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Shell Game At the Seashore

1932–1936

EARLY IN 1932 the dynamic and always headstrong Camille Rossi, San Simeon's construction superintendent since 1922, finally wore his welcome thin with Hearst and Julia Morgan. George Loorz rose to the occasion. He was the young builder from Berkeley (b. 1898) whose past credits included nine months on the Beach House job in 1927–28. Loorz was as much a typist as Hayes Perkins was but one imbued with a deeper respect for the truth and with far fewer axes to grind. Letters, not diary entries, were his writerly stock in trade. We can rely on George Loorz for some glimpses of Beach House history in the 1930s. Midway through 1932, Morgan described him to Hearst as "simple, direct and capable," as a man "with a natural manner." In contrast, the often cynical Perkins described Loorz at the outset of 1932 as "a back slapper if there ever was one."

You decide. To most old-timers conversant with the San Simeon or the Santa Monica of that era (not many are left), Loorz was a man who could do no wrong, a mortal who all but walked on water.

Before we move past the first month of this new year, Alice Head must be heard from again, silent in these pages since the summer of 1931. She has no peer, no equal in these circles—not even George Loorz and surely not Hayes Perkins—when it comes to recounting Los Angeles and sometimes the Beach House (though still not by name) during what technically were the worst years of the Great Depression:

Mid-January, 1932, saw me once more setting forth for the States, this time on the *Samaria*, one of the smaller Cunard boats. . . . After seven

extremely stormy days at sea we arrived on Sunday [probably January 24] at Halifax, Nova Scotia. . . . We left Halifax on Sunday evening and arrived at New York mid-day Tuesday. Leslie and Ruth Howard were at my hotel within an hour of my arrival and in the evening Dick Berlin [of Hearst Magazines] took me to see Leslie in his play *The Animal Kingdom* [at the Broadhurst Theatre] in which he was having a tremendous success. . . .

In a few days I left for Los Angeles, where there was the usual pleasant life—parties (Mary Pickford gave a big one which I much enjoyed), happy days at the studio [Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in Culver City], and the wedding [on Sunday, February 14] of Carmen Pantages to John Considine [Jr.]. This meant a new dress as I had not expected to attend a wedding, and I was hurriedly fitted out at Magnin's beautiful shop with a most lovely lace dress and hat which Marion insisted on giving me. Carmen Pantages is a pocket Venus—dainty and exquisite, and she made a lovely bride. Marion was an equally lovely bridesmaid [and maid of honor] in pale blue, and the wedding, which took place in an enormous room at the Ambassador Hotel, which was solidly massed with the most gorgeous flowers, was an occasion which I shall long remember.

The remainder of my stay was as happy and busy as usual, and after a few days [back] in New York, I sailed in the *Berengaria*. . . .

One of the films shown on the *Berengaria* this trip was *Freaks*, which never succeeded in passing the censor in England. The performers in it were all monstrosities and it is difficult to understand how such a revolting picture ever came to be made.

Freaks had come to be made through MGM. In fact, it was made at the same time as *Polly of the Circus*, with a release date of February 20 to *Polly's* February 27. Marion had just one other film to concern herself with in 1932—*Blondie of the Follies*, made in the early weeks of summer for release in late August. Its production kept her and Hearst at the Beach House accordingly, punctuated by quick trips to San Simeon that more and more consisted of flights from Clover Field (today's Santa Monica Municipal Airport) to its rural counterpart at

the ranch, an unpaved airstrip that George Looz was keeping high on his “to do” list of improvements Hearst wanted, both on the hilltop and elsewhere around his Central Coast kingdom, which comprised tens of thousands of pristine acres.

Throughout the last week of June 1932 and until Saturday, July 2, coinciding with the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Hearst ran his newspapers and other interests from the Beach House and the Cosmopolitan Bungalow at MGM. Such had become his pattern whenever Marion had a picture to make, more so than in much of the 1920s. Thus he was most likely in Santa Monica or Culver City for the much-mythified telephone connection with people in Chicago, a call favoring Franklin D. Roosevelt as the Democratic nominee for President. John Nance Garner (“Cactus Jack” of Texas, an old Congressional crony of Hearst’s and his preferred candidate) got the Vice-Presidential nod. The details exceed what this book about the Santa Monica connection can begin to unravel. For Hearst, that lordly a gesture was a throwback to the late 1890s and the Spanish-American War. He took full credit for his daring promotion of that spectacle, for his virtual if not literal starting of it, as many liked to say—a noble thing in its chauvinistic day. The last of the romantic wars, the Spanish-American conflict has been called: a historic event that ousted Madrid from the New World once and for all, upholding the Monroe Doctrine and liberating Cuba. In reality, the cause for a free Cuba had been brewing since long before Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer and yellow journalism had their operatic heyday on Park Row in Lower Manhattan. Hearst regarded the Roosevelt of 1932 and the jostlings in Chicago in a comparable vein, never mind if Joseph P. Kennedy or other politicians said the credit and spoils should be theirs to divide.

For our purposes, we need merely note that once *Blondie of the Follies* wrapped in mid-July, Hearst was as free as he’d once made Cuba; and for him that meant free to return to San Simeon, with

Marion and their full retinues in tow. She, or rather they, wouldn't need to be back at MGM until the following winter for the sake of *Peg o' My Heart*. Except for going to Cleveland in October (Hearst needed a throat operation, to be performed only by a trusted specialist), they favored San Simeon for the rest of 1932, letting the Beach House play second fiddle.

FOR JULIA MORGAN THAT YEAR, San Simeon remained her largest account, far and away. Next came her YWCA Residence Building in San Francisco, followed by the Marion Davies Clinic in West Los Angeles and The Principia in St. Louis, Missouri, a Christian Science college whose campus requiring Morgan's efforts lay across the Mississippi River in Elsah, Illinois. Three noticeably small jobs of Morgan's in 1932 pertained to the Beach House. Their combined expenses were less than \$250, mostly geared toward unglamorous maintenance (both the 415 and the 321 buildings needed painting, tasks coordinated by—though surely not performed by—the Morgan office). In other words, it was an off year for Morgan in Santa Monica, although 1933 would fall almost completely off the charts. At that point scarcely any drafting-room time or travel or other expenses would be accrued by her office for Santa Monica's sake.

As to George Loorz, he had been on the new job at San Simeon for two months early in 1932 when he heard from Bert Johnson, a college friend from UC Berkeley who'd worked for him on the Beach House job a few years before; Johnson had lived in Santa Monica since then or perhaps longer; he wrote to Loorz on April 12:

The best piece of news that I have had for a long time was when I heard that you had taken charge of the work at the ranch. [H. O.] Hunter [of the *Los Angeles Examiner*] told me about it about a month ago, and it sure tickled [William] Newton and me. By the way, I suppose you know

that Newton has the engineer's job at the beach house. He has been there quite a while now.

Johnson may have been using "engineer" loosely in an older sense, much as he or Loorz used "mechanic" to mean a skilled workman. Bill Newton, well represented in the George & Rosalie Hearst Collection, oversaw maintenance at the Beach House into the 1940s (caretaker-houseman would be the more accurate term for him). All the same, Newton was a key player in Santa Monica and would remain so for many more years. Johnson's letter of April 12, 1932, continued:

Do you know who is doing the work at the clinic [the Marion Davies Children's Clinic in Sawtelle] down here? I heard that it is being done by a San Francisco concern, but evidently [Frank] Hellenthal has something to do with it as he is seen around there at times. I heard that he was kind of upset about you being at the ranch. All he has been doing down here is knocking the work at the beach house, even doing outright lying to gain his point. There is plenty of his work that falls plenty short of the kind of work done when you were there.

The postscript asked: "Have you your family at San Simeon?"

Loorz was nearly two months in responding to Johnson's letter. He told his friend on June 4, "I intended to answer it immediately but misplaced it":

I suppose you have found out by this time who is doing the work at the Clinic. I have never heard as yet.

It's hard to imagine that Loorz wouldn't have learned the details by virtual osmosis, four months into his work at San Simeon in 1932. Morgan had been on the hilltop every week or so. Half of her check-ups had included a swing to Sawtelle in West Los Angeles to stay abreast of the emerging Clinic. "Miss Morgan, Geo[rge] Wright and others have kept me well posted on things there at Wyntoon," was much more Loorz's style—this when he wrote to his business partner, Fred Stolte,

the following year but concerning a completely different project, though as much a Hearst-Morgan pursuit as the Marion Davies Clinic was.

In any case, Loorz's letter of June 4, 1932, to Bert Johnson continued:

Yes I have my family here with me and we enjoy living right down by the beach again as we did in Santa Monica. However, the weather here has never been real nice and the beach is not to be compared with that at your city. . . .

I cannot think what we did that was so terrible when I was down at the Beach House. However, I have learned a lot in the past four years and there are a few things that I might do a little differently now. I wish Mr. Hellenthal a lot of luck even tho he may not be a booster for us.

WITH 1932 BEING AN election year, the loopy Hayes Perkins had some pronouncements to make after commenting on the economy; this was on May 16, several weeks before Roosevelt captured the nomination:

Business very bad, not only in the United States, but all over the world. It is the aftermath of the recent war [the World War], for depressions always follow in their wake. Everybody blames Hoover, the president. As Hoover has an antagonistic congress his hands are tied, he can do nothing, yet every fool blames him. Hoover has the right ideas, but is helpless to accomplish anything. Even California's vaunted [Senator] Hiram Johnson heads the list of Hoover's detractors. Hearst smears Hoover worse than [he does] any other [politician], but this is for personal reasons. Hoover wouldn't meet Hearst's mistress and now he is paying the price.

Hoover was missing a bet if there was any truth to the foolishness that Perkins liked to trumpet. On May 6, ten days before that entry, the *Los Angeles Times* had reported the following under "Four Hollywood Stars Added to Beaton's List":

Cecil Beaton, widely known for his photography, has added the names of four Hollywood stars to his list of the ten most beautiful women on the screen. He announced the additions recently at Columbia studios, where he was visiting Edmund Lowe and photographing Evelyn Brent.

The new four are Tallulah Bankhead, Gwill Andre, Kay Francis and Joan Crawford. This completes Beaton's list of ten, six of whom he selected last year, in the order of their beauty, Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Lilyan Tashman, Marion Davies, Norma Shearer and Ina Claire.

Beaton says he would place Miss Bankhead third in the list after Marlene. Otherwise the list remains in the order given.

Part of an entry Perkins made for June 19 touched on the ever-beguiling subject of Hearst, as had likewise been true of May 16:

Hoover and [Charles] Curtis have been re-nominated to succeed themselves [on the Republican ticket], but they'll never make it. Hoover has been a good president, to my point of view, but Hearst thinks otherwise.

The diarist's entry for July 5 contained further words along similar lines:

The Democrats have nominated Franklin D. Roosevelt for president. I don't like him. Hearst had the fate of the nomination in his hands, for he was behind Garner, a Texan. He made a dicker with the Roosevelt forces whereby the latter agreed to meet Marion in return for the electoral votes of California and Texas. . . .

All are maligning Hoover, unfairly smearing his reputation in every way to advance the cause of Roosevelt.

Hearst had been in the Los Angeles area, as we've seen earlier in this chapter, when he made the "dicker with the Roosevelt forces" Perkins spoke of. Perkins had more to say about the Democratic nominee in an entry he made several weeks later, dated September 30, 1932:

Hearst is gone now [from San Simeon] and his entourage has left with him. Roosevelt tried to welch on his promise to Hearst to meet Marion if Hearst, who had Texas and California's delegations in his pocket, would throw him the nomination. Hearst came through and now come this [the attempted welching]. But Hearst said come, and he [Roosevelt] did. Sat up on the platform at Los Angeles with Marion, who presided at the meeting [at Olympic Stadium], like a little man. Yet he fired [Jimmy] Walker for the same thing [for having a mistress, the actress Betty Compton]. A great man we have picked for the next president! He is riding high on a wave of booze [anti-Prohibition] that will carry him in.

Unbeknownst to Perkins, Hearst had heard from Roosevelt in early September, by wire from Poughkeepsie, New York, sent directly to San Simeon:

I am made very happy by that splendid editorial [by Hearst about the recently deposed Mayor Jimmy Walker] this morning. I wrote [Adolph] Ochs that [the] fact of times [*The New York Times*] reprinting it in full shows they knew a good one when they see it. It now looks certain that I will start on western trip next Monday [September 12]. The plans call for my being in San Francisco all day Friday September twenty-third leaving that night for Los Angeles spending Saturday twenty-fourth there and on Sunday twenty-fifth motoring to San Diego to see marine base which I started many years ago [while Assistant Secretary of the Navy under Woodrow Wilson]. Should much like to see your wonderful ranch but I fear it cannot be worked into this schedule. Hope much you will come [to] Los Angeles the day I am there and that we can have a good talk. Arrangements are being made for big charity performance [in Exposition Park] as you probably know. I am looking forward to seeing you.

Jimmy Walker had resigned on September 1 after intensive hearings in Albany chaired by Roosevelt (while the latter was still Governor of New York, with New York City being under his special jurisdiction). The main issue had been deep-seated municipal

corruption, not something as frivolous as Walker's love for Betty Compton. Perkins was up to his usual shenanigans. Roosevelt, for his part, was well into a long campaign swing through the western states when he stopped in Los Angeles on September 24. He addressed a large crowd at the Hollywood Bowl before he went to Olympic Stadium (today's Memorial Coliseum), where a fundraising pageant for the Marion Davies Foundation for Crippled Children drew an even larger crowd. Conrad Nagel served as master of ceremonies, and Will Rogers introduced Roosevelt to the cheering throng.

Although none of the recent Perkins diary entries or a message like Roosevelt's have an immediate bearing on the Beach House in Santa Monica, they give a helpful inkling of Hearst and his activities (and between the same lines, those of Marion). Otherwise, there's precious little to go on for 1932 without the words or records of Julia Morgan or George Loorz or Alice Head.

An unusual exception is a passage by Will H. Hays Jr., whose memoir of 1993, *Come Home With Me Now . . . The Untold Story of Movie Czar Will Hays By His Son*, recounts the summer of 1932 in Santa Monica, when Will Jr. was seventeen. The son's passage contains that critical, decisive word *their* with regard to the Beach House:

To continue my swimming and get all the outdoor exercise I could, Dad decided I should spend that summer vacation on a Southern California beach; so he rented Ben Lyon's and Bebe Daniels' three-story mansion on the sand at Santa Monica [at 1070 Ocean Front]. . . .

Some of the people in addition to Dad and Jessie [Will Jr.'s step-mother] who made those beach summers [1932 and 1933] memorable for me in one way or another were . . . the Hollywood Athletic Club's swimming coach Clyde Swensen and wrestling coach Carl Johnson, Johnny Weismuller, Buster Crabbe, *Photoplay* editor Jimmy Quirk (who died late the first summer [August 1, 1932]) and his former movie-star wife Mae Allison . . . director of the 1926 *Ben Hur* film Charles Brabin and his kindly, erstwhile glamour-queen wife Theda Bara,

superstar Norma Shearer who owned a nearby beachhouse [at 707 Ocean Front] with her Metro movie-executive husband Irving Thalberg, and publishing tycoon William Randolph Hearst and his beautiful and generous moviestar mistress Marion Davies, whose parties at their Santa Monica beach mansion as well as their San Simeon castle up the coast were legendary.

One evening, as we were walking beside the surf in front of the Hearst-Davies house, Dad told me that, although he knew both of them, he had the warmer feeling for Marian [*sic*]. He said that at some time previously, Hearst had been in financial danger of losing at least one of his chain's newspapers, and had called together for dinner in that house a few of his top executives and some other people whose judgment he respected, like Dad, to discuss his problem. Marian, the hostess and only woman present, listened to the lengthy discussion of the need for "bail-out" money in a hurry and of where possibly to get it; and as coffee was being served, she excused herself for a few minutes and came back carrying a shoe-box size metal case which she set on the table in front of Hearst. Putting a hand to her temple, she said something like, "Gentlemen, I hope you'll forgive my leaving you now to your cigars, but I seem to have a headache. However, I think some relief for your much bigger headache may be here"—tapping the case and looking down at Hearst—"and I'm returning it to you, my darling, with love." And she left for the upstairs. Under the circumstances, Hearst was pretty much obliged to open the box then and there; and in it were at least most of the jewelry and deeds to buildings he'd obviously given to her. Dad said that she may not have been a great actress, but that she was grateful. (One of his favorite saying[s] was, "There ought to be an eleventh commandment: 'Thou shall not be ungrateful.'")

The story of the jewelry and deeds belongs more properly to the late 1930s, not to the early part of that decade when Will Hays Jr. was in Santa Monica; even if placed later on the timeline, the allusion to the financial help Marion gave Hearst is nothing that either of the Hayses, father or son, would have been privy to. Of course, the important things in these lines are Will Jr.'s choice of words: "their Santa Monica

beach mansion” followed later by his reference to 415 Ocean Front as “the Hearst-Davies house.” On that score alone, this little-known book by Will Hays’s son has uncommon pertinence.

But regarding “their” in San Simeon’s case, Hearst had strong feelings about the matter, as the biographer David Nasaw emphasized in *The Chief*; he did so by quoting a letter from Hearst to one of his executives in New York, Joseph Moore; Hearst’s message was prompted by an article about Millicent Hearst that appeared early in January 1926 in the *New York American*. Hearst disliked the article, as Moore unmistakably learned:

I do not know who wrote it, but I would like to know, and also why it was written in the way it was. It says that Mrs. Hearst had “passed the autumn and early winter [1925–26] at her estate, ‘Las Estrellas,’ at San Simeon, California.” In the first place, the name of the estate is not “Las Estrellas” [it had been briefly that in the early twenties]. In the second place, it is not Mrs. Hearst’s estate. It is peculiarly mine, free even from community ownership under the laws of California because it is my inheritance. However, I have not, of course, any objections to having it referred to as “our estate,” but I do not like to be so wholly excluded from it.

Once more, though, if he were mostly or even wholly excluded from such matters where Santa Monica was concerned—at least in the public’s mind—so much the better.

THE PERKINS DIARY has an entry dated November 6, 1932, stemming from the throat surgery Hearst had in Cleveland the month before:

Hearst is ill at Marion’s house at Santa Monica. I hope he don’t peg out [die], but I am taking the selfish point of view and thinking of our jobs. No doubt a special delegation of angels are prepared to flit down from the clouds and bear Hearst away to their eyrie in the skies, where

Hearst will repose on Abraham's bosom, but it would be better if they would wait a few years.

The angels indeed waited, nearly twenty years more. Hearst's recovery at the Beach House in the fall of 1932 and then the progress he made at San Simeon left little for Perkins or anyone else to fret about; thus George Loorz could tell Julia Morgan on November 22:

Mr. Hearst looks much better than when he first came back. In fact, I have never seen him looking better. I have conversed with him at length but once and I found him to be in very splendid Humor.

Perkins made a final entry for 1932, dated November 30; it said in part with regard to San Simeon:

We have here now Arthur Brisbane, Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Norma Shearer, Greta Garbo and of course the ubiquitous Marion. Marion is jealous of Garbo's fame. The latter is nothing to look at, one marvels what makes the world go mad about so gloomy a person. She is not even pretty, never smiles, seems dumb. But the public is unhappy unless someone is deceiving it.

Earlier in November, before Perkins made those last two diary entries, Loorz had some correspondence with a Beach House connection to it. This was on Wednesday the 2nd, six days before Roosevelt's predictable landslide on Tuesday the 8th. Loorz wrote to the Palisades Glass & Mirror Co. at 111 Broadway in downtown Santa Monica:

Perhaps you will remember me as the Superintendent [of Construction] at the Beach House there about five years ago. How have things gone with you? I have not one complaint to make.

Now here's a good one for you. We will need right away several etched mirrors and beveled plate mirrors here in San Simeon. I can think of no better way to get things [done] promptly and properly and cheaply than to have you come up here immediately, if possible, and go over the various installations with me.

“Promptly and properly and cheaply.” Exactly the way Hearst liked to do things, the same as Loorz and Morgan also did, whether at San Simeon, at the Beach House, or anywhere else.

Loorz wrote to Palisades Glass in Santa Monica again on November 14. The items he sought were identified now within the pantheon of increasingly vast, palatial San Simeon: “20 mirrors for the South Dressing Rooms.” He meant the indoor Roman Pool, yet another tie-in between San Simeon and the Beach House on that established score.

When Loorz wrote to Palisades Glass on March 25, 1933, the mood was as blue as the shimmering tiles in the recently completed Roman Pool:

I have written to Miss Morgan regarding your account. They had not yet received their monthly allowance [from Hearst] and will not be able to send it to you right away. As soon as they receive it they will send it. If that is not within the next two weeks write me and I'll tell you just how to go about getting it direct their [there] in Los Angeles.

Likewise on March 25, a short letter from Loorz to Bert Johnson in Santa Monica sounded a familiar note in those dismal weeks that saw bank holidays and closures nationwide, haunting the inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt on March 4:

I am very sorry to have to write this note to tell you what has happened here. Mr. Hearst came in yesterday and notified me to finish up the room I am now working in [in Casa Grande] and to shut down everything for a couple of months.

That means of course, that I will be out as well as everybody else. So Bert, I don't think you can depend upon anything up here as I had promised you. Hope you are able to find something else and that everything picks up before many months.

Things picked up quickly, all right, almost breathtakingly, as those conversant with San Simeon history know perfectly well. The

financial storm blew over for Hearst—or at least his thoughts of stopping progress at San Simeon did, Depression be damned. Besides, Wyntoon was about to emerge grandly, both in his mind and on paper too, once again as those versed in the story of San Simeon are amply familiar (hence the chapter title for the year 1933—“Brother, Can You Spare a Million?”—in *Building for Hearst and Morgan: Voices from the George Loorz Papers*.) Evidently no special funds or extra means could be allotted to the Beach House, though, not after San Simeon and Wyntoon’s needs were met that year.

WE CAN SOON SKIP, therefore, to 1934 where Santa Monica’s concerned. San Simeon and, increasingly, Wyntoon so dominated Hearst’s life in 1933 and the life of Marion that the Beach House played even less than second fiddle. An unusual year it was, 1933, the one that saw Hearst turning seventy in April to Marion’s thirty-six in January. It was the first year in a good long while—in decades, actually, since sometime in the late 1800s—that Hearst never set foot outside California, never mind outside the U.S. (he and Marion wouldn’t be in Europe again until 1934). Two stretches in 1933 were dominated by her roles at MGM. The comedy-drama *Peg O’ My Heart* began filming in early February. The show-business musical *Going Hollywood* beckoned in the late summer and fall. As usual, the shooting schedule for each of these pictures was measurable in a few frantic weeks, not months, as has long since become the draining, ruinously expensive standard in the movie industry.

In essence, Hearst and Marion’s schedule in 1933 left all of January, the five months from April through August, and most of November and December for them to be doing other things. And do them they did, with the Beach House typically lying quiet in their protracted absences, one of which was for the sake of Hearst’s annual birthday bash. April 29—a Saturday in 1933, what could have been

better?—found Hearst and Marion and their hugely varied circle at San Simeon for his milestone seventieth, enjoying an Old West costume extravaganza. They wouldn't host anything comparable at the Beach House for another year and a half, not until October 1934, when the Tyrolean party took place in Santa Monica as a homecoming after their recent trip to Europe (during which Hearst saw Adolf Hitler in Berlin to his lasting disgrace, witness *Citizen Kane* and its endless fallout). Earlier that year the now-inseparable couple of Mr. Hearst and Miss Davies had made their one "Davies Cosmopolitan" picture for 1934, *Operator 13*, with Gary Cooper opposite Marion (meanwhile, five other non-Davies films were released through Cosmopolitan Productions in 1934). And the annual Hearst birthday bash for that year? It was held at San Simeon again, not at the Beach House, and again on a Saturday, inasmuch as April 29 fell on a Sunday.

Yet 1933 and the first part of 1934 had more than birthday parties to endear them. After all, it was late in March 1933 that the globetrotting George Bernard Shaw and his wife stayed at San Simeon, followed by a visit to the studio—the Cosmopolitan Bungalow, that is—at MGM. The Shaws' visit was all the rage in the film community while they were with Hearst and Marion for a few days. Yet there's little about the Beach House in the context of the Shaw's cameo in 1933 (they evidently spent one night at the Santa Monica mansion) that can't easily be imagined or extrapolated from diverse experiences in the Hearst-Davies sphere, as recounted later by memoirists like Marion herself in *The Times We Had*.

Also, on April 19, 1933, Julia Morgan wrote to Frank Hellenthal at his office on Tenth Street in Santa Monica. She'd had another mastoid operation the previous September, following the one in 1926, and had been all these months in recovering:

I am quite well, but the face has not yet regained its normal form. For an architect, it is more or less embarrassing to present so unsymmetrical an appearance!

She closed with a reference to the Beach House or the Marion Davies Children's Clinic—or if not to one of those jobs at least to one that she and Hellenthal were jointly pursuing. “Thank you for the information and the chimney photograph,” she said. “Is this as repaired, or before?”

ONWARD TO MISS HEAD in 1934. She remained the managing director of Hearst's National Magazine Company in London. But the strain had been getting to her lately:

Through the kindness of my friend, Dick Berlin, in the New York office [of Hearst Magazines], who persuaded Mr. Hearst that my health required a sea trip in 1934, I made the journey to Los Angeles by the S.S. *Santa Lucia* on the Grace Line via the Panama Canal.

She sailed from New York in March and went ashore in Cuba; she was also in Colombia briefly before crossing to the Pacific in April:

Our final port of call before Los Angeles was Mazatlan in Mexico, and I found this a most picturesque and fascinating place. . . . Rupert Hughes, the American novelist [and uncle of Howard Hughes], and his wife were among the passengers, and I accompanied them on many of the shore excursions. . . .

Harry Crocker was at Los Angeles to meet me and he drove me to Marion Davies' beautiful house on the beach at Santa Monica, where I was to stay. Marion was at work on a picture [*Operator 13*, which had begun filming in late February] and had to leave the house about seven o'clock in the morning. I rose in a more leisurely manner, had a delicious bathe in the her lovely sea-water swimming pool, breakfasted and then found a car waiting to drive me down to the Metro-Goldwyn studio [MGM in Culver City]. I sat on the lot all day watching Marion's scenes being shot, met many famous film stars at luncheon at her

bungalow, sometimes visited other sets during the day and drove home at night with Marion when work was finished. As she had to get up so early she naturally went to bed early, sometimes before the picture which was shown every night in the library.

Not one for short paragraphs, Miss Head's recollection of events in April 1934 included these lines, unbrokenly following the ones just quoted:

Occasionally I sat in solemn state alone seeing one of the newest talkies—frequently some of Marion's friends called in [to chat by telephone] and very often she had to spend the evening in a lesson in elocution from Mr Curry [George Currie], her private coach. But on Saturday evening there was always a large party—Harry Crocker, Matt Moore, Aileen Pringle, Carole Lombard, Connie Talmadge, Charlie Chaplin, Gary Cooper [the male lead in *Operator 13*], Norma Shearer, Leslie Howard and his wife Ruth, Mary Carlisle, Irene Castle (Mrs. Vernon Castle the dancer), Conrad Nigel, Frances Marion, Hedda Hopper are among those whom I have often met at Marion's house.

The endless paragraph continued—still with no mention of Hearst, whom we can be sure couldn't have been very far away. Miss Head provided authentic details about the Beach House to be found nowhere else:

On Sunday mornings I bathed and read the papers. Several guests arrived for lunch and many more in the afternoon for tennis, among whom were Alice Marble the American champion and Eleanor Tennant. On Sunday evenings there is a delightful buffet supper at Marion's home. A long table is covered with dishes of roast beef, hot lobster, hot ham, asparagus, potatoes, salads of all sorts. You are given a large plate with several compartments and you help yourself. You then return to the main dining-room with your filled plate and servants bring round the drinks. After this there is a delicious ice-cream, and finally coffee. Marion frequently entertains fifty or sixty people on Saturday and Sunday nights. An invitation is a very great privilege not only because of the interesting company but because Marion owns a really wonderful

collection of pictures [paintings]. She has one of Romney's most appealing Lady Hamiltons, a number of magnificent Hoppners and Lawrences and some beautiful examples of the work of Boucher, Fragonard and Greuze.

It was Ilka Chase, of course, whom we encountered in Chapter 3 saying that, in addition to "portraits of Marion in all her roles," there were "also portraits by the Messrs. Holbein and Rembrandt," paintings that got short shrift in favor of the movies shown after dinner. However, neither Hearst nor Marion owned a Holbein; but a Rembrandt, yes—a picture reputedly by the Dutch master that was later deemed a follower's work.

Attributions aside, if anyone were in a position to describe the imported columns, friezes, ceilings, paneling, fireplaces, and other architectural elements that reputedly accompanied the paintings at the Beach House, Alice Head would have been the one; and this very moment would have been the perfect time. Earlier in her memoir, in reflecting back on the San Simeon of 1926 and her first visit to the ranch, she'd mentioned "the magnificent palace" Hearst was building there, along with "the glorious collection of antiques" to be seen. But apart from mentioning "the wonderful collection of pictures" in Santa Monica, she didn't elaborate on any of its other trappings—for example, the English and Continental silver that was there in abundance, much as it was at San Simeon and at St. Donat's in Wales (a passion of Hearst's through many years of collecting). Instead, she continued her lengthy paragraph about 1934 in this way:

The house is built right on the Pacific beach and is a most delightful home at which to have the happiness of staying. I was given a very lovely bedroom overlooking the Pacific with a little sitting-room attached where I could do my writing. Unquestionably it was a room with a view. From one window I could see the Pacific coast from Malibu to Long Beach and, as the saying goes, catch a glimpse of "Catalina on a clear day," and from the other window I could overlook Marion's tennis

courts [toward the north end of the property], and watch the graceful and expert Alice Marble in action while beautiful Madeleine Carroll was swimming in the pool; later on in the evening Aileen Pringle, Matt Moore and Carole Lombard were among those who joined us for supper.

It was a hard act even for Miss Head to follow. Her next sentence finally launched a new paragraph upon this abrupt transition: "After I returned to England in 1934 I noticed a change in Lord Riddell." At that paragraph's end, she skipped right past 1935 and made belated mention of Hearst in regard to events of 1936.

We ourselves needn't move ahead quite so fast. Julia Morgan merits attention here: 1934 yielded her eighth of eleven Beach House job ledgers, a minor one again whose categories of drafting-room time, travel, telegrams, and overhead equaled \$138.61, for which she collected \$230.06 (7% of \$3,286.67, the latter amount comprising Frank Hellenthal's construction costs). Her profit came to \$91.45 on this small effort—"Beach House sun rooms 415 Ocean Front [for] Mr. W. R. Hearst, 1060 So. Broadway, Los Angeles," the job was called. The address denoted the Los Angeles Railway Building (catty-corner to the Examiner Building downtown), the former providing Hearst, Willicombe, and Louella Parsons with the office space they needed in that neighborhood. Marion wasn't mentioned at all by Morgan at this juncture.

When the Hearst party got back from its summer sojourn in Europe, June through September 1934, everyone stopped in New York. Hearst and Marion went to Washington so that Mr. Hearst could see President Roosevelt at the White House. Before settling back in at San Simeon in late October, the couple held their renowned Tyrolean costume party at the Beach House on Sunday, October 21. Soon afterward, tensions boiled over between the Hearst-Davies and the Thalberg-Shearer camps. A disputed part in an MGM movie has

traditionally been assigned the blame. The upshot is that Hearst and Marion would be leaving Culver City—not just them but their whole entourage comprising Ella Williams and certain others, plus Ed Hatrick whenever he was in town, and even the Bungalow itself, despite the theater that Julia Morgan and Frank Hellenthal had added to it while the Hearst party was abroad. Everything was marked for departure: the whole Cosmopolitan kit and kaboodle.

But not so fast again: let's savor the details. In 1965, here's how Jack Warner of the gritty studio by that name (assisted by an old anti-Hearst newspaperman named Dean Jennings) described what happened in the waning days of October and the dawning ones of November:

At MGM—in this year of 1934—the honeymoon was over for Louis B. Mayer, Marion Davies, and William Randolph Hearst.

The disenchantment became acute when the picture *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, which had originally been bought for Marion Davies, was assigned by Irving Thalberg to his wife, Norma Shearer.

When Hearst applied pressure—and he could be ruthless when he was crossed—Mayer refused to surrender, and agreed with Thalberg that Marion belonged in light comedy but not in serious drama.

Hearst abruptly severed his long and happy association with Metro. Then he phoned me at the studio [in Burbank], and said that he wanted to make a deal with us. I met him and Marion at their Santa Monica beach house, and a multimillion-dollar proposition was settled in five minutes flat.

What telling words: *I met him and Marion at their Santa Monica beach house*. Warner's partly ghosted yet undeniably inside account continued:

"You know Marion and you know me," Hearst said. "And you know what we want."

"Sure I do," I said.

“We want to bring Cosmopolitan Pictures and Marion to Burbank. Will you do it?”

“Of course,” I said. “Nothing to it.” . . .

Not long after the contract was signed, Hearst decided to move Marion’s “bungalow” to our lot, and I set aside a piece of ground on the Warner Avenue side of the studio. The bungalow turned out to be a twenty-room house which had to be cut into three sections, and hauled across town from Culver City. Streets were blocked, phone and electric wires were raised, and traffic was rerouted while this odd caravan rumbled toward Burbank. The cost was shocking, but Hearst was determined that his favorite star would not have an ordinary dressing room. Marion’s bungalow was more than that. She lived there when her pictures were being filmed.

You mean, *not* in Santa Monica? *Not* at the Beach House when the day’s work was done? A contestable point, surely, yet it’s another telling one precisely as it stands.

Jack Warner’s memoir has seldom been upheld as a paradigm of deep thinking or as an insightful expose of goings-on in the film industry. Oh, but Warner’s choices of words and his idiomatic twists could only be ghosted or polished so much, by Dean Jennings or anyone else. It was no idle point that Bette Davis became the “bitch goddess” while under contract at Warner Bros.-First National in Burbank. If anyone knew expressive language, the hardboiled Jack Warner did.

The George & Rosalie Hearst Collection provides a different shading, as is only to be expected of any primary documents that address these subjects. Irving Thalberg to Hearst, Thursday, November 1, 1934:

Dear W. R.: Am heartbroken to feel you are leaving ten years of association during eight of which we worked so closely together and with, at least to me, such happy results. Our *Broadway Melody*, our *Big House*, our *Marianne*, our *Blondie [of the Follies]*, our many other

successes—yes, and even our few failures have left a memory of so kindly and inspirational a personage whose help to me as an individual I will never forget. It will always be a source of regret that circumstances during the last two years [Thalberg's health was failing him] took away from me the privilege of close contact.

I wish you and dear Marion greater success than ever in your picture ventures. I hope you will not hesitate to call on me if it lies within my power to give you service, and I wish you both great personal happiness in your new connection. As ever.

Thalberg had this to say to Marion on the same date as his wire to Hearst—on Thursday, November 1:

Dear Marion: It was an awful shock. I can't tell you how much I will miss you even though I have been forced to play a smaller part with you the last couple of years [indeed, he was younger than she, yet he would die in 1936]. From the bottom of my heart lots of luck, success and happiness to you. Remember I am still your pal, so call on me.

Marion took the high road, the safe road, in wiring Jack Warner that Thursday:

Thanks for your kind telegram, Jack. I am sure I shall be very happy in working for your big company and in such pleasant personal association. Hope to see you Friday [tomorrow, November 2] at the ranch.

Mr. Hearst appreciates the pleasant interviews you and Harry [Warner] gave the papers as much as I do. We both send best wishes to you and Harry and promise our heartiest cooperation for success.

She wired Louis B. Mayer as follows four days later, on Monday, November 5:

Dear Mr. Mayer: I tried to reach you by telephone Saturday after I received your lovely letter. I am writing you a [non-telegraphic] letter now. I would have done it sooner but I have been upset. I appreciate all the nice things you said and all you have done for me during the many years of our happy association. Much love always.

There's more that could be said, more excerpts that could be included here. For now, we can merely cite one that's evocative of how omnipresent Hearst could be in situations of all kinds. Willicombe ("the Colonel") wired a minor employee, Jack Ackles, in Santa Monica. This was on the same date as Irving Thalberg's telegrams to Hearst and Marion—Thursday, November 1, 1934:

While we are at [the] ranch I think [it] advisable for you to occupy your time the same as when Chief was in Europe, namely as additional watchman at [the] Beach House. In fact kindly consider this [the] usual routine for you unless Chief instructs to contrary when Chief is away.

Colonel Willicombe said nothing to Jack Ackles about Marion. He didn't need to, surely not for Hearst's sake. Like master, like mistress.

Not to be outdone historically-archivally, the George Loorz Papers include the following exchange between Loorz and Frank Hellenthal on November 1 and 2, correspondence oblivious, no doubt, of the higher drama going on between the titans above them. From his office at 911 Tenth Street in Santa Monica, Hellenthal wrote to Loorz at San Simeon on Thursday the 1st:

I am trying to figure out the manufacturer of the silvered wire screens that are in the Library book case doors at the beach house.

I understand that quite a number of these have been used at San Simeon and that therefor[e] you might have the answer.

Loorz replied promptly to Hellenthal, on Friday, November 2:

I regret to state that I cannot, immediately, tell you the manufacturer of the silvered screens or grilles at the beach house.

Those at the beach house were installed before my time [starting in August 1927] and I know of no similar grilles installed here.

However, in the back of my mind, a Bohemian iron worker who did some very high-class ironwork for us at the Beach House did say that he made the grilles in question before my time. As I remember, at the time he worked for us he and another Bohemian had opened a shop with a

fancy name like Artistic Metal or Metal Arts shop or something. The depression may have closed their doors long since. With a good deal of luck you might phone shops with pretty names.

And then the kicker in Loorz's letter of November 2 to Hellenthal:

Frank, I have some old Beach House records in the attic of my Berkeley home, now rented. This man's name will be in those records. My tenant might gladly send the files to me. I will try to get the information though I'm not positive this man made them.

Nothing further was ever said of the Beach House records Loorz spoke of; they've long been lost, unaccounted for, considered missing for more than seventy years now. It was this tie-in of George Loorz's with the Beach House that put yours truly on the active Santa Monica trail in the first place, a connection in 1988 through Loorz's second son, Bill Loorz. Bill was born in 1928, right after his father, mother, and older brother, Don (b. 1926), left the Beach House job in April 1928, with the father handing his superintendent keys to Hellenthal. As George Loorz explained to Fred Stolte later in November 1934:

Frank Hellenthal has been doing all of Miss Morgan's work in Los Angeles for the past ten years and more. After I left Santa Monica he got in on the Hearst work and has done every bit of it since. Mr. Hearst knows him personally and likes him very much. He just finished the theater [Morgan's sole addition to the Cosmopolitan Bungalow in Culver City], in fact, Mr. Hearst never even went to look at it, so naturally he [Hellenthal] is already doing the moving job [to Warner Bros. in Burbank].

Loorz also explained that Hellenthal and Jim LeFeaver of the Morgan office in San Francisco were "graduates of the same University" (the University of Washington in Seattle) and were "very friendly" with each other, no small point in Morgan's world view.

HIGH TIME ONE OF Hearst's birthday parties should be held at the Beach House. The last one had been in 1932, when he turned sixty-nine. In 1933 and 1934, the ranch had taken the honors. He and Marion planned to rectify that in 1935. But then her father, Bernard Douras, died on April 26, three days before Hearst's seventy-second birthday. A pall descended on Palisades Beach Road. Hearst and Marion had been in town since late March 1935, following a nearly unbroken five-month stint at San Simeon, a period marked by Hearst's launching of his campaign against foreign *isms*, especially Communism. Soon after that he began doing battle with Rooseveltism, joining the ranks of other disgruntled publishers, the foremost of whom was Robert R. McCormick of the *Chicago Tribune*. On a pleasanter note, Marion began making her first film through the new Cosmopolitan-Warner Bros. pact, a comedy called *Page Miss Glory* for summertime release.

Julia Morgan went to Santa Monica in early April 1935 and again later that month. A new job was in the offing, the largest at the Beach House since the big-budget days on the 415 and 321 buildings in 1929 and 1930. "Beach House, 415 Ocean Front, Santa Monica, Calif., Service Wing," the new ledger was called. On its inside pages, further clues: "Beach House service wing alterations 415 Ocean Fr[ont] Mr. W. R. Hearst, 1060 So. Broadway, Los Angeles; Mr. F[rank] A. Hellenthal, contractor." At no time in the ledger was the detached north building, 321 Ocean Front, specified or mentioned. The confusion over what was done or not done in 1935 remains sizable. Some Beach House aficionados subscribe to rental or guest-house status for 321, others to domestic status. The former prospect (rental unit or guest house) is arguably more plausible if we lean on Patricia Ziegfeld and certain other memoirists, and if we rely on the *Bay Cities Directory* listings of the period.

Morgan’s “recap” or reconciliation sheet, which on her medium-sized to larger jobs precedes the cursive entries with a page (or sometimes pages) of typewritten data, goes like this: “On a/c [account] for services in connection with Service Wing additions and alterations at #415 Ocean Front, Santa Monica, charges being 7% of payments [by Hearst to Hellenthal et al.] as follows”:

Ctf [certificate]	56 . . .	\$283.47
	57	1,360.52
	58	4,375.48
	59	13,601.79
	60	12,100.29
		<hr/>
		\$31,721.55 @ 7% \$2,220.51

Unquestionably precise, exacting, businesslike. Those five certificates from Hellenthal were logged onto the recap sheet on October 28, 1935 (the Morgan office’s work took place in April through August). An additional logging was made on November 13, 1935:

Ctf [certificate]	61 . . .	\$3,062.13
	62	563.72
		<hr/>
		\$3,625.85 @ 7% \$253.81

In other words, \$2,220.51 plus \$253.81 equaled \$2,474.32—the amount the Morgan office received from Hearst in May 1936, whereupon the account was marked “Closed.” The office’s expenses, meanwhile, had topped out in late August 1935 at \$955.86, thereby yielding a profit of \$1,518.46, albeit one not realized for many months to come.

So it was that Morgan did business with Hearst. Most other architects couldn’t have functioned this way. She could. He’d made her

prosperous. And the Depression was still on. She needed him as much as he needed her.

Regarding the “additions and alterations” (which sound like they were applied to an existing service unit, not to a guest house that was now gaining a service extension), the itemized breakdown is on the simple side: travel, drafting-room time, overhead, blue prints, telephone, telegrams. A basic job, a routine job. There would be only two more jobs for Morgan at the Beach House through 1938, one larger than the 1935 effort, one smaller.

Some of her travel dates on the Service Wing job of 1935 dovetailed with trips to Wyntoon, hundreds of miles north, clear up in Oregon almost. That’s where Hearst and Marion held court in the summer of 1935 on a scale hitherto unknown there. Following its coverage of San Simeon in 1931, *Fortune* magazine did its second lavish spread on the kingly Hearstian way of life in 1935, published in its October issue.

Sometime during this period, Hearst and Marion drew up an agreement that the wealthy can best appreciate. She remained the nominal title-holder of the Beach House. He, in turn, leased the whole compound from her, and he did so at no small expense: \$2,500 a month, easily the equivalent of \$35,000 to \$40,000 in the dollars of 2010. This leasehold status ran to the end of the deflationary 1930s, possibly longer, perhaps right up until another shell-game technicality resulted in one of Hearst’s corporate entities buying the Beach House from Marion. It takes one to know one. Perhaps these maneuvers were simply Hearst’s way of providing for his beloved mistress; after all, he was in his seventies now and she still wasn’t forty. As Jack Warner so aptly said years later, the Beach House was *theirs*, jointly and dually *theirs*. We can be virtually sure it long had been, perhaps even at its launching in 1926, no matter how a given letter of Hearst’s to Julia Morgan may have been worded.

Taxes could also have underlain these machinations. California adopted a new state income tax midway through 1935. Hearst the publishing tycoon and fellow high-salaried folk in the film industry took a major hit. He was one who sought relief from the “confiscatory” rates he was sure the Roosevelt Administration had imposed on him as a personal vendetta, FDR’s way of driving the New Deal home. Hearst and others spied a loophole. By remaining out of state for six months, he and Marion could avail themselves of a “non-resident” exemption, thus effecting a substantial savings, especially in his case; otherwise, his hefty Hearst Enterprises salary of \$500,000 per year (nearly 8 million dollars today) would leave him with less than \$100,000 by the time he met his federal and state obligations. He and Marion wouldn’t avail themselves of that ploy until 1936. For now, 1935 had to be endured. The Beach House was relegated to a minor role. San Simeon and Wyntoon were the couple’s current priorities.

MARION’S SOLE PICTURE through Cosmopolitan-Warners in 1935, *Page Miss Glory*, wrapped in mid-May. Following that, she and Hearst and their usual entourage spent most of the summer at Wyntoon, where work on the fairytale Bavarian Village was in full swing under Julia Morgan, Mac McClure, and George Looz’s contracting partner, Fred Stolte. The ex-zookeeper, ex-janitor, and somehow always omniscient and omnipresent Hayes Perkins was there as well; he’d been transferred from San Simeon to Wyntoon for the 1933 and 1934 seasons. Perkins had a new job description. It included keeping Wyntoon’s fireplaces in proper shape for year-round use. Thus did he seem so often to be where the action was, as his diary entry dated July 29, 1935, indicates:

Late yesterday [Sunday] I was laying the assembly hall fire [in The Gables] before the crowd came in. I noticed Marion there, and Clark Gable, and a few other hams. Louis B. Mayer too, and a half dozen other

heavy jowled Semites. The fire was half laid when Marion arose hurriedly and almost ran over to a table just in front of the fireplace. She was followed by her anti-social dachshund [Gandhi], who will bite anybody who comes near her. Mayer and the other sons of Jacob began to assemble near me, and Clark Gable effaced himself as was meet [proper] and fitting for a man of his lowly estate. The office door of Hearst's den opened and the old man emerged. Came the sound of Mayer's voice, introducing someone to Marion.

"Miss Davies, let me present Mr. Hoover!"

Marion's faithful hound, excited because of the company reached for the nearest [person] and it happen[ed] to be me. He encompassed a fair mouthful of meat in his capacious jaws, and it stung sharply. I almost dropped a load of wood, but managed to hold it and to shake the beast off. Out of the corner of his keen eye old Hearst got it [saw the incident], and grinned. But he was not nearly so much interested in this comedy as the drama unfolding behind me. I had half turned to get rid of my tormentor [the dachshund], and saw there ex-President Herbert Hoover.

A well knit, compact man, carefully groomed, getting grey about his ears. He did not look his real age [sixty] and was of healthy appearance. Behind him his son Alan [Allan], a tall, rangy youth, with Jack Eccles [Ackles, late of Santa Monica] and another muscle man lounging in the nearby offing. Hoover bowed low over Marion's hand, which he shook heartily. Marion reached for a decanter resting on the stand, but Mayer stepped into the breach.

"No! No! Mr. Hoover takes only cigars."

None of these were at hand, and I doubt if Hoover smokes anyhow. He shook [hands] with the others there as Mayer introduced them one by one, Alan [Hoover] coming in on it because of his relationship. I have never seen such a look of triumph on a human face as was expressed on the countenance of Hearst. He had made the haughty Hoover eat out of Marion's hand at last!

This takes a long time to tell, but it lasted only a few moments. Hearst let it drag. At last he had revenged himself for his humiliation in 1932 or '33, when Mayer was chased from the White House because Hoover refused to accept a harlot [Marion] as a social equal. Times have

changed now, and Hoover or any other politician will bend low to get aid for their party's candidate. Hearst called for taxis and they sped up to the Waterhouse [the Bavarian Village area], where Hearst resides in the Brown Bear [House] and has installed the Hoovers, father and son, in the nearby Waterhouse itself [River House].

Being rated as a cat under the table and all of the household knowing me they paid me no heed. I was one of the help, or as Mrs. [Eugene] Kower neatly puts it, a servant. This causes little enthusiasm for her among those who keep the entertaining going. Even Mrs. Kower dared not crash this august assembly, and I never would have made it except for the fire [that Perkins was laying].

There's more than a little truth to this latest rant by Hayes Perkins, although the presence of Herbert Hoover at Wynton during the summer of 1935 remains to be delved into, remains to be verified through the Hearst Papers at The Bancroft Library in Berkeley or through the more extensive Hoover archives at Stanford University, across the bay. When Louis B. Mayer wired Hearst from Culver City on Friday, August 2, he said nothing about his good friend the ex-President:

Dear W. R.: Just want to tell you again what a marvelous visit I had with you and Marion [on July 27–28] and how very much I enjoyed every moment of your inspiring companionship. The time was much too brief. I only wish I could have remained longer for there is no one from whom I derive more genuine pleasure than you. Hope you are well and that it won't be long before we may be together again. Affectionate good wishes to you both and many thanks for the finest weekend I have had in recent years.

It matters not that Hearst and Marion had left MGM and Mayer and Thalberg as abruptly as they had in 1934. Hearst and MGM-Loew's still had their newsreel, *Hearst Metrotone News*, to make and distribute jointly; in that regard, blood was thicker than water and would remain so throughout the 1930s and even longer.

Hayes Perkins made another entry about Herbert Hoover on Saturday, August 3:

The Hoovers stayed two days. Each day a place was laid for them in the salon where ordinary mortals dine [in The Gables], but not for them. In the Brown Bear [house] Hearst had plates laid for four. For himself, Marion and the Hoovers, father and son. Not one meal eaten elsewhere. Doubtless many things were cussed and discussed, and a new potential leader of Republicanism has been chosen. Never heard of him before, but on inquiry learn his name is [Alfred M.] Landon and that he is governor of Kansas.

A *New York Times* editorial on Landon's prospects had appeared on June 1, 1935; *The Times* had initially broached the subject on February 3. And yet at mid-summer in 1935 Hearst was still two months away from declaring for Landon. Besides, he had yet to make his improbable, short-lived appeal to his old nemesis Al Smith, extolling him as a "Jeffersonian Democrat" who could unseat Roosevelt in 1936 through a third-party effort. Hoover, meanwhile, saw himself as the best Republican candidate—surely not Alf Landon. The prospect that Hoover and Hearst weighed such matters at Wynton in 1935 seems farfetched. In turn, the prospect that Hoover was at Wynton for *any* purpose is nearly as suspect. As an ex-President, unpopular or not, Hoover was newsworthy at every turn. If he did what Perkins recounted, the Associated Press and other bureaus were none the wiser. Nor is posterity any better informed through Hoover's own papers (or thus far through Hearst's); and a tame, pabulum of a book like *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: The Great Depression, 1929–1941*, published in 1952, is of no help at all.

We've had little occasion thus far to touch on Hearst's other film interests besides those starring Marion. Even if we concern ourselves with her pictures only, omitting the thirty or so Cosmopolitan non-Davies pictures from her Metro years in Culver City (1924 to 1934) and

their roughly twenty non-Davies counterparts from the new Warners period in Burbank (1935 to 1938), complexity reigns supreme. A single message from Ed Hatrick to Hearst, sent to Wynton on August 8, 1935, is a case in point:

When I was on [the] coast Marion approved payment to real estate department [of] 62,000 dollars which will be required from August 1st to end of year. Martin [Huberth] now states he will require eighty-seven [thousand] for this period and I am forwarding letter giving reasons. This letter should be approved by Star [Miss Davies].

This will make total for the year of hundred ninety-one thousand [\$191,000] advance real estate department. In addition to this [I] was advised yesterday that [Geoffrey] Konta [a New York attorney] will require thirty-six thousand plus interest for Star's income tax payment due August 15th and 18,000 due September 15th.

If it meets with your approval I am arranging with [Ella] Williams to give [A. J.] Walker [a Los Angeles attorney] Star's personal checks [for] thirty-six thousand to forward immediately with income tax return, and I will forward her Cosmopolitan check for this amount made out to Star and charge same to Star's account. Will also arrange for September payment in same way.

This will put serious crimp in Cosmopolitan revenue and I am writing you regarding same. Please advise.

As regards Cosmopolitan, *The Hollywood Reporter* made a surprising claim on its front page of October 15, 1935, under "Hearst Wants to Acquire Own Studio":

William Randolph Hearst is reported looking over the local field with the intention of taking over one of the smaller studios on which to concentrate his Cosmopolitan productions in order that he can move from the Warner studio.

Hearst representatives have been surveying the Pathé lot [in Culver City] with this in mind, but as yet have made no formal bid to buy or lease.

The next day, October 16, Hearst appeared on the front page of *The Hollywood Reporter's* rival trade paper *Variety* (the weekly edition) under "A Hearst Letter," which began with "Dear Sir":

I have read your article of Sept. 30 [in *Daily Variety*] stating that I am leaving California.

I hope still to be able to spend some time in California, but I am compelled to close my places and live almost entirely in New York.

Heaven knows I do not want to leave California. No one does, least of all a native son whose father was a pioneer; but it is utterly impossible for me to remain here and to occupy a place like San Simeon, on account of the federal and state tax laws. . . .

What I do, however, is of little consequence; but I fear that a great number of people with considerable incomes are planning to reside elsewhere, and that a great many who had in mind to come to California, and to remain here for at least half of their time, are realizing the utter impossibility of doing so.

The California law contains the peculiar provision that if anyone, even though a citizen of another state, remains in California six months of any year, he thereby becomes for that year a citizen of California, and is subject to California income taxes in addition to the taxes he has to pay in the state where he has his actual and legal residence.

This, of course, will prevent many well-to-do people from being even part-time residents of the state.

It would seem also that a number of moving picture people who earn considerable salaries are unwilling to pay the high income taxation of California, and are accepting engagements in the east or abroad.

I am inclined to think that if some alert moving picture company should establish studios in Florida or Delaware or New York City, or some suitable eastern place, they could get many of the most valuable stars away from California.

This would be better for the nation than allowing them and many leading directors to go abroad, to build up English pictures and foreign pictures generally.

Hearst concluded that the state income tax “was an unhappy move—very unhappy for us who are compelled to leave the state.”

He admitted, though, that “the state is so great and so rich that it will easily sustain the loss.” Instead, the loss would be that of Hearst and others who felt compelled to leave.

Blink and you’ll miss what comes next: on October 17, 1935, *The Hollywood Reporter* mentioned the following under “Rambling Reporter”:

For the tremendous party at Marion Davies’ house after the opening last night, the entire place was turned into a forest.

The Hearst Papers at The Bancroft Library had tipped their hand in that same direction on Friday, October 11, when Joe Willicombe told Warden Woolard of the *Los Angeles Examiner*:

Reine Davies asked Chief’s okey on covering the affair Wednesday night [the 16th] at Beach House. Chief has given his approval for her to do so with an assistant. She states that she has been gathering a lot of stuff together and as it is a social event she would like to cover it. Chief says okey.

Bob Thomas’s biography of Jack Warner may well be the better way to flesh out what these fleeting references mean, better than relying solely on Marion’s coverage of them in *The Times We Had*. Thomas’s pages in *Clown Prince of Hollywood* include these passages:

Hearst had been thwarted in his plan for Marion Davies to star in *The Miracle*, the Karl Vollmoeller play that had become a classic through the inspired direction of Max Reinhardt. Warner Bros. owned the film rights, but Jack Warner had avoided handing them over to Hearst, realizing the folly of casting Marion Davies as a sainted nun. (Warner Bros. finally filmed *The Miracle* in 1959, badly.)

Reinhardt was greatly admired by Hearst, who had seen the director’s mammoth productions in Europe and America. Hearst was among those sponsoring Reinhardt’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in

San Francisco and Los Angeles, and he helped convince Jack Warner to transfer it to film [in 1935]. . . .

Although Shakespeare was Greek to him, Jack Warner put the studio's entire support behind *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Harry [Warner] agreed that the film would add prestige to Warner Bros., which was often scorned as a maker of fast-talking melodramas and leggy musicals. A lavish premiere was held at the Warner's Beverly Hills Theater [on October 16], followed by a party given by Hearst at his Santa Monica mansion, Ocean House. The tennis courts were tented; two orchestras played for dancing; caviar and champagne were served.

Overshadowing the gaiety of the premiere and party was the feeling that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* would fail despite its beauty and cleverness. It did.

As Thomas further said, "American ears were untuned to Shakespeare's lyricism."

WE CAN FORGIVE Bob Thomas for having called the Hearst-Davies place "Ocean House" in the context of 1935, a dozen years too soon; he more than offset the error by speaking of "a party given by Hearst at his Santa Monica mansion." But was the place properly his, hers, or theirs? To unravel the ownership of the Beach House during the mid-1930s is no easy thing. In a letter of June 19, 1937, for example, Larry Mitchell, a Hearst-Davies attorney in Los Angeles, was told the following by another Hearst attorney, Edward Woods, who was based in Chicago:

Mr. Hearst's lease on the beach house was terminated in December, 1935.

In spite of this termination, payrolls and expenses for provisions and household of the beach house were charged to Mr. Hearst during 1936.

Mr. [Geoffrey] Konta writes me that it was his understanding that the practice of making such charges against Mr. Hearst would be

discontinued but that the same practice was maintained throughout the year.

I wonder what can be done to correct this situation?

Joe Willicombe told the Los Angeles attorney, Larry Mitchell, on July 10, 1937:

Referring to Mr. Woods' letter of June 19th to you regarding payroll and expenses for provisions and household at the Beach House, Mr. Hearst says:

“Present arrangement is okay. It is the agreement under which the lease was cancelled. I occupy the Beach House.”

The cancellation must have been revoked. Or a new lease agreement supplanted it. As we'll be seeing three chapters from now, a lease still existed in 1939; it may have continued right into the early 1940s. It's impossible to say until someone delves more deeply into the under-utilized Hearst Papers at The Bancroft. In comparison, the unraveling of Julia Morgan's job ledgers for Beach House work from 1936 through 1938 is a cake walk.

Her next to last job in Santa Monica began in January 1936. It ran throughout the year, half of which Hearst and Marion spent outside California to gain the non-resident exemption on their state taxes. The Beach House job lapped over into the spring of 1937. Morgan's two typewritten recap sheets refer to “professional services in connection with alterations and repairs at #415 Ocean Front, Santa Monica, charges being 7% of payments to contractor.” The latter was Frank Hellenthal, as usual. At the head of the recaps, some other familiar words appear: “Mr. W. R. Hearst, 1060 So. Broadway, Los Angeles.”

A letter from Hearst to Morgan, sent from Los Angeles on February 2, 1936, gives some inkling of what the new job would be addressing, at least in part:

I am very serious about eliminating electric heat everywhere—Wyntoon, San Simeon, and Santa Monica.

It is unpleasant, unhealthful, dangerous and expensive. It burns up the oxygen in the air. It scorches anything near it. It often fails when it is most needed. It is difficult to regulate, and the most costly of all methods.

All that can be said in its favor is that it is easy to turn on, but no easier than steam.

I suggest that we put steam heat EVERYWHERE.

Of course we plan that at Wyntoon. We can easily install it at Santa Monica, and we can do it this summer when we are putting on a new roof, reconstructing our [sun] porch, and fortifying our foundations.

Installing steam heat seems the least of our worries there.

Morgan did well for herself on the alterations job. Her travel, drafting-room time, and even minor engineering tasks assigned to Walter Huber accrued \$1,727.20 in office costs against \$5,781.21 in sporadic payments, which Hearst made from May 1936 through March 1937. The key to Morgan's success was her ability to carry her foremost client for months or even longer. Most other architects, builders, or artisans didn't have the wherewithal. They would have sunk like stones (several of them did) under that kind of financial pressure.

Her ability, of course, came not just from her sober economic ways. It came from the sheer volume of work Hearst kept giving her. He was the perennial fountainhead in her career throughout its second half, from the early 1920s until World War II, a span of more than fifteen years during which he accounted for a large percentage of her total business—more than sixty percent in 1928 alone, her most active, prosperous year overall.