



Julia Morgan's
ASILOMAR

A Self-Guided Walking Tour of
Julia Morgan Architecture at Asilomar

Asilomar State Beach & Conference Grounds
A Unit of California State Parks





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Julia Morgan, Architect

It is too soon to predict how women will acquit themselves in a field so old, yet so new to them.

—Julia Morgan 1912

In the summer of 2014, the American Institute of Architects awarded Julia Morgan its Gold Medal, calling her “the early 20th-century architect whose copious output of quality work secured her position as the first great female American architect.” Morgan directed the design of Asilomar’s buildings and grounds between 1913 and 1928.

Born in San Francisco, California in 1872, Morgan became one of the first women to graduate from the University of California with a

degree in engineering. While in Berkeley she met Bernard Maybeck, a faculty member and architect who would become a leading figure in California’s Arts and Crafts movement. He encouraged her to apply to the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France - the most important design school at the time. In 1902 Julia Morgan became the first woman to earn a Master’s Degree in Architecture from that prestigious school. Upon returning to California, Morgan’s first job was with John Galen Howard, the supervising architect at the University of California. Seeking an office of her own, Morgan left Howard’s employ and in 1904 she became the first woman licensed to practice architecture in California. She operated her own firm for nearly five decades.

Morgan’s first major commission was for Mills College, a school for women in Oakland. Her design for El Campanil drew hundreds to its dedication in 1904. After the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake—through which the campus landmark survived intact—Morgan was hired to assist rebuilding San Francisco’s Fairmont Hotel. She later designed St. John’s

Presbyterian Church in Berkeley, where several Young Women's Christian Association leaders belonged, and when the YWCA offered her the Asilomar commission she was designing a chapter building for Oakland's YWCA. Morgan's firm would eventually design dozens of buildings for the YWCA.

Beginning in 1900 the Pacific Coast chapters of the YWCA held their annual conference meetings at Capitola, a resort on the northern shore of Monterey Bay. By the start of the 1910s it had outgrown the resort and its leaders began searching for a site of their own. In the spring of 1912 Phoebe Apperson Hearst hosted the meeting at her Pleasanton, California estate. At Hearst's suggestion, the YWCA asked the Pacific Improvement Company, the Monterey peninsula's largest landowner, to donate land. The PIC offered 30 acres near Moss (Asilomar) Beach, on the western end of the peninsula, stipulating that the YWCA must construct \$35,000 worth of permanent structures on the grounds within ten years to receive the deed. By the end of the Morgan era, the YWCA had invested more than \$250,000 in building Asilomar.

With topographic maps supplied by the PIC, Morgan drew the initial plans for the grounds, linking building sites with walking paths and utility roads. She planned for three buildings around the wooded campus circle which would serve as the primary sites for socializing, spiritual uplift, and sustenance. She drew inspiration—and materials—from the local setting.

Morgan's design aesthetic becomes apparent when you first pass through the rubble-stone entry pillars and her buildings come into view. Working in the First Bay Tradition, a uniquely Northern California Arts and Crafts style emphasizing nature, site, and local materials, her rustic aesthetic would serve as the



Asilomar entry pillar, 1925

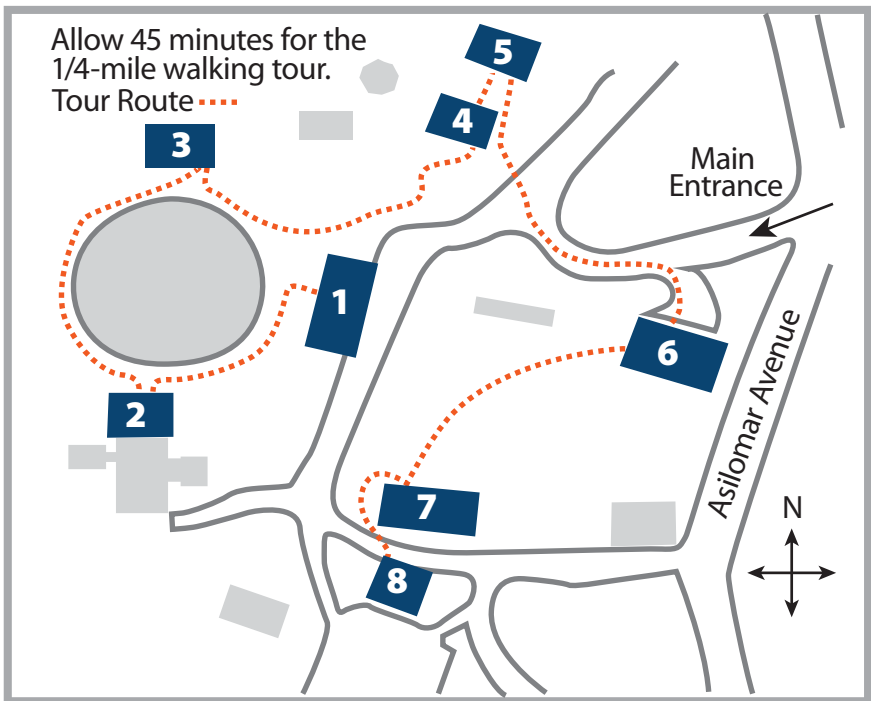
basis for Asilomar achieving National Register of Historic Places Landmark status in 1987.

Refer to the map for your bearings, begin your tour at the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Social Hall and wind along walking paths and roadways. Today buildings are used for lodging, conference meetings, dining, and administration. Please do

not enter occupied rooms.

Pay attention to the design elements Morgan applied to her buildings—from the stacked granite stone on the Social Hall pilasters to the Carmel flagstone veneer of Merrill Hall. Asilomar contains the largest collection of buildings designed by this extraordinary architect. ●

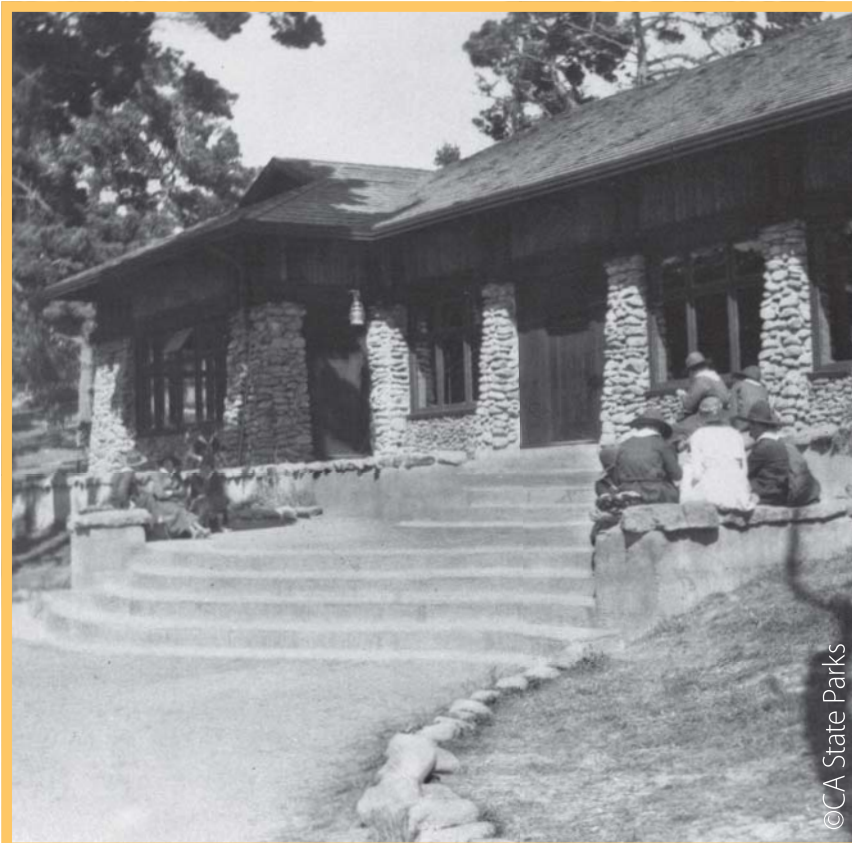
Map for Self-Guided Walking Tour



- 1** Hearst Social Hall
- 2** Crocker Dining Hall
- 3** Chapel Auditorium

- 4** Visitor's Lodge
- 5** Scripps Lodge-Annex
- 6** Stuck Up Inn

- 7** Merrill Hall
- 8** Pirates' Den



1 Phoebe Apperson Hearst Social Hall, 1913

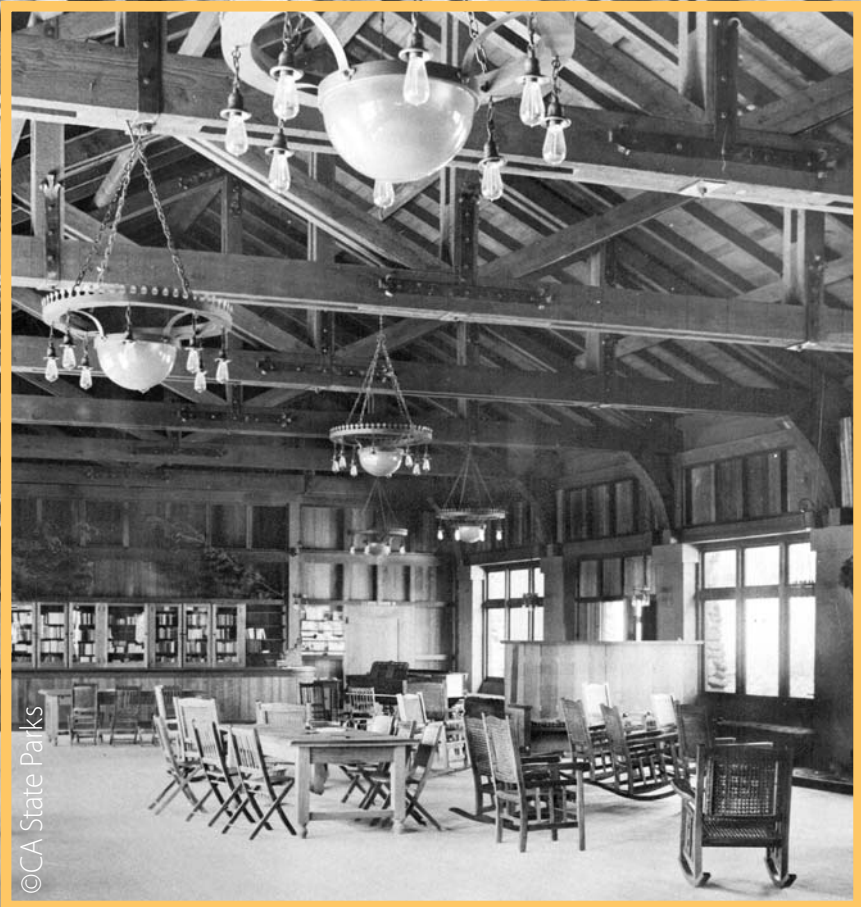
Viewed from the campus Circle, it appears that Morgan intended the Social Hall to be the center of activity. Visitors entered the west side of the Administration Building, now known as the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Social Hall, from a terraced concrete and stone patio, which was replaced with a modern redwood deck in

1974. Morgan set the building's foundation into the side of the hill, battered the granite pilasters, and clad the frieze in pine logs with the bark left on. The cupola and bronze bell, originally slated for the Chapel Auditorium, were installed in 1915. The Social Hall, like all the Morgan buildings, included hot and cold running water and

lights powered by electricity drawn from the Hotel Del Monte, in Monterey.

As you pass through the thick redwood doors, your eyes are drawn to the massive stone fireplace. The redwood beams, wood floors, and darkly stained trim are common in California's Arts and Crafts architecture and help reinforce the intimacy of the fire. Note the unfinished

natural redwood details in the ceiling and walls, and the tall, single light casement windows with transoms. The room on your right, where Phoebe's Café is now located, originally contained a Post Office and stenographer's desk. The north side of the building originally held a classroom, a library and a gift shop. ●





2 Mary Ann Crocker Dining Hall, 1918

Morgan designed the Mary Ann Crocker Dining Hall in 1918 and built it on the site where the dining tent had been in use since Asilomar opened in 1913. The exterior cladding is granite stone veneer with wood shingles above the windows. The forward sloping roof includes four glazed dormers and a cupola on the center ridge beam. The entryway provides shelter from the elements for those waiting in the line at the start of meals. Morgan included bare redwood walls, high, open ceilings, exposed trusses, and a pair of fireplaces. To immerse diners in nature, she lined the walls with

tall casement windows with transoms.

In 1960, architect John Carl Warnecke put his own stamp on Crocker Dining Hall by adding the Woodlands and Seascape dining rooms on either side. His designs honor Julia Morgan's precedent while adding more explicit Japanese influences and modern elements. To give the building a more contemporary feel he modified Crocker Dining Hall with single pane windows, removed the dormers (restored by 1999), and elevated the floor 18" to accommodate a mechanical heating and ventilation system. ●



3 Grace Dodge Chapel Auditorium, 1915

The Grace Dodge Chapel Auditorium was Morgan's second permanent building at Asilomar. As with her other Asilomar buildings, Morgan left the exterior wood unfinished (paint was first applied in the late 1930s). The Chapel features deeply pointed stone rubble of varying sizes and shapes, and stone ledges that jut out from below the window bays and from the top of the chimney. As with the Social Hall frieze, gable ends and window bays were

clad in bark-on pine logs.

The central auditorium is flanked with wings that can be closed to serve as meeting rooms. One notable interior feature is the carved, gold-leaf covered inscription below the clerestory, adapted from Psalms 93:4 and Isaiah 49:13, augmented by a recessed shell pattern. The enormous plate glass window behind the stage reveals the dunes and forest and fills the interior with the sunset's changing colors. ●



4 Visitor's Lodge, 1915

Morgan designed the Visitor's Lodge for the YWCA's leaders and guests, as well as to attract overnight visitors willing to pay for such comforts as a private fireplace. Nevertheless, her design directs everyone toward a living room to socialize around a stone hearth. Morgan's singular design also includes a commanding split redwood staircase with squared floor-to-ceiling newels and balustrades.

The building also features

redwood board and batten walls and ceilings in the living and sleeping rooms. Private baths were added to all sleeping rooms in the 1950s. At the same time, the Trunk Room - a relic of the railroad era located behind the stairs - was incorporated into the room next door. A sleeping porch, which had been built on the north side of the building, was removed and replaced with the fire escape in the 1970s. ●

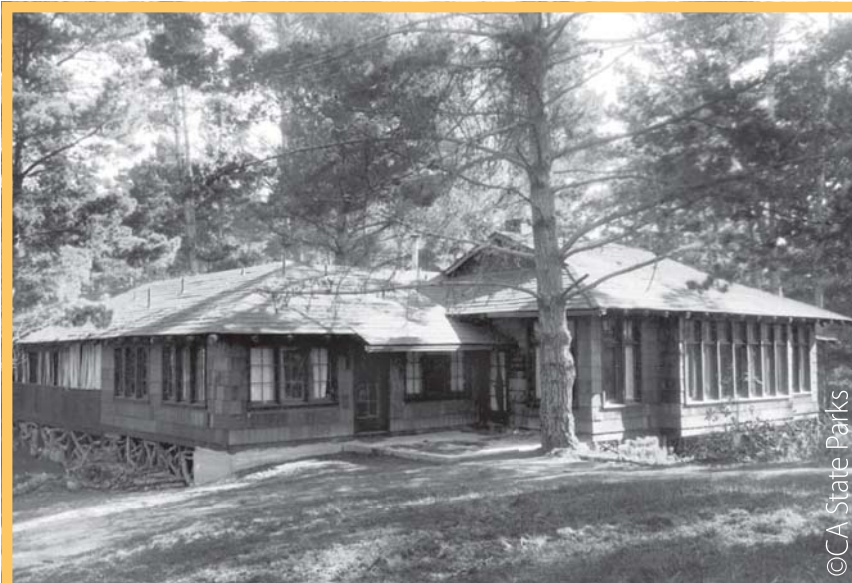


5 Scripps Lodge Annex, 1927

The YWCA constructed buildings as funding became available. The 1927 Scripps Lodge-Annex was the result of a generous donation by Ellen Browning Scripps of La Jolla, California, who probably also paid for Class Hall, which was built in 1918 and destroyed by fire in 1955.

The multipurpose Scripps building was designed to accommodate year-round “transient” visitors to Asilomar.

The large meeting room on the southeast end was originally a restaurant, and what is now the concession accounting office was once a full-service kitchen that later became the laundry for the grounds. The interior accordion doors were a later addition while the stone fireplace, redwood board and batten walls and bracketed beams are original. The terraced patio was once surrounded by tall Monterey pines. ●



6 Stuck-Up Inn, 1918

Opened for the 1918 conference season, the Stuck-up Inn featured sleeping rooms separated with canvas drapes, which were also used for exterior walls. Nevertheless, staying in the Stuck-up Inn was probably a luxury for the girls. Those who worked during conferences, either in the dining hall or in housekeeping, were among the privileged few allowed to stay here (see hallway exhibit for the story).

In the early years a room next to the main entry was reserved for the house mother. The living room includes rough debarked log trusses and the only brick

fireplace Morgan built in the YWCA housing. Morgan added built-in bookcases and storage units and installed seating beneath the west windows, which afforded a view of the thick forest that surrounded the building when it was constructed.

The east wing, added in the early 1920s, created an enclosed courtyard that still provides one of the most private spaces on the grounds. As with the tent houses, the Health Cottage, and Pirates' Den, the crawl space was enclosed with rustic pine stick work. ●

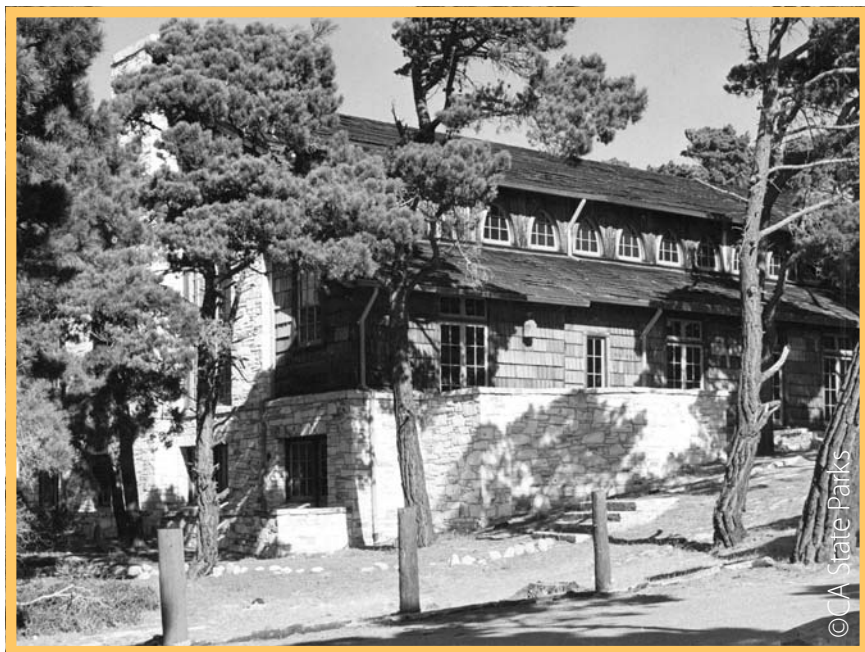


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7 Mary S. Merrill Recreation Auditorium, 1928

The Basilica-shaped Merrill Recreation Auditorium was opened on April 22, 1928, in a ceremony dedicated to

the memory of Mary Sroufe Merrill, first chair of the YWCA Asilomar Committee. Merrill's philanthropic work in the San



Francisco Bay Area earned her the respect of many friends who paid all of the building's construction costs. It was the last Morgan design constructed on the grounds and represents the high point of the YWCA at Asilomar.

The building is clad with redwood shingles and once had bark-on pine log detail. It features amber-glazed arched hopper windows at the ridge and clerestory, numerous large casement windows designed to look like double-hung windows, and twelve-lite center pivot windows providing a view of the dunes and ocean to the west. The

Carmel flagstone veneer on the west facade and chimney match the short walls surrounding the patios and walkways. The walkways originally extended north to Class Hall, which burned in 1955.

Morgan borrowed the interior plan from St. John's Presbyterian Church in Berkeley (1912), and included arched trusses of heavy redwood timber joined with ornamental iron work. On the west end of the interior she added a folding redwood partition to create the Club Room, which includes a massive Carmel-stone fireplace. ●



8 Pirates' Den, 1923

Designed as the men's dormitory, this 1923 building became known as the Pirates' Den in honor of the staff who provided entertainment during meals in the Crocker Dining Hall that reflect the local obsession with Robert Louis Stevenson (see the back hallway display for how the name morphed into "Pie Rats").

As with the Stuck-Up Inn, Morgan included an enclosed

living room with stone fireplace and rustic debarked log trusses; the original south end—supported by trusses and surrounded by rustic pine stick work—included open-sided sleeping rooms draped in striped canvas. In the 1930s the sleeping quarters were enclosed with windows and the lower half of the building was infilled with utility rooms. ●

Other Morgan-era Structures

Between 1913 and 1928 Julia Morgan's firm designed more than twenty-five structures for Asilomar. The eleven that survive comprise Asilomar's Historic Core. Starting in 1913, the Pacific Improvement

Company executed Morgan's designs for tent houses and the Social Hall, the grading for roadways and footpaths, connected electric and water utilities, and installed "modern sewerage." PIC workers also built

the stone entry pillars. Morgan's tent houses had canvas walls and verandas to "ensure neighborliness." Later enclosed with fixed walls and windows, all tent houses were replaced with modern buildings by 1971. For the 1915 season, the YWCA added the Health Cottage, now known as Viewpoint, staffed with a live-in nurse. To its south was the Class Hall, opened in 1918, which accommodated more than 500 students in six classrooms. It burnt to the ground in 1955 and was never rebuilt. The 1918 Guest Inn included 90 beds and stood for more than 50 years on the spot now occupied by North Woods. While there is no extant record of its construction, the Engineer's Cottage, located at Asilomar's south entrance, includes several rustic elements that Morgan introduced to

Asilomar, including a redwood board and batten ceiling, wood casement windows, and walls clad in redwood shingles.

The cross-gabled Director's Cottage, built in 1927 to house the conference grounds director, has a commanding view of the grounds and the ocean beyond. It was designed by Thaddeus Joy and James H. Lefeaver, two of the men Julia Morgan employed in her firm. Morgan's firm also designed several utility buildings. In 1928 San Francisco's Herbert Fleishhacker funded the Mary Merrill swimming pool, which has since been altered. In all, Morgan's Asilomar architecture demonstrates her artistic sensibility, her appreciation for both the latest technology and the natural world, and her extraordinary talent. ●



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