

## *Foreword*

I met Taylor Coffman at Hearst Castle in 1972, and I immediately noticed two things about him: when he talked about anything, he was thorough, and he was accurate. *Hearst and Marion: The Santa Monica Connection*, the book you're about to read, is certainly thorough; and although I'm not a Hearst scholar, I'll bet you anything it's also pretty darned accurate (or in Taylor's words, "accurate within human reason, which by its very nature is fallible").

Here's a typical passage from his new book:

How do we know, really *know*, that work started in Santa Monica by 1926? The question is put that way in deference to those favoring 1927 or even 1928. . . . There's no need to dwell on what Fred Lawrence Guiles said in 1972 . . . . Nor do we need to cite other secondary sources beyond the Miriam Cooper or even the Irene Mayer Selznick level to drive home the point that 1926 is a date we can trust.

Taylor's thoroughness reminds me of what George Orwell says about Charles Dickens's prose: "It is futile to object that this kind of thing is rococo—one might as well make the same objection to a wedding cake. Either you like it or you do not like it." Whether or not you like Taylor's thoroughness, you'll have to admit that his book is accurate—again, "within human reason."

His book is unquestionably enchanting, filled with wonderful descriptions like "play the penguin" for "dress formally" and, about the construction of the Beach House, "built to the best Hollywood studio, false-front standards." It's also enlightening. For example, in it we learn that Hearst detested the Three Stooges, that he discouraged publicity of Orson Welles ("If we print anything bad about him it will be attributed to hostility, and if we print anything good about him, it

will be a lie”), and that he may well have saved his empire by writing the column “In the News” in the early 1940s.

There is much, much more: Dobermans provided security at the Beach House; Marion was a master quilter, a patroness of more than one hundred thousand children, and a charming woman (in a thank-you note, she wrote, “I hope you are as happy as you have made us”); in 1947–48, after Hearst and Marion had sold the Beach House to Joseph Drown, who renamed it Ocean House, Orson Welles stayed in it; and on and on and on.

After I’d read an earlier version of the work, then called *415 Ocean Front, Santa Monica: The Grand Mansion That Was*, I congratulated Taylor for having written two magnificent books—one about the grand mansion, and the other about Hearst and Marion and the times they had in many places. In *Hearst and Marion: The Santa Monica Connection*, whose new title Taylor came up with, he has united those two books.

To Taylor and to Joanne Aasen, who has produced a beautiful electronic version of the work, I want to say what Marion often said to those who had done great things for Hearst and her: “Millions of thanks.”

— JOHN PORTER  
Hearst Castle Guide