



## JULIA MORGAN (1872-1957)

In 1904, Julia Morgan became the first woman licensed to practice architecture in California. A successful and prolific architect during the first half of the twentieth century, Morgan was born in San Francisco in 1872 and educated at the University of California at Berkeley. After graduating in 1894 with a degree in engineering, Morgan continued her education becoming the first woman to study at the world's most prestigious architectural school, the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Her initial attempts to enroll were rejected because she was female, but after her third application, she was accepted. In applying there, she was following a pattern established by such well-respected American architects as Henry Hobson Richardson, Louis Sullivan, and her own California mentor, Bernard Maybeck.

Upon her return from Europe in 1902, Morgan began her architectural career in the San Francisco area working for the designer John Galen Howard on buildings at UC Berkeley and for Phoebe Apperson Hearst. She also collaborated with Maybeck, with whom she was continuing to develop a strong professional relationship. Maybeck's personal style, a product of Beaux-Arts disciplines and individual fancy, was one which appealed to her enormously and which had a lasting effect on her own style.

Her trailblazing career helped open the field of architecture to women in the United States. Perhaps best known for the design and construction of publisher W.R. Hearst's legendary California coastal estate, San Simeon, she built a remarkably diverse practice, designing at least 700 buildings that are prized by owners and revered by architectural historians. Morgan was also an influential member of the Arts and Crafts movement in the Bay Area, one of the few born in California. Biographer Sara Holmes Boutelle wrote: "Her preoccupation with light, with the relationship of a structure to its site, with flexibility of plan ... and with the use of color and decoration make her work relevant to contemporary designers."

In 1929, Morgan was awarded an honorary doctorate from her alma mater. One of the few honors she willingly accepted, the degree states:

*Distinguished alumna of the University of California; Artist and Engineer;  
Designer of simple dwellings and stately homes, of great buildings nobly  
planned to further the centralized activities of her fellow citizens;  
Architect in whose works harmony and admirable proportions  
Bring pleasure to the eye and peace to the mind*

Morgan ran her office in the atelier style she had learned at the Beaux-Arts, creating a learning environment for all who worked there. In 1951, she retired, closing her office in the Merchant's Exchange Building in San Francisco and preserving documentary evidence of her long and distinguished career. Julia Morgan died in San Francisco in 1957 at the age of 85.

In December, 2013, Julia Morgan was posthumously awarded the prestigious AIA Gold Medal, the highest honor given by The American Institute of Architects Board of Directors. As one of the great architects of our time and a Bay Area treasure, Julia Morgan is also the first woman ever to be given the AIA Gold Medal, thus securing her position as the first great female American architect.