

BERKELEY CITY CLUB

BC

CONSERVANCY

# NEWS from the CASTLE

BERKELEY CITY CLUB CONSERVANCY, FUNDING THE PRESERVATION OF  
JULIA MORGAN'S BERKELEY CITY CLUB BUILDING

2315 DURANT AVE., ROOM 306 ♦ BERKELEY, CA 94704 ♦ (510) 883-9710 ♦ [WWW.BERKELEYCITYCLUBCONSERVANCY.ORG](http://WWW.BERKELEYCITYCLUBCONSERVANCY.ORG)

## BERKELEY CITY CLUB CONSERVANCY HONORS SARAH GILL

The Berkeley City Club Conservancy Board of Directors gathered at Julia's Restaurant on August 6 to honor longtime board member and supporter, Dr. Sarah Gill.

Sarah's contributions in service of our landmark Berkeley City Club building have been both substantial and sustained. Most well-known is her book, *Julia's Morgan's Berkeley City Club*, published in 2016. Drawn from what might generously be referred to as the Club's "archives," which at the time amounted to a closet and boxes of papers, Sarah's background as an academic with a PhD in Art History, and experience as a university faculty member and anthropologist, brought a scholarly eye to the process of creating a serious archive. She placed the building and its architect into an historical, architectural, and social context, bringing Morgan, the building, and the book to life.

But it is hardly her only contribution. Sarah has been in service to the Conservancy and the Club in many capacities, including serving on the Conservancy Board as Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, several years of writing and editing our "News from the Castle" newsletter, making significant monetary donations to the Conservancy, as well as donations of art and jewelry to auctions and fundraisers. She also arranged for the restoration, preservation and rehang of the Chinese scrolls in Morgan's Lounge.

She has brought sophistication, an art historian's insights, an anthropologist's understanding of cultural context, and keen architectural observations to the organization. As director of the building's docent tours, her skill and knowledge enabled the training and organization of team of docents capable of presenting the building in a larger historical context to its visitors.



*Dr. Sarah Gill*

Sarah has introduced the building and its architect with equal grace and relevance to a national gathering of professional architects and engineers, and to a room full of teenage girls considering STEAM professions.

Honoring Dr. Sarah Gill is a privilege for the Conservancy as we continue our efforts to raise funds and spearhead a variety of restoration efforts to support the preservation of the Club's historic building.

*~Karen Yencich, Friend of the Berkeley City Club  
Conservancy*



NEWS FROM THE CASTLE  
FALL 2021

*News from the Castle* is the official newsletter of the Berkeley City Club Conservancy.

The Berkeley City Club Conservancy is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve the Berkeley City Club building, and to promote the legacy of Julia Morgan, its architect.

♦ Board of Directors ♦

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♦♦♦

The Conservancy Board meets monthly, except for August, on the second Thursday at 7 p.m. The meetings are open to the public. Call (510) 883-9710 for more information.

♦♦♦

Public tours of Julia Morgan's clubhouse, sponsored jointly by the Conservancy and the Berkeley City Club, have been suspended as a COVID precaution. They will resume when distancing and mask constraints are lifted.

♦♦♦

BERKELEY CITY CLUB  
CONSERVANCY

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## Victoria Kastner's new book, *Julia Morgan: An Intimate Portrait of a Trailblazing Architect*, speaks for Morgan in her own voice



Victoria Kastner

During Victoria Kastner's first visit to Hearst Castle in 1978, the tour noted the building's architect, in passing, as, "a woman - but we don't know anything about her." That architect was Julia Morgan. Notable for her reticence, she famously declared, "My buildings will be my legacy ... they will speak for me long after I'm gone." Indeed, hundreds of them throughout California and beyond have spoken eloquently on her behalf, but had little to say about Morgan herself.

It struck Kastner, later working as an historian at Hearst Castle who has also written three books on the building, that it didn't make sense that a woman so gifted and prolific as an architect, who practiced at a time when women were both uncommon and unwelcome in the profession, could have left a personal life defined only by supposition and speculation.

Kastner was right; she hadn't. And her new book, *Julia Morgan: An Intimate Portrait of the Trailblazing Architect*, speaks for Morgan, often in her own voice, where the buildings left off.

"In a way, I have been studying her for more than three decades." With her deep and pervasive knowledge of Morgan's work, especially regarding projects with the Hearsts, she felt that she was in a good position to write her biography. Realizing that this would be a full-time job, she waited until she could retire in order to give the task the attention it demanded.

In spite of the hundreds of hours she'd spent in the Hearst and Morgan collections at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, including her work as a historian, a master's thesis on Morgan, and research for her three previous books, Kastner realized she had never started at, "folder one, box one" of the collection. Together with her assistant, Ruth Latson, she began at the beginning, working her way through the entire collection and what they found astonished them.

There were thousands of pieces of correspondence, personal and professional; notes and receipts from trips she took as a student in Paris; sketches and diaries; tens of thousands of drawings in addition to photos of Julia as a child, as well as such ephemeral details as a drawing of the Morgan living room from an ancient issue of the Oakland Tribune. And the old trope that she burned her papers when she closed her office in San Francisco? Not true.

If anything, there was so much information that it was difficult to create an orderly narrative. Together they established a timeline of Morgan's life, establishing a focus for the thousands of divergent pieces of information that presented at every turn. And from these thousands of details, a life emerged.



## THANK YOU TO OUR 2020 DONORS!

*Your generosity helps to support the preservation of our landmark building  
and to promote the legacy of its groundbreaking architect, Julia Morgan*

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deposited after that date will be  
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### Victoria Kastner's new book - Continued from Page 2

Far from the enigma she was assumed to be, Morgan materialized as a woman with many friends in letters to sorority sisters, and as an affectionate and engaged sister and aunt. She was active in community affairs, frequently quoted in newspaper articles, a giver of lectures and speeches - including advocating

architecture as a career for women - down to serving as a judge in the merits of a children's window box competition. Her handwritten travel diaries reveal her as a thoughtful and compassionate observer. In the records of her professional life, Kastner says, "she certainly had a lot of experience with

misogyny and injustice, but she just didn't let it define her. She defined herself ... just was indomitable ... if anything, she would be wryly amused with things that were patently unjust it was too insignificant."

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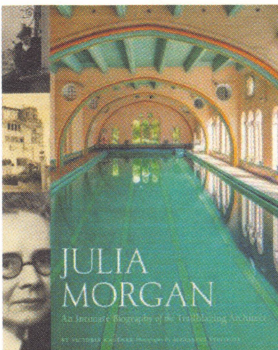


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### Victoria Kastner's new book - *Continued from Page 3*



The resulting book, ***Julia Morgan: An intimate Portrait of the Trailblazing Architect***, reveals an openminded and egalitarian woman, possessed of tremendous will and a passion for her work. Richly illustrated with 150 photographs - including some of a favorite project of

Morgan's, the Berkeley City Club - the book "reads like a novel," Kastner says. Documentation includes 22,000 words of endnotes "... that was very important to me because there are people who will think that I'm making this up because there was so much material," providing a textural sense to the narrative.

Writing the book "felt like it was an absolutely urgent thing to do." The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Morgan's birth will be January 20, 2022," ... so, certainly it was important to get this book done. But her courage and her refusal to be defined by circumstances really were exemplary."

***Julia Morgan: An intimate Portrait of the Trailblazing Architect***, hardcover, 240 pages, with over 150 archival photographs, will be published Chronicle Books, January 18, 2022. The book, priced at \$29.95, may be advance-ordered at the author's website, [www.victoriakastner.com](http://www.victoriakastner.com), and the publisher, [www.chroniclebooks.com](http://www.chroniclebooks.com), in addition to being widely available upon publication.

~Contributed by the Conservancy Team