

Julia Morgan's Architecture

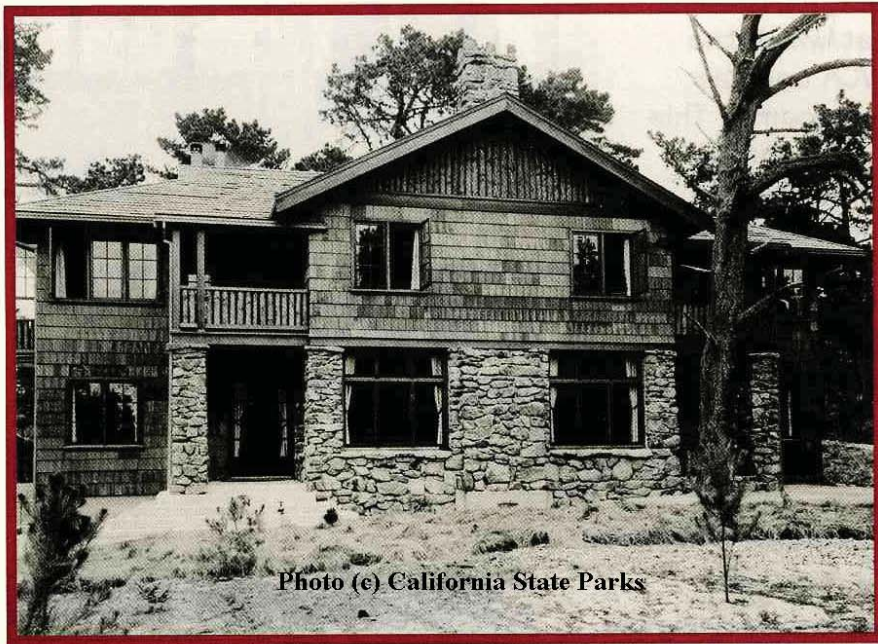


Photo (c) California State Parks

Visitor's Lodge - circa 1920

Discover Asilomar

Self-guided walking tour

Asilomar State Beach & Conference Grounds



Julia Morgan

1872 - 1957

Born in San Francisco on January 20, 1872, Julia Morgan filled her life with admirable accomplishments. She graduated from UC Berkeley in 1894, with a degree in engineering. She then went to the L'Ecole de Beaux Arts in Paris, France, earning her certification at the age of 29. She



Photo
(c) Calif. Polytechnic
State University

was the first woman ever to be granted an architecture certificate from the Paris school. In 1902, Morgan returned to California, and took a position with a prominent San Francisco architectural firm. She opened her own practice in 1904.

Morgan's distinguished career spanned 49 years, during which she designed nearly 700 buildings. She adamantly believed that architecture is a visual art and her work should speak for itself. In 1951, Morgan closed her office and spent her retirement traveling with family to Europe and South America. She died at the age of 85 on February 2, 1957.

Leaving no apology, Julia Morgan's legacy instead is the three-dimensional evidence of her innovative ideas and personal philosophy.

Thirteen of Julia Morgan's original sixteen buildings remain today. All display the beauty and simplicity of her skilled interpretation of the Arts & Crafts style. Adamant that Asilomar be a haven of peace and inspiration, she successfully wove together the tools of her craft to create the foundation for Asilomar.



Photo (c) California State Parks

Women arriving at Asilomar Train Stop - circa 1918

The Dream Comes Alive

In the spring of 1912, Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst opened her estate in Pleasanton, California to the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) for their annual Leadership Conference. During this conference, Hearst championed the organization's desire to build a permanent west-coast facility to expand and promote their cause.

Wanting a central coast location for their new facility, the YWCA contacted the Pacific Improvement Company. The Company donated 30 acres on the outskirts of Pacific Grove. The company's stipulation, however, was that \$30,000 of property improvements be made and taxes paid. The YWCA agreed.

A Blending of Function and Form

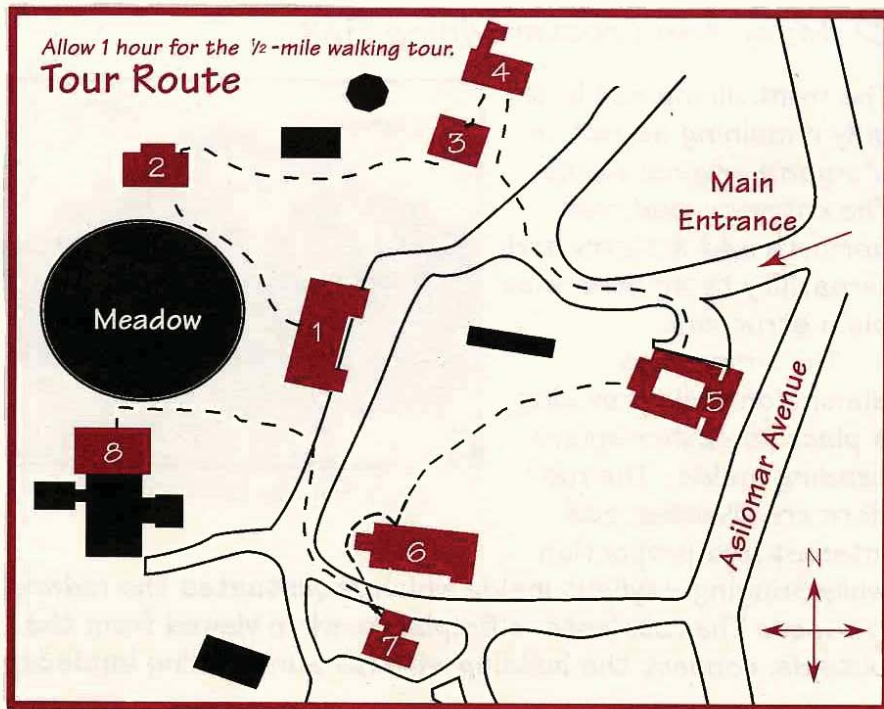
Mrs. Hearst encouraged the YWCA to employ architect Julia Morgan. To reflect the women's character and interests, Morgan embraced the Arts & Crafts architectural style, a movement sweeping California at the time. This movement was a direct reaction to the toll industrialism took on quality of life. The movement's principal aim was to restore craftsmanship and artistic form to all structures, from

workplaces to homes. The goal was to bring people back in touch with nature, and thus restore balance, health, harmony, and happiness.

Morgan was true to the California Arts & Crafts style at Asilomar. She designed the buildings from the inside out, with the main character and expression found in the interiors. The use of local wood and stone was fundamental; the craftsmanship of the structures became the art.

Weaving patterns together out of lines, colors, and textures, the result is a lovely rhythm and harmony within and without. Repetition of form is seen throughout each building, echoing its character until form subtly reverberates with a peace all its own. Open spaces and natural light dominate. A fireplace is often the centerpiece of a room, as Morgan gave credence to the ideal that the fireplace represents the structure's soul.

In 1913 Asilomar opened for its first session with the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Social Hall, tent houses for lodging, and a circus tent for a dining hall. By 1928, Morgan completed sixteen structures on the grounds, aided by the generous financial support of the many women who believed enough to make the dream a reality.



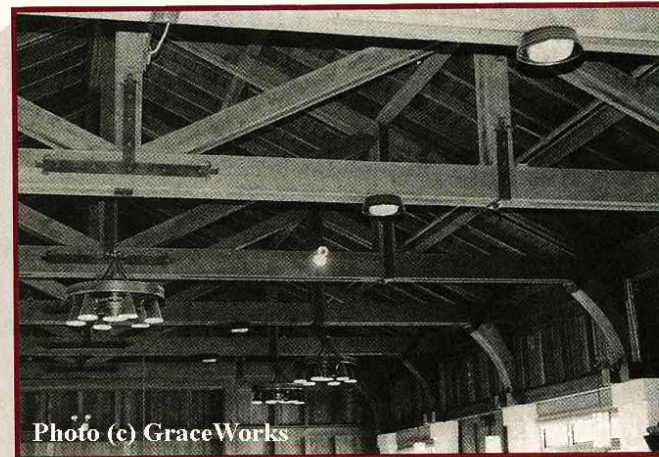
Your tour begins at the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Social Hall and winds through the grounds along the walking paths and roadways. Refer to the map for your bearings. The buildings are in use today for lodging, meetings and offices. Please do not enter rooms that are occupied.

As you proceed with your tour, notice that the beauty of the Arts & Crafts style lies mainly in its simplicity and harmony with the surroundings. The buildings flow in rhythm with their placement, becoming part of the natural environment.

Asilomar represents the largest collection of Julia Morgan's architecture in one location. The remaining structures (listed below) are a National Historic Landmark and on the National Register of Historic Places.

- Stone pillars at the entrance – 1913
- Phoebe Apperson Hearst Social Hall – 1913
- Engineer's Cottage – 1913
- Grace H. Dodge Chapel Auditorium – 1915
- Mary Ann Crocker Dining Hall – 1918
- Stuck-Up Inn – 1918
- Health Cottage (Viewpoint) – 1917-1918
- Visitor's Lodge – 1917-1918
- Pirates' Den – 1923
- Director's Cottage – 1927
- Scripps Lodge Annex – 1927-1928
- Merrill Hall – 1928

1. Phoebe Apperson Hearst Social Hall



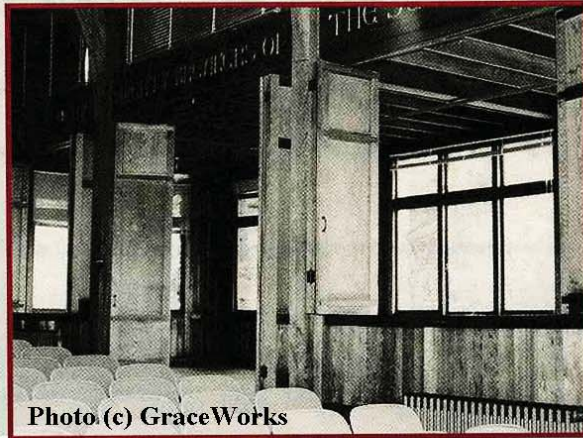
As you enter through the wide swinging door, a sense of space and simple grandeur is immediate. This is primarily achieved by the open ceiling

with exposed triangular wood structures which support the load and span the length of the roof. These structures are King Post Trusses. The redwood beams are artistically decorated with iron.

The large stones in the imposing fireplace naturally draw your eye to this centerpiece. The vertical keystones above the hearth and the large stone mantel adorn the fireplace.

2. Grace H. Dodge Chapel Auditorium

The Chapel's beauty is enhanced by its versatility. Built to serve multiple purposes, the interior has folding wood partitions that/which the YWCA used as classrooms. This is an example of harmonizing function and form.



A vast picture window overlooks the forested dunes, bringing the inspiration of nature into the room. The wood floor is purposely slanted to give one a sense of sitting on a sand dune looking westerly to the Pacific.

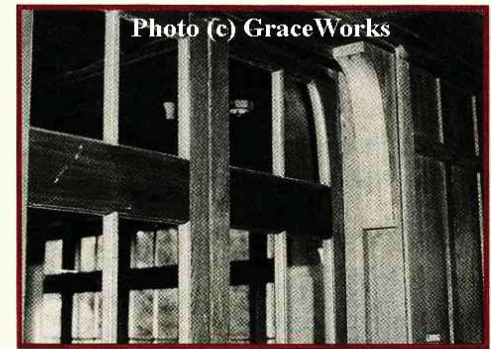
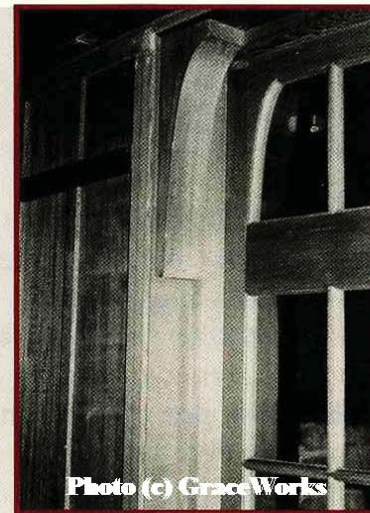
3. Visitor's Lodge

Miss Morgan deliberately designed the Lodge in the style of a fine hotel to accommodate the YWCA's executive members.

This building sits above the other structures so from the living room executive members had a commanding view of their "domain". The rich redwood tones and graceful simplicity of the grand staircase dominate the lobby. The staircase railings match the battens on the walls, conveying a vertical design to the interior. Upstairs, an open gallery landing lends airiness to an otherwise confining space.



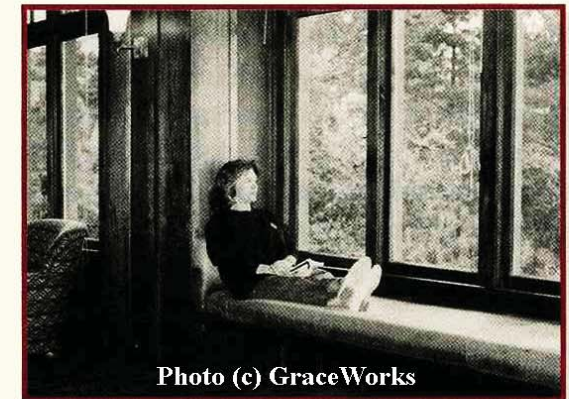
4. Scripps' Lodge Annex



Here, the entry hall is as long as the building is wide, giving a sense of proportion and balance. Gentle lines soften and counterbalance the rooms' angles as seen in the French doors and moldings with their curved brackets.

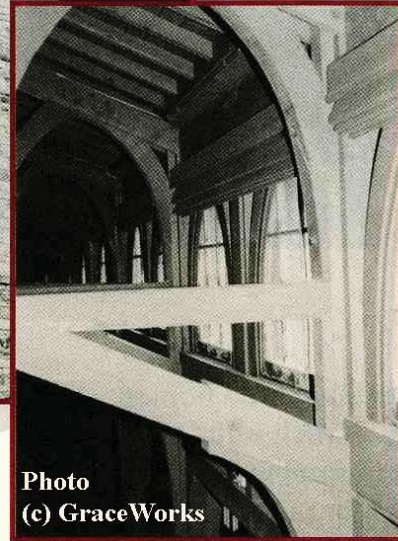
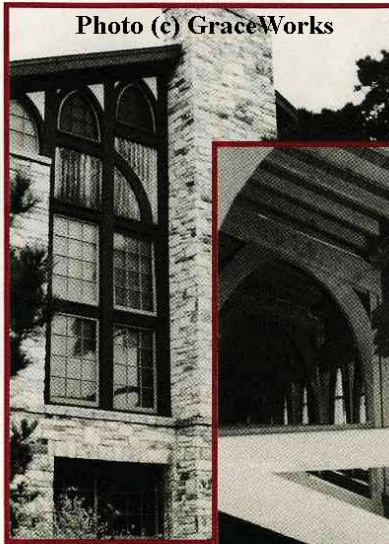
5. Stuck-Up Inn

Affectionately known as Stuck-Up Inn (see hallway exhibit for the story), this building was staff quarters, so the emphasis was on economy and practicality. Morgan used brick in place of stone for the fireplace; debarked logs replaced redwood for the building trusses. In the tradition of the Arts & Crafts style, much of the furniture, such as bookcases and storage units, was built-in, making a room furnished without furniture. Built-in window seats, a subtle feature, provided a place of respite close to nature.



6. Merrill Hall

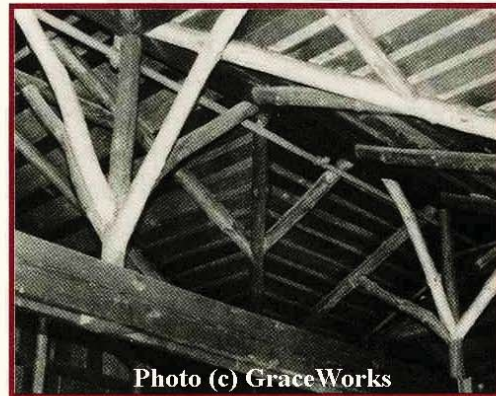
Merrill Hall's function remains constant – auditorium space built to hold over 800 people. A distinct departure from Morgan's other buildings; the fortress-like flagstone wall endures the relentless ocean winds and reflects the golden hues of sunset. Tall pines help blend the building into the environment as it emerges from the hillside. Stately Gothic arch trusses echo the arched window design.



7. Pirates' Den

Pirates' Den housed the young male staff during the YWCA camp days (see exhibit within). As with Stuck-Up Inn, Morgan used debarked logs for trusses since economy was important. Morgan also wanted to add space and dimension to the small living room. She modified the ceiling with varied angles and pitches, thus increasing its proportions.

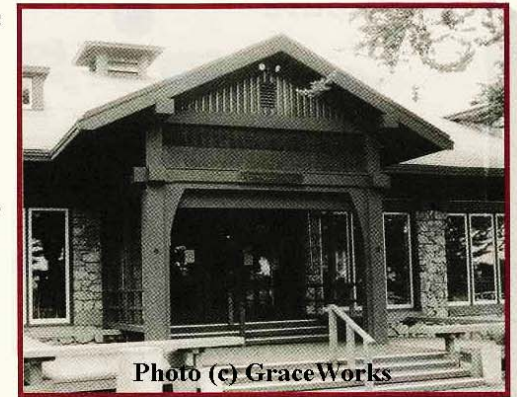
These strategies and techniques exemplify her inventiveness while adding to the craftsmanship of the building.



8. Mary Ann Crocker Dining Hall

The front dining hall is the only remaining aspect of Morgan's original design. The entryway and roof dormers add artistry and versatility to an otherwise plain structure.

The entry gives dimension while providing a place to gather before heading inside. The roof dormers, likewise, add interest and proportion while bringing daylight inside which accentuates the redwood trusses. The rubblestone fireplaces, when viewed from the outside, connect the building with its surrounding landscape.



If this guide has piqued your interest to learn more, we invite you to schedule a walk with one of the State Park staff by calling (831) 646-6440.



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