the Robert R. Blacker house, widely considered to be the Greene brothers' masterpiece.

Another collection contains a few

drawings by landscape architect William Peschelt, a German immigrant known for his design work on the 60-acre estate for Arthur Letts in Los Feliz in the early 1900s. Photographs of the Letts house and garden are part of this small collection.

In addition to the periodical *Touring Topics* noted above, another magazine, *California Southland*, published in Pasadena from 1918-1928, is an excellent source of information on architecture and gardens in the region, as well as on art and other cultural interests. The Huntington owns a complete set of this key periodical, which later became *California Arts and Architecture*, the leading publication of the Southern California Modernist Movement. *California Southland* is also available online from the California State Library, with keyword search capability. Unfortunately, the photo archives of the magazine have been lost. However, there is a photo archive of another periodical to explore at the Huntington, that of Eugene Swarzwald's Pictorial California and the Pacific collection (1925-1968), named for the magazine published by Swarzwald. The collection holds images of California and the West, many of them produced by the Keystone Photo Service, a company founded by Swarzwald. The Keystone studio is a familiar source of many early photos of Los Angeles and the region.

Information regarding Los Angeles parks and park planning can be found in the

Olmsted Brothers report *Parks, Playgrounds and Beaches for the Los Angeles Region* (1930), and Cornell, Bridgers and Troller's *Master Plan for Elysian Park* (1971). A report by the Oakland Park Commission in 1910 is also at the Huntington. More recent collections of papers of Los Angeles government officials John Anson Ford (1928-1971), and Kenneth Hahn (1945-1973) contain materials on parks and park planning.

As a backup to the primary materials, manuscripts, photos and ephemera, the Huntington's shelves contain a selection of books on gardens, gardening, horticulture, urban planning and design, agriculture and other topics of interest to CGLHS members. Researchers can access the catalog at [www.huntington.org](http://www.huntington.org) and the archival collections at [www.oac.cdlib.org](http://www.oac.cdlib.org). Contact Readers Services to arrange a visit. Renewable one-day passes are available for researchers with special projects. ■

Ann Scheid is Curator of the Greene and Greene Archives (Gamble House, USC) located at the Huntington Library. She is a member of the CGLHS board and has written several articles for *Eden* as well as organized tours and talks for CGLHS. She is the author of several books on Pasadena history, as well as articles and book chapters on the history of the Gamble House and the history of architecture and city planning in Southern California.

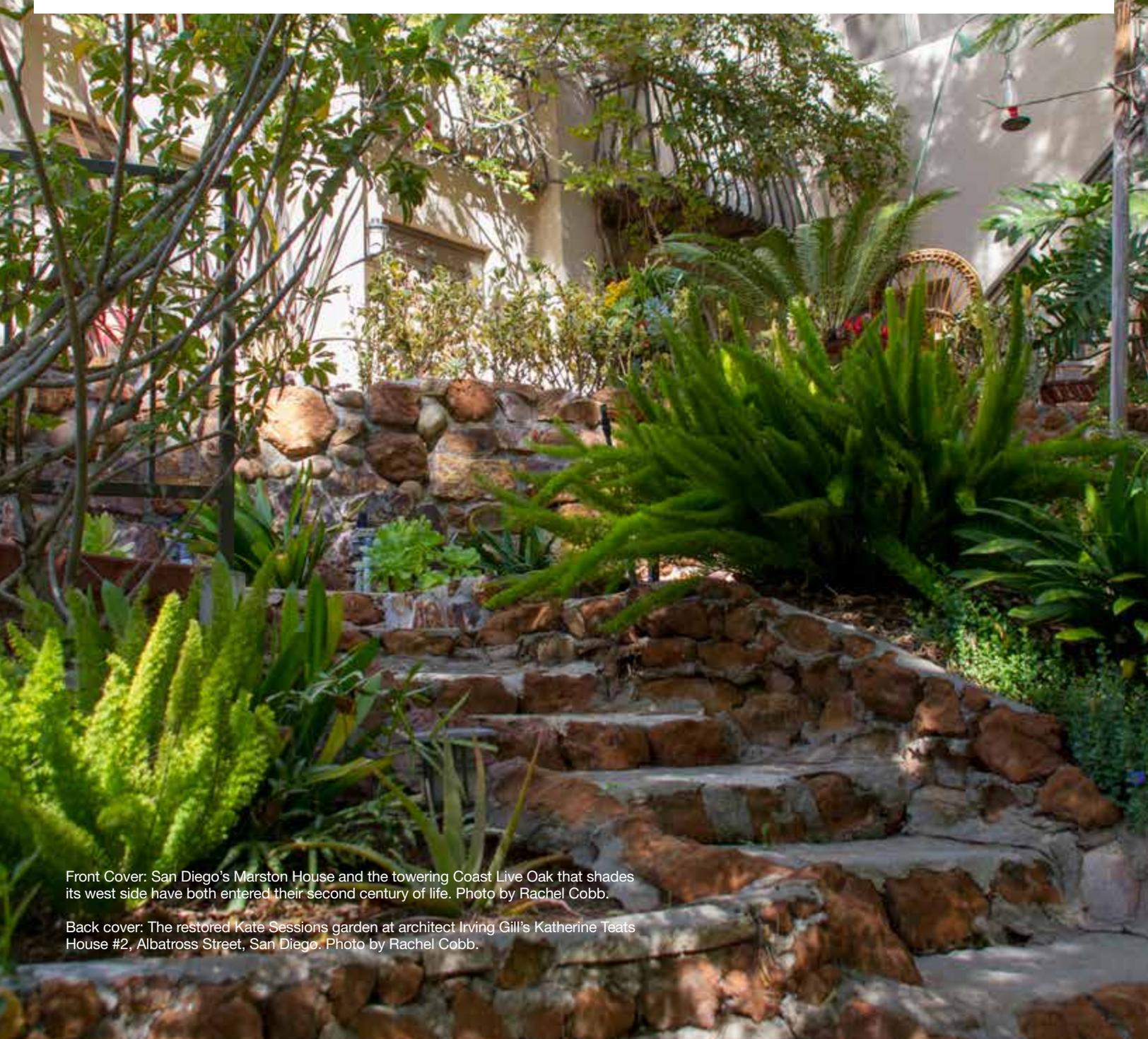
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Front Cover: San Diego's Marston House and the towering Coast Live Oak that shades its west side have both entered their second century of life. Photo by Rachel Cobb.

Back cover: The restored Kate Sessions garden at architect Irving Gill's Katherine Teats House #2, Albatross Street, San Diego. Photo by Rachel Cobb.