Guide to the George Marston Correspondence Collection

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George Marston Correspondence Collection

Collection number: PC.0017

Pomona College Archives
Claremont, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title:
George Marston Correspondence Collection

Dates:
1910-1950

Collection number:
PC. 0017

Creators:

Extent:
.25 linear feet (1 box)

Repository:
Pomona College. Pomona College Archives. Claremont, CA 91711

Abstract:
The collection contains correspondence between George Marston and Pomona College presidents James Blaisdell, Charles Edmunds, and E. Wilson Lyon, regarding board of trustee meetings, fundraising, and campus planning projects.

Physical location:
Please consult repository.

Language(s):
English

Access
Collection open for research.

Publication Rights
All requests for permission to publish must be submitted in writing to the Archives.

Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], George Marston Correspondence Collection, Pomona College Archives. Pomona College. Claremont, CA 91711

Biographical Note
1887 Joins Pomona College’s original board of trustees. He is the first president of the board of trustees and remains an active member of the board for more than fifty years.

1899 With botanists David Cleveland and Belle Angler, persuades the San Diego City Council to pass an ordinance setting aside 364 acres of pueblo lands, which later become the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve.

1902 Contributes funds to the San Diego Park Commission for a comprehensive plan for Balboa Park.
1905  Brings Mr. Cooke of Samuel Parsons and Company to visit the Pomona College campus and meet with the Executive Committee of the Board, leading to the purchase and development of The Woods and Blanchard Park sites (thereafter known as The Wash).

1907  Purchases Presidio Hill, which he privately develops as a park in order to preserve the site.

1910  Elected president of the Pomona College Board of Trustees.

1913, 1917  Unsuccessful candidate for mayor of San Diego against Charles F. O’Neill and Louis J. Wilde.

1919  Donates $100,000 to Pomona College for the formation and endowment of a central quadrangle.

1928  Founds and is first president of the Serra Museum in Presidio Park.

1929  Donates Presidio Park and the Serra Museum to the City of San Diego.

1929  Donates land for Harper Hall at Claremont Graduate University.

1935  Donates for reconstruction of Pearsons Hall at Pomona College.

1935  Donates for the building of Blaisdell Hall, a women’s residence hall at Pomona College.

1936  Retires as president of the Pomona College Board of Trustees, named Honorary President of the Board of Trustees.

1946  George Marston died at age 95 at his home in San Diego.

Born in Wisconsin and educated at Beloit College and the University of Michigan, George White Marston had moved to San Diego, established a successful dry goods business, and become a respected member of that community when, in 1887, he became a founding trustee of Pomona College. The youngest member of the fledgling college’s board, he was to serve for a remarkable 59 years, 26 of those as president. His impact on Pomona was as lasting as it was long.

The College’s first decades were dominated by financial problems. In 1895, Marston was one of three board members called upon to help manage a budget crisis; his leadership and personal monetary contributions played a significant role in minimizing its impact and that of others that followed during the period E. Wilson Lyon, sixth president and historian of the College, termed “the years of crisis.”

Marston had an abiding interest in landscape architecture, and maintained a large garden at his home in San Diego; many of his gifts to the College involved improvements to the grounds. He was, for example, largely responsible for inspiring the 1905 acquisition of a 64-acre parcel of land to the east of the campus. Bringing in a NY landscape architect, he helped persuade fellow Trustee Nathan Blanchard to purchase the land as a gift to the College, which in turn pledged $2500 to develop a park and an annual amount for maintenance. Blanchard Park (“The Wash”) remains today one of the best-loved areas of campus. Three years later, when architect Myron Hunt’s 1908 campus plan was approved, it was Marston who funded the creation of the green that centered Hunt’s design. Marston Quadrangle, which took form between 1919 and 1923, was the first work of Ralph Cornell ’14, a graduate of Harvard School of Landscape Architecture and the first landscape architect to set up practice in Los Angeles. Subsequently, Marston also funded the landscaping of Carnegie Library.

In 1929, funds for Frary Hall, the Clark campus refectory, were provided by Marston; insisting on anonymity, he requested the hall be named for Lucien Frary, the congregational minister who had followed Charles Burt Sumner, Pomona’s first administrator, as pastor of Pilgrim Congregational Church in Pomona. And in 1930, it was Marston who made it possible to prepare the east end of the Quad for Bridges Auditorium (“Big Bridges”) given by Appleton Shaw Bridges, who had also donated Bridges Hall of Music (1915). The site chosen for the auditorium was, at the time, occupied by an unsightly heating plant, complete with tall smokestacks. This was removed and, at the same time, the original Renwick gymnasium moved farther east. Marston, who was a friend of the Bridges family, believed that: “Since this would inevitably be a very massive building it should have an ample foreground, and with Bridges Hall of Music the companion building nearby, a location east of the large open quadrangle framed in a vista and trees and shrubs seemed ideal.” Along the way, Marston also played a significant role as one of the initial trustees of the Claremont Colleges consortium, incorporated in 1925-6, supported the cost of improvements to Pearsons and Blaisdell halls, and donated land for Harper Hall at Claremont Graduate University.
Marston’s beneficence was not limited to Pomona College. In San Diego, he was instrumental in the preservation of pueblo land (1899) that later became Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, and in commissioning a comprehensive plan for Balboa Park (1902). After unsuccessful bids to become Mayor (1913, 1917), he founded and presided as president of the Serra Museum in Presidio Park (1928), later donating park and museum to the City.

Marston retired as president of the Pomona College board in June 1936; named Honorary President, he remained an active trustee. On Founders Day 1937, the fiftieth anniversary of the College’s founding, Marston was honored, the presentation noting the “graciousness of spirit that has always distinguished him among his fellow men.”

George Marston died in 1946 at age 95. In his history of the College, E. Wilson Lyon wrote: “Mr. Marston was the embodiment of Pomona’s highest ideals, and he left an incomparable legacy to the college he loved so deeply.” Marston was recognized on Founders Day of that year, and in addition to spoken tributes, the College published a book in his honor titled the Education of George W. Marston, written by Professor Hubert Herring.

Scope and Content of Collection
The collection contains correspondence between George Marston and Pomona College presidents James Blaisdell, Charles Edmunds, and E. Wilson Lyon, regarding board of trustee meetings, fundraising, and campus planning projects. Also included are news clippings regarding George Marston’s death and correspondence between Anna Marston and E. Wilson Lyon.

Indexing Terms
Marston, George W. (1850-1946)
Blaisdell, James Arnold, 1867-1957
Edmunds, Charles K. (Charles Keyser), 1876-
Lyon, E. Wilson (Elijah Wilson), 1904-1989
Pomona College (Claremont, Calif.)
College trustees

Box 1, Folder 1  Correspondence with James Blaisdell, 1910, 1912, 1915-1923
Box 1, Folder 2  Correspondence with James Blaisdell, 1913, 1915, 1918, 1920-1925, 1928, 1930, 1932, 1934-1936, 1942
Box 1, Folder 3  Correspondence and clippings, 1924-1926, 1946-1947, 1950
Box 1, Folder 4  Correspondence with Charles Edmunds, 1928-1941
Box 1, Folder 5  Correspondence with E. Wilson Lyon, 1941-1945