

# NORTH STAR HISTORIC CONSERVANCY

# THE STAR

## NEWSLETTER

Spring 2022

## Ecole des Beaux-Arts

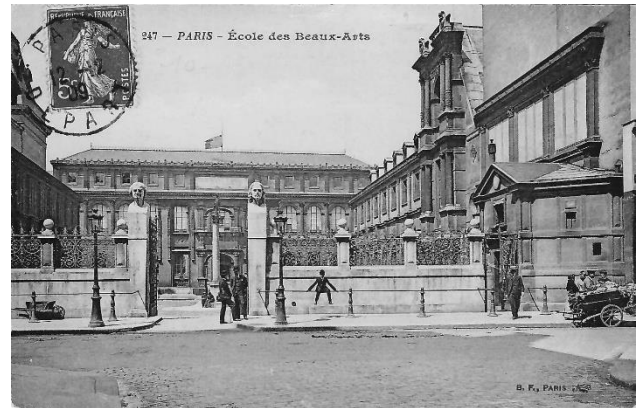
### Julia Morgan's Architectural Alma Mater

**HISTORY:** The Academie des Beaux-Arts was founded in 1648 by Cardinal Mazarin to educate the most talented students in drawing, sculpture, painting, and other art forms. Louis XIV, King of France from 1643-1715, used graduates of the school to decorate apartments at Versailles. In 1671, King Louis founded the Academie Royale d'Architecture. The Art school and the Architecture school maintained separate curriculums, but they were merged into one entity and placed under the control of the king. Those were prosperous times in France and the King wanted elegant buildings.

Over the centuries, there were changes to the name and structure of the school. This article



*Interior of Ecole des Beaux-Arts*



*Early 1900's postcard*

focuses on L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts around 1900, when Julia Morgan attended.

**JULIA GOES TO PARIS:** Increasing numbers of Americans had started attending the Architecture school, including Julia's friend and mentor, architect Bernard Maybeck. It was the most prestigious architecture school in the world. Recognizing how talented Julia was, Maybeck, strongly urged her to apply. Julia arrived in Paris in 1896 at age 26. Before she would be ready to take the entrance exam, she needed time in Paris to master both French and the metric system. She loved Paris.

There was an obstacle to overcome: *Ecole des Beaux-Arts did not accept female students!*

There was growing pressure from French female artists to allow them admittance to the school. In 1896, women were allowed to audit classes, and in 1897 the school finally announced that women would be allowed to enroll. Julia had been in Paris for a year and was ready to try the entrance exam.

## **EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE:**

**Entrance Exam:** This was a multi-day test.

- The first day was a timed drawing assignment, on-site.
- The subsequent days included tests in descriptive geometry, mathematics, history, plus modeling and drawing.

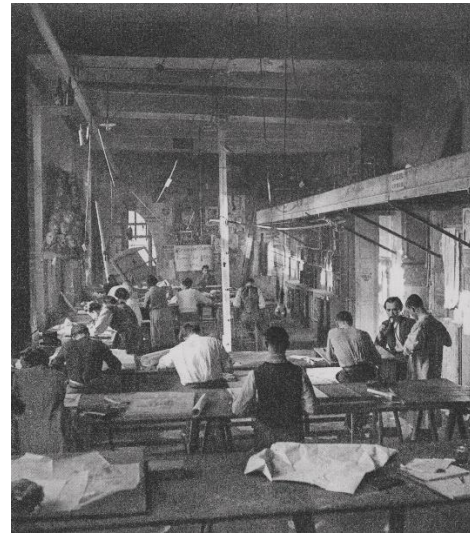
**Points and Classes:** Points are earned in Competitions (discussed below). When a student passed the Entrance Exam, he started in Second Class. When he had accumulated 16 points, he advanced to First Class. He needed an additional 10 points to graduate.

### **Classroom lectures:**

Second Class topics: Focused on classical principles of symmetry, proportion and harmony plus basic necessary mathematics/geometry and construction materials.

First Class: Concentrated more on the art of design, applying theory and method to their own original ideas.

**Atelier:** Most aspiring students would join an atelier (workshop). Each was led by a practicing architect – the “Patron” – who selected his students and was paid by them. The atelier was physically completely separate from the Patron’s architecture business. He would visit one-three times per week to provide the students



*An Atelier with Students*

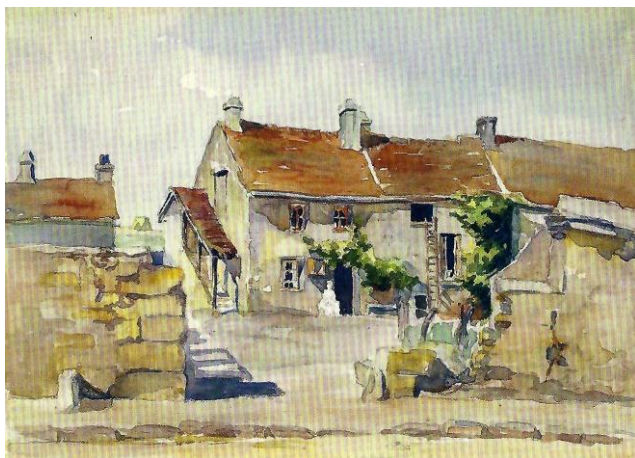
help with their projects and give suggestions. There was also generally comraderie and help among all the students in an atelier.

The atelier provided a place for aspiring students to prepare for the entrance exam and for accepted students to work on competitions.

**Competitions:** Competitions were offered about once a month. Students could enter as many as they wanted. For each competition, a detailed requirement was provided for something that must be designed and submitted. First Class students received more complex and difficult design projects than Second Class students.

Submissions were numbered so that students were not identified to the judging panel. The panel consisted of eight professors of the architectural section of the school who were not associated with an atelier. They would decide which entry, if any, was deserving of a “mention” award and if any should receive the first, second and third place medals. Points were awarded with medals.

**JULIA'S PROGRESS:** Julia joined an atelier and began studying in earnest for the exam. She also attended some lectures, which was allowed without being enrolled. Despite working very hard, she still took a little time to enjoy Paris. During school breaks she would travel and study architecture and ornamentation, do a lot of sketching, and broaden her knowledge.



*Julia painted this watercolor while taking a break in the countryside after her first exam.*

Julia failed to pass the first entrance exam. She was not surprised; her mind was not yet fully locked into metric system for measurements. She did place 42<sup>nd</sup> out of 376 applicants. The second time she placed within the top 30 but she learned that her marks had been arbitrarily lowered because they didn't want to admit a woman. On the third try, she placed 13th out of 30. The judges finally admitted her in the Fall of 1898.

Now she had to work very hard and very fast. Students were not allowed to compete in any competitions after their 30<sup>th</sup> birthday and that's the only way to get points and graduate. She would be 30 in January 1902.

**More Detail about Contests:** Each contest had a detailed set of requirements for what was to be designed. The judges looked for creativity and

originality in addition to properly meeting the project requirements.

For the first step, the student was confined for twelve hours in an individual studio within the school, to guarantee that the work was entirely independent. She was given the requirements and had to develop a plan and present a detailed sketch of her "solution" to the challenge. She could keep a tracing of the sketch, but the sketch itself remained with the school. At that point it was numbered and tracked by that number throughout the judging process.

Students then had 6 weeks to complete a full set of drawings with plan, section, and detail. On the final day, the drawings were carried on a

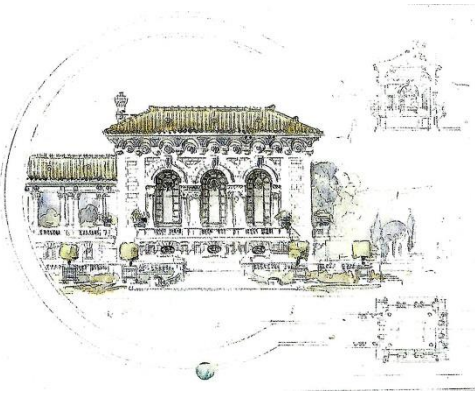
hand-cart to the school. This was generally a fairly frantic day in the ateliers and in the school. If the final

drawings were not consistent with the initial sketch, the submission was rejected. The remaining submissions were evaluated on technical skill, artistry, creativity, and the effectiveness of the plan – how well did it meet the stated requirements. Students could receive a "Merit" for good work, and the top 3 students could receive first, second or third place medals if the work was good enough. Medals earned points towards promotion or graduations.

The contests trained students to work quickly and carefully, with attention to detail. These are good skills to have in their chosen field, and skills which Julia demonstrated throughout her career.



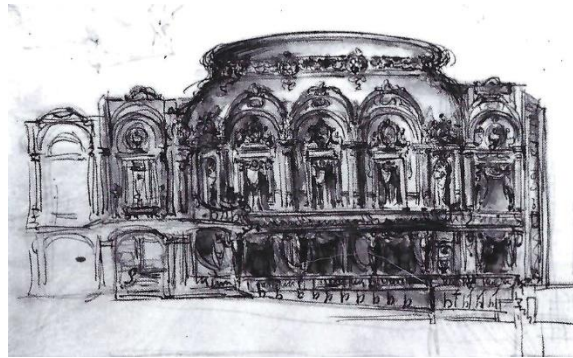




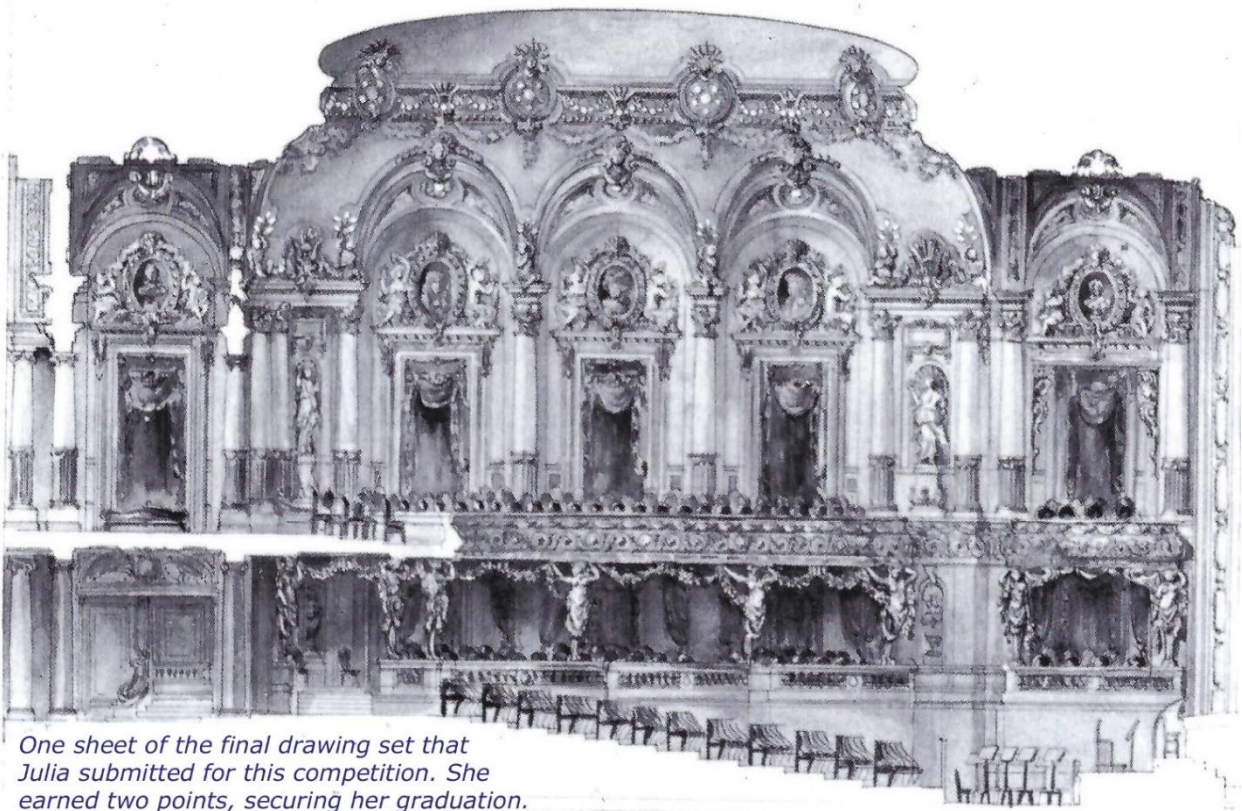
*Part of submission for a Lecture Hall*

**Final Submission:** Julia completed her final submission for a theater in a palace. It was submitted in the end of 1901, with her 30<sup>th</sup> birthday looming in front of her. She received a second medal, worth 2 points. She had earned the points required for graduation.

*Part of the project description: A theater in a palace, with loges for the president and ten guests and access through the palace rather than a public lobby.*



*Sketch Julia produced and submitted on first day.*



*One sheet of the final drawing set that Julia submitted for this competition. She earned two points, securing her graduation.*

## BEAUX-ARTS EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

By now you might be wondering about the value of learning to design classical buildings based on ancient Greece and Rome. How does that possibly relate to, for example, Arts & Crafts?

Ecole des Beaux-Arts taught discipline and technical skills, promoted “problem solving” with the competitions, and stressed the importance of bringing your own ideas and creativity to your design rather than just copying what others have done. The fundamentals of the Beaux-Arts education could be applied to any

style of architecture. The basic style should be selected based on the purpose of the building. Different styles could even be combined as long as it was done with harmony, balance, and good taste. Julia did that many times.

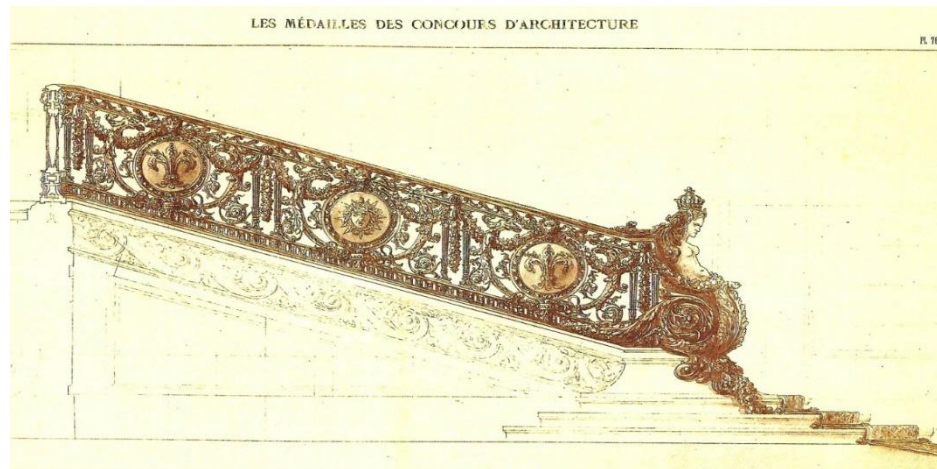
### *Project Description for Staircase Competition*

Destined for the stairway of honor of a monumental building, the projected balustrade should bear the luxury of materials and of decoration that one encounters in beautiful examples of French architecture.

The balustrade should rest on a curved base of marble holding the ends of the steps and should link in the most supple way with a metal newel, which should be arranged in an interesting and ingenious manner. Toward this end, contestants are given the most complete freedom about the base and starting point and in the number and degree of projection of the steps curving around the newel, preceding those that gradually merge into the base.

The balustrade itself, meeting the newel by whatever curve, ought in any case to present, in the straight part, some ornamentation, sculptured motifs, or panels where possible repetition would facilitate the carrying out of the work and would give to the whole the indispensable unity of conception.

The stairway in the flight from the starting point should consist of thirteen steps between the level of the floor and the level of the first landing. It is the study of the balustrade in the part between the floor and the landing that is the object of the present program.



*Julia received a 2nd place medal (2 points) for this competition*

Julia Morgan had the valuable combination of a Civil Engineering degree from UC Berkeley and an Architecture degree from Ecole des Beaux-Arts. She also had the determination, creativity, attention to detail, and perseverance to use that training and become an exceptional architect.

### REFERENCES:

Boutelle, Sara Holmes: *Julia Morgan Architect*

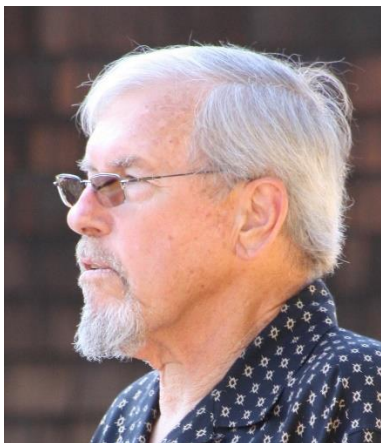
Quacchia, Russell L.: *Julia Morgan Architect* and the creation of the Asilomar Conference Grounds

Kastner, Victoria: *Julia Morgan An Intimate Biography of the Trailblazing Architect*



## President's Message

*Larry Dulmage, President*



Here we are after another year of Covid. I won't say it's been easy, but with your support and our GREAT volunteers we have made more progress in the House, Grounds, and the Heritage Garden.

A major focus right now is hardening the House for fire resistance. That includes automatically operated misters on the outside of the house and sprinklers inside, with expanded water system to support it. We are also doing extensive clearing of trees and brush to improve defensible space.

The Grounds and Heritage Garden teams have been expanded. A couple of considerations with all the tree removal and brush removal are:

(1) preserving heritage trees and plants, and (2) developing more areas to be enjoyed on the property.

The Heritage Garden will be on the 2022 Soroptimist Garden Tour May 21-22. We'll also have the house open for tours with docents on hand.

We have pulled permits to start on the second floor (the Peggy Levine Art Gallery). We're also working on a long range vision for the property to support community events and activities. We look forward to sharing all of this with you.

### NSHC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Shop the same as always, at all of the same stores. Amazon will donate a portion of your purchases to NSHC.



*Mark Your Calendar and*

## *Join Us At The North Star House*



2022 Garden Tour  
by  
Soroptimist International  
of the  
Sierra Foothills  
May 21-22  
10am - 4pm  
Tickets \$25

The North Star House  
will be on the Tour

The House will be open  
and staffed with Docents

Be sure to visit all of the lovely gardens.  
[www.sierrasoroptimist.org](http://www.sierrasoroptimist.org)  
[www.thenorthstarhouse.org](http://www.thenorthstarhouse.org)



## **Open House at The North Star House**

**Sunday, July 10  
5 - 7 pm**

**Tours of House and Garden  
Music - Food and Drink Available**

12075 Auburn Road, Grass Valley  
1 mile south of Fairgrounds

**Look for updates on Website  
[www.TheNorthStarHouse.org](http://www.TheNorthStarHouse.org)**



## *AutumnFest at the North Star House*

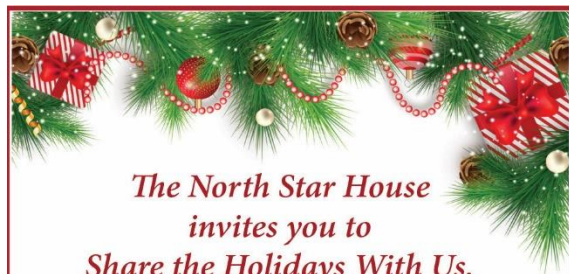
*Sunday, October 2, 2022  
12 - 4 pm    \$10 admission*

*presented by  
Soroptimist International  
of the Sierra Foothills  
&  
North Star Historic Conservancy*

*Artisan Craft Shop  
Music, Tours, Food Drink*

*12075 Auburn Road, Grass Valley  
1 mile south of Fairground*

*More details later  
[www.TheNorthStarHouse.org](http://www.TheNorthStarHouse.org)*



*The North Star House  
invites you to  
Share the Holidays With Us.*

*This Historic Julia Morgan House  
is particularly lovely when we  
decorate it for the holidays.*

*Sunday, December 4  
Early Evening*

*We're still working out the details.  
Check our website periodically.*

*[www.TheNorthStarHouse.org](http://www.TheNorthStarHouse.org)*



## Thank You to Katherine Hale, great-grandaughter of AD and MH Foote



LEFT: We were very pleased to receive this sideboard through the will of Katherine Gardiner Hale (Evelyn Foote Gardiner's daughter). It was built in the North Star shop, specifically for the dining room. You can see it on the same wall in this old family photo.



She also bequeathed us first edition books of some of Mary Hallock Foote's novels and short stories. They will be on display when the locked, glass-front bookcases are finished in Mary's study.

## What's Happening Around the House?



ABOVE: Fireplace in the Library is looking more finished. There will be a mantle and woodwork above, per original design. The dark wood on right, which was covered over by the school, will have nice cabinet work, per the old photographs.

BELOW: The Mary Hallock Foote room, where Mary did a lot of writing, is progressing nicely. Original wood has been refinished. New windows and window frames are being built.







LEFT, ABOVE: Nadine and Arlene are always willing to paint. The most recent project has been the lower walls on the terrace and in the courtyard. They look so much better. (The white is primer)

BELOW: Larry is installing the new pocket doors between the DR and LR. According to old photos, there was a curtain here which was replaced fairly early with pocket doors.



ABOVE: Rick Panos is working on the final section of wall in the living room. This is in the corner, back in the nook to the left of the fireplace. (Fireplace is behind Rick.)

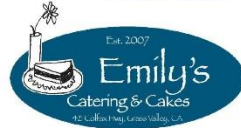
As usual, the paneling comes off and gets refinished, anything else that needs to be done while the wall is open gets done, then the paneling is replaced.

If you're wondering what the diagonal board and section of gray plaster is, that is the where the stairs go up to second floor on other side of this wall.

BELOW: We continue with demolition on the second floor, removing old plaster, flooring, ceilings, and everything that has to be cleared out to be ready for work upstairs. Mike French is removing a section of wall, taking it down to studs.



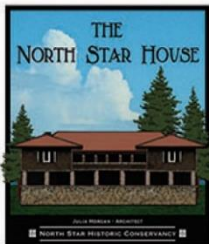
# THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



## NORTH STAR HISTORIC CONSERVANCY

P.O. Box 1538, Grass Valley, CA 95945

[www.TheNorthStarHouse.org](http://www.TheNorthStarHouse.org) 530-477-7126



Our Vision is to restore the unique rural roots of Julia Morgan's North Star House as a center for exchanging ideas, nurturing the arts and fostering learning. Your support makes this possible.

We invite you to join us: Become a Member ❖ Make a Donation

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