Guide to the Julia Morgan-Walter T. Steilberg Collection, 1908-1974

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Guide to the Julia Morgan-Walter T. Steilberg Collection, 1908-1974 (bulk 1918-1935)
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Descriptive Summary

Title:
Julia Morgan–Walter T. Steilberg Collection, 1908-1974 (1918-1935 bulk)

Collection Number:
MS 144

Creator:
Steilberg, Walter T., 1886-1974

Abstract:
Collection of architect and engineer Walter T. Steilberg, who worked for Julia Morgan in the 1920s and 1930s, including vintage photographic prints of Morgan projects and Steilberg's published and unpublished recollections of Morgan and her practice.

Extent:
1 box

Language:
English

Repository:
Special Collections, Robert E. Kennedy Library
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, California 93407

Administrative Information

Provenance:
Donated in 2000, the Julia Morgan–Walter T. Steilberg Collection is housed in and administered by Special Collections at Cal Poly.

Access:
Collection is open to qualified researchers by appointment only. For more information on access policies and to obtain a copy of the Researcher Registration form, please visit the Special Collections Access page.

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Preferred Citation:
Julia Morgan–Walter T. Steilberg Collection, Special Collections, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, Calif.

Abbreviations Used:
c.: circa
n.d.: no date
n.p.: no publisher
l.f.: linear feet
c.f.: cubic feet
FF: flat file

Funding:
The National Endowment for the Humanities has generously funded the arrangement and description of this collection, along with matching funds from California Polytechnic State University.

Indexing Terms:
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects:

Architecture -- California.
Architects -- California -- Correspondence.
Architecture, Domestic -- California -- San Francisco Bay Area.
Architecture, Domestic -- California -- San Simeon.
Berkeley (Calif.) -- Buildings, structures, etc.
Hearst Castle (Calif.) -- History.
Hearst, William Randolph, 1863-1951 -- Homes and haunts.
Hearst-San Simeon State Historical Monument (Calif.)
Morgan, Julia, 1872-1957
Morgan, Julia, 1872-1957 -- Archives.
Morgan, Julia, 1872-1957 -- Career in Architecture.
Oakland (Calif.) -- Buildings, structures, etc.
Pacific Grove (Calif.) -- Buildings, structures, etc.
Panama-California Exposition, (1915 : San Diego, Calif.)
Panama-Pacific International Exposition, (1915 : San Francisco, Calif.)
San Francisco (Calif.) -- Buildings, structures, etc.
San Simeon Ranch (Calif.) -- History.
San Simeon (Calif.) -- Buildings, structures, etc.
Steilberg, Walter T., 1886-1974.

Genres and Forms of Material:
Vintage photographic prints
Newspaper clippings
Serial publications
Correspondence

Related Materials

Related Collections:

Special Collections, Cal Poly:
Julia Morgan Papers, 1836-1858 (MS 10)
Julia Morgan–Sara Holmes Boutelle Collection, 1877-1958 (MS 27)
Sara Holmes Boutelle Papers, 1972-1999 (MS 141)

The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley:
Julia Morgan Architectural Drawings, 1907-1929 (BANC MSS 71/156 c)
Correspondence Concerning the Phoebe Hearst Architectural Plan for the University of California, 1896 Oct 22-23 (UARC 308gh.cor)

Environmental Design Archives, UC Berkeley:
Julia Morgan Collection, 1893-1980 (1959-2)
Julia Morgan/Forney Collection, 1907-1931 (1983-2)
Julia Morgan–Walter T. Steilberg Collection, ca. 1910-1974 (1973-1)

Special Collections, UCLA:
Harriet Rochlin Collection of Material about Women Architects in the United States, 1887-1979 (1591)

Biographical Note

Walter T. Steilberg, noted California architect and engineer, was born on May 12, 1886, in Louisville, Kentucky. In 1890, his parents, Willie and Matilda, relocated the family to San Diego County, where they took up ranching.

As a young man, Steilberg worked briefly for architects Irving Gill and Myron Hunt. While studying for his architecture degree at UC Berkeley, Steilberg joined the practice of John Galen Howard as a drafter, participating in the design of Wheeler Hall, the UC Library, and the president's house. After graduation in 1910, Steilberg worked for Julia Morgan for a year, upon the advice of architect Arthur Brown. Steilberg rejoined Morgan's practice in 1918, and continued to consult for her through the 1930s, even after he left to start his own practice.

According to the biographical statement of the Environmental Design Archives at UC Berkeley, "Steilberg had just built a home for himself and his family on Panoramic Hill when the influenza pandemic of 1918 took his mother; his wife, Rowena – an artist who designed detailing for some of his projects – and his newborn daughter. 'Miss Morgan knew just what to do for me,' he told [architectural historian Sally] Woodbridge. 'She had me working about 16 hours a day.' Steilberg gave the home he had designed for himself and Rowena to her parents, then built another for himself nearby, where he lived with his second wife and raised a family. Panoramic Hill became Steilberg country, dotted with homes he built for clients and friends."

While working for Morgan, Steilberg directed the stone-by-stone dismantling of the Santa Maria de Ovila monastery, a thirteenth-century structure built by Cistercian monks on a hilltop, overlooking the Tagus River in Spain, about 90 miles northeast of Madrid. The monastery building was shipped to San Francisco, where Morgan and Hearst contemplated its use at Wyntoon. When the plans were dropped for lack of funds, Morgan convinced Hearst to give the stones to the city of San Francisco for a medieval museum to rival Manhattan's Cloisters. Morgan contributed additional plans and by 1941, the city had selected a site in Golden Gate Park. After a series of arson fires at the warehouses obliterated the markings on the stones, the city lost enthusiasm for the project. This last great collaboration between Morgan and Hearst was never realized.

According to a 2005 article in the San Francisco Chronicle, in the 1930s "Steilberg experimented with concrete houses, influenced by the destruction wrought by the Berkeley fire of 1923, and the Santa Barbara earthquake of 1925. The Depression also affected his thinking, grandson Jonathon Dwyer says. He also saw concrete houses as an economical way to provide housing for workers and, after World War II, for returning veterans and their growing families. Steilberg developed and patented a system he dubbed 'Fabricrete' that involved hollow concrete walls troweled onto steel mesh. When he couldn't get sufficient financing, he turned to a local building firm, Pacific Coast Aggregates, and designed structures using their large (3-foot-long) Berkeley Concrete Bricks. He also designed buildings using precast 4-by-8-foot concrete grids."

During World War II, Steilberg kept in touch with Julia Morgan when he relocated to Alaska to serve as an instructor for the Seabees. During the 1950s, he worked extensively in Saudi Arabia for Aramco.

Steilberg died at the age of 88 on December 6, 1974, succumbing to injuries after being struck by a car while walking near the UC Berkeley campus.

Sources

Reiss, Suzanne B., "The Work of Walter Steilberg and Julia Morgan," Vol. 1, Regional Oral History Office of UC Berkeley, 1974.

Weinstein, Dave. "'Julia Morgan': 'Earthquake Ambulance Chaser' Also Designed Economical, Romantic, 'Slightly Mediterranean' Houses.'" *San Francisco Chronicle* 3 Dec. 2005. 20 Feb. 2007 < http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-n/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/12/03/HOGU5G0P0G1.DTL&hw=morgan+engineer&sn=003&sc=558>

Scope and Content Note

The Julia Morgan–Walter T. Steilberg Collection contains photographs and files relating to Julia Morgan commissions in the Bay Area, created by long-time staff member and engineer Walter T. Steilberg.

Project files and project photographs are arranged alphabetically by client name, followed by building type, city and date of construction. Cities listed on folder headings are located in California, unless noted otherwise.

Where possible, the provenance, or original organization, of the papers has been preserved. However, in order to simplify access to the collection for researchers, some materials in specific formats and topics were reorganized and refoldered to more accurately reflect their contents.

There are two series in the Julia Morgan–Walter T. Steilberg Collection:

1. Personal Papers, including obituaries and Steilberg's photographs of buildings in California; and
2. Professional Papers, including Steilberg's written and visual documentation of work for Julia Morgan.

The collection is housed in one box. Series 2 Professional Papers contains the most significant and unique portions of the collection, including both Steilberg's published and unpublished recollections of working in Julia Morgan's practice, as well as Steilberg's vintage photographs from the 1920s of various Morgan commissions soon after their completion.

Series Description/Folder List

Series 1. Personal Papers, 1915-1974
Contains two subseries: A. Obituaries, B. Research Photographs.

A. Obituaries
Contains Steilberg's obituaries. 1 folder.

Box 1 Folder 1
Obituaries, Walter Steilberg, 1974

B. Research Photographs
Contains Steilberg's vintage snapshots of buildings in California. 2 folders.

Box 1 Folder 2
Panama-California Exposition, San Diego, 1915

Box 1 Folder 3
Crocker Bank, San Francisco, c. 1930s

Box 1 Folder 4
"Howard house, Tunnel Rd., Berkeley," c. 1930s

Series 2. Professional Papers, 1908-1974
Contains three subseries: A. Julia Morgan Assessments, B. Julia Morgan Project Files, and C. Julia Morgan Project Photographs.

A. Julia Morgan Assessments
Contains Steilberg's assessments and recollection of Morgan's work and her practice, arranged chronologically. 4 folders.

Box 1 Folder 5
Steilberg, Walter T. "Some Examples of the Work of Julia Morgan." *Architect and Engineer of California*. Nov. 1918: 38-108.

Box 1 Folder 6
Steilberg, Walter T. "Julia Morgan," biographical statement prepared for the American Institute of Architects, 1957, 1974

Box 1 Folder 7
Transcript, Steilberg's Lecture to [Hearst Castle] Historical Guides Association, 1968

Box 1 Folder 8
Correspondence with Loren Nicholson re Julia Morgan, 1969

B. Julia Morgan Project Files
Contains Steilberg's correspondence with Julia Morgan, Bjarne Dahl, a member of her staff, and a rough sketch. 3 folders.

Box 1 Folder 9
Correspondence with Bjarne Dahl re Homelani Columbarium, Hilo, Hawaii, 1935

Box 1 Folder 10
Correspondence with Julia Morgan, 1943

Box 1 Folder 11
YWCA Building, Honolulu, rough sketch, undated

C. Julia Morgan Project Photographs
Contains vintage snapshots by Walter Steilberg of Morgan commissions arranged alphabetically by client name, followed building type, city and date of construction. Cities listed on folder headings are located in California, unless otherwise noted. 29 folders.

Box 1 Folder 12
Ayer, Richard B., residential, Piedmont, 1914 and alterations, 1930

Box 1 Folder 13
Atkins, David, residential, San Francisco, 1915

Box 1 Folder 14
Barnard, Grace E., residential/educational, Berkeley, 1910, 1927

Box 1 Folder 15
Blanding, Gordon, gates and alterations, Belvedere

Box 1 Folder 16
Chickering, Allen, residential, Piedmont, 1911

Box 1 Folder 17
Clark, Mr. and Mrs. Richard A., residential, Berkeley, 1913

Box 1 Folder 18
Derge, Albert R., residential, Berkeley, 1908

Box 1 Folder 19
Drexler, Elise Kelley, residential, Woodside, 1913

Box 1 Folder 20
Glide, Mrs. Lizzie H., residential, Berkeley, 1916

Box 1 Folder 21
Greene, B.D. Marx, residential, Berkeley, 1910

Box 1 Folder 22
Hart, Agnes Borland and Walter M., residential, 1904

Box 1 Folder 23
Hearst, William Randolph, San Simeon, 1930s

Box 1 Folder 24
Hearst, William Randolph, restoration, Santa Maria de Ovila Monastery – Medieval Museum, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, 1940s

Box 1 Folder 25
Linforth, Edward W. and Ivan M., residential, Berkeley, 1907

Box 1 Folder 26
Lombard, James L., residential, Piedmont, 1915, and gardener's cottage, Piedmont, 1915

Box 1 Folder 27
Merrill, Prof. Charles Washington, residential, Berkeley, 1911

Box 1 Folder 28
North, Hart H. and Emma Morgan, residential, Berkeley, 1909

Box 1 Folder 29
Olney, William, residential, Berkeley, 1914

Box 1 Folder 30
Price, Prof. Clifton, residential-multi, Berkeley

Box 1 Folder 31
Stewart, Margaret, guesthouse, garage, two apartments, Garberville, 1926

Box 1 Folder 32
Starr, Allan Moore and Adaline Eddy, residential, Piedmont, 1938

Box 1 Folder 33
Tasheira, George, residential, Berkeley

Box 1 Folder 34
Thousand Oaks Baptist Church, religious, Berkeley, 1924

Box 1 Folder 35
University of California: Girton Hall, Berkeley, 1911

Box 1 Folder 36
University of California: Phoebe Apperson Hearst Memorial Gymnasium for Women, Berkeley, 1925-27

Box 1 Folder 37

YWCA Building, Oakland, 1910–15

Box 1 Folder 38
YWCA Buildings, Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco

Box 1 Folder 39
Unidentified project, Etna Street, Berkeley

Box 1 Folder 40
Unidentified project photographs

Box 1 Folder 41
Unidentified project photographs (photocopies)