JOHN NOLEN

by
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John Nolen was born in Philadelphia on June 14, 1869, the son of John Christopher and Matilda Thomas Nolen. His father, a carpenter and member of the Democratic party, died of a gunshot wound inflicted by a Republican judge during a during a meeting to certify a vote of a disputed election before Nolen was two. His two older sisters having passed away and his mother having remarried, the Children's Aid Society in 1878 placed the young and presumably castoff Nolen in the Girard School for Orphaned Boys. He graduated first in his class in 1884 and in 1891, after working as a grocery clerk and as a secretary to the Girard Estate Trust Fund to accumulate money, he enrolled in the Wharton School of Finance and Economics, a branch of the University of Pennsylvania heavily influenced by German pedagogy and economic theory, from which he graduated in 1893 with a bachelor's degree in philosophy.

To pay his college tuition Nolen did garden work on the Stephen Girard estate and, between semesters, acted as superintendent in charge of the care and feeding of guests at Onteora Park, a Catskill Mountain resort. An honors paper he wrote in college telling how to solve graft and waste conditions in the Philadelphia Gas Works by making the utility a city-owned business and lowering gas rates indicated his and the Progressive (also Wharton School) thinking of his time about ways to correct social problems and to make life better for people. Intentionally or not, Nolen expressed his disdain for the political machine his father had fatally challenged.

With experience between 1893 and 1903 as a secretary for the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching, he decided to become a landscape architect when, after marrying Barbara Schatte on April 22, 1896, he and his wife visited England, France, Belgium and Germany. This was Nolen's second trip to Europe, the first, on July 20, 1895, to attend the 7th Annual Conference of University Extension at Worcester College, Oxford, aroused his curiosity about architectural and landscape matters that were not covered by the theme of the conference. In his 1911 master plan for Madison, Wisconsin, Nolen cited the pleasure grounds surrounding Worcester College as a model for a like development at the University of Wisconsin.

While on his second visit, Nolen found European architecture and civic planning to be superior to anything he had seen in the United States. In such matters as building controls, housing and sanitation laws, provisions for

workers, zoning and conservation the Europe Americans were accustomed to call "backward" was far ahead of bumbling attempts at civic improvement in the United States. It was, of course, centralization of government at city and state levels that made these advances possible, a centralization many Americans regarded as anathema. During a third trip, the second with his wife, from June 22, 1901 until June 18, 1902, Nolen prepared for a change in careers by studying German art and architecture, Italian culture, and the art history of the Renaissance at the University of Munich, his mastery of the German language being sufficient for the task.

In 1902, at the age of thirty-three, John Nolen sold the house he had built and the garden he had planted at Ardmore, Pennsylvania and with the proceeds enrolled in a class of eleven students at the Harvard School of Landscape Architecture at Harvard University. One year later he and his wife moved close to Harvard Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts where he opened a landscaping office. His instructors at Harvard were Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Arthur Shurtleff, and B. M. Watson. In 1905, he got his Master of Arts degree and became a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Except for giving advice to private home owners about landscaping, his first public commission was to design Independence Park for Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1905. He had secured the assignment on the recommendations of President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard and Horace McFarland, of the American Civic Association. Daniel A. Tompkins, chairman of the Charlotte Park and Tree Commission and owner of textile mills and mill towns, wanted a park built on the former site of a municipal reservoir so that working people could "see the green grass, flowing waters, and waving trees of the country."

A fourth trip to Europe in 1906, where Nolen studied planning laws and visited the new "garden city" of Letchworth, England, was followed, in 1907, by his editing and publishing the writings of Humphrey Repton, an eighteenth-century landscape designer. Also, in 1907, George J. Baldwin, a member of the Savannah Park and Tree Commission, appointed him to prepare the original design of Daffin Park, Savannah, Georgia. In a letter to P. D. Daffin, chairman of the Commission, September 26, 1907, Nolen claimed his plan, "aims to provide a first-class recreation park, one that would be a pleasant resort almost immediately and in the course of time might easily become one of the most famous pleasure grounds in the United States."

As most of the achievements for which he became nationally and internationally acclaimed were in the future, John Nolen's plan for the City of San Diego, completed in 1908, was a “make or break” effort. When in 1907, on

the recommendation of J. Horace McFarland, San Diego merchant George W. Marston hired him to prepare a comprehensive development plan for San Diego, California. Nolen was a novice in landscape architecture and city planning. In examining the problems of a growing metropolis, he was far removed from making plans for small, specialized recreational parks for "children and adult men of the urban working class" (Galen Cranz) after the examples of Independence Park, Charlotte, and Daffin Park, Savannah. He had entered the domain of such distinguished city planners as Daniel Burnham, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Harland Bartholomew, Edward H. Bennett, Charles H. Cheney, and Robert Whittier.

Nolen recommended that San Diego build a civic center plaza on D Street (Broadway since 1912) between Front and First Streets; develop its bay front on fill-land with a “paseo” at Date Street joining the bay to City (Balboa since 1910) Park; build a casino, art museum and aquarium and plant gardens at the waterfront foot of Date Street; create a waterfront esplanade north of D Street; eliminate an existing railroad crossing at D Street; concentrate business wharves, piers and docks south of E Street; break up the existing street-grid wherever possible with diagonal and curvilinear streets of varying widths; plant trees along sidewalks, place overhead wires underground; establish a regional park system; and restore Mission San Diego de Alcala. Interestingly, Nolen cited plans for the waterfront at Roanoke, Virginia which he was preparing concurrently with his plans for San Diego, as a model for San Diego to follow.

Marston, Women’s Clubs, and Chamber of Commerce officials supported Nolen's proposals, but they never got beyond the argument stage because passage in 1911 of a bond issue to build two long commercial piers at the foot of D Street did away with Nolen’s recreation pier; because public resources were diverted to the 1915-1916 Panama-California Exposition in Balboa Park, and because Marston, Nolen’s champion, was defeated in mayoralty contests in 1913 and 1917, in which Marston’s opponents, Charles F. O’Neall and Louis J, Wilde, ridiculed Nolen’s vision of a Mediterranean-like city rivaling Naples instead of a city of factories and docks . . the first-runs of what was to become a perennial contest in San Diego between so-called “geranium and smokestack” factions.

The Woman's Civic Betterment Club of Roanoke, Virginia, a volunteer group led by Sarah Johnson Cocke, similar to the Civic Improvement Committee of San Diego, asked Nolen in 1907 to survey the city. By concentrating on streets and parks, his work at Roanoke was sketchier than his work in San Diego. The chief feature of his plan for Roanoke, as it was also the chief feature of most of his plans for small cities, the widening of main city

streets and the opening of a public square at their intersection was never implemented. The 1907 "Remodeling Roanoke" survey contained the much-quoted sentence: "What is fair must be fit." "Fit" in this context meant what was profitable to the civic-commercial backers of the plan. Because of lack of funds and interest, the Roanoke City Council failed to commission a follow-up master plan.

Roanoke was dominated by a money-minded elite with a financial interest in making their city beautiful, rational and efficient. The interest of city politicians was, however, in saving money and getting re-elected. Consequently, they had no time for such luxuries as magnificent buildings, parks and streets. (Not, fortunately, the attitude of San Diego's politicians, bankers and real estate developers who were determined to make their city the first port-of-call in the United States following the completion of the Panama Canal.)

In his doctoral thesis, *Big Dreams, Small Cities: John Nolen, the New South and the City Planning Movements in Asheville, Roanoke and Johnson City, 1907-1937,* Kevan D. Frazier, suggested the primary reason Nolen's 1907 plan was "shelved" was that "the male political leadership of Roanoke was not ready to have the economic development and growth of the city controlled by a plan initiated by women." Another factor was a widespread belief that, because of the presence of the Norfolk and Western Railway, Roanoke would become a major hub of transport and commerce without the dubious benefits of a city plan.

In 1908 the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association, a private organization led by John M. Olin, contacted Nolen for advice in laying out parks for Madison, Wisconsin. Because the Association did not have the money to pay Nolen, it enlisted the support of the city of Madison, the University of Wisconsin, and the state of Wisconsin. Thereupon, the three entities finalized a contract with Nolen in 1909 to advise each how to make their individual sections more beautiful and efficient.

As Madison was the state capitol, Nolen recommended extending a mall 400 ft. long and 1,000 ft. wide from the capitol building to Lake Monona; creating four avenues radiating out from Capitol Square; grouping public and civic buildings around a 13-acre capitol park, 75 feet above Lake Monona, and along both sides of the mall; regulating the height and architectural style of buildings near the capitol and mall; developing waterfront esplanades and parks around all four of Madison's lakes (Mendota, Monona, Waubesa and Kegonsa); and draining and filling in marsh land within and near the city limits. As was to

become his habitual practice, he recommended establishing boundaries for industrial, business, civic and residential sections; widening major streets; planting trees along streets; placing overhead wires underground; eliminating grade crossings near the center of the city; establishing permanent park and planning commissions; and increasing land assigned to parks, parkways, playgrounds and plazas. His suggestion to build satellite communities on the fringes of Madison showed his concern for bringing the center and periphery of a city into reciprocal alignment. As with his 1907-1908 plan for San Diego, he used examples from European cities—but principally Geneva, Switzerland—to show Madison citizens how to make their city worthy of its place as the capitol of a thriving state.

For the University, Nolen proposed adding over 1,000 acres to the 350-acre University. These additional lands would include a 20 acre botanical garden; a water garden and aquarium; a 200-acre arboretum; a forest of from 1,000 to 2,000 acres; and a summer engineering camp on the shores of Lake Mendota. The diagonal State Street that connects the University to State Capitol Square is today a pedestrian mall lined with shops and restaurants. This change approximated Nolen's recommendations, both for Madison and San Diego. Nolen's description of how the University could transform the cultural life of Madison is enthusiastic. As he developed sharper insights into a city's problems, his descriptions became more precise and prosaic, though no less tinged with optimism.

The plan for a park system for the state of Wisconsin was much needed in the 1900s as vast sections in the northern part of the state were being deforested. Even so, Nolen was hired not only to find locations for parks, but to provide reasons for their existence. He answered that parks contribute "to physical and moral health, to a saner and happier life," a slogan that officials of Wisconsin State Parks still repeat. That Nolen succeeded in persuading people to seek recreation in the great outdoors is shown by the growth of Wisconsin's state parks from the four he recommended—Devil's Lake, Peninsula, Wyalusing and the Dells of the Wisconsin River (not, however, accepted)—to 44 state parks, four recreation areas, six southern forests, and 23 trails that in 2004 are open to public use.

Nolen was fortunate in having a city to work with that was willing to follow his ideas. Some suggestions, relating to parks, drives and playgrounds, were realized almost immediately. Others—like the mall on State Street (not a Nolen idea, though he might have approved)—took decades. Duplicating the experience in San Diego, where a proposed park at the foot of D Street was jettisoned in favor of a commercial pier, the open space affording a view of

Lake Monona at the foot of the projected Capitol Mall was replaced in 1992 with a spacious Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center, as adapted by the Taliesin Fellowship from a design by Frank Lloyd Wright. Unfortunate as this setback to Nolen's plans may have been, his successes in Madison and in Wisconsin surpassed that in many of the locations where he worked. Powers that be in Madison have named a main thoroughfare alongside Lake Monona after him, though its busy and confusing traffic patterns, likened by a surly critic to the Minotaur's labyrinth in Crete, would probably have given Nolen the shudders.

His prestige as a city planner firmly established, Nolen gave the keynote address at the first National Conference of City Planning in Washington, D.C. in 1909. During this speech, he asked the questions, he answered in his life's work:

> In political rights we have democracy enough; judging by results perhaps more than we have fitness for. But should we not work for a wider democracy of recreation, for more opportunity to enjoy those forms of beauty and pleasure which feed and refresh the soul as bread does the body? We should no longer be content with mere increase in population and wealth. We should insist upon asking, How do the people live, where do they work, what do they play?

Nolen and his wife were the parents of John, Jr., born February 28, 1898; Barbara, born December 19, 1902; Edward, born February 11, 1905; and Humphrey, born September 9, 1911.

In his penetrating 1964 dissertation on John Nolen, John Loretz Hancock devoted the greater part of a chapter to Reading, Pennsylvania. (Kingsport, Tennessee and San Diego, California were cities that got a full chapter.) The Reading debacle had similarities to San Diego's vacillating approach to city planning. In both cases, J. Horace McFarland got Nolen his commission and progressive factions within each city became his supporters. Nolen wanted Reading's Penn Square enhanced by a mall as long as the square with public buildings nearby, a variation of his projected malls for San Diego and Madison. He also wanted a belt parkway around the city, thoroughfares widened and extended, railroad crossings eliminated, new bridges built crossing the Schuylkill River, playgrounds in every neighborhood, overhead wires put underground, a sewer system completed, and housing for workers improved. His suggestion to employers to build homes for workers in the country was a harbinger of the many industrial, country-like towns the federal government was to build for workers during World Wars I and II. The idea of a beltline,

eighteen miles in circumference, for pedestrians and vehicles, similar to Vienna's Ringstrasse, was the most innovative element in his plan.

Unlike San Diego in 1908, Nolen's task in Reading in 1909 was staggering. This was a built-up, congested and constricted city of narrow alleys and streets, locked within a binding grid, with almost no restrictions on its *laissez-faire* development. The closer one came to the center of the city, the more destitute conditions became. Wealthier citizens, living in well-groomed wards farther away, were indifferent to the needs of workers and their children. Among these affluent people were, as Hancock bitingly observed, landlords who were well aware "that overcrowding increased land values."

Reading was a grimy, smoke-belching, industrial city whose economy was controlled by owners and managers of "manufacturing plants . . . handling coal, iron, furniture, hardware, brewery, car and heavy machine products." (Hancock) These forces, in obedience to the wishes of the Reading Railroad, the city's largest employer, and with the cooperation of political parties, including the Socialist (whose members distrusted city officials) brought Nolen's plan down. Through their united efforts, on November 8, 1910, they voted against a loan to implement Nolen's proposals, many of which had been watered down. While Nolen had other failures and while most of his plans were only partially completed, his defeat at Reading was one of his greatest disappointments.

In fairness to Reading, and again similar to San Diego, the city adopted many of Nolen's proposals in subsequent years, some of them after consultation with him. Hancock concluded his tale of Reading's woe with the mordant comment: "Reading was one of the first American cities to undertake a modern city plan and one of the last to make modern city planning work."

1n 1910 Nolen was chosen by his peers to become a fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects, a designation awarded to a select few for their contributions to the profession and to society.

Through his work on Independence Park Nolen became acquainted with George Stevens, a banker and real estate developer, who hired him in 1911 to plan Myers Park, a "streetcar suburb" of Charlotte, North Carolina, for wealthy people. Beginning in 1915, Earle Draper, from Nolen's office, did the field work for the project under Nolen's supervision. Together the planners evolved schemes for a sumptuously planted suburb on what had been rolling, almost treeless, farmland. Eschewing the rigid grid plan that had been imposed on old Charlotte, the professionals laid out wide curving boulevards that followed the

topography. These fed into curving byways that led to the homes of the wealthy. Willow, oak, tulip, plane and elm trees lined boulevards, streets and byways. Shopping centers were located within easy walking distance of neighborhoods. A park covered an entire city block and a children's play area occupied a half block. The Presbyterian College for Women, renamed Queens College after Queen Charlotte of England, the city's namesake, was granted a site at the center of the plan. With the consent of the Stevens Company, Nolen provided bungalow sites for low-income people. (Were these the servants of the grandees who lived nearby in Georgian Colonial and Tudor Revival Style mansions?) A branch of Sugar Creek that ran through the suburb was converted into Edgehill Park and Greenway, in the minds of many the suburb's most attractive feature.

In any account of Nolen's work, Kingsport, Tennessee (1915-1937) deserves special mention. John B. Dennis, owner of the Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Railroad, that passed through the town, saw an opportunity to enrich the railroad by developing industries in the Holston River Valley, where Kingsport was located. On the recommendation of T. H. Sears, president of the American Society of Landscape Architects, he and other sponsors of the enterprise invited Nolen to prepare a plan for a new town in 1915. Their hope was that by providing housing, service and employment, in an area of breathtaking natural beauty, they would attract settlers. Nolen began work in 1916; however the advent of World War I forced a delay in the work and it was not resumed until 1919.

The plan consisted of a civic and commercial center, four neighborhoods with parks in each, and two industrial districts. Industrial plants used local raw materials to manufacture goods, such as cotton, silk, hosiery, shoes, leather, and building materials. The Kingston Press made paper and printed books. The Press maintained homes and provided free medical care for its employees, as did Borden Mills, a dairy products company. Tennessee Eastman Kodak, the largest employer in the city, did not; however, all factory corporations paid the cost of a Metropolitan group insurance for employees and their families. They also paid for employee accident policies on a 50-50 basis.

Roads in each neighborhood were curvilinear and fed into main thoroughfares that radiated out from the civic and commercial center. Neighborhoods were arranged according to the cost of homes, which the Kingsport Improvement Corporation rented or sold. Housing for workers was located at the bottom of a valley near factories. As the land rose the cost and quality of the housing increased. Buyer-developers purchased land from the Improvement Corporation on which they built houses that were inferior to

those built by the Corporation. The town had four churches, an inn, city hall, post office, library, schools, clubs, a hospital, a nine-hole golf course, and a railroad station, the latter located half-way between the civic center and the industrial districts. Park strips acted as buffers between neighborhood districts and each school had four acres for playgrounds. The Works Projects Administration (WPA) built an airport nearby that opened in 1937, the year Nolen died.

Kingsport was widely applauded as a successful industrial town built by businessmen in which labor and management could work harmoniously together for their mutual benefit. The town was important to Nolen as it was his first attempt to organize an industrial community and to provide adequate housing for workers in sylvan surroundings. It was also the first project in which he had to coordinate the work of a number of specialists, including architects, engineers, woodsmen and gardeners.

Unfortunately, the financial backers of Kingsport did not adhere to the standards Nolen had set. Consequently, he was not to blame for flaws that later became distressingly obvious, such as heavy traffic through business sections; the removal of strip planting along streets; poor sanitation; the sub-division of the African-American neighborhood into small lots; the conversion of the railroad parks into business areas; and the lack of control over peripheral land. Because there was no greenbelt surrounding the town, slums marred its outskirts.

Industrialists who had wooed workers to settle in Kingsport began acting as if the workers were disposable. The extent to which labor-management relations had deteriorated was made clear in 1938 when workers struck a mill company and elected their own representatives to a previously business-dominated mayor and council.

On the plus side, because of the proximity of industries and natural resources and its strategic location at the conflux of U.S. 25 and 11 highways, Kingsport was one of the few cities in the United States that prospered during the depression. Both its pluses and minuses served as object lessons for planners, including Nolen, on what to do and not to do to create attractive cities in which people could live, work, play and prosper.

In her book *Kingsport, Tennessee: A Planned American City,* 1987, Margaret Ripley Wolfe's criticism of John Hancock's praise of John Nolen is unusually sharp. It may be true that many professionals were on site before Nolen was hired, he was still responsible for tying aspects of their work

together. It may also be true that Philip W. Foster and Earle Draper, planners in Nolen's office, did most of the work, Nolen was still their boss. It is always a fine line determining who is responsible, the head of a firm or his subordinates. It is, however, customary practice to give the person who has the ultimate authority and who gets paid for the work, credit for its execution.

Nolen, having secured a hold on Charlotte, North Carolina, through his acceptance of private commissions to landscape homes for wealthy residents while he was working on Myers Park, it was inevitable that the Chamber of Commerce would call on him in 1917 to survey Charlotte with the intention of executing a master plan for the city. Due to the opposition of a "civic commercial elite" who lived in suburbs planned by Nolen but who disapproved of planning in downtown Charlotte as it might infringe on their profits and lower or eliminate class and racial restrictions, the plan was never commissioned. Nathan Lindquist put the matter succinctly in his 2003 bachelor's thesis for the University of North Carolina when he wrote: "City planning made enemies by threatening a way of business that had made many men rich." Nolen's ideas for a network of greenery along stream beds—derived from the success of the greenway at Myers Park; for boulevards radiating out from the center of the city; and for a belt road around the old central core to carry traffic were picked up and partially completed by Charlotte city engineers decades later.

Nolen's plan for Myers Park and his preliminary proposals for Charlotte are meaningful as they show how he was moving away from "City Beautiful" notions toward "City Practical" schemes in which cities would become more than glittering exteriors that hid mundane realities, such as functioning streets, adequate housing, and efficient sanitation systems. It may be obvious today but city planners like Nolen had to learn to put determining geographical constraints, historical dimensions, social differences and economic capabilities first before they designed fancy-dress buildings and landscape configurations.

With Nolen's approval, Earle Draper established an independent practice in the south in 1917. By expanding the ideas he had acquired in Nolen's office, he became a prosperous planner. His most successful commissions were Eastover, a Charlotte suburb, Chicopee, Georgia and, during the depression, Norris, Tennessee, a project for the Tennessee Valley Authority.

After the United States entered World War I. April 6, 1917, Nolen joined the advisory housing committee of the Emergency Fleet Corporation, became chief of the Bureau of Housing and Town Planning of the U.S. Army Educational Commission, and was a town planner for the U.S. Shipping Board

and the U.S. Housing Corporation. The planning of Union Park Gardens outside Wilmington, Delaware, built for otherwise homeless workers at the Pusey and Jones, Bethlehem Shipbuilding, and American Car and Foundry companies, under the auspices of the Fleet Corporation, was Nolen's major contribution to the war effort. Writing of his wartime work in his 1927 book *New Towns for Old,* Nolen referred to Union Park Gardens as "the best low cost example of community planning and development in the Philadelphia region." The convivial community of two-story row houses with wide-open verandahs and with settings of grass, flowers and trees still (2004) exists.

In 1923 Charles J. Livingood, an agent for Mary M. Emery, a wealthy benefactress, impressed by Nolen's work at Kingsport and at Union Park Gardens, gave him a commission to design the “garden city” town of Mariemont, Ohio. Hailed by Nolen as a "national exemplar" ot town planning, Mariemont was intended to be a model community for people of moderate means with a wide range of shops, businesses and services. Containing a mix of apartments and town and freestanding houses, the architectural style was predominantly English Tudor. The village had so many half-timbered and stucco buildings that it appeared to have been transplanted from the Cotswolds region of England.

Attempting to answer the question, "Was Mariement a national exemplar?, Millard Rogers in *John Nolen and Mariemont* (2001) praised the town's cohesiveness and neighborhood experience but acknowledged income levels had so risen that many wage-earners could not afford to live there. He was pleased with the vitality of the town square with its shops, restaurants, banks, post office, and inn, and with the easy and safe pedestrian accessibility to schools, shops, parks and other neighborhoods; however, he regretted the absence of a greenbelt that would have curbed sprawl, the failure to build some of the public buildings Nolen had proposed, and the inadequacy of public transportation. While Nolen provided space for on-street parking and rear alleys giving access to garages, he did not foresee the escalating problems caused by the automobile with the result that some streets were too narrow, there was not enough space for parking, and traffic coursing through the main avenues produced congestion, noise and exhaust fumes. The increased density— not of people but of automobiles—gave the fronts of many residences "the appearance of commercial parking lots." With so many caveats, Rogers answered his question with an equivocal YES.

By 1919, Nolen had written two books, edited two others, and published scores of articles and plans. His standing among his peers had so increased that in 1926 he was elected president of the National Conference on City Planning.

In his presidential address at St. Petersburg, Nolen suggested the town and regional plan he prepared for Venice, Florida in 1925 should become a paradigm to make Florida a state of interconnected garden cities. Nolen's vision lives on today in the Florida-based "New Urbanism" movement to combat suburban sprawl.

During the 1920s John Nolen was "the dean of city planners." Until Harvard opened its School of Planning in 1929, many city planners, including Russell Black, Earle Draper, Philip Foster, Kenneth Gardner, Irving Root, Justin Hartzog, and John Nolen, Jr. served their apprenticeships in his office.

During "the roaring twenties," the growth of automobile traffic caused city planners, economists, and real estate speculators to shift their focus to the suburbs, for, as investment consultant Roger Babson pointed out, the suburbs had become easily accessible for people with automobiles. Nolen noted how the change transformed parkways, which in pre-war years were pleasure drives, into "channels of traffic . . . for millions of automobile owners, rich and poor" *(Parkways and Land Values).*

Nolen responded to the new emphasis on regional expansion and rural resettlement by joining the Farm Cities Corporation of America in 1921 and by drawing up a plan for a "Farm City" in Pender County, North Carolina, which had to wait until World War II to become a reality. In addition to Mariemont, Ohio (1920-1925), which was not intended to be a Farm City, but, in theory, a satellite community for workers outside Cincinnati, Nolen, from 1923 to 1927, worked on plans for the west coast and inland areas of Florida. Most of these plans came to nothing because of the collapse of a land boom in 1927. Such was the case in plans for Sarasota, St. Petersburg, West Palm Beach and Canal Point. More successful were plans for Clewiston (1923-1924), a "farm-city" on the south shore of Lake Okeechobbe, owned by the Celotex Company of Chicago, and Venice (1925), a center for agriculture and light industry on the Gulf of Mexico, owned by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. In 1977, the city of Venice dedicated a memorial to Nolen at the intersection of Venice Parkway and City Hall, which he had planned as an elevated platform overlooking the ocean, the only memorial to an American city planner in the United States.

The twenties was also the decade in which Nolen became a lecturer on city planning at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the Harvard Summer School, the Cambridge School of Landscape Architecture, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The book he co-authored, *Parkways and Land Values,* began as a series text for a course in city planning at Harvard.

Not the least of Nolen's achievements in the twenties was his revived 1926 comprehensive city plan for San Diego. The plan came about because, as a by-product of the Panama-California Exposition, the U.S. Navy and U. S. Marine Corps settled in San Diego. While “smokestack” adherents thought of the military as their natural ally, this proved to be a mistake. As San Diego was not-equipped to deal with the infrastructural problems of expanding military installations, a need for centralized city planning became evident. Accordingly, in 1924 a for the time, “progressive” City Council, under the aegis of Mayor John C. Bacon (1921-1927), invited John Nolen back to San Diego to update his 1908 plan. To further Nolen’s plans, the Council in 1925 appointed Kenneth Gardner, from Nolen’s Cambridge office, as “planning engineer.”

Nolen’s second San Diego city plan in 1926 broadened the goals of the 1908 plan. The emphasis was still on the waterfront, where an 11-mile drive would extend from the southern boundary of the city to the U.S. Naval Reservation at Point Loma, where civic buildings would be located between the bay and Atlantic (Pacific) Avenue; where a “recreation island” would be created; where an airport would be placed; and where a series of parkways would connect to Balboa Park. Heavy industry would continue to be located along and near the waterfront south of Market Street and shopping and office districts would stay in downtown and Hillcrest areas. Because of its “picturesque” quality, the fishing fleet would be permitted to dock along the waterfront north of Market. Seeing more than San Diego’s downtown, Nolen proposed the historic restoration of Old Town, the use of reservoirs for recreation, and improved traffic connections beyond the city to the east, north and south. This new regional focus may have reflected changing standards in City Planning, which at the time was dividing into competing civil engineering and social science departments in colleges and cities throughout the country.

In his 1983 Master of Arts thesis for the University of Oregon, Stewart Jerome Wilson observed pungently:

> Ironically, Nolen's advocacy of specialized experts, official government planning bodies, and zoning helped create a profession in which private consultants such as Nolen had a diminished role.

Unlike most of his plans for cities and towns, providing decent public housing for wage-earners was not a feature of either of Nolen's two plans for San Diego. This may have been because his clients were concerned with attracting wealthy residents and business or it may have been that San Diego in the teens and twenties was not excessively endowed with shanties for the poor. There was nothing in his "comprehensive" San Diego city plan of 1926 as

scorching as the statement in *Replanning Small Cities* (1912) regarding the shabby treatment of immigrants and Afican-Americans in the wealthy community of Montclair, New Jersey, for which he prepared a plan in 1908-1909.

> It is pleasant to think of these people employed in the country or suburbs; but when one sees their homes, it appears that they are little better off than in the slums and congested districts of a great city.

San Diegans again supported and opposed proposals in the 1926 plans. Unlike the 1908 recommendations, city officials implemented many of them in slow stages, rather than all-at-once. In an A.M. thesis presented to the faculty of San Diego State University in the summer of 1977, Gregg R. Hennessey listed Harbor Drive, Lindbergh Field, Harbor Island, Shelter Island, County Administration Center, and San Clemente Canyon Park as "the result of Nolen's suggestions or his improvements and incorporation of local citizens' ideas."

City residents, whose property lay in its wake, opposed the iconic 'paseo," first proposed by Nolen in 1908 and revived by city planning director Glenn Rick in 1946 as the Cedar Street Mall, twice defeated by voters in 1947 and 1949. Recalcitrant residents were not so lucky in 1961, when the Crosstown Freeway (State Highway 5) plowed through their neighborhood devouring residences while providing a quick connection to Mexico

Desiring to get the most of Nolen while he was in the City, Marston in 1927 commissioned him to prepare a landscape plan for Presidio Park and Presidio Hills, which at that time were in his possession. (Presidio Park did not become City property until 1937.) Nolen refined a plan for the Presidio he had prepared for Marston in 1916. At that time he suggested a museum be built on a knoll overlooking the park. This became the Junipero Serra Museum, nucleus of the San Diego Historical Society, which was dedicated on July 16, 1929.

Independently of his 1926 city plan, Nolen prepared a 1927 plan for Balboa Park, the first such effort since Samuel Parsons, Jr.'s plan was completed and forgotten before the opening of the Panama-California Exposition. While Nolen appreciated the 1915-1916 Exposition buildings, he warned against encroachments in Balboa Park. He was responsible for the development of Morley Field in the northeast quadrant of the park for physical sports. However, the implementation of his proposals were delayed until work-relief funds from the federal government during the depression following the stock market crash of 1929 made them feasible and necessary.

According to Galen Cranz in *The Politics of Park Design* (1982) the Reform Park, of which Independence in Charlotte. Daffin in Savannah, Eastside Balboa Park in San Diego and Francis William Bird Park in Walpole, Massachusetts were examples, evolved as an offshoot of the Progressive Movement. At this time moguls of commerce and industry, concerned about the morals, habits and thoughts of workers, set about creating public parks to defuse proletarian hostility. In reform parks workers were to participate in group sports under the guidance of trained leaders, with the aim of making them happier and healthier, therefore, less inclined to congregate in saloons or to join anti-capitalist campaigns.

Charles D. Warren described the 70-acre Francis William Bird Park in Walpole, Massachusetts, begun in 1925, as John Nolen's "most richly conceived and fully realized public park." Warren stressed that Nolen's blend of Pleasure Ground elements (bridges, hillsides, knolls, meadows, paths, pines and streams) and Reform Park elements (bath houses, outdoor theater, swimming pool, and tennis courts) went "only so far." Aware of the need to preserve green, open and quiet spaces, Nolen placed an athletic field equipped with grandstand and playgrounds on a 7-acre tract adjoining the park he had planned for the passive enjoyment of workers and their families.

As a transitional figure Nolen did not renounce the naturalistic values of the Pleasure Ground era (1850-1890) rather he merged them with the “civilizing” intentions of the Reform-Park era (1900-1930) in the same way that he combined the ideals of promoters of a City Beautiful of civic centers and boulevards with those of a City Practical of farms and factories.

Terrence Young extended Cranz’ observation when he stated that Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and John Nolen preferred a diversity of parks within cities with each park offering different services for different people. Nolen’s primary interest and business was in locating sites, indicating functions, and providing outlines for park systems, such as those for the state of Wisconsin and the cities of La Crosse, Sacramento, Chattanooga, New London, and Venice. He left the design of individual parks to others. In San Diego, the layout of Presidio Park was derived from after-the-fact planting schemes by local landscape architect Roland S. Hoyt. Similarly the 1927 Master Plan for Balboa Park was based on the studies of Hale J. Walker and Kenneth Gardner, from Nolen’s office, with Nolen functioning as the plan’s articulate defender.

Cranz noted that museums were placed in public parks during the Reform Park phase at the request and beneficence of upper-class people seeking cultural improvement. Lower class people preferred athletic fields,

mass spectacles, and betting venues. She cited the Museum of Science and Industry in Jackson Park, Chicago and the Shedd Aquarium and Adler Planetarium in Lincoln Park, Chicago as examples, to which number could be added museums in Forest Park, St. Louis, in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, and in Balboa and Presidio Parks, San Diego. Pointedly, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., the Pleasure Ground's greatest advocate, opposed putting museums and athletic fields in parks as he thought scenery "best offered mental refreshment." (Cranz).

In 1926, the same year he was fashioning his second city plan for San Diego, Nolen was elected president of the National Conference of City Planning, a forum established by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. in 1909 in which representatives of the nascent city planning movement from such fields as social work, public health, civil engineering, architecture, and landscape architecture could come together to seek remedies for problems of housing, transportation, recreation and planning in cities. This was followed, in the early 1930s by his appointments as director of the National Housing Association, founded in 1911, and director of the American Society of Planning Officials, founded in 1934, to reduce a "myriad" of planning organizations into three bodies . . . the American City Planning Institute, the American Civic Association, and the National Conference on City Planning . . . just as the government, in the words of John Loretz Hancock, "was starting to undertake 'social planning' on a nation-wide scale."

The passage of a new San Diego city charter in 1931 and the appointment of Glenn Rick as city planning director carried forward the utopian plans of John Nolen. Rick championed long-range city planning. He helped develop Mission Bay as a recreation and tourist attraction, which was in keeping with Nolen's hopes for a flourishing and integrated city park system.

As was the case with George Marston in San Diego, Edward L. Stone, spokesperson for the Chamber of Commerce and owner of Stone Printing and Manufacturing, called Nolen back to Roanoke in 1927 to expand his 1907 proposals and to design a zone plan and ordinance. Attempting to redress the aesthetic emphasis of his earlier plan, Nolen in his 1929 plan stressed that beauty and serviceability were complementary. In keeping with this practical approach, he varied the arrangement, grade, width and construction of streets, saying that new streets "would not only be more esthetically pleasing and convenient for residents but would also save great sums of money." (Hancock) By easing traffic congestion, new streets would enhance downtown business. In the same vein, parks not only increased natural beauty and provided places for

citizens to play and rest, they also protected areas from unwanted development. (Frazier)

Nolen must have had second thoughts about the location of municipal airports for he recommended that Roanoke locate its airport in an industrial section outside the city and not, as in San Diego, in land-fill close to city residences and downtown business. As with his proposals for school sites, the Roanoke City Council rejected Nolen's choice of a site for an airport.

Having the support of a Supreme Court decision in 1926 legitimizing zoning, Nolen established five use zoning districts for Roanoke: General Residence, Special Residence, Business, Light Industry and Heavy Industry. Each district would adhere to height, area, street width and building setback restrictions. African-Americans in Roanoke were kept separate by Jim Crow laws and not by zoning.

Most of Nolen's suggestions for Roanoke in 1907 and in 1928 fell on deaf ears. Property owners squabbled over which road or zoning district would help or hurt them. The stock market crash of 1929, the year his plan was adopted, and the ensuing depression delayed, many permanently, the implementation of Nolen's plans. Justin Hartzog, from Nolen's office, completed a final budget plan for Roanoke on his own time on October 29, 1932. The lethargic City Council waited to 1964 before it passed its first zoning ordinance. Frazier succinctly summed up the impasse between Nolen and politicians and property owners in the statement: "The concept of planning would not be rejected, just the planner's suggestions."

As an aftermath of the stock market crash of 1929, Nolen was close to being bankrupt. His office in 1931 consisted of himself, his associate Justin Hartzog, and a secretary. "For the first time in more than twenty-five years," he wrote to Charles J. Livingood, his employer at Mariemont, May 9, 1932, "I find myself not without employment, but without employment that yields any income." Fortuitously, having received a grant from the Oberlaender Trust to defray his expenses, he went to Germany in 1931 to study city planning and waterfront improvements.

While on his sabbatical trip abroad, Nolen gave a talk on American planning "at the first all-Union Conference of City Planning open to foreign specialists" (*Pionners of Landscape Design)* in Moscow and saw and approved a new automobile factory and town near Nizhni-Novogorod, 500 miles east of Moscow, and a "Children's Village", so named by the Bolsheviks, on the grounds of the summer palace of Tsarina Catherine near Leningrad. Nolen

recognized that planning in the Soviet Union came from the top, a process he thought could not be repeated in the United States because of the individualistic character of the American people. He tempered his praise by criticizing the small size of apartments, the mechanical nature of the work (workmanship?) and the meager landscaping.

Always willing to accept responsibilities, Nolen became president of the International Federation for Housing and Town Planning in 1931 and m presided over the Federation's meeting in Berlin. At any rate discords between English and German members of the organization, related to political events, created a fissure in the organization. Back in Cambridge in 1932, Nolen took over the presidency of the Boston chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Nolen was never a member of the prestigious Regional Planning Association of America, a New York City based organization formed in 1923, which organization numbered among its members landscape architects Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, who designed the towns of Sunnyside and Radburn and Benton MacKaye who prepared plans for the Appalachian Trail. Architecture critic Lewis Mumford was an associate of this latter organization. Nolen was, however, a member of the Committee on the Regional Plan of New York [City} and Its Environs, that began in 1921, one of his first ventures into large-scale regional planning. Mumford grumbled that the Committee was too conservative.

In a letter to George Marston, October 6, 1932, Nolen weighed the effects of the depression on city planning and sympathized with the plight of the poor:

> I have abundant faith that sooner or later we shall rise from it with some added strength, but the waste and demoralization is very costly. . . . The planning movement itself has been set back and it will take time to recover. Unfortunately, these losses fall most heavily upon the poor, both in money and in lack of better facilities for recreation, education, housing, etc.

Because of declining health, Nolen's participation in the recovery programs of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal was limited. His most active work was, in 1933, as a planner for the Farm-City of Penderlea, North Carolina, a project of the Division of Subsistence Homesteads, a branch of the Department of the Interior. As the name implied, a subsistence city was a government-funded planned city in a rural setting whose residents were

expected to be impoverished farmers and their families. Over 100 subsistence homesteads were built across the nation between 1933 and 1940, when a conservative U.S. Congress terminated a program it considered "Communistic" and "un-American."

Nolen's indirect but no less important role was as consultant-at-large for the National Planning Board. Here he advised the state planning agencies of New Hampshire, Vermont, Alabama, East Florida and Georgia on land utilization, recreation, public works and planning matters. The Federal Emergency Housing Corporation also called on him for advice on slum-clearance projects in Atlanta, Georgia and St. Louis, Missouri. Aside from providing work, the goal of slum-clearance was to replace slums with one, two and three-story houses after examples in France, the Netherlands and Germany.

Planners, many of whom had been members of Nolen's office, borrowed ideas from Nolen's plan for Kingsport and Clarence Stein's plan for Radburn as well as from England's garden cities in the famous or infamous "Greenbelt" towns they designed for the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Resettlement Administration's Division of Suburban Resettlement. They included Earle Draper and Tracy B. Auger, who laid out the town of Norris, Tennessee; Hale J. Walker, who planned Greenbelt, Maryland; Justin Hartzog and architect William Strong, who planned Greenhills, Ohio; and Richard T. Crane and Elbert Peels, who designed Greendale, Wisconsin. In slum-resettlement projects poor people were to be moved out of city slums and into planned suburban communities. So went the theory; in practice, poor people did not have the means required to rent or purchase houses and to move to and from their places of work. Advocates of free enterprise raised such a hue and cry over government sponsorship of these projects and their cooperative mode of living that in 1937 the U.S. Congress cancelled funding for new housing-planning, except for projects approved by the United States Housing Authority, the latter a public corporation created by Congress in 1937, under the Department of the Interior, to loan money for low-cost housing.

John Nolen died on February 18, 1937, at the age of 67, and was buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts. He left behind his widow Barbara, three sons, John, Jr., Edward and Humphrey and one daughter, Mrs. David (Barbara) F. Strong. During his career, he completed more than 450 commissions, including 29 comprehensive plans for cities and 27 for new towns and he served as consultant to 17 state and regional government agencies. His major writings included *Replanning Small Cities* (1912); *New Ideals in the Planning of Cities, Towns and Villages* (1919); *New Towns for Old* (1927); *City Planning* (1916 and 1929), and *Parkways and Land Values,*

with Henry V. Hubbard, published posthumously in 1937. He is honored in many of the cities and towns where he left his mark, such as Sacramento, California, Madison, Wisconsin, Little Rock, Arkansas, Walpole, Massachusetts, Niagara Falls, New York; Glen Ridge, New Jersey; Kistler, Pennsylvania, Roanoke, Virginia, and Venice, Florida.

As with these cities and towns, Nolen's vision for San Diego was that of a beautiful, comfortable and spacious metropolis, in which the demands of agriculture, commerce, housing and industry were adjusted for the greater benefit of a whole city and a whole people. The wish he expressed in *Replanning Small Cities* (1912) to make Madison, Wisconsin, "a beautiful, well-ordered, free, organic city" and "the hope of democracy" was true, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the demands of his clients, of all his commissions. For fear of alarming San Diego's conservatives, the "democracy" Nolen espoused was implicit rather than explicit in his plans for the city.

In 2004, San Diego planners are still thinking of ways to fulfill Nolen's ideals for making their city lovable by constructing a breathtaking city library, by creating parkways from the waterfront to Balboa Park, by developing small parks in a crowded downtown, by expanding parkways and parks throughout the region, and by providing adequate housing for low-income people.

The landscape architecture profession in the United States began in the middle of the nineteenth century with Frederick Law Olmsted. As the profession developed it reflected the artistic and practical goals of Olmsted, who designed parks, parkways, communities, colleges, and cemeteries. His stepson, John Charles, and his natural son, Frederick Law continued the work of the senior Olmsted. The two brothers,. Samuel Parsons, Jr. and others n 1899 founded the American Society of Landscape Architects, and in 1917 Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. became the first president of the American City Planning Institute. Acceptance of the public work of these and other landscape architects reached an apex before the stock market crash of 1929.

Following World War II, landscape architects were relegated to a subsidiary role as consultants for plantings at shopping centers, golf courses, corporate headquarters, private gardens, and along the edges of highways. Meanwhile civil engineers had co-opted their pre-war role as designers of cities. This was an evolutionary process made necessary by the increasing specialization of city departments dealing with communication, historic preservation, sanitation, sewage disposal, transportation, utility management, and water delivery.

As for small neighborly pre-war "garden cities" they were replaced with mass-produced, land-devouring subdivisions. Unlike "garden cities," containing a mix of single-family and tenement houses, whose designs were executed by professional planners for people who could walk at the behest of benefactors, large-scale post-war subdivisions, composed mainly of single-family houses, were designed—if that is the proper word—by in-house architects for drivers of automobiles at the request of profit-seeking developers. Whereas "garden cities" were intended to be, in theory at least, self-sufficient, suburbs were often described as "bedroom communities" for people who worked in factories and offices in large commercial and industrial conundrums a considerable distance away. Professor Witold Rybczynski described how the transition from town planners. whose aim was to create conditions for a more sociable life, to builders, whose aim was to sell low-cost houses, resulted in the decline in the quality of life for atomized residents of suburbia:

By concentrating entirely on making houses affordable, developers overlooked the chief lesson of the 1920s garden suburbs: subdivisions should not be composed solely of private dwellings but also [of] shared public spaces where citizens can feel they are part of a larger community.

City Life: Urban Expectations in a New World, 196.

With the growth of ecological concerns in the 1990s, due to the pollution of the environment; the growth of sprawl; the decrease in farm land and open space, the humdrum character of suburban housing; the tedium of living in cookie-cutter housing tracts, and the seminal book *Design with Nature*, first published in 1969, by landscape architect Ian McHarg, some city officials and some landscape architects reverted back to thinking of landscape architects as professionals with a role to play in setting standards for city and suburban planning. Like McHarg, many landscape architects became conscious of how climate, topography, soil conditions, water availability, and scenery affected the well-being of people.

Not surprisingly, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, the Miami-based couple who promoted "New Urbanism" concepts, alluded to the achievements of the pioneers of landscape architecture, Frederick Law Olmsted, John Charles Olmsted, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Jens Jensen, Horace W. Cleveland, and John Nolen. They reexamined plans by these men that for a long time had been considered anachronistic. Among these pioneers of "walking cities" and of "the balanced co-existence of man and nature," John Nolen was gifted with keen and flexible intelligence. He understood the work of his predecessors while he extended their reach. He was uniquely qualified to

convert his extensive knowledge of city plans and regulations in Europe into programs for the improvement of cities.

While his commissions for private clients may not have revealed it, Nolen was sympathetic to the conditions of working people, as he showed in his advocacy of playgrounds and in his designs for city parks, parkways, towns for workers, and housing projects for federal and state governments. Profiting from the example of German cities like Dusseldorf. Frankfurt-am-Main and others, Nolen recommended that zoning ordinances and regulations be used to regulate the height and placement of buildings, the grouping of public buildings, the enhancement of sight lines, the widening of streets, the planting of trees along streets, the elevating of streets or depressing of tracks at railroad crossings, the under-grounding of utilities, the separating of industrial, business and residential districts, and the locating of public facilities, such as churches, community centers, government offices, parks, playgrounds, schools, stadiums, stores and theaters, in new and old sections of a city.

As with the English “garden cities” of Letchworth and Welwyn, Nolen sought to provide residents of cities and towns with nearby green spaces and he advocated mixing together apartment buildings and privately-owned houses. He was not averse to row houses or super-blocks; indeed, he considered them a means for conserving land. Where possible, he placed factories and sewage and garbage facilities away from residential and business sections. He was personally opposed to segregation: however, in deference to the wishes of his clients, he planned separate living districts for immigrants in Niagara Falls and African-Americans in Kingsport, Tennessee, Roanoke, Virginia, Asheville, North Carolina, and Venice, Florida.

If Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. thought of nature as a universal anodyne-for man’s ills, John Nolen thought of beauty as an absolute with nature, culture, architecture, and hygienic and spacious cities as its manifestations. In his choice of sites and occasional designs for parks and plazas for cities, counties and states, he stressed the importance of preserving natural beauty. As he said in his 1925 plan for Venice, Florida, "nature led the way and the plan followed her way." Knowing that he, like his San Diego patron George Marston, could be accused of being an impractical idealist, he linked beauty with serviceability and economy; in other words, beauty was efficient and it paid. Likewise, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., sold his natural parks by telling city officials that they raised property values and broadened the tax base. Having discovered that his comparisons of American cities to European to the former's disadvantage repelled clients, Nolen toned down stark comparisons as his career progressed.

Throughout his plans, writings and lectures Nolen cited the ideals of Sir Raymond Unwin, who planned the first industry-based “garden city” at Letchworth, England in 1904; Pierre L’Enfant, who sketched the boulevards of Washington, D.C in 1791; and Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., who prepared the grounds for Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893. It was images of these diverse, seemingly contradictory urban and exurban achievements that Nolen sought to re-create in his plans for San Diego, California; Madison, Wisconsin; Little Rock, Arkansas; Asheville, North Carolina; St. Petersburg, Florida; and Venice, Florida. If the plans for these cities and towns should be placed side-to-side, a commonality of vision would be present that would demonstrate Nolen’s lifelong commitments to beauty and the happiness of people.

While a perspicacious reader might detect an inconsistency in Nolen's choice of guides, he should remember that Nolen did not believe that "one size fits all." Classically- trained L'Enfant may have been a formalist but in his use of diagonals and radial avenues he relieved the tyranny of the grid and romantically-disposed Olmsted and Unwin, with their inclinations toward informality, showed how greenery could be inserted within large cities and in the satellite communities that surrounded them.

Justin Hartzog, a Nolen apprentice and city planner, concluded his eulogy to his former boss at the time of his death with the words:

> He aimed to enable people to enjoy their individual lives to the utmost, through improvement of the environment of all. Always he struggled to implant new ideas in the practical mind, to crystallize the dreams of the visionary mind, and to check the untempered rashness of the unprepared mind.

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John Nolen (June 14, 1869 â€“ February 18, 1937) was an American landscape architect, planning consultant, founding member of the American City Planning Institute and a writer. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Nolen was orphaned as a child and placed in Girard College. After he graduated first in his class in 1884, he worked as a grocery clerk and secretary to the Girard Estate Trust Fund before enrolling in the Wharton School of Finance and Economics at the University of Pennsylvania in 1891. Nolen John Nolan (born 22 May 1938) is a British film and television actor. He is known for his role as Wayne Enterprises board member Douglas Fredericks in Batman Begins, the Gotham Tonight promotional segments for The Dark Knight, and The Dark Knight Rises. Nolan had a recurring role in his nephew Jonathan Nolan's television series Person of Interest as John Greer, a mysterious British figure connected with Decima Technologies and the main villain from seasons three to five of the show. Author:John Nolen. From Wikisource. Jump to navigation Jump to search.Â John Nolen: Landscape Architect and City Planner, by R. Bruce Stephenson. "John Nolen and the Metropolitan Landscape" (2013), by Judy Beck.