*Heritage*

*Happenings*

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# Julia Morgan Building Centenary Celebration 03-27-2025

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Greetings Supervisor Sherrill ~ Felicitations Architect Kiernet   
Hello Chairman Randy and board members,  
distinguished residents, team members and fellow citizens

Many of you have walked past or even inside this building countless times. But have you ever - truly - looked at it?Have you noticed how unique and special this mansion is?

* Have you noticed that the garden extends the entire length of a city block? It has fronts on three streets. Francisco, Laguna, and Bay There's no other mansion with a garden like this in northern San Francisco.
* And did you ever imagine that the fence, gates, the path, the planting, the steps all remain exactly as they were — back in 1925?
* Did you ever consider that the roof is made of stone slates imported from Belgium? Not just a fake front slate roof. The entire roof is slate.
* Have you ever considered that the building might be earthquake-resistant? Tom! Can you knock on that column? What's it made of? Tom says: "It's solid!" The bricks wrap around a core of reinforced concrete.
* Did you ever walk around the building and say "Gee, it's lovely on every side of the building"? Most houses in San Francisco have a nice fancy front but, on the sides and back, it's just cheap siding. Not in this place!
* Did you notice the building offers hundreds of examples of works of art? The terracotta decorations are part of What is called the "golden era of California art pottery”
* And you probably didn't know that the final construction price was $20,000 under budget.

Well, how did all these lovely things happen? It happened because there was this interesting woman who happened to live on 2229 Divisadero Street between Washington and Clay. About a mile from here. Julia Morgan, a Bay Area native, a San Francisco resident, First woman architect in California. First woman to graduate from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris.

She did so much, but unfortunately, we know more about her personal life than we do about her professional life. She gave few interviews. As she said: "My buildings will be my legacy... they will speak for me — long after I'm gone."

Over the past five years, as I've walked this campus, Julia has been speaking to me. Julia is a supremely talented "building whisperer". What are some of the special things she whispers about? The style of the building is called Tudor Revival, just like a proper sixteenth century English manor house. That means the decorations are more than just aesthetic. they must carry historic or symbolic meaning. You can think of old-time decorations just as emojis for buildings.

Example. Just above the front door, there are two shields. Unadorned. Just shields. Like for a knight. Well, why do you carry a shield? To protect yourself, of course. But why here? The shields whisper the answer: "Come inside — and the San Francisco Ladies Protection and Relief Society will protect you/" I've spent a lot of time thinking about the largest decorations: The two large terracotta panels on both wings of the second floor. Each plaque contains three images of a special flower. I've Googled the image a lot. It's called the Tudor Double Rose. It's the family crest of the Tudor family. This rose symbolizes the end of the War of the Roses, the reuniting of the Houses of York and Lancaster. So, a Tudor rose on a Tudor building makes sense.

But there are more than just two of these roses. As you walk around the building, you begin to see roses everywhere: I can count at least twenty examples of roses in different media. in terracotta, cement, stone, metal, lacquer, wood - and brick. I'm not talking dozens of roses. I'm talking about hundreds of roses. On every wall of the building Even the Brutalist-style building at the back has roses.

So why does Julia obsess with the rose? What is she whispering? Here is my theory: The rose is an ancient symbol of love. On Valentines Day, what do you send to someone you love? A dozen roses, of course! Robert Burns the Scottish poet wrote: "O my Luve — is like a red, red rose" In designing this home for women in need, Julia Morgan wrapped them — and us today — in a quiet message of safety, comfort — and love.

And indeed, this message resonates to this day After these talks, Kindly go up to the art gallery on the second floor. There's an exhibit on the history of the building and the art of its residents. The exhibit is a love letter to the building. From a community filled with love. Julia still speaks to us. Julia is whispering, "You are standing in one of my loveliest buildings in San Francisco" Let us return the compliment. Let us speak to Julia. Kindly raise your glasses. I'm going to give my toast and then on the count of three, we all say "Thank you Julia Morgan" Julia Morgan: May your legacy continue to speak to us for many years to come. Julia Morgan: We love you! 1 - 2 - 3 — "Thank you Julia Morgan" After the talks I'll be outside answering question Thank you and have a lovely time!