

HERst CASTLE: Julia Morgan was enthralled with mathematics and physics in high school. Upon graduation in 1890, she decided to be an architect. With no architectural schools yet established on the West Coast, she enrolled in the all-male College of Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, with the encouragement of her mother and the tolerance of her father. In 1894 she became the first female to graduate Berkeley with a civil engineering degree.

Morgan pursued architectural studies in France at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris per the advice of a professor, but failed the entrance exam twice. She wrote to her professor she had been failed on purpose because she was female but that she would try again, "just to show 'les jeunes filles' are not discouraged." Once accepted, she became the first woman to graduate there, and went on to win medals for her work in mathematics, architecture, and design.

Upon her return to San Francisco in 1902, she became the first woman in California to be licensed as an architect, and helped design several buildings at the University of California, Berkley including the Hearst Mining Building and the Hearst Greek Theatre. In a man's profession, she started her own firm in 1904 and was commissioned to build a seventy-two foot tall bell tower at Mills College. An early advocate of building with reinforced concrete, about which she had studied in Paris, she used it in the tower.

Her office and most of San Francisco was destroyed by the 1906 earthquake, but her seventy-two foot tall bell tower stood tall. This brought her local acclaim and new commissions which included rebuilding the earthquake-damaged Fairmont Hotel. Morgan's career was assured, and her practice flourished.

One-third of Morgan's clients were women or women's organizations. She designed twenty-eight buildings for the YWCA in California, Utah, and Hawaii, including a thirteen-building project at the Y's retreat near Monterey which now is a state historical park and conference center.

Morgan never forgot the needs of the single, working-class women aided by the YWCA. Her designs included homelike comforts, i.e., as private kitchenettes and dining areas. She combined beauty with practicality respecting the needs of these women. Some on the YWCA board objected to such details on behalf of these minimum-wage working girls. To Morgan, they were exactly the reason for her details.

In 1919, Morgan had completed the Mission Revival building for the Los Angeles Examiner, Hearst's flagship newspaper, and was asked by Hearst to design a main building and guest houses for San Simeon as a tribute to his mother who had died that year, and whom Julia knew very well. At the time, Morgan had owned and operated her own firm for twenty years, had already completed some 450 projects, and was much in demand. She accepted his proposal, continued her own business, and worked only weekends on Hearst's project. Morgan oversaw the work of countless tradesmen and artisans, supervising everything from the overall design to minute details of tile and ornamentation.

Hearst had told her he wanted "something a little different from what other people were doing in California." Little did he know, "little" seemed not to be part and parcel of her or her work. Her design and construction of his villa estate, her weekend job for twenty-eight years, was to become the Hearst Castle.

The Hearst Castle, with 165 rooms, includes a library, a dining room for thirty people, and a private theater. It has fifty-eight bedrooms, fifty-nine bathrooms, eighteen sitting rooms, and two kitchens. The estate has 127 acres of gardens, terraces, indoor and outdoor pools. She designed the Neptune Pool to be hung by reinforced-concrete beams in such a way that a seismic movement would let it sway but not break.

During her 45-year career, Morgan designed more than 700 homes, churches, hospitals, stores, office and educational buildings. She employed women, encouraged them in their profession, did not describe herself a feminist, and did not marry. In 1951, Julia Morgan closed her office and retired. She died six years later at the age of eighty-five.

Nearly three hundred linear feet of her architectural drawings are in the library at Cal Poly. The Hearst Castle, now a state historical monument, has attracted millions of visitors since opened to the public in 1958. California state historical records at Hearst Castle list Julia Morgan as Hearst's private secretary.

Sources: *Enterprising Women: 250 Years of American Business*, Virginia G. Drachman
<http://www.neh.gov/news/humanities/2006-09/BeyondSanSimeon.html>
<http://architecture.about.com/od/greatarchitects/p/juliamorgan.htm>

NOTE: In 1972, Sara Boutelle, who taught architectural history at the Brearley School in Manhattan, visited Hearst Castle for the first time and was horrified to find that the state historical records described Julia Morgan as Hearst's private secretary. Boutelle dedicated the rest of her life to researching and collecting material by and about Julia Morgan.