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JULIA MORGAN

Architect of Beauty

Wilson



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Mark Anthony Wilson

Photography by
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Mark A. Wilson

with a foreword by Lynn Forney McMurray,
goddaughter of Julia Morgan

Julia Morgan, America's first truly independent female architect, blazed a trail for women in the field and left a legacy of more than 700 buildings (many of which are now designated landmarks) in cities throughout California, as well as in Hawaii, Utah, Arizona, and Missouri. Her work spanned five decades, and her total output was greater than any other major American architect, including Frank Lloyd Wright. *Julia Morgan* tells the remarkable story of this architectural pioneer and features text, drawings, and photographs of the many buildings that still stand today. Mark Wilson explores the underlying design philosophy that guided a large portion of Julia Morgan's work, as well as the physical, cultural, and historic settings in which her buildings were created. From the William Randolph Hearst Castle at San Simeon to Chapel of the Chimes in Oakland to the Phoebe A. Hearst Memorial Gymnasium for Women in Berkeley, this comprehensive volume offers a fresh exploration on the life and work of a groundbreaking architect.



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CHAPTER 9

Quiet Corners of Commerce and Culture

Above the doorway to the shop, Suppo placed an ornate carved wood plaque that had a basket of flowers at the top, and the words "J. Suppo, Wood Carving, Furniture, Made to Order."

—Jules Suppo Shop and Apartments, San Francisco, 1925

Designing “quiet corners” for commerce or culture in the middle of a busy urban environment was something Julia Morgan was especially adept at. She managed to create an aesthetically pleasing ambience in both her commercial and social commissions, which was conducive to the purposes of such buildings. Julia’s designs provided a shop owner, a newspaper editor, a hotel manager, or a theater director with a setting for their work that was inspirational as well as practical.

One of Julia Morgan’s most loyal clients was an Oakland entrepreneur named Fred C. Turner. Mr. Turner commissioned a house from her in 1907, at 255 Ridgeway Avenue in Oakland (see chapter eleven). He later hired Morgan to design two small, street-scale shopping centers, which are still in use today; at Piedmont Avenue and 40th Street in North Oakland in 1916, and on Bancroft Avenue east of Telegraph Avenue near the UC Berkeley campus, in 1938.

The Fred Turner Shops in Oakland are a cherished landmark in the historic upscale district known as the Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood. This elegant brick-faced complex has a series of bays along the ground floor that house small shops and restaurants, and a few apartments on the second story. The basic style of the edifice is Renaissance Revival, with the total symmetry of the street facade, a low-angled gable on the second story, and porthole windows set into the brick walls, which are bordered by della Robbia-type terra cotta decorative patterns of fruits and vegetables. Stepping into one of the boutique shops or gourmet cafes on the ground floor, customers are surrounded by an atmosphere that is reminiscent of such neighborhood establishments in the historic towns of Italy.

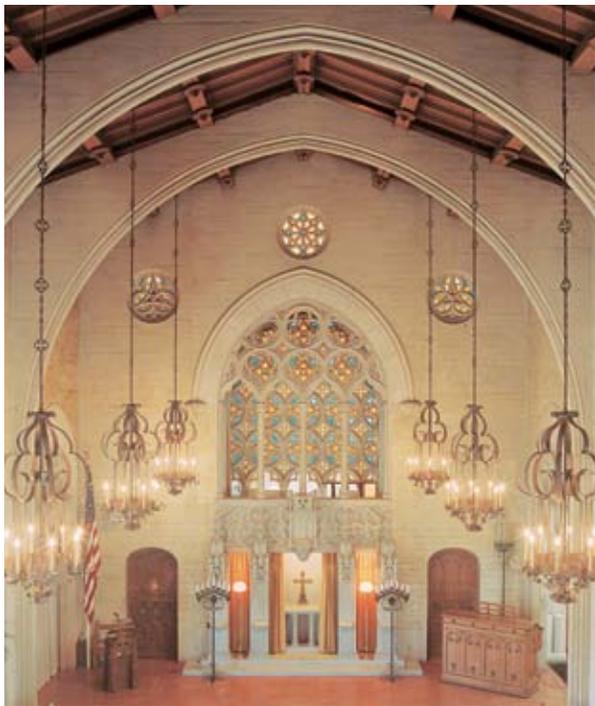
The Turner Shops in Berkeley are located at 2552 through 2546 Bancroft Avenue, across the street from the UC Berkeley campus. This commercial complex consists of a one-story, street-scale structure with boutique shops and cafes arranged around a central light court. Originally

it housed a popular bistro called the Black Sheep Restaurant, which closed many years ago. The interior of the building has been extensively remodeled in recent years, but much of Morgan’s exterior remains.

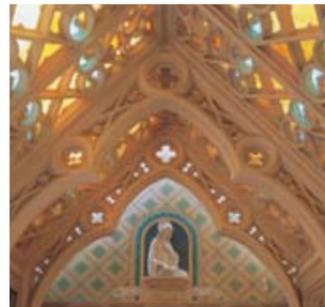
The street facade has two wide side bays flanking the entrance. These bays have metal latticed windows and doors, and they are decorated with a Streamlined Moderne “curtain molding” pattern in copper as a frieze along the top, with sunburst motifs at the corners. The entryway has a curved arch over a metal-latticed glass screen that leads into the central courtyard. The walls are made of sand-colored, textured concrete, and the roof is covered in red clay tiles. The rear portion of the building has a second story, with offices and storerooms. The complex currently houses variety shops and eateries that cater to the college crowd. Julia Morgan also designed a laboratory facility and a medical building for Fred Turner on Bancroft Way in 1938, but both buildings were demolished after WWII.



FACING: Sacramento Public Market, Sacramento, neoclassical details above entrance.
ABOVE: Fred Turner Shops and Apartments, Oakland, 1916.



ABOVE: Chapel of the Chimes, Oakland, interior of the chapel. **FACING**, ABOVE: Chapel of the Chimes, Oakland, domed passageway. **FACING**, BELOW LEFT: Chapel of the Chimes, Oakland, Chapel of the Palm. **FACING**, BELOW RIGHT: Chapel of the Chimes, Oakland, Chapel of the Holy Word.



Stylistically, all three of the guesthouses were designed in the southern Spanish Renaissance style that was the unifying theme for all the residences at San Simeon. The main entrances to the bungalows are on the single level that faces the Esplanade, while the rear of each house has multiple levels facing outward from the steep slopes of the hillside. Casa del Mar has an imposing rear facade, with a Renaissance balustraded double staircase rising towards the central two-story tower. The tower has three arched windows on the lower level, and rectangular banded windows on the second level, which provide guests with maximum views of the Pacific Ocean. Casa del Sol has an ornate three-story rear facade, with a Spanish Renaissance loggia on the top level flanked by balconies, and banded picture-glass windows across the upper story. There is a curved double staircase leading to the rear entrance and a superb sixteenth-century Spanish fountain in the courtyard with a replica of Donatello's "David" perched atop it. Casa del Sol has a hipped roof with twin Moorish towers at each end, which are embellished with Moorish-style

wooden balcony screens. The front of this house is decorated with intricate Moorish tiles and metalwork. Casa del Monte is not as visible from the rear as the other two bungalows. It has a simple double staircase leading up to the two-story rear facade, with banded windows and Spanish Renaissance balconies across the upper level.

For many first-time visitors to Hearst Castle, the highlight of their tour is the Neptune Pool. This large outdoor swimming pool is at the southwestern corner of La Cuesta Encantada, below the guesthouses. It was constructed in several stages between 1924 and 1936. The appearance of the Neptune Pool was altered several times during those years, as Hearst continually suggested making it grander and incorporating various ancient artifacts and recent sculptures from his private collection.

By the early 1930s, the Neptune Pool had reached its current length of 104 feet, with a basin that could hold 345,000 gallons of water. It was engineered like no other private pool in California before it. The pool was supported by a complex system, which involved hanging it from reinforced concrete beams that were set into a concrete retaining wall. This system would allow the pool to sway during an earthquake without breaking apart. Above the pool, there is a terrace that has seventeen dressing rooms housed within its foundations. Each dressing room has a full bathroom and full-length mirror.¹

The aesthetic effect of the Neptune Pool is simply breathtaking. The pool itself has a bottom decorated with black-and-white inlaid marble done in Greco-Roman geometric patterns. Curving around the ends of the oval-shaped basin are twin peristyles, or covered rows of paired columns, which embrace the pool like two elegant arms of marble. These columns are in the Classical Ionic style, enhancing the graceful feeling of the space they embrace.

Dominating the western edge of the pool is the so-called "Roman Temple." This is really a composite structure, created by Julia Morgan by incorporating parts from several ancient Roman temples dating from the first to the fourth century A.D. The marble columns and capitals, pediment, and sections of the frieze were made from fragments of old Roman temples, with modern concrete added to extend and support them. The pediment group was created by Morgan by setting ancient statues of Neptune and the Nereids (or sea nymphs) into the pool.²

At the opposite edge of the pool, Julia designed a marble-walled space to display a sculptural group called "The Birth of Venus." This group was designed by the prominent French sculptor Charles Cassou, and Morgan traveled to Paris to personally commission this work from him.



FACING, ABOVE: Hearst Castle, Casa Grande, 1922–27, detail of pediment, with carved figures by Jules Stoppa. **FACING**, BELOW: Hearst Castle, statue, left side of Casa Grande. ABOVE: Hearst Castle, stairs above Neptune Pool, c. 1926.