

MR. MARSTON'S STORE

A nostalgic look at our shopping past



Long gone are the genteel days of shopping when hats and gloves were *de rigueur* and Marston's department store was the hub for all things fashion and furniture in downtown San Diego. Outlet malls and online shopping have replaced what once was a gracious age of unhurried pleasure, gathering with friends for lunch or tea in the middle of the shopping day.

The Marston Store founder, George White Marston, was one of the visionary and early San Diego leaders whose influence and philanthropy spanned decades, nurturing a sense of community for the city. Besides his department store,

Marston was instrumental in the planting of Balboa Park for the 1915 Exposition, bought and donated Presidio Park and Serra Museum to the city, restored the San Diego Mission and created Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

Marston was a young man when he sailed into San Diego in 1870, and he quickly found a need for supplies in his new town. His retailing experience began with a brief stint of store ownership with Charles Hamilton in 1873. Five years later their partnership ended. Hamilton stayed with groceries and Marston with dry goods.

It was August 8, 1878 when Marston opened his first store at Fifth Avenue and D Street (now,

After the death of daughter Mary Marston in 1987, the family bequeathed the Marston home and gardens to the city. The Marston House Museum & Gardens is open to the public, as one of the few period Arts and Crafts house museums in the country.

Marston House Museum & Gardens

3525 Seventh Ave., at Upas Street, adjacent to Balboa Park

Open Friday-Monday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; 45-minute tours begin every half hour; last tour starts at 4 p.m.

Cost: Adults, \$15; seniors and students, \$12; children ages 6-12, \$7; kids 5 and younger, free

Contact: 619-297-9327, sohosandiego.org

Broadway). His advertised offerings included gloves, handkerchiefs and corsets. A boy's sailor suit was \$4.75. A man's suit sold for \$10-\$25.

This year, on August 8, 2018, 140 years to the day, Save Our

Heritage Organisation (SOHO) will open a new permanent exhibit at the George White and Anna Gunn Marston House Museum, adjacent to Balboa Park and designed by Hebbard and Gill in 1905 as the Marston



Left: Treasures in the exhibit will feature one of the first charge cards for Marston's, a never-used pair of nylon stockings with receipt and George Marston's leather wallet.

Below: Paper ephemera includes newspaper ads from several decades and a whimsical map by Jo Mora of San Diego history, commissioned by Marston in 1928 for the store's 50th anniversary.

Bottom: 1940s woman's suit, hat and men's ties; even the hanger is vintage Marston Company.

Facing page: Vintage womens' hats and mens' straw boaters from The Marston Company department store will be part of the permanent display at the Marston House Museum in Balboa Park beginning in August of this year.

family home. The exhibition looks back on the Marston family and chronicles the founding of a small dry goods business that eventually became one of Southern California's most iconic department stores.

That first dry goods store moved three times. By 1896, it was at Fifth and C, where electric lights were installed and an elevator rose to the top floor. And by 1912, its final—and largest location—was on the north side of C Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues, and it had been renamed The Marston Company. Horse-drawn buggies shared the road with new motorcars.

By the store's 50th anniversary in 1928, everything had its own department, including silks, china and gifts. Toys were in the basement and home furnishings had a special Spanish room.

For years, a profusion of fragrant lilacs were brought down from Julian each spring and placed on every counter in the store. In December, shoppers would find the store aflame with San Diego-grown

poinsettias and other fabulous holiday decor.

On view at this exhibit will be George Marston's personal leather wallet, the Marston's charge card (about the size of a stick of gum), the signature hatboxes, Christmas gift boxes and rolls of lemon yellow-and-white striped wrapping paper.

While SOHO has already collected a trove of old photographs, a few hats and suits, ties and a pair of never-used nylon stockings in their original box, it needs a wide range of items from every decade of the store's existence. So start looking! Contact friends and family; dig in your closet and trunks; and donate memorabilia, photographs, clothing or furnishings you might have from Marston's—including men's, women's or children's clothing (excluding furs, which can't be stored properly) or hats with the Marston label on it.

To give, contact the SOHO office in Old Town, 619-297-9327, SOHOSandiego@aol.com. ❖



MARSTON'S TEA ROOM FRESH COCONUT CREAM PIE



Marston Tearoom Fresh Coconut Cream Pie, photographed on a length of vintage Marston Company signature yellow-and-white striped wrapping paper.

Marston's Tea Room, designed by Sam Hamill, opened in 1955 against a backdrop of antique Japanese screens. Famous for its Fresh Coconut Cream Pie, the restaurant reprinted the recipe in a small cookbook for the tea room's fifth anniversary. We reprint the recipe here. SOHO will be serving this pie at the opening of the Marston's department store exhibit in August (see page 96). Friends of the Marston House volunteer, Kimberly McKean, baked one for our photo shoot.

Makes 1 pie

Prepare: one baked 9-inch pie shell

Filling:

2/3 c. cornstarch
1 1/4 c. sugar
1 1/2 t. salt
1 qt. scalded milk
4 egg yolks, beaten
2 T. butter
1 1/2 t. vanilla
2/3 c. coarsely chopped, fresh coconut (not packaged)
1 c. whipped cream, slightly sweetened

Mix cornstarch, sugar and salt and add it to the scalded milk, stirring until thickened and smooth.

Add a little of the hot mixture to the beaten egg yolks, then slowly stir the egg yolks into the hot mixture.

Cook 5 minutes and remove from heat.

Add butter and vanilla and set aside to cool.

Add 1/3 c. coconut to the cooled filling and pour the filling into the pie shell.

Spread whipped cream over the filling and sprinkle with remaining coconut.

Chill well before serving. ❖

