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University of California/Berkeley  
Regional Oral History Office

The Julia Morgan Architectural History Project

Volume II

JULIA MORGAN, HER OFFICE, AND A HOUSE

Interviews with:

Mary Grace Barron  
Dorothy Wormser Coblentz  
Bjarne Dahl  
Bjarne Dahl, Jr.  
Edward Hussey  
Hettie Belle Marcus  
Polly Lawrence McNaught  
Catherine Freeman Nimitz  
Flora and Morgan North  
Kirk O. Rowlands  
Norma Willer  
Quintilla Williams

Edited by  
Suzanne B. Riess

Copy No.   /







Julia Morgan photographed in December 1880.

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Charles Bill Morgan  
Father of Julia Morgan

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Julia Morgan  
A Kappa Alpha Theta portrait,  
Berkeley, 1895.

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Julia Morgan, probably 1896.

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Julia Morgan standing before Notre Dame Cathedral when a student at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris, ca. 1904.

*Reproduced courtesy of Howell-North Books*







Julia Morgan, Ecole des Beaux Arts student, in the kitchen of her apartment in Paris, ca. 1904.

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Julia Morgan, standing, with niece, Judith Avery Morgan, and nephew, Morgan North. 2414 Prospect Street, Berkeley. Ca. 1918.





Some of Julia Morgan's family, photographed at the Monterey studio residence of Julia Morgan by Morgan North. Left to right, standing: Flora d'IlleNorth, Sachi (Miss Morgan's housekeeper), Mrs. Parmelee Morgan (nee Sally Moon). Seated: Julia Morgan, Mrs. Moon, Hart H. North, Emma Morgan North, Judith Avery Morgan.

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Julia Morgan (center) being seen off on a trip to South America, August 1947, by Emma North (Miss Morgan's sister) and Flora d'Ille North (wife of Miss Morgan's nephew, Morgan).

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Volume II  
JULIA MORGAN, HER OFFICE, AND A HOUSE

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## INTERVIEW HISTORY

The two volumes of the Julia Morgan Architectural History Project appear at a time when women in professions are being focused on with increasing frequency and clarity. Julia Morgan, the first woman graduate of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, the designer of San Simeon, was a totally successful woman architect, yet so little known as to be until recently only a note in the architecture books. The following oral history transcripts with associates in the Julia Morgan office, staff, clients, and her nephew and his wife, enlarge the picture.

In her day Julia Morgan was unwilling to grant interviews. Her time was totally committed to her work, and she felt her work spoke for her. All the individuals interviewed in these oral histories agree in their assessment of Julia Morgan as scrupulously private, and certainly this affected how deeply known she was to her associates and to the world.

Yet although she courted anonymity, the many beautiful houses that are her work are proudly called by their present owners "Julia Morgans."

Walter T. Steilberg

The first volume of the Julia Morgan Architectural History opens with Walter Steilberg as the subject and interviewee. For many years Mr. Steilberg was the primary source of information on Julia Morgan. She had full confidence in him as an architectural engineer, and as a reliable friend; his testimony regarding her shows how well he understood her plans and needs.

The interview moves from Walter Steilberg's own history to his early memories of the beginnings of the William Randolph Hearst-Julia Morgan working relationship, and to Mr. Steilberg's execution with Miss Morgan of many major commissions, often for Hearst. Walter Steilberg was unique as an architect because of his strong research interest in materials; after 1921, he had his own office, yet he continued to take on assignments for Julia Morgan.

After Mr. Steilberg's unfortunate accidental death cut short his interview, his work was viewed further in two reminiscent and appreciative interviews, one conducted with friends Robert and Evelyn Ratcliff, and one with associates Jack Wagstaff, Norm Jensen, Edward Hussey, and George Hodges. Helena Steilberg Lawton has further enhanced the value of the Steilberg interviews by her appended commentary and additional material relating to her father's career independent of Julia Morgan.



## Warren Charles Perry

While Walter Steilberg's occasional work at the University of California was in consulting and building, his contemporary, Warren Perry, was a University man who, after his study in Paris, came back to teach the next generation of architects. Dean emeritus of the University of California School of Architecture, Warren C. Perry was interviewed in an effort to enrich the historical material available on architecture in Berkeley. Having followed John Galen Howard--with whom Julia Morgan worked on early campus buildings when she returned from Paris--and preceded William Wilson Wurster as dean of the architecture school, Mr. Perry was in a good position to observe change and to set the early 1900s scene.

Reading of Warren Perry's school experience at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, one begins to imagine how difficult it would be for a young woman to step into the same situation, yet Julia Morgan did, and came back well-trained and confident of her ability. (Her architectural drawings from the Paris years were exhibited at the Oakland Museum in January 1976, the first Morgan exhibition of any magnitude.)

## The House at 2821 Claremont Boulevard, Berkeley

In the second volume of the Julia Morgan Architectural History, Miss Morgan is first viewed rather abstractly from the vantage of one of her works, the splendid house at 2821 Claremont Avenue, a commission which has had an unusual history. Now the home of the vice-president of the University, originally the Seldon Williams residence, it is a sample of Julia Morgan's residential best. Yet disappointingly to Julia Morgan it was never really lived in. Today, however, it fills easily its role as a grand and public home, visible proof of the fineness and quality of a Julia Morgan house.

Wishing to document the origin and changes in that house, a series of short interviews was undertaken with Mary Grace Barron, the real estate agent handling the sale of the house for the Williams family; Kirk O. Rowlands, involved with the purchase by the University; Norma Willer, project architect who worked on the redecorating of the house; Quintilla Williams, one-time housekeeper at 2821 Claremont; and Catherine F. Nimitz, widow of Admiral Chester Nimitz, and at one time a neighbor of the house.

## The Office: Edward Hussey and Dorothy Wormser Coblentz

The focus of the second volume then moves from the house to the draftsmen in Julia Morgan's office. Edward B. Hussey and Dorothy Wormser Coblentz worked for Julia Morgan in the 1920s when the work on San Simeon and other buildings for William Randolph Hearst, many YWCAs, and



institutional and residential work was keeping a large staff occupied. Edward Hussey was interviewed particularly about his role on the site for the Honolulu YWCA. His comments on Julia Morgan, her few idiosyncracies in the office; on Bernard Maybeck, with whom Mr. Hussey also worked extensively; and his memories of years with Walter Steilberg, add to the record on all three architects. Mr. Hussey was also most helpful in sharing pictures and drawings from the work at Principia College, a job which involved the Morgan office as well as the Maybeck.

Dorothy Wormser Coblentz has a vivid appreciation of what being employed by Julia Morgan meant--fine training, high expectations, no nonsense. We can guess at what Julia Morgan might have hoped would result from the schooling she gave the young women architects in her office, yet not one of the women who worked for her chose to commit her life to architecture as fully as had Julia Morgan. Dorothy Wormser also worked for a period in Henry Gutterson's office, and that experience gives her additional insight into the different qualities and expectations of the Julia Morgan office.

#### Family and Private Life

The interviews with Morgan North, nephew of Julia Morgan, and his wife, Flora d'Ille North, are a major addition to the biographical material extant on Julia Morgan. Family history is vital in looking at the enormous will and determination Julia Morgan brought to whatever she did, from being admitted into the profession to never letting down in quality or in purpose.

Flora and Morgan were at first reluctant to go another round of questions on Aunt Julia because their time has so much been taken up with those curious about Julia Morgan, newly "discovering" this first woman graduate of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. But the Norths' respect for the memory of Julia Morgan, and their unwillingness to endorse half-done research on her, convinced them that if they consented to the tape-recordings they might be able then to refer some of the inquiries to the interviews on file in The Bancroft Library.

Morgan North's "note to the historian" (p. 237) and his suggestion that no writer so far has dealt sufficiently with what Miss Morgan was trying to do in her work, present a challenge. The next step perhaps will be a study of the Morgan work, and the correspondence, along the lines sketched by Mr. North.

An almost endless horizon of research and interviews with clients, workmen, and myriad persons who had various contacts with Julia Morgan is suggested by the three other interviews in the volume. Bjarne Dahl,





of Julia Morgan's office staff, recalls Julia Morgan admiringly. He, and his son, and Polly McNaught, who worked briefly for Julia Morgan, and Hettie Belle Marcus, a client and friend, all speak of high standards and human touches; the lady architect had the strength to resist compromise without flawing her femininity.

### Conduct of the Interviews

The interviews in these volumes, except where otherwise noted, were tape-recorded for the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library in 1974 and 1975 by Suzanne B. Riess. Excerpts are included from a 1968 interview with Dorothy Wormser Coblentz conducted by Elizabeth Sacks Sussman and Leslie Mandelson Freudenheim, authors of Building With Nature.

Sally Woodbridge, devoted student of Bay Region architecture and author of Buildings in the Bay Area, interviewed Walter Steilberg at the request of the Regional Oral History Office because of her established interview relationship with him. (Earlier Steilberg/Woodbridge interviews are deposited in The Bancroft Library.) A commentary on Mr. Steilberg by Sally Woodbridge is included in Volume I.

Sara Holmes Boutelle, whose interest in Julia Morgan has led her to form the Julia Morgan Association, to organize tours and meetings, and to write about the architect's work, was present at the second of the North interviews, and was the interviewer in the Dahl interview.

All of the interviews were held in the homes of the interviewees, with the exception of the interviews with Kirk O. Rowlands, Norma Willer, and the group interview with associates of Walter Steilberg, which took place in offices of the University of California at Berkeley.

The interviewees reviewed and checked their transcripts, making minimal changes; only Walter Steilberg was unable to complete this step because of his sudden death, and we are grateful to Helena Steilberg Lawton for her help in editing her father's memoir.

The gap in time between the first and last interviews with Flora and Morgan North explains why some subjects were approached twice. To edit these questions further would mean a departure from the oral history aspect, and the Norths, writers and editors both, have been patient with the demands of oral documentation.

### Related Material

Blueprints, bills, and itemization of furnishings for 2821 Claremont Avenue; an interview by Harold Lyman with Walter Steilberg; tapes of some of the interviews; and a variety of material related to this study is



deposited in The Bancroft Library. A collection of Julia Morgan drawings is presently housed in the documents collection of the College of Environmental Design, and letters, more drawings, and blueprints are in the Morgan and Flora North Collection.

Throughout the interview the concurrent research by Bernice Scharlach, Richard Longstreth, and Elinor Richey is alluded to. Miss Richey includes an interesting chapter on Julia Morgan in her Eminent Women of the West.

These volumes join the shelf of Regional Oral History Office interviews with California architects William Wilson Wurster and William Charles Hays. They also take their place with interviews conducted with successful women such as Imogen Cunningham, Dorothea Lange Taylor, Grace McCann Morley, Portia Bell Hume, Emily Huntington, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, the suffragists, pioneers in education and the arts, trail-blazers in political life in California. All of these women differ in their attitudes toward woman's role; together with Julia Morgan they enlarge the definition of achievement.

#### In Conclusion

Finally, even if the Regional Oral History Office had existed while Julia Morgan was still living, there is no doubt but that if asked Miss Morgan would have refused to give time or endorsement to an interview. This we remained aware of throughout the project. Julia Morgan's very nature was to be private and all the "whys" of that which persist in the public and self-revealing 1970s finally are irrelevant.

There are many flamboyant personalities, monument-makers in abundance among architects, and there are few of the variety of Julia Morgan. Her early acceptance in the profession may perhaps be credited to her convincing quietness; indeed there was never a reason for her to change, never a need to shine more brightly, loom more largely, or to be anything more than the absolute master of her craft.

Suzanne B. Riess  
Interviewer-Editor

February 1976  
The Regional Oral History Office  
486 The Bancroft Library  
University of California at Berkeley



The Julia Morgan Architectural History Project

Mary Grace Barron

THE SALE OF THE SELDON WILLIAMS HOUSE, 2821 CLAREMONT  
BOULEVARD, BERKELEY, TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

Interview conducted by

Suzanne B. Riess



MARY GRACE BARRON: THE SALE OF THE SELDON WILLIAMS HOUSE, 2821 CLAREMONT  
BOULEVARD, BERKELEY, TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Date of Interview: 1 October 1974

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THE SALE OF THE SELDON WILLIAMS HOUSE, 2821 CLAREMONT BOULEVARD,  
BERKELEY, TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

An interview with Mary Grace Barron, real estate agent.

October 1, 1974.

The Julia Morgan House at the Corner

Riess: As a Claremont area resident, did you know Mrs. Seldon Williams?

Barron: She was there, but no one ever saw her. The shades were drawn, the draperies were drawn. Mrs. Seldon Williams, owner of 2821 Claremont Boulevard, did come outside occasionally, but I only saw her once. I would not have recognized her if I had seen her again in another place. The house was always noticed by the many who passed daily, and it was the "dream house" of many who speculated about its mysterious owner.

There were many tales, some farfetched, some demonstrating Mrs. Williams' humanity. One neighbor, Emily Eggleston, came around several years ago collecting for Community Chest. Emily rang the doorbell, and waited and waited, then rang again. Finally Mrs. Williams opened the door. Emily told her what she wanted. Mrs. Williams made no reply, closed the door, and went away. In about five or ten minutes she came back, opened the door, and gave Emily a very nice check.

As far as I know, that was the only typical neighborly contact that she had other than with Mrs. Halden and her bachelor brother who lived across Claremont Blvd. and whose kindnesses she accepted and relied upon.

My husband [Dr. Gilbert Barron] attended her occasionally as a substitute for her own physician, and there was an elaborate ritual of doorbell ringing before she would answer the door. She received



# A Jewel By Julia Morgan in Berkeley's Claremont Court



AN HISTORIC HOME IN ORIGINAL CONDITION BUILT IN 1928 WITH THE ARTISTRY AND ARCHITECTURAL STYLE OF SAN SIMEON



**Berkeley  
INVESTMENT  
Realty**

**MARY GRACE BARRON**

OFFICE 841-8262 - RESIDENCE 841-2618  
2576 SHATTUCK AVENUE - BERKELEY, CALIF. 94704

**OFFERED AT:** \$125,000  
**PROPERTY:** 2821 Claremont Boulevard  
Berkeley, California 94705  
**INSPECTION:** Appointment with agent  
**MAIN HOUSE:** 5 Bedrooms plus 2 servants  
**GARAGE:** 2 car — apartment above  
**LOT SIZE:** 120 x 130 (approximate)  
**1969-70 TAXES:** \$3,893





Barron: him in the small library, and his impression was that she lived alone without help.

Riess: What about Reverend Griffith at St. Clement's?

Barron: I don't believe she knew him, for he came soon before she broke her hip and left the house. (You might ask him.)\* She was not, judging from all the things I saw around the house, particularly interested in the Episcopal Church. She was more interested in the fundamentalist, evangelistic kinds of religions, or at least they were interested in her philanthropy, potential or real. Remember that her mother, Lizzie Glide, gave San Francisco the Glide Memorial Methodist Church, and endowed it.

However, I asked Mr. Glide if she would give an Italian candlestick that stood about five feet tall to St. Clement's for an Advent candle, and with her permission he did. Dr. Griffith wrote her a letter of thanks.

Riess: How did you happen to list the house for sale?

Barron: Of course, that's what we are to discuss--the sale of the home for the University's use.

My husband and I had gone down to San Diego to retrieve an old family redwood home, and on the way back we had stopped in San Simeon to see what Miss Julia had done for Mr. Hearst. I had known Morgan North, Julia Morgan's nephew, and his wife Flora, knew the Berkeley City Club, and I was vaguely aware that 2821 could be a Julia Morgan design, but I never would have dreamt of ringing the doorbell to inquire or call.

But after seeing San Simeon, as we drove around the corner returning to our home on Avalon Avenue, I looked at that house, and I said, "Gilbert, that's the best Julia Morgan there is. It's better than anything at San Simeon." (Later I was to learn from Morgan North that his Aunt Julia felt it was one of her best homes.)

At that time I did not know if Mrs. Williams was in the house or not, for I saw the gardener there on a regular basis and upstairs lights which I was to discover later were set on timers.

After discussion with Hans Ostwald, president of the Berkeley Civic Art Foundation, I wrote a letter to Mrs. Williams at 2821 Claremont asking if she could give the home and an endowment for its care to the city for a "petit museum," or as a place for

---

\*See p. 17.



Barron: recitals and concerts for children in Berkeley. (I come from Nashville, Tennessee, and the young and old of that city enjoy the luxury of endowments of historic homes for such uses.)

You may know that the Civic Art Foundation is chartered to receive and hold in trust for the City of Berkeley gifts of money and art works, and to preserve historic monuments. Rose Walk, designed by Maybeck and Gutterson, is preserved by the city at this time.

Riess: But such gifts have to have endowments with them?

Barron: Yes, but the city was able to take over Rose Walk without private endowment because they maintain the city services only of the lighting and the paving. To take on a home, an establishment where programs would be run, would require money for staff and maintenance, money which is non-existent in the city budget. So I requested both money and the home from Mrs. Williams. I had no response to that letter.

I wrote a second letter saying that we were still very interested in having the home for the Civic Art Foundation, and "by the way, I am a real estate agent, and if you want to get rid of the house I'll be glad to sell it."

I received a reply from her nephew, Joseph Henry Glide, Jr., of Napa, indicating that he was in charge of Mrs. Williams' affairs and her care. Mr. Glide and his attorney, Jack Patterson, and I met at 2821 Claremont to inspect the house and discuss listing the property for sale with the firm I was working with at the time, Berkeley Investment Realty.

Mr. Glide explained that he had come down to take care of Mrs. Williams the previous year when she had fallen in her bedroom and broken her hip. After a stay in Alta Bates Hospital, she was moved to a convalescent hospital in Napa. Mr. Glide indicated that his aunt was concerned about the expense of her care, and had given him permission to dispose of the house and its furnishings to pay for her care.

However, he indicated that if she died before the sale of the home, it was willed to an evangelistic group called the Christian Jews, a Texas-based organization which wanted a Northern California branch, and they would probably use the home as a base for their operation in the Bay Area. At one time in the past we had received their pamphlets--probably Mrs. Williams had put our names on the list. The group is composed of Orthodox Jews converted to Christianity





Barron: whose mission was to convert other Jews.

Riess: What was the house like inside?

Barron: Dark and musty! I discovered that the house was only being used by Mrs. Williams in the upper western wing. She had two bedrooms, a sleeping porch, a charming little kitchen, all of which were cluttered with years of collections of clothing, books, papers, all crowded together and disorganized. For a ninety-five year old lady who looked after herself, it was not truly dirty, as I have seen with other old people.

The furnishings left in the house were quite good, and essentially the furnishings that were purchased when the house was built.\* But the dining room furniture was all gone, and many other more contemporary items that fitted into another style of living were removed-- probably things that were supplementary to the rest of the Glide family's use. Those had been removed before I saw the house.

The main rooms (i.e., living, dining, kitchen, guest rooms) were almost like new. They had evidently been closed down soon after the house was built, or after the death of her husband. It was my understanding that Mrs. Williams had married late in life, built the house in 1928, and that her husband had died two or three years later. She did use the charming downstairs library which overlooked the back garden. There was a large Capehart music system and a collection of operatic records which she played full blast, according to her neighbor who lived behind.

#### Getting it Ready for the Market

Barron: But there were many things that had to be done before the house could be marketed. Even though most of the rooms had not been used, they were dusty. The colors of the paint had oxidized and changed. There was some buckling around the stairway and cracks in the walls. (That happens around this area, particularly--we have a lot of blue clay strata which swell up during rainy seasons, and then doors won't open and cracks form with the vertical movement--not serious cracks, even though we are on the edge of the fault.) We agreed that these main rooms could be shown, but the upstairs suite, especially the bedroom, had to be cleared out and repaired and painted.

Mr. Glide and Jack Patterson agreed that I could list the property, and I was given authority to come and go and supervise

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\*Bills itemizing the purchases for furnishing the house have been deposited in The Bancroft Library with a set of drawings of the house. - S.R.



Barron: the preparation of the house for sale.

First I had to be "certified" with the ADT security system which had the house wired and "bugged" with electronic sensors. Every time I went in or out was quite a test of bravery. There were heavy velvet curtains pulled over the windows; the interior was black as pitch. Each time I went in I had to call in advance to ADT, tell them I was entering, walk over, open the front door which made all the systems "go," then have to walk across that dark long hall to the telephone closet which had a light which would only switch on once I closed the door to that closet. Spooky as all get out! Then I would call ADT, say that I was in, give my code number as identification, and repeat the procedure in reverse when I left.

The process of cleaning out and making the house showable really took about six weeks. Mr. Glide allowed me about \$1,500 to have it cleaned and to have Karl Kardel come in and paint the master bedroom suite. The bedroom repainting had been started while Mrs. Williams was there, but evidently she fired the painter after he had puttied up the cracks and prime coated part of the room.

Karl Kardel painted it in the original colors which he felt had been there (rosy mauve) and which were "typical" of Julia Morgan. Kardel and his fine finish painters striped and glazed multicolors around the baseboards and picture moldings, and restored and antiqued the dressing room doors. It looked quite nice. There was also some work done on the library ceiling and in the small kitchen.

I got a typical Berkeley "hippie looking" cleaning crew to do the mammoth job of cleaning, sorting, and washing windows. I had to be around most of the time to supervise and, of course, to open and close the house for ADT.

More about the cleaners: The young man who ran the crew had been recommended by our management firm and it was my understanding that he has a thousand-dollar-a-month income from a trust from grandparents. He had long hair and a beard and a shrewish wife, and they had a young French fellow whom they bossed around, and another couple who came and worked for a while. All these young people had come from well-to-do families so that they recognized what was good and what was bad as they sorted, and they were really quite honest. If they wanted something, they asked for it. They really wanted very little, except for some of what they called the "hate literature."



Barron: It really wasn't hate literature, but books sent from the fundamentalist religious organizations.

Riess: How did you know what to do with all the stuff?

Barron: All of the things that had particular value were put in one area (bedroom dresser) -- pieces of silver or jewelry, mirrors, beautiful silver picture frames. There were some lovely things, things purchased on trips abroad, beautiful laces, kid gloves, usually one of each, not used.

Here and there were odd things, clocks that didn't work, tons and tons of bibles and bible books from the evangelists, and in the library some choice Lalique vases which I put in a special closet for use by the potential buyer, for they "went with" the house. One day when I went in, I discovered that Mr. Glide and his attorney and an antique dealer had taken most of the good things to Napa, and later I saw the picture frames and vases in an antique shop there. However, some nice things were left.

Riess: Was there a lot of correspondence with the groups?

Barron: Yes. I didn't read it all, just checked to see what category or box to toss it into. All the boxes of papers were put in the garage. Mr. Glide went through all of it looking for deeds, pieces of paper relating to other properties that she and the Glide family had an interest in.

Riess: How did you determine what price to ask for it?

Barron: We thought that in its present condition \$125,000 was just about right. I confirmed this by comparables, and by checking with an appraiser who visited the house.

Riess: You told me once that a lot of homes in the area were on the market because of the traffic divergence problem.

Barron: Right. There were some beautiful homes that were almost as good as 2821 Claremont that had sold for seventy, eighty, and eighty-five. So, asking \$125,000 -- well, it was a Julia Morgan and truly a beauty. But also considering that there were cracks, an antique kitchen, an almost unusable narrow driveway, a steam boiler that had to be replaced, the price was as high as could be.

Mentioning the boiler reminds me that Mr. Rankin, who came to fix it up temporarily, was the son of Rankin & Son Company who had



Barron: originally installed the furnace, both on Claremont Boulevard and at San Simeon. Mr. Rankin told me that the woodcarvers were also the same Italian crew who had carved the doors at San Simeon.

Riess: Did you confirm this from papers around the house?

Barron: Miss Morgan's secretary, Mrs. Forney, confirmed some of this and had other information about the lighting and the della Robbia wreath in the entry hall.

I had a hard time keeping that wreath and the furniture which remained too. Mr. Glide was convinced that "this stuff is worth a lot of money" and that "the della Robbia wreath in the entry hall is genuine. I want to sell it." So, I had my friend Wilson Combs, a knowledgeable and artistic architect, climb a ladder, look at the installation and the workmanship of the wreath, and then talk to the de Young Museum.

The de Young said that in taking it down, because it was mounted in concrete, it would be worthless should it break. Furthermore, how could we know if it was authentic or not unless we could look at the back and see if it was done in 1650 or whether it was a 1928 reproduction? Reproductions were very stylish to do around the turn of the century and there was a very fine ceramic shop in South Berkeley that did them. (It would be interesting to know the name of that company.)

Anyway, the wreath stayed. Later Mrs. Forney told me that Miss Morgan herself had purchased the wreath for the house in Italy and also one for the Berkeley Women's City Club, and that indeed both were genuine della Robbia's.

The Butterfield Auction Gallery man came over and went through and refused to give an appraisal on the furniture, saying simply that he would take the furniture on consignment, that they would take 25 %, and that the family would have to pay for the cartage. So, I was very persuasive with Mr. Glide, urging him to leave the furniture in the house. One, there wasn't that much of it, and two, the scale and the Italianate style would not fit into many homes. As a result, I was able to offer the furniture with the house, and I am like a proud mother when I see it there.

Later, after the University acquired the property, as Norma Willer and others went through the stacks of papers and books left by Mr. Glide, they found in a box that there were tags and bills of sale describing many of the original pieces of furniture and decorations, the draperies and the fixtures.







*Season's Greetings*

Chet and Nina McCorkle

The Della Robbia wreath in the entrance at 2821 Claremont Blvd.



Barron: Almost all of the furniture left had been original period pieces and probably selected with Miss Morgan's help. The little blue sofa was very typical of the Morgan design. I've seen others with that same blue velvet, and the ashes-of-roses color used here and there. Because the furniture and curtains had had little use, they have been easy to clean and restore. Even in those days the cost of the fabrics for upholstery and draperies was very high.

### The Sale

Riess: How did you market the property?

Barron: In several ways: Some newspaper advertising, but basically in specific approaches to individuals and groups. I first made up a simple brochure which could be mailed to the realtors and prospective clients. I invited some of the more sensitive realtors to an open house. I had the Berkeley Civic Art Commission come by to see it before one of their meetings.

I called one of my A.I.A. friends who arranged a chapter board meeting there. The president of the group did not especially like the house and was not too interested. I called Michael Goodman, professor emeritus of architecture, who was a friend and younger colleague of Miss Morgan's, to come by.

I showed the house to Regent John Lawrence as a potential buyer of the property.

Riess: You contacted Cardwell [A.I.A.] and Goodman for what reason? You didn't expect them to buy it, did you?

Barron: Yes, I expected that the A.I.A. or the A.I.D. might be very interested in buying it for a local headquarters, just as the Pasadena group bought the historic Greene and Greene house.

I also had the Junior Center of Art and Science board for a box lunch one day for their fun and interest and because of their area of contact. They had restored the Moss Home in Mosswood partly in conjunction with the City of Oakland.

Riess: In other words, you were looking for an institutional use for the house?

Barron: Yes, in the interest of historic preservation.



Barron: Soon after I listed the house, I had a call from Mr. Kirk Rowlands from the University. He came by to see the house one Sunday after church.

On a second more formal visit he disclosed in a confidential manner that the Regents were looking for a University-controlled home that was centrally located for the UC executive vice-president (a new man who would be coming). He indicated that there was much involved in gathering voluntary funds, as well as getting permission from the Regents to accept the gift of such a home from the volunteer donors.

I hoped that this could materialize, for I had worked with Dr. and Mrs. Oswald unsuccessfully in finding a proper home for the heavy load of entertaining necessary for the executive vice-president. The home did not exist that was in the salary range of such a person, nor were there many fine large homes which would be suitable at any price. I had thought at that time that it was too bad the University did not own a house for a vice-president with those responsibilities.

Kirk Rowlands later had several of the members of the UC administration in, including project architects, the real estate department, President and Mrs. Hitch.

Subsequently the Regents met and option papers were drawn to conclude the purchase within ninety days. I held great hopes that Mr. Glide and his family would accept the \$100,000 offer to purchase, for it is my understanding that Mr. Glide and many members of that family are UC graduates. His mother, Lizzie Glide, was a close friend of Phoebe Apperson Hearst, who was such a sponsor of Miss Julia Morgan's that Mrs. Glide and her two daughters, Eula Elliott and our Mrs. Seldon (Elizabeth) Williams, had Miss Morgan do their Berkeley homes.

Once those option papers were prepared by the real estate division of the University with the help of the lawyers, I drove to Napa, met Mr. Glide and Mr. Patterson, and went with them to the convalescent hospital where Mrs. Williams' physician met us to witness her signature. She signed and initialled all documents in a clear hand. The next morning she had a stroke or a heart attack and died!

Ninety days later the option was exercised, and the Probate Court handed over the proceeds from the sale of the home to the Christian Jews. I do not know all the details, only what was told to me at the discretion of the principals.

The neighborhood reception to the news of the sale of the house



Barron: for the University was very mixed.

Riess: When did people learn of it?

Barron: Unfortunately, not through University sources, but by newspaper headlines of an inflammatory nature.

The story on that: A young ambitious banker by the name of Fortney Stark, commonly known as "Pete," was revving himself up to go into politics. He was asked to speak to the Berkeley Junior Chamber of Commerce and present a community award to a very outstanding black dentist, but Stark's entire speech was about the "purchase of a \$100,000 mansion by the University with public funds and alumni money" and how scandalous this was.

The Sunday San Francisco Chronicle and the Oakland Tribune both had front page stories; I was hounded by the Berkeley Barb, which made a full page incorrect story. It was a mess. I never knew how Mr. Stark picked this up, unless it was in the recordings which passed across his bank's desk. (At one point Stark had expressed interest in the house, but never came to see it when it was available.) At any rate, he had a field day with his story, no matter how incorrect he was. I telephoned him and had an angry interchange.

I had angry calls from alumni who protested they were not asked and did not want their money spent without permission. And I would say, "No, it's my understanding that no alumni money was spent on the purchase of the house. It was a gift of a special group of donors."

There were some professors who felt that if one vice-president had a free house, every vice-president should have a house, and that certainly some of their positions on campus were as important as the vice-presidents'!

Later there was a notice in the newspaper that the University had been gifted this property, and the names of the donors were made known. They were alumni, but not "the Berkeley Alumni Association." I believe the donors were Steve Bechtel, Preston Hotchkiss, from Los Angeles, a Mr. Bridges from San Francisco, Mr. Ehrman, and the UCLA Alumni Foundation.

Things settled down finally, because many who had seen the property were much in favor of the University having it. Professor William Dauben





Barron: and several others of those who had seen it all agreed the property had its best use in the public domain, and added prestige and a useful addition to UC Berkeley. Of course, I heartily agree, and am pleased to have Chet and Nina McCorkle as my neighbors.

Transcriber: Suzanne Riess  
Final Typist: Marilyn White



The Julia Morgan Architectural History Project

Kirk O. Rowlands

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA ACQUIRES THE JULIA  
MORGAN HOUSE FOR A VICE-PRESIDENT'S RESIDENCE.

Interview conducted by

Suzanne B. Riess



THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA ACQUIRES THE JULIA MORGAN HOUSE FOR  
A VICE-PRESIDENT'S RESIDENCE.

An interview with Kirk Rowlands, assistant to the President.  
September 26, 1974.

Riess: Would you review the history of the gift of the Blake Estate for the president's residence, Mr. Rowlands?

Rowlands: The grounds [of the Blake Estate] were a gift to the University by the Blake family. The understanding was that the University would use them for instructional and research purposes. The University was free to use the house in any way it was thought desirable. It was tried in various ways: it was used as a women's dormitory for graduate women students for a while, and that didn't work out--too far from campus, transportation wasn't convenient, and the house wasn't laid out well for that purpose.

When Charles Hitch was appointed president, it then became necessary to look for a University house for the new president to live in. President Kerr had lived in his own home in El Cerrito, and he had added on to it to make it suitable for entertainment purposes. Meanwhile, the Berkeley chancellor was using the University House on campus, where President Sproul had lived. The Regents decided to develop the Blake House for President Hitch.

When the renovating project was undertaken, they found that the house practically had to be rebuilt; the foundations were in shambles, the floors were uneven, and the state of the house was wholly unsuitable. And it had to be added on to some. The house has only three bedrooms and a house like that really needs some live-in help; so they added on an apartment unit for live-in help to be there. Also they had to widen the dining room to make it appropriate for dinner parties.

Riess: Norma Willer [UC Project Architect] has said they could move in housefuls of furniture and still rattle around.

Rowlands: Yes, some of the rooms are quite large and spacious. You can



Rowlands: squeeze forty people into the dining room, but it's an awfully tight squeeze.

Riess: How did the story of the University's acquisition of the vice-president's house begin?

Rowlands: My recollection is that in September of 1970, on the Sunday following Labor Day, I attended church at St. Clement's Episcopal Church across the street from the Seldon Williams house at 2821 Claremont Boulevard. The rector, Doctor Gordon D. Griffith, spoke to me after the service and said, "Mary Grace Barron has just told me that the Williams house will be on the market, and I think it would be an attractive house for the University to acquire for one of its top officers." He stated that Mrs. Barron had an exclusive listing on the house and suggested that I should get in touch with her. I did look her up in the next day or two and she gave me a tour of the house.

Mrs. Barron explained that the house had been very recently vacated; Mrs. Williams had moved to a nursing home in Napa just a few weeks before. She had lived in the house for forty-two years, and she had become a recluse. Most of the neighbors hadn't seen the inside of the house or had any access to the house for years. Many people had admired it from the outside since it was a handsome house and had been quite well maintained. The neighbors realized that Mrs. Williams was there by herself and that because of her advancing years--she was then ninety-six years old--she was pretty much out of touch with the community around her.

Riess: Had she ever been in touch with it?

Rowlands: I really don't know about that. She moved there in the '20's. Someone has stated that she and her husband had given "one large party." Mr. Williams died within a short time after they moved into the house; there may have been a span of several years, but it wasn't very long afterwards. She lived on all by herself, with the aid of several servants, for a long period of years. There was naturally a great curiosity about the house at the time it was put up for sale in the early fall of 1970.

Since I personally had long admired the house--I had driven by it for so many years--I was immediately excited by the prospect of seeing the house when Mrs. Barron offered to take me over there. I recall that she was quite anxious for the University to consider buying the house. I think she thought this house would be valuable as an exhibit of fine architecture, with its many artistic features,





Rowlands: and that it might be used for a variety of purposes, including that of a residence.

Somewhat coincidentally I had been asked by President Hitch only a few weeks earlier to start looking again for permanent housing for the executive vice-president of the University. I had already done some looking in Piedmont, Montclair, the Claremont district of Berkeley, in Kensington, and in El Cerrito.

Riess: Were you following leads, or did you have brokers?

Rowlands: I worked with several brokers and followed up individual leads. There were several houses that had been brought to the attention of the University which might have been partial gifts by the owners; several of these were quite seriously considered.

However, most of the houses that were considered initially needed a lot of renovation work. President Hitch and the Regents were reluctant to take on any project that would involve a great deal of expense for this purpose. One of the things that was very appealing about the Williams house was that it was in very good condition; it had been built to very high standards and the original house was intact. No remodeling had been done during the life of the house for some forty years, and very little renovation work would be needed.

Riess: Was there some controversy about the question of whether the University properly should provide a house for the vice-president?

Rowlands: This was a decision by the Regents. The Regents had determined in July, 1969, that they would provide permanent housing for the executive vice-president on the grounds that it was necessary for the University to be competitive with other institutions in the recruitment and retention of top administrators. It was determined that the housing should be approximately comparable to that provided for the chancellors of the nine campuses.

Initially a house was leased in Kensington for one year for Dr. John Oswald, then the executive vice-president of the University. When Dr. Oswald resigned to become president of Pennsylvania State University, Dr. Chester O. McCorkle was selected by the Regents as the vice-president of the University in March of 1970. The Regents then reaffirmed their earlier commitment to provide suitable housing for the vice-president. For the academic year of 1970-71, a house was leased for Vice-President McCorkle in North Oakland. Meanwhile, a quiet search was going on to provide permanent housing.



Riess: Part of the role of the executive vice-president is a social one which would demand a large residence for entertaining?

Rowlands: That is correct. He would have social functions for which he would be responsible, in part to relieve the president of a heavy entertainment schedule. The vice-president of the University is expected to be in touch with community and state leaders, with representatives of the campuses--faculty, students, administrative staff--and with countless other visitors coming to the University.

Riess: I'm shocked at the idea of the University having a house in Piedmont. [Laughter.]

Rowlands: The reason that Piedmont was considered was that quite a large house there was brought to the University's attention by a prominent alumnus who would have made a substantial gift to the University as a partial payment on the house. So in terms of the cost of acquisition this was attractive.

But President Hitch indicated to me that he preferred the vice-president to be located closer to the Office of the President in University Hall; and since President Hitch's official residence was located in Kensington, there seemed to be some merit in looking for a house on the other side of town, so to speak. That's why I looked very seriously in Berkeley and particularly in the Claremont district. The Williams house seemed to ideally fit the location factor.

Riess: I had understood that Mary Grace Barron had been assigned the job of looking actively for the University.

Rowlands: I wouldn't put it that way. I went to her with respect to the Williams house when I was informed that she had the exclusive listing on it. I don't recall that she had shown me any houses prior to the Williams house.

Mrs. Barron had indicated to me that she had visited the Hearst Castle at San Simeon on Labor Day weekend of that year, and that upon returning to Berkeley, she was especially intrigued with the Williams house because it also had been designed by Julia Morgan.

Riess: I guess what one finds is that there are lots of echoes [of San Simeon].

Rowlands: Yes. In that connection I'm sure you've seen the recent newspaper column by William Randolph Hearst, Jr. in the San Francisco Examiner



Rowlands: about the studies being made on the landscaping of the grounds of Hearst Castle by a professor from Cal Poly [Woody Frey].

(It seems to me that this work on the life of Julia Morgan might be somewhat of a companion to the study that is being done by the Cal Poly professor. It was my thought that the Hearst Foundation might be interested in helping with the study, but I haven't pursued it, although I think Willa Baum may have mentioned it to Dick Erickson.)

Riess: Had Reverend Griffith known Mrs. Williams?

Rowlands: I am doubtful that he had any personal contact with her. Since the church rectory was across the street, the Griffith family was aware of some of the goings and comings in the house, and about how quiet the house was. I remember hearing about a story concerning the Griffiths' elder daughter, Melinda, then in high school, who once took her courage in hand and, for some fund-raising event, went up to the front door of the Williams house and rang the doorbell.\* To her surprise, she was admitted. Apparently it was the first time anyone in the neighborhood had been in the house for years. The neighbors generally observed little activity except in the corner apartment on the second floor, where Mrs. Williams spent most of her time.

I have attended St. Clement's Church across the street for nearly twenty years, and I remember seeing her on but one Sunday morning coming out to pick up the Sunday paper on the front lawn. To me, it was a confirmation that there was actually an occupant in the house.

Riess: Was it known as a "mystery house" in the neighborhood? Were there rumors about it?

Rowlands: I really don't know very much about the neighborhood stories. Father Griffith might be asked about that since, as an immediate neighbor, he would have a greater knowledge of the neighborhood interest in the house.

Riess: What did you do after you first visited the house?

Rowlands: I then asked the University real estate officer, Richard Hartsook, and Robert Evans, the University architect, to inspect the house. The University real estate officer felt that the house was in fine condition and that it would be appropriate for acquisition by the University.

Riess: Weren't you terribly excited when you saw the whole thing?

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\*Reverend Griffith said that in the ten years he has been at St. Clement's Mrs. Williams did not attend services; he understood that at one time she did attend. For himself, he recalled Mrs. Williams going out to the mailbox at about five o'clock each afternoon, speaking to no one. - S.R.



Rowlands: Oh, I should say, in spite of the house being filled with cobwebs and dust and that it looked as if it hadn't been touched for ages by a cleaning lady. I remember Bob Evans, as he walked through the house, saying that he was just enjoying the house--that he wasn't making any written notes, but he was just enjoying the tour of the house. As we were leaving he remarked, "That is a distinguished house." He especially admired the woodcarving, the scale of the rooms, and the various artistic features that are unique to the house.

Riess: Was it still full of her furniture?

Rowlands: Yes, it was. Some of the oriental rugs and the dining room furniture had been taken out, but substantially all of the rest of Mrs. Williams' original furniture was still there. It was understood that much of the furniture probably would go with the house.

Riess: So they were both keen on it?

Rowlands: Yes, they were. The three of us had already visited a number of other houses in the East Bay, and each house that had been shown to us had deficiencies of one kind or another for the uses intended. So I felt quite encouraged about this one.

I proceeded to ask Mrs. Hitch's secretary, Mrs. Maggie Johnston, to visit the house, to look at the house from the point of view of how it would be used, particularly for social occasions and as a residence. She commented after touring the house that that would be a "great house" and certainly the best house she had seen among those we had visited or heard about.

She remarked that there would be a good pattern of circulation for guests throughout the house; that the sun room or loggia, with three exits and marble floor, would be ideal for serving refreshments; that the dining room would be sufficiently large for most occasions; and that it could be extended into the hallway for large dinner parties.

Also it was determined by Mrs. Norma Willer, of the University staff of Architects and Engineers, that the kitchen would have to be remodeled, but that would be the only renovation the house would need other than repainting and redecorating. In the kitchen area, the stove and the refrigerator and the lighting were all changed, and the overall layout was altered. A wine cellar was added in the basement and the furnace was replaced, but other changes were minimal.





Rowlands: It was decided by the University architect that the exterior of the house should not be repainted; the original finish would be left in its original state, other than the woodwork.

Riess: At this point you were fairly sure that you could acquire it?

Rowlands: Once the determination was made that the house was what we were looking for, we had then to make the necessary arrangements to acquire it. I will talk later about the private funds that were raised to pay for it.

Mrs. Barron called me on October 26 and advised me that the University should move rather quickly, because she had had word from Napa that Mrs. Williams appeared to be in failing health. She (Mrs. Barron) had been in touch with Joseph Henry Glide, Mrs. Williams' nephew, who was then taking care of her affairs. Mrs. Barron had learned, meanwhile, that if the house were not sold while Mrs. Williams was still alive, the house would be willed to a religious foundation. This meant that the house would not then be available for purchase.

Riess: Would the religious foundation have moved in, or just sold it themselves?

Rowlands: I don't recall that anyone then had information about what their plans might be. It was an out-of-state organization in Texas, I believe. Mrs. Barron had been advised that the family wouldn't have control over the house and that it couldn't be acquired from the estate in the event of Mrs. Williams' death.

In view of the suggestion that Mrs. Williams was failing, Mrs. Barron advised me to move without any delay. So I put in a long-distance telephone call to President Hitch, who was then on a trip to the Middle West. I was able to reach him at Indiana University in Bloomington where he was attending an AAU convention. I explained to him that it seemed advisable for the University to take an immediate option to purchase the house. He verbally authorized me to put up \$1,000 in order to take a ninety-day option to purchase the house, subject to raising gift funds to pay for it. He had not had an opportunity to visit the house at that point.

Riess: An option was all that was called for?

Rowlands: That's right--a ninety-day option. It was all we were then in a position to offer, since President Hitch would have had to secure approval by the Board of Regents in order to complete the transaction.



Riess: Was there any problem about all this? Or was Mrs. Williams encouraged to do this by her family?

Rowlands: I understand that she was encouraged by her nephew to accept the offer. Since the price offered was less than the price asked initially for the house, the price itself had to be negotiated.

The University offered \$100,000 as compared with the asking price of \$125,000. Mrs. Barron agreed to take the University's offer to Napa and to see if it would be accepted. She drove up to Napa about mid-afternoon on the 27th of October.

Mrs. Williams' doctor, Dr. Morris, was in attendance at the home, together with her nephew, Joseph Henry Glide, and the family business manager, Jack Patterson. Mrs. Williams was able to sign the option to purchase in a shaky handwriting.

Mrs. Barron called me at home when she returned to Berkeley to say that Mrs. Williams had signed, but that she had been a little testy that day because she had to wait fifteen minutes for her doctor to arrive! She signed the papers in a very shaky hand and initialed six exhibit pages with a clearly legible "E.G.W."

Riess: It's interesting to think about those last years for her, because she had been such a recluse and really managed to live without people; then to have to deal with all of these relatives and lawyers. It's amazing that it went as smoothly as it did.

Rowlands: We were not at all sure that it would go through. I am sure that her nephew had recommended to her that she accept the University's offer. Mrs. Barron had had several conversations with him over the telephone, and he apparently had talked to her about selling the house to the University before the University was quite ready to go ahead with a specific offer.

Riess: Was there a delay in consummating the purchase of the house?

Rowlands: In a sense there was. The Williams house had been brought to my attention in early September. Mrs. Barron had kept pressing me, asking me when the University was going to move on this. I was stalling because I wasn't sure I could get the president's approval prior to special funds being raised to pay for it, until Mrs. Barron advised me that the University wouldn't get the house if Mrs. Williams passed away and that, by late October, Mrs. Williams appeared to be in a very precarious state of health. When Mrs. Barron convinced me that there had to be an early decision, I then asked President Hitch to authorize an option to



SANHOE ROAD  
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

3-8018

October 20, 1970

Mr. Owsley Hammond  
Treasurer  
University of California  
615 University Hall  
Berkeley, California  
94720

Dear Mr. Hammond

I have recently had occasion to visit a very fine house located at 2821 Claremont Blvd. in Berkeley, which is presently for sale.

This residence was built in 1928 and was designed by Julia Morgan. She was an architect of extraordinary talent, and I would say that this particular building is an outstanding example of her great skill. The building appears to be in excellent condition and has not been remodeled, changed or even painted since it was built. One could say that it was in "mint" condition. In this aspect it offers a rare look at a vanishing life style and sense of aesthetic value.

It occurred to me, as I walked through the house, that its size, arrangement of rooms, gardens and most importantly, its quality, seemed to make it a house uniquely suited for a use such as a Chancellors or Presidents residence,--where there is need to accomodate both a private and a semi-public world. But it is the aesthetic quality of the house, the excellence of its design and its remarkable state of preservation that leads me to suggest that it should be aquired by the University.


This then, is my reason for writing to you, to express my belief as an architect and as an alumni, that this building would be a most appropriate and important acquisition for the University.

Sincerely,

  
William R. Dutcher

WRD:ned





**Berkeley  
INVESTMENT  
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2576 SHATTUCK AVENUE • BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94704 • 415/841-8262

February 2, 1971

Mr. Kirk O. Rowlands  
Office of the President  
University of California  
Berkeley, California 94704

Dear Mr. Rowlands:

I was glad to hear from you that 2821 Claremont Boulevard will be purchased for a University executive residence. In my opinion, and in the opinion volunteered by several others, this meets the highest and best use for this historic home. The fact that the University has the facilities and talent to restore this beautiful example of Miss Julia Morgan's work is paramount, and assures the quality of the neighborhood.

I believe the neighbors will be pleased, even though as U. C. property there will be taxes lost to the community. However, I believe this tax loss on this property was very probable due to the nature of the property. Most of my other qualified prospects were buyers who would have also received tax relief.

For example, there was a church foundation who wished to purchase the home as a half-way house for disturbed delinquents; an orthodox Church who wanted the home for sanctuary; a knowledgeable admirer of Miss Morgan's who proposed to restore the building and have it declared as a historic monument; a wealthy young man who wished to establish a music-art center. Of course, you remember that I mentioned that the Civic Art Foundation of Berkeley had appealed to Mrs. Williams, the owner, to donate the property to the city for a music center. This was refused.

Since more than 600 of Miss Morgan's homes were destroyed in the Berkeley fires of the 20's, this home stands as an outstanding example of her work. Besides residences, you know that she did the Berkeley City Club, the rebuilding of the Fairmont Hotel after the 1906 fire, <sup>and</sup> Hearst's many projects.

We thank you especially for your courtesy and consideration throughout our negotiations.

Sincerely,

*Mary Grace Barron*  
Mrs. Gilbert Barron





# U.C. Plan for \$200,000 Mansion Hit

BERKELEY — Banker Fortney H. (Pete) Stark Jr. assailed the University of Cal-

ifornia Saturday for buying a "lavish mansion" for an administrator despite its budgetary problems.

Stark, president of the Security National Bank, said the university is in the process of purchasing and remodeling, for \$200,000, a Berkeley mansion for Chester McCorkle, the university's new vice president.

Addressing the Berkeley Jaycee's distinguished service banquet at Spenger's Restaurant, Stark condemned the "hypocrisy of a university system which pleads that it can't afford to help minority youth get a higher education while at the same time it buys plush mansions for its rank-and-file administrators."

The home, at 2821 Claremont Blvd., "will cost \$200,000 — \$100,000 for the house and grounds, and another \$100,000 for remodeling and new furniture," Stark said.

"This strikes me as somewhat extravagant when you consider the howls of protest being raised by these same university people over Governor Reagan's proposed budget cuts."

Stark said he had been told by a university official that the proposed 1971 budget would prevent admission of any new disadvantaged students to the Educational Opportunity Program.

"Not counting the expense of servants and gardeners," he said, "the money spent for the McCorkle mansion would enable 180 disadvantaged youngsters to attend the university for a full year."

He called this a "lawlessness of the elite," symptomatic of "double standard among our institutions today, one for the public and another for an establishment intent upon preserving and aggrandizing the status quo."



Banker charges university is buying this home in Berkeley for a new vice president





# Fortney Stark's Story Rebuffed

By BOB KROLL  
Gazette Staff Writer

2/15/71

The University of California yesterday poked holes in an argument put forth by prominent East Bay banker Fortney Stark, Jr. that the statewide institution has been complaining about budget cuts while purchasing a costly mansion in the Claremont district here.

Stark leveled a broadside attack "on the sanctimoniousness of institutions" and cited as an example of the "lawlessness of the elite" the University of California's purchase of the \$100,000 mansion.

"This (purchase, totalling nearly \$200,000) strikes me as somewhat extravagant when you consider the howls of protest being raised by these same university people over Governor Reagan's proposed budget cuts," the president of Security National bank stated during an address Saturday at the Berkeley Jaycees, Distinguished Service Award banquet.

U.C. spokesmen stressed yesterday, however, that the mansion is being purchased with public funds.

**THE MANSION** will be the residence for Chester McCorkle, a recently appointed senior vice president for the statewide university. It is located at 2821 Claremont Blvd., and was sold by Berkeley Investment Realty, which listed it at \$125,000.

A university spokesman yesterday stated the mansion is being purchased "largely from money donated by alumni."

The university declined to state how many individuals are involved in the purchase and renovation project, but indicated some public funds may be advanced to consummate the deal pending termination of the fund-raising effort.

The spokesman said the six-  
(Turn to Page 2, Col. 3)

bedroom home will be used for official university functions and as lodging for visiting guests of the university.

**STARK CHIDED** the university for its "pervasive hypocrisy" — protesting proposed budget cuts "which they say will cripple important courses and programs, such as medicine and environmental research, cause overcrowded classrooms, prohibit faculty salary increases and jeopardize faculty morale" while "purchasing a luxury mansion."

A champion of many environmental issues, Stark holds a Master's degree from UC-Berkeley.

He suggested that McCorkle, the former UC Davis dean of Agricultural Sciences, would "ride to Berkeley, on a horse, no doubt," in ridiculing the mansion acquisition.

"Not counting the expense of servants and gardeners, the money spent for the McCorkle Mansion would enable 180 disadvantaged youngsters to attend the University for a full year," the young banker stated.

**STARK SAID**, "There seems to be a double standard among the public and another for our institutions today, one for 'establishment,' intent upon preserving and aggrandizing the status quo."

The occasion for the speech was an award dinner which honored Berkeley police officer Henry Allen Paige, 25, as the "Distinguished Young Man of the Year."

## UC Repeats Stark Denial

2/16/71

University of California spokesmen yesterday repeated their refutation of implications by banker Fortney "Pete" Stark that UC is purchasing a mansion for its new statewide vice president with public funds.

Stark had contrasted the \$100,000 purchase of the Berkeley mansion for Vice President Chester McCorkle with UC complaints over state budget cuts.

In an address before Berkeley Jaycees, the president of Security National Bank had pointed to this seeming contrast in UC priorities as evidence of "hypocrisy" in a general critique of "establishment politics."

A UC spokesman rebuffed the implications yesterday, but a paragraph in the *Gazette* yesterday contained a typographical error which totally reversed the meaning of the story:

"UC spokesmen stressed yesterday, however, that the mansion is being purchased **WITHOUT** public funds" is the way the paragraph should have read.

The spokesman's point was that there is no correlation between UC complaints over state budget cuts and the purchase of a home here for McCorkle.

**IN FURTHER** clarification of the purchase at 2821 Claremont Blvd., and further rebuttal of Stark, UC issued this statement yesterday:

"As President Charles J.

Hitch announced publicly at the January meeting of the Board of Regents, the University of California is using private funds' purchase of a house for the Vice President of the University.

"Recently there have been incorrect statements and allegations about this matter. The following is to get the record clear to avoid further misunderstandings:

"The purchase price of the house is \$100,000. Gifts from alumni have now made this possible. No state funds will be used.

"The purchase fulfills a long-standing need and commitment by the University. In 1968 The Regents authorized an official residence for the senior vice president of the University and have since been leasing a house for this purpose, an unsatisfactory arrangement. The senior vice president is charged with official duties and responsibilities in the administration and operation of the nine-campus system, comparable to those of heads of other educational institutions.

"**HE SERVES** as deputy and at times as Acting President, and requires a house of adequate size where official meetings, conferences and University-related functions can be held.

"The additional funds required for renovation and furnishings will be far less than figures quoted erroneously in the press. No state funds will be used for this purpose."

Several members of the Jaycees did not disguise their displeasure with the content of the Stark speech, but several members of the audience, which numbered about 50, stood in prolonged applause as he concluded.

Stark questioned whether two or three of those students turned away because of the budget cuts would be offered "token jobs to fill the servant's quarters in the new UC mansion."

From Berkeley Gazette



20 EAGLE HILL  
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94707

February 17, 1971

Mr. Fortney H. Stark  
313 Cross Road  
Danville, CA. 94526

Dear Pete:

It is a rare occasion when I write a letter with regard to the published statements of people giving talks but I have been highly moved by your recent speech in Berkeley and I feel I must reply to it. In the past I have followed your various causes with interest but in this present case of the purchase of a house in Berkeley I feel better informed with regard to the background. It is the knowledge of this background which leads me to be concerned with the lack of understanding of a critic.

Being the son and grandson of an architect, I have been brought up to appreciate the heritage and the art form of houses. As you have so many times called attention to the conservation of natural resources and the preservation of the heritage of a race and culture, may I now call to your attention the value of the Berkeley house you discussed. California has developed two architects who have been viewed as creating a California style, they are Bernard Maybeck and Julia Morgan. These two persons created a California architectural form which is part of the cultural history of the state. The house bought by the University, and thus becomes public property, was looked upon by Julia Morgan as her jewel. Many people worked to save Maybeck's Palace of Fine Arts, why not save her jewel.

It is to be admitted that the administration of the University has presented a poor public image with regard to the purchase. However, with knowledge one can rise above such misinformation and appreciate the importance and greatness of the purchase. In years to come, I am confident that



this house will be viewed by the citizens of the state as a true heritage.

In the present period one must strive to retain a balance of values and I only ask that as you stress the values of a class you also appreciate the values of a culture, a California culture. I believe you would do yourself much good by rephrasing your criticisms of the University and give merit to their good moves, like this purchase.

Sincerely yours,

*Bill*

William G. Dauben







**Berkeley  
INVESTMENT  
Realty**

2576 SHATTUCK AVENUE • BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94704 • 415/841-8262

23 February 1971

Dear Mr. Rowlands:

Re: 2821 Claremont Blvd.

Some time ago I mentioned that I would send general information about the maintenance people who have been contacted to work on the house during the time I have had it listed:

Furnace Man and Plumber: James Rankin & Son 444-6711  
 (Mr. Rankin and his father installed the original system in the house and at San Simeon. He knows all about how to start the furnace, drains, etc.)  
 Oil for Furnace: Jack King, Humble Oil Co. 865-0767  
 Termite Man: Ed Knox 524-0737 He also gave an estimate on driveway.  
 Keys: Rex Key Shop 845-7784

Fritz Vogelsang 524-5582 Miss Sleeper is Secretary for him - he is a marvelous handy-man who does almost anything.

Karl Kardel, Painter of the upstairs suite 531-3665

Burns Detective Agency: 781-1067 Russ Nezick


Ted and Barbara Milhous would like to buy stove - 569-1674

Mrs Lillian Forney was Miss Julia Morgan's secretary: 848-0600  
 Mrs. Leslie Freudenheim and associates have photographed home: 525-2503  
 East Bay Chapter of A.I.A.: Miss Betty Phillips, Secy: 893-6834  
 Mr. Kenneth Cardwell, Pres.

Mr. Michael Goodman has expressed interest in the restoration = colleague of Morgan's  
 Mrs. Halden across Claremont Blvd. was great friend of Mrs. Williams 841-0826

This is lots of extraneous information, but I believe can be helpful to Mrs. McCorkle and/or project architect.

Sincerely,



Mary Grace Baron

*I sent copies to Mrs. McCorkle*



Rowlands: purchase the house.

I was greatly relieved that Mr. Glide and Mrs. Williams were agreeable to the University's offer. If it had been turned down, we would have lost the house because on the next day, October 28, Mrs. Barron called to inform me that Mrs. Williams had quietly passed away. She had actually signed the sales document barely twenty-four hours before she died.

Riess: There would be no reason why her family wouldn't advise her to do this, unless they had a particular interest in this religious institution.

Rowlands: There's a special story about her religious interests, of which I have only bits and pieces. Her mother, (Mrs. Henry) Elizabeth Glide, I believe her name was, had been interested in the Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco and had given substantial amounts of money towards its establishment and support.

Mrs. Williams herself had come under the influence of a conservative religious group, as evidenced by great numbers of tracts and books and papers that suggested the direction of her religious interests, in the house. I didn't see them--they were removed when the house was being cleaned up--but I remember that Mrs. Barron had remarked about them. The organization that she had willed her house to was reported to be a very conservative, fundamentalist foundation located in Texas.

Riess: Were there other parties who wanted to buy the house?

Rowlands: Yes, there were. Mrs. Barron may have told you that many people inquired about the house and that several wanted to make offers on the house, some apparently with cash in hand. I'll give you this statement [by M.G. Barron] in which she put down for the record some of the other parties who were anxious to acquire the house.

Riess: Most of them seem to be people who planned to turn the house into some kind of institution.

Rowlands: Yes, this would have had implications for the predominantly residential neighborhood.

Riess: Since it was only an option, was it possible to "keep it quiet" until the University was ready to execute the option?



Rowlands: It was, because the Regents would have had to authorize the execution of the option, and since we had ninety days to go there was no reason to execute the option before the expiration date on January 27, 1971. The Regents formally granted approval to buy the house at their meeting on the 22nd of January, 1971.

Riess: Did any of the other people interested in acquiring the house get any further than just expressing interest?

Rowlands: Mrs. Barron discouraged other potential buyers as soon as the University had taken an option. She was then able either to say that the property had been sold or convey the impression that it was no longer on the market. She was very helpful in not disclosing who was acquiring the property although there was quite a lot of curiosity about it.

Riess: Did President Hitch go to see the house as soon as he got back from his trip?

Rowlands: Not immediately. As a matter of fact, it was almost a month later because he had a particularly busy schedule that fall. President Hitch and Vice-President McCorkle went over to the house together for the first time along with Mrs. Hitch and Mrs. McCorkle in late November. The McCorkles were particularly excited about seeing the house since they had the prospect of living there.

So in January 1971 the president recalled to the Regents that when Dr. McCorkle had been appointed vice-president of the University during the preceding March it was stipulated that suitable housing would be provided for him. The president advised the Regents that, on October 27, he had taken a ninety-day option to purchase the residence at 2821 Claremont Avenue for \$100,000. He informed them that funds in the amount of \$95,000 had been pledged by five individual donors to finance the purchase of the property.

He explained that there also had been one pledge of \$20,000 that could be used to help meet the expense of renovation and furnishings if the purchase price should be met by other pledges.

President Hitch described the house to the Regents and advised that it had been built to unusually high standards of workmanship, and that it was intact without having been disturbed by any remodeling. He estimated that rehabilitation work, costing approximately \$25,000, should be done to make the house suitable as an official University residence. In addition, he estimated that approximately \$25,000 would be needed to furnish the public rooms.



Rowlands: President Hitch informed the Regents that, subsequent to the time the option to purchase was secured, the owner of the property died, leaving a will which provided that the property would go to a religious foundation. The general counsel to the Regents advised that while the University's option to purchase was still valid, the matter would have to go through probate proceedings.

It was decided that some public announcement should be made that the University was buying the house. At the Regents' meeting on January 22, the president made an oral report of gifts that had been reported that the University had received, and advised that there had been gifts of \$50,000 received to be applied toward the purchase of a residence for the vice-president of the University. That was the first public statement about the University's proposal to buy the house.

Riess: When the president reports like this to the Regents, it's not for their approval, is it?

Rowlands: The president was simply reporting that the funds had been received to apply towards the purchase. This was an open, public session of the Regents in which he made that statement of the University's intention to provide a house for the vice-president.

Riess: Who were the funds received from? (I know there's a plaque at the door.) Was it your job to go out and work on that?

Rowlands: No. The University's Gifts and Endowments Office worked on that-- Paul Christopoulos, in particular. He put on a special campaign to raise the money.

Riess: How were the funds raised?

Rowlands: With something like this you really have the donors pretty well lined up in advance; you don't really have to put on a public campaign. You have a good idea already of the people who would be interested in contributing, if requested.

I don't believe a great number of people were contacted. The people whose names appear on that plaque are these: the Kaiser Foundation, the UCLA Alumni Foundation, Frederick L. Ehrman, Preston Hotchkiss, Robert L. Bridges; and at a later time, Stephen Bechtel, Sr., made a contribution. In total, \$105,000 was received, which was sufficient not only to purchase the house, but to help towards the renovation expense. The Regents specifically approved expenditures of \$50,000 for renovation and furnishings, to be paid wholly from gift and endowment sources.





Rowlands: In late January or early February--I don't have the press stories here--there was a story alleging that the University was spending something on the order of \$200,000 for a home for the vice-president of the University, and charging that taxpayers' funds were being used for this purpose. This story put the University in the position of having to clarify misstatements appearing in the press.

Riess: The University must have made an official statement though, even before the first attack?

Rowlands: That's right. The first statement was made at the Regents' meeting on January 22. I don't think the papers picked it up as a news item at the time though. Apparently it wasn't considered to be newsworthy then. I'll give you this attachment for reference, because I think it's an important statement of the chronology relating to the acquisition of the house. I want to give you a couple of statements.

Riess: This one is from William Dutcher, Berkeley architect, advising the University to buy the house.

Rowlands: Here's another statement from Professor William Dauben, a Berkeley faculty member whose father and grandfather were Berkeley architects. He's writing in support of the house and challenging the statements that were being made by the critics of the University's having purchased the house.

Riess: Do you think the aspect of the house being considered a museum will be developed? Or will it be left essentially as it is--a home?

Rowlands: I think it will be treated primarily as a home, with its special artistic features preserved insofar as possible. The house will be of special interest to architects and others interested in studying Julia Morgan's work. I don't think this house will be developed along the lines of a museum, however.

I believe that most of the people who have been particularly interested in seeing the house have seen it by this time. For example, the house was displayed to the local chapter of the AIA. Also, the National Association of Architectural Historians toured the house a year or so ago. Several newspaper articles have been written about it.

The McCorkles have entertained many of the neighbors in the immediate neighborhood to give them an opportunity to see it. The McCorkles are very generous about entertaining people; they've invited many different groups--from University Hall and the Office of



Rowlands: the President, student groups, faculty groups, administrative groups, community groups. Over the last year, the McCorkles have entertained more than nine hundred people in this house.

Riess: Is the house then open for University functions other than those sponsored by the McCorkles?

Rowlands: No, it has been decided that it should not be used for other than University functions because it becomes very awkward to draw any limits. It is the University's general rule that people who are invited to this house will be invited as guests of Vice-President and Mrs. McCorkle.

Riess: [Looking at document.] You refer to the house as the Morgan House.

Rowlands: President Hitch indicated a preference for calling it the Julia Morgan House, in honor of the architect.

Riess: I was also interested in whether the Glides and Williams have been benefactors of the University in the past.

Rowlands: I haven't been able to ascertain that they have. I asked Bill Monahan, a classmate of Joseph Henry Glide, that question. He wasn't aware that they had. I do know that several generations of the Glide family had attended the University over the years. My impression is that the family was pleased to have the University acquire the house.

Transcriber: Judy Johnson  
Final Typist: Marilyn White



accident; a surviving child (a daughter who recently graduated from UC Davis) was Raised by Mrs. Elliott's second daughter, Elizabeth Elliott. The latter daughter lived in the house on Hillcrest until it was recently sold; she now lives in Lafayette. Mrs. Elliott has a surviving son, Roy Elliott. Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Elliott reportedly did not get along well with one another.

Source: The above information (except about Mrs. Elliott) was provided by Mrs. Richard C. Ham who was a dinner guest at the McCorkle's on December 5, 1973. - Kirk O. Rowlands.



The Julia Morgan Architectural History Project

Norma Willer

REDECORATION OF THE INTERIOR OF THE JULIA  
MORGAN HOUSE, 2821 CLAREMONT BOULEVARD.

Interview conducted by

Suzanne B. Riess





REDECORATION OF THE INTERIOR OF THE JULIA MORGAN HOUSE, 2821  
CLAREMONT BOULEVARD.

An interview with Norma Willer, project architect, University  
of California Architects and Engineers Office. September 17, 1974.

Riess: Before the Julia Morgan House [2821 Claremont] was purchased, what living arrangement was made for the vice-president of the University?

Willer: The University provides a house for the president, and previously a house had been rented I believe for Vice-President Oswald. When Oswald left, McCorkle became vice-president, and that house was found unsuitable for one reason or another. I can't remember just why. Kirk Rowlands and Mary Grace Barron began looking for one more permanent. Maggie Johnston was involved in the search also. Maggie has to do with putting on various functions for the Regents and other dignitaries. She's very helpful at setting up for caterers and catering, and parties; she knows about people spacing and protocol and all that sort of thing.

Riess: What were the attributes that were looked for in a house? Size, I suppose, was a major one.

Willer: Size and circulation--a large entrance hall and the ability to circulate in a circular pattern through the main rooms so that when a reception is given, those doing the receiving can form a line and then the guests can go through that line and just continue through the house, through the food lines and out, without getting trapped in any particular area.

Riess: Wasn't that the hallmark of a large, gracious house anyway?

Willer: Yes, I think it probably was, though the Blake house did not have that attribute; we had to add it to the Blake house. But this one seemed to have been designed for entertaining, even though it was never used for that.

Riess: Where did you come in on the Morgan house?



Willer: At about that point. Kirk had talked to me a couple of times on the phone to tell me how this was progressing. Along about that time we had a tour of the house and I met Mrs. McCorkle. I went through the house with her and listened to some of the ideas that she had. I think the first tour of the house was probably with Maggie Johnston and Kirk and Nancy Funston. (Nancy Funston was Mrs. McCorkle's secretary, so she had also had a real say in that line of work.)

I was really impressed with the house my first time through it. It was a very grand-looking house, even in its state of repair. My impression was that we wanted to maintain it as it had been, and make as few changes as possible.

The kitchen was old-fashioned, with an enormous stove and a peculiar old sink with an octagonal tile counter top and no grout between the tiles [laughter]--a little rot around the sink. So we had to do some very extensive changes in the kitchen, but we were determined then to retain as much of the old character of the kitchen as possible.

We did retain some of the old cabinet work, practically over the dead body of the contractor. [Laughter.] His feeling was that it was much easier to start from scratch, just putting on new cabinets without trying to salvage any of the old. Our contract documents showed remodeling some of the old cabinets, and we permitted him to destroy those and make new cabinets all around, except for those that are on either side of the windows--the upper cabinets. Those we didn't have to move, so we retained those. Many cabinets are of the same style as the original ones.

The kitchen was designed for large entertainment--a kitchen that can be used by caterers as well as the housewife. Mrs. McCorkle is very interested in doing her own cooking; she is an excellent cook. She had definite ideas on the kind of equipment that she wanted to operate in her own kitchen and it made it easy for me, because I thought her ideas were good ones.

We did a little carryover from Blake estate kitchen, putting in another set of ovens and making them extra wide so caterers could utilize their large pans. It seems to work quite well. Mrs. McCorkle has told me that caterers like it and find it easy to use, and so does she; she loves the kitchen.

Riess: Was there general agreement to leave the rest of the house as close as possible to the way it was?



Willer: Yes. Everyone seemed to agree with that philosophy. We had a very tight budget, and of course with that agreement, too.

The McCorkles were renting a house in Oakland and they were quite anxious to get into the new house. But it takes a little while to produce plans and specifications and to get them through the University system, and to get a contractor started. We did that as quickly as we could, but still we ran into difficulties with staging their moving into the house with the completion of certain parts.

Our goal was to make the upstairs portion of the house habitable and let them move into the upstairs area, and then finish the kitchen as soon as possible so that they could begin really living in the house. We ran into all kinds of delays.

Riess: You wouldn't expect things to go really smoothly, would you?

Willer: No, they never do. Usually we have a little more leeway as far as time schedule goes. This one we were really working to a very tight schedule, and since nothing ever goes right, nothing did. [Laughter.]

Riess: You had to paint the entire place, didn't you?

Willer: We had to paint the entire place. Some of the rooms had been painted shortly before we took occupancy.

Riess: There had been that type of preparation prior to sale?

Willer: A minor amount, and it was in the master bedroom suite where Mrs. Williams had lived. The master bedroom suite, as I understand it from Mary Grace, was covered with smoke from the fireplace--soot and smoke. She [Mrs. Williams] used the fireplace for heat. I don't know what she burned, but... And sometimes she forgot to open the flue. It was a dark cave.

So before Mary Grace put the house on the market she had to paint it. In the interest of economy we did not include [re]painting in those particular rooms in the contract. Mrs. McCorkle and Tim, her younger son, painted that themselves one day.

Riess: What do you think about Julia Morgan's bedrooms? I didn't find them terribly interesting rooms.

Willer: No, I don't think they are either, except the master bedroom; I feel that's quite interesting, and of course the interest is given by the fireplace, which I think is marvelous. It's difficult to arrange



- Willer: furniture in that room; there's only one place to put the bed, and it's not exactly where I would have chosen to put it. The fenestration of the room and the openings into the dressing room and into the sun porch area; they take up all the remainder of the walls.
- Riess: Did you come across any great surprises upstairs or downstairs that were delightful?
- Willer: It was all fairly apparent when we looked at the house to begin with. There was a rumor that there was a vault somewhere in the house, and I kept looking for the hidden vault. I came to the conclusion that the vault was really in the hallway, between the kitchen and the entrance hall. But it's a "vaulted" ceiling, not a vault. [Laughter.]
- Riess: I noticed the niches in what is Mr. McCorkle's study at present seemed very unoccupied.
- Willer: I think they probably did contain something at one time. Mrs. Williams, I am told, was quite religious and she probably had some religious knickknacks there.
- Riess: Do you think that wood-panelled room was supposed to be a copy of something else?
- Willer: I don't really think so. I think Julia Morgan worked on that at about the time she was working on San Simeon. She did a lot of traveling in Europe, and she had been collecting things, like that della Robbia she has in her hallway.
- Riess: Mrs. McCorkle obviously doesn't feel completely settled about whether that's authentic.
- Willer: I'm not either. Last September when we were in Italy I looked at some della Robbia's in Florence in the Pazzi Chapel. I'm not at all sure that that's an authentic della Robbia. Generally, it doesn't have the same character as the della Robbia's that I saw there. They were quite different. There is that style of ceramic sculpture, though, that has prevailed. When you look in a lot of the shops in Florence that are selling ceramic sculpture, they are still selling the sort of thing that Julia Morgan brought back for the Berkeley Women's City Club and for this house. But it's not an original della Robbia.
- Riess: Was it on the plans to have anything like that?
- Willer: No, I didn't see anything on the plans about that, nor the mural that's in the loggia in back. She indicated a fountain to be installed in that wall.





Riess: Mrs. McCorkle said you had brought back some beautiful velvet from Sienna to cover that little blue sofa. It sounds like you are very attached to the place.

Willer: Well, I am. It becomes a part of you after a while. I think any construction project that you live with over a number of years just does become part of your life.

Riess: Speaking of that, I marvel at the amount of work that Julia Morgan put into that house in terms of the business end of decorating it. Do architects these days do as much of the detail as she seemed to do?

Willer: They seldom get that involved with decorating--furnishing--but the detailing is as involved as it was then. These days an architect, because of the way the business has gone, must put every detail in the drawings. Bids are obtained from a contractor, and if there is any deviation from the contract documents, it means an extra. The owner, quite frankly, isn't interested in paying a long list of extras; he finds fault with the architect if the final cost of the house isn't pretty close to what the bid price was.

In the days when Julia Morgan was operating, what was given to a contractor was a conception of what was required, and the contractor put in a bid based upon the concept that was given to him through the specifications and drawings and the reputation of the architect.

Riess: Farquharson was the contractor, and he was an architect himself, wasn't he?

Willer: Yes, he was. I'm sure you could find out more about how she worked from people like Steilberg and Hussey (who is now an inspector of work), who worked for Julia Morgan.

Riess: I always thought that architecture looked like fun, because it seemed to be such an idea business--sketching out concepts and then letting somebody else do it.

Willer: Well, it is fun in that area; I enjoy working in the design area too. But I don't enjoy working in the field, and of course you have to carry a project--it depends on the size of the office.

In a large office they have it segmented, so that they have a design staff, and then they have another staff that produces the contract documents, and then there's another staff that does the field supervision, and they have another staff that deals with the



Willer: client. But in just a small office you have to do all of those phases of work.

The problem comes, as far as I'm concerned, when you begin dealing with the contractors--the field supervision--on bid jobs. On a bid job all the contractors obviously have to cut corners to make low bidder, and the job of the architect is to see to it that the contractor builds the job as it was specified. There's a conflict of interest there. [Laughter.] You become a policeman.

My main function here [ at the University ] is as a project architect and coordinator--the liaison between the client and the outside representative that the University hires. So I work with quite a number of architects' offices.

On each job, of course, we find out that attitudes vary, but for the most part the architects like to be involved in color selection and in the furnishings. They always want to know how the building is going to end up looking, and you can't know that unless you do get involved in furnishings and colors, selection of carpet, and things of that nature.

We don't hire them here to perform that service most often; but they do do the color selection for paints and for floor coverings, and for anything else that is part of the general building contract. They don't very often get involved in the furnishings. We either do that ourselves or it's done by a department if we don't have the time, or if they insist on doing it themselves; or we hire an outside decorator to do it.

But I find that there's little difference between men and women in their desire to carry a job through. Often it's that the client doesn't desire them to carry it through to completion for one reason or another. They either don't want to pay them for it--they feel they can do it themselves--or they don't have faith in their ability to handle the interiors, or something.

Riess: I am just thinking that [in my own case] I might hire an architect to do the outside of the house, and then I might do the inside myself. Yet, the Morgan house is so clearly a rectangle on the outside--a top, sides, corners, and windows; it's the inside where she's put most of herself. Do you feel that way about her work--that it is more inside?

Willer: I don't think that's the case in all her work. I think that that style of architecture that she used there probably gives the impression of less attention to the outside, but I don't think that's really the



Willer: case. I think that if you look at the location of the windows and the composition of the whole building, it's a quiet building from the exterior--unpretentious--but it's certainly studied. I think she paid as much attention to the exterior as she did to the interior.

It's good solid construction; that's one thing we found when we were tearing into it.

Riess: How finished is it, as far as you are concerned?

Willer: I seem to be constantly involved in little repair jobs, but I think it's pretty well finished. The tile around the bathtub leaks from time to time--or did leak--and we just finished putting in some new tile, attempting to stop those leaks; I think we have now.

Even with the supervision that Julia Morgan gave that house, there were some areas where some things got by that weren't very satisfactory. One of the problems was the tiling in the bathrooms. The tiler, though he was a very good craftsman, for some reason hadn't soaked the tile before he put it on the setting bed, and there wasn't the adhesion that there should have been. So there were large areas of the tile that just popped off.

And the old bathtubs, while they were absolutely first class material at the time, were designed with a rounded rim on all sides. The bathtubs today have an upturned rim at the sides toward the walls, and the tile comes down over that upturned rim and conceals it. Any water that might enter the joint between the tile and the tub is shunted away by the upturned rim. The old style tub with the rounded rim allows water to be sucked in--as a matter of fact, through capillary action it is sucked in--and then it drips down through the construction. Pretty soon you get a river running through the living room, or wherever.

Riess: It's hard to think that something wouldn't have been done about that much earlier.

Willer: Well, the showers weren't used. That's another thing: it's amazing that she installed showers in the tubs, because you wouldn't have thought that in 1929 all the tubs would have had showers.

Riess: There are lots of amazing things, aren't there? Like that little mail entrance with its little door. It's doubtful her client would have thought of that.

Willer: No, she probably offered that idea, and no doubt many others; but that's the role of an architect.



Riess: When you have a "no holds barred" sort of client?

Willer: Yes, and a budget that is also fairly generous. Obviously Mr. Williams was a man of means. I imagine that before the crash he offered a fairly free hand to his architect. And Julia Morgan was a person of great reputation at that time, so no doubt he had much faith in her. She was probably given a program; she observed the way they lived and listened to a description of what they wanted; then she put all those things together and came up with this idea for a house.

Riess: And apparently they never did live that way?

Willer: No. Undoubtedly the stock market crash had an enormous effect on Mr. Williams. I don't know whether it wiped him out or not, but it must have gone a long way toward doing that.

Riess: Are you actively trying to find old furniture to put back into the house?

Willer: No, we really haven't been looking for anything. For about a year we haven't done anything toward finding additional furnishings. I've been involved in other projects, and I'll have to say that I've neglected the Julia Morgan house.

Riess: Will the house and furnishings be kept intact for other vice-presidents who move in?

Willer: Yes, I think that is the intent. But, of course, when the McCorkles move out they will take the furniture that is their own with them, and when the new person comes in he'll be asked if he wants to utilize some of his own furniture or whether he wants to buy furniture that is appropriate for the house--and leave it there.

I think some people feel more comfortable if they have some of their own furniture with them; others would like to have the house all furnished with furniture that's most appropriate for the setting. The Hitches at the Blake Estate moved quite a bit of their own furniture; I'd say fifty per cent of the house is furnished with their own things. But it was fortunate that their furniture is almost all antique, some of the same style as the Blake Estate antiques.

Riess: Could you say a word or two about the Blake Estate? Did you have the same role there?

Willer: No. At that house I was a project architect--the coordinator. We had an outside decorator, and Rod and Myra Brocchini, a husband and wife team, were the architects. We also had the landscape architects.





Riess: Who was the original architect of that house?

Willer: For some reason I draw a blank on remembering his name.

Riess: Is it one of the great old ones?

Willer: No, just one of the old ones--not really great. [Laughter.] One thing about that house is that it was big. It has some charm too, but I think the charm comes from the gardens particularly. The size of the house is right; it's enormous: the living room is thirty by sixty. To fill a house like that with furniture was quite a task. That's why we were so fortunate that the Hitches had this marvelous furniture. They had a houseful of furniture that they moved into that house, and there was already at least a houseful of furniture there. Those two housefuls of furniture had to be supplemented. [Laughter.]

Riess: I understand that the Morgan house was quite dark before redecorating.

Willer: The floors were all dark hardwood, and I personally think that Berkeley's climate is not too compatible with that style of architecture because we have so many days that are foggy and gloomy; mornings are quite often foggy and so are evenings. If that house were decorated in the same Mediterranean style as you might encounter in Italy, for instance, it would be very dingy and cold. I think that's what the McCorkles encountered when they came in; it was cold because we didn't have any heat on when we were remodeling.

Riess: The glass doors in the sun room are narrow to the point of being impassable for some people.

Willer: Those are things that I think we could change; I mean the doors to the exterior from the sun room.

Riess: That seems to me to suggest a sort of rigidity on the part of Julia Morgan. I was surprised that she couldn't get around that. I wonder what you think about that?

Willer: That is a problem for a designer--to get an idea fixed in your mind that that's the way it should be. It's often hard to reconcile means with that idea. Years later you might look back on that idea and think what a silly thing to have clung to so stoutly. [Laughter.]

I'm afraid I don't have that conviction myself. I've seen it happen too often--an idea that was fought to the very end as far as design was concerned turned out in the long run really not to have had much merit. It happens to all architects, that they encounter that



Willer: situation; even though the client may roar and grumble about it, they persist with it. Then it's up to the client at a later date to make a change.

That particular room [sun room], too, invites you to walk outside. It's a transition from the closed spaces inside to this marvelous sun room; the next step is obviously to go beyond into the outdoors. I think the marble floors in that room and in the breakfast room are marvelous.

The orientation of those rooms is very nice too. They get the morning sun, and the sun room gets afternoon sun too. I'd really like to see that sun room filled with ferns and arranged in a different way. I like the wicker furniture in there, but I'm not too fond of the way it has to be arranged in order to work the way it must. It has to satisfy the need for space during fairly large meetings Mr. McCorkle has.

Riess: It's just adjacent to his study and he uses that for meetings?

Willer: Yes. One of the problems we have encountered in that room and in the dining room is acoustic reverberation with large crowds of people and everyone talking at once. The din just becomes deafening. We tried putting a rug over the marble tile floor; of course that wasn't satisfactory--you wanted to see the tile. So we put an acoustic ceiling in that room and in the dining room too.

The acoustic ceiling and the rug in the dining room seem to have helped a great deal, and of course the draperies are quite heavy. The acoustic ceiling in the sun room has helped, but the acoustics there are still unsatisfactory. We'd like to do something more to it, but I haven't come up with a solution yet of how to handle the floor treatment without covering up the tile and without putting up draperies. I think draperies in that room, heavy enough to do any good, would be inappropriate.

[Looking at plans.] We got this set of plans from the Glides. Mary Grace asked them if we could borrow their set and make reproductions. Mrs. Glide sent them down special delivery to Mary Grace, and she delivered them to me. I had these record sets made from this set, and then sent it back to the Glides. They had the set that they sent to me back again.

Riess: The whole thing came with just that [a small, scalloped piece of oilcloth] around its middle?

Willer: Uh-huh. [Laughter.] I thought it was hysterical--it's oilcloth. I've never met Mrs. Glide but I'd love to.



Willer: We have an original set of specifications [looking at specifications]. We found this, along with some of the blueprints, in one of the closets. This is also priceless. This tells how the excavation and grading should be done; how the concrete work should be done; how many bricks to purchase for the fireplace; the tiling; the plastering; the carpentry; the roofing; metalwork; painting; plumbing; electrical wiring; heating; and oil-burning equipment. These plans form what we call a contract document. That's what the contractor gives you a bid on.

[After some talk of foundations, a wine cellar, water in cellar, re-designing driveway.]

Chet [McCorkle] likes to do woodwork, and he wanted to utilize the garage as a shop; it wasn't possible then to utilize it as a garage. We decided to add a carport. What I wanted to do was to put something up there that would have the same character as the house if possible. I did a little studying of Maybeck's and Julia Morgan's construction and came up with a carport that used sono tube forms. They are forms that are made out of cardboard; they're made just like any kind of tube that you might use. First you install reinforcing into the tubes; and then pour in concrete; then you vibrate it and come up with a rather attractive-looking column.

Riess: Vibrating it brings things to the surface?

Willer: And gets rid of the air bubbles. It just shakes the concrete down so that it's a more solidly packed interior than it would have been if it hadn't been vibrated.

Riess: Was that the technique Maybeck used?

Willer: Oh, I think Maybeck probably rodded it. They didn't have vibrators in those days, but they had people with rods that would stand at the top and trim them down and try to get the thing compacted.

Some of the things on the carport turned out not too good during construction, and it isn't as precise a job as I would have liked to have had. I went on vacation about the time they were putting up some of the beams and left an engineer to watch the job. When I came back they were too far along to have made some of the corrections on things that took place while I was gone. The contractor didn't understand the way I wanted the beams cut; on these major girders I wanted a two-way bevel on the ends. We discussed it at length before I left, and I thought he understood. I also discussed it at length with the engineer I left in charge, and I thought he understood; but when I came back I found I had a one-way bevel and the whole roof was on.



Willer: It didn't really seem to matter to anybody but me, and I was certain the contractor didn't have the skill to cut the second bevel with the girder in place, and I didn't think it was worth it to take the whole job down in order to do it over again. [Laughter.] It's heartbreaking sometimes. He did a pretty good job on it, considering everything, I suppose, but there are many things I look at that I would have liked to have had changed.

In this business I suppose one should be willing to put off vacation plans, but I'm not that dedicated. [Laughter.] That's probably the difference between me and Julia Morgan. I could have had this changed at no cost, because it wasn't done according to plans, but I'm somewhat empathetic, I guess, with the contractor's problems too. It did mean a lot to me, but it just didn't mean that much to practically ruin a contractor for it. He was a small operator.

Transcriber: Judy Johnson  
Final Typist: Marilyn White





The Julia Morgan Architectural History Project

Mrs. Quintilla Williams

THE SELDON WILLIAMS RESIDENCE

Interview conducted by

Suzanne B. Riess



## THE SELDON WILLIAMS RESIDENCE

An interview with Mrs. Quintilla Williams, cleaning woman for Mrs. Seldon Williams, 2821 Claremont Boulevard. October 13, 1974.

Riess: When did you work for Mrs. Seldon Williams?

Williams: Around 1962 to 1964. I went once a week.

Riess: And I understand she lived in just one part of the house.

Williams: One part upstairs, where the little kitchen is.

Riess: Did she do her own cooking?

Williams: Yes, she did, and she ordered all her food from the Star Grocery. The kitchen downstairs wasn't used. I had to go and clean it once a week, go over that part of the house. The dining room was cleaned I guess about every two months.

Riess: It was kept locked, wasn't it?

Williams: Yes, she kept the living room and dining room locked.

Riess: Why was that?

Williams: She didn't use it, so I guess it was better to lock it when there was no one in the house but her. She had a lot of silver, very expensive stuff, dishes.

Riess: Did she have beautiful things about her in the upstairs quarter where she lived?

Williams: No, just a comb and brush of silver. She didn't keep anything upstairs. Everything was downstairs, in the dining room. She had a great big silver tray. I've never seen one like that; it was just huge, and the work on it was just something else! I wonder if they kept that.



Williams: The dining room table that was there was the hugest thing that you could ever find. Beautiful carved wood. All her furniture, most everything that she had in the dining room and living room, they had ordered it from overseas. They had the house built themselves, you see; he was a building contractor.

Riess: Did Mrs. Williams talk about Mr. Williams with you?

Williams: Not too much. His family was from Tennessee, I think.

Riess: You said when we talked earlier that she got together with the other members of the family, the Elliots, and Glides, just at holidays, Thanksgiving, Christmas. Were there ever times when she had everyone come to her house?

Williams: Never. No one but her nephew Roy Elliott would visit her. I think he had a key. That's one thing--nobody had a key to her house but her. And her sister would visit every so often. Not often. They didn't...

She lived to herself. She kept her own books. She stayed busy. The times that I would be there, she would be continually working on her books, keeping all the business.

She had oil rights from down in Southern California, oil wells down there, because I know two men came around trying to get her to lease it to them and she refused to talk to them. They came to the door, and I told her who it was, and she told me to let them in, and I let them in, but she wouldn't talk to them, and they wanted to know would she lease it to them, and she said no. They said, "Well, it would be money for you." She said, "Well, she didn't need the money." And it would be more work for her to keep the books.

Riess: Did she read, get books from libraries?

Williams: She had mostly all her books there at home, and magazines.

Riess: Television?

Williams: No, but she had a radio. And that's all. She stayed in that one room. There was her bed, just a regular three-quarter bed. To see the way she lived you wouldn't think that she had as much money as she did. Oh, she ate good food. When I was working there she didn't give me anything to eat. I had to bring what I had myself.

Riess: Why didn't she have a housekeeper?



Williams: Because she said she couldn't find the kind of a person she could trust in the house. She had one lady who was supposed to come and live with her, but I don't know why she didn't come.

She had her gardener and she went out and told him what she wanted and then right back in. She never stayed out with him. She would go to San Francisco when she was able about once a week. She took the bus. She walked to the corner and caught the bus, or took a cab to catch the bus.

Riess: Would she have talked to a neighbor en route?

Williams: She would talk; she never refused to. She would talk to the minister at St. Clement's. She'd always talk religion. She was religious; she went to church every Sunday.

And around the house she had bulletins and magazines from all the religions, magazines from India. I think she was sponsoring some Indian person over there, adopted. She would always send money different places, and I know one place was India.

Riess: Did it feel strange to be in the house, all dark and closed?

Williams: She never wanted me to open the drapes, that's true. But I never felt strange. Like I say, people may have thought she was a weird person, but she wasn't. She and I would sit down and talk a lot of times because she would be lonely a lot.

She said that before he died they entertained a lot. She said she used to have a lot of guests. I don't remember the names of some of the people she mentioned. And overnight guests. And she would always talk about the room in front with the two twin beds, who would stay in there.

Riess: What did she look like?

Williams: She was a little, low lady, about five-five. Just a cute little lady. Her hair was mainly grey, and she kept it in a ball in the back. She kept herself up.

Riess: Of what did her husband die?

Williams: She kept him out on the sun deck upstairs--I think he had T.B.

Riess: She liked to reminisce?





Williams: She would tell me about the places she had gone, and she would say, "Maybe one day you will be able to go to some of those places, Quintilla." She'd always say, "I like you because you're a nice Christian girl, and if you just keep doing the right thing, everything will work out for you."

I liked her. She was a very sweet person, but she had her ways of not wanting anybody in and out of the house, and I could understand why she was alone. Oh, her attorney would come once every so often and she would come down and talk to him in the office downstairs. And her doctor would come to her; she wouldn't go to him.

But she could sit upstairs there for hours and hours working on the books.

Riess: Did she take a paper?

Williams: Oh, yes, the Chronicle, and maybe the Berkeley Gazette.

Riess: What can you recall of her talking about having the house built?

Williams: I'm trying to remember. From some place in Europe she got the rugs, and they had long fringe on them, and I had to get in there and take a pan and wash them. Big plush Oriental rugs. One in the dining room and one in the living room. I had to scrub them and sweep and brush them straight. And the floors, she liked to keep them just perfect. She liked everything perfect. She treasured that house; that was her life, keeping that house intact. She wanted to keep the dust from deteriorating the furniture and things.

Sometimes she would tell me not to open the blinds at all, and it was because, you see, she'd lived there long and she didn't want anybody looking in.

And there was a light there that when you turned it on it would turn every light on in the whole house, the yard, everything. When you turned that one switch on (it was in her room) every room in every part of the house and the little house outside, the lights would come on. So if anything would go wrong, that's all she would have to do, hit that switch. Whoever was there would be seen. And then you couldn't cut it off; you would have to go to every room to turn the lights off. She warned me to never touch that switch if I didn't want to go around and turn all the lights off.

And I had a signal to ring when I came to work, so she would know it was me, because if anybody else would ring the doorbell she wouldn't answer it. I rang once and it took her about fifteen



Williams: minutes to come down. I told the sister, Mrs. Elliot, but she said, "Oh, she's so stubborn, can't nobody tell her anything. She'll be all right." But I wondered what I should do, in case anything was really wrong.

There was one neighbor, in the big brick house next door, who used to come over and bring delicious cookies to her all the time. She would just come and ring the doorbell and give them to me to take to her. They had been friends, and so she understood.

In one of the rooms upstairs she had it full of nothing but boxes and boxes of the things that she had brought back from her travels. Things that had never been touched, still in the boxes. Some of the boxes would be empty, and some would still be full.

Transcriber: Suzanne Riess  
Final Typist: Marilyn White



The Julia Morgan Architectural History Project

Catherine Freeman Nimitz

THE BERKELEY YEARS OF ADMIRAL AND MRS. CHESTER NIMITZ,  
WITH A STORY ABOUT THE HOUSE AT 2821 CLAREMONT BOULEVARD.

Interview conducted by

Suzanne B. Riess



## THE YEARS IN BERKELEY: REMINISCENCES OF MRS. CHESTER NIMITZ

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THE BERKELEY YEARS OF ADMIRAL AND MRS. CHESTER NIMITZ. WITH  
A STORY ABOUT THE HOUSE AT 2821 CLAREMONT BOULEVARD.  
An interview with Catherine Freeman Nimitz. October 2, 1974.

Retired in Berkeley

Nimitz: When we were here [Berkeley] from 1926 to 1929 it was our first experience of being with University people. At first the University people looked at this very young, very handsome Naval officer as sort of an outsider. Then they discovered that he always lunched at the Faculty Club with the different professors and got to know them well, and that we got to going to the parties that the different professors had, and that we were both terribly thrilled with Berkeley. We just dearly loved it. Our children were so happy in the Berkeley schools.

Riess: You said that your husband had come out to set up the Naval ROTC.

Nimitz: Yes. We had come out to set up the NROTC, the first one in the country.

The land grant colleges in the United States had accepted this, though only about five or six of these NROTCs were set up that year. This was the very first one. There was one at Harvard and Yale, I think. UCLA had one. I don't remember where the others were.

Anyway, in the three years we were here with the people on campus I was terribly impressed with Berkeley's old ladies. My sentiment was that when I left here I said to my husband, "Sweetheart, when I get old I am going back to Berkeley, because I want to be one of Berkeley's old women. I want to go back there because Berkeley's old women are not stylish, they're not society goers, but they're highly intelligent and they accept the change in their fortunes. When they have less income to go on, they simply draw in a little bit. But not in their friendships. And not in their interests. Therefore, when I come back to Berkeley, I'm coming back as one of Berkeley's old women."



Nimitz: Chester loved the University. And when we came out to San Diego from Washington, when he had just left the head of the Navy, CNO, we arrived in San Diego, and within twelve hours of the time we got there he received a telegraph from Earl Warren, then the governor, asking him to become a Regent of the University.

I was so thrilled with that, because I did not want him to start looking back while he was still on active duty, and assistant for the secretary of the Navy, it wasn't a very active duty after his tremendous years of work during the war. I was so pleased, because the people in San Diego wanted us to stay there, but most of the people there, his classmates and all, had been retired as captains. They were all looking backwards, and I wanted him to look forward. So we decided we'd like to come up to Berkeley. Therefore, we came here.

Riess: That was 1946?

Nimitz: That was the very beginning of 1948.

We lived on Yerba Buena for the last three years; when the Navy found that he was not well, they wanted him put where they could have plenty of people around to look out for him, and we were offered the big house. There was a doctor within three minutes of him at any time, and we had a staff of stewards and mess attendants to take care of him.

When he died, I told him just before he lost consciousness that I would go back to Berkeley to live because we had both thought of Berkeley as home. He was a Texan, I had been born up in New England, but neither of us wanted to go back to either of those places. And so, I came back here. And this is why I am now a Berkeley old woman.

Riess: That was a good ambition!

Nimitz: The other day, at the luncheon for the West Point people, they started talking to me and asking me certain things. They said, "How did you happen to settle in Berkeley?" And I told them this story.

One of the men from West Point said, "Wait a minute. Please wait. Don't move." He rushed off. He said, "I want my wife to hear what you have just said." So I repeated it for his wife. What he wanted was to bring home to her that when the time came to retire, you could either grow small or you could grow up.

I'm happy all the time. I make myself happy. I get up every morning at six o'clock for TV classes because it keeps my mind alert.



- Nimitz: I can't do the reading for them; my eyes wouldn't take all of it. But I have done it in the past. I've taken these courses for ten years now. I've gotten Russian literature, French literature, English literature--
- Riess: These are all on educational TV?
- Nimitz: Yes, from New York University, most of them. Now the one that's particularly interesting me is one from Pittsburgh, the University of Pittsburgh.
- Riess: And what is that class?
- Nimitz: That is on the Peoples of America. For instance, there will be a group of people who are of Russian background but who have settled here. And the professor asks them why they settle here. This is just absolutely fascinating. I get up at eight o'clock in the morning, not hating to get up or anything, but very much alive.
- Riess: You're really saying something about taking charge of your life.
- Nimitz: Yes. Take charge of your life. When I was very small--I was five years younger than my sister, six years younger than my brother... For some reason, my mother, having struggled to get money to put my sister and brother through college, when I came along, she said to me quite frankly, "I don't consider you college material." So they paid no attention to my education whatsoever. And they were most surprised when this young Naval officer [Chester Nimitz] came.
- He was brought to the house to meet my sister, who was nearer his age. But she wasn't there at the time, and I was. By the time she came back, he didn't pay any attention to her. He paid attention to me. I couldn't believe it when I found he really was in love with me because I was considered much too young to be bothered with by anybody.
- I'd hated Naval officers because they were a nuisance because I couldn't have my high school friends at the house because the place was always filled with Naval officers. My father always played an excellent game of bridge, my mother made marvelous apple pies and mince pies--
- Riess: Where was this in New England?
- Nimitz: In Quincy. Wollleston. Seven miles out of Boston.
- Riess: How come the Naval officers were there?



Nimitz: Some of them lived out there because the Fall River Shipbuilding Company was there, and battleships were being built. So these people were all in connection with that.

Anyway, before anybody became conscious of the fact, I was engaged to this man. But I couldn't be engaged, he couldn't ask me to marry him until the night before he was leaving to go down to Cuba with his submarines. In those days submarines had no heat. They were cold and desolate things to live in in winter. They were going down there for the winter, and he said, "The day I come back, I give up my command, and then you and I are going to be married right away." So we were married and went to Europe on a trip for the Navy.

#### 1306 Bayview, 1926-1929

Riess: When you lived here from 1926 to 1929, where were you living in Berkeley?

Nimitz: I was living up at 1306 Bayview Place, right opposite the Brewer's house. We had an exciting time there, because--I guess it was about the second year we were here--we'd been off to a dance that the midshipmen and the cadets were having.

We came home about one o'clock, and I had a lot of the youngsters with us, and I scrambled them eggs and so forth. I'd just pushed them out of the house and we were going to bed when an earthquake struck. And it was really an earthquake.

Chester immediately said, "I will go up and stay with the two older children upstairs, and you go out to Nancy." (We didn't have Mary then.) So I rushed out on the back porch with Nancy, and she slept right through it. We had three shocks. They were hard, and the birds tried to get into the house. They wanted to get in with us; they were scared.

The next morning I was getting breakfast, and I kept stumbling. And I thought, "What's the matter with me?" So, I finally went into the dining room and lay down on the floor and looked. And the dining room floor went right up in an arc. So then without saying anything to anybody, I walked out in the back yard to find the entire underpinnings of the back of our house hanging like this [gesturing]. The posts that they rested on were all down in the canyon.





Nimitz: I called my husband and I said, "Listen, we've got to get somebody here quick." And he looked, and he came in, and immediately got hold of a good carpenter who rushed right around with a crew of men. They screwed the house back up and put new posts under it.

You have never heard anything quite so agonized in your life as an old house that is screaming because it's being treated that way. The sounds that came out of that house were just awful. But they got it all back together again by the afternoon.

Riess: That's certainly an "only in Berkeley" story. It was an old house in 1929?

Nimitz: Yes. I don't know how long ago Mrs.--I can't think of her name now. She was a character in this area. Then she moved up into the gold mining area with her husband. She moved up to Auburn, I think it was. But the house was a funny house.

It was the first house on the right-hand side going down, but now there is another house above it. And it had a big fish pond on the front porch. Fish were always kept in it. I used to get such a kick because in the summer there was a setter dog down the street that discovered that there was a pool there, and when it got to be hot he'd come. And I'd find the fish out on the deck. He would just push them out and climb in.

#### A Story about 2821 Claremont Boulevard

Riess: It sounds like you were very tolerant. [Laughter.] When would you have known the Seldon Williams house? It wouldn't have been in that period.

Nimitz: I did not know the Seldon Williams house at all. My connection in this taping is apparently because I told a story to Mrs. McCorkle about when I lived in that neighborhood.

I lived down on Forest Avenue during the war. I came out here when my husband was in the Pacific. I came out here to get out of Washington. I brought my youngest child, because by that time we had Mary, the fourth one, and she was much younger than the others. I brought Mary out here.

I was living on Forest Avenue and working at the Naval Hospital six days a week, from morning till night, because they were opening



Nimitz: the first family hospital in the Navy. The doctor who was the head of the Naval Hospital then had two years before done a very tremendous operation on my right leg. We had talked at that time about how we thought we ought to have family hospitals. He said, "You come out here and help." So I went out to handle Navy relief, and then--

Riess: Sort of social service.

Nimitz: Yes. And then the Labor Department asked me if I would handle Emergency Mother and Infant Care [EMIC] for them. It was just a question of getting the papers they had to have to give sailors below a certain rank, so their wives could have free hospitalization when their babies were born if they did not have outside means.

Riess: This was at Alameda or in Oakland?

Nimitz: This is at Oak Knoll. So my connection with the house came about this way:

I came home one night from the hospital. I think it was the block warden who came to me--we were talking--and said that something very exciting had happened the night before. I said, "What was it?" Then he told this story:

A young man who worked in San Francisco, but who lived right opposite that house on the side street, Avalon--I think he must have been the son of the person who was minister to the church there. I would just guess that. Anyway, everybody came out on the train at the time. The train ran right straight up to the slot there by the Claremont Hotel, the Key Route.

He had just come home, and he was just about to go into his house, when a gentleman stopped him and asked if he could talk to him for a minute. He asked the young man, "Do you live here?" And he said, "Yes." The man said, "What about this house across the street? Do you know the woman that lives there?" The boy said, "No," nobody knew her, she was a recluse. She never saw anybody.

Then this man said, "I'm the FBI, and we're interested in that house. Would you mind--I would like to give you a list of automobile licenses, and if you ever see an automobile there anywhere around that house with any of these numbers on it, would you call me immediately? But don't say anything to anyone else."

Well, it wasn't a week after that that this man came home and noticed there were a number of cars parked around that house. So he waited until the people from the trains had all left the area, and



Nimitz: then he went over. It was dark. He looked around the cars, and every single number that had been given to him was there. So he called the FBI, and they said, "Don't say anything to anybody, and just stay out of the way."

They came over that night, and they picked up all of the German agents that they hadn't picked up on this end of the coast. Among them the consul general was there. It seems that the butler was one, and the maid was one. They were all connected with the German Secret Service.

Riess: Theoretically they had been having their regular meetings there?

Nimitz: It was perfect! She was upstairs. They had it in the luxury of a beautiful drawing room. It couldn't have been nicer.

This is entirely hearsay. It was told to me, and it is interesting.

Riess: It seems possible.

Nimitz: It was, I'm sure. Because I remember saying to somebody one day, "Who lives in that house?" And they said, "She's a woman that never comes downstairs. Her meals are all taken up to her. She has a hatred on the world. She just doesn't want to pay any attention to anybody."

Riess: That was the feeling in the neighborhood about her.

Nimitz: Apparently it was. I didn't know because I had no time to talk to people. I was at the hospital all day and came home at night.

In fact, I put my child in the Dominican convent; I think the service [the Navy] was a little worried about what might happen to Mary because she was still young enough to be kidnapped. They wanted to keep an eye on her. So I put her in the Dominican convent. Believe you me, nobody got near her there.

Riess: So, once this secret service group was gathered together, were they all just taken away?

Nimitz: They were all taken away.

Riess: It's hard to picture Mrs. Williams upstairs with her staff disappearing.

Nimitz: Yes. Disappearing! I've often wondered whether they--they must have sent somebody up to tell her. The man who told it to me himself died



Nimitz: just about the end of the war. But I used to walk by that house with a great deal of interest. When Mrs. McCorkle moved in, I couldn't resist telling her the story.

### The NROTC on Campus

Riess: To go back to the first period when you were out here, it sounds like the NROTC was accepted easily enough.

Nimitz: You know, it was very interesting. The man who had command of the Army ROTC was just on his last legs as far as service was concerned; he was just about to be retired. He'd been a person who'd been very controversial to the Army. When Chester came out here first, I think it just killed him to see this stunning young Naval officer, only a commander, getting the rank of full professor.

But Chester was a person who had a charming manner. He always did the kind thing for everybody. And he was so nice, and deferred to Colonel Nance, you see, and very soon the Nances and the Nimitzes became the closest of friends. We had our parties together, the Army ROTC officers--there were only two Navy ROTC officers the first year--and we all had parties together. We had an awfully nice time.

But I really always thought it was terribly unfair to the Army in a way. The Army cadets were having to wear out the uniforms left over from the First World War. They were pretty ghastly. When the Naval unit came here, the first thirty cadets that we got in were sent down to Roos Brothers, and they had their uniforms tailored. They became regular midshipmen. They looked stunning, and I think it was awfully hard on the Army, because the girls just flocked to these thirty [laughter]--you can imagine.

There were lots of very amusing things that happened that first year. We loved it, and we got to know all of the people at the University, and to go about with them a great deal. In fact, we were great friends with the Sprouls long before he was president. You see, when we came here William Wallace Campbell was the head, and Sproul was controller. Then there was a professor we were very fond of, with his wife; they both died soon afterward, rather young. I think their son is still in this area.

Then Doctor Bill Donald, who was then football doctor, and the doctor at the University hospital, was our doctor. Bill and Minerva, his wife at that time, and the Sprouls and ourselves. I remember





Nimitz: going making New Years calls on New Years and having a perfectly marvelous time. We called on everybody. We had such a good time with so many people. And the friendships have gone on. The Hildebrands. They are such darling people.

Riess: How about Professor Barrows?

Nimitz: Oh, we were very fond of the Barrowses. Later on, after we left the University, and my husband was in command of the destroyer base--

Riess: This was in 1930?

Nimitz: This must've been in 1931 that he took command of the destroyer base, because when he left here he went in command of a big submarine division for two years. From '29 to '31 he had the 20th Submarine Division. Then he went to the destroyer base.

Professor Barrows came down, and stayed overnight with us one night. There was another officer that came that same night, a Naval officer, who was coming down to inspect the base. He was in the construction department. He and Professor Barrows had the same room with two bunks in it.

When they came down the next morning to breakfast they both looked absolutely exhausted, and I said, "Well, did you sleep well last night?" They looked at each other, and they burst out laughing.

They hadn't gone up until midnight, and just as they got ready to get into their bunks, one of them said, "Look, you know there's something about you that's very familiar. Weren't you up in either the Philippines or Hong Kong in such and such a time?" And the other one said, "Yes." Then they began to compare notes and they found that they'd known each other years and years before when Barrows had been out in the Philippines. They had talked all night long, had a perfectly marvelous time.

Riess: So when your husband left that meant that the ROTC was well established?

Nimitz: Well established. We would have liked to have seen the graduation, but we couldn't. They graduated the next year. But I'm very proud because those people in that class did awfully well, like Admiral Onnie Lattu, who is retired now, who's way up, one of the tops, at City Service. His father was a lumberman up north and he raised a big family of children.

When Onnie came to college he had to work like a dog to put himself through. He used to be the guard at some of the banks.



Nimitz: He would do his studying through the night while guarding the building. He really was a wonderful person. We're still great friends. He calls me whenever he comes out here.

### Berkeley, and Tolerance

Riess: When you think of the fine old ladies of Berkeley that you first saw in the 1926 to 1929 period, do you recall some of the women in particular?

Nimitz: No. I can't remember their names now. But they were the wives or the widows of professors. Professors weren't getting paid very much then. I just liked the cut of their jib. We'd lived in all parts of the country. It just pleased me to see women that didn't make any effort to be stylish. They just wore the clothes they had. But you could talk to them, and they were utterly delightful. When I talked to Grace Bird the other day, the first of two girls who graduated in architecture, I thought, "You're just definitely one of Berkeley's grand women." She just convulsed me, because I was asking her if she ever knew a certain professor who was a bachelor here, Tom Buck. I had known Tom when we came here. Tom became very friendly with our family. He didn't go out very much with people, but he became very friendly with us, and was so up to the very end.

But she was saying when she went into his class--these two girls, I can't remember who the other one was, that went into the class--he never asked them a single question all the way through, and he never looked at them. Although they got A's in that class, he wouldn't call on them, he was so shy. Terribly shy. And the idea of these women being in this class was too much for him.

Riess: That reminds me of Julia Morgan. What reputation did she have, as you recall?

Nimitz: She was still young enough then. I mean, she was still doing the houses. The person that I heard most about at that time was Maybeck. Of course, what I love in Berkeley are these lovely gingerbread houses. I think they should never be taken down! With all the filigree on them. There's one down here about three blocks I just love to look at. [Boudrow House, 1536 Oxford.]

Riess: And Alameda's famous for them too.

Nimitz: Yes. And you know, Alameda's done something about it. They are fixing them up and making them absolutely charming.



Nimitz: I think that we've got much around this whole area that is exciting. Our oldest girl graduated from this University.

Incidentally, she was a member of the first class that went in when President Sproul became president and then four years later graduated. We were in China at the time. It was a lonely thing for her, her graduation, with not a soul of her family here. And she said she'll never forget it because as she walked up on the stage President Sproul said, "Catherine, your family'd be very proud of you," and gave her her diploma. She says, "He's just absolutely the man, as far as I'm concerned."

Riess: So you really felt your roots here.

Nimitz: My roots were here. And I've heard my husband, at the time in the '60's when we were out there on the island [Yerba Buena], when we were having all the trouble here (you know, when they became so radical and just impossible), and one of the young Naval officers, who was a reserve Naval officer, and an excellent Naval officer, was going out to the Pacific, and he said, "God, I hope we don't get any of these kind out there."

Chester said very quietly to him, "Bill, you'll find that most of them, when they get out there, make wonderful officers." These were not the Naval reserves; these were the youngsters that would go in or be drafted.

He wrote back to Chester a year or so later. He said, "Those same kind of boys that were just wild in Berkeley will get up Sunday mornings early to go out with me into the country and help wash the babies and clean out the sores and do all sorts of things." Because the service was doing a lot of that, going out to try to help the natives at that time.

People say to me that Berkeley's spoiled, and I say, "No, Berkeley isn't spoiled. We're just learning to live another way." When I first moved into this apartment house, I walked down the street and everybody had a very ugly expression on their face. I thought, "I can't stand this." So, I'd walk down the street in the morning, and as everybody came towards me I'd say, "Good morning. Isn't it a lovely day."

At first they'd look very startled. And then their faces would break into the broadest of smiles. They would say, "Yes, isn't it." Now I go down here and I don't know the names of any of the people, but they all speak to me; they're all friendly with me.



Nimitz: I've made it a policy when I go out on the street here in Berkeley to never wear my rings. I never wear any jewelry of any value. I just wear costume jewelry, very little of that. The result is that I don't look as if I had money. I'm no temptation to anyone who's taking drugs and wants money. I think that this is important, because there is a lot of drug-taking around here, and I'm terribly concerned about it.

Our little park up here, which I dearly love, and which has such amusing things happening...

Riess: Live Oak.

Nimitz: I went up there two weeks ago Sunday, and the Socialists and the World Citizens and the Quakers, and everybody that doesn't go into the category of Republicans and Democrats, were up there, each one "doing their thing" and having such a good time. You know, I can wander around among them and have the greatest amount of fun watching what they're doing and what they're having fun doing.

Riess: Of course, you're uniquely fitted to do that, because of the traveling life you've led, and you can go into situations--

Nimitz: Yes. I loved living in China. I lived in China when it was China, in '33 to '35. In Shanghai. We went up to Peking and lived at the embassy there for a few days. Chester was in command of the flagship out there. I have a lot of friends among those Chiang Kai-Shek people.

But it is infinitely better for China that she's under Mao Tse-Tung, because for the people there now, it isn't just the top people that are living well; everybody is getting enough to eat. Everybody is getting a chance at an education. There are lots of things about it that still are not too good. But it's much better than it ever was before. I have a great deal of faith that we're never going to be the same country again. And the country that has the most money is never the happiest country. England found that out.

Riess: Sounds like you were always open and tolerant. Do you think that there are as many officers' wives that end up feeling the other way around?

Nimitz: I don't know. I think perhaps the Navy is more tolerant than the other forces. My husband once remarked on that, saying that the reason was that in the Navy, when you're out on a ship, you may get into difficulties and it may be a ship of a country that your country has had lots of trouble with that will come to your rescue. You never know who is to come and stand by you.

Riess: So you are always open.





Regent Nimitz

Riess: What were your husband's interests, particularly when he was a Regent? What were the things that he was most concerned about?

Nimitz: For a while he took the place of someone on the Atomic Energy Committee. He went up to Alamos for one visit. But he was terribly interested in student affairs. I remember how disappointed he was when the alumni got that place where they have the Alumni House. He wanted that for the students' union. His loyalties were with the youngsters who were working their way through. They got another place, perhaps in a more prominent place, but he thought the other was better for them.

Riess: When did he retire from the Navy?

Nimitz: He never retired from the Navy. He had active duty to the end.

Riess: But I mean when was that period when you arrived here in Berkeley?

Nimitz: We came back in '48, and we were staying at the Claremont Hotel. We were sort of looking around for a place. His description of what he wanted will interest you. He wanted three bathrooms and a long view. He said, "I love my grandchildren, but I don't want to share a bathroom with them when they visit."

So, we had been looking for a place, and we hadn't found a place. I was interested in a place down on the Peninsula they wanted us to take which would've been a lovely spot, but he wasn't--

Riess: You mean the Navy had that idea for you?

Nimitz: No, not the Navy, but some people that knew us. Anyway, he didn't want that. So, one day when we were at the Claremont...We were perfectly comfortable at the Claremont, but the trouble was that we would go down to breakfast and someone would come over and say, "Admiral, I have to speak to you. You know, I lost my son in the Second World War."

This, to start with breakfast, was pretty hard on him. Finally he said, "Sweetheart, I just can't take it. I don't want to take this any longer. Go out and get a house." So, I said, "All right, I'll try."

Well, the real estate woman said, "I can't find any houses for sale that you'd like. But there's one person that wants to rent a house for a year, furnished." And Chester said, "Go look at it."



Nimitz: So, I went. I knew I was not going to take that house, because I didn't want to do that. I knew it would take a few weeks, but we'd get a house.

Anyway, the thing that was so amusing was--we drove up to this house. It was on San Diego Road. And you know what San Diego Road is. The houses on one side are way up. We struggled up there, and of course at that time I was having great difficulty walking. And we got up to this house.

When we got in it--to this day I don't know whose house it was--but anyway, everywhere they had these glass animals and gadgets, little knickknacks. Everything. I took one look around this place, and I thought, "I'm not going to take this place." And he was asking an absolutely exorbitant rate, because he thought that he could get it, you see. They seemed to think that a commander-in-chief had plenty of money. (Actually we had only saved up \$10,000 because we'd gotten our children through college.)

I looked around this room, and I said, "Well, you know we have a dog." And this man said, "A dog! A dog!" And he said, "Well." Then he thought of this big rent that they were going to get, and he said, "Of course there are dogs and dogs. I'm sure that Admiral Nimitz' dog would behave very well in this place."

And I thought, "That's not going to do it." So, I said, "And we have six grandchildren under the age of seven, and we're having them all come and spend the summer with us." That did it. [Laughter.] This woman, the agent, was terribly disappointed, and she said, as we left, "There is one house just coming up for sale. Would you mind just looking at it?" I said, "How much is it?" She said something like \$42,000. I said, "We haven't got any \$42,000." She said, "But just look at it."

Well, I looked at it, up on Santa Barbara Road [728]. We eventually bought it. But it fitted Chester's description. It had a magnificent view. And it had three bathrooms. So, I went back to the hotel, and I called the Admiral. He was in his office over in the Federal Building. I said, "Come home. I found a house with three bathrooms and a long view, and you'd better come look at it." I took him out there. I didn't see a single book in the house. It was in perfect condition because the man owned a paint factory.

We looked through the house. We went back to the hotel, and Chester said, "You know, that is a beautiful house." My husband had been brought up, you see, under very strange circumstances in Texas. This was a magnificent house as far as he was concerned. It was a little hard for



Nimitz: me to take it; first, because it was a Spanish type, and I had been used to New England type square houses. Anyway, we went back. Then we talked to the bank people. We made the owners an offer. It wasn't anywhere near \$42,000. Finally they came back with another offer, and we accepted that, and we bought the house. We had some very happy years there.

The Admiral loved his compost heap. He had the most marvelous roses I've ever seen. He had a lovely garden. I had a garden.

And we had all of our friends there. In the meantime, we had acquired four Hungarian girls into our family, because Mary had met them. They had come over in the middle of the war, and had come up to Dominican College. They began coming over to our house. Finally we ended up getting all four of them their citizenship. Then they all four of them had keys to the house. If we went away for the summer, they had the house. We handled some of the bills so that they could live there. They'd have to get jobs during the summer. They had not a cent from home. Really they became just part of the family.

So, we had our own children. Our son and his wife came out here because our son became executive officer of the NROTC for a while. We've been pretty much connected with this neck of the woods.

Riess: Do you remember the troubles of the loyalty oath years?

Nimitz: Oh, do I! When the Heynses were here, and Mrs. Heyns had picked me up at a luncheon I'd gone to, and was taking me home, bringing me back to my apartment, which was then south of the campus, I said to her, "Now, listen, my dear. The University's always in trouble on something." Then I told her about the loyalty oath. I said, "What that did to the University can never be undone." Because it was tragic. We saw people who had been friends for years and years and years break up.

You see, Admiral Nimitz was very strict on this thing. He immediately said, "Now, look. There's no need of the oath. The oath won't do you a bit of good, because anybody who is against the University will sign that oath without the slightest hesitation, and then do as they please." He really fought to kick that oath out, because he realized what it was doing to the University. I remember one professor's wife came up to me down in one of the stores, and said, "Oh, how grateful we are to your husband for trying to stop that business."

I said to Mrs. Heyns, "Your troubles with the University here--it's just par for the course. It's always in difficulties on some account."



Riess: You are a grand old lady of Berkeley!

Nimitz: It was being here for the four years of the war when my husband was away. My work then was entirely with the hospital. Trying to make arrangements all over this area, I would go to visit the different heads of hospitals--the county hospital and the other hospitals--and say to them, "Now, suppose a young girl comes to you late at night and says she's sick. Don't say, 'If you do not belong to this county, you can't come here.' You take them in. If they're Navy, I'll send for them the next morning or I will pay you. But don't turn any of our Navy women out on the streets late at night."

I got great cooperation with everybody all around here. The social service group in Oakland worked hand in glove with me. I could call them up and say, "We've got a Navy wife here, and she comes from this area, and what do you know about her?" I'd give the name, and they'd say, "We've been hunting for her. She is a ward of the court, and she disappeared." I'd say, "Well, I can tell you where you can find her. I want to know about her baby. I don't want her selling that baby."

#### Thoughts about Respect and Dignity

Riess: Did you find yourself as involved on your other posts as you did during those war years?

Nimitz: No, I did not on other ones, because I had my children to look out for.

I'm a great believer that you can be friends with people without being intimate. I don't think it is wise for anyone to be intimate with people. Navy women that do that are apt to get into trouble. I always kept the handle on my name. The junior officers' wives all called me Mrs. Nimitz. They did not call me by my first name. And I still think too much intimacy is a great mistake.

Riess: Why is that?

Nimitz: For the simple reason that you immediately lose a certain amount of dignity. I saw a tragic thing happen right here at the University when we were here. One wife of the second commanding officer of the Army unit used to be very familiar with all the junior officers' wives on the committee.





Nimitz: And I said to her one day, although I think she was older than I was, "I think you're making a mistake."

She said, "Why?"

I said, "You're letting those girls come in your back door without ringing, you're letting those girls call you by your first name. You're going to get into trouble. That's not wise. You've got to hold up your husband's honor for him and let them come in the front door and always ring before they enter."

And she said, "That's simply stupid."

I didn't think any more about it. Not too long afterward I saw this man across the street. We were just coming up from the Faculty Club. He didn't look over and speak to us. I said, "Sweetheart, how funny," because his son was in the same class as our daughter at high school, and my husband said, "Don't say anything, I'll tell you."

So, when we got out of the University, Chester said, "I hate to tell you, but his wife is just asking him for a divorce. She's accusing the wife of one of the junior officers."

I said, "God, how stupid can you be!" He was such a nice man, and he adored this boy. They only had one boy. The wife took the boy and went off. Now, to show you how stupid it all was, the girl whom she accused is still married to her own husband, and they're retired and living in this area.

Riess: And she just sort of lost her sense of--

Nimitz: Yes. She probably found her husband kissing this girl, or something of that sort. Nothing more serious. But it broke up that home. And this is why I have a great feeling that you have to keep your dignity. As your husband gets senior, you have to treat people in a dignified way.

Riess: And so your very closest friends might be out of the ranks?

Nimitz: Yes. But it isn't that you're trying to pull rank on anybody. It is simply that you are trying to stop these youngsters from overstepping, trying to teach them, teach their wives as well as their husbands, that there are certain things, certain ways that you show respect to older people. It isn't a question of rank as much as it is of age and seniority.

Riess: I guess it's still applicable today.



Nimitz: It is applicable today, terribly so. I think a lot of these young people who went off their rockers in the early '60's--and I can understand why a lot of them went off. They are the children of the people that came back from the war. Their parents had been separated for three years, some of them. When they got back, the one thing that both husband and wife felt was, "We must be together. We must do things together, because we've got to overcome the fact that we've grown apart from each other." In doing that, the youngsters suffered.

Now, you've had too much of me.

Riess: I've absolutely enjoyed it. Thank you.

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The Julia Morgan Architectural History Project

Edward Hussey

WORKING WITH JULIA MORGAN, WALTER STEILBERG, AND BERNARD MAYBECK.

Interview conducted by

Suzanne B. Riess



EDWARD HUSSEY: WORKING WITH BERNARD MAYBECK, JULIA MORGAN, AND WALTER  
STEILBERG

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WORKING WITH JULIA MORGAN, WALTER STEILBERG, AND BERNARD MAYBECK.  
Two interviews with Mr. Edward Hussey, architect.

Interview 1, October 17, 1974.

Julia Morgan, and San Simeon

Riess: Mr. Hussey, what was your first connection with Julia Morgan?

Hussey: I had had one year at the University in Berkeley before the First World War, and then I came back from France and started my sophomore year in 1919. Just before the summer of 1920, the church I belonged to, Calvary Presbyterian Church (Virginia and Milvia Streets, Berkeley), was going to build a new building. They had Miss Morgan as the architect, and I met her there at a meeting on April 24, 1920 where they were discussing the new building.

I talked to her about the possibility of work during the summer, and I went that summer of 1920 and worked in her office, 1135 Merchants' Exchange Building, San Francisco, starting May 6. Some of the work I did was on our own church, Calvary Presbyterian Church, and some of the work I did for her was on drawings for the Hearst place at San Simeon.

Riess: So her signing you on to her staff was very casually done?

Hussey: She just said it was all right to come over and see her as soon as the University was out, which was less than two weeks later. Some of the drawings I did were for San Simeon, as I mentioned.

It might be interesting to note that one of the things I did was a layout for a floor in one of the little guest cottages, as they called them. There was a certain space that had to be filled with a marble floor, and I laid it out with various things that would fit in--a diamond shape, for instance; it would take so many sizes that would go in and just fit right, either that size or a size smaller, or a size larger, to make it come out at the right length.



Hussey: She had me make the full-sized layout--about four feet square or so--on tracing paper, of these various sizes that would fit in, and then she just laid them down on the drafting room floor and walked on them. It gave her the feeling of what would be about the right size and shape; and that was it. It went on that basis. That was the first time I had seen a drawing walked on to get the feeling of it, but that was what she did in that case.

Riess: I wonder if you can remember your initial reactions to her. Was she a very imposing person to meet?

Hussey: You've seen pictures of her and know that she was rather small and light; I suppose she only weighed about a hundred pounds or something. She was very small, and very quiet in her manner. She never raised her voice or got angry, but she was very particular in her work. I know some big men used to quail in her presence, because she was very demanding and everything had to be right; but she did it in a very ladylike manner. She was very insistent on the work being done correctly and properly. As I understand it, some people used to rather tremble at her because of that, you know.

Riess: How was she in dealing with a client, as with the church?

Hussey: She seemed rather modest, actually. There never was any sense of overbearing. She wanted to get the feeling of what the people wanted and to do everything correctly, but she in no sense gave you the feeling of superiority or that she was trying to impress people with her superiority or anything of that kind; she was very modest in regard to herself.

She got her ideas over, but she didn't have to do it in an obtrusive manner. She was very quiet and subdued in that way, and yet she was quite firm in getting her ideas over, I believe. She was a very fine person to work for, very meticulous in her work, very precise.

In those days, they used to do lots of full-sized drawings. She had one man in the office, Thaddeus Joy, who was excellent at free-hand drawing. On the Honolulu YWCA, for instance, we had quite a little ornamentation. We had columns that had to be done in a sculptor's studio and Thaddeus Joy made the drawings for those. And the same at San Simeon: there are lots of plaster cast ceilings. In fact, I worked on the drawings for some of them. They had a number of men come out from New York to do those ceilings, quite a crew of men who were familiar with cast plaster work. But Thaddeus Joy in her office made many of those drawings of the full-size ornamentation. He used a dark pencil or a charcoal pencil and made very beautiful drawings.



Riess: His own inspiration?

Hussey: A good deal of it came from books. At San Simeon, as you know, most of it is Spanish type of architecture, and she had a number of books. Often Mr. Hearst would look at something and even with a pen he'd write across a beautiful drawing, "Let's use this." And they did. The drawings that I made, for instance, for some of the ceilings, I used from books on Spanish architecture and actually tried to copy some of the Moorish and Spanish type of architecture.

At the end of summer, I took a two-week vacation. Saturday, July 31, 1920, I took a bicycle to San Francisco and worked in the office. At 6:35 p.m. I left San Francisco on the old stern wheeler Capitol City arriving Sunday morning in Sacramento. After a day with my aunt and uncle who lived there, I left Sacramento at 5:50 Monday morning, August 2, by bicycle. I was in Fresno by August 7, sleeping in haystacks most nights.

From Fresno across to Coalinga was the hottest trip I ever had. It was about thirty miles across there without any water. I thought I would get some water before I got out of town, but first thing I knew I was past the last water hydrant. There I was without any water, peddling across there for four hours. I tell you, I was thirsty when I got to Coalinga. I sat by the drinking fountain most of the afternoon.

Anyway, at 6:15 on the evening of August 9, when I got into San Luis Obispo, I went into a restaurant. Lo and behold, there was Miss Morgan in the restaurant. Her usual schedule was to go down there about every week. She would take a night train from San Francisco to San Luis Obispo, and then someone would take her from there out to San Simeon, which was about thirty or forty miles by car. She'd be there all day and then take the night train back, so she'd be gone from the office one day, plus two nights on the train. So, she happened to be there, and she gave me a note to Mr. Washburn, the superintendent at the job. I went up the next day and spent a day and night there.

Riess: So you weren't really coming down on an assignment?

Hussey: No, just on my own, on vacation.

After the summer was over, I'd go over on Saturdays, or if my schedule was such that I had an afternoon off from college, I'd go over. So, I worked part-time in her office. In those days they used to work Saturday mornings in architects' offices and in other offices too.



Hussey: On May 25, 1921, I was again on a full-time summer schedule in the Julia Morgan office. From June 25 to July 21 I was in San Simeon, working from the office but on the construction payroll. That was the first year that they used the buildings. They had only been doing the three little guest cottages; they hadn't started the main castle as yet. That was the first year that Mr. Hearst used them.

In fact, Thaddeus Joy and I were the first people to sleep in any of those houses. He slept in one, and I think it was Warren McClure in another, and I in another, so there would be somebody in each of these, because all the furniture and things were there and they thought it would be good to have somebody at each one of these during the night for protection.

Riess: The place was so isolated. What were the dangers?

Hussey: Actually, there wasn't much danger, but there were lots of workmen around, and it was just a matter of having the place looked after. There really wasn't a great deal of danger like there would be in a city nowadays. However, we did stay there; I was the first one to stay in B cottage.

Then Mr. Hearst arrived on Wednesday, July 13, with a lot of guests and they occupied the buildings for the first time that summer--1921.

Riess: Were you there at that time, when he was there?

Hussey: Yes, he arrived there.

Riess: What were your impressions of that whole scene?

Hussey: The day before the Hearsts arrived, a number of servants came--the stewards and so forth. I'll never forget how important they were; they were bustling around, ordering people here and there.

Riess: You mean self-important?

Hussey: Yes, they were. They had some tents for construction people. The stewards who came were going to be in a certain place, and they had a number of suitcases. Do you know that they had to come and ask the construction men to carry their suitcases for them, from one tent to another? I thought it was very strange indeed that they couldn't carry their own suitcases about twenty yards. They were so important. But the next day when the Hearsts arrived I found out they weren't so important; then they were second-class citizens. [Laughter.]





Riess: At that point it was Mr. and Mrs. Hearst and their children?

Hussey: Yes. I remember Mrs. [Millicent] Hearst came to me one time with some little statue of a religious figure that had been broken and asked me to have it repaired. That's about the only contact I had with Mrs. Hearst, but she was there that summer. The children stayed at the ranch buildings down by the ocean.

That first day when I saw the suitcases, I thought, "That's not much for a summer vacation." Much to my surprise, the next day a tremendous van arrived with trunkloads of things, just for the summer vacation. They'd have a trunk full of bathing suits, for instance, for his guests, and all that sort of thing.

Riess: You were working on installation?

Hussey: Yes, putting the furniture in place--the finishing touches. Warren McClure was there and Thaddeus Joy and myself.

Part of the work I did was out at Pleasanton, starting August 2, 1921. You probably know about the Hacienda there? Even after school started I'd go out there on a weekend, or after school on weekdays, and stay overnight, or even have a day off and go there. They had a two-story warehouse that had a good many things in it. You probably know that Mr. Hearst had things stored there and also in a big warehouse in San Francisco and also down at San Simeon. At Pleasanton we had two carpenters and a photographer from the Examiner who stayed there.

The carpenters would open all these crates and boxes of things and we would set up a column, or a door, or a window, or whatever it happened to be, and take photographs of it. I'd put a scale next to the object so it would show the size, and I'd also write down the dimensions with notes on a card for each item and label it, number it, and give all the particulars about it.

So, we had an extensive book of photographs and information about all these various items that he had. Then she could look through that and actually use those things in the construction and the design of the building. There'd be a door and she'd have the actual dimensions of it and a picture of it, and she'd say, "We'll use that in such and such a place."

Riess: At this point, what was going on at the Hacienda? Phoebe Apperson Hearst was dead by then?



Hussey: Yes. It was just empty, really, but it was kept up. They had a swimming pool there and beautiful bathrooms with all the things that go in a bathroom all ready any time for people to come in. But all the time I had anything to do with it, nobody occupied it; it was just empty, except for a caretaker and a gardener who were there all the time. I don't know how often any of the Hearsts ever went there.

One of the items there was a ceiling that came from a building over in Europe. We had to lay it out on the tennis court to uncrate it and try to put it all together. The carpenters were working on this, and they couldn't seem to get the thing to fit. It was all labeled--north, south, east, and west--and the thing wouldn't fit. Do you see why? It was labeled when it was up on the ceiling; [thus the directions were backwards]. So, when they put it down on the tennis court it didn't fit together.

They rearranged it north to south and we got it so it fitted together all right, and then we took photographs of it. I often wondered what happened to it. The first time I was down to San Simeon after it was completed I didn't see anything of it. The next time I was down there they had opened the upstairs. I went up there, and it was in Mrs. Hearst's suite, in the bedroom. It's made of painted wood panels.

#### Julia Morgan, in the Office

Hussey: Incidentally, to show the quirks of some people, I know that when I was a small boy I had an aversion to feeling anything with fuzz, like apricots or peaches or potatoes. Did you ever have that?

Riess: No, but similar sorts of aversions.

Hussey: Way back fifty years ago I had a pencil holder. This one here may be the very one. You've probably seen things like this, where you can put the short stubs of pencils in to use up the ends; it's quite common with drafting, so you can use the pencil down to a very short length.

Riess: Actually, I've never seen such a thing. And you think this one is as long as your career?

Hussey: Oh, yes. That may be the very one I was using in Julia Morgan's office.



Hussey: She came to look at a drawing, and, as is often the case in school when an instructor comes around or in an office, you'll hand them a pencil so they can make a drawing. I handed this [pencil holder] to her, and she said, "Oh, no!" She knew it was peculiar; she couldn't stand the feel of this aluminum.

Another thing she had an aversion to was triangular scales. Are you familiar with architects' scales? Some of them have three sides, and others are flat scales. One kind is flat and it has scales for quarter inch, half inch, inch, three-quarter inch, and so forth; so it gives you four readings, like this [demonstrates]. Of course, they are narrow, like that. There's a triangular scale that has three sides, and it has scales here, here, and here. One day somebody handed her one of those, and she got so angry that she threw it up on top of the cabinets. [She didn't like it] because she had to keep turning it over three different sides to find the scale she wanted.

Riess: She just got plain ordinary angry.

Hussey: I didn't see that incident. I was just told about it. (The aluminum incident was actually my case.) So, I immediately went out and got a flat scale to use. In high school and in the university I used the triangular boxwood scales, and they have scales of three-sixteenths, three-eighths, and so on, as well as half inch, inch, and others. I hope soon we'll go to the metric system and we won't have to worry about those things.

Riess: Eventually you would become very adept.

Hussey: Sometimes what I used to do with a triangular scale was to put a clamp on it [like this], so then you would always have it right side up. Anyway, those were a couple of little quirks.

In 1922 I didn't work for her any longer; I went east with my father on a trip by auto to Maine. Then in 1923 I did some work for Walter Steilberg. He knows quite a lot about Miss Morgan; he worked for her for many years.

She had a very beautiful library, by the way. Mr. Maybeck had very few books. He'd just use everything out of his head, but Miss Morgan used to use books a great deal.

Riess: A library of pictures of old buildings?

Hussey: Yes, classical architecture and everything else. She had some books that were so big. I remember one time she had a client come into the



- Hussey: office, and she had me go into the library to help her lift the books off the shelf because they were too heavy or too big for this lady to lift off. She had very beautiful books.
- Riess: How would she use her books for a client?
- Hussey: The clients would look at them and then give her an idea of the type of thing that they liked.
- Riess: I should think, though, that one would always risk having the client get too carried away with something that was all wrong, and then you'd have to reconvince the client.
- Hussey: Yes, there is that difficulty. I was working on drawings one time--not for Julia Morgan, but on my own--for some party who had seen a picture of something and they liked it very much, and there was a certain type of arrangement that they wanted. This particular thing simply wouldn't fit on their house. The roof wouldn't fit or anything else. So, you do have that difficulty. Sometimes people want various things that don't fit together.
- Riess: Anyway, she did work with books in a way that Maybeck wouldn't have?
- Hussey: Yes. He didn't use the books very much. He had some, and I suppose he would look at them, but not as much as Miss Morgan did.
- Riess: You were talking about Steilberg.
- Hussey: In 1923 I did some work for him up at his house here in Berkeley. It was on drawings for a job that was Miss Morgan's, and Walter Steilberg did the engineering.

It was just at the time I finished college in 1923 that he said to me, "The best experience you can get is to work for Mr. Maybeck."

So, I went over to Mr. Maybeck's office. It was in the old Russ Building. There was a little fellow sitting at a table there, and when I inquired about the possibility of working he hardly said anything; he just shook his head--no, no possibility; nothing doing.\*

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\*In another conversation Mr. Hussey adds that this man who turned him away from Mr. Maybeck was named Manning, and that Mrs. Maybeck had told Mr. Hussey, "Oh, yes, Manning was good; he was always protecting Mr. Maybeck, keeping him from being interrupted and so on." - S.R.





Hussey: Off in the distance, through some doors in another room, I saw Mr. Maybeck with his white beard and his bald head and his Chinese-type jacket. I thought, "Well, that's the first and probably the last I'll ever see of Mr. Maybeck," and I left. That was in 1923.

Walter Steilberg was very good at getting people work, because for some reason or other when people wanted draftsmen or assistants they called Walter; he seemed to know a lot of younger fellows. Anyway, he sent me then over to Ashley and Evers' office in San Francisco, because they had asked him for somebody. I worked there for about three years doing drafting, detailing, specification writing, and actually going out to the jobs. I went out to the jobs quite a bit to see how they were getting along and sort of supervising in a way. So, I got a variety of experience in that office that way.

#### The Honolulu YWCA, 1926

Hussey: About the end of 1925 or early '26, I went over to Julia Morgan's office for some reason, just to visit, and I saw a fellow there that I knew--Bjarne Dahl. He was working on drawings for the Honolulu YWCA building, and he said that when the drawings were done he was going to Honolulu to supervise construction of the work for Julia Morgan. I thought what a lucky fellow he was; I'd never have any such good fortune as that.

Along about May, I decided to leave Ashley and Evers to get some other experience, and I even talked to another fellow who was in Ashley and Evers' office about buying an old automobile and making a trip east, just to get other experience. Walter Steilberg knew my brother Henry and happened to meet him in the bank one day. He asked about me and what I was doing, and Henry told him I was going to leave Ashley and Evers and figured on doing something else. That night Walter Steilberg called me up and asked me if I would go to Honolulu. It seemed they wanted to replace Bjarne Dahl, so they sent me down there.

On June 2, 1926, I boarded the Wilhelmina (Matson Line) for Honolulu to work on the YWCA [project]. They had already started the foundations and excavations, and they had had some difficulties. They had a contractor there who was very difficult. I'll have to tell you more about him.

At that time they had what they called a "puka." I think Bjarne Dahl had used the word "puka," and it was confusing to the people in San Francisco; that's the Hawaiian word that means "hole." Anyway,





Edward Hussey and Miss Agnes Henion. Leaving Hawaii for Japan, 1927.





Hussey: the building had been designed for resting on coral. Walter Steilberg had done the engineering work for it. It seems that in one place there was not any coral, as they had expected, but only sand, and they would have to rearrange the footing. So, it delayed the work a couple of months while Walter Steilberg went down there and made investigations, came back and redesigned it, and so forth.

Incidentally, Walter Steilberg said he was never going to Honolulu again until they built a bridge, because evidently he and the ocean don't get along very well together. I don't know how he is on flying. [Laughter.] As he was crossing coming back, his roommate came in and said, "You know, we're right in the middle of the largest unoccupied body of water in the world." Walter didn't appreciate that very much.

So, I was there for a year on the Honolulu YWCA building.

Riess: That was the kind of skill you had, that you could just walk into that situation? Or did you have to be briefed extensively by Miss Morgan ahead of time?

Hussey: Not particularly. We had the drawings, of course.

Riess: And good drawings, if they are followed properly, make good buildings?

Hussey: Yes. But this contractor was very difficult to get along with. He had put in a bill for \$20,000 for extras, and \$20,000 in those days was like \$60,000 now, or more.

Riess: Was he an Hawaiian contractor?

Hussey: No. John Young was his name. He lived in Hawaii, but he wasn't an Hawaiian. They went to arbitration, and the local architect awarded him this \$20,000 extra. It shouldn't have been, because a lot of the things were absurd, really.

Riess: That's just the sort of thing I should think that Miss Morgan really couldn't tolerate.

Hussey: One of the things, for example, that he charged for was reinforcing steel; he said it got rusty and he'd have to buy new steel. Well, he never did buy new steel. One of the oddest things was that he said his millwork was going to come too soon and he would have to cart it to a warehouse and then cart it back to the job, so he had to be paid. The people who made the arbitration down there said, "Oh, yes, that would be extra expense, so he should be paid that." So, he was awarded the \$20,000.



JULIA MORGAN  
ARCHITECT  
MERCHANTS EXCHANGE  
SAN FRANCISCO

Nov 28 1927

DEC 19 1927

Dear Ed.

I seems unbelievable that it is almost a year since I landed on the troubled shore of Oahu, haunt of dreaded Young, the terrible Monty & the contriving Lewis, and now those names are almost forgotten, consigned to the oblivion of the dusty files. Are they forgotten by their erstwhile victim in his new world

What do you have in the place of "pilikea"? Is there a plentiful supply in Japan? Do you have any time to write anything other than reports? If so, let us have a letter *S'il vous plait*, a fine newsy or descriptive letter such as you can write so well.

Now I wish I had called on your mother yesterday so that I might give you news that you would care to read, but I have not seen her in





ever so long, now your mother either

100

Our office is busy as always with, mostly, out-of-town work. I have to keep almost exclusively on Klearst work. That job has been going on for 9 years (nearly) & there is no prospect of finishing in less than 3 years, perhaps not then. I am at San Lincoln most of the time when Mr Klearst is there & go down for frequent visits when he is away & have a little office & draughting room there & one draughtsman

The call of the tropes seas came to me again the other day when the Tiao Huan sailed for the orient — went down to see an old Japanese off, a man who has been with my father in law on his ranch for about 30 years. He has saved enough to retire on in Japan. He did not know any of us were going to see him off. So I had to hunt for him in the last 10 minutes before the boat sailed. Have you ever tried to find a particular Jap in a steerage full of Japs. They all look alike. I hunted furiously until they gave the signal to pull away the gang planks & I had given up the search when he burst upon my vision standing right at the head of the gang plank down which I had started. Well, I should have liked



JULIA MORGAN  
 ARCHITECT  
 MERCHANTS EXCHANGE  
 SAN FRANCISCO

to have joined him, even at the cost of eating raw fish & sleeping in the steerage, just to be going again to the sunny seas I love.

The office force at present is:-

Miss Morgan  
 Miss Le Beaver  
 Harriet DeMori  
 Miss Forney  
 Eleanor Joy  
 Elizabeth Boyter  
 Ray Carlson  
 Jack Wagnert  
 Chrling Clausen  
 Shirley Davidson  
 Camille Colon  
 Dick Kusbaum  
 Walter Clifford  
 T. J.

Do you ever hear word from Bjarne?

Stafford Joy came in a few days ago on his periodical search for



work. I suggested that he write to Dickey  
 & Wood or to Bjarne, but leaving the continent  
 did not appeal to him. Business is  
 rather slow in the field of architecture  
 & building & there are good men looking  
 for places.

I met Dorothy Wormser in  
 the Nathan-Dohrman store last Friday  
 The name Wormser does not belong to  
 her any more, but I can't remember the  
 new one. She has an offspring -  
 a girl, but in spite of these incidents  
 in her career she looked the same  
 old Dorothy. I had not seen her for  
 two years or more.

Montgomery st is becoming  
 a grand canyon with its new skyscrapers.  
 The new Telephone Building (New Montgomery st)  
 is very fine; the Russ Building a little  
 disappointing. The Hunter Dulan building  
 is rather poor; the Financial Center bldg.  
 very good with an excellent lobby. San  
 Francisco will look good to you when you return  
 Best wishes  
 Thad Jones





Hussey: At the end of the job they had a beautiful opening ceremony, with flowers around and the local people and all that. I had an office in one of the rooms there temporarily, with a desk, to finish up the work the final week. He came in and threw down an envelope on my table that night, a very thick envelope.

I opened it up, and it was a bill for another \$20,000 worth of extras that he had on the job. Some of them were legitimate, but one of the items he had in there was that the architect had not furnished the complete detailed drawings in time, so his millwork was delayed and did not arrive on time. He'd already been paid because it arrived too soon and he had to store it! That's the kind of fellow he was; he wanted to collect both ways.

Riess: He didn't get away with it, did he?

Hussey: No. Jim Lefeaver came down and went over everything, item by item. Finally we got it down to about \$10,000; we cut about half of it off.

Strangely enough, there was one little item that you might be interested in. Mrs. Andrews was the YWCA president. She had seen a grille that was sitting there that was left over from something or other, and she thought it might be nice to put on the kitchen door. Knowing how Mr. Young was about all these extras, I let it go, and said someone could stick that up and put four screws in later.

She was so concerned about this that she spoke to Mr. Young directly and asked him if that grille couldn't be put on the kitchen door. He said certainly, and put it on the kitchen door, all right. On the list of extras was \$10 for putting the grille on the kitchen door; it took about four screws. When Mrs. Andrews went through this list of extras she was very disturbed about this \$10. In the whole big bill of \$20,000 that was the only thing she was worried about: "Oh, I thought he was going to do that for nothing." At the end of these dealings Mr. Young asked to have \$10 put on some other item and scratch the grille charge. When Mrs. Andrews saw the grille charge removed she was pleased.

Riess: That's the sort of murky side of architecture that you hear about.

Hussey: In this case, we went over the entire bill. The first \$20,000 had been gone over just before I got there, and unfortunately was approved by this arbitration business. The people who were arbitrating it lived in Honolulu and thus said, "We live on the island with this fellow and we have to get along." That was their attitude.\*

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\*[Some of the people on the island thought, well, Julia Morgan was really an outsider. They didn't like it that some people from California were coming down there to show them how to build a building. - E. Hussey]





Hussey: Regarding the second \$20,000, as I said, Jim Lefeaver came down. He was sort of the office manager for Miss Morgan. (She didn't come down at all during the time of construction; she didn't see it at all.) Fortunately, I had very good records. These are the records from the Honolulu YWCA building [shows records to interviewer].

Riess: Did she do that whole building without ever having gone there until it was finally completed?

Hussey: Yes. She may have gone down there before it was started, but she didn't go down there during construction.

I made one of these diagrams each week and showed exactly what had been done during that time, and I also took a whole roll of eight pictures each week. This shows [demonstrates] where the pictures were taken [numbers], and one color shows the part that had been formed, another part where the steel had been put in, another part where the concrete had been poured. So, I had this complete record. Also, I wrote back here a report each week.

In those days it was only once a week that you had any communication. The boats went once a week. I'd go down the last day and put the mail on board. I left a wide margin, and I'd send two copies; one of them she'd send back with notations. Also, I'd write letters as well, but most of it was taken care of with these reports. So, she kept in touch with it very closely in that way.

Riess: I guess you got to know her writing, too. I'm having trouble with it. [Reads Julia Morgan note.] "Won't this venting into building bring objectionable dead air odors?" So, you would take such a note as that and be given free rein?

Hussey: Usually things were going along all right, but sometimes she would make a note to do something or other.

Riess: This is a remarkable document, and also it reminds me of how much work goes into it--the incredible detail.

Hussey: One time, because of the difficulty with this contractor, we had to be there all night. They wanted to move a couple of palm trees in; they were widening a road at Waikiki and these palm trees were left over. So, they moved these palm trees up to the YWCA and put them in the court. (I'll show you a picture of it later.)

Because of the contractor being so difficult, I knew that he couldn't be interfered with during the day, so those trees were moved in at night. I stayed there all night to see that no damage was done.



Hussey: Unfortunately, there was one place where they scratched a little piece and it had to be put on--it took a man an hour or so. And that was one of the things we paid him for as an extra. I remember reporting that I stayed up all night doing that, and Miss Morgan said, "When do you sleep?"

Riess: How long did that job take in Honolulu?

Hussey: Just a year. The following June, Miss Kaufman came over from Japan. She was the secretary of the YWCA in Tokyo, and they were going to build a new building. I was interested in talking to her about the possibility of going to Tokyo, but she said there wasn't any chance because Mr. Vogel was there and he was the architect.

Miss Morgan had originally made some preliminary sketches for the building, but she didn't carry on as architect. Joshua Vogel had been an architect in China in connection with the missions, and then when there was the trouble in China (early or mid-1920's) they had to leave, going to Japan.

He made the working drawings for the YWCA when he was in Japan. It was just about the end of the job there in Honolulu when I got a telegram from her [the secretary] to come to Tokyo. So, on July 18, 1927, I left Honolulu to spend three years in Japan. (Mr. Vogel's wife was ill and they wanted to return to Seattle.)

Riess: Did that job take three years?

Hussey: No, I did other work while I was there too. I worked independently as an architect and I did some work with Mr. Bergamini, another architect, on several jobs. But the main one I went for was the YWCA, and the other things happened incidentally.

Riess: I take it you didn't have any family connections?

Hussey: No, I didn't then. But I got married in Japan; that's where I met my wife. We were married there in the following year--in 1928, actually.

Riess: After your successful handling of the Honolulu Y, did Miss Morgan thank you very much, or did she just expect you to do a good job anyway? How did she show her appreciation?

Hussey: I have a letter here.



Riess: [Reading.]

"This is just a word to express my appreciation and thanks to you for all the care and personal devotion you have given on mutual work through the hardest set of conditions this office has ever met." [Julia Morgan.]

You were very independent through this. Going from job to job.

Hussey: In some ways. I have been on many different jobs; when I'd finish one I'd go on to another one. That's her own handwriting [referring to letter].

Riess: This [second letter] was written in 1931.

Hussey: When I was at Principia.

Riess: [Reading.]

"This is just a personal note to say how much your handling of conditions has meant to Mr. Maybeck and self. Reading between lines, I realize that all has not been easy. Your prompt solutions and steadiness have been just what has been needed." [Julia Morgan.]

Hussey: Mrs. Maybeck used to be the one who corresponded; Mr. Maybeck seldom wrote a letter. He just told his wife to write so-and-so, and she would do the writing.

Riess: This is 1932. [Reading.]

"Dear Mr. Hussey: We read the mail at home. There is too much else to do in the office. Mr. Maybeck likes your businesslike way of saying things and wished me to say he particularly enjoyed a certain letter no. 8 to Wells and Company. I think paragraph D was the special part. Don't bother to look it up--just take the compliment. Give our regards to your other two-thirds." [Mrs. Maybeck.]

Miss Morgan, Mr. Maybeck, and Principia College

Hussey: Miss Morgan and Mr. Maybeck were very good friends, and yet they were very different. Miss Morgan was very precise and she always dressed immaculately, with a tailored suit and a white jabot, I think they



Hussey: called it in those days, and a blue straw hat. Her work was very finely done--you might say delicate in some respects.

Whereas Mr. Maybeck was more homespun, rougher, very seldom wore a necktie; he wore this Chinese jacket and a tam o' shanter. His work was heavier and bolder. There was just that difference in character. And yet they respected each other and they worked together very well.

After I had worked just a short time in Mr. Hays' [William C. Hays] office--only sort of a temporary job, one little job that I was working on that was coming to an end--I got a call from Julia Morgan's office. I had checked in there when I got back from Japan, and there wasn't much going on. In fact, there wasn't much going on anywhere.

Then I got this call from Julia Morgan's office to come over and they sent me to Mr. Maybeck's office. It seems there was this Principia job that was coming up and Mr. Maybeck wanted some help. I went over there to see Mr. Maybeck on September 17, 1930, and I remember he looked at me and kind of blinked and said, "Can you take orders?" I was astounded at that.

I found out afterward that he very seldom gives orders, but he gives suggestions. For example, when we were in Principia he used to come back there many times and we'd stay together or live together, just Mr. and Mrs. Maybeck and myself. She did the cooking and what-not. We took the garbage down to a friend's house who had some pigs. When the garbage pail would get a little full he wouldn't say, "Take the garbage down." He'd look in there and say, "I think the pigs must be getting hungry." Sometimes he was rather subtle, you see.

And when we went around the campus when we were first there, he didn't give orders to do this or that and so-and-so, but he tried to get you into the spirit of the thing. He'd say, "I want these buildings to look as if they grew here." Many times it would be suggestions rather than orders.

After I had come back from Principia, by the way, I worked one summer with him up at Twain Harte at his summer place--just Mr. and Mrs. Maybeck and myself--on the Ninth Church that I showed you the drawings of. I was making a drawing of a pediment, and after I had it drawn he would say, "If you were going to change it would you make that higher or would you make that lower?" I looked at it and said, "If anything, I'd make it a little bit lower."





Hussey: [He said,] "Just draw it again."

He didn't say, "Now take off twenty inches." He just said, "Draw it again." So, I'd draw it again, smaller.

He'd look at it and say, "If you were going to change it, what would you do?"

I would answer, "Make it a little higher," and he would say, "Draw it again." In other words, he was just like a teacher teaching you, rather than giving you orders. Anyway, that first time I went was the only time he was very brusque with me--"Can you take orders?"

The other thing he said was, "I'm not an architect; I'm just an artist who paints pictures in stone and concrete." And that was the way he worked. He always worked on a vertical board; he didn't work on a table very often. When I worked for him up at his house in Berkeley, I'd be working on a board with some drawings, and he'd have it on a wall. He worked with charcoal pencil, carbon pencil, chalk, and so on. He would have maybe two drawings on the wall--one on this wall and one on that wall. He'd work on this one, and then he'd look around at the one on the other wall, and maybe he'd go over and put a little lamp in this one or something. Anyway, that was the way he worked.

I was called to his office, then, and started working on October 8, 1930. I was there for only about a week (till October 16th) and then they decided that Miss Morgan would take over helping him. I was then moved over to Miss Morgan's office again, and I worked there for several months on drawings for section 6, Agnes Anderson dormitory for women.

Riess: Was there so much work that he needed Miss Morgan?

Hussey: Yes, he needed more help. There were the Dining Hall drawings by John White and the Chapel drawings that were actually done in his office by Charles Lundgren and the dormitories they did over in Miss Morgan's office. He'd make the preliminaries, like the drawings I showed you, and then we made the working drawings.

I worked there and so did a couple of other draftsmen. These [shows them] are actually photostats of drawings that I made while I was working in Julia Morgan's office for Mr. Maybeck's Principia job. This was on the largest dormitory, section 6. Another fellow was working on one of the others, and so on.

Riess: What was the original size of this?



Hussey: It was quarter-inch scale. I had to get a special T-square five feet long for this drawing, it was so big. I wore out a smock, I think, leaning over the table here to get to the top of it. The original drawing was about five feet long.

I worked there, then, for several months until it was completed, and then Mr. Maybeck called me to go back to Principia to work there during the construction.

To show the difference between how Mr. Maybeck and other people usually operate, here are two telegrams you might be interested in.

Riess: [Reading.] "Hussey. Honolulu. Come as soon as possible. Answer." Who is that from?

Hussey: That was from Miss Kaufman at the Tokyo YWCA. The next one is from Mr. Maybeck.

Riess: [Reading.]

"Please come now. Your best train San Francisco Limited leaving San Francisco six p.m. via Omaha. Stop. Get off with your baggage at Del Mar station where we will meet you; come prepared for cold, rain, wind, and extreme heat and dust. Stop. Please wire day and time your arrival."

Hussey: So, then I left May 26, 1931, for St. Louis and Elsie. That again was a very tough job because we had Mr. Maybeck here, of course, and we had Mr. [Henry] Dewell, who was the structural engineer, and we had Julia Morgan's office; we had three offices in San Francisco.

Then there was Principia to deal with, that is, the owners there. And then we had the Dickie Construction Company, who were doing the construction work. They were very conservative, mid-west contractors, and of course their ideas were very different from the California architects. And so on. So, we had our difficulties on that job.

Riess: How many buildings were you working on simultaneously?

Hussey: Oh, back there we had five dormitories, two temporary classroom buildings, the chapel, the science building, the dining hall and kitchen, a field house--I actually designed [it] while I was there, with some suggestions from Mr. Maybeck at this end; we actually made the drawings there, and I did the principal design work on it.

Riess: Which parts of Principia is Miss Morgan most identified with?



Hussey: The dormitories.

Riess: Yet they do really spring from his original drawings?

Hussey: Yes, that's right.

Riess: What was the overall spirit of the design for that place?

Hussey: The English cottage architecture, with the thatched roofs...

Riess: That's what the dormitories certainly show.

Hussey: The tile there was all made by the Heinz Roofing Tile Company in Denver, special for that job. The eaves were curved, and the hips and valleys; and the tile was all shaded from dark at the eaves to light at the top. In one case they had very dark green at the eaves--almost a black--and then graded to a light green at the top. In another case they went from a very dark, almost black, at the eaves through dark reds to almost pink at the top.

Riess: To give an illusion of age?

Hussey: Yes. And also, like when you are making an architectural drawing, a rendering, you don't just paint it one color; you shade it a little bit to give it character. And as I say, he wanted those buildings to look just like they grew there.

Later, one time Mr. and Mrs. Maybeck and I made a trip over to Portage des Sioux, a little town just across the river. The college there at Elsah is on top of a bluff, about 150 feet high, right along the Mississippi River. We looked at these buildings from across the river, about a mile away, and of course from there they looked like little toys. There was another house there, the dean's residence, that was designed by a St. Louis architect, and you could see the difference.

Mr. Maybeck's buildings--the dormitories--looked like they were molded out of clay, with everything soft and smooth and flowing into the landscape. We had stone there that was large at the bottom and lighter and smaller at the top--walls of concrete--and half timber work that was made of three-inch thick oak. Well, they looked like they were clay and blended into the landscape. The building that was designed by the St. Louis architect, from that distance and on the same scale, looked like it was stamped out of tin--sharp, hard lines on the eaves and everything else. You could see the contrast.



Riess: You say the construction firm was from St. Louis, and they didn't like what they were working with. How did that affect things?

Hussey: There'd be many points of contention. They were two Scotch contractors. Mr. Maybeck wanted everything strong and solid and heavy. The dormitories were actually designed with structural steel, and even those little dormers were structural steel. Of course, it was very expensive. "Very costly, very costly," the Scotch contractor would say.

Mr. Maybeck wanted everything to withstand an earthquake, and, of course, back there they'd say that they never have earthquakes. It so happens that about a century ago they did have a tremendous earthquake in Missouri in that area, and he thought there might be one some time again. Back there they are more concerned about lightning; we had to put lightning rods on. But they weren't so concerned about earthquakes. Inside they wanted to use hollow tile lining and Mr. Maybeck wanted to use gunnite. There were various things. They would try to cut down on the cost, and Mr. Maybeck would want to insist on other things. Here I was, sort of in the middle.

Riess: So you were back in the middle again, because you were the "on the job" man.

Hussey: That's right. The owners, too, were in kind of a difficult position because they had to raise the money. They liked Mr. Maybeck's work, and yet they had to figure sometimes that they had to cut down on costs, and that was it.

Riess: So you could authorize changes?

Hussey: There were certain things we did. We stuck to the engineering--all the structural work that Mr. Dewell had done--but sometimes there were minor points where we had to concede or do something. Like toilet partitions, for instance: I know Mr. Maybeck wanted to have toilet partitions that were up off the floor, so you could clean under them. They do that nowadays, but in those days the Dickies said they wanted to use Columbian marble; that was what had been used in St. Louis for years.

I even designed a toilet partition myself. We had the tile man make one; we made it out of tile. The tile came down and had a cove at the bottom that coved into the floor. The Columbia marble has a way of getting stained and dirty, but they finally won out. There were difficulties like that with these contractors.

Riess: After the initial inspiration of the drawings, did Mr. Maybeck lose interest in this end of it? I would expect that of somebody who was really an artist.





Hussey: No, he followed it quite closely and he came back to the job several times, as I mentioned. We stayed together; sometimes we lived together, just Mr. and Mrs. Maybeck and myself.

The job closed down for about a year because of labor difficulties and the financial difficulty in 1932. I left November 9, 1932. When it opened again I went back, arriving there October 28, 1933. When I came home in 1932, I had just been there a little over a year when they closed down. It was another case of labor trouble; the unions were very difficult in the St. Louis area.

Riess: I thought during the Depression anyone would be glad to get any kind of work.

Hussey: You would think so, but there were many instances of union conflicts. For instance, they sent pipe out to the job. It was six-inch pipe we had in the chapel that had been cut and threaded in St. Louis, where they had a machine they could thread it with. It was the natural thing to do. They sent it out to the job and the steamfitters wouldn't fit it in. No, you had to send out a raw piece and let [them] cut it and thread it.

Then on the chapel there were stoneriggers from St. Louis helping the stonemasons. One of the big troubles was between Alton and St. Louis. This job was in Illinois, about thirty-five miles from St. Louis and about ten miles from Alton, so there were two jurisdictions--Alton and St. Louis. Most of the contractors were from St. Louis and they sent their men out from St. Louis to do the job. On the chapel they had the stonemasons from St. Louis--I guess they didn't have any in Alton--and they were putting up the stone. They brought their own riggers--you know, the laborers that helped them, that knew how to handle the stone--then the Alton union came out and said, "You have to have Alton men do that." They asked what Alton men could do it, and the Alton union said just ordinary laborers.

Then over on the other job, number 6, there were steelworkers putting up the steel. The steelman said, "If you get those men from Alton, then we'll quit because those stoneriggers over on the chapel are affiliated with us. We'll quit if you have the Alton laborers come." So, they had to shut down the stone work until they got through with the steel work; then after the steel work was done they got the stonemasons to come back.

Riess: Who arbitrates all that business?

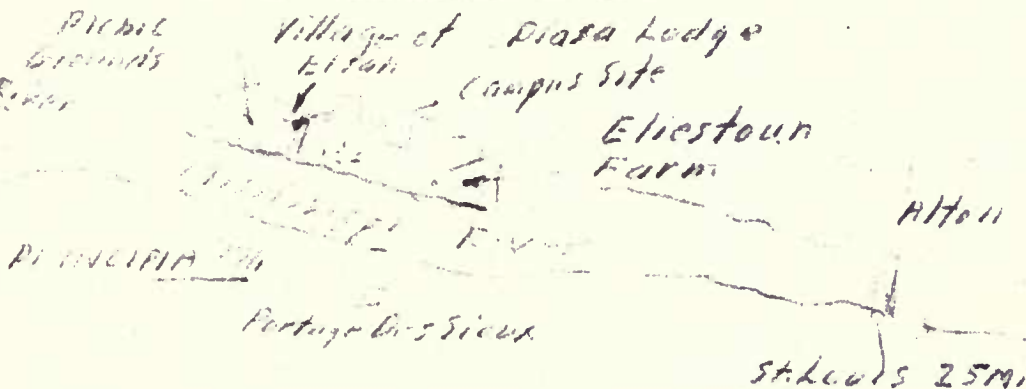
Hussey: That was the trouble; the owner was right inbetween. He couldn't do anything about it. The electricians said they should put in the telephone wires. Well, the telephone company never does that; the electricians put in the conduit in a building, and after it's all done



THE PRINCIPIA COLLEGE ELSAH ILL.  
Some Construction Dates from records of Ed.B.Hussey

1930

- Sep. 17 At request of Julia Morgan (J.M.) went to office of Bernard R. Maybeck in Russ Bldg. San Francisco and met him for first time. (In 1923 after completing Arch at U.C. went there seeking employment but was turned away by the door keeper.)
- Oct. 7 Started work at B.R.M. office on Section 6 later called Agnes Anderson dormitory for women. Met there for the first time Fredrick E. Morgan (F.E.M.) Director of Principia who acted as owner.
- 16 Moved to J.M. office in Merchants Exchange Bldg. as arrangements were made to have dormitory working drawings made in her office using three or four of her draftsmen. Charles Lundgren (C.G.L.) stayed in B.R.M. office working on Chapel John White was there making drawings for the Dining Hall. Mark White wrote specifications and handled office work. They were both brothers of B.R.M.'s wife Annie. Henry D. Dewell (H.D.D.) was doing the structural design and drawings in his office. The dormitories and Chapel had structural steel frames even to the dormer windows.
- Dec. 16 Word received from B.R.M. who was then in St. Louis that the St. Louis site had become unsuitable and a new one was purchased at Elsau Ill. 35 miles from ST.L. and 10 miles West of Alton. It covered some 2000 acres high on the bluff running 4 miles along the North side of the Mississippi River.



1931

- Jan. 2 B.R.M. and F.E.M. came to J.M. office with photos of new site. Working drawings underway had to be revised to fit new topography. Sec. 6 had a semicircular stone stair added to the North entrance. As B.R.M. used to say "If you meet an obstacle make a feature of it".
- May 22 Received telegram "E. Hussey, care Miss Julia Morgan Merchants Exchange Bldg. Please come now your best train San Francisco Limited leaving San Francisco six PM via Omaha Stop Get off with your baggage at Delmar Station where we will meet you Come prepared for cold rain wind and extreme heat and dust Stop Please wire day and time your arrival. B.R. Maybeck."
- 29 Arrived in St. Louis and driven to Elsau to stay at Eliestoun, a large old two story residence on the property about a mile from the campus site. MR. & MRS. T.E. Blackwell Principia Comptroller were residing there and the BRMs had been guest since early May.





1931

- Jun. 1-6 H.D.D. visited Elseh regarding structurat work.  
Chapel footings underway.
- 10 C.G.L. arrived in Elseh for "a short stay" which lasted over a year. B.R.M. working on "Mistake House" a small structure of two small rooms one over the other. This was to be a full size model of the various types of construction concrete, half timber, brick, etone, metal windows, fireplace and gunite roof.
- 12 Trip with B.R.M., F.E.M., C.G.L. and Arthur Dickie, Contractor,  
13 to Bedford Ind. to see method of making "shot sawn" limestone for Chapel.
- 15 Dormitories being staked out and excavation started using Missouri mules and Fresno ploughs.
- 17 B.R.M.s leave for San Francisco.
- Aug. 10 First steel arrive (for Chapel).
- Oct. 14-17 H.D.D. at Elseh.

1932

- Jan. 6-8 J.M. visiting Elseh. (Dinner at our home in Alton on 7th)
- March Work slowing down duxe to labor trouble and finances.
- May 2 Start Chapel stone work.
- Oct. 14 B.R.M.s arrive Elseh to stay at Piasa Lodge in village.  
16 C.G.L. left Elseh to return to California  
26 B.R.M.s left to return home.
- Nov. 9 E.B.H. left Elseh as work closed down with Chapel and dormitories partially completed. (my family had left Jul. 7)
- Nov. 11 In Chicago visited Degan Chimes and Portland Cement Asso.  
15 Visited American Seating Grand Rapids re: Chapel pews.  
16 Met F.E.M. in Michigan to visit Cranbrook School.
- Dec. 23 Arrived in Berkeley having driven by way of New York & South.  
30 Visited J.M. and B.R.M. offices.

1933 Jan. to Mar. occasional contact with J.M. and B.R.M. offices.

- Jun. 7 To Hearst job Wynton (on McCloud River) for J.M.
- Oct. 14 Telegram from B.R.M. and letter from J.M. "Return to Principia".  
28 Arrived Elseh to stay at Piasa Lodge with B.R.M.s who were already there. Work was resumed at a slower pace. Previously there had sometimes been half a dozen people in our Elseh office but now for much of the time it was just B.R.M. and E.B.H.
- Nov. 6 Staking out Dining Hall.  
11 Drove B.R.M.s to Alton and then Portage Des Sioux to see Principia from across the Mississippi River.

1934

- Feb. 2 B.R.M.s left for return to Calif. They had been in Elseh over the three months with B.R.M. working on the General Plan and on the "College Center" which did not get to working drawings. He was also interested in many details and visited factories and material suppliers in the area. At Piasa Lodge Mrs. M. did the cooking. She would not eat anything with butter, eggs or milk. She baked her own bread and carried some with her when she went out to eat. She used avacado for a spread.

During this period we had Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years together. In fast we spent half of New Years together working on details at the office.

We went occasionally to a movie. B.R.M. wanted to see "The three little pigs" "Little Women" and Grane Moore in "One night of love". He also liked playing ping pong with no rules. We also played anagrams and often Mrs. M. read aloud from the Sat. Eve. Post (Alexander Botts of the Earth Worm Tractor Co.) while we might be working on some sketches.



1934

May 22-23 Chapel organ being tuned.

Jun. 1 Put on Principia pay roll, had previously been paid thru J.M. or B.R.M. office.

8 First use of one of the Elsay buildings. The Senior Class Commencement was held in the Chapel, students and visitors coming out from St. Louis for the day.

Sep. 21 B.R.M.s arrive to stay at Eliestoun

Oct. 1 Drove B.R.M.s to Carbon Ind. to see hollow tile for Science Bldg. walls. They explained how the tile used to be handled manually and get distorted while now they very carefully put them on pallets. B.R.M. said "Why don't you you still move them by hand?"

2 Coming back I noticed a sign which read "Chicago 100 miles" so B.R.M. said "Let's go to Chicago" and we did staying at the home of a sister Mrs. Biels whom he had not seen for years. Visited the Chicago fair where B.R.M. was particularly interested in the foreign villages.

3 Visited the Chicago Art Museum.

4 Called at Firemarshal's Office in Springfield where all plans had to be approved. Then back to Elsay.

30 B.R.M.s left for New York.

Dec. 4-7 B.R.M.s stop over on way from N.Y. to S.F.

1935

Feb. 28 Men students by buss from St. Louis campus to occupy Dormitories Sec. 26 & 28

Mar. 1 Women students arrived to occupy Sec. 5 & 6

May 10 Staked out Miss Jenkins house, the first of three homes I designed for faculty.

Oct. 26 B.R.M.s at Elsay staying in apartment bldg. on Principia grounds (designed by N. Bailey St/L/ Architect). Working on General plan, Library (never done) and consulting on "Field House" (gym) for which we made drawings in Elsay.

Nov. 16 B.R.M.s left for Calif.

1936

May 15 Broke ground for Field House.

Nov. 24 E.B.H. last day at Elsay.

1937

During the year worked with B.R.M. at his home in Berkeley occasionally driving him to his office in the Russ Bldg. in S.F. Making studies for future Principia buildings which were never built. F.E.M. came for conferences in Jan.

May 15 Took B.R.M. to Tognelli sculptors studio in S.F. to see model he had made of "College Center".

26 Working on preliminaries for 9th Church Christ Scientists San Francisco (which did not get to working drawings).

Jun. 7 With B.R.M.s to their summer cottage in Twainharte where design work continued.

Sep. 18 Returned with B.R.M.s to Berkeley.

1938

March B.R.M. no longer had work.

Apr. 4 E.B.H. started work in Sate office Sacramento.





Hussey: the telephone people come along and put in their telephones and put in their own telephone wires. The electrician says, "Oh, no, we won't let you do that. We're going to have to put in the telephone wires." You know what happened? We couldn't put in telephones until the electricians were through on the job. Then the telephone company started putting in the telephones. Something went wrong with the electric system. We had to have the electricians come back. The telephone men had to go sit outside the grounds until the electricians came in and did their work and went away. Then the telephone men could come back in and do their work. They wouldn't be there at the same time.

Riess: Where is the architect in something like this?

Hussey: Caught in the middle. He can't do a thing.

Because of all that difficulty and also the difficulty with the financial situation, they simply closed down the job. Then everybody was out of work.

So, I left just after election day in 1932 and came back to California. Then I was here studying for the architectural examination.

Riess: Were you studying off and on throughout this period?

Hussey: To get an architectural license you have to take a four-day examination. It just so happened that I was going to take it in 1926, just before I went to Honolulu. Mr. Evers, one of the men I was working for at Ashley and Evers, was on the architectural board, and he had advised me to come up for it. In those days it was only an oral examination; you had to go up and they talked to you.

Unfortunately, I left for Honolulu just before the examination, so I never did get it then. After I came back in the '30's, you had to have a written examination. So, I had to study up for that. I wouldn't even be able to pass it today. I'd have to go back and study all over again to know the answers to all these questions and whatnot.

So, anyway, I was studying some for that, and then I got the call from Miss Morgan's office that there was this chance to go up to Wyntoon. On June 16, 1933, I went up to Wyntoon, the Hearst place on the McCloud River. In October, I got a call to go back to Principia. Miss Morgan wrote a nice letter and said I wouldn't want to miss this opportunity to go there, and this job at Wyntoon wasn't going to last too long anyway. I guess they closed down in the winter. So, she said it was okay to leave, and I went back to Principia again.



Hussey: They started gradually then to get back into the work. At that time, when I arrived on October 28, 1933, Mr. and Mrs. Maybeck were there. When I was originally there we had at one time seven people in our office in Elsayh--draftsmen and secretary and so on.

Riess: What do you mean by "our office?"

Hussey: The architect's office that I was in charge of, which was separate from the contractor's office.

Riess: In the building that was there?

Hussey: For the construction, yes, because we were doing quite a little drawing there--detailing and so on. When we opened up again we didn't have nearly as large an office. I was there most of the time, and sometimes I had one or two helpers and a secretary, and that was about it--sometimes just BRM [Mr. Maybeck] and myself. So, they opened up sort of gradually. Anyway, just Mr. and Mrs. Maybeck and myself were there for a while, living at Piasa Lodge, a stone house in the village of Elsayh, and we worked together. He was there until February 2, 1934 and then came back here to Berkeley. I left on November 24, 1936; that was the end of my time at Principia.

Riess: Then what was the fate of Principia?

Hussey: They had moved in and they were occupied. The first students arrived on February 28, 1935.

Riess: How much of the original plan...?

Hussey: They've done just the dormitories and the dining hall, science building, field house--in fact, the field house wasn't quite finished when I left--and the chapel, which was the first building finished. They had two temporary classroom buildings.

Riess: Then another architect took over?

Hussey: Yes. That was all they had for some time; then Henry Gutterson did another dormitory there. Several years later they had other buildings built. They had a St. Louis architect, and it was in an entirely different character. I have pictures of it, if you're interested. [The structures] are square, boxy--just conventional-type buildings. Unfortunately, they are the first things you see as you come into the campus. Mr. Maybeck's things are all hidden in the background.

It's too bad they couldn't have carried on, but, of course, the thing is that Mr. Maybeck's work was expensive--there's no doubt about that. One of the first things Mr. Maybeck asked me when I was



Hussey: in his office was how much I thought these buildings would cost. In those days they used to figure in cubic feet; now they go by square footage. I said, "Oh, about seventy-five cents a cubic foot." Mr. Maybeck said, "No, they build school buildings now for forty cents a cubic foot." But these buildings were rather different and complicated and expensive in their style, and I thought it would be more than that. I think actually it landed out at about eighty cents a cubic foot later, so it was much higher than he had expected.

Riess: Was it a problem with him, not being really practically oriented enough?

Hussey: I think he was, of course, concerned with the appearance of things. For instance, take the Christian Science Church here: that would cost much more than a conventional type of building would, and nobody would build a building like that nowadays. They would just say, "No, we can't afford it." It is too bad that that is the case. Like these Principia buildings--they'd never rebuild like he built those dormitories. For instance, that oak half-timber work was three inches thick. Nowadays they would just put in a little inch-thick pine, or something or other. That oak nowadays would cost thousands and thousands of dollars. So, it was expensive construction, but it was very fine and beautiful work.

Riess: How about Miss Morgan on that same issue: did she have a closer sense of the practical?

Hussey: I believe so, because so many of the things that she did were for the YWCA or for churches.

She did a number of churches--our church for instance--and that was building that had to be done very inexpensively. [Shows picture.] This is the part that she did. Here it shows as stucco, but it was actually a shingle building when it was built, and this [gestures] wasn't on there; this was an addition to it. The idea was, when she build it, that this was going to be space here for another chapel balancing this. (This is a brochure for when they put on the addition.)

In that, for instance, she had to do everything as inexpensively as possible; it has a frame construction. I remember, for instance, that first summer when I was working on some of the drawings, instead of making a ten-foot bay, she made them nine feet eight inches. The reason for the nine feet eight inches was that she could take ten-foot joists and let them overlap four inches. Little things like that show that she was concerned about the cost on the thing. On so many of the jobs she had they were concerned with the cost.



Hussey: On the other hand, Mr. Maybeck didn't say, "A four-by-four timber will be big enough to hold up that roof." He'd make a drawing and work over and over it and decide what looks right. It might end up an eight-by-eight to do the same job, which is more expensive, and yet it would have a finer character to it. A lot of times he did that.

I think you might have known that he went to the Beaux Arts and had a patron there. He was doing a certain drawing, and when he finished it he thought it was a fine drawing. The patron came around, looked at it, and said, "That's fine. Now study it." Mr. Maybeck wondered what he meant by "study it." So, the patron took it and just scratched over and over it. He finally found out [what the patron meant], and that's the way Mr. Maybeck will work himself. He'll make a drawing, and then he'll make lines and lines, and finally he'll decide which is the nicest line.

So many architects might say, "Six-by-six will do here," and they'll draw a six-by-six. Mr. Maybeck works from an artistic point of view. He'll keep drawing and drawing and changing, until he gets the feel that that's right, like I mentioned about this pediment: "Draw it over again until you get the feel of the thing as being just the right line." In some of these drawings you'll see he'll start out with a charcoal sketch, with a very rough, crude drawing, and get a general feeling of the thing. Gradually he refines it down and down until he gets just exactly the right line he wants.

Riess: Walter Steilberg says that Julia Morgan believed that architecture was an anonymous art, that names shouldn't be connected with buildings. I'd like to know more about that--how one can be so self-effacing or modest. Do you think Maybeck felt that way too?

Hussey: Not particularly. I've often wondered about that. You take a painting, for instance, and the artist always puts his name down in the corner. Yet you build a two million dollar building and you don't see the designer or architect anyplace on it. Sometimes you do--there are occasions--but generally speaking you don't know who they are.

Riess: She believed, I guess, not only that the building should be anonymous, but that she should be unknown even as a person.

Hussey: I don't know why it should be, but she was self-effacing in a way; she never made any pretense at all. By the way, Mr. Maybeck was interesting in that way: he didn't believe in kowtowing to anyone, and he didn't think anyone should kowtow to him either. He was very down to earth in that way.





Riess: Democratic.

Hussey: Yes, democratic I guess would be the word. I remember him referring to a draftsman one day as having a "hangdog" look.

Back there we had a landscape architect, Butler Sturtevant, that he and Mrs. Maybeck didn't have much use for because he was a very egotistical and stuffed-shirt sort of fellow. They had no use for him at all. He used to talk about "my roads; my trees; I'll put my path here; I'll put my plants here," and so on--always "my, my, my." He acted like a big shot. He was a young fellow too, compared to Mr. Maybeck.

On the other hand, they were very democratic with a workman--a bricklayer or anybody else. They'd talk to him and get his ideas: How do you lay the brick? Is it good to do this or to do that? He was willing to listen to anybody who had a worthwhile idea.

Riess: That's the old idea of being identified with the craftsman, isn't it? Do you think he identified more with the craftsman than even the client?

Hussey: I suppose, in some ways. He usually likes to understand the client. I don't know if you ever read that little item about the Joralemons, who built a house out here in North Berkeley. She wrote about meeting him the first time. She and her husband went out to see Mr. Maybeck, and the first thing he asked her was whether she was tidy or whether she was not tidy. It seems Mrs. Maybeck isn't, so he'd design a house that was entirely different for someone who was very tidy.

Then he wanted to know what kind of gowns she wore; and by golly, he insisted on going over to her house and seeing the gowns that she particularly liked. I think she was an artist, and he felt the studio should be designed with a certain aspect.

It seems her husband was getting more worried all the time; he thought an hour would be long enough to tell an architect how much money he had and how many rooms they wanted, and that would be it. But here Mr. Maybeck went into all these details of the character and trying to get the feel of what the person was like, what they wanted, what kind of house they would fit into, and so forth. So, he would design it entirely differently for one person than for another.

Riess: Can you think of any similar things with Julia Morgan?

Hussey: No, I don't know of anything like that. I suppose she did try to get the feeling of what the people wanted or were like. I know that was



Hussey: the case with Mr. Maybeck. They were both very fine people to work for--very interesting, and quite different in a way. I remember when Julia Morgan and Mr. Maybeck collaborated on the Hearst Gymnasium. Walter Steilberg told me that they probably couldn't get Mr. Maybeck to be concerned with such mundane things as shower baths, so they called Julia Morgan in. On the other hand, Mr. Maybeck was quite concerned about toilet partitions back at Principia, from a structural point of view.

There is an interesting story about Mr. Maybeck. When they had the grand opening of the Hearst Gymnasium, Mr. Hearst was there and he wanted to know where the men's room was. Mr. Maybeck, the architect, couldn't tell him; he had to get somebody else to find out where it was. [Laughter.] There are lots of stories you could tell about Mr. and Mrs. Maybeck; they're quite some characters.

#### Mr. Hearst, and Wyntoon

Hussey: Mr. Hearst, of course, was a character too. He had a high falsetto voice [in falsetto] way up here; he talked very high up. There were a lot of things about Mr. Hearst that I couldn't understand. For instance, up at Wyntoon we had a little shack that we were using for an office and they were building one nextdoor for the contractor. They had the shack up, and just the roof to finish. It was just a little thing, about ten feet by twelve feet. Hearst came in one day and said, "What's that for? What's that building?" I said that was for the contractor's office. He said, "Oh, maybe we aren't going to have a contractor. Maybe we aren't going to build a castle. Take the carpenters off; put them on something else."

He was mad as a hornet because they were building this little shack. So, we had to take them off and find something else for the carpenters to do. Later on they finished up that same little shack and moved it alongside another building that was there, and used it for liquor storage, so that was all right.

They had a table there that would seat about twenty people, and he was going to have twenty-two, counting the guests or something. So, he sent all the way down to San Francisco and spent \$700 for a new table. They had fine dishes there, but they packed them all up and sent up all new dishes from San Francisco for these guests. Things like that they would just spend hundreds and thousands of dollars right and left for his guests.



Riess: You're saying he'd be very cheap about some things?

Hussey: Yes. The caretaker, who lived over across the river there, put a little addition on his house, and we had to scrounge around for secondhand windows to put in his place.

Riess: Why didn't Hearst ask Maybeck to work again on Wynton?

Hussey: I don't know. I suppose he had been working so long with Julia Morgan that it was just natural to call her in.

Riess: Do you think he and Maybeck could ever have worked anything out together?

Hussey: I don't know. It would have been more difficult, I suppose, because they were two strong-minded people. I guess Miss Morgan was probably easier to work with in that way because Mr. Maybeck might have had more fixed ideas. He had very grand dreams. Perhaps Miss Morgan was a little more down to earth, you might say, about what was possible and what could be done.

Then they decided not to build the castle and they built the Bavarian village. Perhaps you've seen pictures of it. They built one that was right along beside the stream, and another--the brown bear and the Cinderella house--had murals on the outside and half-timber, sort of a picture book type of thing.

Across the stream from the little brown bear was a rather barren hillside, and he wanted some trees there. So, he told the man who was doing the landscape work that he wanted trees over there, and he wanted big trees. He said he didn't have time for them to grow; he said, "I'm not going to be here forever." So, he wanted big trees put in. Yet, on the other hand, he couldn't stand putting a roof on the place for the contractor to have an office.

Riess: He must have had to tone himself down, even when he was dealing with Julia Morgan; he couldn't have been so rude and awful. Do you think she would have put up with it?

Hussey: I don't know how they actually got along together. I was in the same office one time when we had the drawings out on the table there, and he came in with Marion Davies. She sat down on a chair over here, and he went to look at the drawings--he was quite interested in drawings and things like that--and he asked Marion if she wanted to come over and look at it. She said, "I'm tired." She could care less, you know, about seeing the drawings.



Hussey: She was one of the guests that came up there that summer in 1933. There was one house there where they had accomodations, and there was another little place we used for an office sometimes, but we had to give that up because they used that for breakfasts. I think they had two or three breakfasts there--a whole little room, all fixed up nicely, just for a couple of breakfasts. But it was hard to get a place for the contractor to do his work.

Riess: Mr. Hussey, after Principia did you have any other contacts or do any work for Julia Morgan?

Hussey: No.

Interview 2, January 23, 1975

Walter Steilberg

[After Walter Steilberg's death, Mr. Hussey was interviewed again and asked to consider more of the work of Mr. Steilberg, whose papers Mr. Hussey was organizing.]

Hussey: At the time of the Berkeley fire in 1923, Walter Steilberg had looked at many of the ruins that were standing around North Berkeley and he noticed that in many cases it was stucco that was standing up; whereas the whole wood framework of the house had burned down, the stucco which had been on the outside was actually standing up, by itself.

His idea was to more or less build a house out of stucco only. His general scheme was to have one row of wire mesh set up and a form placed on the outside; then he would put stucco on that, pushing it through the mesh from inside; then, about every sixteen inches, the same as studs, he would have two reinforcing rods that would go vertically, with a wire lattice between; the inside reinforcing would be about four or five inches from the outside reinforcing. Then he would put another row of lath on the inside, fastening it to that standing reinforcing, then plaster on the inside.

What he would get would be two walls, one of stucco on the outside, another of plaster on the inside, reinforced every sixteen inches with what was essentially a concrete stud. Between studs it would be hollow. In other words, it would be a good deal like wood structure, with the studs replaced by concrete, and the exterior wood and the interior finish being of cement or plaster--the thought





Hussey: being then that they would be fireproof. And they would have concrete floors.

He built some houses himself for his own use or for rental up on Panoramic Way. But I remember him saying one time that they didn't pay financially due to the fact that the tax assessor would keep up the value on those, charge a higher tax on those than he did on a wood frame structure. The wood frame structure deteriorated; the concrete one hadn't. Therefore he kept up the assessment and the taxes were higher, but the people who were renting didn't want to pay the higher taxes just because it was a fireproof building. In other words, the government authorities are keeping you from building a better building. In many respects that's true, that it's not financially feasible to improve a building.

Riess: Did this building system have a name?

Hussey: Fabricrete, I think, is what he called it.

Riess: Did he have to use a special formulation of stucco?

Hussey: I think it was the typical stucco, but I think he was careful in the design of it so as to get the maximum strength, and that of course would be done by mixing small proportions of sand, or small gravel, in the cement, and then testing them to get the proper proportion.

Riess: Prior to this, what sort of houses, or materials, had he used in building?

Hussey: I think in most cases they were typical frame constructions.

Riess: Are you finding many early plans among Mr. Steilberg's papers?

Hussey: They go back to about the late 1920's. He was in Julia Morgan's office when I was there, about 1920 to 1923, and then he opened his own office, and for a short time, at the end of 1923, I worked for him up at his house, at 1 Orchard Lane. He was working on his own, but actually the drawing he was doing there was for Julia Morgan, the structural work for one of her buildings.

Riess: Did he have other offices?

Hussey: Originally he had an office in San Francisco, once on Montgomery, and I think once on Second Street. Then it was later that he just worked from his home, because I remember him telling me that it was just ruinously expensive to have an office in San Francisco.



The Underdown System



Fabricrete





Riess: How successful was the Fabricrete system? Was it bought by any company?

Hussey: Not that I know of. I think that he applied for a patent on it, but I don't know that he ever received one, and I don't know of any houses that were built with it, other than those that he did on Panoramic Way in Berkeley and in Los Gatos, but there certainly was a lot of correspondence with Basalite and the Pacific Coast Aggregate Company.

Then there was the Underdown System, about which there is also correspondence. It's a little different: it's a concrete block that had a method of tying it together, an area where it could key in. The blocks came together in such a way [demonstrates], and then they would pour concrete in here and it would tie the two blocks together, so it made a key in here. The blocks were cast with the tongue in them to get a better reinforcement between the two.

Riess: Did he sell that?

Hussey: The Underdown System, I think, came from England, and he had correspondence with Pacific Coast Aggregate on that. I think Walter helped them with making tests on that. That was not his invention. The Fabricrete was, and that was around the late '20's.

Riess: Do you think he was disappointed it didn't go farther?

Hussey: Well, I suppose, although I didn't hear him mention it, other than this fact that the tax collector had dashed cold water on it in an unfortunate way.

Though, you know, I think he did a building down in Los Gatos with that system ["The Cats," for Sara Bard Field and C.E.S. Wood]. It seems to me there are some photographs of that here, and correspondence. This letter has something to do with that, because Colonel Wood's name is mentioned, and the difficulties that he refers to in this letter may have been on account of this Fabricrete and the costs running high.

Riess: [Reading.] "Cellular concrete construction."

Hussey: Maybe he just didn't use the name Fabricrete there, thought the other would be more understandable, to say that it was "cellular concrete construction."

Riess: When was he involved with the Underdown System? [Looking at pictures.] Oh, here are tests done in 1935.



Hussey: [Going through papers.] Here's the ceramic tile investigation in 1934. Here's the special warehouse construction that he did for PCA. (Insulation studies. Coefficient of thermal transmission.)

Riess: Was he a loner in all of this?

Hussey: He was pretty much alone on that, although he worked with the concrete companies.

[Going through papers.] ...Falling fragment hazards, earthquakes, architecture statutes, public works department, board of education, construction joint efficiency, tests on concrete, Basalt Rock Company, computations, basalt shingle tests...

Riess: The shingle tests...this was in 1938. Here in his letter to the Basalt Rock Company in Napa he says:

"I have endeavored to organize this material in a quite impersonal way and to forget for a moment my enthusiastic interest in it and in your effort to advance the cause of good building construction..."

Were many of his ideas adopted, or not?

Hussey: Well, in this case evidently they didn't do a great deal with it, though I don't know why they shouldn't.

Here's a scheme for putting up concrete walls and then putting up stucco on the outside with reinforcing in it...concrete blocks, and then reinforcing in the stucco to reinforce it.

Riess: To go on with that letter, he says:

"It seems to me that if this material were brought to me as an architect--and I were entirely ignorant of the European method of laying tile as would be the case in 95% of the men of the profession in this locality--one of my first doubts would be as to the manner of fastening with respect to the resistance to lateral forces. Having seen such a roof survive a very severe windstorm at Lausanne, Switzerland, I myself have a good deal of faith in it, but I don't think that this would be the general opinion."

I guess he was used to having difficulty getting his ideas across. Was he asked by his clients to develop these systems?





- Hussey: No, I don't think so. I think he just felt there should be some better methods of construction than there were. [Going through papers.] ... Tests of wall panels built by the Underdown System, photos of earthquake damage, specifications from the Honolulu YWCA, drawings of the monastery, photographs taken in Spain of dismantling the monastery, photographs of the stones at the De Young...
- Riess: Could we go briefly to your experience in the architecture department?
- Hussey: Yes. We had Warren Perry for the juniors, William Hays for the senior year, and then Mr. Howard was for the postgraduate work. We also had Mr. Raymond Jeans, who taught pen and ink and also watercolor, and then Stafford Jory sometimes.
- Riess: Were there differences in the teaching of the three major professors?
- Hussey: Not really. They were all of the classical school, and every project we turned in had classical columns on it. That's what we always did. In fact, in the sophomore year we had one whole semester of doing the orders, the Tuscan, Ionic, Corinthian, in India ink wash. I remember spending sixty hours on one plate.
- Riess: So much of what you are showing me reflects the details of engineering. I wonder how Walter Steilberg felt about whether he was an architect or an engineer.
- Hussey: Well, he was both, and in a way it was very good. I remember reading somewhere in a letter about the Honolulu YWCA building that because Walter was both an architect and an engineer, the beams over the Honolulu YWCA gymnasium were designed so that they looked well exposed. They were designed well structurally as well as architecturally, whereas an engineer would think only of the structure and whether it would stand up and he wouldn't care how it would look. The architect might care how it would look, but not about whether it stood up or not. But Walter would do both.
- Riess: What was the engineering training for an architect?
- Hussey: We took stereotomy [stone work]. And in one course we designed a reinforced concrete structure, and also a steel frame for a building. We had to do all the calculations for that and show all the rivets and connections.
- Riess: But engineering and architecture were always separate.
- Hussey: In a way. They were in separate buildings. And there wasn't a great deal of connection because the particular projects that we did in



Hussey: engineering had no relation to architectural design in a way. The steel frameworks we designed were not to frame any of the buildings that we designed architecturally.

Riess: This didn't occur to anyone as a failing?

Hussey: You'd think it would be very well to carry it through, to design a building and then work out the structural framework for it. You might find you would change your architecture to do that. For instance, just today I was going by a building down on Grove Street, a mortuary, and I thought how strange it was--they have brick columns there that are twenty or twenty-five feet high and only thirteen inches square. You know that structurally they must have a steel post in there. Well, if they are going to have a steel post, why not make it a steel post instead of trying to make it look like brick? Being brick, it looks like you could go over there and push it over.

Riess: Where do you learn to express the materials in the design?

Hussey: Well, you go to the University for five years to learn to be an architect, and then after you get out you go to an architect's office and start all over again to learn how to be an architect. Because, at least when I was there, we didn't make any working drawings when we were in the University, and when you're in an architect's office of course you have to make things that they are going to build, not just pictures. In the architecture department they had the feeling that what you must learn first is design, how to make the thing attractive architecturally; they figure you're going to get all this other later in an architect's office, all the nuts and bolts, so to speak.

Riess: Seems like Walter Steilberg would have been a good addition to the faculty.

Hussey: Yes, probably Walter Steilberg and Mr. Maybeck could have had a very good school of architecture, the two of them together, Mr. Maybeck for the design, and Walter for tying in the structure and the actual working out of details. They would have made a good combination.

Mr. Maybeck was interested in structure too, though. Did I tell you about the little "Mistake House" they built at Principia? They had it up by the time I went back there. It was only one room and a little second floor with a roof on it, but in it they tried everything out that they were going to use in the building: they had one piece of concrete wall, another piece of brick, another of half-timber, and they put in a fireplace and chimney. They figured out how the radiator would fit in with the windows. Samples of things.



Hussey: It was on that building when they were putting gunnite on the roof that I understand one of the men wanted to know from Mr. Maybeck whether it should be screeded or not, and for some reason or other Mr. Maybeck didn't seem to know what he meant by screeding. So, when he explained that meant taking a board and making it very smooth on top, Mr. Maybeck said, "Oh, no, I'll shoot you if you do." He wanted it to look rough and rugged.

So, that was the "Mistake House." And that little building is still there.

Riess: You and Walter Steilberg both worked for ARAMCO [Arabian-American Oil Company] at one time.

Hussey: Yes. In 1951, about Thanksgiving time, Walter called me up one night and he said, "Well, Ed, I know you're not a house cat. Would you be interested in going to Arabia?" And this was the first time I had heard of Arabia, except about finding oil over there, and I supposed by this time any construction that was going to be done was all finished. But it seems not. They were doing quite a bit of expansion.

Walter sent me a copy of a letter he had from Mr. Stirton, which I received on December 7, 1951, saying that they were looking for several young men who had had three or four years' experience who would be interested in going to Arabia, looking forward to a career with ARAMCO. Of course, I thought that let me out: I had had a good deal more than three or four years' experience and I was already fifty-four years old. However, I filled out the application and had an appointment in San Francisco with Mr. J.C. Stirton, the chief engineer for ARAMCO, on December 24, 1951, and lo and behold they wanted me to go. (I was superintendent on construction of a hospital building in Modesto at the time for Matthew A. Little, Contractor, and I sort of hated to leave that, but it was just about completed when I had my last day there on April 14, 1952.)

For two days I was packing and sorting Principia drawings in Berkeley. On April 17, 1952, I left for New York and Rome. At that time Walter Steilberg and Mr. Lefeaver were in Rome; they had gone over in the beginning of 1952 to work for ARAMCO. Walter was only there for a couple of years.

I stopped for a few days in New York and Rome and then went directly on to Arabia, where I arrived on April 26, to supervise the work on the new hospital they were building. Previously they had had a very small hospital, the Arabs in one place and the Americans in another. This new place had two large wings.



Hussey: And then, on November 11, 1954, I was transferred to the Hague to work on drawings for the additions that were going to be built on the same hospital. I arrived there on November 15, having stopped in Beirut, Jerusalem, and Rome on the way. By that time Walter had left ARAMCO. He didn't go to the Hague. Originally ARAMCO had had its engineering offices in Rome; by 1954 they had moved to the Hague. I worked there for two years, and then I was pensioned off by ARAMCO and asked to return to Arabia to build a hospital for Mohammed Dossary. We had made the drawings for him in the Hague office. I was there then in Arabia a solid two and a half years until June 14, 1959.

Hans Schickele was another young man Walter got to go to Rome. He could tell you more about what Walter was doing there.

Riess: Was Mr. Lefeaver in Julia Morgan's office up to the end?

Hussey: It might be. He was there for quite a long time. He came to the office maybe as early as 1920. I know I was already in the office when Mr. Lefeaver came to work there. He took over some of the business end, specifications and things of that kind.

Riess: Who else was in Julia Morgan's office in the years that you recall?

Hussey: Bjarne Dahl. He stayed on in Honolulu and now lives in Los Altos. There was Dick Nussbaum, a short fellow, hunchback, quite a good draftsman. There was Walter Clifford. Jack Wagenet--he lives over in Montclair. Louis Schalk. Francis Lloyd. Dorothy Wormser. I can't think whether Betty Boyter was there at some time, and maybe Charlotte Knapp. Evelyn Barber worked there one summer (1920) for a couple of months. Mrs. Forney was the secretary. And of course there was Thaddeus Joy, who made beautiful full-size details of column caps and ornamentation. And Camille Solon, who used to design a lot of tile work.

Riess: Did Walter Steilberg have people in his office?

Hussey: No, he didn't have a large office. I think he had students come in and help him from time to time. He helped students a great deal and he probably had them working on things for him.

Transcriber: Judy Johnson  
Final Typist: Marilyn White





## **E.B. Hussey memorial service set**

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, May 15, for Edward Bright Hussey, Berkeley architect, who died in Alta Bates Hospital on May 2, after a brief illness.

Mr. Hussey was born in Vallejo in 1897 and moved with his family to Berkeley at an early age. After service in the army in 1917-19, he earned a B.A. and an M.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, and worked for Ashley-Evers Architects in San Francisco for a time.

In 1926-27, Mr. Hussey supervised construction of the Honolulu YWCA, designed by Julia Morgan, with whom he had worked during his student days on the legendary San Simeon.

Mr. Hussey then traveled to Tokyo, where he was supervising architect for the Tokyo YWCA and various mission buildings and designed the Chinzei Gakuin School. There, too, he met Norah Bennett from New Zealand, whom he married in 1928.

He returned to this country to supervise construction of Principia College in Elmhurst, Ill., with the designer of the College, Bernard R. Maybeck.

During the war years 1940-44, Mr. Hussey was a field office manager in Hawaii for Robert E. McKee, general contractor. He returned to California after the war to resume work as supervising architect on the Berkeley High School Community Theater and to work on the rebuilding of several Berkeley public schools. Upon completion of the Theater, he was a designer in Holland and constructor in Saudi Arabia

of hospitals for the Arabian American Oil Co.

Since 1960, Mr. Hussey had been in private practice in Berkeley. In recent years he had been a valuable resource for researchers and authors interested in the works of Julia Morgan and Mr. Maybeck.

Mr. Hussey was one of the last surviving charter members of Calvary Presbyterian Church in Berkeley, of which he was a member for over 60 years. He was very well-known among Bay Area folk dance groups and had served as President of the Berkeley Folk Dancers. He was a member also of the U. S. Power Squads and the Berkeley Lawn Bowling Club, whose clubhouse he proudly designed.

Mr. Hussey is survived by his widow, Norah, of the family home in Berkeley; two sons, Roderick of Berkeley, and Ian of Oakland; two daughters, Mrs. Frederick (Rana) Schadrack of New York, and Mrs. Robert (Anne) Luse of Ibadan, Nigeria; and ten grandchildren.

Some of his papers on architecture will go to UC Department of Architecture and papers on Maybeck and Morgan will go to Bancroft Library.

# Obituary Notices



The Julia Morgan Architectural History Project

Dorothy Wormser Coblentz

JULIA MORGAN'S OFFICE

Interview conducted by

Suzanne B. Riess

With excerpts from an interview conducted by

Leslie Mandelson Freudenheim and Elizabeth Sacks Sussman



## JULIA MORGAN'S OFFICE

Two interviews with Dorothy Wormser Coblentz, architect.

Interview 1, Excerpts from an Interview Conducted by Freudenheim and Sussman, September 20, 1968\*

Coblentz: I went to her [Julia Morgan's] office early in 1919. It was after the war and building was just starting up again and Mr. Hearst was just getting going on San Simeon, and from then on the office was always working on San Simeon. There were always people in the office working on it and it went on for years and years and years, during which time every weekend she would go down by train to San Luis Obispo. I don't know where it was he would send a plane to meet her and fly her into San Simeon. At the time I went one took the stage up the coast from San Luis, and when I went there I stayed at the ranch house at the foot of the hill, where the children, the twins and William Jr., and their nursemaid lived.

F & S: What was your role at San Simeon?

Coblentz: I was working on the cataloguing of the stuff that was unpacked.

F & S: How did Mr. Hearst first come to Julia Morgan?

Coblentz: She had worked for his mother, for Phoebe Apperson Hearst. She was in John Galen Howard's office, after being with Maybeck. John Galen Howard had come from the East to supervise and implement the University Plan, which Benard had won (but he, of course, had no intention of doing anything about it). So, John Galen Howard came to continue the plan. She was in his office and I believe that in his office she was probably responsible for the Mining Building and the Greek Theater. There is also a story, possibly apocryphal, which says that he told somebody, "I have a wonderful designer and I don't have to pay her anything because she's a woman." [Laughter.] I don't know if that story is true, but it's a good story anyway.

Shortly thereafter I think she set up in business for herself with a partner, Ira Hoover. I don't know how long that lasted and I can't imagine it ever lasting because she certainly was not going to--I mean, wherever she was she was boss.

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\*Interviews conducted as research for Building with Nature: Roots of the San Francisco Bay Region Tradition, by Leslie Mandelson Freudenheim and Elizabeth Sacks Sussman, Peregrine Smith Inc., 1974.



Coblentz: About cataloguing the antiques, which was my part of it--they would be unpacked and we would set them up and then I would stand with a yardstick alongside to give it scale and Sam Crow would take a picture. Then we would give it a number and I would write a brief description of it. These were eventually all enlarged and made into albums, and there were shelves of these photographs. When Mr. Hearst would write and say, "I want a Florentine mantel in Cottage C in Room B and four yards of tiles," then we would look it up in the books and find something that would fit.

I think I was there (on that job) because Julia Morgan knew I was bored stiff with whatever she was making me do in the office and she was very kindly giving me a little vacation.

F & S: Were you an architect?

Coblentz: I majored in architecture at the University, without doing the engineering, because I didn't know what I would do with it. And the first job I got was with Henry Gutterson.

I don't know whether you know the workings of the department of architecture, of how the problems were assigned. Well, at the beginning of the term you come in the morning and you are given a typewritten sheet which tells you what the problem is, the date, the drawings that are going to be required, and when it is due. I don't know how it is now, because I graduated in 1916 and everything was in terms of the Beaux Arts then; I mean, the terminology was French, the project was a projet. The last minute rush was a charrette; the origin of that, they said at the Beaux Arts, was that when the problem was due the students put them on little wheeled carts and wheeled them to the school. Well, at the end of the six weeks or so when the problem was due to be judged, it was mounted on a big board with your esquisse esquisse pasted in the corner. And when the judges came they judged not only the excellence of the solution, but its fidelity to the original intention.

[As a result of this Beaux Arts influence] we had [here at Berkeley] the craziest problems that had nothing to do with real life. We did war memorials and--oh, lordy!--I only remember one house that was ever done. What we did were spectacular things in the Beaux Arts manner. So, when after college you came to get yourself a job, you sure were not fitted for real life.

F & S: Considering this Beaux Arts influence, where do you think Julia Morgan got the idea for her houses being so shingled and warm?





Coblentz: Well, she had an awful lot of common sense.

F & S: You don't think it was from Maybeck?

Coblentz: Well, to a certain extent, but you realize that when you're building houses there is no place in it for that particular thing [the Beaux Arts thing].

Her office was a real apprenticeship. To work with her was to learn it from the ground up, and it had certain drawbacks because you learned to be so thorough that you couldn't put your pencil down unless it meant something. So, I think anybody that had been trained at Julia Morgan's office was welcome at any other office because probably nobody else would have taken the time or trouble to give such a thorough training.

She always would say, "Well, what are you going to do there?" I would say, "Oh, I don't know yet."

[Then she would say,] "Well, think it out at the start, and finish everything as you go along." You couldn't put any line down which didn't represent an actual possibility. You couldn't just think, "Well, when the time comes I'll solve this." You solved it there and then. And if you haven't had that kind of training you can't imagine what it means. Everything is very different now; where a modern house may have a sheet of plywood, we would be designing a wall which would be molded and carved--things that you couldn't afford to do now, and which people wouldn't want now because there is nobody to dust them.

Well, Gutterson came over to judge a problem one night--

F & S: Was he on the faculty?

Coblentz: No. He was a graduate and a prominent alumnus and, of course, a friend of all the faculty. After the judgment he had said to me, "If you ever want a job, come and see me." I stuck that away in my head because he was one of the few that employed girls. So, I took a fifth year and then when I was ready for a job I went to him and he did give me a job. I couldn't have known less, and he was sweet and patient.

Then it was wartime--we got into the war--and he was called to take charge of the Christian Science camp work. So, he left his office in charge of Gertrude Comfort, and I worked for her. In fact, I was very glad of an excuse to quit. She was a pretty stern taskmistress.



F & S: Did she build in Berkeley?

Coblentz: She married Irving Morrow and I think she did work with him for a while.

Anyway, I guess I quit the office after about six months of work.

F & S: Could you just briefly describe Mr. Gutterson?

Coblentz: Yes, indeed. My mother was very aesthetic and for some reason or other she had gone to the Mason McDuffie office [a real estate firm for which Gutterson did many houses] one day and she came back with shining eyes and said, "I've discovered the man you ought to work for." He [Gutterson] was so handsome in those days. He was perfectly beautiful. He really was. I giggle because she used to have enthusiasms for symphony directors and matinee idols and people, and then Henry Gutterson. I didn't meet him, however, until the judgment, when he said I should come and see him.

After I left that office I went to Julia Morgan at the end of 1918--I had been away--and asked for a job. I was scared to death. She said, "There isn't any work right now, but in a month or two, if you'll come back," which I did, and I did get a job with her, and although I had learned something at Henry Gutterson's, I certainly hadn't learned anything to amount to anything, and she surely was patient to let me stay. She kindly did, and bit by bit I picked up some of it.

When you were at Julia Morgan's and she gave you a thumbnail sketch--or a sketch she had given the client perhaps--now she wasn't the kind of draftsman that you associate with draftsmen, but her sketch showed what it was to be and it was clear in her mind. Anyway, she'd give you a little scratch of something and then you had to work from that. I personally found that difficult because as you developed the scheme she criticized it as far as it went, and then you went on from there. She'd tell you what to do next, and then you struggled with what she had given you, and you did not depart from what she had assigned you, until she came back and gave you permission. Well, you were a child and did what your mother told you, and you couldn't get anywhere. I mean, here you would be, stymied. You'd come to a place where you couldn't go further, but you couldn't try any other line of reasoning until she came back and gave you permission.

And by the time I went back to Henry Gutterson's office again, which I did--I left Julia Morgan's, I guess, at the end of 1922 and I went abroad for a year. When I came back I went to see her



Coblentz: and she said something about, "Are you prepared to work as hard as you know you'll have to work if you come back?" And I said, "I'm not sure that I am." And in the meantime I got a job for myself to build a house, and about that time I got a telephone call from Henry Gutterson and he said would I come back and work? And I said yes, if I could work on my own time and finish the job that I had. That was fine with him, and I came back and worked on my own time on my own job and on his jobs. Then I left to get married [to Lambert Coblentz].

Then after my husband died I went back and worked for Gutterson from 1947 until he closed his office, about 1955 or 1956. And the difference there was that he would turn over a job to any one of his draftsmen and then it was your job; it wasn't his job any more. Everything that came out of Julia Morgan's office was Julia Morgan's. But anything that came out of Henry Gutterson's office might have been Jack Ballentine's, might have been Louis Schalk's [Louis Schalk worked in both Morgan's and Gutterson's offices. - S. Riess], might have been Elizabeth Austin's, might have been John Wagenet's, might have been mine, with his overall criticism. He assumed that you knew enough to carry through, whereas she assumed nothing--except, perhaps, for Walter Steilberg.

Louis Schalk came to her straight from high school. He tells how his mother brought him there and Julia had a little stool fixed up so he could reach to the top of the drawing board; he was little. He was terribly bright and she, of course, was a wonderful teacher, but their problem was that as he grew older and older and knew more and more and more and could pretty nearly think what she would want, she was still treating him as a child, and he was grown up and married with children of his own. He eventually got to the point where he wanted to be on his own more than he ever would be with her, and he went into business and eventually ended up with one of the public commissions.

F & S: Where was Julia Morgan's office located?

Coblentz: She was in the Merchants' Exchange Building in San Francisco, on California below Montgomery. She commuted from Berkeley daily and she commuted from San Simeon weekly.

F & S: To finish up on Mr. Gutterson, you were with him from 1947 to 1955. Did he work into a modern mode of architecture?

Coblentz: No. When I went back in 1947, not having worked since 1924, I went to him and said I'd like to get back into it and I'd like to



Coblentz: get back into the contemporary stream. Well, I discovered that there was no contemporary stream there. Sometimes a client would come and Henry would have kind of an informal competition. He and one of the others and I would do a sketch, and there was I, trying to do something contemporary, but if the client accepted Henry's, he would come in grinning, saying, "You lose!"

F & S: Is that because that's what the clients wanted, or what he wanted?

Coblentz: Well, of course, they came to him because they wanted what he did. You didn't come to somebody and try to get what he wasn't doing.

Now, the Women's Gym [UC Berkeley], for instance, was supposed to be Maybeck's job, but it was done in Julia Morgan's office, and if it works, if you can get from here to there, it's because it went through Julia Morgan's office, not because of Maybeck.

You worked when you were in Julia Morgan's office. You worked from eight to five and you didn't stop and you didn't take time off.

F & S: If you were to describe Julia Morgan's building style, what would you say?

Coblentz: Well, she didn't build in a style. She built functionally; the plan came first. Nothing was built from the outside in; everything was from the inside out.

F & S: And if a client came to her and said they wanted an Italianate house, or a redwood house, then she would conform with their wishes?

Coblentz: We never knew what went on. We never saw the clients. We were in the drafting room. We didn't ever see the clients, which was completely different from Henry Gutterson, where the client was ours. With her we didn't know what went on, and I pulled a couple of wonderful boners! For instance, in those days the breakfast nook was done like an ice cream parlor: that is, a table with a bench on either side. Well, we had a house and I built the breakfast nook and she came in and she said, "Dr. Rowe can't get into his breakfast nook!" [Laughter.] Well, I'd never seen him, and it would have helped if I'd seen him. I would have known that he had to have an extra six inches for his stomach!

F & S: So, whatever they asked her to do, you in the office did not know. So, it was hard to say to what extent the outside was her idea.





- Coblentz: Yes, and that is why I had such a good time with the Emanu-El Sisterhood job. I knew what they had asked for, and when I couldn't solve what she had suggested I knew that wasn't what they had required and I could go ahead on some other tack, because I knew. But that was the only time in her office that I ever met a client.
- F & S: So, if someone said they wanted a "Julia Morgan house" that didn't mean anything particularly.
- Coblentz: Well, I should hope not! That would be awful if that meant any one style.
- F & S: But in Maybeck's case that meant they got what Maybeck liked.
- Coblentz: Yes, but, of course, Maybeck didn't like just one thing. Maybeck was always innovating.
- F & S: What did Julia Morgan think of Maybeck?
- Coblentz: I think she was devoted to him, had affectionate admiration.
- F & S: How would you describe Julia Morgan?
- Coblentz: She always wore a kind of a grey-blue suit and a cape, her hair pulled up in a knot, and a rather largish hat, a white blouse with a high collar and white cuffs, always scrupulously white. I'm sure the shoes were very sensible. And she looked like a nobody. She couldn't have looked less distinguished. And she had this funny little lisp. And boy, if anybody tried to put anything over, oh oh. She was a hard taskmistress because she didn't realize that people had private lives, that most of the men in the office were married, that there were wives waiting at home for them. Time meant nothing to her. But she was very kind and gave a great deal of help to the people who needed it financially, I'm sure.
- F & S: During the period when she was in her prime, was she the most sought-after architect in the Bay Area?
- Coblentz: That's hard to answer. The office was always busy.
- F & S: Did she design all the intricate ornament that is in some of her houses?
- Coblentz: In those days there wasn't one thing done in any building that came from an architect's office that wasn't full-size detailed. That meant that you made drawings the size of the finished object. You



Coblentz: started your original sketch as a little swirl, but what went to the caster or the woodcarver or whatever was the full-size detail. Draftsmen have various talents and I think that's a talent [for drawing ornament] I surely never had.

I think the period I was so unhappy in her office was when I was supposed to be doing curlicues, which was not what I wanted to be doing at all. But she had people in the office who could turn out yards of the most beautiful stuff that you ever saw. And all that went to the craftsmen. Then it was up to the contractor to get it executed. Your original drawing had to show the contractor what was going to be expected, but the office turned out the full-size detail.

In the Emanu-El Sisterhood I had to figure out every brick course so it would come out even; from taking the dimensions of the windows and the building you laid out the number of courses and all of that. I learned all that. Nothing was left to chance.

F & S: I'm curious about the popularity of redwood as a building material used on the insides of houses. It makes it so dark. Why was that desirable?

Coblentz: That was a period when interiors were dark. Dark furniture, heavy oak furniture, Spanish and Italian stuff. Yes, it was a dark period, definitely.

F & S: When you think of the Beaux Arts training in classical detailing, you would think that would make for a hard transition to a house made of wood. Why is it those people with the Beaux Arts training just naturally use the wood instead of turning to stucco?

Coblentz: The material didn't matter. Classic moldings worked beautifully in wood. After all, Doric architecture was in imitation of wood. All the moldings [in Doric orders] were derived from wood, so why not reverse the process?

F & S: Julia Morgan did some wood houses with porches with Doric capitals.

Coblentz: Yes, what else would you do with it? Frank Lloyd Wright hadn't told you what else to do, so you did what you learned. And if you worked in Julia Morgan's office you used the details that she used and liked, and your reference library was all the drawings of everything that had ever been done in the office, and if you were in doubt about something you could look up such and such a job in another house. You learned to apply her thinking.



F & S: Would she vary the traditional styles, such as taking a Doric motif for a column and playing around with it, or did she go by the book?

Coblentz: No! She didn't "go by the book." It was supposed to be in your head, just as in cooking you learn to do without recipes.

F & S: How did the leaded glass fit in with the classic?

Coblentz: Nobody says it had to be classic. So, you know something about the Gothic, you use it. And when I say classic, I mean more historic, not just Greek and Roman.

F & S: Did Julia Morgan have an interest in the landscaping and the outdoors of the house, and did she work with the landscape architect?

Coblentz: Oh, she certainly would have done a certain amount of indication of what she expected to go on outside.

F & S: Were there many details that connected the inside with the outside of her houses, like pergolas?

Coblentz: I'm sure there were. I can't remember at the moment. Oh, yes, San Simeon. It seems to me it was Bill Wurster, however, who discovered that the kitchen didn't have to be in the back of the house and discovered that San Francisco houses could have available out-of-doors areas. But I don't think that that had happened in her time. You still walked in the front door, and the service was in the back.

In those days there were the service areas. That was one of the things that I had to teach Mr. Gutterson when I worked for him the second time. He was still laying out houses as though there were a corps of servants to care for them. When he was commissioned to do a house for a little old lady and his first sketch would show it as it would have been prewar, I would say, "She doesn't want to have to walk half a block from the bedroom to the kitchen."

F & S: Did Julia Morgan believe that every house had to have certain interior elements, a complete this or that?

Coblentz: I think she would try to find out what the owners wanted, and I suspect that the people who would come to her were pretty much people who expected a complete house. She must somehow have known, or found out, how a client lived and what they expected. You found out how people lived and gave them what they required. I do think in those days there always was a living room and a dining room!



F & S: Was Julia Morgan aware of the modern movement, the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, for instance?

Coblentz: Well, I didn't see much of her...the Emanu-El Sisterhood job I finished at the end of 1922, I was in Europe in 1923, and I never worked for her again, except as follows: I invited her to come to my house on Washington Street for lunch. I had a very nice garden and somehow, looking at the garden, she said, "Do you think you could do the landscaping for the model that I'm doing of the monastery?" And I said, "I haven't any idea, but I'll try to learn." She said, "All right, you try to learn, and tell me when you have learned."

So, I looked through the yellow pages and I found a model maker who had a studio way down in the commercial district, almost at the Embarcadero, and I went to the model maker and said, "I want to learn how to make trees for a model," and he told me how much it would cost to learn to make trees, and I went down every day and learned how to make trees out of sponges and toothpicks and steel wool and goodness knows what all.

She was having the model made in the office with no landscaping. She came down to call on me at Mr. Owens' place of business and saw the things he was doing, and she asked him if he would complete the model, and she had it delivered to his office and [he did the] topography, the actual topography of a piece of property in the park. I had gone and measured all the trees and attempted to duplicate all the trees that were there, to scale. So, he completed the model, and I completed the trees, and he planted the model with the trees, and it was sent to the de Young Museum and put in the basement along with all the beautiful blueprints, and that was the end of that.

Some years later Dr. [Thomas Carr] Howe decided to show these and there was an exhibition, but when I got to see it, there wasn't a tree left on it. What damaged it, I don't know. At this point probably all that you will ever see of the monastery [story of monastery told elsewhere] is in the gateway in the de Young Museum and in the stones that are in the walls of the arboretum.\*

F & S: That was your last connection working with her?

Coblentz: That was the last time I worked with her, yes. Oh, after that... she came in to see the model and she saw my check on Mr. Owens' desk, the check that was my payment to him for having taught me to make trees, so she promptly sent me a check, doubling it, I think it was, with a very sweet letter. Then I asked her, please, would she arrange for me to see San Simeon. So, she wrote to the

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\*Volume I of the Julia Morgan Architectural History Series has considerable material on the monastery. - S.R.





Coblentz: superintendent and whoever was necessary, and I took my daughter and a friend and we had the red carpet treatment and were shown all over everything by a little maid.

F & S: Was Miss Morgan independently wealthy?

Coblentz: Oh, she had an awful struggle to get started. The story that Louis Schalk tells is that she had found out how much it would cost to live in Paris when she was studying, and her brother went with her, and I think the two of them lived on what it should have taken to support one. She had an awful struggle. But she lived very simply.

During this period of the model, she had bought two old houses on Divisadero between Clay and Washington and I think she chopped off the top of one so as to let light in the other and she lived there, rented one and lived in the other, and I think Harriet de Mari, who was her secretary, might have lived with her part of the time.

[The interview turns to the background of Mrs. Coblentz.]\*

F & S: What could you say about John Galen Howard's architecture?

Coblentz: I remember asking him about Stephens Union, why it was in the Tudor style, and he said, "Harmony in diversity." [Laughter.] When I asked Benjamin Ide Wheeler once why there were no women's dormitories on the campus, he said, "Women in large groups tend to become hysterical." [Hysterical laughter.]

Transcriber: Suzanne Riess  
Final Typist: Marilyn White

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\* Dorothy Wormser Coblentz, b. 1894. San Francisco, 1896 to present. UC, 1916. Studied with John Galen Howard, William Hays, and Warren Perry.



- a -



Charlotte Knapp, Bjarne Dahl, Walter Clifford, Dante, Ed Rossi, Jim LeFeaver, Thaddeus Joy, Harriet deMari, Dorothy Wormser.

- c -



from a film, Julia Morgan with William Randolph Hearst at San Simeon.

- b -



Louis Schalk, Walter Steilberg, Dorothy Wormser, Thaddeus Joy, unknown.



## JULIA MORGAN'S OFFICE

Interview 2, December 12, 1974

- Riess: When we spoke on the phone, you said you had some pictures of the office.
- Coblentz: Yes. She [Julia Morgan] doesn't appear in them.
- Riess: Would she deliberately avoid having her picture taken?
- Coblentz: She probably would have, but I don't imagine she was there on the days that we were doing it.
- Riess: Why do you think Julia Morgan avoided publicity?
- Coblentz: She didn't think it was anybody's business, I think! It was a personal relationship between her and her clients; it was nobody's business. She didn't need publicity; she always had word-of-mouth references. People kept coming to her. Every job she did was satisfactory to its clients. I think she would have resented publicity.
- Riess: If a house or an object is beautiful, it seems one would want to share it and have it more generally known. I guess it is a question of who she did her buildings for. Was it just between her and her client?
- Coblentz: I think so. It's hard to answer that. Their privacy was sacred to her. I always thought I was a little smarty, and when I was at San Simeon I wrote what I felt would be very entertaining letters back to the office. She sure gave me hell for it, because that was private.
- Riess: Were you reflecting on what was going on at San Simeon?
- Coblentz: That's right. I thought I was entertaining the office; poor guys, they couldn't be there and I was. [Laughter.]
- Riess: These days architects are often seen as doing their work for other architects. It's kind of a showy business.



Coblentz: No, no. She was a perfectionist, and each job was a maximum effort. Nothing was left incomplete, and you learned to do it from the ground up; nothing was left to chance.

Riess: In working for her, were you personally inspired to follow in her footsteps?

Coblentz: Nobody could lead a normal life working as she did. She couldn't have had any private life. I think that Louis Schalk and Walter Steilberg knew the most and were the closest. Louis Schalk left the office while I was there, which was sometime during the four years 1919-1922. He left because he resented not being treated as a grownup.

Riess: Was that peculiar to him, or was nobody treated like a grownup?

Coblentz: Nobody was treated as a grownup except Walter Steilberg, and there were various other people. But Louis had come to her just out of high school--he was probably about seventeen--and grew up in her office. He was very, very bright, very intelligent, and developed so that she depended on him a great deal. But still, even though he married and had children, he wasn't really grown up to her, I think.

A young man came from New Zealand, "Auckland" Joe, I think, and according to us he wasn't so smart. He bought himself a partnership in another office, and Louis saw that this man was now a partner in a firm and he was just Louis Schalk, so he quit and did go in with someone else. It wasn't too successful. After that I think he got himself some kind of a job on a public commission.

Riess: When he made his unhappiness known, couldn't she adjust to that and change?

Coblentz: No, It had a very bad effect on the office and things didn't clear up until he left, which was too bad because he had been such a mainstay of the office. There was no job he couldn't do, and do it along the lines of her thinking.

Riess: Did she take care of everything administrative in that office?

Coblentz: Yes, I would say so. When I came, after the war, she had a kind of part-time girl who did her secretarial work. Then afterwards she had more professional help. Toward the last part of my stay there she had Jim Lefeaver. He was a general office manager and he started writing specifications and handling the business





Coblentz: end of it. But at the start she did everything. When I was first there she wrote specifications. I never knew what her fees were. I didn't ever know anything about the business end of it. It was so different at Henry Gutterson's, but there [in Morgan's office] the drafting room was private, the office was private, the clients were private.

Riess: Were there any other young women there when you were there?

Coblentz: Charlotte Knapp was there, and there was a girl named Delius. I don't know how long she was there.

Riess: Were men and women treated differently?

Coblentz: I think she probably always had hopes that "this was the girl" she was going to turn into something [laughter], and then the girl would go off and get married or something, and I imagine that would be a disappointment to her. I don't know how long Charlotte Knapp stayed, and I don't think Delius was there very long.

Riess: Do you think she hoped to turn all of her people into something-- that she was the master craftsman and they were apprentices that she was training?

Coblentz: I don't know. Certainly in my case she was trying to turn me into something. [Laughter.] When I came I was about as ignorant as anyone could be; most people who came to her probably had more experience and required less training and teaching. But they had to do what she wanted; they followed in her footsteps, they did her work, so that a Julia Morgan job was a Julia Morgan job.

Riess: If you had stayed on with her, what would have been the progression of responsibility?

Coblentz: It's hard to tell. I really don't know. The pressure was terrible; I don't know whether I could have stood the pressure, the long hours.

When the cat was away, the mice would play. When a job would go out for bids, we would have a pool and we would each put a dime in the pool guessing the amount of the contract. The one who got closest took the pool, which by then must have been all of eighty or ninety cents. We'd go out to the nearest bakery and buy a cake; then we would have a party and eat the cake. I remember one day when we were in the library with the cake on the table and she came in with a client. That wasn't very good [laughter]; her displeasure was manifest.



Coblentz: Louis was an early liberal. Louis and his wife were very devout Christian Scientists, and they wanted to have blacks in their church. That was pretty early to admit blacks to the church, and I think there was great trouble on that score. But when Miss Morgan was away, the amount of conversation that went on--oh, my! Usually it was Louis who controlled the conversation, and always on liberal subjects.

When he got married, in what Julia Morgan probably would have considered his infancy, I think they walked to Tahoe on their honeymoon, not having any money.

Riess: Would she mother her employees to the point of giving them money if they needed it?

Coblentz: I suspect she would. I'm sure she helped Charlotte Knapp. She [Julia Morgan] was a delightful person, if you weren't being scolded.

Riess: You were observed for both your lifestyle and the quality of the work you did. It sounds hard to live with that sort of scrutiny.

Coblentz: I think Louis found it so.

Riess: Did she get involved in architectural competitions?

Coblentz: I could say absolutely no to that.

Riess: Wouldn't she be tempted by some grand competition?

Coblentz: I don't think so. The jobs came to her; as far as I know there wasn't any question of that. People came to her because they wanted her.

Riess: What about the 1915 Exposition?

Coblentz: I have no idea how those architects were chosen.

Riess: It is suggested that Miss Morgan was a symbol for those concerned with the emancipation of women and that her work came in part because in those days women were encouraging other women.

Coblentz: I have no idea, except that her jobs were satisfactory; she gave them what they wanted and needed. The old cliché about women knowing about closets--well, she gave them good buildings that answered their problems.



Riess: Would it be a part of her nature always to encourage economy?

Coblentz: She must have known the means of her clients, what they expected. If she did a house like the Perkins house for wealthy people, there was no question of economizing in materials or workmanship. No, I think she fitted her job to the client. She certainly didn't economize on workmanship; there's no question of that. There was no skimping; if there wasn't much money, it was a smaller house.

Riess: I have heard that she was very loyal to craftsmen and very appreciative of what they did.

Coblentz: Oh, yes, certainly. The contractors who were allowed to bid--to whom she would have given jobs--were people in whom she had extreme faith. In general, nobody tried to put anything over on her.

One of the contractors on the Emanu-El Sisterhood knew me socially, and he would phone me when he wanted to make a substitution. Whenever he asked to speak to me I knew he was up to something, and I'd say, "Just a minute."

I would say to Walter, "Now he wants to know if he can substitute sand for cement."

Walter would answer, "No," and I would say, "The answer is no." That would be that. [Laughter.] He thought I would be a soft touch. And I knew that the very fact that he asked to speak to me meant he was up to something. [Laughter.]

Riess: That makes you think about how an architect must always be on guard; it's kind of a great game, with everyone trying to get away with a little bit.

Coblentz: Oh, yes. But the people she normally would have permitted to bid were people whose character she respected.

Riess: Can you imagine Julia Morgan ever refusing to do a piece of work because of the nature of the work or of the personalities involved?

Coblentz: I should think she would have, but I don't know of any instances.

Riess: I asked you before what kind of approval she was seeking, and you said it was between her and her clients.

Coblentz: I think it was her own self-respect.



Riess: As she respected the people in the office more, did she show you work and ask for some kind of comment ever?

Coblentz: I don't remember. I was only there from 1919-1922. The office went on for another fifteen or twenty years after that, and there must have been more "grownups" then. [Laughter.]

Lefeaver, the office manager, would have seemed improbable, but she trusted him and he was devoted to her, I think. He seemed such an unlikely sort of person to be associated with her, but it worked.\* He took responsibilities from her. The office did all the buying for San Simeon. There was a camp up on the hilltop where all the craftsmen and laborers lived in tents, and there was also the mess tent. Everything happened up there. The office bought all the supplies, all the food, and, later on, all the hay for the animals for the zoo, and I guess Lefeaver handled that.

Riess: There was no organized Hearst Corporation to take care of that?

Coblentz: I don't think so. He [Hearst] was said to have said that she was the only person in the world who'd never tried to take advantage of him; he had complete faith in her and she was utterly loyal to him. It was a very nice relationship.

Riess: And he didn't try to take advantage of her?

Coblentz: Oh, no! I don't know if she was on a retainer or whether it was that he simply paid her by the year. I can't imagine that there would have been any fee for jobs, because it was a continuous performance. She would turn out drawings, she would go down to see the work, and he would meet her there, and he might say, "I think that wall is too close." It didn't matter if it was a concrete wall, out it would come and be moved over. So, I don't know how you can pay for that. I think there must have been some kind of a retainer. But she'd come back--sometimes she would be rather giggly about it--and say, "Mr. Hearst wants this and this and this." She'd give it to him, of course.

Riess: Those were the times when she was questioning him, but not doing anything about it?

Coblentz: You can't imagine that product [San Simeon] being out of her mind. She was giving him what he wanted, and doing it to the best of her ability, which was considerable, and producing something quite superlative.

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\*When asked for an explanation of Lefeaver's "unlikeliness," Dorothy Coblentz said she thought it was the contrast of his business-like manner and salesman qualities with the nature of the other office staff. - S.R.





Riess: You said earlier that wherever she was she was boss, but it sounds like she wasn't boss at San Simeon.

Coblentz: No. She gave him what he wanted. I think she understood him very well, and he was certainly satisfied with her. I don't know what happened at the end, because I believe the construction went on after she was through.

As far as I know--in fact, I'm sure of it--she did all his other places too. She did Wynton, which I believe burned down, and she did Marion Davies' beautiful Santa Monica house, which later became a club, I think--perfectly beautiful. There were other places in California which were Californian in feeling of style. I don't know about Mexico.

Riess: Could she also have thought of Hearst as just a big child, not a grownup?

Coblentz: That I don't know. I don't think so. He was exactly her age, I think. No, I don't think she had that attitude toward him.

Riess: I'd like to know how she came to terms with him.

Coblentz: I think it was mutual respect. Certainly he respected her and her ability.

Riess: What do you think about Julia Morgan's artistic taste?

Coblentz: I think it was perfect. [Chuckle.]

Riess: How was it formed?

Coblentz: I don't know if it was her Beaux Arts period. As I said, we did full-size details of everything, and it's awfully hard to judge at large scale, but her judgment was infallible, I think. She'd say, "Reduce that a little," or, "Increase that," or whatever. And you knew that if she approved it, it was right, and you didn't want anything to go out that she hadn't approved, but her approval made it correct. Yes, I think she had infallible judgment and taste.

Riess: Did she have any objects around her? Do you associate any "things" with her?

Coblentz: I don't remember. Her library was a beautiful little room, with bookcases all around the walls, and a central table (at which we ate our cake). Her working office was tiny; there was scarcely



Coblentz: room for the desk at which her then secretary or Mr. Lefeaver sat. She had a little desk in the drafting room, a little work table with a high back on which she had a few books; so, when she was there she had a little privacy because of the high back of her table. There she would sit and concentrate and produce these funny little drawings in which the whole story was foreshadowed, but it was just a little sketch with perhaps a little color on it. It was enough to give the idea, and she would present that to the client, and it was always accepted, and it was the basis for the completed work.

Riess: She always worked on a very small scale for herself?

Coblentz: Yes, a little eight-inch sketch. But it was all there; the germ, the future, was in it.

Riess: Wouldn't that take great ability by her staff to interpret that?

Coblentz: Yes, you'd have to learn to interpret her sketch. She'd take a little piece of paper and put something on it, and you saved those little scraps like jewels. She herself would go to the city hall and look at the survey of the lot, and she would take off the salient features of the plot and bring it in and show it to you. I remember on one occasion I was doing a house, and when it came time to lay it out it wouldn't go on the lot, and, of course, she came in ready to give me Hail Columbia. I fished out this little scrap, and she had made a mistake in copying down the figures. You saved those little things, because if you didn't you were in real trouble. So she said, oh yes, it was her fault.

Riess: If you couldn't understand what was being asked of you, would it have been better to produce something, or would it have been better to go to her office and ask her?

Coblentz: No, you waited for her to come and then you asked. You didn't go off on any other tack; if she told you to do it thus and so, you worked on that. If you came to a stumbling block, if you couldn't go any further there, you might think in your own mind, "Well, if I couldn't do that, I could do it this way." But you didn't do it until she gave you the go ahead.

Riess: You wouldn't run into her inner office and ask her?

Coblentz: I don't think so. But you lost a lot of time when you could have been going ahead.



Riess: Did you get the sense that when she was in her office she was being seized by inspiration and couldn't be interrupted?

Coblentz: You certainly didn't interrupt her. [Laughter.] You waited until your turn came.

Riess: How did you last as long as you did?

Coblentz: Well, there is the story of the Emanu-El Sisterhood. The Emanu-El Sisterhood was a Jewish organization. They wanted a residence for girls, and they wanted Julia Morgan and nobody else. So, they came to her, and all was going well when the Jewish architects of San Francisco started in to raise Cain. They said, "Why this WASP woman?" [Laughter.]

Well, the committee didn't want anybody but Julia Morgan. One of the ladies suddenly had a bright idea and said, "How about Dorothy?"

"Oh, that would be wonderful."

So, she [Julia Morgan] came to the drafting room and said, "Dorothy, have you got your certificate?"

I said, "No!"

She said, "Well, could you get it?"

I said, "I don't know."

So, she said to Walter, "All right, you see that she gets it."

So, Walter Steilberg proceeded to give me a course in engineering so that I could pass the examination. [Laughter.] Boy, did I have to work!

And she had to constantly soothe the committee and say, "Oh, yes, it's coming." They were holding off two or three prominent Jewish architects, all of whom were eager and wanted the job, or at least wanted to be associated with it, thinking that, of course, they would get it away from her.

I took the examination. Seventy-five was the passing grade, and they gave me 74.99 to keep me from getting it, Walter went down to interview them, and they said, "The answers were technically correct, but we thought she was lacking in experience."



Coblentz: So, they made me take them over again. I spent the next three months studying like a dog. The next time all went well and I think I got 95 on it, so I got the license and was named associate architect of the project.

She was an honorable woman, and on the strength of that I was treated as an associate. Anyway, then I could go ahead. She was a little surprised at the progress I seemed to be making and she was saying, "Well, Dorothy, really!" But I was allowed to go ahead because it was my job, so that was wonderful.

Riess: She treated you as a grownup.

Coblentz: Yes, I became a grownup. That was fine.

Riess: Did the two of you work together on the design of the Emanu-El Sisterhood Residence?

Coblentz: She had laid out the original scheme of it, but then I could go ahead and develop it--of course, always subject to her criticism and review. But I could go ahead; I didn't have to wait to ask her. She seemed a little surprised at the progress I made. I don't know if it taught her that if she let the children work on their own they'll go ahead. She said, "Dorothy, you've made a lot of progress in the past year." [Laughter.]

Riess: Do you think that you would have gone for the certificate otherwise?

Coblentz: No, probably not. It's so much easier not to.

I have a letter that she wrote me later.

Riess: [Reading.]

"To my Coblentz friends: I was so sorry not to have been home the time I did arrive and find the calling cards on my stand. It would have been such a beautiful surprise to have found you instead. And then so soon after to miss again and to find a large and dainty surprise card in pottery shape with all sorts of goodies packed up into it." [Julia Morgan.]

What did you give her?





Coblentz: Cookies, I imagine.

Riess: [Continues reading.]

"...I took the advice given and repacked them in a nice airtight tin against down and out feelings, which that supply should cure many attacks of."

Did you say on the gift that it was for when she was feeling down and out? Do you think you would say something like that to Julia Morgan?

Coblentz: No, I never would have implied that she could feel down and out.

Riess: [Continues reading.]

"...Seriously, thank you, Dorothy. The year has been tightly occupied because of the office adjustments, which should provide reasonable time off this next year. I will ring your doorbell someday, and in the meantime thank you for the kind thought which is very dear to me. With wishes for the happiest of New Years for all the Coblentz's. As always, Yours, Julia Morgan. December 28, 1937."

Coblentz: It always made me feel that she did have a private life and that I should have made more effort to see her, but I always felt that I was intruding on her very precious time. And there were a good many years when I didn't know where she was. It wasn't until she came to the City...

Riess: That makes me feel a little sad.

Coblentz: Yes, one did. And she loved children. Once I had some kind of a weekend invitation and asked if I could take Friday off if I came back on Monday--Monday was a holiday. So, I came back on Monday with my little nephew--I guess I was nephew-sitting--to work to make up my time. She came in and played with him. She did love children.

Riess: After she finished a house for a client, I suppose they wined and dined her a bit?

Coblentz: I don't think there was any wining and dining, not that I ever knew or heard of. Her clients, of course, were loyal to her, but I don't think there was any question of social life.



Riess: You said in another interview that you were "scared to death" to ask Miss Morgan for a job.

Coblentz: Well, that speaks for itself. [Laughter.]

Riess: I wondered if it was your youth or her reputation.

Coblentz: It wasn't her reputation, I don't think. I had no confidence in myself; I didn't ever have any job-hunting confidence. I had nothing to offer, so that was it, I guess.

Riess: When you went to the University and enrolled in architecture, how far did you think you would get professionally?

Coblentz: I had no idea if I ever would do anything. No, I wasn't one of those women full of ambition that you read about, like Julia Morgan.

Riess: Was it extraordinary to be a woman in the architecture department?

Coblentz: Oh, there were a lot of women in the department, but very few of them went through with it. Elizabeth Austin was one. Most of them went into teaching. Later on, during the war, there were far more, and they married architects. But in my day, while there were girls in the department, very few of them went ahead with it.

Riess: Was that because you wouldn't be able to get ahead anyway?

Coblentz: I think that there was great feeling that you could never get a job, even if you did. I was warned never to learn stenography, because even if I got a job in an architectural office, I would never be allowed in the drafting room--girls became secretaries.

Riess: When were you in architecture school?

Coblentz: I was in the class of 1916, and I stayed on for one year, 1917. That was it.

Riess: How much of a reputation at the school did Julia Morgan have?

Coblentz: I think the men ignored her. [Laughter.] Oh, I don't know; her name never came up, that I can remember. But listen, lady, that was some sixty years ago; I don't quite remember everything! But I don't ever remember her name coming up. The other graduates, like Henry Gutterson and Abe Appleton, people who came over for the judgments, were a part of the school, as graduates. She wasn't, because there was no architecture department in her day.



Riess: So, when did your first knowledge of her come?

Coblentz: I had relatives in San Diego, and my aunt was on the board of the YWCA. When she did the Hostess Building, or the "Y" in San Diego, her name came up in conversation there. That probably alerted me and made me decide I would go and see her when the time came.

Riess: Why her in particular?

Coblentz: Well, why not? Especially when you heard that women weren't being hired by men, except Henry Gutterson.

Riess: Gutterson sounds like he had a great deal of warmth and risked a lot for the sake of his apprentices.

Coblentz: He had a great deal of faith in them. Sometimes he would hire people that I would think were terrible. One man he got to do renderings would go out and drink and would come back actually drunk, so that he couldn't work. Henry was so innocent about it; he had no idea what was going on. The man shared my cubicle, so I was very much aware of his condition. But Henry was so sweet, I guess he never thought of it.

Riess: Were there such things as presents at Christmas time [in Julia Morgan's office]?

Coblentz: Oh, that was terrible. I'm just thinking of poor Thad Joy who had a wife and (I think) four children. He didn't get off to get them presents until Christmas Eve.

At Henry Gutterson's office Christmas was very important because Mrs. Gutterson would put on a party. That meant that on Christmas afternoon you would have to stay for Mrs. Gutterson's party. Finally the men in the office who had wives and families asked Henry please, if for Christmas instead of a party they could have time off.

It was so awful, because he couldn't tell her and he had to tell her. I think he didn't speak to them for...Lord knows. It was just an awful situation! They naturally wanted the time more than they wanted Mrs. Gutterson's candy; they wanted to go home to their families. It was awful; it was so embarrassing! It didn't matter to me, but it did to them. It took a long time for him to get over it.

Riess: It sounds like it would be easy for an architectural office to become sort of paternalistic.



Coblentz: Miss Morgan called us the "office family." She wouldn't let us call Walter "Mr." Everybody had to be on first name terms, because we were all the office family. But she was "Miss Morgan." But he wasn't "Mr. Steilberg," he was "Walter," and Thad was "Thad," and so on.

Riess: Were you ever all called together for a staff meeting?

Coblentz: Not in her office.

Riess: I guess Julia Morgan had a better chance of having an office full of agreeable or docile women than agreeable men.

Coblentz: Maybe agreeable women of ability didn't exist! [Laughter.]

Riess: Walter Steilberg talks about how the people who came really had to be trained from scratch. Do you feel that that would have described you, that you were quite incapable of doing what was called for in the beginning?

Coblentz: Oh, you certainly had to learn.

Riess: What was architecture school all about?

Coblentz: It was design. It didn't have anything to do with reality. You might be able to design a palace, but you couldn't do a house. You learned how to do that in her office. You learned how to keep the rain out, and how to build a window, and how to make mill drawings that went to the mill for the construction. You learned every inch of the way, and that was something to learn. I'm just thinking--she used to do the heating. She used to place the radiators and indicate their size. Later on, of course, you had heating specialists, but not in those early buildings.

Riess: How did she know how to do this?

Coblentz: She seemed to know everything. [Laughter.] She had had engineering at Cal. She was practical. Later on she had men she could depend on to supervise the job. She learned to delegate to a certain extent as the years went on; as the business increased she had to.

Thad Joy was a fascinating character, apparently imperturbable, turning out his magnificent drawings and seeming to ignore her, but I guess very much aware of her.





Riess: How was the office physically set up? There was the library and her little office...

Coblentz: Then there was the big drafting room, and I suppose it had room for nine or ten people at tables; maybe not as many as that--maybe six or seven or eight. There was just that one drafting room with her table in the corner by the door.

Riess: How about lunch--did you go out, or did you bring your lunch in a bag?

Coblentz: We went out for lunch. [Laughter.] Walter always went to Chinatown; we always claimed he lived on steamed buns. Once in a while we all went out, but I don't think we went with each other.

Riess: Did she go with you?

Coblentz: Oh, no. I don't know whether she ever ate. [Laughter.] One was never conscious that she had any physical needs such as food.

There was a San Diego girl, Julian Mesick, who made the original model of the San Simeon castle. This other one for which I made the trees was the monastery model, which was started in her office, and then she brought it to Mr. Owens to finish. I guess it's in the basement of the de Young. It would be kind of fun to go and track it down. Why don't we do that?

Walter Steilberg went over originally and took care of its dismantling and shipping here. Then the Board of Supervisors gave her, I think, \$10,000 to make a model and to have blueprints made, because they wisely said that she wouldn't live forever and nobody in the future would know what the intention was. So, she was doing the model in her office, and Walter was in charge of the blueprints. He got people to work for him, I guess, and they produced these magnificent drawings. That was all on exhibition after some years had passed. Nothing will ever come of it now.

Riess: Who was the "cable car woman" that Walter Steilberg referred to who jinxed the whole thing?

Coblentz: Oh, you mean Frieda Klussmann--"San Francisco Beautiful." Did she jinx it because she didn't want any more buildings in the park? Oh, she's quite important in our "City Beautiful." I guess every now and then she does something worthwhile. Louis Schalk built her a house on Russian Hill. Louis Schalk did St. Patrick's Church on Mission Street, and it's perfectly beautiful! He never got any publicity for it, I don't think. It's a beautiful job.



Coblentz: I'm sorry if she did jinx the monastery project, because I would have liked to have seen it. It would have been cloisters to out-cloister all cloisters; it would have been beautiful. [I meant it would have been more beautiful than New York's "Cloisters" medieval museum. - D. Coblentz.] It never will be now. The stones are all dismantled and used in the park--in the arboretum, chiefly. The gate is in the de Young Museum; as you come in you face it. That's all. If Hearst had left some of his millions for the reconstruction, it probably would have gone ahead, but there was no money for it.

Riess: Walter Steilberg suggests that the building was too simple to be really appealing to Mr. Hearst.

Coblentz: I wish it could have been built, because it would have been a beautiful medieval museum.

Transcriber: Suzanne Riess  
Final Typist: Marilyn White



The Julia Morgan Architectural History Project

Polly Lawrence McNaught

REMINISCENCES OF AN EMPLOYEE OF JULIA MORGAN'S.

Interview conducted by

Suzanne B. Riess



REMINISCENCES OF AN EMPLOYEE OF JULIA MORGAN'S.  
An interview with Polly McNaught. February 18, 1975.

Riess: Would you say something about your education and how you came to work for Julia Morgan?

McNaught: I was an architecture major at UC and I imagine I got my first job with Julia Morgan through the University employment bureau. However, I was not part of her office drafting staff; I was doing miscellaneous, odd outside jobs.

Riess: Were there any others working in such a capacity?

McNaught: Not that I know of. It was sort of a special category.

Riess: How did she know that you could understand her wishes? How did she test you?

McNaught: I don't think she tested you. I think she just assumed you could do anything she wanted, so you never felt like you could let her down. And you always tried your best. She had a marvelous capacity for making you feel you could do anything.

Riess: Was there praise and thanks?

McNaught: No, it wasn't that. She just took it for granted that you could do it.

Riess: What were some of your odd jobs? When we talked before, you mentioned getting furniture for San Simeon.

McNaught: Yes, the unpainted furniture for the guest cottages, chest of drawers, a table. So, I shopped around and got pictures of what was available, and prices.

Riess: Was she much concerned about prices for stuff for San Simeon?





- McNaught: Not particularly, that I recall. Obviously she wasn't looking for antiques.
- Riess: I thought perhaps "the sky was the limit" for Hearst.
- McNaught: Oh, I imagine he kept her down, though I don't remember her talking about it.
- Riess: She wouldn't talk about him.
- McNaught: No, but she spent a lot of time on the trains going to various places for him, and she had a lot of minute details to look into-- the shape of the roof in snow country, for instance.
- Riess: You mentioned work on the Berkeley Women's City Club.
- McNaught: Yes, I think it was there that she had me checking on the condensation. I tried taking temperatures and opening windows. [Laughter.] I wasn't very successful in that.
- Riess: How did she get in touch with you when she needed you? Call, or write?
- McNaught: I don't remember. I remember I made out little cards, 3x5 cards like recipe cards, for my time. I think I was making all of thirty-five cents an hour. And that was the going rate in the early '30's for college people, when a dollar was worth a lot more than it is now. And, of course, architects then were mostly doing work for the WPA; practically everyone who got out of school when I was there worked for the WPA.
- Riess: Were there many women in your class?
- McNaught: Not very many, several, maybe half a dozen in the school.
- Riess: Were you taken seriously, you women, as potential architects?
- McNaught: Oh, I think we were all treated alike.

I was telling you before, also, that I did the first modern design in his class for Stafford Jory. They had the judging by the faculty then up in the exhibit hall in the back of the building. It was all very secret, but the boys would climb up on the balcony on the outside and listen to what was said. I got first place on that one, but they didn't put a "K" on it because they said the awning was fragile-looking; it was not structurally strong enough.



- Riess: What kind of a building was it?
- McNaught: It was a railroad depot.
- Riess: As a student, did you remember much interest in the work of Maybeck and Morgan?
- McNaught: Not really, although Julia Morgan was doing all sorts of work at the University and in the Women's Club at that time. But I don't know how the faculty felt about her work. I know Maybeck was well thought of, but also being impractical--stories about designing a house without any stairs or closets. [Laughter.] I know Bakewell and Brown were well thought of in those days.
- Riess: Would you describe your contact with Julia Morgan?
- McNaught: My memories of the office are very dim. I don't have any recollection of ever having been in the drafting room. My contact with her was in the library or her private office.
- Riess: You mentioned scouring the shops in Chinatown for her. Was this a permanent commission?
- McNaught: I guess you'd call it that, because I was always on the lookout for very fine embroideries. I think she just liked to collect the nice old things.
- Riess: She was too busy to do that sort of pleasurable thing for herself?
- McNaught: She was awfully busy; Mr. Hearst kept her very busy.
- Riess: Yes, I picture her on the run, never eating.
- McNaught: She was very small, very petite.
- Riess: Yet she went out to the job sites.
- McNaught: I'm sure she did, from what she had to say of talking to certain workmen and their families.
- Riess: When would she talk of them?
- McNaught: Oh, in just a casual reference, not anything in particular.
- Riess: But you did know her in a social way?



McNaught: Well, I did have her unlisted telephone number, and when she had a niece visiting we would go there and have fresh crab and salad. I lived at the corner of Green and Baker streets when I was first married, and her house on Divisadero would not have been very far from there.

Riess: You worked for her from 1929 to 1937?

McNaught: By 1937 I lived in Sausalito and didn't see her. I lost touch with her. It was always "mañana." Then the war came along. I'm sorry I didn't keep in touch.

Riess: Did you feel like a protege of hers, and that she encouraged you to keep up your career?

McNaught: In a way I did. I felt like she thought highly of me.

She had a sense of humor too. Her inner ear was damaged, her sense of equilibrium, and she would talk about walking down the street and trying to pass a drunk!

Riess: You worked on the Town and Gown Club in Berkeley, in 1931?

McNaught: I went to decorators' shops in San Francisco and picked out samples for new draperies, but she ended up bleaching and dying the old brown velvet ones gold.

Riess: She really stayed with a project to the end.

McNaught: Oh, every little detail. And she had such a reputation for being good with plans that I think other architects had her do plans for them.

Riess: Did you ever get sent any further than San Francisco to do odd jobs?

McNaught: No.

Riess: Were you ever put directly in touch with the clients?

McNaught: No.

Transcriber: Suzanne Riess

Final Typist: Marilyn White



The Julia Morgan Architectural History Project

Mrs. Hettie Belle Marcus

REMINISCENCES OF A CLIENT AND FRIEND OF JULIA MORGAN'S

Interview conducted by

Suzanne B. Riess





REMINISCENCES OF A CLIENT AND FRIEND OF JULIA MORGAN'S  
 An interview with Mrs. Hettie Belle Marcus, on the San  
 Francisco YWCA Residence Club, and the Marcus residence,  
 1040 Lombard St., San Francisco. September 18, 1974.

Riess: How did you know Julia Morgan?

Marcus: My sister, Margaret Matthew, was a YWCA secretary, and it seemed that she always knew Julia Morgan.

Riess: She was the secretary of the San Francisco Y?

Marcus: Well, she was sent to Japan. That's where she really was active, in Tokyo. She had her training in the east, in Boston, and then she was sent to Japan. She was there for many years.

Riess: Are you from San Francisco?

Marcus: I'm Los Angeles born, but I keep it very dark in San Francisco. [Laughter.] Since I've been married and had my children, we lived on the winding Lombard Street hill--we still have that home there--since 1920. We have it rented at present since I'm on a cane.

I wrote a little story of the hill which I brought down to show you. Miss Morgan built the top floor on for us. I'll let you just read that. [Essay on Lombard Street by Mrs. Henry Marcus available in The Bancroft Library.]

Riess: [Reading from essay.] "By 1935, we were seven living at 1040 [Lombard Street], so we decided to put on another floor."

Who put on the first floor? I mean, who built the house originally?

Marcus: An architect named Mr. Pissis. That was their home. He was an architect who built lots of downtown buildings, the Monadnock Building and so forth, after the fire.

Riess: [Continues reading.] "Julia Morgan was our architect, a remarkable, but frail, little woman."



Riess: Why do you describe her as frail?

Marcus: Because she was.

Riess: But she seems so tough to have done all the things--

Marcus: I know, that's the remarkable thing about this person. Because, of course, we came to know her very well. It took six months to build on our top floor. But she was frail, and had a little soft voice. You had to try hard to hear her speak. I think she had a little impediment in her speech. But this wonderful power that she had in this little frail body was part of the wonderful thing, I think. As I said, she seemed frail, and I think early in her life she'd had a mastoid, so she had lost her equilibrium. She used to walk a little bit bent. I've seen her downtown--she had her office in the Merchants' Exchange Building--walk near the buildings, and sometimes touch the buildings as she came along.

Riess: And that problem would make her particular work especially difficult.

Marcus: Well, I don't know, but it just shows this wonderful spirit and wonderful talent that she had to overlook everything that was physical.

She put on this top floor for us, and, of course, there had to be a stairway going up. There was a skeleton stairway for a long time. She went up on her hands and knees. I could walk right up. Of course, I was much younger then--no cane.

Riess: Did she acknowledge the problem?

Marcus: No, it was never mentioned.

She wore beautiful little tailored things. She was always just exquisite, never a wrinkle. And little shirts, so fresh, and I've never seen her without a hat.

Riess: You were starting to say when you had first met her.

Marcus: I was on the YWCA Board here. She built the Residence Club, as you know. This was in 1932 that she built the Residence Club. Of course, we saw her many times when she was planning the Club. You know the Residence Club, do you?

Riess: I've been in it. I haven't really looked at it architecturally.



Marcus: You know, on the Board there are lots of people that question things and don't agree to things. So, it was very interesting how she so quietly got her own way. I remember, for instance... this was for minimum wage girls. It was on Powell Street that we built so that they could walk downtown; they would take the cable car.

One time when we met with her, things were going along, and she said, "I found that we have a little extra space here," and she said, "My idea is to have one or two little private dining rooms with little kitchenettes so that the girls can invite their friends, and cook a little meal and have a little private dining room."

Well, a lot of the Board opposed it. They said, "These are minimum wage girls there. Why spoil them?"

And she said, "That's just the reason. That's just the reason."

I remember things like that. The next time that we were together she planned these rooms.

Riess: But her manner was not at all irritating.

Marcus: No, she didn't ever fight for anything. She just would say something in a very quiet way. She wanted right from the first to have a room where the girls could do sewing, have a sewing machine, and have a little beauty parlor, and could do their laundry. Some of the Board opposed that. "You're just spoiling these minimum wage girls."

Riess: I wonder what the sense of "spoiling people" meant.

Marcus: I just bring this up because people don't see eye to eye even when they're on a board. You know that. She just quietly did what she wanted to do. And so she had this great success.

That's a very beautiful building today. It has the large living rooms, and there is a garden below the dining room. Really a lovely room today. I was talking to them nextdoor at the YW because I wanted to get a date, and they said that it's now coeducational. I didn't know that.

Riess: There must have been a few discussions before that. [Laughter.]

Marcus: Well, I'm not on the Board. But I was on the Board when we were building that.



Marcus: Then right about that time she built the Chinese YWCA. And that's wonderful. They just loved it. She did research, Chinese research, and she put in some things that were very sacred for those Chinese.

Then later she built, all about this time, the Japanese YWCA. I didn't know that at all. It was out on Sutter Street. I wasn't connected with that at all.

Riess: This was all in the '30's. I don't see how she had the time to do that and San Simeon and all those things.

Marcus: I know. You'll see in this [Lombard Hill report] that she would say to me very quietly, "I won't be here for two or three days," and she'd be flying off to Mexico. She was building a great big hacienda for Mr. Hearst there. She'd fly down in a private plane, of course, and she'd be gone for two days.

Riess: Did she seem to revel in that kind of activity?

Marcus: There was never any excitement about her, just this wonderful quiet power. At least to me it was power.

Riess: She must have had great inner resources. Did she live by herself at that time?

Marcus: At this time I don't know whether she had the place on Divisadero yet or not. She did get these two little old-fashioned houses and connect them so she'd have more space.

Riess: Did you know other members of her family?

Marcus: I met her sister, [Emma], who was Mrs. North, and her sister's husband, and they had this one son, Morgan North. I knew them, yes.

Riess: She had a brother, didn't she?

Marcus: Yes. I heard her once speak of her brother, but I don't know that he was still alive at that time. I'm not sure. She was not a talkative person. She just would appear, and she'd see what was going on.

About these steps up to our top floor--I told you there were these skeleton steps to begin with. She'd been away, perhaps in Mexico, and came back. As she went up the steps, I heard her say to the builder that there was to be one more step.





## LOMBARD STREET

by Hettie Belle Marcus

In the spring of 1920, Mr. Marcus and I decided that we would like to live in San Francisco. With our infant daughter, Virginia, we had been living for some time with Mr. Marcus' mother at her lovely old estate in Menlo Park. The property was at the corner of Middlefield Road and Oak Grove Avenue. A most delightful place at that time, her neighbors were the Donahoes, Nichels and Floods.

The daily commuting had become arduous for Mr. Marcus -- thus, our decision. Our hope was to find a home on Russian Hill. By good luck, a friend told us that she had seen "for rent" signs on two homes on Lombard Street. I hurried to San Francisco and found the owner of 1040 Lombard -- Mrs. Mary Watson -- who showed me the home. She had purchased it as an investment -- from Mrs. Pissis. Mr. Pissis had died, and Mrs. Pissis did not wish to remain there. I liked 1040, with its garden -- and rented it immediately, for one year. I did not look at the second house that was for rent -- the one next to the west -- soon afterwards purchased by Mrs. Abdy.

Mr. Pissis had been a well-known architect -- had built many of the down town buildings after the earthquake and fire. Our home was built in 1911.

Mrs. Mary Watson lived up the hill, on the south side, in the flats now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Williams. The Watson family owned a laundry. These flats were full of family: Mr. and Mrs. Watson -- two sons and various sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, etc. Also -- Mary Watson owned the home to the rear of her flats -- this, rented to Mrs. McEvoy, a lovely widow with three charming daughters -- all career "gals". Beyond, in the garden was a tiny cottage -- owned by Mary and rented to Mr. and Mrs. Tenwinkle, a tiny couple, whose name describes them.

And so -- we soon moved to Lombard Street. At that time, the original great cobbles paved the street -- which was an unusable twenty-seven percent grade. On either side of the Street were straight, rough cement sidewalks -- with wooden cleats nailed across at intervals. These were never in good repair. Between the cobblestones enough earth had collected to encourage a variety of wild flowers, dandelions, etc. These greens frequently encouraged a herd of goats -- supposedly tethered in a great field off Chestnut Street -- where the San Francisco Art Institute now stands. They would come solemnly up the hill -- dragging their chains and stakes, enjoying their find.

At the corner of Lombard and Hyde Streets -- on the north side -- the first home belonged to Mr. Carl Henry -- a widower. This was a small portable house -- put there after the earthquake and fire -- and subsequently greatly improved by Mr. Henry. Mr. Henry had various interests -- Insurance



Agency -- Owl Drug Co., Etc. His property extended to Chestnut Street -- and down Chestnut to our eastern and northern property line. He had a fabulous garden -- and a building in the garden which served as social hall and wine cellar. It was said that he had one of the finest cellars in California. A Burns detective roamed his garden at night.

Mr. Henry had Japanese servants -- one might see the white coated little butler hovering near the door from 5 P.M. on -- watching for the chauffeured limousine.

Next, down the hill, was another portable house, in a charming garden. I am not sure who owned this property -- but at this time it was rented to "Annie Laurie" -- one of the first of the "sob sisters", I believe -- and a fascinating person! She had started out at the same time as William Randolph Hearst -- on the "Examiner" -- and came down the years with a syndicated daily column. She was short -- and much too heavy -- and teetered about on tiny feet. When at home she always wore high heeled red shoes. She had a shock of uncombed white hair -- and glittering green eyes. She could not talk without exaggeration and hyperbole. She held you with her fascinating eyes -- and you were completely under her spell. So -- there was no answer when she told about the son that she carried for eleven months -- and who weighed 16 lbs. at birth!

She had a son by her first marriage -- whom she saw drown in the surf at Carmel-by-the-Sea when a young man.

Later -- she married Mr. Bonfils - a newspaper man of Colorado. They had two children, I believe. "Annie Laurie", of course had a colorful servant -- Juanita, an American Indian -- Black Hawk and Cherokee mixture. Juanita wore gay cottons -- yellow, orange or red -- a beaded band around her hair -- and a great necklace of bears' teeth. All on the hill loved her!

These were the days when we all knew each other. If one was ill (Mary Watson alerted us) and we ran with hot soup or a cup custard. And each birthday was celebrated with a "surprise" party! "Annie Laurie" would tell some one that come Friday she would have a birthday -- and then be terribly surprised when we all burst in with cake and ice cream on her day. "Annie Laurie" and Hearst always remained the closest friends. She told us about him -- as a father with his four little sons -- interesting episodes.

Years went on -- and when "Annie Laurie" moved -- Dr. and Mrs. Clain Gelston moved into the little home. We met them in a strange way. We were awakened in the middle of the night by a cry of "Help! Help!" Mr. Marcus ran out -- the Gelston house was on fire! Firemen came, put out the fire -- but Dr. and Mrs. Gelston and a house guest could not stay there -- even after the fire was extinguished. We brought them to our home -- moved the children -- and somehow made room for the three. Next morning at a "pajama" breakfast they introduced themselves. Dr. Gelston - a pediatrician, had his training under Dr. Langley Porter -- who took him to France as his assistant in World War I. Mrs. Gelston went as a Red Cross nurse. All were



decorated by the French Government.

This property was acquired by Mary Watson -- who soon sold it to Mr. Carl Henry.

Next came the Abdy home. Mrs. Abdy was an excellent, well-known artist. She painted all of the California Missions -- supposedly the finest series extant. Mrs. Abdy was frail -- had a serious congenital lameness. She had a lovely car and chauffeur -- which would await her at the bottom of the hill. She had no time or strength for social contacts. I do not remember that she ever smiled. Mr. Abdy was a "would be" writer. They were finally divorced -- and when Mrs. Abdy died she left the property to the "Shriner's Hospital".

Next -- below 1040 -- the property now owned by the Arthur Caylors-- was owned by the Schwarzenbecks. European born -- Mrs. Schwarzenbeck was dour looking and had a serious congenital lameness. Mr. Schwarzenbeck was very handsome -- and gray Van Dyke beard. They had a handsome son. They owned the "Red Cherry" Bakery and Restaurant. Mr. Schwarzenbeck was the baker (at least in early days) and Mrs. Schwarzenbeck watched over the Restaurant -- and kept the books. They were open in the evening -- and we always knew when Mrs. Schwarzenbeck returned at night between 10 and 11 P.M. -- because she always closed her front door with a bang that even reverberated in our home! Because it was easier for our little children -- we called her "Mrs. Red Cherry".

Next -- in the home now owned by the Dignans, lived Mr. and Mrs. Arques and their two sons. They were a silent family -- but a well-knit one. Always went up and down the hill by two or by four. We had a bowing acquaintance only. Mr. Arques was a builder of barges -- his plant on the Sausalito waterfront. I believe the sons carry on this business even now. They changed the home into flats before leaving the hill.

Next came a vacant lot -- quite steep from the sidewalk -- where our children sometimes played. There was an old foundation up there -- where once some telegraphic instrument had stood. Eventually the Petris built their home there. Mr. and Mrs. Petri have two sons -- this is the family well known for success in tobacco and wine.

The Bercuts bought the Petri home eventually -- and it is now owned by the Charles N. Fulchers.

On the corner of Lombard and Leavenworth lived the Charles Cushings. Mr. Cushing was an eminent lawyer -- the firm Cushing and Cushing was well known -- his brother was O. K. Cushing. It was a great privilege to be invited to their home -- where one met only distinguished guests. They also had a very charming country place on the Hecker Pass. I was fortunate enough to be invited to this charming old home.





Mrs. Cushing told me that she had lived in Oakland as a child -- and at times she would drive to San Francisco, with her family, via San Jose -- to visit the Livermore family who lived on the other "bump" of Russian Hill. From Florence and Vallejo Streets, they could see to the Presidio -- most of the expanse covered with great flowering orchards!

At this time, from our second floor -- we could easily see the activity at Fisherman's Wharf. When it was learned that apartment houses were planned for the northwest and southwest corners of Chestnut and Leavenworth Streets -- a clamour arose! Residents, led by the Cushings and Mrs. Carlisle descended on the City Hall. To no avail however -- as there was already an apartment house on Chestnut between Leavenworth and Hyde Streets. On the vacant property on Chestnut Street -- belonging to Mr. Carl Henry -- stood an old yellow barn or stable. Mr. Frank Carroll Giffen used this as his studio. He was a well-known tenor -- and teacher of voice. The Giffen home was the charming old home at the northeast corner of Hyde and Chestnut. It had a "widow's walk" -- and a beautiful ornamental bronze fence. It was a crime that it was demolished. Mr. Giffen told us that at one time the George Hearsts maintained a town house at Leavenworth and Chestnut -- and in the yellow barn the stablemen taught W. R. Hearst to clog dance.

At the top of the hill, on the southeast corner -- lived Mr. and Mrs. Lauren Addison Norris. They had no children. Mr. Norris retired, was a devoted yachtsman, who had won many trophies. Tragically -- Mr. Norris fell from his yacht -- off Sausalito, and was drowned. This was in 1930. Mrs. Norris, a beautiful woman, of Bohemian ancestry -- lived on the hill for 38 years, cared for by a wonderful Chinese servant. She now lives at the Cathedral Apartments.

Next down the hill came flats -- later made into tiny apartments.

Next -- the Watson property.

Next came a little home completely smothered in huge trees. Here lived Mr. Volkman -- and his second wife -- who had been a spinster school teacher. Mr. Volkman had come to San Francisco in early days, with other German friends -- among them Mr. August Schilling. Mr. Schilling made his fortune in coffee and spices, Mr. Volkman in grain and seeds. Mr. and Mrs. Volkman had raised eleven children -- the youngest, Elfie, I knew well. Later she married Percy Goode. When Mrs. Volkman -- and their father married again his children seldom saw him. No one on the hill knew the Volkmans by sight.

Next came property quite below the street level -- wooden steps led down. Here was a funny little house owned by a widower, Mr. Maisch. He was head of "trouble" for the S. F. Water Co. I believe his home was later





converted by Mr. Tait for his daughter. Now it is the charming home of Lucinda and Robert Auger.

As did many Italians of North Beach -- Mr. Maisch made his own red wine -- and Mr. Marcus and I would be invited, of a Sunday morning, to sample his new wine -- from a huge barrel standing on a frame in the garden. Perhaps Mr. Maisch had already done too much sampling!

The wine presses went from home to home -- and at night we could hear the Italians singing as they pressed their grapes. Vacant lots in our vicinity received the sour "mash" at this time. A favorite vacant lot for such -- was the southwest corner of Lombard and Leavenworth, where Constance Tydeman eventually decided to build a charming apartment house.

When we had lived at 1040 for a year, a friend telephoned on Sunday and informed us that our house was advertised for sale in the morning paper! When Mary Watson was questioned she said, "Well, yes -- we have decided that we have acquired too much property -- and would sell some. But of course it would be understood that you could rent 1040 as long as you wished." Of course we soon owned it -- and when property owners on the hill were summoned to the Engineer's office at City Hall in 1922 -- we were among those present.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy explained that a young engineer in his office -- one Clyde Healy, had a "brain storm" -- and felt sure that the hill could be opened, with his plan -- and the grade reduced from 27% to from 11 to 16% -- and so made usable. The city was willing to build the street -- if the property owners would pay for brick steps adjacent to their property -- do the planting and maintain it (it was supposed to be grass) and put in the electroliers and maintain them. And so -- it was agreed. There were several City Hall sessions -- at one we property owners suggested strongly -- that as long as the hill would be torn up -- why not put all utilities underground. "Oh! No! -- said the City Fathers -- "We have a plan for this -- and will not reach you for several years. (The time came when all was torn up again.)

There was enthusiasm at first -- a committee chose the planting, the cost of which the property owners prorated -- then we were to each give \$5.00 a month for maintenance. The Misses Wolf declared that they would contribute nothing if veronica was planted on the hill! It proved impossible to collect from the property owners -- and so -- for many years the Cushings and we were the only ones who contributed to the upkeep of the hill. It got beyond our little Italian gardener -- Tony Scavo -- became overgrown -- until Mr. Bercut arrived with his hatchet! The \$5.00 monthly water bill was paid for from Mr. Cushing's office.

Electroliers were supposed to be placed on each rampart -- the electric wire is deep in each round hole. But Altho' there was some effort -- this was not accomplished. Mrs. Cushing and I found beautiful electroliers



on a wrecker's dump -- they had come from the Great Highway -- near the Cliff House -- when the highway was enlarged, and the lighting changed. Bronze standards, with three light globes -- we said that we would buy and cut them down. For some reason this was not allowed.

For many years - two-way traffic was allowed on the street.

By 1935 -- we were seven living at 1040 -- so decided to put on another floor, Julia Morgan was our architect -- a remarkable, but frail little woman. She had built "Wynton" on the McCloud River, for the George Hearsts -- and "San Simeon" for Wm. R. Hearst -- and at this time was building a palace, or great Hacienda for Mr. Hearst -- in Mexico. Miss Morgan would tell us that she would be absent for a day or two -- would fly to Mexico in Hearst's private plane. Eventually this project came to naught -- as Hearst's properties, mines, etc., in Mexico were confiscated.

Came a time, when Mr. Carl Henry married Mrs. Landis. But all too soon -- he put his head down on his desk one day -- and was gone. His estate was so involved that it was imperative to sell part of his property. Montclair Terrace was the result of this sale.

The Carl Henry property is now owned and lived in by Mrs. John B. Metcalf -- a daughter of Henry Huntington.

And so -- as of January 1965 -- the Marcus family is the only one on this block -- that was here in 1920.

HETTIE BELLE MARCUS



Marcus: He said, "Well, we kind of thought we didn't need it." So, those steps were almost steep.

She took me aside and she said, "My plan calls for one more step, which would make it a much easier tread." She said, "I can have them take the whole thing out." And I said, "Well, I have to leave it to you." So, she didn't have it changed. The steps were always a little steep, but they were all right for us.

You know, I can't imagine her--of course, she could've said, "Now, you'll have to take that all out"--but I can't imagine her ever fighting. She was too quiet for that.

Riess: It sounds like she handled that graciously.

Marcus: This was a very minor thing, but she noticed it immediately. Of course, she knew everything.

One time--I forget whether this was when she was building our top floor or just after...She had a little home in Monterey where she used to go and do some of her work, and she asked me if I'd like to go down for a weekend with her. I was, of course, very happy and very complimented that she wanted me. The family thought it would be lovely too for me to go, so I drove her down. Up towards the woods above Monterey there was a lovely home with a drive in, and we went along the drive. Behind this big mansion was a smaller home that she owned. And she used to work there sometimes.

Riess: Had she built either of these?

Marcus: I don't know. I don't think they were hers. So, she went right to work. I read and walked in the woods. We'd stop for meals and go find some nice place to eat, and she'd go back to her work. We went back to town on Monday, and she said, "I just wanted you near me."

Riess: Isn't that nice.

Marcus: So, I enjoyed that very much, seeing the way she worked and so forth.

Riess: She must have had great trust in you as someone who wouldn't make any particular demands of her.

Marcus: She'd come to know me quite well. As I say, I met her first when she was building the Residence Club, because we put on our top floor later, in 1935, and this was 1932.



Riess: [Reading from Mrs. Marcus' essay.] "She had built Wyntoon on the McCloud River for the George Hearsts and San Simeon for William Randolph Hearst, and at this time was building a palace, a great hacienda, for Mr. Hearst in Mexico. Miss Morgan would tell us that she would be absent for a day or two, and fly to Mexico in Mr. Hearst's private plane. Eventually the project came to naught, as Hearst's properties, mines, etc. in Mexico were confiscated."

Marcus: Because of the change of authority in Mexico, there were lots of such things.

Riess: I think that one would have been tempted to find out as much as you could about William Randolph Hearst, trying to have a good gossip, and yet that wasn't possible, I take it, with Miss Morgan. She was--

Marcus: Oh, no.

Riess: --very private.

Marcus: I wouldn't have thought of asking any questions.

She did say--I think he had four little sons, he had twins, and I think he had four sons--she did speak of his devotion to these little boys, and whenever he was away and came back, that always there'd be a little gift, a little leather coat or something for each little boy. I took it that when they were growing up he was very close to them.

Riess: I guess that anyone living so close to that family would have to be very discreet.

Marcus: Well, of course, she was that kind of person.

Riess: After your time of knowing her around the building of the house, did you continue to have contact with her?

Marcus: No. She was a very busy person. But when the top floor was finished, she was the first person that had lunch with me out there on the balcony. She said to me when she was building--it was a very, very shallow lot, about thirty-eight feet, that this house was built on--she said, "You know, San Francisco's going to change. But you'll never lose all of your view or all of your sunshine." To the east--right up against the house on the west, and to the east, between the two bedrooms on the top--she put a little balcony there, so they'd go from bedroom to bedroom, and





Marcus: there's be a little sunning place, and a little air place.

She wanted to have this great big balcony in front. She began at the basement, and she pushed every floor out so there not only was this new top loft, but it improved the whole home. Because before just this one couple, Mr. and Mrs. Pissis, had lived there. The dining room was small, the basement--the laundry boy was so happy because he had much more room.

Then the third floor bedroom came out, the dining room came out of the second floor, and then, of course, it looked right for this great big balcony on top.

It was very, very livable. There's a court to the north, a beautiful view. And, of course, the south, the whole city view from this balcony. Lovely at night; you even forgive the Pyramid now. [Laughter.]

Riess: How much was she on the job? How much supervision did she provide?

Marcus: She seemed to appear and be there; I can't say just how much, but frequently. She didn't seem to stay long, but she would give her instructions, and, of course, they had all the blueprints.

Riess: How did she work with you and your family in the beginning about planning out just what would suit?

Marcus: We just talked about things and left them entirely to her.

There was this great big balcony in front. There were two bedrooms and two baths, and it looked very feminine, because she knew that my two little daughters that were in their teens were going to be up there. So, there were those tiny little tubs that you've seen. Those were the first we ever saw. The girls were so delighted with those. Then there was a huge living room at the north with a view, a fireplace. There was a little kitchenette and bar.

Time went on, and my daughters were married, and I couldn't use the whole house. So, that top floor has been rented. Now the whole building is rented, the whole house.

There's a great big north garden. I always had a coffee out there in the spring because of spring planting. Beautiful trees, Japanese flowering trees.

When we lived there first it had a sloping lawn, but Miss Morgan put in a big brick terrace, which was much more useful. The terrace



Marcus: was laid out by some of the San Simeon workers that she'd brought from Italy. And the fireplace, and so forth.

Riess: She thought that this would be a good idea, so she mentioned this?

Marcus: No, she didn't, and it didn't happen right away. But I asked her--after she had finished the top floor--I said that in order to keep the lawn, we'd have to keep it wet, and, of course, the children couldn't really be out on the lawn. Wouldn't it be much more useful to have a terrace? She said, "Oh, yes."

She brought a little Italian worker, and she told me he was working by the hour. She said the brick terrace will never sag. (It never has, of course.) He put in a little fireplace, because at that time we did have fires in the garden, have a barbecue. (Now there's a law against it.) He fixed the metal part so we'd have a spit, and it was very complete.

I remember she came one time and went into the garden where he was working. She came back to me, and she said, "He'll just go on here hour after hour; he doesn't want to leave." But she said, "I think we'll call this about finished." [Laughter.]

She put in the garden a little design that she had put on the top floor. She used a lot of this [indicates scalloping] on the top floor. She liked little scallops. And in the living room it came around at the top. She used some on the balcony, I think. I forget. Then there was iron grille and so forth.

When she came to do the garden, she made a little pool that shape. Then she had him outline the garden in the same design.

Riess: It sounds perfect.

Marcus: Charming, yes. Of course, I miss that garden. I always used to have a coffee in the springtime, have seventy or a hundred people there, you know.

Riess: We all know that she was the first woman to graduate from the engineering school at Berkeley, and the first woman from the Beaux Arts. When you first met her, were you impressed with this kind of thing?

Marcus: No, I didn't know anything about it, except I knew that she was a very successful architect.



Riess: But as sort of woman to woman--

Marcus: No, never anything mentioned. No bragging. I didn't even know then that she had been in France. Of course, I knew these things later.

Riess: And there was no question in your mind that a woman could be a superb architect?

Marcus: Just this great simplicity and modesty, that was the thing that was very evident.

Transcriber: Ann Weinstock  
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The Julia Morgan Architectural History Project

Bjarne Dahl  
Bjarne Dahl, Jr.

REMINISCENCES ABOUT JULIA MORGAN

Interview conducted by

Sara Holmes Boutelle





## BJARNE DAHL AND BJARNE DAHL, JR.: REMINISCENCES ABOUT JULIA MORGAN

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## REMINISCENCES ABOUT JULIA MORGAN

An interview with Bjarne Dahl and Bjarne Dahl, Jr. March 11, 1975.

Working for Julia Morgan

- Dahl: I was employed the first time to design a garage for the Hearst estate--a ten-car garage, I think. [Laughter.]
- Boutelle: For which place of the Hearsts?
- Dahl: San Simeon. That's when she started to do the work.
- Boutelle: How did you get to Miss Morgan, though? Did you just walk in and ask for a job? Or did somebody send you?
- Dahl: No, I belonged to the Engineers' Association, and they sent me up there.
- Boutelle: She advertised, perhaps?
- Dahl: She advertised that there was a place vacant. At that time she was hiring quite a few people; she was looking for people for San Simeon. Around the same time she sent my good friend Camille Rossi, a big structural engineer and an architect, down to put up the San Simeon castle. See, she was the contractor and he was the superintendent. He was there for twenty years. He designed the building at that time.

After twenty years he got to be pretty friendly with Mr. Hearst, and he tried to take over. He didn't obey her orders, and she [Julia Morgan] let him go. [General laughter.]

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\*Dahl, whose devotion to Julia Morgan is salted with his own humor, was delighted to talk about her with Morgan Stedman, her cousin of the Connecticut branch of the Morgans, now a practicing architect, F.A.I.A., in Palo Alto, and with the interviewer to whom he had written after seeing a piece in the Chronicle of July 2, 1975, describing her research effort. We met in his Los Altos home where he has lived for nearly thirty years, surrounded by his treasures from Hawaii, his gardens, fruit-trees, and rare privacy. He has many letters from Julia Morgan and at least one large art book which she gave him--also her father's stamp collection. His first wife, a nurse, died a few years ago, after which he was remarried to the recently widowed "Thelma," who had been one of the YWCA belles in Honolulu in the '20's, courted by at least two of the Morgan architects on the YWCA job, although she was at that time unwilling to settle down. Mr. Dahl's son, Bjarne also, came in for the latter part of the interview and added his enthusiastic and devoted voice to the chorus. He is now a very large, ruddy man (built like his father) who must have been a handful at 12 for the spinster of nearly 70, but clearly they remained friends, and he now appreciates what a rare experience his was. His own home, family, and harpsichord business are in nearby Sunnyvale,



Boutelle: It had to be a one-man show.

Dahl: He wanted to do certain things, and didn't consult her, and she didn't want it done that way. Poor Mr. Rossi.

Mrs. Dahl: Is he living?

Dahl: No. He died some years back.

Now, when I worked in the office--if you know her office, it was pretty big. She had about fifteen people in the office. And she always loved to have girls and train them. She trained me, too.

I was always interested in working, and I worked all hours; I couldn't make anything if I wasn't into it. It wasn't money. All I was interested in was work. We used to work until ten or eleven o'clock every night--just she and I. [Laughter.] If we got hungry, she'd take me down to different restaurants. We'd go and eat at the Oyster House, or some Italian place. It was always a nice dinner, of course.

Boutelle: Excuse me for interrupting you, but did she eat? Some people have said that she usually just had soup.

Dahl: No, when we went out to eat, she ate.

Boutelle: I'm glad to hear that.

Dahl: Then one time she took me to San Simeon with her. We left at eight o'clock at night, and we got down to San Simeon early, early in the morning.

Mrs. Dahl: On the train?

Dahl: On the train. Then we'd take a taxi up to San Simeon. When we got up there, she'd work with the contractor all day long. And I'd go 'round--at that time they were finishing the three cottages, and I would work on those--go 'round and see what I could see in the cottages. They were building the big buildings.

Then it was time to go home. We'd get home the next morning, and I'd be pooped--all tired out [chuckle]--and she'd go right to the door and go over and go to work, and have another trip some other place. She was never tired.

I was mostly interested in doing all the YWCA buildings. Besides the Honolulu YWCA, I drew one for Fresno, and then I drew one for the

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\*happily for his father, whose health is somewhat uncertain but spirit absolutely dauntless. - S.B.



Dahl: Hollywood Studio Club, and I worked on the Long Beach one. Then I worked on the King's Daughters Home in Oakland and on another big home in San Francisco. Oh, so many homes--big institutions was my job; I'm the big institutions...

Mrs. Dahl: Not private homes?

Dahl: No, institutions.

One time we had to work--Hearst wanted the biggest skyscraper in San Francisco for his paper. I was assigned to go with a Mr. Pancose [sp.?], who was the designer for all the machinery. I had a wonderful memory at that time, and he used to take me with him to go and inspect the other--was it the Chronicle that de Young was building at that time?

Boutelle: Yes, I think so.

Dahl: Well, we'd go through his plant. Pancose says, "We can't take any notes, but you remember this..." We'd go through all these different rooms where the machinery was, and he'd say, "Now, you memorize this and see how far that is from the wall, and is it so high." When we got back, we'd lay out the plant.

Later on, in one of her letters, she tells me that they didn't go ahead with the San Francisco Examiner [building]--too costly, I think. But he wanted to have the biggest building in San Francisco.

Mrs. Dahl: That one never materialized?

Dahl: No.

[Tape off.]

Boutelle: The building that's on Fifth and Market, I think it is, has some grill work and things that she did. She did some face lifting on it; she didn't really build that.

Dahl: One time she sent me to Los Angeles to the San Francisco Examiner down there. They had to do some work, and I was sent down there. And I drew the plans for the Pasadena YWCA--the great big gymnasium and social hall. I was sent down there for a month or two to put that up. She used to come down, and then we'd go out to lunch.

[Tape off.] ...Apartments for Mr. and Mrs. Hart North--I think that's a fourplex. She did an extra good job, and she was so tickled that she gave me a raise--ten dollars a week, I think.





- Dahl: Then, when they got through building it, she found out they forgot to put any drawers in the kitchen. [General laughter.]
- Boutelle: Now, when you made those apartments did you do the design, or did she do the first design?
- Dahl: No. She designed everything.
- Boutelle: That's what I thought.
- Dahl: Yes, she always designed everything, and then us draftsmen would take over.
- Boutelle: From what? Would she give you a little sketch, or what?
- Dahl: No, everything that was designed was almost perfect.
- Mrs. Dahl: To scale on her large drawing board?
- Dahl: Oh, yes, sure. She worked night and day on those boards. And then I would also work night and day with her.
- Mrs. Dahl: Were the girls learning to be draftsmen also?
- Dahl: Yes. Girls were always pretty good at it too.
- Mrs. Dahl: Isn't that interesting in that early day!
- Dahl: But she'd give them heck, too, if they didn't do right.

#### Friendly Relations

- Dahl: Several times when she had her place down there in Monterey [Cedar Street, just off Franklin], she would come by here [Los Gatos] and stop here overnight.
- Boutelle: When you say "here," what do you mean--to this house?
- Dahl: To my house here. And then I'd take her down and we'd spend the day here, and have lunch; then the two of us would spend the week-end down there, and then I'd come home. My wife was with me. And she came down especially to hear Bjarne, my son, play the piano. She was interested in his advancement.



Dahl: Every time J.M. went on a trip to Italy or Europe or Guatemala-- (she always wanted to see the Canary Islands)--she always sent me pictures, postcards, and letters of her trips. One time she went to Mexico, and while she was buying her ticket somebody stole her watch right from where she carried it. She was so burned up [laughter]--"Those darned Mexicans."

Mrs. Dahl: Oh, Mexicans did it! [Laughter.]

Dahl: One time she went down to Santa Barbara early in the morning; it was the time they had the big earthquake [1923?]. She was standing there talking to a fellow on the corner, and the shock was so great that it threw her to the middle of the street. She crawled on her hands and knees, and, when she turned around, the man was gone. They found him under a ton of bricks later.

Boutelle: Frank Hellenthal told that he worked on the Long Beach Y, and he said that the day after that earthquake he got a quick telegram from her saying, "Drive down and see how the Y held up." She was interested in her buildings, after they were in use.

Dahl: One time I drew plans for a church in Saratoga. The people raised the tower on her, and we went down there and looked at it. Oh, that burned her up; they had spoiled her design.

Boutelle: Oh, and the reason they had done that was that Senator Phelan had been asked for \$3,000 to help with the tower, and he said, "Make it a bigger tower and I'll give you \$18,000." So, they made it bigger. [Laughter.]

[Tape off.]

Dahl: Once I had ulcers of the stomach, and I was pretty pale. She wouldn't let me come to the office; I had to stay in her house on Divisadero for a whole week. She was trying to patch me up.

Another thing...when I was in Honolulu, we were invited out to dinner with the board members of the YWCA. I had to pick her up and bring her there, and I was a half hour late; I had a flat tire. And she was mad. And that was the first time I had seen her with a beautiful silk gown.

Boutelle: One of the women in the Y at Honolulu said that her only concession to dressing up there, that she saw, was to put on a silk blouse that was very pretty. But she still wore a suit. I guess that woman hadn't been at the dinner party and didn't know.



Dahl: It was at Mrs. Andrews' house.

She [Julia Morgan] was the best friend I ever had. And every Christmas she divided up all her dividends with all her employees. She didn't keep anything for herself; everyone was her big family.

Boutelle: Was Thaddeus Joy there?

Dahl: Yes. He was there. One day Thaddeus and I and a couple of other fellows were going down to Los Angeles on a trip to see the different buildings, sometime in 1931, and she had a nice dinner party for all of us, and I saw all of the oldtimers again. I'd been away; I left her in Honolulu in 1926. She fired me! [Coughs or guffaws.]

Mrs. Dahl: Oh!

Dahl: When I wouldn't come back. She sent me my ticket three times, and I wouldn't come back.

Then I got a job with C.W. Dickey Company, and then I got a job as territorial architect for eight years. One time I asked her--I wanted to come back, and she said, "No, we haven't any more work." [Laughter.] [Tape off.]

She and William Randolph Hearst went to Europe on a buying trip for books--beautiful books. When she came back, she said, "I can't keep all these beautiful books; I'm going to give you one." So, she gave me this book--a beautiful book of Chartres Cathedral, a most beautiful book. I want to give it back to her foundation. Is it the North Foundation?

Boutelle: No, I think it would really be best if you gave it to The Bancroft Library.

Dahl: 1922 was when she gave me that. A beautiful book. You couldn't buy it now. This is really an antique.

Bjarne Dahl, Jr.

B.D., Jr.: He has so many stories...

Mrs. Dahl: ...no one else has had contact like that with her.



Boutelle: I know. So, he is really fascinating.

Stedman: Would you just say, so I won't forget, the fact that you went to live with her for six months.

Mrs. Dahl: When the bomb fell.

B.D., Jr.: I'll explain this. I was born and raised in Hawaii. At the time of the war, Dad was recruited into the U.S. engineers, and my mother became a nurse heading a Red Cross unit. Of course, they had no time for me; I was alone most of the time. So, they decided to send me to the mainland--the United States--from Hawaii, for fear, at that time, that there would be a Japanese invasion, and so forth.

Dahl: First we were going to send you to Omaha, Nebraska, to Lexington [?]. Julia Morgan said no, she'd rather take you than send you to the Lexington. She'd rather have you.

B.D., Jr.: So, she decided to take me on, and I was just a twelve-year-old brat! But Dad had...

Dahl: He's forty-five now. [Laughter.]

B.D., Jr.: He had had very close contact with Julia throughout the years, ever since he left for Hawaii. Anyway, I came over on a convoy. I was put in the guardianship of a retired army couple that were coming over here. I was under their care on this ship.

Julia Morgan had arranged for a Red Cross car to meet me at the ship, at Pier 47; I remember that. A cab took me directly to her office at the Merchants' Exchange Building in San Francisco, where I met her for the first time. It was quite interesting because she was working; she was as busy as all get out. She had a staff. I don't know how many guys she had working in that building--about twelve guys, or something.

So, I was guided into her presence, and I saw this little old lady. I stayed there until she was finished, and then we took the cable car and went to her house on Divisadero Street. She had a room all set up for me.

Boutelle: Downstairs or up?

B.D., Jr.: No, no, it was on the bottom, where she lived, in her flat. The other flats were rented out. She had three ladies--working girls--at the time. There was Miss Kidney, and Miss Hale, and then there





B.D., Jr.: was another one.

Boutelle: Betty McClave. She and Miss Kidney both live in Carmel Valley now.

B.D., Jr.: But Julia had this whole complex; or, Miss Morgan did. So, right away I finished up. She enrolled me into the Union School on top of [Divisadero?]. I forget the name. Was it Union Street? I think it was Union Street.

Mrs. Dahl: Yes.

B.D., Jr.: She enrolled me promptly, so I could finish my sixth-grade education. And, oh, I had a lot of adventures there.

Mrs. Dahl: Tell them about the footwear.

B.D., Jr.: Well, coming from Hawaii, we never wore shoes. I decided to go to school barefooted. Miss Morgan wouldn't have that. She said, "You're not going to be a savage; you're going to school and be a gentleman." [Laughter.] So, I had to be a gentleman. And I got shoes. It's kind of funny, because I was having an adjustment problem--a whole cultural adjustment, you might say--at the time.

Mrs. Dahl: Because the Islands were so different then.

B.D., Jr.: They were totally different, and life was easier. But here everybody was so polite. Over there we'd just shove elbows and say, "Aw, get out of the way," or, "You like to fight?" This kind of stuff. But over here, "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean..." I was really quite shocked at the politeness--of even the kids!

But as far as I can remember, she was awfully good to me--very patient.

She and I would go on these little jaunts into town. She ate very conservatively. She was not an ostentatious woman: we would go to Compton's Cafeteria; or we would go to Moore's [?]; or once we went to Bernstein's Fish Grotto. We would have our food, and for breakfast, or for a light dinner, she would buy these chip steaks. I always remember that--these little chip steaks that she used to buy, because she ate like a canary and was not very used to big eating.

The ladies there also took an interest in me. I remember--I think it was Miss McClave who had a car, I believe, didn't she? She drove.



Boutelle: Yes, she's the one that was likely to.

B.D., Jr.: Well, we went on a picnic once, overlooking--across the Golden Gate, up in those hills. We had a very nice picnic. They were very nice to me, all these ladies. I don't know what they were doing. I think they were secretaries, or whatever. They were working...

But every day after school, when Miss Morgan wasn't home, I would go down to her office, and she would show me books of architecture, and she would give me tracing jobs--little jobs, you know, to trace this and that. It was very interesting, getting this little background into what her thoughts were.

Maybe every other day we would go to the Tele-News theater. At that time they were showing war newsreels and things of that nature. We'd go to the Tele-News and see what was going on in the world. She was very up-to-date.

Then we'd go to the Fleishhacker Zoo. She would take me on these Saturday excursions, just to show me the city. We went on top of Coit Tower once.

One thing about her, she was absolutely a fearless woman. She wasn't afraid of a doggone thing. There was one time when she fell off a scaffold. Did Dad tell you that story?

Mrs. Dahl: No.

B.D., Jr.: [To Dahl.] Do you remember that--when she fell off into the Sacramento River? Yes, Rossi used to tell about when Miss Morgan insisted on going up on the scaffold on a construction job. And a wind came and blew her off. She went down about three or four stories into the river. To this day they don't know how she survived.

Boutelle: And did someone rescue her?

B.D., Jr.: Oh, yes, they pulled her out, you know. She insisted on going up on the scaffold. Then right after they pulled her out, she still wanted to go back up. She was totally fearless.

She told me once that she went up in an airplane; I think it was before the First World War. The poor guy--the aviator--who was flying; it was a double-seated plane...

Mrs. Dahl: Open cockpit?



B.D., Jr.: Open cockpit. It got stuck in the clouds. They went into clouds, and they kept going up higher and higher, and the clouds kept going up, and they didn't know where the heck they were. [Laughter.] The pilot was afraid to come down. She didn't care; she was a little worried, but...Finally the guy managed to pull out, and they landed. But they kept going around and around. They were trying to break cloud cover, and in those days it was pretty risky.

One day we decided to go to Playland-on-the-Beach. I'd never been there. We'd been to Sutro's, and also to the Cliff House, and seen the museum collection and all the music boxes and so forth. She says, "Oh, let's go on the roller-coaster," and we did!

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The Julia Morgan Architectural History Project

Morgan North  
Flora D'Ille North

THREE CONVERSATIONS WITH MORGAN AND  
FLORA NORTH ABOUT JULIA MORGAN.

Interview conducted by

Suzanne B. Riess





## THREE CONVERSATIONS WITH MORGAN AND FLORA NORTH ABOUT JULIA MORGAN

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THREE CONVERSATIONS WITH MORGAN AND FLORA NORTH ABOUT JULIA MORGAN.

Interview 1, September 25, 1974.

Childhood Home and Family

Riess: Do you remember Julia Morgan reminiscing about her own childhood?

Flora: Seldom.

Morgan: Occasionally to illustrate a point or something like that she'd mention something, or some little thing that interested her. But by and large, I think most of the things she did were in her own mind and came out on the drawing board but not verbally.

Riess: By way of letting you answer rumors, I have heard, or read, that because she had to clean the staircase in her own large home as a child so many times, she always designed modest staircases in her residences--so nobody would be set to that task as she had been.

Flora: I doubt that.

Morgan: It was not exactly a one-man operation; they had a staff there, I'm sure, of substance. I don't think any of the children ever did anything like that, cleaning the stairs and so on.

Flora: Perhaps she was shocked with the change in the availability of help in her lifetime. After all, the Chinese servant was so available way into her life, into the time she was fifty or sixty, that help was never a problem.





Charles Bill Morgan home, 14th & Brush Sts., Oakland.





Morgan: No, but right up to the end she had help.

Flora: She always had help; so did your mother.

Riess: But the whole concept of the bungalow was of a simple existence that didn't involve help, wasn't it?

Flora: Not really. It was a matter of indoor-outdoor living, which was only coming into vogue--fresh air and sunshine and that sort of thing, which was a revolt of some kind against the Victorian era when everybody was a hothouse flower. I think that influenced her thinking.

For instance, when Esherick built the University Y, he took measurements of everything in her earlier Y so that he could reproduce those proportions. That was a very inexpensive building, but it was done on the basis that all rooms could be expanded or compressed for purposes of the use of the building.

Her primary idea all through it [original University YWCA] was flexibility, and that's all a bungalow to her meant--that you could expand your area by being out in the garden, but it would still be part of the house because there would be architecturally some walls or something that would suggest to you that you were still encompassed by your own walls. But still you have this fresh air and out-of-doors feeling, which was a concept she embraced.

Some of her drawings of bungalows have five bathrooms and such things, so that they're not our concept of a bungalow, by a long shot.

Riess: Let's begin at the beginning. What were Julia Morgan's parents doing in California? Were they a pioneer family?

Morgan: No, I wouldn't say they were pioneers. They came out about 1869 or so, somewhere in there I guess; I've forgotten precisely.

Flora: And with their nurses and this and that, they lived at the Palace Hotel all the time they were deciding where to live and where to build and what to build.

Morgan: They had the house on Castro Street for several years before that and then they built this house [14th & Brush Streets, Oakland] when they decided they were going to stay.

My grandfather thought he was going to be a sugar broker, and he had ideas that he might be headquartering in the Islands. But



- Morgan: that never materialized, and he didn't make it as a sugar broker.
- Riess: It sounds very adventurous, being on the east coast and imagining being a sugar broker in Hawaii.
- Flora: He had a wealthy wife; it was easy to be adventurous.
- Riess: So she had the family fortunes? And was she the one, then, with the adventurous soul, do you think? I mean, if we can figure out what made Julia Morgan tick--
- Flora: Just a spark of genius is all.
- Morgan: That's all. There were five children, and out of the five she happened to have this.\* It skipped a generation.
- Flora: What about A.O. Parmelee? He was the--
- Morgan: I said it skipped a generation. Her mother and her father and all the members of both families on that side had very undramatic and unglamorous existences. Her grandfather was a cotton trader--I guess you'd call him an out-and-out gambler. His whole life was in buying and selling cotton futures. In his earlier days, he'd have this rig driven all through the South to assess the cotton crops, and most of the time he was right. If it looked like the crop was going to be scarce, he'd buy cotton early and sell it high later on; if it looked like the crop was going to be copious, why, he'd sell it short. So, he'd make money both ways on the deal.
- Flora: They shut down the cotton exchange when he died. So, he was a big name in the field.
- Riess: And so that's her mother's father?
- Flora: Yes.
- Morgan: As I say, they could afford, in that generation, not to do too much, although everybody tried; but they weren't particularly

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\*Julia Morgan, b. 1872, of Charles Bill and Eliza Woodward (Parmelee) Morgan.



- Morgan: apt. All of a sudden, this perfectly clear vision and capacity to get a great deal done appeared in Julia Morgan. It hasn't shown up again since, so there you are.
- Riess: I thought her father was in mining too. No?
- Morgan: Yes and no. He was in airplanes, balloons, nails, farm machinery, sugar--most anything that didn't work he was in.
- Riess: Do you think a sense of all these near misses made her nervous and want to settle into something?
- Morgan: I don't think that affected her at all. When you're born to a certain level of living and this level of living continues, you don't think about it. They didn't have to think about the day-to-day thing, whether there was going to be any food or they had a roof over their heads or not. If they wanted to do something within reason, they did it. They weren't spendthrifts; they didn't have elaborate other houses in the country. The whole family would go to Catalina or Santa Cruz for the summer; they'd rent a small house down there, and that's the way it worked.
- Riess: There wasn't a big high sense of drama, then, about it?
- Morgan: No, not at all. I just think she was very determined that she was going to do what she wanted to do, and she had no fears about what she tackled. She was very much interested in medicine.
- Flora: And music.
- Morgan: They were exposed to music and they had a lot of fun at it, except Mother looked back with horror at the years she had to practice for hours and hours every day on the piano.
- Flora: Well, that was a form of discipline in those days. You weren't expected to become a concert pianist.
- Morgan: You know what happened...the front living room of the house had these old sliding doors, the kind where you pushed a button and the handle came out to pull the doors--even until the very last days of the house they fit perfectly--and the piano was in the room and what they did was pull the doors all closed and then they went into the parlor or stayed upstairs or something, and the pianist could bang away, and it was no particular agony to the household.
- Riess: Did they all suffer through it?



- Morgan: Avery played the violin and organ.
- Flora: Julia played the violin, and Emma the piano. I don't know what the others did.
- Riess: You said Julia was interested in medicine.
- Morgan: I think for a long time she thought seriously about going into medicine, but for some reason or other decided on architecture. I'm sure she could have handled medicine with no trouble at all. The architecture was difficult because there weren't any schools here for it.
- Riess: Did she talk about it? Is that how you know about the medicine thing?
- Morgan: Yes. And I guess my mother told me about it, and Julia too--that part of it. I don't know that my aunt ever did say anything about that, but I know my own parents did.
- Flora: Well, she was a very disciplined person, so it wouldn't matter too much. You see those people all the time who can tackle whatever it is that comes along. But her cousin, Pierre LeBrun, was probably the motivating force of her going into architecture because he built some of the first skyscrapers in New York City. They were very close. I have just boxes of letters between them, most of them in French. He left her his library when he died, and he was very interested in her career, and they compared notes always on what she was building and doing.
- Riess: That's very interesting. On which side of the family was he cousin?
- Morgan: The maternal side.
- Flora: The strong strain comes from the maternal side in this family.
- Riess: And I guess nobody had anything but good wishes for her making her way in the world? Or wouldn't there have been anything that could have stopped her anyway?
- Flora: No, I think her mother hoped for her that she'd have just a good marriage and a career that her mother could keep her finger on.
- Riess: How does the family sibling order work? Who are all the children in the family?
- Morgan: Parmalee Morgan was the eldest.





Flora: The mother's name was Eliza Woodward Parmelee.

Morgan: He was going to be a cotton broker, and somehow or other it didn't work out too well either. He finally died at a fairly early age in Los Angeles, I suspect of total frustration. That's only conjecture on my part.

Julia Morgan was the second, then my mother [Emma] was the third, Avery Morgan was the fourth, and Gardiner Morgan was the fifth.\* Gardiner Morgan was an adventurous soul. He couldn't find any adventure in Oakland except the fire department. Mathematics bored him, so he quit school.

Flora: Of course, the fire department was very social in those days.

Morgan: Oh, hell, no.

Flora: It was.

Riess: I don't know whether you're kidding me, or--

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\*[From a second interview.]

Flora: [Aunt Julia] was called Doodoo by her siblings, of course, and that made sense [similarity of sound to "Julia"].

Morgan: And my mother was always called "Emmaline."

Flora: Her name, she complained, was Emma, "nothing above the line, nothing below the line, just Emma."

Morgan: Gardiner was "Sam." Parmelee was called "Pon," and Avery was called "Gibby."

Riess: And the parents, were there pet names for them?

Morgan: No, it was always "Ma" and "Pa."



- Morgan: No, it was not. Excuse me, but it was very businesslike. The original old volunteer fire department was social, but I'm talking about the one of his maturity--1900.
- Flora: Okay. We were just in different decades.
- Morgan: He was 20 years old in 1900 when the department went from a volunteer to a full-paid department. At the age of 32, he was a battalion chief and he owned a moving and storage company, and an insurance agency, which today would look like a horrible conflict of interest for a fireman.
- Flora: They still moonlight today,
- Morgan: Yes, but nevertheless, these were both enterprises employing a fair number of people and he was well on the way to success. He was in line to be the major chief of the department; at the age of 32, that's moving along. But he was injured seriously in a wreck between the chief's car and a Southern Pacific train. The family has a history of hemophilia; he never recovered from it--never stopped hemorrhaging.
- Flora: And I live with two of them to this day. The most difficult thing is that my daughter has it, and that's very difficult to explain, because they're only beginning to learn about hemophilia.
- Riess: Yes, it's a dreadful thing to think about. We mentioned Avery before; can we get that on tape?
- Morgan: Yes. Avery was an extremely intellectual person. He followed his sister very closely educationally. He went to the University of California.
- Flora: Did he graduate in engineering too?
- Morgan: He graduated in engineering and belonged to Delta Upsilon fraternity. He led a more or less regular life. He was at the Beaux Arts after my aunt came back, a little later,
- Flora: That would have been after the 1906 earthquake.
- Morgan: No, not that late. But he came back and worked for a year or two here or there. No, I don't think he ever worked that long; he worked just a few weeks at the most. Usually the procedure would be to go out to lunch sometime and not come back. He'd do something. Then maybe he'd go down to a farm and work on a farm for a while because he just liked to work with horses or something of that



Morgan: nature. In other words, he didn't care to be--

Flora: I think in those days they called it "fey," didn't they?

Morgan: I suppose so.

Riess: Was he unhappy?

Morgan: No--a very cheerful person generally speaking.

Flora: He played the organ like an angel. He was very talented in every way.

Riess: And he did, I understand, drive Julia Morgan.

Flora: For some small period, yes. When it came to a place where she needed a pilot or a plane, that wasn't Avery.

Morgan: No. But I would say probably from about 1915 up to--let's see, when my grandfather died in 1923 Avery had a breakdown and I don't think he ever drove after that.

My grandfather had a stroke in the lower hall, and the doctor came in and gave him a massive injection of something that kept his heart beating, but he was otherwise a total vegetable, and Avery insisted on nursing him for almost a year; he wouldn't let anybody else near him. When Grandpa died, Avery had a total nervous collapse, and it was several years before he could do anything at all again. It was just a very unhappy situation.

Flora: It was a very close family.

Morgan: It was.

Flora: To their dying days, they were devoted to each other.

### Taking the Train

Morgan: My aunt never drove a foot in her life; she always had somebody in the office with a company car who would take her up to the train or to the airport or whatever mode of transportation she was going to employ. In later years, of course, they took her all over; when she wanted to come to the East Bay or something, they'd bring her over. Except, like coming to the family, she'd always take the Key train.



- Riess: Do you think there were reasons why she didn't want to drive?
- Flora: No. She didn't know what to do with the chauffeur when she got here; she wanted to be alone with the family.
- Riess: No, no, I mean in general.
- Morgan: I think she was too preoccupied. She always--on the trip down to San Simeon, you had to go by train to San Luis Obispo; she'd always take an upper berth, and she'd have a portable drawing board. She'd get in the upper berth, and, of course, the lights would shine in over the curtains. She would work--wouldn't sleep on it at all, but in the lower berths she couldn't sit up straight, couldn't work, but up there she could. People sometimes accused her of being frugal because it was a cheaper berth.
- Riess: Driving is a great waste of time.
- Flora: Her sister was the world's worst, too.
- Morgan: But she liked to look around. She always enjoyed the drives.
- Flora: And they grew up with horses.
- Morgan: At San Simeon, they were met by a regular fleet of cars that Hearst maintained, with service round the clock. So, very often the Owl that she would take from San Francisco at around eight o'clock got down there around two. Steve's taxi would be at the train to pick her up and drive her right up to the job. In those days, it took several hours to make the trip, and nothing but dirt roads all the way. At off parts of the year, sometimes they were barely passable. She would get in there in the morning, about time to join the crowd for breakfast, and then they'd get to work.
- Riess: Would she join the crowd for breakfast? That seems like something--
- Morgan: Certainly she would.
- Riess: Well, you know, I get a picture of somebody who would choose just to have a little cup of coffee in their room or something like that, while she works on.
- Flora: Don't think she just joined the crowd's conversation; she probably used that time for outlining the necessary things to be done for the day, or to explain what her plans were.
- Riess: Yes. When you say "join the crowd," you mean the crew of workmen or something?





- Morgan: No, no. There was a dining room with a long table, and everybody sat at the table and ate at regular stated hours.
- Flora: But construction was always going on, so it was a matter of interest to everyone who was there what was the next thing they were going to rip apart or put together.
- Morgan: These were not the carpenters at all, no. Hearst and his guests.
- Riess: Right. They always say about San Simeon that Hearst insisted that everybody arrive at dinner, but I didn't know whether they got down there for breakfast.
- Morgan: I don't know either, but I know that he did, because when she went down there, of course, it was specifically to go over things with him. They would very often sit out on a bench in the garden someplace with Joe Willicombe, who was Hearst's longtime secretary, taking down notes on everything. They'd both be firing off letters one way or another and deciding as they went along what they were going to do. People were advised of this and that. Then when she was out checking the building, he'd be working on something else.

I remember she said he used to come back and he'd have a pile of his various newspapers around and he'd have a big pencil, making notes on the margins; as soon as he made a note, he'd pick them up and throw them over here and somebody'd grab them, take them into the wire room, and the criticisms were flashed immediately to the editor of that particular paper. They had a regular full AP Western Union telegraph wire room at San Simeon, so he wasn't out of touch for a minute. Of course, this was in the days before radio was any kind of a reliable means of communication, except for ships.

- Riess: When you said something about her plane, I thought that was a mistake, that she didn't have her own private plane.
- Morgan: She didn't actually own it. There was a pilot who had a Lockheed Vega; it was one of the earliest closed-cabin planes. She chartered it on a steady basis for several years because she liked to have a couple of days in the office in San Francisco, but she liked to cover Wynton and San Simeon and Santa Monica and way points--at least cover all of those, for at least a day, sometimes two days apiece, each week and still wind up with office time. So, the only way she could do it, of course, was to fly.
- Riess: She seems like a fearless person.



Flora: She had no fear.

Morgan: I don't think she had any sense of personal danger at all.

Riess: Your mother, I understand, studied law? She was one of the remarkable ones also?

Morgan: Mother was a very level-headed person, but I don't think she was-- she was an intelligent woman. She married my father, who was a lawyer, and then she went to law school and thought that perhaps she would work with him. But when it came to practice, I don't think she cared for it too much. For all intents and purposes, you wouldn't say she was much of a heavily practiced lawyer, although she did keep up her Bar license right up to the time she died at the age of 94.

#### Julia Morgan and Her Mother

Riess: I read a group of letters in The Bancroft Library in the Hearst Collection, in Phoebe Apperson Hearst's papers, from Julia Morgan to Mrs. Hearst when she's very young. Julia Morgan seemed polite and incredibly grateful to Mrs. Hearst. I'm interested in her relationship to Mrs. Hearst and to her own mother.

Morgan: She and her mother were the closest of all family relationships, without question. She used to come and spend hours and hours. Her mother had a stroke in 1919 and was more or less incapacitated for the remaining ten years of her life. Of course, Julia's schedule being such, she'd take the last ferry over in the morning at, say, about two o'clock, and she'd sit by her mother's bedside; when her mother was asleep, I'm sure it didn't make any difference whether her mother slept in the daytime or the night anyway. They'd talk for three or four hours till six o'clock in the morning when the train started running again. She'd get on the train and go back to her office.

Riess: It sounds like Julia Morgan didn't sleep.

Flora: She didn't.

Morgan: All right, so she missed it one night; she'd sleep maybe four or five hours the next night and make up for it.

Riess: You do know that that's remarkable.



Morgan: It's a phenomenon. In a sense, it's like the person that had two heads. She had the constitution of an ox.

Riess: She developed that when she was very young, do you think?

Flora: No, this is when she was in her sixties, I'm talking about.

I would go down to Monterey for a weekend, and we'd build a roaring fire. She'd pull out architectural books; she was terribly interested in the fact that I might veer into an artistic career of some kind at that point. She would be going page by page and discussing art subjects of one kind or another all through the night. Here I had put in a day at the office, and I was exhausted, but it never occurred to her that I was.

I wasn't alone in this complaint because every architect who ever worked with her said the only problem with her was that they couldn't live on Hershey bars and coffee even though she did. It's true; she'd just get terribly annoyed at stopping for food or interruptions of that sort.

Morgan: At midnight, everybody'd be famished, so she'd break out a couple of Hershey bars and pass them around, and then start to work again.

Flora: All these young men were ready to eat three steaks.

She only ate for necessary energy, although she seemed to generate it from nothing really--just enthusiasm.

Riess: What were her living arrangements? She lived alone and then she lived with her mother and then she lived with you, is that right?

Morgan: Up through 1920, she maintained rooms in the family home at 14th Street. Then she found that the transportation was not as good as it later became, at that time. So, she bought an old Victorian out on Divisadero Street in San Francisco, two of them. The view wasn't much, so she decapitated one of them--cut the top story off at least. Then the upper hill one had somewhat of a view. She redecorated it into sort of a series of loosely connected apartments and moved several members of her staff into the house and their friends, so that there was always somebody there.

Riess: Who were they?\*

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\*See Bjarne Dahl interview on this question. - S.R.



Morgan: They were all single women. (Her longtime secretary, Mrs. Forney, lived in Berkeley and still does.) But most of the others--I won't say most of them, but there were always enough of them--the gal that usually drove her had an apartment there. Then they had a garage that would hold the car,

I guess in 1928 or '29, 14th and Brush Streets in Oakland began to be a pretty rundown neighborhood; all the electricity was actually in my aunt's old quarters upstairs, and the rest of it was gas. The pipes had formed coatings on the inside of them, and there was very little gas coming through.

Flora: But her mother didn't want to move.

Morgan: Her mother didn't want to move, but--

Riess: This was after she had had the stroke?

Morgan: Yes, This was about 1928 (?) I would guess. It was just thoroughly impractical. Mother had to go down every day and check on the help and see that her mother was all right. So, she happened to own a lot; my grandmother owned a lot adjacent to my mother's house here in Berkeley. My aunt built a house for her there.

Riess: Is that on Prospect?

Morgan: Yes, for Grandmother. She made a room exactly the same--proportions and fireplace and everything--as her room in the old house was. We brought Grandma out on Thanksgiving day for dinner to our house, which was the usual thing, and then after dinner was over, we had the usual conversation in the living room. They took Grandmother and walked her across the path into the new house. She looked at the downstairs; she didn't recognize it. But the minute she got upstairs, the bed and dressers and all the things were in exactly the same place, and there was a fire in the fireplace. She made no comment whatever--never made any comment whatever about the switch.

Flora: I love that story. As I've talked with people who've lived in her houses--most of which have burned by now in this area--she was very fond of children, extremely fond of children.

Whenever she was building a house for anybody, she would particularly make a point of doing something in the house that would be only for that child, like a hidden closet, like she did for Bill Olney, or some secret steps, or a hiding place, or something that was entirely for that child and that child alone, so that the house, as





- Flora: they grew up, would always mean something and recollect childhood to them because, I think to her, she had an extremely happy childhood. They talked about it always, the sisters. I don't think either of them ever recuperated from it, in a sense. Those days were too idyllic.
- Riess: Do you think it was different for the sisters than for the brothers? It sounds like it came out quite differently.
- Flora: The brothers were "charged" with escorting them to the University morning and night on streetcars and charged with their constant care. Sisters must have been a pain in the neck in those days.
- Riess: So they were sort of the family jewels.
- Flora: Yes and no. I think the family was totally devoted to Sam; he was the favorite of the parents. He was fulfilling his masculine role; Aunt Julia was not being the dutiful daughter and marrying some dull person.
- Riess: Did she ever get close to marriage?
- Morgan: I don't think so. I never knew of anything. I don't think the subject ever entered her head really. I talked to my father, who was far more aware of matters of that sort than my mother ever was. She [Julia Morgan] just was not the type that was at all interested in men.
- Flora: Morgan's mother was the beauty of the family, without any question, and she always accused herself of stealing Julia's beaux. So, there you are.
- Morgan: Father said she just was never interested in that at all.
- Flora: No, I think she found immediate interest in her career, because she pursued it twenty-four hours a day thoroughly.
- Morgan: Very little family went a long way with her. Two or three times a year was enough.

Flora North and Aunt Julia

- Flora: Except me. Not being the family, it was easier for her to accept me.
- Riess: That's interesting, yes. I take it she was really interested in





by  
Flora D. North



## SHE BUILT FOR THE AGES

The most outstanding woman architect, Julia Morgan, Omega, California-Berkeley, was so exasperatingly modest and retiring that very little is known about her, to the chagrin of those who worked with her and loved her.

Yet an aspect of her character which manifested itself later in her career was first apparent in her young girlhood. In the garden of her family's large and formal home in Oakland, California, she was caught doing somersaults on the gymnastic equipment erected for her three brothers. Her very proper Victorian mother was shocked at this unladylike behavior, and made her do penance by practicing the violin an extra hour each day.

Later, at the University of California, where she was an outstanding student, the time came to choose a major. She seriously considered medicine, music and art, but the success of her mother's cousin, Pierre LeBrun, New York architect, must have influenced her to consider his profession. There being no School of Architec-

ture at California at this time, she was graduated from the School of Engineering in 1894, and it was generally acknowledged that this background figured in her later successes.

Her years as a Kappa Alpha Theta at the University were very precious to her, and her friends there became lifelong friends. Emma Morgan ('96), her younger sister, soon became a Theta, too, and after her graduation, went on to a law degree from Hastings College of the Law. Those Morgan sisters were launched on careers considered in those days to be the province only of the male!

Julia Morgan was the first woman to be graduated from Paris' Ecole de Beaux Arts in architecture, and although they explained at the outset that a degree would be unthinkable, her perseverance and the fact that she repeatedly won all the competitions finally embarrassed the authorities into granting her degree.

Upon her return to California in 1901, she worked for a short period with John Galen

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THE CRITERIA determining a Theta Star choice are 1) national renown for the individual 2) a tie-in with the news. There is no doubt about the national renown of Theta Julia Morgan (1872-1957) who was headlined as recently as March 1966 in the Oakland (Calif.) Tribune as "the world's best woman architect" as the Berkeley City Club paid homage to her by a "house tour" featuring three of her notable dwellings—the City Club, a private home, the Alpha Xi Delta sorority house. As for a recent tie-in with the news, Time Magazine in November 1966 carried an article on Julia's most famous architectural achievement, Hearst's San Simeon estate, since 1958 a California state park. Also, Ladybird Johnson, wife of the U. S. President, while on a west coast tour, was a guest at San Simeon, presumably sleeping in baronial splendor among the rare antiques with which Hearst furnished his hilltop "home."—EDITOR.

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Press baron William Randolph Hearst named it La Cuesta Encantada—The Enchanted Hill. There, near San Simeon, Calif., he directed architect Julia Morgan to build him a home. Work continued from 1919 to the mid-thirties; at Hearst's death in 1951 La Casa Grande (top, left pic; detail, right pic) was still unfinished, though it has 100 rooms furnished with priceless antiques. There are also two swimming pools (Neptune Pool, is shown at center on left), and three guest houses.

Howard, who at that time was the University of California architect and had the commission to build the Hearst Memorial Mining Building, a gift of Phoebe Apperson Hearst. Miss Morgan's work so impressed Mrs. Hearst that she asked her to open her own offices so that she could do work on her own. In time she met Mrs. Hearst's son, William Randolph Hearst, who confided his dreams of building at San Simeon a "living museum" properly to house his growing collection of art treasures. Unfortunately, he said, no one had been able to figure out how to get the necessary materials to this then remote area. Again Julia Morgan's engineering came to her aid. She suggested building a wharf at San Simeon and bringing the materials by boat.

In later discussions Mr. Hearst realized that her Sorbonne background of large scale "institutional" and elegant building was completely suited to his grandiose plans. His tastes were catholic, and he would acquire a Gothic ceiling for which he needed a setting, along with some Etruscan urns and Greek statuary. It was a chal-

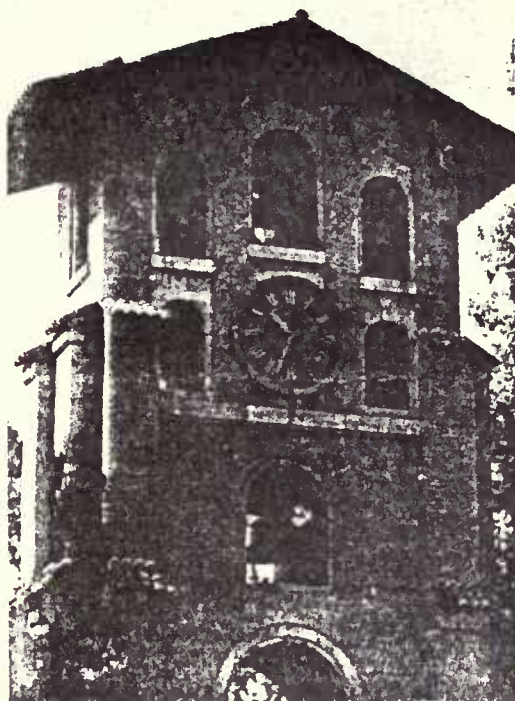
lenge to mix and use these things tastefully. Mr. Hearst's admiration for Julia Morgan's ability constantly grew, and through several decades and many many building projects, each enjoyed the exhilaration of working with the other's extraordinarily able mind.

At the height of building activity at San Simeon, Miss Morgan had 16 architects in her employ and her offices were located in the Merchants Exchange building in San Francisco. She built over 600 residences in the Bay Area alone, only to see many of them destroyed in Berkeley's fire of 1923.

During World War I Julia Morgan worked as a "dollar-a-year-man" building Hostess Houses (comparable to WW II's USO's) all over the country. Some of her outstanding work was done for the YWCA—in Oakland, Berkeley, Hawaii, San Francisco and Asilomar. These buildings were radical for their day in that the structural members were visible and the outdoors in the form of decks and patios was included in the total plans.

She had opened her own offices in 1903 and





Julia Morgan was architect for over 600 homes in the San Francisco Bay Area alone, also built educational structures. At Mills College she designed the Campanile (left), library, gym, social hall. The Oakland YWCA (right) was her first YWCA, commissioned by her Omega Theta sister, Grace Fisher Richards, when Grace was president of the Oakland Y. Julia went east to study existing YWCA's, returned to build in Oakland, subsequently built many other Y's.

by 1918 *The Architect and Engineer* honored her with a whole issue devoted to her work, which by this time was as impressive for its quantity as its quality. Among her educational buildings were the Campanile, library, gym and social hall at Mills College, Miss Ransom and Miss Bridges' School, the original Miss Burke's School and the Berkeley Baptist Divinity School. Hospitals, churches and a building on the U.C. campus followed.

By 1929 her outstanding work brought her an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from her alma mater, one of the few accolades this most modest person ever accepted.

Having embarked on her architectural career, she never stopped studying. Eating and sleeping were things she did when there was time for them, coffee and chocolate bars kept her going when building boomed. She had her own plane and pilot to check on her ever-widening sphere of operations. It was on these flights she studied Chinese for relaxation.

Workmen of the building trades worshipped her and vied to work on her buildings because

she appreciated skill and praised them for it. They, in turn, respected her knowledgeable plans and knew if they weren't followed the work would be ripped out.

It was her pleasure to help many young women through college and with the beginnings of their careers. As in many such projects, the donees remained anonymous. Some, who have since revealed themselves, told of what great inspiration she was to them and how they treasured knowing one who exemplified true kindness and courtesy.

Achievement by women in the professions was very difficult in her time, and almost always meant that marriage and children must be forsaken. But she pioneered.

After a long and meaningful life, Julia Morgan died at the age of 85 in San Francisco where she was born, leaving the world enriched.

*Flora D. North, who so graciously provided this article about Julia Morgan, is the wife of Morgan North, son of Theta Emma Morgan North, Julia's sister. Emma died in 1965.*





Kappa Alpha Theta  
Spring 1967



# Over the DESKTOP

## Quotation for Spring

*"A man is given a bag of tools, / A shapeless mass and a book of rules; / From these he is of his life to hone / A stumbling block or a stepping stone."* Theme statement of 1966 session of South-eastern Panhellenic Conference at University of Kentucky. (See page 43.)

YOUR EDITOR HAS A NOTION that you might be surprised how much fun she had "processing" this current issue (along with a little work, of course). Two subjects were unusually exciting—the material on *alumnæ-on-the-go* (pages 29-36) and the story of Hearst's San Simeon, built and planned by a Theta (pages 9-11). In fact we were fascinated and bemused by the little oddments accompanying the Hearst story. For instance, Julia Morgan built Hearst an outdoor swimming pool "big enough to sail a boat in," and an indoor one filled with "heated water" pumped in from six miles away. Also, climbing to the top of his "castle" one day Hearst was enchanted with the view of the sea. "This will be my bedroom," he told the workmen. "But," they protested, "this is the roof." "Not any more!" retorted Hearst. "Add another story and call it the celestial suite." The two stone towers of La Casa Grande became just that.

Fond of trees (fond? there must be a stronger word!) Hearst did not allow a single tree to be cut down, once spent \$40,000 moving a giant redwood so that a path could curve properly.

Julia employed all her perfectionist skill creating the Hispano-Moorish mansion and surrounding buildings. A traditionalist at heart, she preferred Italian and Spanish design for California use, but would build in any style a person requested—except modern!

Omega Theta Grace Fisher (Richards) roomed with Julia while Julia studied at the École de Beaux Arts in Paris, recalled how they sneaked around to avoid the boys who "looked down on them because they did not like the idea of a girl studying architecture." There is a Julia Morgan scholarship at UC-Berkeley, for which good friend Grace raised the money.

We owe deep thanks to Criss Cross Morton, Rho, Nebraska, PAS for Omega, California-Berkeley, Julia Morgan's chapter, for arranging for the article about Julia for the magazine.



Riess: your career too.

Flora: Yes. We got along famously, and I was the first person she had any time for.

Riess: Because it was that time in her life?

Flora: Yes, time in her life, and this war going on, and the situation of things in general. We spent weekend after weekend with never a moment lacking in conversation or anything like that, and we were vastly different in ages. But I was very fond of her.

Riess: How about difference in opinions? Was it all right to argue with her?

Flora: It was very hard to argue with her because she had an awfully good mind and was very clear about facts and an authority on almost anything you could mention. I didn't try to argue with her; there was no point in it. I was just very anxious to learn from her anything I could. But she was so enthusiastic.

I was doing a little pottery at the time, and she thought it was absolutely the most beautiful pottery ever done. Certainly it wasn't, but she was so anxious that I continue, and I think she had this effect on young people, that she was able to thoroughly encourage them. It was a kind of thing no one else would take the time to do; it was a very kindly thing.

If I designed a book or something, according to her it was unsurpassable; it was the best thing she'd ever seen. It was marvelous; it was a great lift for a young person.

Riess: She must have meant it.

Flora: I don't know whether she meant it; I think she may have hoped it. But the thing was that most older people don't take the time to give that kind of encouragement or enthusiasm to the young. She took the time to do it.

We hit it off, anyway, right away. Morgan made an awful mistake and took me to meet her first before he took me to meet his mother. It was a happy association for me always.

Morgan: She had almost a soldier's ability to determine the integrity of the person she was talking to. If she didn't feel they had it, she made very short shrift of the whole thing. But if she felt that they had integrity, whether they were young or old or what the situation was, then she was with them.



- Flora: I often wonder what she'd think of some of my way-out stuff today. Probably she'd be shocked.
- Morgan: The house I told you that we had built, built by Roger Lee, whom we think is a pretty good architect--
- Flora: This was McCarthy, excuse me. Wrong house.
- Morgan: Excuse me, dear, but this was Roger Lee that I'm referring to. We had this house, and McCarthy designed the house on Shasta Road.
- Flora: Yes. That's the one she came to see.
- Morgan: I'm talking about the one Roger Lee did. The neighbors--there was a Maybeck house on the corner and a couple of Julia Morgans around there, but my aunt had given up her office and she was too unsure of herself to want to do any more work. She told us that she just couldn't undertake [to build us a house]. So, we got hold of Roger Lee and we had him build it. This neighbor was screaming, saying, "What a horrible modernistic house. It doesn't belong in this neighborhood. It should have been a Maybeck or Julia Morgan house or something like that."
- We got the house built by that fall, I guess, and we had our family Thanksgiving there. My aunt came over. I was out in the back part of the house, and all of a sudden I heard somebody walking rather stealthfully along, and here was my aunt with her hands in the pockets of her coat, going from room to room looking at everything.
- Flora: I was shuddering.
- Morgan: Then she came into the living room and said, "The young man did very well."
- Flora: This is strange; I don't remember that at all. I remember her coming into the McCarthy house and saying that there was a piece of molding needed; that was the only criticism she had. But again, she said of him that he was a young man with lots of imagination and good space division and this and that. So, she liked the young.
- Morgan: I just happened to be standing out in the kids' playroom when she came through.
- Flora: At this point, I was bogged down with babies.



Riess: It sounds like she was really able to get clear of herself and look at somebody else's thing for just exactly what it was.

Morgan: Exactly.

Riess: What does this integrity you have mentioned really mean? It means being true to--

Flora: Her architectural principles rather than personalities.

Morgan: In her case, I think it was a person's honesty of intention. She'd take a person with perhaps very little potential as far as imagination or anything else, but who was totally honest and had a kindly attitude towards his fellow man. This type of a person was acceptable. If a person was sour and devious, then she had no use at all for him.

Flora: She was a very devoted aunt in every way to all of us. She didn't see our daughter--well, she saw her, but she was pretty old then. But she was just mad about our son; the same thing, total family devotion. We were all marvelous, wonderful, and she loved to see us on her own time.

Riess: That's what I was going to bring to your attention--the fact that you said about three times a year was sort of it.

Flora: Yes, but it was full-focus. She felt very sentimental about Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving (those are the three I think he means), and we did always have a big family to-do, later in our house, but originally in Morgan's mother's house. She devoted the full day to that, and that was it.

Once in a while she'd be on a trip somewhere--not once in a while, but just once she missed Christmas, and said never again in her life, that it was the most hideous time she'd ever spent alone. Then, after that, we made do with whatever family we could gather.

Morgan: She got lost in Spain. She forgot where she was and forgot where her ship was.

Flora: Yes. That was sad.

Riess: That sounds very sad. That was in this time when she was forgetting things?

Morgan: When she closed her office, she just traveled continuously as long as she could.









## PLACES VISITED

begin & child worship - a Christ on cross,

Date in a secondary place somewhere -

Placed here after noon in the Poggio -

There here & there beginning to find out

the numbers so high & numbers & things

so distant, a great deal of shade is

there, against which work of miles

in bright green grassy dunes,

not more than half a mile, more body.

blacks, pure white, & a few others in

their part with glowing heat or their

own kind - mixed & hard in beautiful,

also dark deep ponds with grey green

in hot puddling - all show broken &

natural looking in place - a valley

will please & early park for any city -

Monday - arrived at large "museums" in part

of big museum, where steps to a river bank, to

see instead looking stationary on top like dome

, perhaps etc. & a few steps later, find in in

The city picture! The things taken in a series!

## PLACES VISITED

collected at the Park & Frederick

"La Pietra" - Saw again church next the Museum

to Place vault of wood, & color, very effective

Other full vault to ceiling - side wall, all

dark in color. The side grey black, you

shall see. Side walls on floor & top

trunk of gold - 1st. into hall see over

figures in pattern hardly light, the dark

tells - but effect about dark to my eye -

dome of some ribs with open large picture in

above - but small figures, light color - pavement

(comparing) large figures, one to each, the &

aperture (I think)

Came back to the old church, which appeared

by comparison, poor. with its long narrow, &

ground, also filled with chapel altar and diving

effect in walls. contained altar - Also another

church with a chapel above (in a story done)

marked by stair way falling out of the one

side - Very high black - chimney & above

steps - Plenty of vaults in the church, here!

Made the museum - no word of any kind

on exterior, - the granitic pavement crumbled

all over at showing anything in the space

language. A lovely small courtyard, with

particularly vaulted low dome over entrance - &

very pretty ceiling to connect stairway to a 2<sup>nd</sup> -





## PLACES VISITED

~~Little India~~ ~~results~~ ~~following~~ ~~up~~ ~~price~~

Date of ~~at~~ ~~time~~, ~~to~~ a landing with  
Place lunch, steam train, bird & creek.

~~Price~~ ~~Trade~~, said to be the original.

about 12" ~~wide~~, none - looking like the  
S. Joe product could. nothing so very  
good, but a large mixed collection of  
objects from Chaco & Spruce - well  
worth seeing - so probably an impression  
(Much furniture was found where we,  
of old, used to work.)

## PLACES VISITED

Date

Place

Buenos Aires again - Hotel - a

room with window opp. a clock in set of light lance  
towers on top of important Ally - two religious statues  
in Playa. One with all the gold statue in their with  
chrome, new, small statue Playa - the statue is in chrome  
by reminiscent time around by clim boys, one house is  
and for some time - is a house is old time  
featuring short columns as before, all top short  
& columns is - is important & color find up all around  
Square & steps, - is pillars & points, is a square column  
set by the Pope - (in a great temple with one other place)  
at each man is fast man in living, standing & standing  
The statue of the card is a house - (lands not are  
The stand or group the speakers.)  
Left for Managory by river boat at 7 A.M. to  
small part of Colonia - new trip about 3 hours - There  
new cabins (bunks) on mid ship cut side, sitting space  
& for one end, lunch room other, is on mid ship



Flora: She hoped to be lost at sea; this was no secret.

Morgan: That's it. She said, "Maybe sometime when I go on one of these trips, I won't come back." She had a horror of being buried.

Flora: She had a horror of being a burden to anyone in that situation; that was mostly it.

Morgan: Having seen her mother and father both go out laboriously.

Riess: She lived with her mother, then, in that house that she built? Is that right?

Flora: That was a strange house. You really should see it--beautiful house. Downstairs, there was a lovely sitting room, nurse's quarters, and that's all downstairs. Two garages. Upstairs was a fantastically big room and glassed-in porch of her mother's, then a little tiny room that was Aunt Julia's. She would stay there very occasionally.

Morgan: There was a room for a nurse, and a kitchen upstairs.

Flora: That's right. There was a kitchen upstairs too, but tiny. So, it just took care of the housekeeping staff and the nurse, and they had a nice garden. That sort of thing.

Riess: So, at that time she was really still living on Divisadero?

Flora: Yes. She really lived there all the time. She always had her own place; it was a matter of, when she did come to see her mother, transportation was such that it was easier to stay.

Morgan: She had Divisadero Street for nearly 40 years.

Flora: It was interesting; she never lived in a house she built for herself except for the little time she spent in the house that duplicated her mother's room.

Riess: What is the house in Monterey?

Flora: That wasn't her design either, only the studio. [See Interview #3.]

Riess: When she was in Monterey, was "place" very important to her--the beauty of Monterey and that area? Was that something that kept drawing her back?





Flora: Very much so. And the seclusion, because this little house was in a forest, so to speak, and from the house you couldn't see anything else. She loved walking in the hills and she loved the gardens. Her own garden was completely wild; there was no formal planting such as at her house in San Francisco.

Morgan: As a child, the whole family used to frequently come to Pacific Grove in the summer; they were old stamping grounds for her.

Flora: That's right; she knew the area. She always could out-hike me, and I was only twenty-something (two or three), but she could do me in every time because you'd have to go to the next highest hill to see a certain view of the Bay, and this and that.

### Schooling

Flora: You see this collection of medals of hers; no one knew they existed until we found them among her things. They were all for grandiose designs of institutional architecture, opera houses, such things, and the medals are what embarrassed the Beaux Arts into finally giving her her degree, because she was winning everything that came along.

Riess: That's something that I noticed in the Richey book [The Ultimate Victorians]---that she had completed all the requirements and they sort of resisted giving her her degree.

Flora: It "had never been done before." That was their brilliant excuse. They also said when she entered the course that she couldn't be graduated, and she accepted it on that basis, thinking that of course she would be if she proved her mettle. That took a certain amount of faith because she could have wasted a lot of years there. As a matter of fact, she traveled a lot in between times, and she worked in various architectural offices there, which was invaluable to her undoubtedly when she came into her own here.

Riess: Did she have contact with that Pierre LeBrun there?

Flora: They corresponded, but he was in New York. But she was in the Chaussemiche atelier.

Morgan: The state architect of Paris.



- Flora: The state architect of Paris, and totally devoted to Aunt Julia, and all her life he was in contact with her--always wrote and always wanted to know what she was doing.
- Morgan: He came here and visited her one time.
- Flora: I'd forgotten about that. But that was a very, very close association. He and his wife and his daughter were all a part of her family.
- Riess: What do you think she was like as a student?
- Morgan: Serious.
- Flora: I have the most charming picture of her in front of Notre Dame with an armload of books and a suit with a sort of fichu front and a huge hat with a bird on it and long gloves--the whole bit--on her way to school. It's a marvelous picture.\*
- Morgan: As a young girl she was rather inclined to be athletic and liked trapeze things and bow and arrow. Later on she had no time for it. If you had asked her what football was, I'm sure she couldn't have told you because a thing like that didn't matter to her at all.
- Riess: Did she have a lot of the usual dancing classes and music lessons and all that sort of thing?
- Morgan: I don't think so.
- Flora: She certainly had the music lessons.
- Morgan: She wasn't musical though. None of the family really were; it was terrible.
- Flora: No. When we cleaned out her house, it was full of her violin music. Yes, I think she seriously thought of music.
- Riess: I mean, did she have that sort of finishing school bringing up?
- Flora: Yes, she did.

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\*This illustration is in Eminent Women of the West, by Elinor Richey, Howell-North Books, 1975.



Morgan: Oakland High School.

Flora: I know, but the Oakland High School of those days was pretty select. Also, think of her classmates. My goodness, they were all distinguished people in the community in all kinds of ways. I think she was subjected to--all the impecunious widows of those days were forced to give lessons, and all the young ladies were forced to subject themselves. And it was a very proper family, very well mannered.

Morgan: But anything she put her head to to learn, she'd learn. Languages-- she'd start off somewhere and learn them on the fly.

Riess: It's amazing that she didn't seem to have those kinds of standards for other young people though, that she didn't expect other people to be like her.

Flora: I think this was one of her great talents--that she could accept people for whatever their own abilities might be. I don't think that she felt that just because you could paint a picture that you had to be Raphael. It was just great that you could do just that. Somewhere in her organization, she'd undoubtedly find a place for you. She was always looking for talent of all kinds. Those frescoes on the McCorkle house [2821 Claremont] are by a woman she really fostered, Maxine Albro.

Then how about all the beautiful ones at Wyntoon by Willy Pogani. He wasn't a woman, of course, but she did foster young artists and saw that there was always something for them to do and a start somewhere to get some recognition.

Riess: I thought it was foreign craftsmen imported to do things.

Flora: No. Local people. Young talent whenever possible.

Riess: Was it the underdog that she was interested in, or just talent?

Flora: Just able people.

Morgan: Most of the people that could do these things were not underdogs. An able person is seldom an underdog.



Later Projects

- Riess: You talked about her coming to see your Roger Lee house and that she had sort of finished work herself. Did she retire, and why did she retire?
- Morgan: Her memory started to become confused and she was aware of it.
- Flora: This was it; she was too bright not to know. There are people who just fade.
- Morgan: I suppose one way of putting it was forgetful. She wouldn't remember where she was.
- Flora: I remember once during the war she was in the depths of despair because she was trying to do some building at Babicora and the only thing she could find anywhere were lavender and purple bathroom fixtures. She was just so shocked with it and said, "Nobody is left in my office and I can't get any supplies, and how can I do anything?" She was very depressed because of that situation.
- Riess: That was the wartime.
- Flora: Wartime. World War II. Of course, in World War I, she was very active.
- Riess: So is that when she retired?
- Morgan: She had the office open in 1946, and about the end of 1946 I think she just gave it up.
- Flora: It was interesting. From a floor of the Merchants' Exchange she kept shrinking her offices. But the downstairs--the basement--kept enlarging with blueprints so that actually she probably ended up with the same amount of space but not the kind of productive space she had before.
- Riess: Historical space.
- Morgan: Mr. Hearst had had a stroke, and that was the end of the building there and at Wynton, San Simeon, or Babicora.
- Flora: He'd given up the castle by then too, hadn't he.
- Morgan: That's San Simeon.





Flora: I meant the one in Wales.

Morgan: That was never a construction project; he bought that all built.

Flora: But she went over to see it.

Morgan: Only as a guest later on. She and Mother went over.

They wound down; they couldn't get materials to go ahead at San Simeon during the war. They did do quite a bit of building at Wyntoon for a while. Then they had this Babicora thing down in Mexico where they were going to build a house. But they had a great deal of trouble with the materials. It was an adobe. It was a four or five day trip to get in there over Mexican railroads, which in those days were not what they are today, which still isn't very much.

Riess: What was Hearst's plan there?

Morgan: He had a big ranch down there.

Flora: Cattle.

Riess: What was the kind of building he was doing? Was it living space?

Morgan: It was just a living thing; it's a small place, probably not more than forty or fifty rooms. That's nothing for a small place for Mr. Hearst. Like Wyntoon.

This project down there, she worked on that. Then, of course, there was the project of the monastery that was going to be erected in Golden Gate Park, and she brought that out of the warehouse--

Flora: And every stone marked.

Morgan: And Mrs. [Frieda] Klussmann raised such havoc about doing it that she got the program delayed. Then somebody set fire to the boxes, which were all numbered and belonged to a key pattern. When all that was gone, why--

Riess: Hearst's idea was to erect a small monastery in Golden Gate Park?

Morgan: It wasn't a small monastery; it was a big one.

Riess: It was going to be his gift? He assumed that somebody would want to have it there?



- Morgan: That's right. But this woman made such a stink about the location and so forth that when it was all set to go, it was delayed. Consequently, it never did get built.
- Riess: It makes me realize how vital the building was to Hearst, and I guess, in the process, how vital Hearst was to Julia Morgan. Can you speculate about where her energies would have gone if they didn't have that man?\*
- Morgan: Into a hundred other projects she turned down.
- Flora: Constantly.
- Riess: I mean, it sounds like the contact with him was very stimulating.
- Morgan: This it was, but many of them were. Over the years, she was offered work all over the world--whole university campuses and things of that sort, which would have been rather stimulating for her to do.
- Flora: Actually, to go over her clients, it's really a Who's Who of her era. That explains a good many "bungalows."
- Morgan: She was in great demand in the Hawaiian Islands, but just couldn't spare the time for it. Many of the Hawaiian Big Four lived in West Oakland in those days--the Alexanders of Alexander and Baldwin, the Cooks of Castle and Cook. You can go right down the line.
- Flora: This was a social register of the area.
- Morgan: It was a very social area for a few years there, and then they all moved over to Piedmont and then moved elsewhere.
- Flora: Most of her buildings today are in Piedmont.
- Riess: So, she was the social architect?

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\*When asked again, Flora North said, "Coming back to California, after Paris, of course she did the Hotel Fairmont work after the earthquake, and other than that, people needed homes and quickly built things, but it was a bad time, in a sense. She got plenty of work, but it wasn't the kind of work that she had undoubtedly dreamed of doing. Hearst was probably a windfall in a sense, because she had the training for what he had in mind and the imagination and ability."



- Morgan: No. These people were all her friends in her youth and they wanted her to do the work. She knew them and they knew her and the type of surroundings they wanted to be in.
- Riess: Was it quality or was there a sort of cachet in having a Julia Morgan house?
- Flora: That came later; it was quality to start with.
- Morgan: She wouldn't have any truck with a builder who wasn't top-notch, so you knew you got a good house, a well-built house.
- Flora: All her suppliers--as a matter of fact, we, to this day, run into old workmen who were on projects with her, and they worshipped her because they said they knew there was no monkey business; if the work wasn't right, she'd personally pull it out. But if it were exactly to her standards, there was no limit to her praise. On the other side of the coin, it made them very happy to be on any project of hers.

#### The Work at San Simeon

- Riess: You've spoken of how important integrity was for Julia Morgan. What about her long association with William Randolph Hearst? Did he have this quality? How could she have spent all the time she did with him?
- Flora: I think she understood what he had in mind.
- Morgan: Yes. I think there was a phase of him that had integrity, as far as she was concerned.
- Flora: I think that meant a genuine love of antiquity and of accomplishments of the past, and I think she appreciated his knowledge and understanding of history and art and horticulture. She also recognized the need he had for those things because she too had the kind of a mind that could use up subjects so much more quickly than people with smaller minds and needed more materials to chew on.
- Morgan: But she suffered the tortures of the damned in staving people off to whom he owed money that she'd made the commitments for and then he would be very slow in coming through on them. There were many phases of that thing that weren't too pleasant.
- Riess: You speak about how she handled some of the financial ends for Hearst and the awkwardness of collecting. That always sounds like a problem



Riess: for any architect--the financial thing.

Morgan: At San Simeon, they had a roving budget. In other words, it was an isolated spot, and there was no use just having carpenters because unless you have the plumbers to get the plumbing in when necessary and the concrete finishers to finish the concrete and so forth--you have to have at least a skeletal complement of nearly all the building crafts there at all times. Therefore, to keep them busy, you had to continue building at a certain rate.

You could shift laborers to helping plumbers or helping carpenters or something like that, but by and large it was hard to balance the thing. Below that certain minimum they couldn't go. This determined the building pace. Whether it was demolition or construction work, it made no difference; it still took the same talents practically. If a wall in the middle of a room were to be removed or a group of rooms, the roof jacked up, or all the walls pushed out and the roof jacked up, which was frequently done, it took an amazing number of crafts. So, they knew from month to month what the expense was going to be.

There were ships plying the coast with small parts in those days, and it was very convenient; anything they would load in them in the morning in San Francisco would be down in San Simeon the next morning--probably about 400 percent faster than the U.S. mail goes there right now.

The same with people being sent down for the job; they'd be down there in 24 hours in one of those little coastal steamers.

A couple of the coastal steamers essentially depended on San Simeon for their existence, because hauling cement, which was brought down in sacks, and lumber--all these things came down by water and were delivered on the pier at San Simeon.

Riess: Did she have to order all of that stuff? Did she have to do that kind of thing?

Morgan: Yes, the whole business; all the construction was done through her office. She had a resident engineer in the office who took care of many of those things, and a regular secretarial bookkeeping staff.

Riess: That's what I was hoping to hear, and not that she had to handle the collection of money to pay the people at San Simeon.

Morgan: I think that was the only one, and the trouble was not limited to my aunt. It was just a little act of his apparently; he ultimately paid everything up. But there were times--the Maher book that's in process





Morgan: goes into Hearst's financial setup and it's really amazing.\*

Flora: He was always borrowing from Peter to pay Paul.

Morgan: He would go into the Los Angeles Examiner, for instance, and take all the cash out of their account, not even leave them the payroll due Friday. He owned the whole thing, kit and kaboodle; it was technically his. But it made it very difficult for some of his operating people to do anything. The paper, of course, couldn't pay their help on Friday or had to make some arrangements to get the funds in--make a float with the bank.

These things went on. But once it was more or less stabilized and the budget was presented at the beginning of the month, she evidently got it across that there was going to be no nonsense with her--that it would have to be in the bank before they would undertake the next month's payroll.

They had around 90 people working there; I think that was the general size of the gang. This had nothing to do with the maintenance of the place or operation.

Riess: So, there were people who were really answerable to her?

Morgan: Yes. Her superintendent was out of her office, and she had a resident architect and a couple of draftsmen. The same applied at Wynton.

Riess: What was she like with workmen and craftsmen?

Morgan: Same thing. If they were honest with her, they'd get along fine.

Flora: They adored her.

Morgan: If they weren't honest, boom--out they'd go. I was witness to one man going out. The man who replaced him later became one of the largest contractors in the area.

Flora: She apparently had a pioneer role in proving herself, though, with all these people; I'm sure that was the case, although it was nothing that lingered on in her experience because evidently she quickly proved, or they heard from other workers, that she was not only fair but extremely knowledgeable.

Riess: If there were flaws in the workmanship or something like that, she wouldn't just brush over that then?

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\*James T. Maher, author of Twilight of Splendor, Little-Brown, 1975, is researching San Simeon and its architect. - S.R.



Morgan: No. I remember one time she was looking over an apartment house that she was going to accept. The hardwood floors were laid not up tight, and when they were sanded down, they didn't look very good. The contractor was there and he wanted to get her to sign the completion which would allow him to collect his last payment.

She stepped into this particular room, and said, "Mr. Littlefield, that floor is going to have to be replaced."

He said, "It's a little loose, but we won't bother about that," and went into another room and did a couple of other things, looked around. Then, like a vacuum cleaner salesman, he jammed the form in front of her with a fountain pen in his hand, and she gave him the coldest look I ever saw anybody give--

Flora: She had the ability.

Morgan: --and said, "Floor such-and-such has to come up," and this that and the other. "While I'm in town next time, if you have it ready for inspection, I'll come." That's all there was to it; he didn't get his money until he came through.

Flora: That's probably a big factor in why the houses that haven't succumbed to fire, and whatnot, have survived as happy living places, because they haven't caused endless problems. Of course, some of them now are awfully, awfully old. It depends on what kind. We lived in one at 828 Contra Costa that was an absolutely beautiful house we wanted to spend the rest of our lives in; unfortunately, it was built in a park of oak trees, and Morgan decided to become allergic to oak trees. They don't bother him now; we have them here.

Morgan: You know how you go along Contra Costa and you come down a little dip into a bridge? There's a big house on the lower side of the street, just on this side of the creek. That was the house. She built that house for Paul Thelen, a brother of Max Thelen, an attorney in San Francisco for whom she had previously built a house.

Flora: I loved that house.

Morgan: Mrs. Thelen sold it to us, and we sold it to James Martin McGinnis, the criminal attorney in San Francisco. We were having lunch one day, and suddenly he burst in the front door and said, "I'm going to jail. I want to buy the house because all the kids in school tell my children their dad's in court and going to jail, and we've got to get out of San Francisco."



- Flora: He plopped the cash down. Later he appealed because, he said, "My poor wife is trying to support all our children by arranging flowers for the Hotel St. Francis. She really can't do it, so will you please let me out of jail?"
- Morgan: That house she built entirely with a family in mind, and you can just feel it when you're in there. In fact, when we bought it we had in mind that perhaps we would have to take hold of her. We had no idea financially where she was, because she had all her people sworn to absolute secrecy. There was no outward indication whether she was well off or not. I was managing certain of the affairs, which were portions of her parents' estate--her mother's estate--but her own things I had no idea about.
- Riess: Everyone certainly assumed that she must be well off.
- Morgan: That was it, but she couldn't care less about funds; just as long as she had enough to do what she wanted to do, that's all that mattered.
- Riess: What did she really want to do? Traveling was something that she--
- Morgan: Build. Build, build, build. She didn't want to travel. She only traveled when she couldn't build.
- Flora: But after all, her architect fees in those days were seven percent or less.
- Riess: I thought Walter Steilberg was saying six percent.
- Flora: Depending on the project, of course. But it was nothing like what they are today.
- Morgan: She never charged as much as most architects did. I have her contract with Hearst. It says, "It costs me so much to run my office and so on; I think I should make one percent myself for the work." So, that's the way she did it.
- Flora: But how she used her money is somewhat of a mystery. We know she helped a good many people.
- Morgan: She never had that much.
- Flora: When she died, she had very little.
- Morgan: Good Lord, I don't believe anybody who worked for her got much less than she took out for herself.



Flora: No, that's true.

Morgan: That is, of her top people. They had better homes than she did.

Flora: She never said "I" anyway in her whole life that I can remember. It was always "we."

A Client: The Seldon Williams House

Riess: Can you tell me anything about the Seldon Williams house?

Morgan: I had a contract to take a picture of it every week during its construction.

Flora: You did? I didn't know that about you after 38 years of married life.

Riess: Why, of all places?

Morgan: I lived near it, I was interested in photography, and she was trying to further my career.

Flora: That sounds like her.

Riess: From all angles?

Flora: From the 12-year-old angle.

Morgan: I was taking it from across the street in front of where the Kochs live.

Flora: That house must have been there then--the Kochs' house.

Morgan: Of course it was. I would set up at the same place every week and take a picture of it.

She liked the house. It was one that she had, for a large part, free rein about. But her complaint always was that it was never lived in.

Flora: It just killed her, all those years when the shades were drawn.

Morgan: The shades were just raw cloth shades; they were drawn, and no curtains. There'd be light in one upstairs window; I guess they





Morgan: had one or two help or something. I don't think the library or the dining room or the living room were ever used. She was terribly disappointed in it and said a house had to be lived in in order to develop a character of its own. This never was lived in.

Riess: But she couldn't possibly keep close tabs on all the houses?

Flora: No, but this one was so near her sister's, where she came to visit all the time.

Morgan: She went by it constantly.

I liked it, and I used to talk about it all the time. In fact, when she died, she'd written on the roll of the drawings for it and the whole bit, "Property of Morgan North." When I opened it, I saw why, because here was the whole thing--the original renderings, and crayon sketches in color of the way it was to appear. It was a pretty complicated house, quite an expensive house at the time it was built, for what it was.

Flora: The Seldon Williamses were out of town the whole time it was being built, weren't they? Didn't they live in Napa or some such place?

Morgan: The Glides had fifty houses.

Flora: Yes, but the particular couple that were going to move into this house--weren't they up in Napa Valley?

Morgan: They lived where Duncan Scott's house is, right around the corner from the Claremont Club, where Hillcrest Road comes into what we called the Broadway Cut. That house I think she did for the other Glides too. It has wood inlaid with stucco around it.

Riess: Do you know anything about the development of that client relationship? Were the Glides introduced to Julia Morgan by Phoebe Apperson Hearst?

Morgan: I would doubt it. They probably had gone to school together. That part of Oakland that she lived in at that time was a very fashionable area. That was before Piedmont was built. She just grew up with this class of people, and it was the natural thing. It wasn't seeking anything. They knew her and knew she was a very bright person. After her work began to appear, she had a tremendous following.

Flora: It's like the Thelens; she built lots of houses for various members of the Thelen family. So, it was a matter of one person being very



Flora: pleased and just spreading the word that her houses were happy places to live.

I don't know all the details of the work for the Seldon Williams-es; I just know that they were constantly out of town and it was a terrible irritation because it was hard to communicate with them and they didn't seem interested, and then they were delighted but then didn't live there. The whole thing made a terrific puzzle to her.

Morgan: After they got pretty well along, they just suddenly decided to economize. For instance, there's an elevator shaft there, but the elevator was never put in.

Flora: It made the house buckle eventually, didn't it?

Morgan: No.

Flora: I heard that story, because it should have been there to support-- the shaft.

Morgan: Oh, Flora. The shaft was there; it was all properly built.

Flora: He's the engineer. I only know that something had to be done because the damned elevator wasn't there.

Morgan: You had to keep the doors closed.

### Standards, Temperaments, and Maybeck

Morgan: You never know what happens [between architect's drawing and completed work]. I've seen her work, and she'd work on the backs of old envelopes and draw little sketches, and by line weight she was able to convey very easily to people a certain sense and feeling about how the thing was to be. A tremendous number of projects never came to be, too, but a great deal of work was put in. They either got into zoning troubles, which was the case next to Ritter Hall; she designed a huge apartment complex to go in there.

Flora: How about that tremendous cemetery setup, or mausoleum?

Morgan: That was another one; that was in conjunction with Maybeck, and one of the last things they collaborated on. It was to be a big mausoleum out in South City somewhere, and this Mrs. Darbee who owned



Morgan: the Tillamook Cheese Company was going to build it. (She also developed a smell-less violet which was very hardy and revolutionized the florist trade. She made a great deal of money out of that.)

She lived in a little hovel over a store across from where the cable winding house of the California Street Cable Railway was, and had a little florist store underneath which her son ran. In the meantime, she was the largest shareholder in the Tillamook Cheese Company and a few other things.

This mausoleum was going to cost something like ten million, before the war, and she was just financing it out of her check-book. My aunt felt that with the scope of the thing, it was a good thing for collaboration because Maybeck's feeling on the general layout was good.

Flora: They had a big roll of butcher paper--brown paper--and some chalk. He would make these sketches, fanciful sketches.

Morgan: Maybeck had--I don't know whether you ever saw his house up there, the burned-out attic with the sandblasted rafters--he had the big pieces of brown wrapping paper on all the walls, and he had drawn these big chalk sketches all over the place there. For some reason or other, I had driven Aunt Julia up there that particular day and she said, "But Ben, we can't possibly build this. This is not a buildable design; it's a good picture."

Ben bristled, but she finally glossed it over, and so forth, and they got it back on the track and finished it up. But she told me afterwards that she knew him and knew that if she pushed him about one inch further he would have torn those drawings, which represented the best of a month's work, off the wall and crumpled them up and thrown them away. And she was not about to make him do that.

But he'd made these sketches, full of urns, very much like the Women's Gym over here in its general outlines, except it was patently an ossuary, and not a women's gym. He'd done something that was totally impossible to build; you could draw it that way, but there was nothing to hold the roof up.

Riess: That was the old artistic temperament going there.

Morgan: It was. On the other hand--

Flora: She was quite devoid of it. Yet, she had a very fanciful imagination, as you can see in a lot of these drawings she won awards for.



- Riess: I think that's what she had to do because she was a woman; she couldn't be anything but--
- Flora: She had to be right too.
- Morgan: I don't think being a woman had anything to do with it.
- Riess: You have to be better if you're a woman.
- Flora: Sure.
- Morgan: I know, but women are supposed to be, in the main, more temperamental than men. The fact that she was more or less devoid of it was simply that that's the way she was; that's all.
- Flora: She made up for it; she was obstinate when she felt it necessary.
- Morgan: I don't think she was obstinate; she was right.
- Flora: Ha! There's a fine line.
- Morgan: No, no. There's not a fine line, not when you're doing things. You're either right or wrong, and she was right.
- Flora: According to whose standards?
- Morgan: Well, she was charged with building them according to her standards, and this was it. People expected this when they dealt with her. Therefore, she would plunge right ahead and make absolutely sure it was done this way. If you were looking for the cheapest shack you could think of, you didn't go to Julia Morgan to get it. She could make very economical houses; I've seen board and batten houses and very economical things, but they were nicely done.
- Flora: I think that's true at Asilomar; that's pretty inexpensive construction, what's left of those buildings.
- Morgan: All those Y's during the war--I've seen pictures of some of them. They were all nicely done, even though they were nothing but glorified USO's.





Interview 2, April 3, 1975.

A Conversation about Julia Morgan's Early Commissions, Family Connections, and her Will.

- Morgan: [In answer to question of whether Mrs. Morgan, Julia Morgan's mother, knew Phoebe Apperson Hearst.] My grandmother was totally antisocial, I would say. The family was enough.
- Flora: But we differ on that. There are calling cards from a tea she gave that have every prominent person in the Bay Area at the tea. So, there you are.
- Riess: You [to Boutelle] felt from the correspondence in the Bancroft that they knew each other.
- Boutelle: Yes, and in one of the letters from Julia Morgan in Paris to Mrs. Hearst, in answer to an offer to support her financially, she says in effect, "If I thought more money freedom would make my work better, I'd be glad to accept. But I don't."
- Flora: The problem is that Aunt Julia felt very guilty that there were four other children in the family and yet that her education was going on and on and on because they wouldn't accept her at the Beaux Arts and she was still studying with Chaussemiche, a lot longer than she had planned to.
- Morgan: This thing galls me. They were very well-to-do; there was no problem.
- Flora: Why should Mrs. Hearst offer money? That's what hurts his [Morgan North's] feelings. Aunt Julia would have been insulted. And that's the letter that has caused a lot of people to say that Mrs. Hearst financed her, and, of course, that's not so.

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\*Sara Boutelle, at the time engaged in research on Julia Morgan, was present to ask some questions of Mr. and Mrs. North.



Boutelle: In a later letter to Mrs. Hearst, Miss Morgan says a very sweet thing about her mother and Mrs. Hearst being her "two great faiths in the world."

Morgan: She and her mother were always very close. Grandmother never had that kind of a relationship with the others--well, I think she had it with Sam. But my mother and Parmelee and Avery just weren't in the thing at all.

Boutelle: Parmelee left to go to Pittsburg, it said in the Oakland directory.

Morgan: Well, it was St. Louis. He was going to be in the cotton business there, but he didn't have the ability of his grandfather. His father's ability commercially was zero.

Boutelle: So, it fizzled and he came back.

Morgan: No, he got married and moved to Los Angeles, but couldn't seem to make a go of anything.

Boutelle: And he had one daughter, Judith?

Morgan: Yes.

Flora: I want to read to you this little part of Julia Morgan's will:

"The set of books in my San Francisco residence entitled Art Italiana I leave to Flora d'Ille North, wife of Morgan North."

The University read another sentence which said, "I leave all my books to the University," and they claimed all those books and would not release them.

Morgan: They aren't at the University, dear; you've gotten that mixed up. To make a long story short, when Aunt Julia died we could find no will, and I was the only person with any business experience, and young enough, to handle it. So, I was appointed executor of the estate, but I had only the legal authority of the executor, and no direction, and so ostensibly she was intestate and the property would have to be divided up amongst the heirs, who were my mother and my cousin. As such the only thing I could do was to liquidate what we had.

We looked at the books, but at the time we didn't have any place to keep them; they were huge, outsize books. I had nothing to do with it really; I was not an heir at all. I sold the books to the highest bidder. We had Newbegin's and John Howell and others come



Morgan: in and appraise them, and whoever it was who had the high bid took them. And immediately some of the books were sold, dissipated.

Then we were almost ready to put the house up for sale, and I was cleaning up a big bundle of Time magazines in the basement and all of a sudden I came across a couple of little paper transfer files, and I opened them, and in one of them were all her most personal papers, including her will. Of all things it named me executor, no substitutes or anything, and many of the things she had asked to have done, of a personal nature, we had done. We didn't have a funeral and we had, to use an expression of hers, "Please give me a quick tuck-in."

Flora: "With my own."

Incidentally, a good many of those books came from Pierre LeBrun. She was very fond of them!

Morgan: This whole bit kind of grates me a little. But that's how Flora's books were sold. The University tried to retrieve them by going after John Howell, but he cooperated with them, so one way or another they settled it.

Flora: The reason she willed them to me was that on those weekends we used to spend together these were books we would open in front of the fire and talk about, because I was doing a lot of design work in my pottery.

Morgan: I know that one was sold because they made a fair settlement in lieu of it, a small one. These things get very complicated. The last thing she would have wanted would be a suit or anything of that sort.

Boutelle: Could you explain the relationship of the LeBrun family to Julia Morgan?

Morgan: There were three sisters, Mrs. Thornton, my grandmother, and Julia Latimer, and there were three Latimer daughters, and two of them, as seems to be with most of that family, died unmarried. But one of them married Pierre LeBrun. So, Pierre LeBrun was gotten into the family that way.

Boutelle: Was Julia Latimer a cousin of Julia Morgan?



Morgan: A first cousin. Julia Latimer's mother was Eliza's sister. Albert Ozias Parmelee was the father of Mrs. Thornton and Mrs. Latimer and of Eliza Woodward Parmelee, who was my grandmother, married to Charles Bill Morgan. Three sisters, and each one of them had a slave on her doorstep--in their house down south, not when they were in Brooklyn. The slaves slept on mats outside the girls' doors.

Anyway, that's how the LeBrun connection comes in there, and it was a natural offshoot that when my aunt was interested in architecture that she would discuss it with Pierre. They went east frequently as a family group [to visit the Parmelee house in Brooklyn Heights].

Riess: Was there a lot of east-west contact between the families?

Morgan: Oh, yes. When A. O. Parmelee died, my grandmother's mother came out and lived with the family in Oakland and died out here. Yes, they were quite close.

Boutelle: I'm also interested in her connection with Maybeck. She studied drawing with him?

Morgan: He was an instructor at the school, but then he got into architecture on his own. And after she graduated in engineering, which was not what she wanted, she knew that the Beaux Arts was one of the best places to go, and then, he having gone there, she talked to him about it, and he said, "Come on, work in my office for a while, and we'll see what can be done." And he was instrumental in at least providing her with the right names, like Chaussemiche, and so forth, that ultimately got the door open.

Boutelle: Not right away, of course. She had to get the languages.

Flora: Well, she had French already. And the sisters [Julia and Emma] always spoke German.

Boutelle: So, after graduating in 1894, she must have stayed on for at least a year. In an 1895 issue of the Weekly Californian there was a little piece saying that "Miss Julia Morgan, who graduated last year...was engaged in building Professor Lawson's house." And I assume that meant under Maybeck.

Morgan: There was a rather funny occurrence--that reminds me of it--in the big Berkeley fire: everybody ran around, and they went to Lawson's--he was away someplace--and they moved all the furniture out into the middle of a vacant lot, where the furniture ultimately burned to a crisp, and the house, because it was concrete, wasn't touched!





Flora: Here is something from March 28, 1896, "Roxy's Column," in the Oakland paper: "Miss Julia Morgan, the very talented daughter of Mr. and Mrs. C.B. Morgan, is now in New York. Miss Morgan is a graduate of the University, taking...mechanical engineering and graduating in it with honors. She is already very successful in her chosen profession, that of an architect, an unusual one on this coast for a woman.

"Miss Morgan and Miss Jessie Peixotto went East together, making a very interesting visit to the Chicago University. After a visit to Boston, which will include the Institute of Technology, Miss Morgan will sail for Europe, where she will study in Paris for a year under skillful masters. Oakland will be very proud in the future of her woman architect. Julia Morgan has rare ability, a capacity for work, and is, with it all, very popular among a large circle of friends."

May 30, 1896, same column: "Miss Julia Morgan, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. C.B. Morgan, sailed from New York on Wednesday. Her destination is Paris, where she will spend a year in close study. Miss Morgan is already a fairly skilled architect, but goes abroad for the further advancement possible in the Old World. Oakland will expect and receive much in the future along architectural lines from so thorough and good a student."

Riess: Jessica Peixotto was a good friend of Julia Morgan's?

Flora: The Peixottos were family friends. Aunt Julia built a house for them, the one...

[Discussion as to ownership and location of several Julia Morgan buildings around Piedmont Avenue and Bancroft Way, one done for "the first woman dean" and one for a Mr. Tashiera, one with tiles of ships on it that she built for him first, and then in later years another one for him, across from what was the Theta house.]

Morgan: Then there is a house on the Bancroft Steps that was built for Richard Clark. He was manager of the Hearst Estate for many years. He had control of things...when Senator George Hearst died, he left all of his money to Phoebe. He didn't trust William, so Richard Clark handled the business affairs and it must have been a rather horrible job, because at one time Mrs. Hearst owned 25 percent of the Anaconda Copper Company and when Willie wanted some money badly, she finally prevailed on Richard Clark to consider the various assets.



Morgan: The Homestake, being a gold mine, I guess they didn't want to sell that, so they sold the Anaconda Company. Well, they got 11 million for a quarter interest in it--at one time it was worth well over a billion; in other words, Richard Clark was absolutely right that that was the last thing in the world they should have sold. In fact, he was for selling the ranch.

[Speaking of the Hearst finances.] My aunt would fret because all of a sudden the building would stop and then start again, but the trouble--as we spoke of earlier--was that Hearst would run things totally into the ground; he dissipated everything with his art collection buying. He would think it nothing to go into the Journal American in New York and ask the controller how much they had in the bank and take the whole damn thing right in one check right out, and run down and cash it at Parke Bernet, and leave them without five cents in the newspaper treasury.

Well, there are lots of these stories, but the upshot of it all was that the papers got into such bad shape that Richard Berlin was called in, a financial wizard, and he took over sometime in the early thirties and paid off the \$100,000,000 that Hearst owed, and by 1940 I think they were \$150,000,000 in the black. And they continued in the black as long as Berlin ran things.

[Speaking of the possibility that Maybeck did some decorative work at San Simeon.] I don't come across anything in connection with Maybeck. The only thing of a Hearst nature that they collaborated on was the gym.

Hearst had Maybeck make sketches of a castle to be built up at Wyntoon--this was early, in the teens--and he asked Maybeck how much it would cost to build it, and Maybeck said \$1,000,000, and Hearst threw up his hands. That was much more than he had in mind. So, Maybeck sent him a bill for \$100,000, the ten percent architectural fee, but all he gave him was two brown paper sketches. Hearst refused to pay it, and not only that, but Maybeck ceased to be his architect. And that's how he went to Aunt Julia for the San Simeon deal.

Flora: But what about the gym?

Morgan: Maybeck did the one that burned down, the old Hearst Hall.

Flora: How come I have all of Aunt Julia's sketches on that, the one that has the big, huge arch?



From Kappa Alpha Theta Journal, 1909

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lose dignity and prestige. I should greatly regret the femininity's entering a woman's college, particularly any of the large eastern colleges which offer so tempting a field from the point of view of their charming girlhood and their prominent position in the academic world.

ESTHER SHAW.

### JULIA MORGAN, OUR ARCHITECT

One of the Thetas of whom Omega is most justly proud, is Julia Morgan, the architect. She more than any other of our chapter perhaps, has "done things."

She was born in San Francisco, but her parents soon after moved to Oakland, California, which is still her home. Her parents belonged to old New England families, and her home has always been one of great culture and refinement. She was educated in the Oakland schools, and before she had entered upon her university course, had determined upon architecture as her profession.

She was initiated into Kappa Alpha Theta in the fall of 1890, and graduated with her class in 1894, with high honors. The course she pursued was probably the hardest and most strenuous ever taken by an Omega girl. Beside all the work offered in mechanical drawing that had a bearing on her profession, she took the hardest courses in strength of materials, physics and mathematics, in more than one of which she was the first who had ever made application, and to keep pace with her preparation one at least of her professors had to work quite as hard as she herself! All her work was characterized by clearness and definiteness, her energy and industry were indefatigable, and though modest and retiring almost to a fault, she nevertheless won a most enviable position in the respect and regard of her professors and classmates, and was considered a true exponent of the finest type of woman student. It was characteristic of the fineness and infinitesimal exactness of her work at this period, that she could distinguish two points one-sixtieth of an inch apart!

After her graduation she spent a year or more in the study of architecture under Mr. Maybeck, and was then ready to go to Paris where she spent six years in closest study. It was here that she encountered her greatest difficulties, probably. A woman and a foreigner, she was regarded by the French with disfavor, and it was not easy to secure a *patron* and recognition of her aims and ambitions. The strict rules governing entrance to the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* made her way of the hardest, and her public examinations were crowded with people who came curious to witness the ordeal of *P'Americaine*.

Examinations passed, she found herself the first woman ever admitted to the department of architecture. This in itself did not give her position, but slowly and surely she gained that with instructors and fellow students, by hardest labor and splendid success, until today among the American students at the *Ecole* she is still regarded a star and emulated as an example.

Upon her return to America in 1902 she refused tempting offers in New York, to come back to her home, and here entered the office of Galen Howard, supervising architect for the University of California. Promoted to the position of chief draughtsman, she supervised the construction of the Greek Theatre, and designed the Sather Bridge.

Private business soon led her to establish offices of her own in San Francisco, and she found herself with a reputation and plenty to do. In the midst of success came the earthquake and fire of 1906, and she lost her every book, all her plans, her office equipment, her typewriter and her lead pencils. In the tremendous building activity succeeding that catastrophe, she was sought for much fine work of rehabilitation. She was given the work of interior decoration of the great Fairmount Hotel of San Francisco, and among other large contracts, has played a great and fine part in the designing of business buildings and homes in San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley and the vicinity.

Stress of work compelled her to take a partner in her business, and she now has a splendid suite of eight offices in the beautiful new Merchants Exchange Building, with every equipment for her large force of draughtsmen. Last year she drew the plans and built the new house for Omega Chapter in Berkeley. It is no vain boast to say that today she occupies one of the foremost positions among architects on the coast, and among architects, contractors and those who are building or interested in houses, Miss Julia Morgan is a name to conjure with.





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know her best and love her most realize the fulfillment of the possibilities of her glorious womanhood.

*Ethel Rose Taylor, Psi*

#### CLARA SMITH LAWLER, Phi

For those of you who are unacquainted with artists' haunts in California, a word will inform you that Carmel is the sacred grove of things artistic—painters, writers, and real estate men flourish there. Competing with them for prominence are a number of most attractive little specialty shops which naturally find a congenial milieu in such an atmosphere.

Clara Smith Lawler, who was initiated by Phi in 1902, conducts one of the most charming of these shops, her choice running to the oriental. One finds everything from beautiful Pekin blue beads, carved ivory and jade trees, to embroidered Chinese summer coats tucked away in the quaintest of little stores.

Mrs Lawler gets her things from China through her sister. She started her work first in Palo Alto, and then went to Carmel where she was located for sometime at the Playa del Rey hotel. She is now more centrally situated on the main street, and any of you who are in Carmel will be well repaid if you go to see the beautiful things Mrs Lawler has there.

#### JULIA MORGAN, Omega

Julia Morgan was a pioneer. One of the few women to complete the difficult course in architecture at California, she was not content with that, but sailed away to Paris. There she entered the Beaux artes and was the first woman to graduate from that famous institution.

Returning to San Francisco Miss Morgan established herself in her profession. It was natural that when the chapter at California decided that it could afford to build its own house it turned to Miss Morgan for advice. And all Thetas who have visited Omega's chapter house have been told how it was designed and built by a Theta! The old house, tall and unlovely outside in accordance with the architectural styles of that date, held much charm and hominess within. Everybody loved the long low living and dining rooms which were so easily thrown into one commodious hall for parties. Even the aquarium held a special niche in our affections. Then, in 1924 when the House association decided that it would rebuild or renovate 2723 Durant because it was no longer adequate or convenient, they just naturally asked Julia Morgan's advice. By this time her pro-

DR PETERS

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ing hurried trips to Los Angeles where she was building a lovely home for the girls in the movie colony, sponsored by Y.W.C.A. A large orphanage in San Francisco as well as many private homes were also demanding her attention.

Nevertheless, Miss Morgan gave freely and gladly of her time and skill. It would have been very expensive to entirely rebuild; moreover, she knew every beam and joist in that three-storied shingled building and she knew what possibilities were hidden away. Today the same old framework and foundation are clothed in soft creamy stucco fashioned in the English tudor style. The house now faces the garden and in all ways is different from the former one. Inside are six beautiful carved doors and a stately stone fireplace, the gifts of Miss Morgan's generosity.

One of the most important buildings of Miss Morgan's designing is the large new women's gymnasium being built on the California campus. This building, which is the gift of William Randolph Hearst in memory of his mother, is to be a beautiful and modern physical education plant. Miss Morgan and Bernard Maybank another prominent architect are associated in the work.

When we asked the editors of the *California monthly* which published articles concerning the achievements of successful alumni, if they had ever written up Miss Morgan, they assured us that they had tried and tried, with no luck. Julia Morgan is modest; she prefers to remain unsung. But with the evidence of her success and of her thoughtful kindness before us always, we are proud to number her among Theta alumnae.

#### DR IVA LOWTHER PETERS, Chi

On the morning of March 14 all eastern metropolitan papers carried the announcement of the appointment of a new Dean of women at Syracuse university.

This Dean is Iva Lowther Peters, member of Chi chapter, who received her A. B. *summa cum laude*, from Syracuse in 1901, her M. A. from Columbus in 1916, and her doctorate from Clark in 1918.

Dr Peters for several years has been a member of the faculty of Goucher college, and her resignation from that position July 1, left her free to assume the duties of Dean at Syracuse with the opening of college this fall.

She is the author of a number of books bearing on the prob-





- Morgan: Well, it might have been done at the time that she was with Maybeck. And about Maybeck, although he was very hard to work with, it's wholly untrue that there was ever any bad blood there. They collaborated on things right straight through, and not only on Hearst work.
- Boutelle: Do you know whether she ever did any work in New York with LeBrun?
- Morgan: No, she came right back here. She just had long talks with Pierre. And his father, Napoleon, was alive at that time. They were counselors. But she, I think, had her mind thoroughly made up before she took mechanical engineering to be an architect.
- Riess: You did mention earlier that she had considered medicine.
- Flora: I've heard so many people say, who knew her well, that it wouldn't have mattered what profession she chose. She had fantastic will power, you know; anything would have been possible for her, but she did have this artistic thing.
- Morgan: Might have made beautiful incisions.
- Flora: And every client who I've talked to who went through the building of a house with Aunt Julia always ended up being very fast friends and very grateful, in a sense, that she was able to capture exactly what they had in mind.
- Morgan: The question often comes up of how she got going with such a wallop, and often people say, "Well, it was Phoebe Hearst." But it wasn't, because she was well acquainted. The University in those days was a pretty exclusive club. [But the idea was that in this club numerous people were acquaintances of Julia Morgan's and naturally commissioned her. - S.R.]
- Boutelle: I'd like to know how Mills College picked Julia Morgan to do their library.
- Morgan: Probably Mrs. Mills.
- Flora: Mrs. Mills was a friend of her mother's.
- [Looking at clippings.] This article was written May 28, 1896. And she was class of 1894.
- Boutelle: So, she had two years of work here. She was accepted in 1898 at the Beaux Arts.



- Flora: I have a feeling she made more than one trip, that she may have come back in between. Also I know she traveled a lot when she was over there, and I know that she worked as an architect there in other architects' offices.
- Boutelle: There is a drawing and specifications for a house built for a Mrs. Fearing in Fontainbleu. That was a commission that she did in France, in 1899 or 1900.
- Flora: I know she did work in between, and this is probably where the idea came from that she was short of funds.
- Boutelle: Well, that's ridiculous.
- Flora: Well, it isn't ridiculous in the light of those days, probably, because schooling expenses were part of the family's obligation. Well, the point was that she tried very hard to be as self-sustaining as she could be, just as a matter of pride.
- Boutelle: Then she came back here in 1901. In 1903 she got the commission to build the Campanile [at Mills College] and in 1904 it was dedicated, completely done. In 1906 was the Library.
- Morgan: Who gave them the bell tower [Campanile]?
- Boutelle: Mr. and Mrs. Smith, "Borax" Smith, a rich Oakland man. He was on the board of trustees, and Mrs. Mills, who was evidently a very big money-raiser, was walking along with him--he was president of the trustees, I guess--and she said, "See those lovely bells on the ground? I call them our silent bells," because someone had given them the bells from the carillon that was in the California Exposition of 1896, given them to Mills College, but just plopped them down on the ground, so she called them her "silent bells."
- And Mr. Smith said, "Well, what do you think we should do to get them ringing?" And she said, "It would take a tower."
- But what I am curious about is whether she then said to him, "I know of a marvelous architect, a girl who just came back from the Beaux Arts," or whether it was his idea, that Julia Morgan was the daughter of a friend of his.
- Morgan: I expect to learn a lot more about the sequence of things after we sort through the bales of stuff we have with Mr. Maher [author doing research on San Simeon].



Boutelle: Do you know anything about that Rosenberg Memorial Oriental Court that she designed? She built the Rosenbergs a house too, which is still standing. But when they died there were five steles, which were to be set up in an Oriental Court. The drawing of the court, by Julia Morgan, was in a memorial booklet made up at the time of the death of the Rosenbergs. Albert Bender wrote the words in the book, but nowhere does it tell where this thing is, or was, to be.

Morgan: The big difficulty in this is...you probably have noticed that you've given several surprises to us...you have to understand her as a person. She delighted in having her family together two or three times a year, and the rest of the time she didn't want to be bothered with family affairs.

She was so intent on what she was doing that she simply didn't consider that anything she was doing was any business of the family. She would tell interesting incidents or little things, but not the whole picture; she never discussed it with anyone outside of her own organization. She didn't want any family interference.

This raised the devil at the end, because she really needed it for protection, and Mrs. Forney had me over a barrel, because she was extremely loyal to Aunt Julia. I considered her totally honest, and she was the best thing for her, to keep up some semblance of order through this, but Mrs. Forney would never tell me what the financial condition was, so that she was literally out of cash when she died, and Mrs. Forney hadn't been paid for quite some time, and the first I knew about this was when a lawyer came around because she was suing for back pay!

I was absolutely flabbergasted. There was really no problem because we could always sell a few things to bring revenue; Mrs. Forney could get Aunt Julia's signature and I would take the responsibility. No problem. But Mrs. Forney would not confide in me in any way.

Flora: She has been awfully loyal in saying that Miss Morgan said that only her work speaks for her, and not anybody else, and that's it. She won't give any information. But she is up to here and so are we, at this point, with requests for information.

Morgan: Things like that are what made it so difficult all along. I don't think my mother understood the machinations of it in the early days.

Flora: With two or three years to throw into this thing [the record of Julia Morgan, Architect] we could organize it.



Morgan: By reading all the letters, we could dig it out from that end. But then, for instance, there was a hiatus in the correspondence because everyone was here from 1900 to 1906.

Flora: To me that is unimportant. It is what she did that is important.

Morgan: And I am explaining why the answers to some questions are not available. For instance, in that Mills work, she was living at home, in Oakland, and she wouldn't have been writing to anybody. The family was intact.

Boutelle: The curious thing is--I don't know just when she came back to Oakland. I assume it had to be 1902 at the latest. In 1902 they were building the campus and Howard was beginning to work. But she's not listed in the San Francisco directory as working for Howard until 1905. In 1904 she is listed for the first time in the Oakland directory as Miss Julia Morgan, architect, at home.

Morgan: She worked on the Greek Theatre [completed 1903] for Howard, and she supervised the dedication of it. It wasn't finished when they dedicated it and she had to do a lot of jury-rigging to get through it.

Flora: Millions of yards of muslin to cover up the unfinished parts.

Boutelle: It was her class that was the first one to have their graduation in that spot, that field, Ben Weed Amphitheatre.

Flora: She played the violin in her graduation.

Boutelle: I have the yearbook of that class, and it didn't have Julia Morgan's name in it. But I talked to another classmate, a woman who had been there at the same time. She said you didn't get your name in the yearbook until you paid a sum of money, and Julia Morgan thought that was perfectly ridiculous, that if you went through college and got your degree, to get your name in the yearbook--just the name; they didn't have pictures in the yearbooks in those days--you had to pay extra. That was the memory of this woman down in Watsonville.

Morgan: Sounds like Aunt Julia.

I only know of two or three pictures of Aunt Julia that I have seen that were taken after 1910; one was the one taken for the Cyclopedia of American Biography, which requested one.

Riess: Speaking of the finances at the end, were there no savings at all?





Flora: She didn't want to make money. She always felt that if she needed the money she could sell something.

Morgan: She didn't realize that suddenly the end of her earning had come. Hearst owed her a lot of money, which she never got, and we talked it over and we undoubtedly could develop a case and sue, but that was the last thing in the world that she would have done, so we didn't do it, we let that thing go. I mean, all the work that she did on the monastery that is out at the de Young Museum--she went out there and personally superintended the placement of every stone so it could be reconstructed. And even when the cases were burned, she personally supervised [the renumbering].

She did all the engineering. San Francisco would have had to build the monastery with steel inside; it couldn't be built just as a masonry structure because an earthquake would have dumped it again. So, she did all the engineering, and all the vaulting, and made a plan for erecting it.

Her fee for the job was miniscule, \$15,000 for work that took place over several years, but Hearst was of deteriorating mind by that time, and when she sent a bill in, it fell on deaf ears, and there was nobody to back it up. It was one of those things: with pressure put on him, something undoubtedly would have happened, but what she wouldn't do in life we certainly wouldn't want to do in death. I would have had to face her in my conscience and it wouldn't work.

At any rate, her total earnings were seldom over \$10,000 a year, and I don't think any year she made as much as \$15,000. She just had no use for more than that. She managed her own affairs entirely. The idea of making money bored her, aside from enough to get by. She bought the two houses and fixed them up and everything else. And it didn't cost very much to do that.

Also, she still had her share of what had come down for several generations from A.O. Parmelee. That was invested in a rather unfortunate way that didn't grow. Ultimately inflation picked up after the war, and she had some annuities, but then when she needed increasing care, the money simply didn't hold up.

Flora: I don't think she ever projected the fact that some day she'd have to live on something more than a Hershey bar, you know, which was her standard diet.



Boutelle: Or a bowl of soup. I visited the place in San Luis Obispo where she would stop in and get a bowl of soup. And I talked to Steve, the one who drove the taxi.

And that reminds me that every little, old, ancient man that I have talked to has said, "I loved Miss Morgan next to my mother." I'm not exaggerating.

Flora: Ever talk to Mr. Rankin, the plumber? He absolutely worshipped her. And his children and grandchildren.

Morgan: The Rankins--she went to school with the Rankins in Oakland, and the Rankins were old Scotch people, quite intelligent, and they were thoroughly aware that any job that they did should be done right. They never grew big; they would be an engineering consultant firm today if they were around. When she had a job, like San Simeon, they simply set up a sub-operation down there and handled everything. She knew she could count on them.

Riess: Well, why did they all love her?

Morgan: Oh, I suppose one of the roots of the whole thing was that money was not her driving force, as it is with many other people.

Flora: And another thing was that she turned full facet on you, for whatever length of time you were worth it, or you interested her, or you were doing something that pleased her in whatever the building project was. And also, they could read her blueprints. There was never a question that she knew everything they were supposed to know as well as they did.

Morgan: And these were all people of integrity.

[Speaking of Miss Morgan's attitude about San Simeon.] It was going to be a museum and the things that were in the museum, which was typical of her too, would be very much worthwhile to the American public to be able to see, discounting the building entirely. Then she said, "Well, of course, my thought is, perhaps if someone else had done it who didn't quite feel about it as I did, it would have been worse."

Riess: She was loyal to all the things in the building?

Morgan: No, but she felt that they were good of a type.

And in not getting the monastery-museum, San Francisco missed what would have been one of the wonders of the town. Had they been



Morgan: able to go ahead, prior to the war there were funds enough to do it, and they could have gotten it up, because she [Julia Morgan] was in complete control of her faculties at that time and the thing would have gone together; she had an office staff and the whole works. But when Klusmann blocked it, it put in a time lag, just like the Alaska pipeline and the Sierra Club. They delayed it four years, brought on an ungodly mess, to the point where now there is no way to build it. The Hearsts have lost all the drawings; I guess the city has too.

Just the Hearst things took two Bekins vans to move them out [referring to removal from her offices of Julia Morgan's papers]. The man in charge of the land company that was handling all the Hearst properties wanted the drawings and he wanted the file on the art collection, so I gave it to him. They hauled them away, and the state has been after me ever since to find the drawings for San Simeon. I don't know where they are.

Boutelle: A guide down there said he understood that just before the property was turned over to the state they spent five days burning papers that were there in that basement.

Flora: And, Morgan, weren't the things in the houses on Divisadero Street already sifted from the things at Merchants' Exchange?

Morgan: Yes. When she decided to close out her office, Aunt Julia sent post-cards to everybody from her file--of course, in many cases the people were gone or the houses had been sold--saying that she was going to close her office and that if at the end of a certain deadline no one wanted the drawings, that she would have to destroy them because they took up too much space. I think she told me ten or twelve people responded, and that was all.

But they used to call her up. She had to have an unlisted phone because people would call her day and night--Christmas Day I remember one time four people called her up--wanting to know where a sewer or pipe or this or that would come in, things that the drawings would show.

Flora: And later she used Mrs. Forney's address, to avoid the people.

I found some things today, incidentally, that showed that she was a member of the Century Club, and I always thought she didn't believe in belonging to anything, except as an honorary member, certainly, of the City Club.

Boutelle: And the Women's Athletic Club [now Metropolitan Club].



- Boutelle: Do you know a Dr. Mary Lehman, a physician who was supposed to be a friend of hers? And also a Dr. Maximila--[?]\* who was the doctor she put down when she was about to take a trip?
- Flora: Those are the last things that we would know. She would never mention anything physical. The way the family would hear would be that the hospital would call and say that she had just been operated on, or something.
- Morgan: When the mastoidectomy got reinfected back in the twenties, early thirties, they had to operate again and remove the whole inner ear, and in so doing they severed the facial muscle on one side. The doctor never sent her a bill and she realized that in some respects he was more hurt than she was. She used to send a present to him every year at Christmastime. And sometimes she'd have her staff drive her clear down there to give it to him personally.
- Flora: An armload of orchids, because he had said his wife loved orchids. (She, Aunt Julia, despised orchids.)
- Boutelle: One time wasn't she in some accident where she had fallen in construction?
- Morgan: Oh, constantly. For instance, up at Wyntoon, when I first went up there, they weren't connected onto PG&E, and they had a ditch and their own power plant for electricity. She was walking down that ditch one day, and part of it was a wooden flume, and towards the end there was a bunch of ferns growing on it, and she thought the ferns were on solid ground. She stepped over and she slid down the bank, and oh, golly, her head was a mass of scars.
- Flora: How about the time she went down the drain pipe at Wyntoon and came out two miles farther away. [Laughter.] That was Mr. Steilberg's story about her. Everyone was looking for her above ground.
- Morgan: She would always go with her hands in her pockets and be looking up above--she always had pockets to her jackets, you know, and she put her hands in with her thumbs sticking out in that typical way--and every once in a while, when they hadn't fenced off a stairwell or something, she would go right down to the floor below.

That brings to mind Chaussemiche's comment that it was too bad that Julia Morgan was a woman because she was really a very able architect, much more so than many men he knew, but that of course because she was a woman she would never be able to get out on the scaffolds and climb structures as a man would be able to do. And she could climb like a goat!

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\* Maximila-Kuleav





Boutelle: Anywhere. What Steilberg said was that half of the men were really scared to, that Thaddeus Joy got dizzy on scaffolding and never would do it.

Morgan: Thaddeus had a degenerative nerve condition in his neck, which finally killed him. This would obviously give him an imbalance condition.

One time she was coming over for Thanksgiving dinner, which was always at some ungodly time like three in the afternoon. She didn't show at the appointed time, and she was supposed to call when she was coming and we would drive down and meet the train.

She didn't call, so I was dispatched to take a look. I went down Prospect Street to Dwight and the minute I turned the corner of the Deaf and Dumb Asylum, which we used to call the Dummy Grounds--it wasn't any disrespect, it was just the Dummy Grounds, like the Campanile was the Campanile, not the Sather Tower--with that sandstone wall all along the side of it from Warring Street on up, here was Aunt Julia, coming up on the edge of the sidewalk and bracing one hand on the sandstone wall.

I got hold of her and we walked up arm in arm. She was willing to do that because we always did it before the accident, so we just did it again, and that was all right.

But of all the--I think Flora was privileged to have one of the best relationships with her of anybody I know. Aunt Julia never relaxed at all until the war, and she was then far from completely relaxed, but she simply could not do the building that she wanted, and she was not about to go out and build war work because this was not her line.

Boutelle: But she did have that boy come live with her.

Morgan: Oh, yes, and that aged her considerably. But once they got rid of him [son of one of her employees], she used the Monterey house a great deal then. I was away, but Flora went down.

Flora: She never lived in a house of her own building.

Morgan: She built her study down there.

Flora: Yes, it was marvelous. It was lined with these 11th-century frescoes.

Morgan: The point is, she went down to work, but there were times when she couldn't work, and she and Flora would talk for hours and hours around the fire at night. She never had time to do that with anybody else.



Interview 3, June 14, 1975.

Introductory Comments

Morgan: [Speaking of Julia Morgan house at 2801 Ashby.] It had sliding doors, which was a typical Julia Morgan trait, downstairs.

Riess: You were saying that the house screamed, "Julia Morgan." What made it "scream, 'Julia Morgan'?"

Morgan: There was a symmetry to the design. You didn't find two square windows on one side of the door and two round ones on the other. The door was in the center of the entrance. The entrance was in the proper proportion to the door, and the door was in proper proportion to the building.

She used a rounded top window in more elaborate houses very frequently. In fact, the older ones were almost exclusively made up in this manner. This house has that. The upper floor windows are rectangular. But there's a balance to the whole thing.

Riess: If money was no object, where would she add on? Like good wood and things like that?

Morgan: Good work, fundamentally--good work and good materials. She was very choosy about the people who built the houses--the contractors and so forth. She didn't ask anyone to bid that she didn't know all about the quality of their work.

This house [2801 Ashby] is, I would guess, probably about 1910, and structurally it's in excellent condition. There were a bunch of hippies living in it for a while, and they ran it down. But Allan Temko is bringing it up, and ultimately I think it will be very much as it was originally. He has no plans for changing it. Oh, the kitchen would have to be revamped, probably, a little, which is typical, because things have simply changed in this time. But it's a very livable, useful, light, airy house. This is usually the case.



- Morgan: I have seen some dark Julia Morgan houses where there were redwood interiors, and they've aged and smoked and whatnot, and other houses were built close to them, which took the airiness away. Sometimes they can be almost drab.
- Riess: How about the Seldon Williams house? As it was described when it was for sale, it was a dark thing.
- Morgan: I think a great deal of that was because the planting had been allowed to go wild. The shades had been drawn from the day it was occupied, and they never had been pulled up. It gave it a drab appearance. But the McCorkles or the University (whoever had the say about it) brought it back to more or less the original planning for planting, and it emerges as what it was intended to be.
- Riess: If a client didn't have quite enough money, and yet wanted to... What was Julia Morgan's attitude toward imitations do you think?
- Morgan: What do you mean by imitation?
- Riess: If she found an excellent ceramic that looked like a della Robbia but wasn't a della Robbia, would she have bought such a thing?
- Morgan: I couldn't answer that. If it was in good taste she would use it, I would say. If it was something flimsy and just painted on plaster or something that would deteriorate, she would probably recommend against it. But if a client wanted it, why, she'd probably put it in. I mean, she did many, many houses that she herself was not satisfied with or didn't like; but the client did, and that was the point.
- Riess: Does the correspondence show things like that--discussion between architect and client? Does that come out in the correspondence?
- Morgan: There isn't too much correspondence on the individual houses. Most of that, I think, was destroyed. Plus, it was all done--she would come over to talk with the clients with a bunch of old envelopes in her pocket, and she'd make sketches and whatnot, and go back and then emerge with preliminary plans--it was mostly all done, I think, by personal contact; hence there wouldn't be any correspondence on it, or very little.



Family Ties

Riess: In the first interview we talked a lot about Julia Morgan's closeness to her mother. Yet, according to my dates, her father was alive until 1923.

Morgan: Correct.

Riess: What about the relationship between those two?

Morgan: She and her father were not nearly as close. Grandfather was more of an outgoing person, and Grandmother was more or less a recluse, I suspect, in a way. This same thing may have been one of the reasons they got along so well together; they both enjoyed discussing things between themselves, but they didn't care much about talking to other people about those things.

Grandfather was always out promoting something or other, even up to his very last days. He loved to laugh, and was just a very different sort of person. I don't think he had, probably, the intellectual depth that my grandmother had.

Riess: He had a stroke in 1922, but he was around all that time. Do you know whether he had a lot of pride in his very accomplished daughters, whether he related to all of that?

Morgan: I don't think he considered the situation extraordinary at all. It developed, and he'd grown with it. I don't think he was either impressed or unimpressed.

Riess: So, they would just still be little girls to him?

Morgan: Oh, no, definitely not little girls. But he always had a major project of some kind of his own that he was chasing. I just never had the feeling that he cared so much about family ties as the rest of the family did.

Flora: The men in the family just weren't very effective; let's face it.

Morgan: They weren't, except for Sam.

Riess: How about the relationship between Julia and Emma in their growing-up years?

Morgan: I think there was a great deal of jealousy between them. I mean, they just didn't get along. They were two totally different people, [to Flora] wouldn't you say?





- Flora: No, there was a very strong family feeling, but there was no jealousy. One was the family beauty, and the other was the accomplished one. I didn't feel any feeling of [jealousy] at all.
- Morgan: Oh, I did. Every once in a while they would snarl at each other a little bit.
- Flora: Oh, well, that happens in any family.
- Morgan: Oh, yes. But if one was in trouble, the other was there; I'll put it that way.
- Riess: I remember from the first interview that your mother married your father and then went on to law school.
- Morgan: That's correct.
- Riess: Was that right out of college that she got married?
- Morgan: No, she was married in 1900, and she must have been 26 at that time.
- Flora: She had a heart condition--a murmur. In those days they kept her out of school a year between high school and college anyway. Then after that she was still closely guarded. Of course, she's the one who lived to be 96. It happened very often, I guess, in those days.
- Riess: I don't know why I didn't catch it when we talked about it before. I think that's even more extraordinary, to go on to law school after you got married.
- Morgan: She had nothing else to do. Father was extremely busy; he was in politics. As such, they lived at first in San Francisco, and it was very easy for her to go to Hastings.
- Riess: I'm one of a pair of sisters, and I know the things that operate between us. I wondered if there was competition between the two of them in this way?
- Morgan: Not really competition, because they were so utterly different. In other words, my mother had no desire to have a rigorous commercial life as Aunt Julia had, and Aunt Julia had no desire to have a family life like Mother had.
- Flora: That's why I don't see the rivalry at all.



Riess: We're not here to talk about Emma, but I do think it is interesting that she would just go at that point, if her desire was to have a family life. Are there children besides you, Mr. North?

Morgan: There were three other boys who didn't survive. My father always said they were warned by the doctor that she shouldn't have any children. After a while she got weary of not having them and decided to try anyway. So, that's the way it worked.

The problem was a slight murmur. Pediatricians today say many children are born with a slight murmur, and by the time they reach adulthood it usually goes away. This was evidently her case, but knowledge of heart problems was extremely rudimentary in those days.

Riess: How about Julia Morgan's health? Was she a frail individual?

Morgan: She was as strong as an ox, actually. But due to the rigorous life she led and her dietary habits, she had a number of misfortunes. She always had a bad ear, and this eventually resulted in mastoid troubles. It had to be worked on.

Riess: What do you mean by dietary problems?

Morgan: Oh, a life of chocolate bars for a diet is kind of rough.

Flora: Her build was such that she appeared frail, when really I never knew her to sleep more than four hours a night, if she bothered to do that. She still lived to be 86.

Riess: I was wondering if she was protected as a child?

Flora: Not any more so than any Victorian daughter, I suppose. They all were guarded carefully.

Riess: Yet that was about the time of the "fresh air" movement. I wondered if your family...

Morgan: No, there were no health freaks, or anything of that sort in the family. They all had fairly strong constitutions.

Flora: They lived through the time when nobody had furnaces, you know. I attribute their longevity to that, because they never pampered themselves.

In fact, there was a family thing not to mention a sickness. If you were indisposed for any reason, that ended it. The indisposition could amount to something really serious, but it just wasn't discussed,



- Flora: even in the family.
- Riess: Was that out of any philosophical convictions, or just a sign of the times?
- Morgan: It was just the way they were.
- Flora: I think both of those things.
- Riess: Did we talk about religion? Did she go to church on Sunday?
- Morgan: The religious aspect was extremely superficial. She was almost conned into this Baptist church across the street.
- Riess: Across the street on 14th and Brush?
- Morgan: Yes. They made her sign a pledge of "no alcohol," and she didn't even know what alcohol was. Fortunately, the church burned down one night, and I think that ended the religion.
- Riess: All the pledges went up in smoke! I think of mothers in Victorian novels making their daughters promise not to do this or that in their life. I wonder if there was any possibility of anything like that between Julia and her mother, in their long closeness?
- Morgan: Her mother never liked alcohol. As an older woman she had to drink port. The doctor insisted that she have quite a bit of port. The housekeeper would bring her her glass in the afternoon, and she would take it, making an awful face. I don't think that Aunt Julia particularly liked the taste of it. She loved it in cooking; well seasoned wine cooking went over well with her. But she never cared particularly about drinking in a social situation.
- I don't think she wanted anything to interfere with her mind, and sought no escapes. In fact, in her whole life she never sought escapes at all, until she was physically unable to carry on. She just wanted more and more work to do.
- Riess: From what you said, it sounds like she was quite totally unprepared to have the kind of eventual loss of memory and loss of capacity.
- Morgan: That was the cruelest thing that could have happened to anybody. She had one of the finest minds going, regardless, and to have it fade out was a horrible way. And she was aware of it, to a degree at least.



- Riess: What kinds of influences can you imagine her mother having on Julia? Or were they just intimates?
- Morgan: I think just intimates. I don't think that anybody had any particular influence on her. I think everything came from her own mind. She had such an unusual mind; she sought an outlet for its use, and experimented around until she got into the channels she wanted to be in. I don't think anybody could have told her anything along those lines. I seldom heard her ask an opinion of anybody about anything.
- Flora: That's what disturbs me when you say she was intimate with her mother. They were very fond of each other, but I don't think her mother was anyone she discussed architecture with or anything like that.
- Riess: The time she spent with her mother was more the recognition of her mother's need?
- Flora: Her mother was alone at that point.
- Morgan: I think most of their things were family reminiscences. I think she would tell her mother what she was doing and so on, and I think her mother listened patiently, but I don't think she was truly interested, in the details at least.
- Riess: When she finally gave up her practice she substituted traveling, I gather. Was she depressed at that time?
- Morgan: She must have been, because she knew...The last job she did, I was keenly aware of the whole thing. It was a remodeling job here in Berkeley. She'd come over and check her measurements and when she'd go back to the office she had forgotten everything and was totally frustrated. So, as the deterioration took place her travels got to be more of a mess, and she'd get lost and forget where she was and what ship she was on. There were several international searches instituted to locate her.
- Riess: Then did she really begin to reach out and ask of people?
- Morgan: No. That was her trouble, you see. She just never sought information. She had always been quite self-sufficient at finding things out, and to ask other people--well, it wasn't part of her.
- Riess: In the first interview you remarked that neither Julia nor Emma ever recuperated from the idyll of their happy childhoods.
- Flora: They didn't.





- Morgan: I don't think any of the family did, for that matter.
- Flora: That was the glue that held them together; they were so diverse, but they did remember very fondly this kind of idyllic childhood. I don't know, I never had three brothers, but I think maybe that added to the fun of it all.
- Morgan: I evidently resemble Sam in many ways, because as her memory started to fade she would suddenly turn to me and say, "Sam, what's happening," on this that or the other. It was obviously a piece of a conversation that she'd had with Sam sometime during his life.
- Flora: It was as if they reverted in times of stress or of problems; they automatically began thinking of this marvelous childhood they had, when, I guess, just the area must have been marvelous to be in.
- Morgan: She treated Sam as an equal, which was unusual, because she was perfectly aware that she was ahead of all the others in the family as far as her ability to use her brain was concerned.
- Riess: What do you mean she treated him as an equal? Would she go to him for advice?
- Morgan: Not for advice, but she would discuss most anything with him.
- Flora: At least on another plane--a different plane from the others.
- Riess: When you say recuperated, it sounds to me like they were somewhat hampered by that also.
- Flora: By what?
- Riess: When you say they never "recuperated" from the idyll of their happy childhood.
- Flora: I guess "recuperated" is the wrong word.
- Morgan: Nothing else was ever the same.
- Flora: No. They returned to it as a happy period of their lives.
- Riess: But you're not saying that they were always looking back and yearning for that?
- Morgan: No.



- Flora: I think they always looked for it, yes. Or at least that situation of being happily ensconced and protected, and enjoying each other without the rivalry and problems of adulthood.
- Riess: And yet it seems like Julia Morgan was unable to ask for any of the things that might have given her this.
- Morgan: Unwilling, certainly.
- Flora: Yes, unwilling; that's it.
- Riess: Maybe that's what she had when she had that period of time with you [to Flora].
- Morgan: Yes, they could discuss things calmly, without any pressure. Flora, having been active in commercial life, understood the problems of time and thought that had to go into things to be presented to the public. It gave them a much better basis of understanding than perhaps some of the other members of the family had. In other words, Miss Morgan had no small talk.
- Flora: When she was at home and in bed those [later] years, our children were very, very small, and I didn't have as much time with her then because there were great demands on me.
- Morgan: Also, half the time she'd know we were familiar, but exactly who we were, I don't think she could connect.
- Flora: Oh, at times she did. But Morgan's mother went over to see her often in the city, and took care of the nurses and gave them relief. And we'd go over on weekends, so really she wasn't left alone. But there weren't periods when I could spend hours at a time with her.
- Morgan: You couldn't have a conversation with her at all in those days.
- Flora: There were days when she was pretty lucid.
- Morgan: Yes, but I think it tired her terribly to try to put these things together.
- Flora: I don't think that mattered. Tiredness never mattered to her in anything, because her answer would be, "It's what I have to do."
- Morgan: Maybe frustrated is a better word--to have fleeting glimpses of things that she couldn't quite put her finger on mentally, and not be able to get them out, or not be able to ask the questions she



- Morgan: wanted, or not be able to assimilate the answers. These were all part of it.
- Flora: I went through this transcript, by the way, and there are some changes in it.
- Riess: There was some discrepancy in that transcript about the statement that Emma accused herself of stealing Julia's beaux. Were there beaux to be stolen? And who talked about this problem--Julia or Emma?
- Flora: Emma talked about it.
- Morgan: I think that was braggadocio on my mother's part.
- Flora: I don't think so.
- Morgan: I do. She went on very few dates, I think--mostly out of her sorority. If she went to parties, she didn't enjoy them; she didn't enjoy any parties, really, at all.
- Flora: As a young person she was very shy until she had the security of her career behind her, when she became quite assertive. Anyone who writes about her in her early years says she was painfully shy, and she even looks it in those early pictures. That was the problem.
- Riess: Who writes about her in her early years?
- Flora: I think sorority sisters have.\* There are lots of reminiscences. People have dug out these friends and talked with them, and they all emphasized [her shyness]. Even her own letters to Mrs. Hearst in the early days, and to Mr. Maybeck, constantly repeat, "I thank you for being so kind to such a retiring or shy young woman," and so forth.
- Morgan: But the difference was that people would offer to do things for her, and that was the last thing on God's green earth that she wanted.
- Riess: Why, from this very close, happy family and childhood, does "very little family," as you say, suffice for her as a mature woman?

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\*See appendices.



- Flora: Well, her work--the volume of work...
- Morgan: The family she grew up with disappeared, you see. By 1920 there were very few left.
- Riess: But there were those occasions--at Christmas, Thanksgiving, etc.
- Morgan: Oh, certainly.
- Riess: But not more than that. Do you think it was mostly just time--that she wasn't willing to give time to those kinds of things?
- Morgan: Really, they didn't interest her. The conversation was not along the lines that she wished to be involved with; it was a matter of small talk.

Working for William Randolph Hearst

- Riess: There is sometimes the feeling, when one reads about San Simeon, that Hearst imposed on Julia Morgan.
- Morgan: He did.
- Riess: I also get the idea from you that Julia Morgan really did all the creative work there, despite all his pencillings and things like that--that it was her production.
- Morgan: That's right.
- Flora: This is what Mr. Maher really found documented in the letters. She first had to present an idea before he wanted to change it, so it had to originate with her. This is the thing that people have confused. Because in one generous moment she said, "Of course, Mr. Hearst was my co-worker," or, "could have been an architect," or something like that, it's been misinterpreted.
- Riess: But the first time I talked to you on the phone, Mr. North, you said that she was not overly proud of San Simeon.
- Morgan: That's correct. She said very much that, and I asked her why she did it. She said, "Well, if someone else had done it, it might have been worse." I think she loved the building part of it. I think she found some of Hearst's changes rather trying, but there





Morgan: are always challenges--and nothing like a challenge to make her open up and go to it. The whole thing was a challenge, and, as I said previously, when things got too tight she'd send him a package of suggestions on how to transfer command, and she would retire from the scene.

Riess: Wasn't that tongue in cheek?

Morgan: Oh, no. Oh, she had it all set up.

Flora: Well, there were periods when she got awfully fed up with his not paying bills, you know, and the people would descend on her for it. This must have been a constant annoyance to her. He seemed to derive some kind of pleasure out of making people dance around and wait for things that they should have been compensated for right away.

So, she laid down the law about having money set aside for any project that was started, so it wasn't this constant drain of her energy just to get the bills paid.

Riess: It's amusing to think of that transfer of command. You had seen this thing, or Mr. Maher saw this?

Morgan: He uncovered several letters. He wondered how she could take it, after reading much of the material. Then, when they'd start sending these other people in on the scene, so she was working second-hand, she wouldn't have that for one moment.

He would suddenly demand that this, that, and the other had to be done in such and such a time because he was having people there and he wanted them to see it finished. Well, it didn't fit in with the budget, or with the manpower, or anything else.

The budget was based on the fact that the manpower had to be there; and they had to be there in the various crafts and skills that were necessary to do the job, and in the right proportion. There was only one man who made worm holes, but there were ten general carpenters and maybe three plumbers and three electricians, and so on, on the job all the time. If you suddenly had to finish up ten rooms, the electricians and the plumbers could not get that work done.

The only alternative was to get more people in, which shot the budget all to pieces. She knew it was a monumental task to make any changes in the budget. So, then he would get querulous and insist on his way about things, and these other people would begin appearing on the scene. That's when she would say, "That's enough."



- Riess: The other people were not workmen.
- Morgan: They were people in the hierarchy of the Hearst organization--Richard Clark and many others. She was very fond of Richard Clark, and Richard Clark was very reluctant. But when Hearst said, "Go in there," why, he had to do it. Richard Clark and Hearst never got along very well anyway. [Clark] was the guardian of the George Hearst estate, which was never left to William Randolph, and he resented this very much.
- Flora: It was, through his mother, eventually left to him.
- Morgan: But it was not when George Hearst died.
- Riess: In any case, that was one of the ways that Julia Morgan could handle her frustration about Hearst--to get together a plan for getting out from under.
- Morgan: She wasn't handling her frustrations; she was an orderly person, and when she'd had enough, she'd had enough.
- Riess: When some people have enough they storm out.
- Morgan: But she wasn't devious, you see. You're trying to give an implication that perhaps this was a devious way, or a way of bringing pressure on him. It wasn't intended that way. It was intended as a finality of the thing.
- Riess: I was seeing that as an alternative to what more ordinary mortals do--like complaining, muttering, and getting an ulcer.
- Morgan: Well, she wasn't that type.
- Riess: It was hard to work for Hearst.



Flora: Many people didn't last the course.

Morgan: And many people simply kow-towed to him in every way, shape, and form. Whether she approved of the place or not, she wasn't going to sacrifice her principles by having the whole thing divided. The whole thing would have been total chaos if she'd done that.

Riess: There must have been plenty of things that were laughable about what she did down there. Did she allow herself to laugh at Hearst?

Morgan: On, never. She never laughed at anybody. But George Loorz [contractor] said, for instance, that after she would leave, Hearst would always come to him and say, "Now, don't tell Miss Morgan, but let's do this, that, and the other."

Of course, George never did that--not once. And she knew he wouldn't. He did tell her about what Hearst had said, so she was fully aware of what was going on all the time. She had hired Mr. Loorz, and he was loyal to her; that's the way he was.

Riess: I know this is a dead horse, but let me ask it just once again: about all that personal integrity, where does that leave us with Mr. Hearst? Was he honest in his dealings with her, and that's all she asked?

Morgan: I think he was honest in certain aspects.

Flora: In his own fashion.

Morgan: Yes. In other words, she understood him. She understood that he was a man who lived in a totally unreal world. His thought of how you get money was simply to ask for it, rather than to think of how you'd make it. This was a hard thing to go with, and she realized that, as such, few people crossed him, because usually he could buy whatever he wanted. She had to make allowances for this.

But by the same token, she wasn't going to put in a horizontal line when she knew that a vertical line would be the only thing that would be right. She would work him over by showing him sketches of his way, and showing him how it would not look as well as another way. She understood what he was groping for. After all, his tastes along certain lines were fairly good; along other lines they were horrible. But by trying to ease the horrible things and emphasize the good things, they wound up with what they had.



- Flora: I can imagine her frustration when she's building a Greek temple and pool and so forth, and he insists on an Egyptian sarcophagus. It must have been horrible to take! It's like my doing a book, and someone deciding on a cover that is entirely foreign to the subject of the book.
- Riess: So that's where they ironed out problems of integrity, not that she would take a look at his life and times and say, "Look, we can't work together."
- Morgan: She wasn't really interested in his life.
- Riess: Or how he made his money?
- Morgan: Not particularly.
- Flora: For her it was an opportunity to use this Beaux Arts education on the kind of building that wasn't being done in the thirties.
- Morgan: I think that was her price--that she was able to build things on a scale that in private enterprise would be virtually impossible.
- Flora: For which she had been trained.
- Riess: Did she actually say anything like that?
- Morgan: No.
- Flora: That's evident, if you look at the building being done at that time, which was the height of her productive career.
- Riess: Did Mr. Maher find correspondence that reflected attitudes about San Simeon?
- Morgan: All the letters from both sides were pointed and objective. There was no fluff or anything to plough through. Hearst was a man who wrote short sentences, and summed up a great deal in a few words: "I would like this, that, or the other."
- Riess: So, we don't have letters to look at in which she was writing to you, for instance, Flora, saying, "If I have to spend five minutes more with this man..."
- Flora: No.





The Office, Especially the Women

Riess: Talking to Dorothy Coblentz, I don't get the idea that Julia Morgan got close to the women in the office particularly--that it was really only you that...

Morgan: In a different way. She would never discuss the details of the business with us. But the way she worked, if she felt that somebody was in her employ, she then had the right to ask them to do something. And an "ask" was an "order"--for instance, to find thumbtacks on a Sunday afternoon from a store when they were in a foreign town.

This Mrs. Knowles, who lived in the house there, and who did Julia Morgan's driving, would do this. She just started out, and you could see that in the top of her head was engraved "thumbtacks," and she just wasn't going to come back until she had them. I went with her one time on a tour in Berkeley here, when they were making that move to the house in Berkeley from the Oakland house. She spent four hours on a Sunday afternoon, but she finally found a drugstore that had some thumbtacks, and we got back with them.

After a couple of hours of looking, I made some comment to her, "Can't you go back and tell her we can't get them?" She said, "But we can get them. We've been ordered to get them, and we will get them." This was the attitude of the whole staff.

Riess: And you wouldn't get special thanks necessarily for that; that was just...

Morgan: Oh, no. That was just normal.

Flora: They also realized that it wasn't asked idly, that she really wanted those things; it wasn't a test of their loyalty or endurance.

Morgan: It was part of her character to think, "Not all the things I ask are easy, but they're to be done." If there was a timing factor in them, then they were to be done within the timing factor, and that was it.

She kept a certain amount of distance. She was friendly, cordial, and so forth, but she was always "Miss Morgan" to them. She was never anything else. There was never any familiarity about that. They didn't tell her she looked tired, and should go home and rest or something: she'd fire them!

Riess: Yet she might tell them, mightn't she?



- Morgan: I don't think so. She didn't understand why anybody else couldn't operate similarly.
- Flora: Mrs. Coblentz' comment on the women who did try to follow her--she called them "Miss Morgan's female children"--was that they all disappointed her, because they let things such as husband, children, easier jobs, etc., influence their staying there. Because she was a very exacting, demanding person, and felt that they should appreciate the fact that they were constantly learning. It was an atelier feeling that she carried through.
- Morgan: Mrs. Forney was a perfect example of that. She was telling us when she was here that she and her husband had come down from the mines in about 1930 and things were bad. She went to an employment agency and they said, "We have sent about fifty people over to this job, and they have all been bounced right back, and nobody has gotten anywhere, so if you want to try, go ahead." She said they talked to her for about a half an hour, and she was expecting to be told to go, and my aunt said, "Well, I think you will do just fine. When can you start?"
- Of course, she stayed with her until the very end. and I think she loved every minute of it.
- Riess: I wonder what they found out about each other in a half hour--what she was really looking for?
- Flora: I'd like to know that too.
- Morgan: Mrs. Forney was a good secretary. She could take shorthand and transcribe rapidly and accurately; her letters were neat. And she was not nosy, and she had an instinct of knowing when to be there and when not to be there. It was a meeting of minds in a certain area that I think did it. She recognized her worth.
- Riess: Have you heard other descriptions of the experience of being hired by Julia Morgan? Was it always...?
- Morgan: No, I think that's the only one. I think I heard Jim Lefeaver say how he got in there once, but it's a little indistinct. I think it was largely through mutual recommendations.
- Riess: I wonder whether you would have to be good at second guessing things anyway to know that Julia Morgan really approved of your work? Was she very generous with her praise of the women in the office?



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- Morgan: The women in the office hate to say so to you, but they were largely in secondary roles.
- Riess: You mean secondary to the men?
- Morgan: Yes. Mrs. Forney, who was the secretary; Mrs. Knowles, who was sort of the handywoman and driver; and Mrs. DeMari, who was the secretary previous to Mrs. Forney, was just that.
- Flora: Morgan, Mrs. Riess is talking about the young women whom she took into her office freshly graduated from school.
- Morgan: I know that, but they didn't stay, they didn't like the hours, and when they found out it was work...like Mrs. Coblentz.
- Flora: She lasted four years.
- Morgan: Yes, but she was an extremely wealthy woman to start with. The work angle didn't appeal to her at all, and when she found this man that she liked, why, that blew the whole thing, as far as that was concerned.
- Riess: Mrs. Coblentz said that she thought maybe Julia Morgan was disappointed that none of the girls stuck with it. But I'm asking if Julia Morgan was able to make herself clear enough to these women, or at least to Mrs. Coblentz, about how much she really valued her? Or, as an employee, would you really have had to guess at that?
- Morgan: She would see somebody at the drawing board, and she would go over. At a slight glance she could tell if something was developing the way she wanted it to. She would sit down with that person, and they would have a long discussion.
- Flora: And sketches.
- Morgan: She would often put it in the form of "What do you think?" and so on, but very clearly stating what she wanted done. She got this across. I think for most of the people the very fact that she would ask questions of them and would go into this kind of discussion told them more than anything else, because she wasn't a back slapper. I've seen many a boss run around saying, "Great! Great! You're doing great!" None of that at all. I think she assumed that anybody who was working there would be right.





Morgan: In fact, somebody did depart and go to work for somebody else, and he got fired. This person came back to see her, and she said, "Well, you weren't very good when you were here. I was almost relieved to see you go. But in retrospect I've thought it over, and I think you belong here." I've forgotten who the person was, but he stayed on and ultimately had his own architect's license. But it was a question of belonging--fitting.

Riess: What is the "belonging?" What's the structure that she's making that people fit into?

Morgan: Personal integrity is a great common denominator to have as a base. If you do this, you're honest about your thinking and you're honest about your conversation. This is what she demanded aside from ability.

Flora: Mrs. [Bernice] Scharlach, who was writing the story for West Ways\*, you know, insisted that we were just keeping all her private life a secret. I couldn't convince her, and I said, "Well, she had a very big office and a big staff, and she was constantly busy."

This woman said, "My husband has twice as many people in his office as she ever had, and he still has time for other things."

I said, "This is just two different types of people, I guess."

#### An Interest in Chinese Art

Riess: What about Chinese art appealed to Julia Morgan?

Morgan: It had roots and integrity.

Flora: And richness of color; I think that appealed to her.

Riess: Integrity? More than other art forms, do you think?

Morgan: No, but it did...

Flora: It has a lasting quality.

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\*August 24, 1975, California Living, San Francisco Chronicle and Examiner.



- Morgan: The things are right there; they're forthright.
- Flora: And imaginative, and based so on folklore; I think that interested her. Oriental art was an early form of folklore, which people have rediscovered today in other forms. The myths, and that kind of formalized art, anyway, I think, appealed to her.
- Riess: How much did she get into it, other than collecting objects? I know she was doing something with the calligraphy.
- Flora: I think it was an antidote, in a way, to that heavily Renaissance and religious art she was coping with down there. I think it had an appeal in that way.
- Morgan: I think a great deal of the time, when she was physically indisposed, she would concentrate on it when she couldn't go to the office. That mastoid business lasted more or less for three years, when she was really not right, or, as she put it, "so unsymmetrical" that she didn't like to appear in public. So, she'd study, and then at night, for relaxation, when she had insomnia and couldn't sleep for hours, she'd study the Chinese language.
- Flora: She had a habit of study.
- Riess: For three years she was indisposed? Which three years were they?
- Morgan: I couldn't name them precisely. I would say in the middle twenties somewhere.
- Riess: So you say that during the day she studied?
- Morgan: Well, she kept the office going, but she didn't like to see people. She went to San Simeon a couple of times on sneak trips, but she didn't appear in the dining room or anything of that sort.
- Riess: Were her jobs brought to her to work on at home by a secretary?
- Morgan: Oh, she probably snuck into the office, but she had a little cubby-hole next to the men's john over there across the hall where she hid away. She could be there all day and all night and no one would know the difference except her staff.



Other Architects

- Riess: Do you know of any jobs that she wished she had gotten that she didn't get?
- Morgan: I never heard her say that at all. The only jobs I heard about were the jobs that she had considered and felt she couldn't take.
- Flora: She always had more work than she could take.
- Riess: So, the pattern is that people would come to her. There was never...
- Morgan: There must have been some friends or somebody or other who didn't come to her, whom she was perhaps a little hurt over. This would be just a normal assumption, because not every one of her friends lived in a Julia Morgan house, although the bulk of them did; I mean those that she grew up with before she ever had definite thoughts of being an architect.
- Riess: When the commissions got to be too many and too thick, did she then add to her staff? Or did she just stay up later?
- Morgan: Both. She couldn't stay up much later. But she handled them, and I think she turned down work that didn't appeal. If people wanted something that she wasn't sympathetic to, she wouldn't do it.
- Riess: Would she have people that she would turn it over to usually?
- Morgan: If she were asked she would recommend other people, yes.
- Riess: Who do you figure they would be?
- Morgan: I don't know. Quite frankly, she didn't have too high an opinion of several of the prominent firms in the area here. I don't know who she recommended.
- Riess: Shall they go nameless?
- Morgan: Well, Arthur Brown was one.
- Flora: Oh, I think that should go nameless.
- Riess: Who is left from the Arthur Brown firm? It might as well not go nameless.



Flora: That's true.

Morgan: She didn't like Bill Wurster's work. Of course, that was much later. There were several others that she did like. I think she rather approved of Willis Polk's work, but I doubt very much whether she made any referrals. Some things she felt were clearly out of her field, and that might be Maybeck's field, for instance. But usually people who were discerning enough to know what they wanted along those lines would go to that person in the first place.

A good example of that is Ira Joralemon, who claims to be the last person living in a Maybeck house that was built for him by Maybeck. Maybeck designed the house, but he couldn't make it fit on the lot. Joralemon, who was an engineer, of course, simply helped him and they rearranged things, and they bent things here and there, and put a crooked passage in, and they got the house on an irregular-shaped lot beautifully; and they've loved it ever since. This is what can be done.

Riess: That's what could be done with Maybeck, who is Maybeck. But could it have been done with Julia Morgan?

Morgan: It wouldn't have had to have been done.

Flora: No. She was the engineer, and Maybeck wasn't.

Morgan: She loved to take advantage of an irregular piece of ground, so this was a delightful challenge to her.

About modern work, she didn't like misuse of lines--lines that went someplace and then ended where they shouldn't. This would bother her. But she liked Roger Lee's work, she liked McCarthy's work, and several others. She said they were doing very nice work. There were people who couldn't understand how she could approve of that.

Flora: I'm sure she would have approved of the man who did the University YWCA--Joe Esherick. It would have been a mutual admiration society, had she known him.

Riess: Esherick was really a student and admirer of Walter Steilberg's.

Morgan: There was a man of total integrity (excuse for re-using the word). Walter Steilberg never thought a wrong thought in his life.





Flora: Some people inspire that kind of devotion or reaction, or whatever. You know they're going to get a fair shake in the office, and certainly that's how she treated them. Whenever there was a lucrative commission, they divvied up. If she hadn't done that, you know-- where's her money?

Riess: But you were saying she didn't like much modern architecture?

Flora: No, I think it was architecture that was so cold that there was no place in it for things of sentimental value--in the homes.

Riess: What about her time with John Galen Howard? Did she like his work?

Flora: Well, she certainly didn't stay with him long.

Morgan: I think John Galen Howard depended largely on other people. In other words, as Maher put it, here he came out from New York to work on the University, and he had the office going back there. He obviously wasn't there, and he had other projects going on elsewhere. He was only around a little bit here or there, and he set up the architecture department at the University.

Now, where would he have time to build in very close order the Campanile, the Greek Theatre, and the Hearst Mining Building? He had to turn the projects over to other people. The Campanile and the Greek Theatre and the Mining Building are three totally incompatible types of architecture. The Mining Building was Julia Morgan; the Greek Theatre was somebody else; and the Sather Tower was a third party. In other words, he did not personally get into everything he did, as opposed to my aunt, who did.

She'd provide an envelope sketch of what she wanted, and then as they developed it she'd discuss it, sometimes for hours, with each person. They'd throw ideas back and forth, and the person would then be on the course that she wanted, and he understood what she wanted; so, they got along fine.

Riess: Mrs. Coblentz was saying, as a matter of fact, that you only went as far as it was clear from the sketch. There wasn't any encouragement to develop a wing off here, or anything of that sort.

Morgan: Yes, that is absolutely correct.

Flora: And, of course, she understood the budget requirements too.



Morgan: Not only the budget requirements, but also a lot of other things, such as the basic line. A wing will upset the basic line totally if it's not done just right.

Riess: I guess John Galen Howard was some kind of Renaissance man.

Morgan: Yes, but he was fundamentally a businessman. He was an astute businessman. He had a lot of things going, and he charged full fees. He had offices all over, and he was a good politician. He spoke well and went to parties, and he entertained well, and all this sort of thing. He made a howling success out of his work, as far as having many commissions.

I never heard her express a thing about Howard at all. I know she fell into the details--for instance, the dedication and opening time for the Greek Theatre was at a point when the thing was nowhere near finished. She had to improvise and get areas lined up where people could be seated.

Flora: President Roosevelt, I think, was coming to visit it and dedicate it.

Morgan: There was a very impressive cast in the opening play too, so it had to be done that way. She had a crash job there, getting that thing ready. We still have some pictures taken at the time, and of that opening crowd.

I think she enjoyed it, because she ran around and had to find out from the play people exactly what minimum standards of things they had to have to get by with--whether she had to pour some concrete or whether they could tamp the dirt down and let that do. Decisions all the way around had to be made, and she had to deal with the University people.

Riess: This is very early in her life.

Morgan: Oh, yes.

Riess: She might have enjoyed it very much, but she might have tucked it into the back of her mind as a way not to do things again.

Morgan: Certainly. I think you're right on that.

Riess: What kind of approval do you think she needed or wished to have? She obviously didn't care about the approval of her family for her work. When she had something done, was she satisfied if the client was satisfied? Or did she want more than that?



- Morgan: She always used to tell Flora that she didn't see why anything needed to be put down, because her work should speak for itself. If it was good, it should appear good; and if it wasn't good, it should appear that way.
- Riess: What about peer approval?
- Flora: I think the ultimate approval was the constantly stated happiness of people who had spent years in houses that she had built. That, I'm sure, is where she collected her reward.
- Riess: Were there people who didn't like her work?
- Flora: We wouldn't be in a position to hear of them.
- Morgan: I'm sure there must have been. In that number of houses, it would be impossible to think that they were all perfect.
- Flora: And needs of families change too. If you build a house when your children are small, it isn't necessarily big enough when they're teenagers, and people change habits.
- Morgan: For instance, one of the most sought-after groups of apartments in Berkeley are the old Price apartments on Panoramic. I've known a number of people--the Fosters and others--who lived there, and they said they simply wouldn't live anywhere else. The atmosphere of the place was such that they could just feel it. There are no other apartments like that. I once lived in an apartment house that she built, and I thought it was wretched. So, there you are.
- Flora: I lived there too, and I liked it.
- Morgan: For what it was, but I was unhappy with it.
- Riess: I wondered if there were articles on her work in architectural magazines?
- Morgan: I've never heard a word of criticism in print.
- Flora: Certainly not in architectural journals.
- Morgan: Except possibly in Swanberg's book where he criticized San Simeon, and said Aunt Julia didn't give a damn because she made a fortune out of it.
- Riess: Were her buildings discussed much in the magazines?



Morgan: Very seldom. Walter Steilberg did an article in 1918, and there was a fairly substantial spread on the Berkeley Women's City Club when it was built. There were, of course, numerous Fortune, Town and Country, and other stories on San Simeon. But other than that, the myriad of residences, ranging from very plain to quite elaborate, appeared hardly anywhere.

Riess: And she never gave interviews?

Morgan: No.

### Quality

Riess: That thing I got into in the beginning, about the della Robbia...

Flora: The one at the McCorkle house? I think that's a real one. Is there any reason to believe it isn't? She had one in her own home over the fireplace. I think at one time she was able to buy quite a few of them by some fluke.

Riess: There were some on some of the school buildings too. We've seen old pictures of them.

Flora: Yes.

Riess: I think good imitations can be just as good as the real things, and I just wondered if you were aware of any absolutes in her standards about that? For instance, would she not use veneers? Was she rigorous about the real thing?

Flora: In those days, good materials were available, and, of course, she'd rather use the best the budget could stand. But then there was another side of her that had a definite feeling that the fact that it cost anything shouldn't enter into your judgement of it.

I think of this down in her house in Monterey. She would have pictures on the walls that were just cut out of magazines that appealed to her for one reason or another--for color, or something. There was no reason why she couldn't have had good paintings or whatever she wanted. Of course, she did have all those Chinese things.





Flora: When we started to dismantle that house, in certain rooms there were, say, ten pictures pasted one on top of the other--not behind the glass, just on top of the glass--because they did a certain thing in a certain portion of the room. Her tastes were catholic as far as art was concerned.

Morgan: A good example of that is the Seldon Williams house. It was designed in a certain way, and at the last moment they suddenly had to knock twenty-five percent off the price. So, the elevator came out, and several things like that, and they were able to knock the price down. An elevator was a fearfully expensive thing in those days, because she would use nothing but Otis elevators; she said all others were failures.

When the Merchants' Exchange building was changed over from the old hydraulic elevators to automatic electrics, the contract went to Westinghouse. They were supposed to put them in in six months, and they were two and a half years in getting them in; and they never did work properly. She said, "I'd never have a Westinghouse elevator on any of my jobs."

Riess: She would have been good on running BART, then.\*

Morgan: Oh, she would have made BART work! [Laughter.]

Riess: Was it easy for a potential client to get in touch with her? How did she receive people the first time? What was her manner--open, charming, businesslike?

Morgan: Businesslike, I would imagine. This is an area in which neither of us has any experience whatever. But I did observe her in the throes of creating a building that was built for the family.

She immediately lapsed into a totally businesslike setup. She walked around and around in circles, with an envelope, and every so often she'd make some lines on it. She would see some impossibilities developing, and she would ask more questions, and so on. In this instance it was an apartment house, and it had to be economic. In other words, you had to get a certain number of units in a certain space in order to make the thing pay at rents people could be charged. This required many considerations.

Riess: When somebody got to her eventually as a client, would there be a period of time when she was trying to woo them in any way?

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\*Referring to current constant equipment failure on the Bay Area Rapid Transit. - S.R.



Morgan: Oh, no. I'm sure that her attitude was simply, "You've come here because you want something that I can do." Perhaps if in talking they realized there was an impasse, I suppose they'd drop the thing. Not all houses that were started...There are many names on the file where there are no drawings indicated, or no houses completed indicated. I imagine that for one reason or another these were dropped.

Of course, many times people would think about building a house and when they found out what it cost they decided maybe this wasn't the thing. Or maybe the fortunes of people changed. They changed faster in those days.

Flora: She lived through the stock market crash, so there must have been instances of that.

Morgan: But San Simeon was at full sway then, and it didn't make that much difference. Although I think Mr. Maher figures all the Hearst work put together was only about twenty percent of her output.

Riess: You said once when we were talking that Julia Morgan never said, "I"--it was always "we." Were you referring then to when she was talking from the office?

Flora: Yes.

Morgan: It didn't matter. Everything she did was a team thing; I mean, in the construction end of it "we" did that, or "Mr. Loorz" did this, or "we" decided this would have to be done. It could include anybody who was involved with it.

Riess: I can see, then, that there would be very little occasion for her to say "I," except if she were asking somebody to do something.

Morgan: No, I don't think so. I don't think she would say that. She would say "we" need this.

Flora: She would say, "Listen, friend, shall we do this?"

Morgan: Yes, she would. Not "listen"--she never said that. But she would say "friend."

Flora: Yes, "Friend, shall we do this?" She always used that, because she couldn't think of people's names.



- Morgan: Yes, this was it. These would slip so deep down that the superficiality of an exact name didn't mean anything. She knew the person--knew their thinking intimately--but couldn't recall the name, so "friend" would have to do. She would get members of the family confused at times. That's easy to do.
- Riess: These were not necessarily in her times of confusion, but just because of her mind being so full?
- Flora: Don't you call your children by the wrong names on occasion?
- Riess: Oh, don't I! Yes.
- Morgan: It's the same thing.

Julia Morgan's Studio in Monterey

- Riess: Talking about the house down in Monterey, what was the life down there like? Who did the cooking? When did you get up in the mornings? What was the whole sense of the thing?
- Flora: Sachi, a Japanese girl, used to come (she was very devoted to Aunt Julia) and she would have everything in apple-pie order, and always fresh flowers and this and that, but made herself very scarce. You didn't see Sachi unless you went to see Sachi, because she came during the week usually, when Aunt Julia wasn't there. But on occasion she would come in to fix Thanksgiving dinner, which we had down there, or Easter dinner. We would drive down, and Sachi would be in command.

Again, it was a house that was surrounded by very natural, woody kind of growth--no formal garden idea at all. It was surrounded by very tall trees, so it was rather dark. Some of the interiors were kind of a faded apricot stucco, which was very interesting. I don't think I've ever seen it elsewhere. So, she played around with the color down there, and was interested in the reflections of the green from the outside, and she was counteracting it, I guess, with this warmer color.

The only thing she lived in that she ever built was a studio down there. It was a very handsome room.

- Morgan: It was about the size of this one, I would say.



- Flora: Yes. It had natural wood about three feet high. Above it she had twenty-two or so frescoes.
- Riess: They surrounded the remaining space, except for windows?
- Flora: Yes. Then there was a fireplace. She loved a big, burning fire. There were lots of cushions and a sofa there. At the other end of the room was just a huge drawing board and all her working utensils.
- Morgan: The ceiling was all paneled in heavy diamond-patterned woodwork.
- Flora: That was handsome. It was a very handsome room.
- Riess: Had she gotten the ceiling from Hearst, or had she had somebody do it for her?
- Morgan: Oh, no. It was all locally done. You could get good carpenters in those days.

These people [owners of the property] were up against the wall in the late twenties, and they sold this back piece of the property, which had access to another street, to Aunt. It just had two little bedrooms and a bath upstairs, and a big living room and a kitchen downstairs. Her patio was covered with a flagstone area downstairs, and above that was her studio.

- Flora: She built a breakfast room. You couldn't find [the house]; it was tucked away behind...
- Morgan: There was a right of way through a gate, and you'd walk about a hundred feet back and there was another little gate; then you'd prowl through the bushes and you'd be there.
- Riess: So, she didn't make any changes in the house part of it--just in changing the colors of the walls?
- Flora: And building the studio; that was the heart of the house, anyway.
- Morgan: And she made a second bathroom in connection with it, which made it more useful generally.





Office Procedures

Riess: Were there any other real objects--talismans or things like that--that she always kept with her? Small things, beautiful things that she cared about, on her desk, for instance, in her office?

Flora: People were constantly presenting her with things, which filled the closets.

Morgan: I don't think she ever had a desk; she used a drawing board exclusively for everything.

Flora: The only one who had a desk was Mrs. Forney.

Morgan: Mr. Lefeaver had one, and so did the accountant.

Flora: I mean, most of the people were there drafting or working.

Morgan: Except for a maximum of four desks in the office, there wasn't a desk in it. By the office, I mean where nonarchitectural work was done. There just weren't any desks; she wasn't a desk person at all.

Riess: There was the place where she received her clients. Is that where the library was?

Morgan: Oh, yes, there were two [rooms]; actually, it was one fairly deep office divided in half. One was a library and it had a long table (that's now down at our office) in the middle and some chairs around it, where they would sit and talk. There was another office in the corner; I've forgotten what the purpose of that one was for now.

And she had a room across the hall where she used to get away.

Then I think there were four or five other full offices going on down the hall. On other floors there were storerooms.

Riess: Where did she do her drawing? Where was her drawing board?

Morgan: It was in the little office across from...It was just a cubbyhole; there are many jobs bigger than that. It had a drawing board all down one side, just a flat board with trestles. That was the principal content of the room. There were some racks for finished drawings and raw materials, and there'd be a pile of odds and ends--erasers, paper clips, pencils, sandpaper, and stuff like that--in the corner.



- Riess: If she had to talk to somebody in the office, would she just go out? Or did she have a buzz system or anything so imperious as that?
- Morgan: That I couldn't tell you. I would say no. I think her system was extremely simple.
- Riess: Did she have staff meetings, as we do in this day and age?
- Morgan: No, absolutely not, because everybody had his own project to work on. Sometimes maybe there would be four tables in one office with four men at work.

They would sometimes carry on superficial conversations with each other. Usually they'd start an imaginary project and they'd be talking about it--something totally ridiculous--while they were working on something else. Lots of times you know what you're going to do, and in an architectural drawing, if you're showing a molding here or there, you have to put in four or five lines. It's done more or less without measuring, because the effect is what counts, so you don't have to think that much about things like that, and you can talk about other things.

Other times, when they were trying to make something join with measurements, it was very intricate and they couldn't stand any distractions or it would foul the whole thing up.

To the Historian:

- Riess: Mr. North, you had some things you wanted to say by way of a general statement.
- Morgan: Yes. I think in the last couple of years there's been a great acceleration of interest in the subject of Julia Morgan. Whether it's due to the feminist movement or what, I don't know. Calls for information--not so much just verifying a house, but wanting complete information to write a book on her--have been coming. Most of these people have no idea what they're up against, and many of them have not written before. Many of them are unsuited in education and environmental background to understand the situation. But somewhere along the line, there must be somebody who could do it.



Morgan: A professional writer who did a book on San Simeon about ten years ago, which has not been published, was out here recently to get some additional material. He spent three weeks and covered perhaps ten percent of the material that we have saved from Julia Morgan's files, and it answered his questions. I think he would have liked to have gone through it all, but there was facing him perhaps thirty weeks to do the job with the same thoroughness as he had done on this other part.

Nobody has the total key to Julia Morgan--her life and her experiences. It has to be made up of components from many different sources. Unfortunately, even in the last four or five years, many of the people who were key to this have passed away. You're not going to get too much information, generally, any more.

The problem is that some day a book probably will be written about Julia Morgan, and I hope it's accurate. If they want to use the material of her files, it will be made available--providing the person can demonstrate that they are serious, that they have the funds to sustain them for at least a year's research, not counting the writing time, and that they have the ability to write.

The economics are not good, because the cost of doing this would be quite substantial; and although I think it would be possible to find a publisher, I don't think they would be climbing all over knocking people's doors down, trying to get the manuscript. It would be published, but I'm sure that the remuneration from the publication would not be anywhere near adequate to compensate a person for perhaps even their cash outlays, not counting their time.

As long as these things are understood, as I said before, we will make the material available. I hope very much that someone will do this. Perhaps I'm the only person who knows the order of things and can explain the background. I hope they do it while I'm still available, which is not going to be eons, certainly.

There have been numerous articles written, some with access to portions of this material, and some without. The accuracy in general is rather poor. This is very disturbing, because it doesn't really describe what Miss Morgan was, or what she really did, or what she was trying to do, or why. These are all important, because a book that leaves out any of these things is going to be incomplete. The motivation and everything else must be explained.

Riess: There will always have to be an element of deduction, and I guess that's where the problem lies.



Morgan: You mean in just using a portion of the material?

Riess: I mean looking at letters and so forth...

Morgan: Yes, but the material is complete enough that at least certain elements are there between, say, 1907 or 1908 and the time she closed her office. A pattern develops, and pretty soon, if a person is researching the whole thing, there'll be references to something in one letter, and later on you'll pick it up in another letter, and the whole thing falls into place. Once you get familiar with it, you start looking through her eyes at the situation.

But the letters are all factual; they're devoid of any dressing or anything of that sort. They're talking about building something, wrecking something, or buying something. It's all there in actual facts.

Riess: That's a nice point--that eventually a biographer, if he sticks with it long enough, does look at the world through his subject's eyes and gets some kind of insight.

Morgan: I know this from being a publisher. When I work on putting a book together, after awhile I'm as interested in the thing as the author, or perhaps as the person who lived the story. I get annoyed if the author leaves gaps unexplained, or introduces something and doesn't follow it up, or introduces something without a background. I get very irritated. This is a professional situation that I have to have in order to do the type of work I do.

Riess: The question is, will anybody be able to get into Julia Morgan enough, or empathize enough, to really make a good case for the motivation?

Morgan: James Maher said that he thought the only answer would be for somebody to get a grant from a foundation to do this. That's kind of bad too, because in a sense it puts an obligation on me to see the whole thing through in considerable detail. I don't think people realize the amount of time it takes the members of the family to get those portions of the papers out that are pertinent to the aspect being studied at the moment. There was much personal background going on concurrently with the business background, and this is in different forms--like correspondence to members of the family versus correspondence to clients, suppliers, collaborators, and so forth.





Riess: That is burdensome, as I think about it.

Morgan: It is a stinker, because you don't like to turn people down. All these people who call in are sincere. Again, there was a prominent architectural student that I gave considerable time to, and I loaned him one of the only pictures that I use for handing out for publication. I've not been able to get it back from him, and I've called him several times. He hasn't given it back to me, and in the meantime other people want it. So, this kind of thing is very irritating too.

To some people, they've just heard the name, Julia Morgan, and know that she was a woman architect in the days when there weren't many. In looking for a subject, they dash something out, and they reach a dead end when they find the amount of research necessary to unearth anything that would be really useful in making an article or story or something that would have real value--which, after all, a free-lance writer must have to exist--and they give it up. There are two or three who are persistent, who I feel may get somewhere.

Transcriber: Lee Steinback  
Final Typist: Marilyn White



San Francisco Chronicle  
March 10, 1986

### **Flora North**

Flora North, 69, one of the first women to head a West Coast publishing firm, died of cancer on Wednesday at her home in Walnut Creek.

Born in Tosmk, Siberia, where her father was the American consul, Mrs. North came to the United States at the age of 5. She was a 1940 graduate of the University of California at Berkeley.

In 1938, Mrs. North became one of three founders of Howell-North Press, which in 1956 was incorporated as Howell-North Books. Mrs. North was president of the firm for 22 years until retiring in 1979.

She was a former president of the Oakland Art Association and of the Town and Gown Club of Berkeley. She sat on the boards of the Shasta Iron Co. and the Rossmoor Art Association.

She is survived by a son, Morgan Evan North of Tucson, Ariz.; a daughter, Ellen North, and four grandchildren. A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. Friday at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1924 Trinity Avenue, Walnut Creek. Burial will be at Mountain View Cemetery, Oakland. The family asked that contributions be made to the Hospice of Contra Costa or the American Cancer Society.



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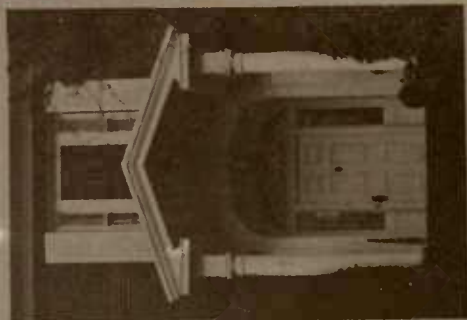
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Many of the houses on the tour illustrated here have not been shown before.





# JULIA MORGAN

Julia Morgan, architect, was a woman who with the minimum of fanfare collected many firsts during her 85 years and left three-dimensional evidence of her innovative ideas for all of us to see. She wrote no apology, asserting instead that architecture was a visual, not a verbal art, that the buildings spoke for themselves.

The Julia Morgan who stands very straight beside her younger brother in the family photograph of the side garden of an imposing Victorian house in Oakland was not at all like the stereotype of the girls of her era. She prepared for the University at the Oakland High School, excelling in mathematics and the sciences as well as in music. Ready for college, she went to Berkeley, as did most of the top students. She was accepted in the rigorous Engineering School, the only woman student there at the time. In 1894 Berkeley provided not only a degree in Civil Engineering; her association with a friendly geometry teacher, Bernard Maybeck, who had informal seminars in his home to discuss architecture (a study not available in California at the time), led to Julia Morgan's firm resolve to pursue a career in architecture. She had a year's experience building with Maybeck, by the end of which time they both decided, and her family concurred, that she should go to the center of architectural education for the world, the School of Fine Arts (called the Beaux Arts) at the University of Paris.

The only flaw in this plan was that women were not eligible to attend this school. Maybeck wrote a warm letter of recommendation to his former school, as did the American Ambassador in Paris and other advocates, but the Beaux Arts did

not give in easily. Not daunted, Julia Morgan and an Oakland friend Jessica Peixotto set out for Paris where Miss Morgan would remain for six years. After more than a year's grueling tests and competition, she was accepted at the Beaux Arts as the first woman in the world to study there.

When she returned to the Bay Area in 1902, this intrepid young woman found a place as draftsman in the office of John Galen Howard, Pennsylvania-trained graduate of the Beaux Arts who had a leading role in developing a master-plan for the University at Berkeley. After a highly publicized World Competition for the plan, underwritten by Phoebe A. Hearst and supervised by Maybeck had been won by a Frenchman who refused to take part in bringing it to reality, Howard, whose entry had come in fourth, was invited to take charge. The Hearst Memorial Mining Building and the Greek Theater were to be built first.

Julia Morgan worked on these jobs and is said to have been responsible for the design of the Greek Theater. Howard is quoted as having boasted of "the best and most talented designer whom I have to pay almost nothing, as it is a woman".

Late in 1904, Julia Morgan started a firm of her own: Morgan and Hoover in San Francisco. Note whose name came first, although Ira Hoover, formerly of the Howard office, was eastern-trained and highly respected. Off and running, Julia Morgan received varied commissions in her first years of practice, including the innovative Bell Tower or Campanile at Mills College in Oakland, many redwood-shingled residences and, importantly, the structural reparation of the Fairmont Hotel.

Morgan buildings were characteristically built from the inside out, structural materials becoming part of the design, movement within and through the building largely dictating the form. Tycoons in Piedmont favored brick or Tudor half-timbers, but more important than style was meticulous attention to detail and an easy axial flow. Let us not imagine that because she was a woman she paid particular attentions to kitchens, unless it was one for an institutional setting. She built from the site and every detail was significant to her.

Institutions played a major part in her practice: schools both private and public university buildings, hospitals, retirement homes, and YWCA's in every part of the state as well as in Honolulu and Salt Lake City. Her conviction that young women coming to the cities should have places to live that would be safe and inexpensive but not devoid of amenities left a real mark on many towns and cities of the West. The Hearst castle at San Simeon was of course her greatest single commission; it is now one of the nation's real monuments, serving all the people as one of the rare great museums conceived to ensconce one collector's treasures.

Physically, Julia Morgan was short and slight of build, with a low voice and large searching eyes, remarkable for ignoring fatigue, hunger, heat or cold. Her courage in climbing scaffolds and ladders was matched by her curiosity to know every last detail of construction. She loved nature, gardens, fruit and children, yet she never married, never really had time for much of a life outside her profession. We are all beneficiaries of this single-mindedness as we are of her extraordinary talent.

*By Sara Bouteille*



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