

# **Julia Morgan**

## **Wyntoon and Other Hearst Projects 1933–1946**

by Taylor Coffman

AN OLD PHOTOGRAPH owned by Lynn Forney McMurray, a god-daughter of Julia Morgan, shows a large group of people at Wyntoon. Miss Morgan may be identifiable among them. Lynn thinks the photo dates from 1902 or '03. It stems from the work being done on that northern California project by Bernard Maybeck for Phoebe Apperson Hearst. Julia Morgan, Lynn reasons, had recently returned from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and was taking part in Wyntoon's development under Maybeck.

I've never confirmed Lynn's theory, but it doesn't seem far-fetched. Everyone knows that Maybeck had been a big influence on Morgan already and that they would keep interacting over the years ahead. However, no buildings are visible in the photo. The period depicted, in any event, is that of the first-generation Wyntoon Castle—the medieval, Germanic pile that burned down in 1930.

By then, at the outset of the thirties decade, Julia Morgan and W. R. Hearst had done some minor work at Wyntoon. In 1928, for instance, they built a swimming pool and two tennis courts. Hearst's mother hadn't left that property to him at her death in 1919. Instead, he had to persuade his cousin Anne Apperson Flint (a favorite of Phoebe Hearst's) to sell him Wyntoon Castle in 1925—a point that's neither here nor there where Morgan's concerned. It merely means that the established Hearst-Morgan partnership, active at San Simeon since 1919, was at no liberty to do serious work at Wyntoon until the late 1920s.

After the fire of 1930, that client-architect pair was intermittently active on the McCloud River site. We can fast-forward, though, to 1933 as the date when the Wyntoon we think of today began taking shape, the Wyntoon we know of mostly through Sara Boutelle, Sally Woodbridge, and other writers.

Hearst was seventy by 1933. Morgan was sixty-one. They had more than a decade of grand-scale work to their credit at San Simeon. The new plans for Wyntoon were, in essence, an extension of their efforts that had long been focused on The Enchanted Hill. Thus did Wyntoon become a strong supporting character in a drama that had been unfolding for some time.

The catch was, 1933 spelled poor timing, even awful timing. The Depression may not have been as grim then as it was in 1931 or '32. Yet the crisis was still affecting everyone, wealthy people like Hearst included. If he and Morgan were to accomplish something enduring at Wyntoon, they'd have to sharpen their pencils and proceed cautiously. At San Simeon, meanwhile, a young man named George Loorz had been in charge of construction since 1932. His Hearst-Morgan credentials were the very best: he'd worked on the Beach House in Santa Monica in the late twenties, and he'd also been the man who built the pool and tennis courts at Wyntoon in 1928. Loorz was an independent builder-engineer-superintendent at San Simeon, not a general contractor. He had a business partner all the while, Fred Stolte, who was keeping active in the Bay Area as a "general" during Loorz's stint at San Simeon.

Hearst and Morgan, with Loorz as liaison, put Stolte in charge of the projected work at Wyntoon. Stolte would function as a cost-plus contractor, not as an independent the way Loorz was doing at San Simeon. Loorz would have useful input just the same, even from his distant vantage point.

The new job—we can call it the New Wyntoon—was fully under way by the summer of 1933. That's when the familiar Bavarian Village got going, a project that in the usual Hearstian mode would see steady tinkering for several years to come. The arrangement of Hearst as the main dreamer, Morgan as the main architect, Fred Stolte as the main contractor, and Loorz as his dynamic partner (but otherwise still based at remote San Simeon) proved eminently workable. Other names can be mentioned, such as Warren McClure, of whom more shortly. These people were the principals from 1933 onward.

An unusual, thoroughly Hearstian twist was that, even before 1933, the Chief (as he was known) had an amazing idea: that of re-erecting all or part of an ancient Spanish monastery at Wyntoon. This has been written about before, often with the dates and details muddled. Suffice it to say, the Depression proved to be too much, and after giving the monastery theme an honest try in that first year of New Wyntoon, followed by another stab at it in 1934, Hearst's idea was scrapped—or at least put on lasting hold. To build the quaint Bavarian Village, along with other things large and small, would be quite enough, a constantly strained budget permitting. For example, next to the burned-out Wyntoon Castle of the Phoebe Hearst period, Bernard Maybeck had put up The Gables, substantial in its own right. The Hearst-Morgan-Stolte-McClure team did further work on The Gables as of 1933. There was also The Bend, a building down the McCloud River—not a former Maybeck production in this instance and yet a sizable adjunct to the list, with greater Wyntoon's assortment of remodels as well as new construction.

A span of six consecutive years can be cited in Julia Morgan's case, 1933 through 1938. By '38 the Bavarian Village was in good shape, The Gables had been enlarged and redone at least once, and serious headway had been made at The Bend. Those highlights at

Wyntoon were measurable against lesser but still impressive creations like Bridge House, the updated River House, and the Servants' Chalet.

Lynn McMurray has Morgan's daily office records that show her drafting-room time, her travel costs, blueprint costs, staff salaries, and so on. The San Simeon job remained active during these same years, 1933 through 1938. Some comparisons are called for. In the first big year of this stretch—1933—San Simeon racked up nearly \$11,200 in Morgan's operating costs; Wyntoon came in second on her overall list at \$8,800. By 1935 the balance shifted back in Wyntoon's favor: \$10,500 was generated by Wyntoon versus \$7,000 by San Simeon. These were old-time, deflationary dollars. The \$10,500 for 1935 in Wyntoon's case equates with nearly \$175,000 in our dollars of 2013; and that's cautiously gauged; the figure may be closer to \$180,000 or a little higher. Again, these were Morgan's operating costs. After she met those and other expenses through Hearst's payments, the balance constituted her take-home earnings.

In 1936, the fourth full year for New Wyntoon, San Simeon regained the lead. Come 1937 Wyntoon was back on top at \$6,800 to its sister project's \$5,900. One more year remained to Morgan through the six-year period I'm focusing on: in 1938 she accrued \$5,500 in Wyntoon costs (round numbers again) to \$4,100 for San Simeon's sake.

After that came a major change as the '38 season drew to a close. Hearst had been weathering a financial upheaval in recent months. He nearly lost it all—his newspapers, his magazines, the whole works. He could no longer afford to pay Morgan properly. They agreed that she'd retire, in effect, at least from large-scale work for him, and would devote herself to other clients. She was already well off, thanks to Hearst's largesse; however, she kept this fact closely concealed. Eventually, what I've called the "Morgan myth" of her near-poverty and her church-mouse ways would take hold. In reality, she lived comfortably

(albeit modestly) through her later working years and had been doing so since about 1920.

Life at Wyntoon went on nonetheless for Hearst, the proverbial dreamer, and also for Warren McClure, known to everyone as Mac. A man of George Loorz's age (b. 1897), Mac freelanced for Hearst from 1938, when Morgan stepped down, until almost the time of Hearst's death in 1951. Mac is very much an unheralded, below-radar subject. In recent years, drawings of his have been bought and sold as Julia Morgan originals—which is odd since his self-taught style and Morgan's deeply schooled approach are noticeably different.

Mac and Hearst puttered about at Wyntoon (that's all the small budget would allow) right into the early part of World War II. In 1942 Mac did some domestic war-production work under George Loorz. Hearst, strapped for attention, prevailed upon Miss Morgan to visit Wyntoon and see what could be done, even under those improbable conditions. She went to the site—for the first time in four years—and went home to draw up some new plans for a portion of the Bavarian Village that wasn't quite finished. Her effort counts as another Hearst-Morgan collaboration, although this one's mostly off the historical charts.

Earlier, in 1939 (her first post-Wyntoon year), she'd worked in Beverly Hills for Hearst and Marion Davies. Mac McClure took over on that small job in 1940. His and Morgan's overlap has been misconstrued by at least one of her biographers, based on an ignorance of who Mac was—an instance of false attributions with regard to Morgan, much like the drawings that would later be sold as her work when they were actually his.

Morgan also did some small- to mid-sized work for Hearst from the early 1940s through 1946. The main thing of this type pertained to his Babicora Ranch in Mexico, for which her efforts never came to full

fruition. She was soon able to focus instead on the proposed Museum of Medieval Arts in San Francisco. That project won her rapt attention; in fact, it stemmed directly from the Spanish monastery Hearst had once hoped to use at Wyntoon.

Thanks to a brief reference in a letter Morgan wrote him in 1938, we now know that shortly before Hearst gave the monastery to the city of San Francisco in 1941, he was hatching a plan to re-erect it on a scenic, hilly site near Topanga and Malibu, a few miles from the Hearst-Davies Beach House in Santa Monica—a choice detail that the usual Morgan accounts (by Boutelle et al.) have missed entirely.

As for Wyntoon itself, it remains privately owned by today's Hearst interests. Small numbers of outsiders have had a chance to see its sylvan wonders. It likewise remains a fitting tribute to Julia Morgan, part of her architectural legacy exceeded only by San Simeon.