

## Chapter 11

# THE SPRECKELS ORGAN PAVILION IN BALBOA PARK

The Spreckels Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park would not exist if it were not for a timely and costly donation by John D[iedrich] Spreckels (1853-1926), whose name the Organ and the Pavilion proudly bear. John D. Spreckels was the son of Claus Spreckels (1823-1908), an immigrant to the United States and to California from Hanover, Germany, and founder of a sugar empire in California and in Hawaii. John D. was one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in San Diego County. He had decided to move to Coronado, then part of San Diego, from San Francisco after the disastrous 1906 earthquake. In doing so, he left behind in San Francisco his three brothers, Adolph B.(1857-1924), Claus A.(1858-1946), and Rudolph (1872-1958) He being the older brother and Adolph the second oldest, a bond existed between them that he did not share with Claus A. and Rudolph. At times he competed with his two younger brothers, with whom he differed in politics and temperament . . . he being more starchly conservative.



John D. and his brother Adolph were the holders of many San Diego enterprises, including the Southern California Water Company, the San Diego Electric Railway Company, the Point Loma Railroad, the *San Diego Union* and *San Diego Tribune* newspapers, the San Diego and Coronado Ferry Company, the First National Bank of San Diego, the Spreckels Theater, the Mission Beach Company, the Savage Tire Company, the Bank of Coronado, the Coronado Country Club, the Coronado Tent City, the

Coronado Water Company, and the Hotel del Coronado, whose expansion they left in the hands of carefully chosen associates. While the brothers held investments outside San Diego County, including several sugar companies, the Oceanic Steamship Company and J.D. and A.B. Spreckels Securities, John D. realized the success of the San Diego enterprises depended on the good will of San Diego citizens and the expanding prosperity of the region.

Whatever John D. Spreckels' religious convictions—and they appear to be sturdily Protestant—he endorsed the philosophy of the Good Steward as expounded in the New Testament and by contemporary idealists. He was not a robber baron and he was many degrees removed from the imperial status of Henry P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and Edward H. Harriman. Part of his aspiration to become a Good Steward can be traced to his father, Claus and his brother Adolph. But writers have praised all the siblings for their good works and, in the case of Rudolph, for their reforming zeal.(1)

Raymond Clary has shown how Claus Spreckels, his son Adolph B. and Adolph's wife Alma de Bretteville contributed to the development of Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. In 1902 a lake in the park was named "Spreckels Lake," in honor of Adolph B. Spreckels, President of the Park Commissioners.(2)

John D.'s gifts to Coronado and to San Diego were many, including the Coronado Public Library and donations to the San Diego Zoo, Mercy Hospital, and the Masonic Temple of San Diego. As a subscriber to the Calvinist work ethic, he believed that the poor should help themselves. He once said, "It's damn Spreckels, except when the hat is being passed around."(3)

Not the least of John D.'s benefactions was his gift to the Panama-California Exposition, to Balboa Park, and, to, as he put it, "the people of San Diego" and to "the people of all the world"(4) of the Spreckels Organ and Pavilion. John D.'s and Adolph's partnership extended to the Organ and Pavilion in Balboa Park, for which each paid \$50,000. As with the Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park, Adolph's role in creating the Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco was contributory. He put up the money while his wife Alma oversaw the building and furnishing of the Palace. As a tribute to his brother, who was dying from syphilis, John D. paid \$89,750 for an indoor/outdoor, 4-manual, 63 ranks, 4,307 pipes, Skinner organ for the

Palace. Adolph never saw the completed Palace nor heard the organ as the Palace was opened to the public on Armistice Day, November 11, 1924, and the organ was dedicated January 11, 1925, several months after Adolph's death June 29, 1924.(5)

John D. was determined that the small city of San Diego's plan for a successful Panama-California Exposition would succeed. He knew that a successful Exposition would be good for his business, but he also may have derived satisfaction from competing with San Francisco, the City he had left and where his siblings resided. Richer than merchant George W. Marston (1850-1946) but perhaps not richer than his fellow San Diegan and rival newspaper owner E. W. Scripps (1854-1926), he contributed to subscriptions for the Exposition, promoted its bonds in his newspapers, served as the Exposition's vice president, promised to bankroll the Exposition should it encounter financial difficulties, and, with his brother Adolph, donated the Spreckels Organ and Pavilion and the services of Dr. Humphrey J. Stewart (1854-1932) and an organ tuner for the two-year run of the Exposition, whose contracts they extended after the Exposition was over.(6) Dr. Stewart's engagement marked the second time he was an official organist for an Exposition as he acted in that capacity for the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York.(7)

One of John D.'s interests was Mission Cliffs Gardens, located on a south crest overlooking Mission Valley. The Gardens had been established as a companion feature of the San Diego Electric Railway, owned by the Spreckels interests. Despite the importance of this business to John D., he offered to donate the Organ and its Pavilion to the Panama-California Exposition when he could as easily have kept these features as an attraction at his own recreational park.(8)

Professor of Music Emerita at Whittier College, Whittier, California, Orpha Ochse found in the archives of the Austin Company in Hartford, Connecticut, the original contract for the Spreckels Organ between the Austin Company and the San Diego Electric Railway, dated May 16, 1913. The price was \$19,500. An inference can be drawn from this contract that shortly after it was drafted, the Spreckels Companies decided to put the organ in Balboa Park rather than in Mission Cliff Gardens (an ancillary of the San Diego Electric Railway) and to pay an additional \$14,000 to increase its specifications.(9)

The circumstances that prompted John D. to make his gift to San Diego rather than to keep the organ as an asset of his business enterprises were not as clear as the *San Diego Union*, the newspaper John D. owned, made them out to be. As a co-owner of the San Diego Electric Railway, John D. and his fellow businessmen and supporters, Joseph W. Sefton, Jr. and D. C. ("Charlie") Collier wanted to put a connection through the center of Balboa Park, in the short term, to allow access to the Exposition, and, in the long term, to allow commuter traffic from downtown San Diego to land north and northeast of Balboa Park then being developed.

Together with whatever plotting was involved in putting a railway in the center of Balboa Park, a plan was underway to move the location of the Exposition from the park's southern border to its center mesa, a move which led to the resignation of the Exposition's landscape architect, John C. Olmsted. John D. is alleged to have held the offer of the Organ Pavilion and the fulfillment of his pledges to the Exposition fund in abeyance until he was assured his railway would be built.(10) In support of this supposition, a concordance existed between the October 26, 1913 offer of the organ and the October 28, 1913 Park Commission approval of the railway.

Panama-California Exposition officials were eager to get the Organ for the Exposition. A music pavilion had long been advocated for Balboa (City) Park. A decision had to be made where to put the gift. A site behind the California State Building, now occupied by the San Diego Zoological Hospital, seemed to be the answer.(11) However, the site was out-of-the-way. Exposition officials suggested a more prestigious site at the head of Plaza de Panama. Exposition architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue and his assistant Carleton M. Winslow supported this site, but when the Sacramento Valley Commission held out for this spot, the officials asked Spreckels to look elsewhere.(12)

Whether he was serious or not, John D. proposed putting the Organ Pavilion on the grounds of the old Howard Tract, where the U.S. Naval Hospital was to be located, outside the Exposition grounds\*.(13) Officials then decided that Brazil and other South American countries were not going to fulfill their promises to erect buildings for the Exposition, and offered Spreckels a location at the south end of the Via de los Estados extension of the Plaza de Panama rather than at the head of the Plaza. This was the site chosen.(14)

When architect Carleton Winslow wrote his critique of the Exposition, he expressed his disapproval of the southern site, but San Diegans were so grateful for the gift, they overlooked or put up with the imperfections of the location.(15) In his book, *The Architecture and Gardens of the San Diego Exposition*, Winslow gave the Spreckels Organ Pavilion short shrift. He spent most of his time praising the view of downtown San Diego from the peristyle rather than describing the Pavilion's features and functions.(16)

Winslow claimed the Organ Pavilion's location facing north brought the sun directly into the faces of spectators, a fact many sun-burned onlookers can confirm.(17) Organist and Spreckels Organ Society supporter Kenneth Herman, who wrote a history of the Spreckels Organ Pavilion, found something positive to say about the location, which Winslow, an architect and not an organist, would not have known; this is: "the organ faces north to protect the pipes from the sun's direct rays."(18) Spreckels Organ historian Edward Barr went further in justifying the north-facing position for south storms over San Diego would not be able to put rain into the organ, a fact yacht and steamship owner John D. Spreckels would undoubtedly have known.. "This is why—even when it rains today—the audience gets wet but the organ stays dry."(19)

John D. chose Harrison Albright to design the Organ Pavilion. The design was finalized before construction began. Albright was a self-taught and successful Los Angeles architect, whom Spreckels noticed when Albright arrived in San Diego to design the U. S. Grant Hotel, opposite Horton Plaza Park in downtown San Diego. Albright's work for Spreckels included the *San Diego Union* Building, the Spreckels Theater Building, and the San Diego Hotel in downtown San Diego, and the Spreckels mansion, Coronado Bank Building, and Public Library in Coronado. John L. Wright, second son of architect Frank Lloyd Wright and an employee of Albright's architectural firm, designed the Golden West Hotel, a hotel for working people in downtown San Diego, another link in the long chain of Spreckels enterprises.(20)

The Wurster Construction Company of San Diego, the same company that built the California State Building in Balboa Park, built the Organ Pavilion. The Tracy Brick and Art Stone Company of Chula Vista made and set art stone ornament on the central building and on the colonnade.

Architectural publications that accompanied the Panama-California Exposition did not mention the Organ Pavilion. They printed photographs, but omitted text. One reason for this neglect was that Albright's Italian-Renaissance design was conventional rather than innovative as were Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue's designs for exposition buildings, derived from churches and palaces in Old Spain and Old Mexico.

While an experimenter in reinforced concrete, Albright was conservative in his choice of decoration. He may have got the angel and satyr heads, flowers, leaf clusters, lyres, quatrefoils, scrolls, shells, etc. that he lavished on cornices and around the great central arch and side doors, windows and plaques from copy books or from sculptors whom he chose to execute the designs. Some of this appliqué can be seen in the Spreckels (Theater) Building in downtown San Diego, but more is visible on the Organ Pavilion. A proliferation of symbolic filigree exists on the main structure and a lesser supply on the balustrade, atop plain Corinthian-style columns, in the colonnade. Angel heads blowing two trumpets on the terminal arches of each colonnade belong to the same festive family as winged angels blowing trumpets at the top of engaged columns on the four corners of the main building. These angel heads and heads of Pan playing pipes on side arches at the end of the colonnades stressed the musical function of the Organ Pavilion. As an addendum to the above, "a little old lady" informed Edward Barr in 1997 that she had worked with Albright on the Organ Pavilion and that the faces on the four angels on the main Pavilion were modeled from a cast Albright made of his wife's face—"the only angel in my life." It is too late—eighty-two years plus after the event—to confirm the accuracy of this statement.(21)

Bound by ethics not to criticize the work of a fellow architect, Winslow, in his February 20, 1917 letter to Dr. Hewett, simply stated that the Organ Pavilion was "too ornate." By "ornate", he referred to a superfluity of decoration. Pavilion and colonnade could benefit from less ornament and from more refinement in the ornament used. A disproportion of scale exists between the larger ornament immediately below the gable and in the elaborate arch above the organ and the smaller ornament on east and west sides of the great arch and on east and west ends of the colonnade.

Eugen Neuhaus, professor of decorative design at the University of California, wrote more about the design of the Organ Pavilion than did other writers. His words were not encouraging:

We have by this time arrived at the organ—that most impressive feature of the Exposition. Architecturally it is not very convincing, the pygmy scale of the colonnade as contrasted with the great bulk of the central part, housing the mechanism of the organ. Of all the architecture of the Exposition it is to my mind the most uninteresting, most untemperamental creation.(22)

Agreeing with Neuhaus, San Diego art, architecture and music critic James Britton, II described the Spreckels Organ Pavilion with his usual tongue-in-cheek as "an octopus, or duo-pus, sprawled out there with a giant head and two long curving arms to strangle you." He went on: ". . . it stands today as a rare monument to the mix of grandeur and gaucherie that simply had to be present in the adolescence of America. As such it is San Diego's nearest equivalent to the Statue of Liberty."(23)

For magnificence and daring, one has to look at photographs of the opulent (Music) Fiesta Hall with its flanking Colonnade of States that overlooked the Cascades and Grand Basin, the architectural wonder of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis.(24) While built for a day and of temporary materials, there is no hint of cost-cutting. Based on a similar semi-circular plan, the San Diego version is a pale cousin. The Fiesta Hall in St. Louis housed a great 140 stop, 10,000 pipe organ, which in 1911 was installed in John Wanamaker's store in Philadelphia. This organ in 2002 has 451 stops and 30,067 pipes.(25)

But the Pavilion would be just that, a stark 75 feet tall structure, like the Band Shell in Golden Gate Park, a gift to San Francisco in 1899 from Claus Spreckels, were it not for the Organ. This was created by the Austin Organ Company of Hartford, Connecticut, who must have been involved in the Pavilion design from the beginning, for how else would Albright have known how to house the organ? The Organ was recessed behind the great arch and into the pediments above. A twenty-foot plus attic between the organ chamber ceiling and the roof acted as an insulator against rapid temperature changes. Flexible 50-ft. cable connected the organ to a movable console. Besides acting as a giant sounding board for the organ, the central structure contained rooms for the organist, chorus and staff, including five bathrooms which soon became godsend for the many people who participated in events at the Pavilion.. When the organ was not in use, attendants lowered a 20,000 pound plus corrugated steel curtain immediately

behind the arch to conceal and protect the pipes. Kenneth Herman compared the metal curtain to "a giant garage door." (26) To critic Britton it was more than that. Like Ahab and the White Whale, Britton sensed malignancy in the great opaque curtain. He described his foreboding in his habitual surrealistic language:

When the iron curtain is visible, it is a blank dumb face, that tends to make the embrace of the arms [of the colonnade] register cold and repellent, like that of a mechanical monster in a mad movie. (27)

Britton suggested a mural be painted on the offending door to relieve its impassiveness without describing what he had in mind. While disagreeing with Britton's animadversions, historian Barr wrote a suggestion was being promoted in 2002 to paint images of organ pipes on the imperturbable door to give the building "identity." (28)

For all its "ornate" decoration at top and bottom, the greater part of the wall surface in the central pavilion is bare, though when the "iron curtain" is up, an array of gilded pipes diverts attention from the rosettes, garlands, shells and lyres in the background. Pavilion and colonnade appear at their finest at night when 1,400, 15-watt lights give the complex a striking iridescence while putting the workaday ornament in shadow.

In 1915, the Spreckels Organ had 52 ranks or 3,400 pipes distributed among five divisions. Size of pipes ranged from the size of a pencil to 32 feet long. The console had four manuals, and a pedal keyboard. A 20 horsepower blower, powered by electricity, two floors below the pipes, pumped compressed air into a wind chest (See Appendix 1). When the organist depressed keys on the console, he opened valves at the bottom of the pipes, causing the wind chest to deflate and bellows to expand. As air from the bellows forced itself over the lips of the pipes, it created sounds. Unknown to spectators, thousands of working pipes were located behind visible gilded pipes, most of whom (except for 15) were mute.

John D. paid \$33,500 for the Organ and \$66,500 for the Pavilion; an unknown but substantial portion of the latter sum was for decoration. Owing to contributions, mainly from the Spreckels Organ Society, composed of private citizens, the Organ in 2002 has 73 ranks or 4,518 pipes distributed among its five divisions. (See Appendix 2) Because it had been "played to death" and because improvements had made a newer model necessary, the



original console was replaced in 1935 and again in 1981. Range and volume are deeper and richer now than they were in 1915.

Part of the reason for the disparity of sound between yesterday and today is that John D. Spreckels did not care for the polyphonic organ music of the Renaissance and Baroque musical periods and he omitted pipes and stops suitable for this music from his order to the Austin Company. Beginning in 1988 Spreckels Organ Society members attempted to make up the deficiency through modifications of wind pressure and the introduction of pipes and stops capable of reproducing the bright tones and voices of baroque organs. (Changing specifications of the Spreckels Organ are listed in Appendix 2.) In Edward Barr's words, "the only deficiency today lies in the ability of the organist to exploit the resources of the instrument." As with the Aeolian player organ in his Coronado mansion, John D's preference was for an organ that would accompany the human voice.(29) Notwithstanding John D.'s predilections, since the 1930's many makers of organs have sought to combine the features of romantic (orchestral) organs with those of Baroque organs. Their success is a matter of debate among lovers of organ music.(30)

Organist and composer Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) is supposed to have said disingenuously about playing the organ: "There is nothing remarkable about it. One need only hit the right keys at the right time, and the instrument plays itself."(31) Many a frustrated organist would not agree!

The Spreckels Organ is a symphonic (orchestral) concert organ with stops that create illusions of brass, reeds, strings, percussion and other orchestral instruments not found on more limited church organs or on the three-manual, forty rank Aeolian player pipe organ that Spreckels kept in his Coronado mansion The Spreckels Organ lacks the toy counter (sound effect sections) and traps (non-tonal percussion stops) found on theater organs.(32) Its acoustic powers are phenomenal. On good days, it can be heard several miles outside Balboa Park.

The Organ's proudest day, and to John D. his proudest day, was its dedication on New Years Eve, 1914. The program included Dr. Stewart's playing of the Processional March from his orchestral suite, "Montezuma," selections from the San Diego Popular Orchestra, conducted by Chesley Mills, selections from Haydn's oratorio, "The Creation," by the Popular

Orchestra and a People's Chorus, conducted by Willibald Lehmann, and, for a finale, a rendition of "Unfold Ye Portals" from Charles Gounod's oratorio, "The Redemption," by Chorus, Orchestra and Stewart.(33)

Notable events during the 1915-16 Exposition, at the Pavilion included the Mormon (Ogden) Tabernacle Choir, July 16, 1915; a speech by William Jennings Bryan, July 17, 1915; a speech by former President Theodore Roosevelt, July 27, 1915; preaching by evangelist Billy Sunday, August 9, 1915; a beauty pageant presided over by silent movie stars Francis X. Bushman and Beverly Bayne, September 11, 1915; a speech by former President William Howard Taft, September 16, 1915, concerts by the New York Symphony Orchestra directed by Walter Damrosch, April 22-23, 1916; choreography by Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis, August 5, 1916; and appearances by Grossmont resident and renowned contralto Madame Schumann-Heink on June 23, 1915, January 1, 1916 and December 31, 1916..

Rather than curtailing events in the Organ Pavilion, the entry of the U.S. into World War I stimulated attendance by civilians and by soldiers, sailors and marines stationed in Balboa Park. Dr. Stewart continued to give daily recitals, though these were shifted to late afternoons. The custom of beginning each concert with the playing of "America" and ending with the "Star Spangled Banner" began on April 6, 1917, the same day President Woodrow Wilson declared war.(34) As head of a Civic Music Committee, Miss Gertrude Gilbert, arranged for Community Sings and for free concerts by guest artists and local musicians. Civic organizations sponsored shows or presented their own Rallies to benefit service personnel or for the war effort were held frequently. Enlisted men reciprocated the City's hospitality by putting on shows for themselves and for civilians. Dr. Stewart complained of noise from a motor pool south of the Organ Pavilion and Lt. Earl W. Spencer, Jr., the officer in charge, agreed not to run motors in machine shops during concerts.(35) A resurgence of measles, mumps, spinal meningitis and influenza among soldiers, sailors and marines compelled the military to restrict public access to El Prado and the organ to east and west gates.(36)

World War II had graver consequences.(37) The public was barred from Balboa Park. Army and Navy people were lackadaisical in their treatment of facilities. On weekdays instructors lectured hospital corpsmen and sailors at the Organ Pavilion and at the Ford Bowl. In the evenings enlisted personnel watched movies. Chaplain's assistants eagerly seized the

opportunity to display their musical proficiency at Sunday afternoon recitals.(38) After the war, the San Diego City Council used money from the sale of materials from Camp Callan, a decommissioned U.S. Army Coast Artillery Post on Torrey Pines, to renovate the Organ Pavilion and to convert a former Exposition building in the Palisades into a municipal gymnasium.(39)

Dr. Humphrey. J. Stewart was a composer as well as organist. He played many of his compositions for San Diegans before he presented them to audiences throughout the United States. He had a formidable and an enviable reputation.(40) Reviewing a performance of Dr. Stewart's oratorio, "The Hound of Heaven," music critic Bruno Ussher wrote in the *San Diego Union*: "In this day of musical materialism, Dr. Stewart's oratorio, "The Hound of Heaven," may to some lack certain virtuosity of treatment, or effectiveness of invention."(41) These caveats may be the reason why so little is heard of Dr. Stewart's music today. In addition to being civic organist, he was a two-term mayor of Coronado, organist for St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, and an advocate of music education, music festivals, and a music center in Balboa Park. His death in 1932 was a sad event for the City. Not only a man, but an institution had passed away.

Following Stewart, the following people have been civic organists:

Royal A. Brown ( organist and composer, 1932-1942, 1948-1954), who was appointed Stewart's assistant in 1918 and who became civic organist after Stewart's retirement.

Charles R. Shatto (organist, 1954-1957), who was Brown's assistant and who became civic organist after his death.

Douglas Ian Duncan (organist, 1957-1978), who tried to neutralize critics by playing popular music and light classics.

Jared Jacobsen (organist, 1978-1984) whose energetic personality and introductory talks established rapport with his audience.

Robert Plimpton (organist, 1984-2000 ) who limited his playing of the often performed Toccata and Fugue in D Minor by Johann Sebastian Bach to the first Sunday of each month.

Carol Williams (organist, 2001- ) who is the only woman civic organist in the United States and who, along with Humphrey Stewart, was born in England and holds a doctorate in music

The Spreckels Organ played a decisive role at the California-Pacific International Exposition in 1935-36. This time, however, a Hammond electronic organ and open amphitheater in the Ford Bowl, built by the City but called "Ford" because the Ford Company paid for symphony concerts, competed for attention. In preparation for the Exposition the Organ Pavilion's stage was brought forward, doubling its size. Using a photograph supplied by architect Richard Requa (1881-1941), a fountain, added at the north end of the seating area, was modeled after a fountain in Chapultepec Park, Mexico City. An "aurora borealis" lighting effect, coming from the top of the Organ Pavilion, sent shafts of fluctuating light far into the sky, providing a central focus for multi-colored lighting on buildings and grounds.

Exciting events at the Spreckels Organ Pavilion (temporarily called Organ Amphitheater) included a performance of Palestrina's "Missa Papae Marcelli" conducted by Dr. Earl Rosenberg with 150 voices on June 2, 1935, a celebration of the birth of Gautama Buddha by Japanese-Americans on August 17, 1935, a musical gala in honor of Charles Wakefield Cadman (1881-1946), a composer of American Indian inspired music and a resident of La Mesa, on September 4, 1935; a speech by ex-President Herbert Hoover on September 17, 1935, appearances by evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson on July 18, 1935 and September 27, 1935, a talk by bridge expert Ely Culbertson on April 20, 1936, and a reenactment of the march of the Mormon battalion from Council Bluffs, Iowa, to San Diego, California during the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) on July 26, 1936. The most unusual event ever to take place on the stage of the Organ Pavilion occurred between August 13 and August 25, 1936 when 35 ice skaters capered, danced, jumped over barrels and engaged in a burlesque bull fight twice nightly on 25,000 square feet of ice made by a giant machine. As with other variety acts at the Organ Pavilion and throughout the grounds, put on to stimulate attendance during the waning days of the Exposition, the spectacle was free.

Noteworthy events after the first and second Expositions included a memorial service for President Warren G. Harding, August 9, 1923; a memorial service for John D. Spreckels, June 13, 1926; the assumption of

City of San Diego jurisdiction of the civic organist after Spreckels Companies discontinued payment for services, September 1, 1929; the dedication of a tablet in honor of Madame Schumann-Heink, May 30, 1938; a concert by Virgil Fox (1912-1980), September 7, 1949; a visit rather than a recital by organist Marcel Dupre (1886-1971), August 27, 1955; a performance by theater organist Gaylord Carter (1905-2000), September 11, 1966; a return organ concert by Virgil Fox, August 17, 1974; a show by organist Hector Olivera, July 8, 1978; a memorial service for victims of the crash of a PSA jetliner and a private plane over North Park, October 1, 1979; pavilion and instrument restorations between 1979 and 1981; the formation of the Spreckels Organ Society, February 16, 1988; the rededication of the Pavilion after renovation of seating and standing area, including the installation of 142,000 paving blocks in place of asphalt based on plans by San Diego landscape architect Ron Pekarek and financed by money raised by the Committee of 100, October 4, 1986; the inauguration by the Spreckels Organ Society of a series of summer evening concerts in July and August, 1988; a memorial service for victims of the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing, China, sponsored by the Greater San Diego Chinese Community for Democratic Movement in China, June 10, 1989; the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee Year of the Spreckels Organ in 1990; and a Day of Remembrance and Unity following the September 11 destruction of the World Trade Center, New York City, on September 16, 2001.

Low points in the history of the Spreckels Organ occurred in 1932 when city council members sought to fire Dr. Stewart and in 1948, 1957 and 1974 when city council members advocated putting the Organ in storage, doing away with the organist, and replacing the Pavilion with a more popular attraction or a parking lot.(42) Councilman Chester Schneider said sneeringly in 1957, "The organ has cost more to keep up than its original price."(43) These were not the only times when the Organ and its recitalist were threatened. The City of San Diego reduced recitals from one recital daily in 1915 to four days weekly in 1932, to two a week in 1947, to one a week in 1957.(44) During the bleak days of the late 1970's bicyclists and skateboarders took over standing spaces in front of the organ, even during concerts. Their hi-jinks and disregard of people showed their egotism.(45) .

To counter cost-cutting moves and to focus attention on the plight of the Organ , Bea Evenson, the Committee of 100's president, arranged for a 1974 recital by renowned organist Virgil Fox. Historian Edward Barr,

organist Jared Jacobson, and curator Lyle Blackinton kept the momentum for organ rehabilitation moving forward.

Problems related to the Spreckels Organ and Pavilion in Balboa Park are:

1. Operating Expense: The problem of raising funds has been only partially alleviated by the efforts of the Spreckels Organ Society. The San Diego City Council is inclined in lean times (and when are they not lean) to reduce or cut funds, hoping that private donors will pick up the slack.
2. Quality of Performances: The quality of concerts is undermined by the noise of auto traffic and overhead planes, and by interference from adjacent park attractions.
3. Popularity: A majority of people demand popular (low-brow) music and a minority demand classical (high-brow) music. Civic organists have been partial to the classical repertoire, though they have (except for Dr. Stewart) sometimes slanted their selections to please audiences.(46) The Park and Recreation Department has met the demand for popular shows by scheduling amateur and professional events for mixed and one-sided audiences.
4. Uses: John D. Spreckels requested that organ concerts in the Spreckels Organ Pavilion should always be free to the public. In 1924 he wrote to the Park Commission objecting to the use of the Pavilion for political speeches. He claimed unconvincingly that his opposition had nothing to do with his negative reaction to a speech by Progressive Republican Robert LaFollette (1855-1925).(47)

Based on the assumption that a park is a place for rest, W. Allen Perry, the "Director of Balboa Park." refused to give the Second Church of Christ Scientist permission to give a lecture on Christian Science in the Ford Bowl in February 1949. Deputy City Attorney Louis M. Karp concurred with this decision.(48) The decision was subsequently modified by the Deputy City Attorney, the City Manager, and the City Council in January 1950 when the San Diego Youth for Christ was allowed to use Balboa Park facilities on the grounds, that their program "is not primarily designed to propagandize religious teachings of any particular sect or denomination, and is not for the holding of any particular religious services."(49) City Attorney

Jean Du Paul solved or compounded the problem of religious activities in the park on November 25, 1958 when he issued an opinion stating religious groups could obtain permits for meetings in the park.(50)

Responding to complaints from adherents to non-Christian religions, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and atheists, San Diego City Attorney John Witt, on December 9, 1987, said the City's participation in the annual Nativity ("Christmas on El Prado ") display at the Spreckels Organ Pavilion might be illegal. (This specific Christmas observance began in 1978, though before that date there were many annual Christmas observances in the City, dating back to Spanish and Mexican times and held in such places as the Old Town Plaza, Horton Plaza, Balboa Park and the City Civic Center on Pacific Highway.) Acting on Witt's advice, the San Diego City Council transferred ownership of the Nativity scenery to a Community Christmas Center Committee. Since 1989 this Committee has mounted a Christmas display illustrating aspects of the Christmas story and has allowed representatives of complaining groups to place secular and non-Christian religious symbols nearby.(51)

San Diego was not the only city ever to have an Exposition organ built by the Austin Company. A 113 stop, 120 rank, Austin organ, Opus 500, was a prominent attraction in the Festival Hall at San Francisco's 1914 Panama-Pacific Exposition. Edwin H. Lemare, an Englishman who designed the organ console, was the official organist. For forty-five years, beginning April 8, 1917, the organ's grand chorus reeds and great diapason choruses echoed through San Francisco's 10,000-seat Civic Auditorium. Neglect and the ravages of time, including damages caused by an earthquake in 1989, reduced the organ to a shambles. With the help of funds from the Federal Emergency Management Association, the Austin Company, restored the instrument at its Hartford, Connecticut headquarters. It is currently in storage in San Francisco, pending completion of a proposed outdoor pavilion, after designs by the Roma Design Group, on the site of an abandoned freeway terminus near the Embarcadero,.(52) ) With four air chests, Great Chimes, Echo Chimes, Choir Celesta, and two derived Pedal stops, the organ, when installed in 1915, "was said to be the seventh largest organ in the world." Dr. Stewart was a member of the committee that drew up its specifications.(53)

Though doubts exist about the practicability of the location and funding is uncertain, the organ's champions have sought advice from Robert

Plimpton and Lyle Blackinton, organist and curator respectively of the Spreckels Organ in Balboa Park. San Francisco chauvinists claim that their organ will become "the largest outdoor organ in the country," an obvious challenge to the assertion by organ historian Orpha Ochse, that the Spreckels organ is "the world's largest and most renowned outdoor organ."(54). The Spreckels organ in San Diego, Opus 453, had 3,400 pipes in 1915 and has 4,518 today which is smaller than the 7,500 pipes in the (indoor) 1914 Panama-Pacific Exposition organ in San Francisco.

Whatever may happen, San Diegans need not despair for, as Dr. Stewart said: "Having played on organs loudly proclaimed to be 'the largest,' I can testify that some of them are very defective and lacking in many of the features which are essential to a good instrument. . . . Perhaps someday we shall learn to regard quality rather than quantity as the real test of the instrument."(55)

Taking its cue from the Central Park Conservancy (established in 1980), the Spreckels Organ Society, under the spirited leadership of its president Vivian Evenson, has played an important role in promoting and paying for organ concerts and in bringing the Spreckels Organ and Pavilion into superlative condition. The Society's many accomplishments can be ascertained by reading Kenneth Herman's history or by joining the Spreckels Organ Society.

The Spreckels Organ Pavilion has become such an integral part of the life of San Diego that it is sacrilegious to think of Balboa Park without it. At one time or another, almost all San Diegans have met there to celebrate happenings—Easter, Earth Day, July 4th, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas—or to join in grief after a catastrophic event—the collision of a Boeing 727 and a Cessna 172 over North Park in 1978 and the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001.

After the dedication of the Spreckels Organ and Pavilion, December 31, 1914, John D. Spreckels concentrated on his business enterprises. A Good Steward, after all, works in his own vineyard! He helped bring the San Diego and Arizona Railway to completion. While his inaugural train ride in 1919, with prominent San Diegans in tow, was a stirring moment, he might agree that it did not exceed his jubilation at the dedication of the Spreckels Organ, New Years Eve, 1914.(56) At an Exposition tribute to John D., December 28, 1916, George W. Marston said : "I consider the giving of this



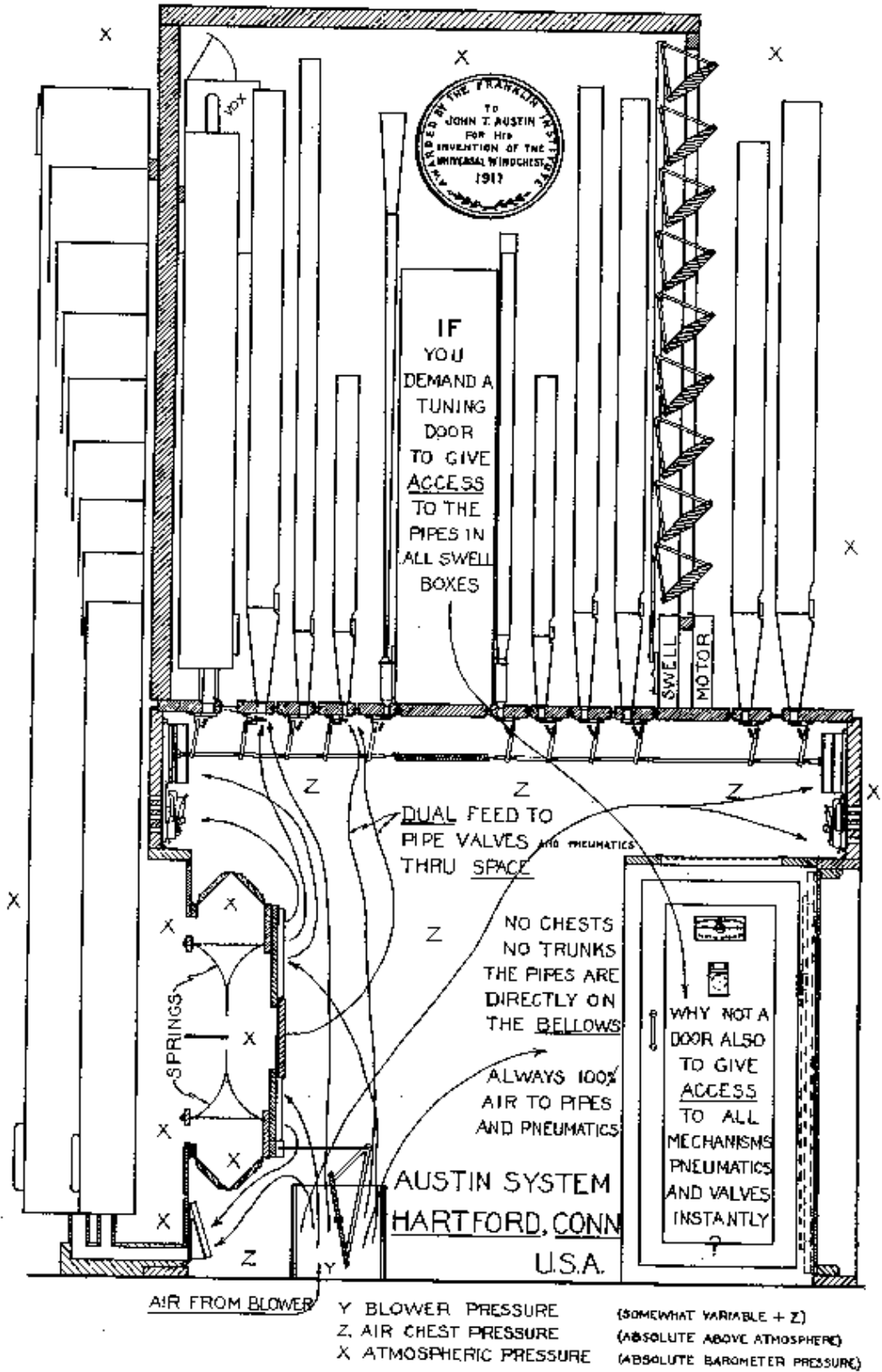
instrument (the Spreckels Organ) greater than building railroads or steamships. We who live in San Diego can live without means of transportation, but we cannot live without music."(57) The statement was so outrageous that Marston's opponents seized upon it. It was a reason why he lost the 1917 San Diego mayoralty contest to Louis J. Wilde. Be it as it may, many of Marston's friends wished that he had spoken more moderately. Music may not be more important than bread on the table: it is, nonetheless, a major component of a happy life.

The poet John Dryden (1631-1700) has the last words:

From harmony, from heavenly harmony  
This universal frame began;  
When Nature underneath a heap:  
Of jarring atoms lay,  
And could not heave her head,  
The tuneful Voice was heard from high,  
"Arise, ye more than dead."  
Then cold and hot and moist and dry  
In order to their stations leap,  
And music's power obey.  
From harmony, from heavenly harmony  
This universal frame began:  
From harmony to harmony  
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,  
The diapason closing full in Man.

"A Song for St. Cecilia's Day."

APPENDIX 1



## NOTES

1. Robert Glass Cleland, *California in Our Time* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1947), 19-21; Marjorie M. Dobkin, "A Twenty-Five-Million-Dollar Mirage," *The Anthropology of World Fairs* by Burton Benedict (Lowie Museum of Anthropology in association with Scholar Press, Berkeley, 1983), 70-77..
2. Raymond Clary, *The Making of Golden Gate Park: The Early Years - 1865-1906* (California Living Book, 1980) 149.
3. H. Austin Adams, *The Man John D. Spreckels* (Press of Frye & Smith, San Diego, Calif., 1924), 301.
4. Inscription on plaque, Spreckels Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park, San Diego.
5. *San Diego Union*, January 12, 1925, 1:3-6; Bernice Scharlach, *Big Alma - San Francisco's Alma Spreckels* (Scottwall Associates, San Francisco, 1995), 132-149.
6. *San Diego Union*, December 9, 1914, 9:2.
7. Kenneth Herman, *The Historic Spreckels Organ in Balboa Park* (Spreckels Organ Society, 1993) 10.
8. *San Diego Union*, April 28, 1917, Classified, 1.
9. Orpha Ochse, *Austin Organs* (Organ Historical Society, 2001), 168.
10. Gregory Montes, "The Rise and Fall of the Olmsted Plan, Balboa Park, 1909-1911," *Journal of San Diego History* (Winter, 1982, Vol. 28, No. 1)
11. *San Diego Union*, October 26, 1913, 3:1.
12. *San Diego Sun*, February 10, 1914, 1:1.
13. Minutes of the San Diego Park Commission, March 13, 1914
14. *San Diego Union*, March 17, 1914, 8:5.
15. Letter, Carleton M. Winslow to Dr. Edgar L. Hewett, February 20, 1917, regarding disposition of Exposition buildings (G. W. Marston Papers, Collection 209, Box 2, San Diego Historical Society Research Archives.
16. Carleton M. Winslow & Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, *The Architecture and Gardens of the San Diego Exposition* (Paul Elder & Co., San Francisco, 1916) 140-142.
17. Herman, 14.
18. Letter, Carleton M. Winslow to Dr. Edgar L. Hewett, February 20, 1917.
19. Communication from Edward Barr to Richard Amero, August 13, 2002.
20. Cynthia B. Malinick, "Classicism and Concrete: Harrison Albright's Architectural Contribution to Coronado," *Journal of San Diego History* (Spring 1977, V. 43. No. 2).
21. Communication from Edward Barr to Richard Amero, August 13, 2002.
22. Eugen Neuhaus, *The San Diego Garden Fair* (Paul Elder & Co., San Francisco, 1916) 51.
23. *San Diego Union*, December 12, 1976, C-8.
24. Timothy Fox & Duanne R. Sneddeker, *From the Palaces to the Pike: Visions of the 1904 World's Fair*, (Missouri Historical Society Press, St. Louis, 1997).
25. Orpha Ochse, *The History of the Organ in the United States* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1975), 356.60.
26. Herman, 14.

27. *San Diego Union*, December 12, 1976, C-8.
28. Communication from Edward Barr to Richard Amero, August 13, 2002.
29. Ibid.
30. Ochse, *The History of the Organ in the United States*, 403-05; William Harrison Barnes & Edward B. Gammons, *Two Centuries of American Organ Building* (Belwin Mills Publishing Co., Melville, N.Y., 1970), 124-29.
31. David Foil, *Bach: The Keyboard Works* (Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, New York, 1995), 11..
32. William Harrison Barnes & Edward B. Gammons, *Two Centuries of American Organ Building*, 55-56.
33. *San Diego Union*, December 30, 1914, 1:4.
34. *San Diego Union*, April 6, 1917, 4:1.
35. Letter from Lt. Earl Spencer to John Morley, January 30, 1918.
36. *Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 1917, 11:2.
37. *San Diego Union*, July 1, 1942, A-8.
38. *San Diego Union*, November 7, 1943, A-4, July 23, 1944, C-2.
39. *San Diego Union*, 10-27-45, Navy-Day Section, 4:1-5
40. *San Diego Union*, July 9, 1916, 3
41. *San Diego Union*, March 10, 1925, 5:1.
42. *San Diego Union*, April 28, 1950, B-2, October 11, 1976, B-1.
43. *San Diego Evening Tribune*, July 11, 1957.
44. *San Diego Union*, August 26, 1932, 10:3; Orpha Ochse, *Austin Organs* 168.
45. *San Diego Union*, January 20, 1980, E-4.
46. *San Diego Union*, January 1, 1920, 3:1.
- 47 Letter from John D. Spreckels to Executive Secretary of the Park Board, October 6, 1924
- 48 Letter from Deputy City Attorney Louis M. Karp to Honorable Harley E. Knox, Mayor of the City of San Diego, February 23, 1949.
49. Letter from Deputy City Attorney Louis M. Karp to Mr. J. F. DuPaul, City Attorney, City of San Diego, January 19, 1950.
50. *San Diego Evening Tribune*, February 5, 1959, A-48.
51. *San Diego Union*, December 10, 1987, B-1; December 22, 1987, B-1.
52. <http://www.sfpavilion.org/project/index.htm>.
53. Orpha Ochse, *Austin Organs*, 173.
54. Orpha Ochse, *Austin Organs*, 165.
55. *San Diego Union*, April 18, 1921, 4:7.
56. *San Diego Sun*, December 5, 1919, 1:2
57. *San Diego Union*, December 29, 1916, 1:3-4, 3:1-2

NOTE: Source material for the above may be found in the "Amero Collection: Balboa Park" in the San Diego Historical Society Research Archives.  
October 1, 2002.

# Specifications of Spreckels Organ, Austin Op. 453 - IV / 73 - 1915

GREAT		CHOIR		PEDAL				
10" and 15" wind		10" wind		10" and 15" wind				
16'	Major Diapason	46 pipes	16'	Contra Viola	73 pipes	32'	Contra Magnaton	12 pipes
	-low 15 Ped. Violone		8'	Geigen Principal	73 pipes	16'	Magnaton	32 pipes
8'	Stentorphone	61 pipes	8'	Concert Flute	73 pipes	16'	Open Diapason	12 pipes
8'	Open Diapason	61 pipes	8'	Viole D'Orchestra	73 pipes	16'	Violone	12 pipes
8'	Horn Diapason	61 pipes	8'	Viole Celeste	73 pipes	16'	Contra Viole	Choir
8'	Gross Floete	61 pipes	4'	Violina	73 pipes	16'	Bourdon	12 pipes
4'	Octave	61 pipes	4'	Flute D'Amour	73 pipes	8'	Octave	32 pipes 1987
2'	Super Octave	61 pipes	8'	French Horn	73 pipes	8'	Gross Floete	Great
V	Mixture	305 pipes 1988	8'	Clarinet	73 pipes	8'	Bourdon	12 pipes
V	Grand Cornet	255 pipes 1935		Harp	49 bars	8'	Violoncello	32 pipes
16'	Tuba Sonora	12 pipes *		Snare Drum		4'	Super Octave	32 pipes 1987
8'	Tuba Sonora	61 pipes *		Tremulant		IV	Mixture	128 pipes 1987
4'	Tuba Sonora	12 pipes *				32'	Contra Bombarde	32 pipes 1990
8'	Doppel Floete	61 pipes *		SOLO		16'	Tuba Sonora	Solo
8'	Violoncello	61 pipes *		15" wind		16'	Contra Posaune	Swell
4'	Harmonic Flute	61 pipes *	8'	Grand Diapason	73 pipes	8'	Tuba Sonora	Solo
8'	Tibia	61 notes *	8'	Tibia Plena	73 pipes		Bass Drum	
4'	Tibia	61 notes *	8'	Gross Gamba	73 pipes		Tympani	
	Tibia on Great		4'	Flute Ouverte	73 pipes		Tap Cymbal	
			8'	Tuba Sonora	Great		Crash Cymbal (toe piston)	
			8'	Horn Tuba	73 pipes 1960			
			8'	Orchestral Oboe	73 pipes			
			16'	Bombarde	61 pipes 1988			
			8'	Festival Trompette	61 pipes 1988			
			8'	Trompette Clarion	61 pipes 1988			
			4'	Chimes	20 tubes			
				Tibia on Solo				
				Tremulant				
				TIBIA				
				(Floating Division)				
				12" wind				
16'	Quintaton	73 pipes	8'	Tibia	61 notes			
8'	Phonon Diapason	73 pipes	4'	Tibia (Enclosed in Solo)	73 pipes 1996			
8'	Violin Diapason	73 pipes	2 2/3'	Tibia	61 notes			
8'	Tibia Clausa	73 pipes	2'	Tibia	61 notes			
8'	Rohr Floete	73 pipes	1 3/5'	Tibia	61 notes			
8'	Flauto Dolce	73 pipes		Tremulant				
8'	Viole D'Gamba	73 pipes						
8'	Concert Celeste	73 pipes						
4'	Principal	73 pipes						
4'	Flauto Traverso	73 pipes						
2'	Piccolo	61 pipes						
III	Dolce Cornet	183 pipes						
IV	Sharf	244 pipes 1988						
16'	Contra Posaune	73 pipes						
8'	Cornopean	73 pipes						
8'	Oboe	73 pipes						
8'	Vox Humana	61 pipes						
4'	Clarion	73 pipes 1988						
	Tibia on Swell							
	Tremulant							

New Console, 1935

New Console and Restoration, 1981

Additions 1935, 1960, 1968, 1990 and 1996

Releathered 2004

99-Level, Solid State Combination Action, 2003

(24 Generals, 8 Pistons for each division)

Total Pipes 4,518

The Organ is maintained by L. W. Blackinton and Associates, Inc