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Women's Clubs in California: Architecture and Organization, 1880-1940

By

Amelia Ritzenberg Crary

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Architecture

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Andrew Shanken, Chair

Professor Greg Castillo

Professor Margaretta Lovell

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Abstract

Women's Clubs in California: Architecture and Organization, 1880-1940

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture
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Professor Andrew Shanken, Chair

This dissertation explores the role of architecture—specifically, clubhouses—in the construction and institutionalization of modern, organized womanhood in early twentieth-century California. Beginning in the 1870s women began gathering in groups across the country for self-education, self-discovery, and civic work. They called themselves “clubs,” a term borrowed from male culture indicating a new, more formal endeavor than existing women’s circles. By 1900 some one million women made up this vast, organized, and effective network. Through clubs women successfully fought for the right to vote, for juvenile courts, kindergartens, public libraries, drinking fountains, street lights, urban parks, improved sanitation, and other civic accomplishments we now consider essential public goods.

The achievements of women’s clubs have become so seamlessly incorporated into our notion of American civic amenities that they appear inevitable, natural—almost innate. The purpose-built clubhouses that played host to these efforts are equally unrecognized. Beginning in the 1880s and 1890s, clubwomen abandoned their private parlors and rented rooms to build expensive new buildings for themselves to facilitate their social action and interaction. More than one thousand clubhouses were built nationwide between 1890 and 1940, and many still stand today. California, due to tremendous Progressive Era population growth and development and property laws allowing women to own real estate, led the nation in clubhouse construction.

To raise funds to build, purchase a lot, hire an architect and contractor, and dictate and iterate upon a building program, as well as to operate, maintain, and often expand a clubhouse, was a massive, and massively symbolic undertaking. Initially the buildings centered on a single large, multipurpose assembly room used for meetings, performances, and lectures. As the institution matured many clubs built monumental structures that were part hotel, part restaurant, part YWCA, part country-club-in-the-city, and part social action headquarters. Through their clubhouses women gave material expression to the evolving meanings of womanhood, conveying their particular status as property and business owners, athletes, ambitious professionals, hardworking civil servants, or sophisticated urbanites, in turn. Clubhouses are an architectural type representative of women’s influence in turn of the century cities, and they represent both the ambitious scope and the shortcomings of organized womanhood.

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Introduction

In New York in 1868 a group of female journalists presented themselves at the door of the all-male Press Club. They intended to report on the evening's event: the novelist Charles Dickens was to deliver a lecture, which would be followed by a dinner. Among the group was Jane Cunningham Croly, head of the women's department at the *New York World* and chief staff writer for *Demorest's Illustrated Monthly Magazine*. Croly and her fellow female reporters were denied entry. Incensed, Croly formed a club of her own.¹

From these relatively unremarkable circumstances—a “male” space proving inhospitable to the presence of women during an era when they were largely excluded from business and politics—would spring a massive women's club movement whose reforms would affect every single American citizen. Out of the discontent of middle-class, middle-aged women came a great wave of association building, responsible for women's suffrage, juvenile courts, kindergartens, public libraries, drinking fountains, street lights, urban parks, improved sanitation, and other accomplishments. Women gathered in groups across the country for self-education, self-discovery, and civic work and called themselves “clubs.” In 1898, thirty years after the incident at the Press Club, Croly published a twelve-hundred-page digest on the work of women's clubs to date. Her inventory included more than seven hundred organizations, one in almost every state, and an estimated one million plus members. Per Croly's estimate, at least fifteen percent of the national population of white women between the ages of forty and seventy-five belonged to a women's club.² This vast, organized, and effective network would continue to grow up until the Great Depression—a singularly vital force for women's personal and political work.

The achievements of women's clubs have become so seamlessly incorporated into our notion of American civic amenities that they appear inevitable, natural—almost innate. The purpose-built clubhouses that played host to these efforts are equally unrecognized. More than one thousand of them were built nationwide between 1890 and 1940, and many still stand today. A significant percentage of the nation's clubhouses—one tenth of the national total in 1908—were in California, where dense urban areas made gathering together and establishing social networks easier, and where property laws allowed women to own real estate.³ Also in California many clubs were started in towns that were themselves just starting, making for fewer physical and entrenched ideological barriers to building.⁴ As late as 1928 California still led the nation in building, with fifty-

¹ J. C. Croly and General Federation of Women's Clubs, *The History of the Woman's Club Movement in America* (New York: H.G. Allen & Co., 1898), 15.

² U.S. Census Bureau, “National Resident Population; Estimates by Age, Sex, and Race: July 1, 1900 (PE-11),” accessed March 31, 2016, <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

³ Gayle Ann Gullett, *Becoming Citizens: The Emergence and Development of the California Women's Movement, 1880-1911* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 118.

⁴ For example, the population of Los Angeles grew from 5,728 in the 1870s (when Caroline Severance arrived in town) to 50,395 in the 1890 (when Severance formed the Friday Morning Club) to 102,479 in 1900 (around when the Friday Morning Club built a clubhouse). Total Population, Los Angeles City and California, 1850-1930. Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Population Density, 1850-1930. Prepared by Social Explorer (accessed October 19, 2015).

five new clubhouses under way.⁵ Clubhouses are an architectural type representative of women's influence in turn of the century cities, and they represent both the ambitious scope and the shortcomings of organized womanhood.

This dissertation explores the role of architecture—specifically, clubhouses—in the construction and institutionalization of modern, organized womanhood in early twentieth-century California. Beginning in the 1880s and 1890s, clubwomen abandoned their private parlors and rented rooms to build expensive new buildings for themselves to facilitate their social action and interaction. As architectural historian Alice T. Friedman points out, “architecture literally stages the value system of a culture, foregrounding certain activities and persons and obscuring others.”⁶ Beyond architectural choices, all of the processes and practices involved in building a clubhouse constitute and reflect the nature of organized womanhood. To raise funds for construction, purchase a lot, hire an architect and contractor, and dictate and iterate upon a building program, as well as to operate, maintain, and often expand a clubhouse, was a massive, and massively symbolic undertaking. Through their clubhouses women gave material expression to the evolving meanings of womanhood, conveying their particular status as property and business owners, athletes, ambitious professionals, hardworking civil servants, or sophisticated urbanites, in turn.

Women were organizing in groups elsewhere, and also well before Croly formed the club Sorosis in 1868. As early as the 1820s women in Rhode Island formed the Female Improvement Society to read “useful books” aloud and hear original compositions by members.⁷ Women joined together in charitable societies, church sewing circles, and in the interest of temperance, abolition, and equal rights. In 1868, the same year as Croly's refusal from the Press Club, abolitionist, suffragist, and organizer Caroline Severance founded the New England Woman's Club in Boston for female education, and for increased efficiency in reform efforts. The New England Woman's Club and Croly's Sorosis are considered the nation's first major urban women's clubs.

The Civil War provided further associative opportunities for women. After the war, clubs became more widespread, diverse, secular, and independent of male oversight.⁸ The very use of the male term “club” indicated a new endeavor for women: a more formal, less personal venture than existing women's circles. More women sought intellectual stimulation and upward mobility through channels not totally controlled by their husbands. They were living longer than earlier generations, with fewer children, and more material resources; many had more time for leisure and enough education to generate ambition. Consequently, clubs in the 1870s were primarily devoted to intellectual self-improvement. In their clubs women learned to analyze and discuss literature and plays, organize cultural events, speak in public, prepare and present reports, and raise and manage money. With membership came educational and also leadership opportunities: members could work their way up the leadership ladder, ultimately gaining the right to direct the organization at large. Many clubs divided their membership into

⁵ “Clubhouses in the Making,” *Handbook of Women's Clubhouses*, 1928, 28.

⁶ Alice T. Friedman, “Architecture, Authority, and the Female Gaze: Planning and Representation in the Early Modern Country House,” *Assemblage*, no. 18 (1992), 43.

⁷ Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Frances Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Harvard University Press, 1996), 38.

⁸ Ellen Carol DuBois and Lynn Duménil, *Through Women's Eyes: An American History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005), 297-99.

committees of interest with corresponding administrative structures. Meetings themselves were highly structured and conducted under parliamentary procedure, exposing women to forms of political discourse.

The women's club movement was mostly white, middle class, married, and Protestant, and individual clubs were typically uniform in terms of race, religion, and class. Women drew upon their existing networks to propose names for membership; they recruited their friends, daughters, and daughters-in-law, and reserved the right to blackball undesirable candidates. Clubs that admitted Catholic and Jewish women usually capped the number allowed at any given time. Black women were excluded as a matter of course. Throughout this work when I use the words *woman* and *clubwoman* I refer only to the particular women who constituted mainstream club membership. My generalizations are not meant to apply to women of racial, religious, and ethnic minorities who were not admitted to most clubs housed in purpose-built structures.

Outside the mainstream club movement other women organized separately. In 1893 black clubwoman Sarah J. Early estimated that half a million members belonged to five thousand "colored women's societies" in the U.S. Like their white counterparts, black clubwomen were mostly married, middle class, educated, and Protestant; similarly high on their organizational agendas were social welfare programs, aid to the poor, and self-improvement activities like lectures and literary study. Black clubwomen built and ran institutions for delinquent youths and other correctional facilities but tended not to build clubhouses for themselves. They instead met in former residences or in churches.⁹

Settlement houses were also organizationally similar to women's clubs. In a model imported from mid-Victorian England, settlement houses hosted idealistic young middle-class men and women who lived for several years in urban slums seeking to bring education and "moral uplift" to the immigrant poor. Settlement workers arranged lectures, hosted debate societies, and ran kindergartens and daycare centers for the children of working parents. Hull House, founded by Jane Addams, was started in a large home in Chicago in 1889 and was quickly followed by a proliferation of similar experiments in other cities.¹⁰

Though on the basis of their tendency to build clubhouses for themselves, and also for the physical form of their clubhouses, women's clubs bear the most resemblance to men's clubs or YMCAs. In general, all three building types are between three and six stories tall, often faced with brick, with conservative styling and understated formal qualities. Buildings usually present a reserved Renaissance Revival or Beaux-Arts façade, ornamentally restrained save for some classicizing detail surrounding the entrance. When clubs or YMCAs deviate from this form it is usually reflective of a larger regional trend and not specific to club buildings. For example, in Southern California around 1915, clubhouses, department stores, banks, office buildings, hotels, and scores of civic buildings were all in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, an idiom that dominated the region's architectural scene for nearly twenty years. In plan and use, however, YMCAs,

⁹ Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (Toronto; New York: Bantam Books, 1985), 95-96; also see Vernetta D. Young and Rebecca Reviere, "Black Club Women and the Establishment of Juvenile Justice Institutions for Colored Children: A Black Feminist Approach," *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 2 (Summer 2015).

¹⁰ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 393-394.

men's clubs, and women's clubs are distinguishable from one another for how they each emphasized and enabled certain aspects of their constituent's lives.

The Christian clubhouses known as YMCA buildings appeared in American cities in the mid-nineteenth century. Meant to counteract the corrupting influences of the city, YMCAs gave young men a safe, respectable place to exercise, sleep, and socialize. The building type underwent a modernization of form around 1900, when the organization gained greater acceptance. Instead of parlors and assembly halls YMCAs began to feature swimming pools, lunch counters, and billiard rooms. Also around 1900, YMCAs no longer needed commercial tenants in ground-floor stores; dormitories would instead provide income for the Association. Architectural historian Paula Lupkin argues that this updated, standardized building type reflects the efforts of YMCA leaders to shape a modern yet moral public culture. With their wide array of recreational facilities, impressive locker rooms, and extensive residential quarters the YMCA offered to members a controlled, Protestant model of masculinity and physical culture, tied to corporate productivity, mass culture, and middle-class leisure.¹¹

Men's clubs also provided leisure space to their members, but without an accompanying moral agenda. Instead, the principles of inclusion and exclusion guided the configuration of space. Originally located in converted houses or rented spaces, in the 1880s many men's clubs in American cities began to commission luxurious purpose-built clubhouses. Based on the British men's club model, a typical repertoire of features included one or more lounges, bars, dining rooms, libraries, smoking rooms, card rooms, and a few overnight rooms. Unlike most women's clubs whose achievements were measured in civic transformation, men's clubs were famous for their exclusivity and for having little other rationale than to cater to the social and leisure activities of their members. The various rooms of a men's club functioned mainly to provide opportunities for unhurried fellowship, as well as peace (the chance to write, read, or talk in peace)—all in the interest of member leisure and camaraderie. For despite tradition—or rules—that prohibited the discussion of business, the fellowships, friendships and circles of acquaintance established in men's clubs were instrumental in the business and political advancement and success of members. Indeed, the purpose of men's clubs appears to have been, in part, to seemingly allay hierarchy and competition among males while in fact facilitating sorting and classification. These urban fraternities competed to commission architects of prestige, who designed buildings around the question of who was permitted where, who was not, and what would occur in various spaces.¹²

The presence of nonmember guests in the exclusive men's clubhouse required architectural refinements to demarcate particularly hallowed, members-only, ground. For example, at men's clubs the ground floor "stranger's" room was often the only space where members could receive visitors, and where a member was required to dine if he brought in a guest. Women's presence in a men's club was not generally welcome; with architectural repurposing clubs could permit but contain the female presence in the male

¹¹ See Paula Lupkin, *Manhood Factories: YMCA Architecture and the Making of Modern Urban Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

¹² Michael R. Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco, Now Named the Metropolitan Club, 640 Sutter Street, San Francisco* (San Francisco: 640 Heritage Preservation Foundation, 2004); "Athletic Club for Women | Men's Places to Be Rivalled | Society Backing Innovation," *San Francisco Examiner*, June 8, 1914; Barbara J Black, *A Room of His Own: A Literary-Cultural Study of Victorian Clubland* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2012), 75-84.

preserve. Some clubs granted women access to certain rooms on certain evenings for particular occasions, others provided ladies' annexes and ladies' staircases and even architecturally inconspicuous ladies' entrances. The second floor of a men's club, where the library and the bar were usually located, was completely off-limits to guests.

For all but the most exclusive of women's clubs, the presence of nonmembers was always a factor to be architecturally reckoned with.¹³ In an effort to establish themselves as institutions in an incipient city, early clubs tended to envision their buildings as the physical counterpart to their municipal good works—clubhouses themselves as public, civic offerings. Many women's clubhouses also had rentable ground floor commercial spaces—a feature that the YMCA eliminated after 1900 and that men's clubs never incorporated. Because dues had to be kept low (competition for members and women's limited access to cash resources necessitated this), most clubs at the very least had to open their doors for rentals to other clubs, to lecturers, and for social functions.¹⁴ The Friday Morning Club of Los Angeles' ca. 1900 clubhouse provided space for other clubs—often mixed-sex organizations—to meet; the clubhouse plan was accordingly informal and open, with a 700-seat auditorium to accommodate public meetings, forums, and events.¹⁵

In its earliest iteration the women's club was primarily an opportunity for assembly, hence the tendency to gather in a member's parlor or rent a single meeting room in a hotel. When women first began commissioning clubhouses the buildings centered on a large, multipurpose assembly room used for meetings, dances, performances, and lectures. As the institution matured, many clubs built monumental structures featuring multiple meeting rooms, ballrooms, restaurants, gymnasias, theaters, libraries, and sometimes, residential quarters. By necessity of the different functions happening in a single clubhouse, plans became more elaborate and complex.

As club membership became increasingly linked to class status, some elite clubs turned inward, eschewing all civic or altruistic work. Here clubwomen conceived of their buildings as expressions of their certain, existing integration into urban, commercial culture; as such, all spaces were explicitly designed as either leisure- or revenue-producing features that served the needs of members. Their clubhouse was not merely an attempt to integrate women into the public sphere but a source of revenue, permanency, and prestige.

Other programmatic elements make women's clubhouses unique and reveal accommodation for a different set of needs and users. A 1923 list of requirements compiled by the Building Committee of the Woman's City Club of San Francisco includes a flower-arranging room, a dietician's office, an open-air day nursery where

¹³ The exclusive and elite Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco (1915-1923) replicates the men's club model, with an impressive entry and well-appointed lobby to welcome club members and a "stranger's" room to contain the rare non-member's call.

¹⁴ The Woman's City Club of San Francisco wrote about the meeting space in their proposed clubhouse, "The justification of the present small dues is that every square foot of this building can bring in a continuous rental." Mrs. Jean McDuffie, "Letter to Mr. Willis Polk. Outlining of Requirements for the Woman's City Club," January 13, 1923, Willis Polk Collection, 1890-1937, Environmental Design Archives, University of California, Berkeley.

¹⁵ "Clubs of Women," *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 1900; *The Land of Sunshine: A Southern California Magazine* v. 5, 1899, 244; "FMC Programme," October 1909, Box 5, folder 13, Caroline M. Severance Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

“women can leave children for [a] few hours under supervision,” and a room with desks, gas plates, ovens, and tables for domestic science classes.¹⁶ Looking at clubs through the lens of architectural history tells us about the needs and aspirations of the women who occupied them, and how the buildings participated in the construction of those needs and aspirations.

The club movement spread quickly from its start in the northeast to the western United States and eventually south. Having acquired education and new skills in their meetings, clubwomen in the 1880s launched social service projects in cities and towns nationwide. These were usually benevolent activities organized on behalf of women and children. Severance’s New England Woman’s Club, for example, founded a women’s horticultural school and opened a store selling sensible garments. They also lobbied to elect women onto the Boston school board—during a time when women were not even permitted to vote for school board members. Other associations managed welfare programs, designed municipal improvement projects, and drafted labor and public health legislation.¹⁷

Clubwomen around the country affiliated in 1890 under the umbrella of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs (GFWC), bringing together two hundred clubs representing twenty thousand women.¹⁸ State and regional federations sprang up as well, all in the interest of coalescing civic and political influence. By the end of the nineteenth century, women had almost completely commandeered nongovernmental civic life from men. In Los Angeles the Friday Morning Club founded the city’s first kindergarten and convinced officials to make it a permanent part of the public school system. A host of other social services followed: medical and dental services, school lunch programs, a juvenile court system with rehabilitative probation officers, pure milk standards, and English classes for immigrant mothers, all established or funded by clubwomen.¹⁹

By the early 1900s the GFWC was the largest national women’s organization. The California Federation of Women’s Clubs (CFWC) was founded in 1900 with forty clubs; within roughly twenty years the CFWC would represent six hundred and three clubs and around sixty-three thousand women.²⁰ Clubs all over the country were launching municipal reform programs and politicizing their members. As a result of their club work, traditionally conservative women were increasingly compelled to define themselves as citizens, not simply wives and mothers. For a very large and powerful segment of American women, benevolent and civic action once considered radical became the norm.

¹⁶ McDuffie, “Letter to Mr. Willis Polk, Outlining of Requirements for the Woman’s City Club.”

¹⁷ Gloria Ricci Lothrop, “Strength Made Stronger: The Role of Women in Southern California Philanthropy,” *Southern California Quarterly* 71, no. 2/3 (1989).

¹⁸ The black women’s club movement also organized under a larger federation: in 1896 the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) formally united hundreds of clubs.

¹⁹ Mrs. Henry Christian Crowther, *High Lights: The Friday Morning Club, Los Angeles, California, April 1891-1938* (Los Angeles: Bundy Quill & Press, 1939); Anastasia J Christman, “The Best Laid Plans: Women’s Clubs and City Planning in Los Angeles, 1890-1930” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2000); FMC Yearbooks housed at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

²⁰ There were actually 787 women’s organizations in California in 1922, but only 603 belonged to the CFWC. Louis S Lyons and Josephine Wilson, *Who’s Who among the Women of California: an Annual Devoted to the Representative Women of California* (San Francisco; Los Angeles, Calif.: Security Pub. Co., 1922), 219.

However, attitudes toward the work of women's clubs changed over time. Responding to concerns during the nineteenth century that home life would suffer in the interest of public goals, clubwomen strategically deployed the ideology of Domestic Feminism. They adopted prevailing notions about maternal goodness, invoking ladies' superior morality and domesticity to validate their public actions. Suffrage was another topic that proved divisive, not just among the general population but among clubwomen themselves. Some were threatened by the challenge to traditional gender roles; other clubs actively campaigned, led lobbying efforts, and shepherded the cause through their state legislatures.²¹ Though concerned by the suggestion that suffragists were subversive—the basis on which ex-President Grover Cleveland disparaged women's clubs in 1905—and aware of lingering dissent, the GFWC did not formally endorse suffrage until 1914.²²

A significant change in the meaning of the women's club movement came around the turn of the century, when—although good works remained the focus—membership became a status symbol. The historian Gayle Gullett reminds us that newspapers made lists of the “fashionable” clubs, a term that implied popularity, desirability, and exclusivity.²³ Athletic clubs, the most costly in terms of plant equipment and in dues paid by members, and the most likely to exist purely for social and leisure activities, flourished with conspicuous success in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Pursuits such as tennis that required elaborate and expensive facilities held special appeal.²⁴ Large urban clubs—the Berkeley Women's City Club had over four thousand members in a city of seventy-five thousand in its heyday—became extremely influential in urban social life. The largest city clubs held elaborate social events, organized expert lectures on pressing political and social issues, and established orphanages, museums, and libraries.

The women's movement reached the apex of its political power in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Clubs worked for the passage of the nineteenth amendment granting women the vote, new laws for pure food, protective legislation regulating wages and hours for working women and children, prison and court reforms, and the creation of a Federal Children's Bureau.²⁵ Recalling Cleveland's grave outlook on

²¹ Suffrage stirred Friday Morning Club (FMC) enthusiasm in a significant way: members voted as early as March 1893 to endorse a suffrage bill under consideration in the state legislature and subsequently continued to support the cause until its eventual success. During the 1911 drive FMC women led lobbying efforts and campaigned throughout Southern California for state passage. When Equal Suffrage won in October 1911, their founder Caroline Severance, at 91, was given the honor of being the first woman to register to vote in Los Angeles.

²² In an article in *Ladies Home Journal* ex-President Grover Cleveland described a “good wife” as “a woman who loves her husband and her country with no desire to run either.” Any “discontent on the part of woman with her ordained lot, or a restless desire on her part to be and to do something not within the sphere of her appointed ministrations” were “perversions of a gift from God.” The discontented woman who joined a club, he continued, corrupted the “wives and mothers within the range of companionship” and “must bear her share of liability for the injury they inflict upon the domestic life of our land.” He also noted suffrage's “dangerous, undermining effect on the character of wives and mothers.” Grover Cleveland, “Woman's Mission and Woman's Clubs,” *Ladies Home Journal*, May 1905, 3-5.

²³ Gullett, *Becoming Citizens*, 117-118.

²⁴ For more on the cultural history of women and sports, see Donald J. Mrozek, *Sport and American Mentality, 1880-1910* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983).

²⁵ Sara M Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York; London: Free Press; Collier Macmillan, 1989), 148-150.

clubs from 1905—they were hazardous for “the injury they inflict upon domestic life”—*The Woman Citizen* reported in 1925 that “it would be hard to find a President or Vice-President or other highly placed official . . . who doesn’t know and realize and acknowledge that this great aggregation of women is primarily concerned with making a better world, and that its influence is beneficial.”²⁶ Of clubwomen in 1913 a writer for the *Los Angeles Times* reported:

Women . . . are the leaders of most of the ‘movements.’ They vote, storm the curbstone tables to sign petitions of protest against immoral trafficking, attend citizens’ meetings, lecture on proposed ordinances and organize political clubs. Many of them hold public offices. Their pictures appear in the daily papers, labeled ‘leading citizens.’ Their support is sought by politicians. They bristle with genuine importance. They are a public factor to be reckoned with.²⁷

In Los Angeles and all over, clubwomen had worked to develop the civic institutions necessary for a powerful, progressive city. In the process, they transformed themselves into an institution—an accepted and influential factor in civic life.

Equally important, in the early decades of the twentieth century clubwomen claimed physical space in their cities, legibly imprinting their influence upon the landscape. It is clear that clubwomen understood the symbolic and literal significance of the built environment. In California in particular, stemming from Spanish tradition, the law had always secured women’s rights to property. The California Constitution written in 1850 protected a woman’s right to own and control real estate acquired independently both prior to and during marriage.²⁸ When they established clubs in the 1880s and 1890s, women developed another vehicle for influencing growth and development. Thus even before they won the right to vote in state elections in 1911, bourgeois women all over California had been helping to define their cities financially and culturally through their clubs. Historian Lee Simpson argues that Oakland clubwomen, for example, as property-owning educated members of the bourgeoisie, improved their city in order to protect and promote personal economic interests. They warmed up with small-scale physical beautification projects around 1906—tree planting and community cleanup. Within fifteen years Oakland women were imbued with official power, creating comprehensive city plans and zoning ordinances as members of planning committees and commissions.²⁹ In Los Angeles clubwomen funded, built, and managed libraries, daycare centers, after-school playgrounds, and affordable workingwomen’s housing.³⁰

Though for clubwomen in the years after World War I, the ultimate form of female institution building, and the true measure of club success, was constructing a clubhouse. “To own your own club house,” the California Federation of Women’s Clubs

²⁶ Cleveland, “Woman’s Mission and Woman’s Clubs,” 5; “Woman’s Clubbism,” *The Woman Citizen: A Weekly Chronicle of Progress*, 1925, 17.

²⁷ Willard Huntington Wright, “Los Angeles: The Chemically Pure,” *The Smart Set: A Magazine of Cleverness*, January 1913.

²⁸ Robert Grayson, *California’s Gold Rush* (ABDO, 2012), 41.

²⁹ See Lee M. A Simpson, *Selling the City: Gender, Class, and the California Growth Machine, 1880-1940* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004).

³⁰ Crowther, *High Lights*; Christman, “The Best Laid Plans;” FMC Yearbooks housed at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

newsletter remarked to an audience of sixty-four thousand members in 1921, “to have a title to a bit of land with a comfortable building in which to assemble—that is the basic fact of club prosperity. That desire for ownership of club headquarters is not hard to stimulate, for there are many valid arguments in its favor.”³¹ The author also noted—presciently, in retrospect—that even before evaluating their financial condition many clubs felt deep determination to build and were “ready with plans.”³² The hasty choice to build without having fully planned for the cost of maintenance, taxes, upkeep, service, repairs, and incidental expenses would be a major factor in the eventual undoing of women’s clubs across the country.

During the boom years of the movement—GFWC membership exceeded two million in 1922—clubhouses became big business for clubs and architects alike.³³ Newspaper articles dramatized competition among architectural firms for clubs’ big projects and budgets. In print and at conferences clubwomen traded tips on the entire process of building. From each other they learned how to raise funds, purchase the right lot, hire an architect and contractor, and how to operate and maintain a building meant to be part hotel, part restaurant, part YWCA, part country-club-in-the-city, and part social action headquarters. Fundraising was often done through the sale of bonds or “stock certificates,” to members and sometimes to the general public. For women who did not own property independently, the purchase of a bond to finance club construction was an investment. And it could be a fruitful one: the Ebell of Los Angeles Building Association paid a twenty-five percent dividend to stockholders.³⁴

Clubhouses were usually strategically located in the heart of a given city’s downtown. In both San Francisco and Los Angeles women’s clubs clustered in an early twentieth-century “Civic Center of Women’s Activities,” a multi-block area of establishments catering to women.³⁵ High-end department and jewelry stores, specialty foods merchants, and art galleries were all nearby. In Berkeley in 1928 the founding members of the Berkeley Women’s City Club reasoned that the presence of a clubhouse “downtown” yet apart from the “congested business section” would stimulate local economic activity.³⁶ Berkeley women had developed a habit of attending luncheon or club meetings in San Francisco or Oakland and staying to shop; a clubhouse in Berkeley

³¹ Mrs. Claude Hamilton Mitchell, “District Reports: Alameda District,” *The Clubwoman*, March 1921, 29.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Sophonisba Preston Breckinridge and President’s Research Committee on Social Trends, *Women in the Twentieth Century; a Study of Their Political, Social and Economic Activities* (New York; London: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1933).

³⁴ Dorothea Moore, *The Work of the Women’s Clubs in California* (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1906), 260.

³⁵ The Friday Morning Club, the Woman’s Athletic Club, and the YWCA comprise the “Civic Center of Women’s Activities” in Los Angeles. In San Francisco, the YWCA, Woman’s Athletic Club, Francisca Club, Sorosis Club, Cap and Bells Club, Papyrus Club, Forum Club, the Corona and Mills clubs, and the Woman’s Club of San Francisco were all within several blocks. The *San Francisco Chronicle* referred to the 500 block of Sutter Street as “the home of the smart decorators shops of the city and many of the fashionable women’s clubs.” Gail Lee Dubrow, “Preserving Her Heritage: American Landmarks of Women’s History” (Ph.D. diss., 1991), 203; Michael R. Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, Now Named the Metropolitan Club, 640 Sutter Street, San Francisco* (San Francisco: 640 Heritage Preservation Foundation, 2004), 34.

³⁶ *Berkeley Women’s City Club Bulletin*, January 1928; Berkeley Women’s City Club, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 1, April 1928.

with an appealing restaurant and slate of activities would draw members who would then shop locally out of convenience.

Another reason to build downtown was for proximity to male-dominated sites of power. Even before the Friday Morning Club of Los Angeles built a clubhouse they specified to their rental agent that they would not consider any locations more than three blocks from City Hall.³⁷ In part this location was merely practical. Their meetings drew hundreds, later thousands, of women traveling from multiple geographic and political points, and downtown was geographically central. Many members lived in an upscale residential neighborhood connected directly by electric streetcar to the central business district.³⁸ Once downtown, members would also need easy access to offices at City Hall, meetings with the Chamber of Commerce, and philanthropic projects in the impoverished neighborhoods circling downtown. Yet the physical link to the centers of civic, commercial, and financial power also reflects their institutional aspirations.

Ironically, for most clubs, the opening of their grand new headquarters marked the start of their rapid decline. Across California in the 1920s women were losing interest in their clubs. Reflecting national trends, club life did not appeal as much to the “New Woman” of the younger generation, who instead opted for more mixed-gender, less regulated forms of interaction. And American women in general were falling away from their organizational activities in the 1920s, a result of the new ability to enter political or professional life directly, without an institutional conduit. Whereas earlier members had considered club work their “career,” the second generation of club leaders had more employment options, especially in social work. Suffrage had been a double-edged sword, as well. The vote had once provided a common rallying point for women but there was less agreement about how to use it. The rise of partisanship within clubs necessitated the scaling back of political forums in the 1920s, replaced by more social activities and general interest lectures. A failure to satisfy the shifting needs of women, coupled with unavoidable generational differences and changing trends, rendered club life passé.

Clubhouse mismanagement was another problem. Most clubs had followed a similar pattern when building: first there would be a struggle to acquire a lot, followed by further struggles to collect sufficient capital to build. Even when ownership and occupancy were complete, the problem was not half solved. Often clubs had not fully planned for the cost of maintenance, taxes, upkeep, service, repairs, and incidental expenses, and members were assessed repeatedly to meet deficits. Competition increased with each new clubhouse that went up, and groups desperate to retain their members were unable to raise dues. The structures that had helped to shape the geographic and spatial landscape for modern womanhood became major cash drains.

By the 1930s clubhouse building had almost ceased entirely. With the onset of the Great Depression many members could no longer afford dues, let alone civic philanthropy. Further, as part of the New Deal, much of the civic work that clubs pioneered became a municipal responsibility. The clubs that remained in the 1930s and beyond largely returned to a mission of self-education and female camaraderie.

³⁷ “Letter to Messrs. Morgan and Wall,” January 29, 1897, Scrapbook 2, FMC Ephemera, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

³⁸ Christman, “The Best Laid Plans,” 108; Marshall Stimson, “Manuscript for Autobiography ‘Fun, Fights and Fiestas,’ n.d., pages 31-32,40, Marshall Stimson Collection, Box 4, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Severance, *The Mother of Clubs*, 100.

Given that over one thousand clubhouses were built in the U.S. during my period of study, generalizations are difficult to make. Women's clubhouses are hard to typify, as there is no archetype that gives rise to subsequent buildings that resemble each other. While programming across clubhouses was basically consistent, style, scale, construction, materials, interior organization and exterior articulation were highly diverse. They are also not generally regarded as outstanding examples of architecture, as they were not, on the whole, particularly technologically innovative or artistically daring, even when designed by major architects. How then, to regard them collectively, as a group of related buildings created to convey the power of female collaboration?

Analyzing clubhouses as examples of gendered space is one method. Socially produced, gendered space is a product of the way in which a building is used, the representations created to depict it, and the memories associated with it. For example, at any given club, women and their affairs dominated the images and the flowery, domestic language used to describe the building. Women raised the money for construction, and were often the only persons to cross the threshold. Alternatively, the gendered character of a building could be overt, like at the Berkeley Women's City Club where images of women appear throughout. Carved figurines of the Virgin Mary, figural brackets, reclining sculptures, and bas-relief panels of women decorate niches, walls, and fireplaces. Visible structural forces also recall a woman's bodily experience moving through the building. Prominent, literal images of women and women's bodies, and the metaphor of structure, create direct psychic identification, marking the space as feminine in stone and concrete. Subtle or overt, gendered space informed the production of all women's clubhouses. It may also have contributed to their demise, as the next generation rejected separate, feminized, places, in favor of assimilation with men's values, symbols, and institutions.

Further, I submit that we can regard clubhouses collectively because the organizational boundaries between clubs were quite permeable. Many women held concurrent memberships in several clubs, and standardized operational practices across clubs and even regions were extremely common. Through *The Club Woman*, the official magazine of the GFWC, members shared information and best practices about the entire process of clubhouse building. Annual conventions included building exhibits to acquaint and instruct, and lectures by leading architects "well known to clubdom."³⁹

As Abigail A. Van Slyck demonstrates in *Free to All*, a history of Carnegie libraries, architectural history allows for a broad focus on the cultural landscape—the intersection of built forms and social life. In this dissertation I treat the landscape of women's clubs comprehensively, considering the clubhouses themselves, their neighborhoods, and the surrounding city or region. Architecture in this dissertation is defined as a process in which institutional priorities are translated into material form. As a result, architects do not always command the starring roles in the following narratives. I instead search out the priorities and experiences of the decision makers who hired the architects. In this dissertation I relate the architectural process of constructing clubhouses to the social process of constructing modern, organized womanhood. The material culture

³⁹ Adeline C. Lorbeer, "Clubhouses and Ground Exhibit, Interesting Feature," *The Club Woman* 14, no. 7 (April 1922); Mrs. Ingle Carpenter, "Clubhouse Pictures and Plans of Clubhouses Popular Exhibit," *The Club Woman* 14, no. 9 (June 1922).

of clubhouses provides a helpful framework for better understanding the motivations of the institutions that built them, and vice versa.

This dissertation focuses on California as exemplary of the nation as a whole and is organized into three case studies, each addressing a representative example of a women's club and their building project(s): the Friday Morning Club (a powerful and aggressive civic reform club in Los Angeles) and their two clubhouses, one from 1899 by Arthur Benton, and another from 1924 by Allison & Allison; the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco (an elite athletic club), 1915-1923, by Bliss & Faville; and the Berkeley Women's City Club (a shared community club center), from 1930 by Julia Morgan.⁴⁰ For this research I conducted site visits and consulted club meeting minutes and publications, architectural renderings, specifications, plans, correspondence, newspaper articles, oral histories, and photographs.

I chose these particular clubs for the similarities and differences between them. In comparison to others in California and nationwide these clubhouses are all expensive, large, urban, and represent ambitious building projects. Well-known, established architects designed all of them, though they are distinct from one another in program and in architectural vocabulary and thus show a range of variation within a building type. They are located in three different cities that were in varying developmental states at the time of construction.

The Friday Morning Club (FMC) and the Berkeley Women's City Club (BWCC) act as illustrative bookends to the overall story of the women's club movement. The pioneering, institutional FMC began in 1891, founded by the "mother" of women's clubs, and the businesslike BWCC was founded in 1927, directly informed by the missteps of the many clubs that came before and at the tail end of clubhouse construction in the U.S. Conveniently, I discovered over the course of my research that the BWCC Board of Directors attempted in 1928 to hire the very architects who had designed the FMC's second, 1924, clubhouse but were subverted simply by circumstance. Given the divergent fates of the two clubs, this sets up a convenient framework for comparison. The Woman's Athletic Club (WAC) falls between the FMC and the BWCC, built at the height of the clubhouse trend and unencumbered by the institutional ambitions of clubs like the FMC and the BWCC. The chapters in this dissertation proceed roughly in chronological order, detailing these structures built over three different decades. This sequence clarifies how the institutional priorities of women's clubs changed over time, and how their buildings reflect this change.

Each club existed for distinct reasons, and they are in disparate states of survival. The FMC has disbanded and its clubhouse stands vacant; the WAC rebranded itself as the Metropolitan Club and more or less maintains its original functionality as an exclusive, single-sex athletic club; the BWCC is now the Berkeley City Club, its clubhouse used

⁴⁰ Choosing only three representative clubs meant neglecting numerous fascinating, important, and canonical buildings. One of those is Irving Gill's La Jolla Woman's Club from 1914. Leaving out the La Jolla Woman's Club was a conscious choice made upon consideration of the cultural and architectural similarities with the Friday Morning Club: both clubhouses are Mission Revival, and both narratives center around one seminal female character who arrived in an empty frontier town and filled it with civic institutions. Other clubs I would have liked to have included are the Ebell Society of Oakland, one of the oldest women's clubs in the country, that built a Tudor Revival clubhouse in 1906; Julia Morgan's Saratoga Foothill Women's Club, 1915; Hazel Wood Waterman's Wednesday Club in San Diego, 1908; and Bliss & Faville's San Francisco Women's Building, 1927.

primarily for weddings and conferences but also as a mixed-gender social club. Thinking of these specific clubhouses in concert and in contrast to one another helped me to tease out how design decisions may have facilitated each club's survival or closure.

In chapter one I approach my study of the FMC within its larger regional context. Los Angeles (and Southern California in general) was in the process of defining and improving itself, and these circumstances presented an opportunity to club founders. Club members, working with boosters, businessmen, and reformers, could develop from scratch the civic institutions necessary to create a powerful, progressive city. In the process the FMC was transformed into one of the city's leading civic institutions. The club wielded its power from a series of two Spanish Colonial Revival clubhouses; the first opened in 1899 and was quickly outgrown. The second opened in 1924. Together the buildings signify the institutionalization of women's work in a diverse set of areas: children's education, sanitation, juvenile courts, women's suffrage, and others. The clubhouses also signify the Friday Morning Club's outward orientation toward the city of Los Angeles, and their efforts to build a better city.

Chapter two is on the inward-facing WAC, the first women's club in California designed on the model of a Renaissance *palazzo*, a style typically associated with men's clubs and meant to evoke associations of power and urbanity. In contrast to the FMC where women built civic institutions to demonstrate their influence, institution building for elite WAC women involved the ability to build like men—purely for leisure and exercise. I analyze the role of architecture in the club's ability to monitor and control access to class status in a rapidly changing city. I employ a geographer's methodology that considers space as another language for behavior, and explore how clubhouse design translated existing hierarchies into the built environment.⁴¹ In the case of the WAC, a lavish club building for wealthy white women did not just represent their place in San Francisco's social and political life. The acts of fundraising and publicity, the existence of their club's social and racial barriers to entry, along with the establishment of separate athletic clubs for working class women, were all systems of representation meant to inform society's notions of organized womanhood.

Chapter three details the efforts of the BWCC to professionalize the process of running a clubhouse. The BWCC effectively combined the FMC's and the WAC's approaches, with a clubhouse that looked outward to the local economy and also provided a cloistered environment for sociality and self-cultivation. The brainchild of an accountant and a women's club president, the BWCC aimed to address the issue of many clubs trying to maintain many clubhouses by creating a single, unifying center. Crucially, professional women managed the club's finances and operations; the general membership was only "barely conscious" of the management of their club home.⁴² Organizers saw their building as the female contribution to Berkeley's urban growth, commercial prosperity, and beautification. With their residential quarters and coed socializing the club attempted to appeal to professional women, especially the New Woman of the 1920s

⁴¹ Feminist geographer Daphne Spain's notion of gendered space illustrates this general concept: initial status differences create certain types of spaces; the resulting, institutionalized spatial segregation reinforces those initial advantages. At the WAC, the difference in status was not according to gender but according to class. Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

⁴² *Berkeley Women's City Club Bulletin*, August 1927, 4.

who had historically proven uninterested in club life. Further, in an effort to signify the continued relevance of women's clubs, the BWCC hired the consummate New Woman, the professional, independent, successful architect Julia Morgan, to design their Gothic-Romanesque clubhouse.

The critical importance of this study lies in its contribution to scholarship on architectural history, women's history, gender history, California history, and the Progressive movement. The historical record of women's clubs also has important implications for the women's movement today. Historians have argued that the achievements of feminism at the turn of the century—access to education, property ownership, and political rights—stemmed less from women's entry into the typically male domains of politics and professions than from separatism, the active creation of separate female institutions such as personal networks or rituals.⁴³ Another way to think about separatism is solidarity in place. Clubhouses were not just places of repose or entertainment but actually deeply important organizational forces that gave space to a disenfranchised community. Through their clubs and in their clubhouses women identified shared challenges and crafted proposed solutions. Clubhouses also provided space for mental health and stability. Even the most committed and vigilant activist needs a refuge, a place where they don't need to defend their beliefs or identity. This model remains relevant today for all second-class citizens looking to garner influence. Clubhouse construction projects connected women to mechanisms of power, and are tangible and telling examples of female institution building, in both senses of the word.

⁴³ See Estelle Freedman, "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930," *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3, (Autumn, 1979), 512-529.

Chapter One

The Friday Morning Club

Women in Los Angeles . . . are the leaders of most of the ‘movements.’ They vote, storm the curbstome tables to sign petitions of protest against immoral trafficking, attend citizens’ meetings, lecture on proposed ordinances and organize political clubs. Many of them hold public offices. Their pictures appear in the daily papers, labeled ‘leading citizens.’ Their support is sought by politicians. They bristle with genuine importance. They are a public factor to be reckoned with. Docility is not one of their virtues. Nor are politics and public improvement their only forte. Here . . . we get a whiff of the spirit of Los Angeles—the aggressive cologne of a village trying to improve itself.
— Willard Huntington Wright, 1913.¹

Introduction

When Friday Morning Club founder Caroline Severance arrived in 1875, Los Angeles was braced for change. Only recently a dusty, rough backwater, the small city of fewer than ten thousand people was anticipating the completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad that would link them to the rest of the country. The city’s newly settled and burgeoning middle class, led by its bankers, merchants, and land developers, were working furiously to generate new construction and prosperity. And they needed to work fast. Migrants were pouring in, drawn by the myths and promises of health and wealth out West:

A gentleman who has paid some attention to the arrivals . . . during the past six months informs the *Herald* that the increase in the population of Los Angeles valley during that period will average about five hundred per month. . . . The steamer arrivals average about two per week, and for months they have come loaded to their utmost capacity with passengers, three-fourths of whom are persons who come to remain. . . . There is room for all that may come. There is work and soil for all. Let them come along.²

In a city that was in the process of defining and improving itself, an opportunity arose for Severance and the likeminded women with whom she formed a club. They could work with boosters, businessmen, and reformers to develop the civic institutions necessary for a powerful, progressive city. In the process club members transformed themselves into an institution—an accepted and influential factor in civic life.

The Friday Morning Club wielded their power from a series of two Spanish Colonial Revival clubhouses. The first opened in 1899 and was quickly outgrown; the second opened in 1924. Their buildings are physical evidence of the institutionalization of women’s work in a diverse set of areas: children’s education, sanitation, juvenile

¹ Willard Huntington Wright, “Los Angeles: The Chemically Pure,” *The Smart Set: A Magazine of Cleverness*, January 1913.

² “Population and Prosperity,” *Los Angeles Herald*, March 30, 1875.

courts, women's suffrage, and others. The clubhouses also communicate their efforts to build tourism and urban growth. Just like male journalists and chambers of commerce, Severance and her successors used a set of architectural and rhetorical symbols to promote and lay claim to Southern California and its many charms. Taken together, the two buildings communicate the club's hopes for Los Angeles. With the force of their efforts, the city would be a place of perfect, health-giving weather with a distinct regional character, full of strong, open civic institutions and groups devoted to municipal, intellectual, and social improvement.

Beyond architectural style, the very shape of the organization and its 1924 building shared a mission—a huge, public, outward-facing institution with broadly defined civic agendas, each represented by a separately run department. The Planning Committee explicitly chose an architectural firm with experience designing large civic buildings.³ The building's main entryway is prominent from a distance, in the center of a colonnade that acts as a scaffold for signage. In the 1930s a lit marquee sign advertised the theater's current offerings. Inside, a vast lobby with towering ceiling branches out into areas for meetings and commercial purposes arrayed on different floors. During the 1920s a host of other clubs rented space in the massive building.

The clubhouse more closely resembles city hall than a private, upscale social club. Thus when club-based political action fell out of favor in the late 1920s and the Friday Morning Club necessarily scaled back civic activities in favor of socializing, the building could not serve its members accordingly. Unlike the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco or the Berkeley Women's City Club, the Friday Morning Club building was not set up to be used as an extension of member's homes—for entertaining, or exercise, or small-group socializing. The scale of the clubhouse is simply too large, with too many unbroken open spaces. Due in part to design decisions, the 1924 opening of the Friday Morning Club's grand new headquarters marked the start of the club's rapid decline.

Further, reflecting national trends in the late 1920s, club life did not appeal as much to the “New Woman” of the younger generation. She opted instead for more mixed-gender, less regulated forms of interaction. And American women in general were falling away from their organizational activities at the time, a result of the new ability to enter political or professional life directly, without an institutional conduit.

The second clubhouse still stands, but few realize that the quiet, unoccupied building represents decades of concerted effort to shape the city surrounding it. In that way, the Friday Morning Club is the consummate Los Angeles story. The city's tendency toward reinvention initially worked in the clubwomen's favor, providing a cultural and political climate tolerant of change. That same tendency also endorsed the inevitable shift away from their definition of what was modern and progressive, discarding the past in the operation of churning out an ever-evolving Los Angeles. Though if the Friday Morning Club's goal was to impress themselves on the history of their city, they undoubtedly succeeded. Their achievements—kindergartens, playgrounds, a juvenile court system, and more—are so hardwired into our notion of American civic offerings so as to appear almost inevitable.

Part I: Formation

³ Anastasia J. Christman, “The Best Laid Plans: Women's Clubs and City Planning in Los Angeles, 1890-1930” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2000), 144.

On April 16, 1891, Caroline Severance made her third and final attempt to inaugurate a women's club in her adopted hometown of Los Angeles (L.A.). Twice before, in 1878 and again in 1885, her efforts had stalled. Each nascent club had disbanded when Severance left for protracted stays in Boston. The city's population had grown by nine hundred percent since her first attempt in the 1870s (see figure 1.1); at fifty thousand people, it was now a healthy size to support a club.⁴ The number of white women in L.A. also had come close to equaling the number of white men: women represented around forty percent of the city's population in 1850 and around forty-six percent in 1890.⁵ Attitudes shifted as well in the booming city. The tens of thousands of people drawn by jobs and potential real estate fortunes brought with them an urbane attitude of commercial and infrastructural development, ushering out the old frontier mentality. Eastern immigrants were familiar with women's clubs from their home cities and had seen women enter the paid labor force in great numbers. By the 1890s, the notion of women organizing to converse about culture and current events was no longer considered radical.⁶

Severance's third try proved to be one of the most successful ventures in the history of women's clubs. Eleven women gathered in the upstairs parlor of the Hollenbeck Hotel, where they wrote and agreed to the constitution and bylaws of the Friday Morning Club (FMC).⁷ In less than a year the club boasted two hundred members. At its peak the FMC would become a household name in L.A., with almost three thousand members, and thousands more regularly attending meetings, forums, and events. A true civic organization, the FMC's progressive reform legacy would include suffrage for California women, kindergartens in public schools, the city's first mobile libraries, affordable housing for working women, a juvenile court system, and a large clubhouse visually and operationally representative of their ideal city. In this most influential and long-lived women's club in southern California history, Severance's club ideals would find a permanent home.

Severance had moved to L.A. from Boston in 1875 with her husband Theodoric, a retired banker. They arrived just ahead of the Southern Pacific Railroad, at a time when most easterners still dismissed remote and under-populated southern California as part of the Great American Desert. Mining had left a legacy that colored eastern perceptions. The state was looked upon simultaneously as lawless, without any "civilized institutions," and also a place of opportunity and republican rebirth.⁸ By this assessment,

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, "Population Density, Los Angeles City, 1850-1930," accessed October 19, 2015, <https://www.census.gov/>.

⁵ J. C. G. Kennedy Superintendent of Census, *Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 29; U.S. Census Bureau, "Population Density by Sex, Los Angeles, 1850-1890," accessed June 20, 2016, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/>.

⁶ Gayle Ann Gullett, *Becoming Citizens: The Emergence and Development of the California Women's Movement, 1880-1911*, *Women in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 24.

⁷ Their stated purpose was to convene each week to "consider and discuss subjects of general interest, whether literary, social, or educational," but they very quickly became a reform-oriented organization. Clark Davis, "Clubwomen of Los Angeles," in *Encyclopedia of Women in the American West*, ed. Gordon Morris Bakken and Brenda Farrington (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2003), 75.

⁸ Caspar T Hopkins, *Common Sense Applied to the Immigrant Question Showing Why the "California Immigrant Union" Was Founded and What It Expects to Do* (San Francisco: Turnbull & Smith, 1869), 39; 17

a lack of cultural authority was just as important as a lack of strong infrastructure capable of sustaining rapid growth and development. These circumstances presented an enormous opportunity for the boosters, businessmen, and reformers of both sexes who would soon act to shape the city, rhetorically and materially, in their idealized image.

In fact, L.A. had already made enormous gains in the decade before Severance's arrival. Founded as a Spanish pueblo in 1781, the City of Angels grew slowly for a century. It was still a rough and raucous frontier town when annexed by the United States in 1848 and incorporated as a municipality in 1850. Rancheros flourished as Northern Californians bought up southern California cattle, but prosperity also brought bandits, gamblers, drifters, and hustlers. Then came the Civil War, and cattle ranching virtually halted as the frontier retreated. Shortly thereafter followed floods, a drought, a smallpox outbreak, and vigilantism. The city's rough-and-tumble spirit was fading. Midwestern migrants arrived in the newly sobered city in the early 1870s and a middle class of bankers, merchants, and land developers set about to generate an image of law and order in their adopted city.⁹ In 1867 L.A. was described as "a town of crooked, ungraded, unpaved streets; low, lean, rickety adobe houses, with asphaltum roofs, and here and there an indolent native, hugging the inside of a blanket."¹⁰ By 1876 L.A. was more like a small Midwestern city, with a public library and a volunteer fire department, paved streets, five different newspapers, gas lamps, hotels, and a college, hospital, public school, and a one-story city hall.¹¹ Women's clubs, specifically the FMC, would be responsible for much of the strong civic infrastructure built in the following decades, improvements sold in terms of regional growth, political reform, and an idealized image of the growing city.

Severance and Theodoric arrived just as these symbols of city life were transforming the small ranching town. To the reform-minded couple L.A. was ripe for further development still. Conservative frontier attitudes—and uneven gender ratios—continued to shroud the issue of women's rights, and outside of church activities, social life for middle class women was restricted to paying calls. Severance had gained experience working in abolition, women's rights, and benevolent associations in Cleveland in the 1840s and 50s, "during the golden age of adult education in America, when the lyceum was in full swing and men and women had the leisure and the desire to listen to the sages of the day."¹² Upon her removal to Boston in 1855 Severance joined Susan B. Anthony in organizing the American Equal Rights Association in 1866 and Lucretia Mott in organizing the Free Religious Association in 1867.¹³

Henry Knight, *Tropic of Hopes: California, Florida, and the Selling of American Paradise, 1869-1929*. (University Press of Florida, 2013), 8.

⁹ For more on the history of Los Angeles see Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 1973), originally published in 1946 as *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land*; Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹⁰ Sam Hall Kaplan and Julius Shulman, *LA Lost & Found: An Architectural History of Los Angeles* (New York: Crown, 1987), 35.

¹¹ The five newspapers included the *Herald* and the *Express*, as well as the local German, French, and Spanish newspapers. Thelma Lee Hubbell and Gloria R. Lothrop, "The Friday Morning Club: A Los Angeles Legacy," *Southern California Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (March 1, 1968), 59–90; Kaplan and Shulman, *LA Lost & Found*, 33-37.

¹² Mary S. Gibson, *Caroline M. Severance, Pioneer*. (Los Angeles, 1925), 7-15.

¹³ Lothrop, "Strength Made Stronger," 151.

In order to further the education of more women and also to make reform efforts work more efficiently, Severance founded the New England Woman's Club (NEWC) in 1868, the same year that Jane Cunningham Croly started Sorosis in New York. The NEWC and Sorosis are considered the nation's first major urban women's clubs.¹⁴ Severance and Croly were the first to deploy the ideology of Domestic Feminism fully, invoking ladies' superior morality and domesticity to validate direct action to erode sexism.¹⁵ NEWC women engaged in specific reform efforts, founding a women's horticultural school, a store selling sensible garments, and lobbying to elect women onto the Boston school board, all during a time when women were not even permitted to vote even for school board members.¹⁶

The FMC's early focus on the literary and cultural education of their members, combined with local projects of social service, mirrors the work of the NEWC and other clubs forming around the country in the 1890s. Severance's new club would, like the NEWC, partner with men when it benefitted their cause, work in specific areas such as education and politics, and promote their reform work more broadly as an effort to improve the lives of all women and all humankind. Any (white) woman of L.A. and the vicinity willing to work on the FMC's committees and listen to its papers was eligible for membership and admitted after endorsement from two current members. Their intention was to "welcome all classes and conditions of women" so that they "might become familiar with their outlook and needs," but in practice, members were typically middle or upper middle class nonprofessionals.¹⁷ Protestant women made up the bulk of club membership, though Catholic and Jewish women were also admitted.¹⁸ Consistent with the policies of similar clubs of the day, black and Hispanic women were excluded. Members were often migrants from the East and Midwest of the country; as such, they were already familiar with the work of clubs and settlement houses attempting to ameliorate the social side effects of industrialization in their native cities. Some especially socially prominent women joined up, as did some known for their experience promoting suffrage and other measures for gender equality.¹⁹

The FMC's growth was immediate and explosive, swelling from eighty-seven members at the end of 1891 to four hundred by 1900. Conscious that the wider the variety of projects offered, the wider the variety of participants, Severance divided the

¹⁴ Clark Davis, "An Era and Generation of Civic Engagement: The Friday Morning Club in Los Angeles, 1891-1931," *Southern California Quarterly*, 2002, 143.

¹⁵ Domestic feminism would also bring about female self-improvement; see Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980), 15, 34-35.

¹⁶ Joan M. Jensen, "After Slavery: Caroline Severance in Los Angeles," *Southern California Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (1966), 179.

¹⁷ Caroline M. Seymour Severance, *The Mother of Clubs: Caroline M. Seymour Severance; an Estimate and an Appreciation*, ed. Ella Giles Ruddy (Los Angeles: Baumgardt Publishing Co., 1906).

¹⁸ Historians have asserted that the city's relatively homogenous ethnic and religious base—soundly middle class, white, and predominantly Protestant—enabled L.A. women to organize more successfully than the more diverse San Francisco women. Joan M. Jensen and Gloria Ricci Lothrop, *California Women: A History*, Golden State Series (San Francisco: Boyd & Fraser Pub. Co, 1987), 35.

¹⁹ Socially prominent women included Margaret Sartori, wife of a banker; Eliza Otis, wife of the owner of the *Los Angeles Times*; and Olive Cole, wife of a former U.S. senator. Gullett, *Becoming Citizens*, 29; Judith Raftery, "Caroline Marie Seymour Severance: Activist, Organizer, and Reformer," in *The Human Tradition in California*, ed. Clark Davis and David Iglar (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 107.

club into committees of interest with corresponding administrative structures. This move toward bureaucratization also reflected the Progressive Era organizational revolution occurring around the FMC. In Chicago and other American cities, the Progressive emphasis on efficiency and rationalized administration as an antidote to corruption was resulting in complex hierarchies and bureaucratic structures in government and corporations alike. The organizational revolution swept through clubs as well. Clubwomen around the country had affiliated in 1890 under the umbrella of the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), and individual states organized shortly thereafter. California clubwomen founded the California Federation of Women's Clubs (CFWC) in 1900. Divided up into committees and subcommittees, certain designated factions of the FMC offered self-improvement: discussions on art and literature, and theatrical or musical presentations. Others engaged directly in reform work: temperance, suffrage, and education. Variety was also a tactic intended to rouse uninitiated women into public action. Exposure to the more militant members in the form of debates, public speaking, and parliamentary practice, softened by lectures and literature on general themes, would ensure a comfortable, gradual conversion for members who viewed reform efforts as extreme.²⁰

In its first eight years of existence the clubwomen met in at least six different places, none of which was their own. In the 1880s the first of many real estate booms had swept L.A. Drawn by the promise of prosperity and health-giving weather in the West, Americans came in record numbers, driving up the cost of the many empty sandlots ready for settlement. Real estate speculation peaked in 1887 and fizzled out within a year. Thus during the FMC's earliest years, in the wake of the recent bust, rents were inexpensive even downtown. By 1894, however, L.A. was experiencing another boom, courtesy of a concerted publicity campaign directed by a new and determined Chamber of Commerce, an increase in oil speculation, and the start of construction on the L.A. harbor. More than fifty thousand people arrived in L.A. between 1890 and 1900, doubling the city's population and driving up rents once again. Clubs like the FMC had to be prepared to move often.²¹ After gathering in the parlors of three successive high-end hotels along Spring Street they leased rooms in the Potomac office building, a decided improvement because they were then able to store chairs and other items for their weekly meetings. Next was Saint Vincent's College, a few blocks south, and then on to the Owens Block office building, where they occupied the entire second floor on an \$80-per-month lease for five and a half years. Gaslights and a telephone lent their organization an aura of professionalism.²²

²⁰ Heather A. Haveman et al, "The Winds of Change: The Progressive Movement and the Bureaucratization of Thrift," *American Sociological Review* 72, no. 1 (2007), 127; Davis, "Clubwomen of Los Angeles;" Dora Haynes to Caroline Severance, n.p., n.d., box 18, Caroline M. Severance Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Mrs. Burton [Martha] Williamson, *Ladies' Clubs and Societies in Los Angeles in 1892* (Los Angeles: E. R. King, 1925), 11.

²¹ Organized to fund and develop the selling of L.A., the Chamber of Commerce recognized the interconnectedness of infrastructure, tourism, the agricultural sector, and the business elite. They aimed to foster and encourage commerce, induce immigration and settlement, and generally to promote the city's business interests. Within a few years, the group included over 500 of the "leading businessmen, capitalists and professional men of the city" and had disseminated 165,000 pamphlets and 50,000 bulletins throughout the Northeast. Knight, *Tropic of Hopes*, 161; *Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 1894, and January 1, 1897.

²² Ella Giles Ruddy, *The Mother of Clubs: Severance, The Mother of Clubs*, 45; Hubbell and Lothrop, "The Friday Morning Club: A Los Angeles Legacy."

The FMC was, in Severance's words, "peripatetic" throughout the 1890s, yet they always orbited the same six square blocks. Male and female social and business organizations alike wanted to be near the city's evolving powerful civic institutions and thus congregated in the shadow of a new City Hall, built in 1888 on Broadway between Second and Third streets.²³ Five out of the club's six temporary quarters 1891-1899 were within sight of City Hall, and the sixth was only four blocks away (see figure 1.2). This was a conscious choice on behalf of the club's Board of Directors. They had specified to their rental agent that their location should be "bounded by 1st and 5th [Streets] on the North and South, and Spring and Hill [Streets] on the East and West."²⁴ By these guidelines they would never be more than three blocks from City Hall. They would also be near the nascent commercial and financial hubs of L.A.²⁵ From the outset FMC members strategically sited themselves near the centers of civic, commercial, and financial power. In part this location was merely practical. Their club was the locus for hundreds, later thousands, of women traveling from multiple geographic and political points, and downtown was geographically central. Many members lived in the upscale West Adams residential neighborhood, connected by electric streetcar to the central business district.²⁶ Once downtown, members would also need easy access to offices at City Hall, meetings with the Chamber of Commerce, and philanthropic projects in the impoverished neighborhoods circling downtown. Yet the physical link to largely male-dominated, often partisan, sites of power also reflects their organizational aspirations.

FMC members drove social change in cross-sex coalitions, working with male boosters, businessmen, and fellow reformers to fashion L.A. in their ideal image. Early on, they founded the city's first kindergarten and convinced officials to make it a permanent part of the public school system. A host of other social services followed: libraries, school lunch programs, daycare centers, after-school playgrounds, and medical and dental services, all established or funded by clubwomen. They partnered with men on projects in many arenas: civic improvement and municipal reform (sponsoring the first female member of the school board; establishing a juvenile court system with rehabilitative probation officers). They drafted labor and public health legislation (establishing pure milk standards), and managed welfare programs and educational institutions (affordable workingwomen's housing; English classes for immigrant mothers).²⁷ They were not opposed to seeking the support of men friendly to their reforms when it would help their cause.

²³ N.B.: Broadway was at the time called Fort Street. Cory Stargel and Sarah Stargel, *Vanishing Los Angeles County* (San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 94.

²⁴ "Letter to Messrs. Morgan and Wall," January 29, 1897, Scrapbook 2, FMC Ephemera, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

²⁵ Both the Chamber of Commerce and the Board of Trade were located one block north of City Hall, and a financial district was emerging one block over on Spring street.

²⁶ Christman, "The Best Laid Plans," 108; Marshall Stimson, "Manuscript for Autobiography "Fun, Fights and Fiestas," n.d., pages 31-32,40, Marshall Stimson Collection, Box 4, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Severance, *The Mother of Clubs*, 100.

²⁷ The placement of club member Margaret Hughes on the school board represents the FMC's entry into politics. After Hughes's appointment the club became increasingly involved in local politics and came to see itself as a legitimate participant in political debates regarding public services. Mrs. Henry Christian Crowther, *High Lights: The Friday Morning Club, Los Angeles, California, April 1891-1938* (Los Angeles: Bundy Quill & Press, 1939); Christman, "The Best Laid Plans;" FMC Yearbooks housed at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Part II: Arthur Benton and The Mission Revival

In order to establish themselves as an institution in the incipient city the clubwomen needed permanent quarters. What's more, rent was steep and unpredictable, and neither hotel parlors nor office buildings had space appropriate for presenting papers from a podium, or for outside speakers to formally present their expertise. The charter members of the FMC wrote the intention to build into the constitution: "the object of this association shall be, primarily, to become an organized social center for united thought and action, and, ultimately, to furnish a central resting place for the convenience of its members."²⁸ As such, when the second floor of the Owens Block became too crowded for their flourishing membership in 1897 FMC president Margaret Sartori was charged with finding larger accommodations. She set forth three options to her fellow clubwomen. One, continue to rent but secure a larger space; two, lease a structure purpose-built for the club on a local property owner's land; or three, Sartori's recommendation, build and own for themselves. Option three caused a stir. Sartori considered it a measure of good faith that an "outsider" was willing to build for them. As such, they could certainly have the same faith in themselves and circumvent the middleman. Some were distressed by the suggestion of such a financial burden. Some even "became so alarmed at the bugbear of personal liability that several had resigned and others announc[ed] a like intention." By a vote the club decided on a combination of options two and three. They would adopt a plan frequently employed by the Masonic and other fraternal organizations: create a separate building association, controlled by the organization but financially separate from it.²⁹

The building would address the FMC's "need of better accommodations not only for themselves but for the other women's organizations of this city." It would be "imposing, beautiful, and commodious," not "ornate," and without "any shoddy display."³⁰ Though building a clubhouse would not be the FMC's ultimate measure of success; it was instead just the medium through which they established themselves as an L.A. institution. Their clubhouse would more closely resemble city hall, open to the public, instead of a private, upscale social club. Built during a moment of tremendous cultural and technological modernization, the clubhouse would also address the ambivalence that accompanied major change around the turn of the twentieth century. The Woman's Club House would accommodate modern and antimodern sentiments using the Spanish Colonial Revival, an architectural idiom that simultaneously expressed both nostalgia and progress.³¹

²⁸ Jane E. Collier, "Early Club Life in Los Angeles," *Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California and Pioneer Register, Los Angeles* 4, no. 3 (January 1, 1899), 216–22.

²⁹ Mrs. Joseph F. (Margaret) Sartori, "Historical Essay in FMC Minute Books," October 20, 1905, Album 32, FMC Ephemera, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Christman, "The Best Laid Plans," 110; Sartori, "Historical Essay in FMC Minute Books"; "Opening Meeting: Large Gathering of Members of Friday Morning Club. President's Address--Glances Backward and Forward--The Club's Purpose and Responsibilities," *Los Angeles Times*, October 2, 1897.

³⁰ "Clubs of Women," *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 1900.

³¹ The history of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture is discussed in David Gebhard, "The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895-1930)," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 26, no. 2 (1967), 131–47.

Interested club members formed a stockholding corporation, the Woman's Club House Association, to raise money to build. The Association in turn would work with an elected FMC House Committee to cooperate on plans, specifications, cost, and other details, and lease the building to the FMC for five years at \$115 per month. The FMC would manage the building known as the Woman's Club House and sublet to tenants they selected. The Association arranged financing for the purchase of two lots on Figueroa Street and selected Arthur Bennett Benton as their architect.³²

Similar to many FMC members, Benton was a Midwestern transplant who became a prominent arbiter of L.A.'s cultural and aesthetic character. He was also an acquaintance of Caroline Severance and thus an obvious choice. A native of Topeka, Kansas, he studied architecture at the Topeka School of Art and Design and worked as a draftsman for the Union Pacific Railroad before moving to L.A. in 1891. He worked again as a draftsman upon his arrival, first for Sidney I. Haas and then for William C. Aiken. Haas was one of the architects responsible for the design of City Hall (1887–1888), and both he and Aiken were prominent figures in the local architectural community.³³ Benton became a junior partner in Aiken's firm, staying from 1893 to 1896. While practicing with Aiken, Benton's work was primarily residential, with a few civic and commercial projects.³⁴ In 1896 he bought out Aiken and practiced solo for the remainder of his career. While working for Haas in the early 1890s, Benton became involved in the architectural movement advocating for the development of an indigenous California style: the Mission Revival, with its stucco construction, distinctive arches, terra cotta ornament, and sentimental allusions to the region's history of Spanish colonialism. Based on a historical myth created by newcomers to the region, the Mission Revival promoted a romantic Spanish past as a Southern California selling point.³⁵

For decades colonialism had been California's chief architectural attribute. Successive waves of migrants brought with them the building traditions of the region from which they emigrated. In the nineteenth century this meant bringing west the current architectural ideas of the Atlantic seaboard. Hence the midcentury Monterey style combining adobe construction techniques with Greek Revival and Federal architecture, then numerous phases of Italianate, and in the 1890s, the neo-Romanesque architecture popularized in Boston by architect H.H. Richardson. Architect Elmer Grey commented that, when it came to commercial architecture, "Southern California has nothing new to say."³⁶ The first edition of the *Architectural Record* also recognized that California required a style distinct from the East Coast's successive revivals; it needed a style rooted in what made it unique.³⁷ It was the promotional fervor of the 1880s and 90s, though, that

³² "Woman's Club House Association," n.d., Box 83, folder 11, Caroline M. Severance Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

³³ Karen J. Weitze, "Arthur B. Benton," in *Toward a Simpler Way of Life: The Arts & Crafts Architects of California*, ed. Robert Winter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 191.

³⁴ Benton designed a Unitarian Church in Pomona, a YMCA in Santa Monica, and a hotel in Hollywood while working for Aiken. *Builder and Contractor of Los Angeles* contains around fifty listings for Aiken and Benton between March 1893 and December 1894.

³⁵ Both Benton and his friend Sumner P. Hunt were on Haas' staff in 1892 when Haas (unsuccessfully) submitted a Mission Revival design for the California Building planned for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Weitze, "Arthur B. Benton," 191.

³⁶ Elmer Grey, "Architecture in Southern California," *Architectural Record* 17, no. 1 (January 1905).

³⁷ Barr Ferre, "An 'American Style' of Architecture," *Architectural Record* 1, no. 1 (July 1891), 42.

really ushered in the search for a regionally specific tradition. After the completion of the railroad, boosters, real estate speculators, boards of trade, and chambers of commerce embarked on massive promotional campaigns to sell the region. For a population of newcomers looking to assert parity with the traditional cultural centers of the East, the crumbling missions became convenient symbols of the region's storied past.

Missions generally had solid, massive walls made of adobe bricks and with buttressing; a large patio with fountain or garden; broad, unornamented wall surfaces; wide, yawning eaves, and low-pitched tile roofs (see figure 1.3). The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century religious outposts had been established by Catholic friars to force Christianity upon the native populations. Spanish soldiers captured and enslaved thousands of American Indians to perform agricultural work at the missions, where the sanitation was wretched and the diet inadequate. Missionization proved deadly for the native population: from 1776 to 1834 the Franciscan padres baptized four thousand and four hundred Indians in the Mission San Juan Capistrano and buried over three thousand.³⁸ The buildings had been mostly abandoned since secularization and were decaying into ruins by midcentury. In their abandoned state the missions acquired a nostalgic patina, enabling authors of guidebooks and other forms of promotional literature to rewrite the painful and ignominious history of missions in completely fictionalized, sentimental terms: "Dreamy and dutiful daughter of Spain. . . . Practically the sole staunch survivors of those old days of romance are the venerable Missions."³⁹ Millions of pamphlets paraded images of pious, gentle Fathers working alongside peaceful natives in fruitful agrarian settings. A shining whitewashed mission crowned by a bell tower completed the image.

The region's seeming foreignness played a crucial role in selling this Spanish fantasy past. Writer Charles Dudley Warner observed, "The most consistent migration pull exercised by the Golden State throughout its history within the Union has been its externality, socially as well as physically, which has allowed California to seem foreign to the American type and tradition."⁴⁰ With its semi-tropical climate and exotic Spanish history, although technically *in* the United States, Southern California was not entirely *of* the United States. Accounts like Helen Hunt Jackson's of Mission San Juan Capistrano conveyed another time and place: "Wandering in room after room, court after court, through corridors with red-tiled roofs and hundreds of broad Roman arches, over fallen pillars, and through carved doorways, whose untrodden thresholds have sunk out of sight in summer grasses, one asks himself if he be indeed in America."⁴¹

Moreover, the Mission Revival married California's exotic characteristics with the stabilizing forces of U.S. control, effectively vindicating past and current forms of colonialism. An 1882 guidebook put out by the Southern Pacific Railroad entitled *California for Health, Pleasure and Residence* trumpeted "the first tropical land which our race has thoroughly mastered and made itself at home in. There, and there only, on this planet, the traveller [sic] and resident may enjoy the delights of the tropics, without their penalties . . . with perfect security and comfort in travelling arrangements; strange

³⁸ Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 1973), 29.

³⁹ Charles Fletcher Lummis, *The Old Missions*, Los Angeles (Los Angeles: Southwest Museum, 1888).

⁴⁰ Charles Dudley Warner and Thomas R Lounsbury, *The Complete Writings of Charles Dudley Warner* (Hartford, The American Publishing Company, 1904), 269-271.

⁴¹ Helen Hunt Jackson, "Father Junipero and His Work," *Century*, May 1883, 10.

customs, but neither lawlessness nor semi-barbarism.”⁴² Contemporary rhetoric explicitly referred to missionaries as the first colonists of California, extolling their work in laying the foundation of civilization in the American West.⁴³ The Mission Revival suggested continuity with this tradition, placing the newest colonizers of California at the end of a linear history of improvement.⁴⁴ At first there were the ignorant natives, who were civilized by the gentle Spanish, who—by way of a Mexican interlude—gave way to the intrepid Yankees, who, in turn, drastically improved the region’s cultural and economic condition.⁴⁵ In this way, the Mission Revival helped formalize and sanction the latest version of transformational settlement in L.A.: a modern metropolis settled by East Coast and Midwestern transplants.

Architects began using the Mission Revival in hotel design in the 1880s, and in 1894 Benton’s friend Sumner P. Hunt designed the first mission-style school in California. The notion of Mission Revival schools as salubrious settings for learning dovetailed perfectly with another key element in the promotion of Southern California: a place of perfect, health-giving weather. Architects cited climate, quality of light, educational requirements, possibility for creating open spaces, and earthquake safety when designing Mission Revival schools.⁴⁶ The style came to dominate L.A.’s architectural scene for nearly twenty years, especially in civic buildings: libraries, railroad stations, clubs, and hotels.⁴⁷

Use of the Mission Revival style during this period went hand in hand with the preservation, restoration, and popularization of the original missions themselves. Benton and Hunt shared a mutual friend in the chief figure in this effort, regionalist and social arbitrator Charles Fletcher Lummis.⁴⁸ Lummis shrewdly noted in his regional magazine *Land of Sunshine* (funded by the Chamber of Commerce and claiming fifty thousand readers after only one year in print) that the missions were the “best capital Southern California has.”⁴⁹ Benton published often in *Land of Sunshine*, and also wrote for another

⁴² Charles Nordhoff, *California for Health, Pleasure, and Residence: A Book for Travellers and Settlers* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1882), 9.

⁴³ W. B. Tyler, *Old Missions: California* (San Francisco: Bancroft Co., 1890); John T. Doyle, “The Missions of Alta California,” *Century*, January 1891, 402.

⁴⁴ This concept is drawn from Eric Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger’s “invented tradition,” defined as a set of practices or symbols that seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁴⁵ The Mexican Era of L.A., 1821–1848, was not necessary to the propagation of the Mission myth and was thus largely omitted.

⁴⁶ Sally Sims Stokes, “In a Climate like Ours: The California Campuses of Allison & Allison,” *California History* 84, no. 4 (October 1, 2007), 38.

⁴⁷ Civic structures built in the mission style during this period include A. Page Brown’s St. Claire Club in San Jose, 1893; George W. Maher’s Fresno civic water tower, 1894; T.W. Griffith’s A.K. Smiley Public Library in the Redlands, 1897-99. Weitze, *California’s Mission Revival*, 66, 100. Gebhard notes that Mission Revival’s remarkable adaptability is due to the fact that the specific historic elements were few in number, and that these elements had little to do with the plan and structure of the building. Gebhard, “The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895-1930).”

⁴⁸ Lummis was married to physician and active FMC member Dr. Dorothea Rhodes Lummis from 1880 to 1890. Charles sought a divorce in 1890, which Dorothea granted. Dorothea, Lummis, and his new wife maintained friendly relations after. She became Dr. Dorothea Rhodes Lummis Moore in the mid 1890s. Gullett, *Becoming Citizens*, 141-44.

⁴⁹ Charles F. Lummis, “In the Lion’s Den,” *Land of Sunshine* 3, no. 3 (August 1895), 133.

California magazine, *Architect and Engineer*, on the suitability of Spanish Colonial building traditions as a basis for an appropriate California architecture. Speaking on the value of restoration, Benton said, “The commercial value of the Missions is nearly as great as their architectural and historic worth. They advertise the State as nothing else can.”⁵⁰ Lummis joined Benton and Hunt in forming the California Landmarks Club in 1895, one of the first preservationist groups in the nation. Formally dedicated to the restoration and preservation of missions and other historic monuments in Southern California, they announced, “Any man or woman, anywhere, who cares a dollar’s worth for history and romance is welcome to membership. [Dues go] net to the preservation of the noblest antiquities in the United States.”⁵¹ Informally, they were dedicated to propagandizing the missions both at home and nationally. Landmarks Club membership tripled between 1895 and 1904. Female members were actively recruited: Severance herself belonged, as did iconoclastic feminist writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Phoebe Apperson Hearst, philanthropist, newspaper owner, and first president of the women’s *Century Club of California*.⁵²

Benton and Hunt served as the Landmarks Club’s architects and together worked to stabilize the moldering missions of the region (see figure 1.4). Benton became an active promoter of the Mission Revival, designing hotels, theaters, and clubs. Like other architects working in the style, he did not draw upon individual missions as models but rather he conjured up the mission vision with simple arcades, stepped, scalloped gable ends (often with a quatrefoil window), tiled roofs, bell towers, and, most important, broad, uninterrupted exterior surfaces of rough stucco.

Benton was thus an obvious choice for the club and the Mission Revival a fashionable and fitting style for their club building. Built at a cost of \$14,000, the Benton-designed Mission Revival Woman’s Club House officially opened in January 1899 at 940 Figueroa Street (see figure 1.5).⁵³ It is a broad, large two-story building made to look even larger by its encircling arcades. The porch that runs across the front and extends around the sides provides a visual transition between street or sidewalk and building, offers shelter, and creates a transitional space where members could linger. The tower, stepped gables, tile roof, round arches, and stucco walls read unequivocally “mission.” Inside, a tongue and groove ceiling with heavy beam timber truss in the auditorium reads “Spanish” and historic. A *campanario* (bell wall) on the exterior drives home the Hispanicized theme, for which Benton attempted to secure an authentic mission bell.⁵⁴ Inside, the plan is informal and open. A large living hall connects to other first-floor rooms through wide doorways (see figures 1.6, 1.7, and 1.8). Furnishings are frank and

⁵⁰ Arthur B. Benton, “The California Mission and Its Influence Upon Pacific Coast Architecture,” *Architect and Engineer* 24 (February 1911), 74-75; Weitze, *California’s Mission Revival*, 93.

⁵¹ “To Conserve the Missions and Other Historic Landmarks of Southern California,” *Land of Sunshine: A Southern California Magazine* v.11-12 (1899-1900). Each monthly issue of the journal typically reported on the activities of the Landmarks Club.

⁵² “The Landmarks Club,” *Land of Sunshine* 6 (Jan. 1897), 83.

⁵³ In 1899 Severance published an article on architecture saying “the man or the woman who selects the architect, is responsible for him and his order of work.” We can thus infer the FMC’s involvement in their project. Severance, *The Mother of Clubs*, 84-6.

⁵⁴ Benton wrote to Lummis, “I have prepared a place in the Woman’s Clubhouse gable for a small bell—can any of the old bells be had?” Arthur B. Benton, Letter to Lummis, October 23, 1899, File entitled “Benton, Arthur Burnett, 1899-1905,” M.S.1.1.316, Southwest Museum, Los Angeles.

simple, applying the principles of the American Arts and Crafts movement. There is a seven hundred-seat auditorium with stage, a large reception room, banquet hall, library, several small parlors, a designated male smoking room in the basement, and an office for the FMC secretary. Back outside, multiple patios and deep arcades allow for the outdoor living for which Southern California was so famous. The only ornamentation is supplied by vines, which were allowed to overtake the primary façade and drape down into the negative space of each arch along the front porch (see figure 1.9). Lush gardens, including tall palm trees and a fountain, contribute to the idealized, Mediterranean air that the FMC worked to cultivate (see figures 1.10 and 1.11).

With its foliage and emphasis on what would later be called outdoor living, the Woman's Club House gave form to another potent myth about Southern California: its temperate climate and bountiful resources made the region America's Mediterranean. Rich in both nature and history, the Mediterranean signified outdoor living *and* high culture. Joining the ranks of boosters, journalists, and guidebook authors, Severance wrote rhapsodically about the similarity of Southern California to Italy. She sometimes used the term "tropical." But conscious of the potential for *tropical* to imply a "wild, defiant luxuriance which could never be subdued by industry" and heat that "would sap the Northern European sources of American will," turning industrious immigrants into loafers, Severance consistently tempered her talk of the sun with symbols of order and civilization.⁵⁵

Severance and the FMC thus tacitly likened the region to Arcadia, a found place of fertile nature, ripe for development. In an article entitled "The New Italy" Severance described L.A. as such:

Our valleys are still green, in the dry season, with orange groves and other orchards, with alfalfa fields and vegetable gardens, or rich with a golden brown that pleases the eye of artist and poet. . . . While the heat may seem severe under the open sky, the shelter of roof, tree, or umbrella, makes it enjoyable. . . . Its crowning attraction to many intending tourists and residents is its life and enterprise as a commercial and railroad center,—destined perhaps to be the capital city of a new state of Southern California. Think of the charm of a land where one's windows and doors may stand open day and night; where one may sit upon the broad veranda, taking in health, beauty, perfume and music the livelong day!⁵⁶

The Woman's Club House was then a complement to Arcadian L.A. In an article entitled "The Beauties of Los Angeles" Severance wrote "A health-seeking and beauty-loving population needs to be well fed and housed and to be entertained, mentally as well as physically. . . . For those to whom nature has administered with such lavish hands, it

⁵⁵ In opposition to Kevin Starr's claim that "the semi-tropical comparison collapsed under scientific scrutiny," Henry Knight argues that in the lexicon of the times, Spain, Italy, and Greece were "semi-tropical countries." Charles Nordhoff's *California for Health, Pleasure, and Residence* calls California both "semi-tropical" and "the Italy of this continent." Other examples of this abound. Knight, *Tropic of Hopes*, 9; Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 45-46.

⁵⁶ Severance, "The New Italy," *The Mother of Clubs: Caroline M. Seymour Severance; an Estimate and an Appreciation*, ed. Ella Giles Ruddy (Los Angeles: Baumgardt Publishing Co., 1906), 100-104.

should be easy to complete the charms at hand.”⁵⁷ As such the Woman’s Club House ultimately defers to nature. It does not take up its entire building lot. Instead it is meant to be experienced on the exterior, in its “regal” setting, “so delicious with mountain and ocean ozone, so full of the music of bird and the perfume of perpetual bloom.”⁵⁸

With the Mediterranean idiom the FMC celebrated a bucolic, Arcadian ideal of L.A.; with the Mission Revival they anointed themselves the new colonizers and wrote themselves into the city’s history. Both myths were used in the service of promoting growth and industrialization. At the same time, the myths were reassuring symbols of harmony and hierarchy for those overwhelmed by growth and industrialization. Like the nation as a whole, California around the turn of the twentieth century was swept by the forces of modernization. For those to whom modern culture, with its ethos of industrial technology and maximum productivity, felt overwhelming, there was palpable nostalgia for the simpler golden age of the past.⁵⁹ In a rapidly changing environment in which women were working with men to transform L.A. into a drastically more culturally modern place, a pre-modern reference like Arcadia helped make more palatable the very modern phenomenon of politically active women. The image of the mission then worked as a kind of mediator, connecting an unsullied, natural Arcadia with the brave new world of modern, industrial California. The use of these two myths in architectural idiom thus helped qualify the FMC’s institutional, modern existence.

The FMC also moved beyond architectural cues to advocate for L.A. in clear marketing terms. They understood the importance of tying their club’s fate to L.A.’s in order to have a stake in the city’s political future. In an article said to have had “wide influence in the inauguration of local improvements,” Severance wrote:

So beautiful for situation, between its guardian mountain ranges and the smiling sea, so wonderful in its resources and its possibilities . . . one cannot reasonably doubt that its manifest destiny is to be a world sanitarium. . . . Our climate, which makes possible a constant out-of-door life for fully eleven months out of twelve, is surely as nearly ideal as this planet of ours affords. . . . And most certainly it is worthy of our united effort in making it known abroad and in utilizing all its desirable features.⁶⁰

Through this kind of promotionalism FMC members engaged in an ongoing process of social and cultural transformation. At the same time, this was a rare nineteenth-century moment when the goals of male groups aligned with women’s. Starting in the 1880s men like Benton and Lummis—through clubs, local periodicals, and working with representatives of railroads, chambers of commerce, state agencies, hotels, and real estate companies—worked to favorably alter the perception of a place so geographically and psychologically distant from the nation’s major cities. Both believed that providing efficient public services and an aesthetically pleasing civic environment would significantly improve civic life, and boost L.A.’s chances of financial success. Both

⁵⁷ Severance, “The Beauties of Los Angeles,” *The Mother of Clubs*, 99.

⁵⁸ Severance, “The New Italy,” 102.

⁵⁹ T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

⁶⁰ Severance, *The Mother of Clubs*.

worked hard at “improvement” by building up civic infrastructure, tourism, and urban growth. To build a clubhouse—an institution—in the Mission Revival style was to help make missions the emblem of the region. This was an act of boosterism because it promoted the West. The clubhouse also fostered industrial, social, and cultural progress by providing a productive public service: a space for other clubs to meet. The Daughters of the American Revolution, the Ruskin Art Club, the Landmarks Club, and other organizations—often mixed-sex—rented space in the building.⁶¹ In addition, members were permitted three guests per quarter and special allowances were made for the presence of nonresident and male visitors. The organization’s Mission Revival style clubhouse signaled to citizens that it existed in league with L.A.’s other public, civic offerings.

Severance in particular was well aware of the economic incentive of “selling” L.A. She wrote of the revenue generated by a health-seeking, beauty-loving population, and compared it to that which other towns receive from “the noisy, filthy, ordinary and often unhealthful, industries.”⁶² Conveniently, the widespread emphasis on innovation and experimentation in L.A. occurred at the same moment that the FMC was forming. Thus L.A. in particular offered a unique opportunity for “city mothers” to join “city fathers” like Benton. FMC women could get in on the ground floor of change, and in the process transform themselves into an institution—an accepted and influential factor in civic life.⁶³ What’s more, unlike their eastern counterparts, civic-minded L.A. men and women did not have to begin by undoing the ills of decades of urbanization and industrialization. Rather, they could work to create the conditions under which those problems would never take root. By capitalizing on an existing suite of advantages—climate and romantic regional history—the FMC and the Landmarks Club together defined their emergent city as a modern, progressive metropolis with due regard for its roots. For clubwomen, their participation in the construction of the narrative of L.A.—the adventure and spirit of the new California built atop the exotic ruins of an old Spanish civilization—was a tool of self-institutionalization.

Another instance in which the FMC worked with city fathers for a shared objective and simultaneously institutionalized their existence was the pursuit of improved and beautiful roads. Severance wrote in 1895 that a ride along the “broad,” “charming,” “perfectly graded,” “tree-lined” Figueroa Street was the best way for tourists and residents to enjoy the “delights and gains” of L.A.⁶⁴ Just as Mission Revival railroad depots reinforced regional identity for tourist traffic—which was ever-increasing with the expansion of tracks in California—softening progress with an antimodern image, the FMC sited their Mission Revival clubhouse with local promotion in mind, on one of the best “drive-ways” for all to see.⁶⁵ In 1902 the FMC further wove themselves into the physical fabric of L.A. when they formed a committee dedicated to regional history. The group worked with Lummis and other city fathers to widen, pave, and restore the King’s Highway, El Camino Real, which had once connected all the missions from San Diego to

⁶¹ “Clubs of Women,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 1900; *Land of Sunshine* 5, p 244; “FMC Programme,” October 1909, Box 5, folder 13, Caroline M. Severance Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

⁶² Severance, *The Mother of Clubs*, 96-100.

⁶³ For more on this, see Gullett, *Becoming Citizens*; Knight, *Tropic of Hopes*.

⁶⁴ Severance, *The Mother of Clubs*, 96-100.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Sonoma. They emphasized the practical necessity of rebuilding the road in addition to the potential gains in beauty, art, and history. Speaking to women at the state biennial, Lummis promoted the joint effort by appealing to women as the guardians of civic virtue, saying, “It is the women who care. We men are too busy, and therefore, stupid; for to be too busy to live aright is stupidity.”⁶⁶ Soon after, the joint coalition began working to locate the road, and spent years marking it with four hundred mission bell guideposts.⁶⁷

Part III: Outgrowing The Woman’s Club House

By 1900 the FMC had over four hundred members and a large new clubhouse just outside the central business district. Though membership had become a status symbol the club’s primary objectives remained educational and civic-minded: institutional efforts to assist local growth, foster an idealized environmental image, and implement political reforms. When the GFWC biennial was held in L.A. in 1902 thousands of clubwomen from throughout the nation visited the new Southwestern city for the first time, and the FMC’s impactful role was obvious. The visibility the biennial brought to L.A. in turn helped club members secure their first seats on civic boards and commissions—City Planning, Playground, Public Art, and Housing—supplying an official platform from which to implement the plans devised at FMC meetings.

In these years FMC members transitioned from self-appointed agitators to formally elected and appointed civil servants. By 1905 it was well understood that L.A. clubwomen worked as legitimate members of the public sphere, and it was “a common occurrence for municipal authorities to seek the co-operation of these clubs in every public enterprise.”⁶⁸ This was a “clubbable age,” as one participant-observer noted.⁶⁹ An unsuccessful suffrage effort in 1906 galvanized members to work even harder, and over the course of the next year only ten of their one thousand members were regularly “missing” from meetings.⁷⁰ An additional twenty-seven hundred guests attended their Friday morning programs. Members reportedly studied braille in one room at the Woman’s Club House (training to transcribe stories into books for libraries serving the blind) and gathered in another to sew gowns for the patients in the Orthopedic Hospital. The club quickly outgrew its rented quarters.⁷¹

In 1905, with a plan to renovate and expand their current quarters, the FMC sought to purchase the property owned by the Association. They offered stockholders \$27,500 for the clubhouse, a profit of forty-one percent on their original investment. Stockholders rejected the offer on the grounds that “the investment has so greatly increased in value in the past few years . . . that sentiment should not in any way enter into consideration of a sale, even to the Friday Morning Club, for whom the building

⁶⁶ Auguste Wey, “The Camino Real and Its Old Art,” *Out West* 16 (May 1902), 480–88; *Los Angeles Times*, May 8, 1902.

⁶⁷ Hubbell and Lothrop, “The Friday Morning Club: A Los Angeles Legacy.”

⁶⁸ Mrs. W. H. Lawson, *California Federation Yearbook* 1904–1905, 18–19.

⁶⁹ Williamson, *Ladies Clubs and Societies in Los Angeles in 1892*, 11.

⁷⁰ Davis, “Clubwomen of Los Angeles.”

⁷¹ Christman, “The Best Laid Plans”; Hubbell and Lothrop, “The Friday Morning Club: A Los Angeles Legacy;” Judith Raftery, “Los Angeles Clubwomen and Progressive Reform,” in *California Progressivism Revisited*, ed. William Deverell and Tom Sitton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

originally was built.”⁷² Complicating matters further, the Association’s Board of Directors demurred when asked to name a price for the property, claiming that individual stockholders should decide. Some agreed to sell their stock to the FMC at face value; others declined to sell at all. Desperate for a solution, the FMC considered alternatives. The property directly behind the Woman’s Club House, currently listed for \$35,000, was an option, as were plots up and down Figueroa Street ranging from Twenty-eighth to Sixteenth Streets. Finally the club purchased land at Figueroa and Eighteenth, but the lot was deemed too small to accommodate a clubhouse of sufficient size. They subsequently bought another lot, this time in a distinctly residential and upscale neighborhood: at Hoover and Adams streets in the West Adams district (see figures 1.12 and 1.13).⁷³ During this multi-year period the club continued paying rent for their quarters at the Woman’s Club House, hamstrung by a lack of unanimity.

In 1913 FMC leaders informed members that due to California real estate laws only clubs specifically organized to conduct real estate transactions were permitted to own multiple properties for more than seven years.⁷⁴ Inadvertent or intentional, this piece of misinformation demanded a decision, as the seven-year anniversary of their Figueroa-and-Eighteenth-purchase approached. The discussion that followed highlights the club’s awareness of the link between place and identity. Both the West Adams and the Figueroa and Eighteenth lots were residential in location, and many believed that to choose either of them was to privilege the social aspect of the club, thereby compromising their civic efficacy and seriousness. One member noted the southward-and-westward shift of “downtown” L.A. By this pattern, 940 Figueroa, as yet slightly outside the boundaries of the central business district, would soon “be in the thick of the city . . . centrally located and unobtainable anywhere else.”⁷⁵ One member was adamant that the spirit of the club “would never be moulded to fit a home, however beautiful, that met no higher need than the social.” Club officer Josepha Tolhurst added, “Women’s progress and the growth of the Friday Morning Club in public affairs demand that the building shall be where it may be of value to the business woman, to civic workers as well as to those who look upon the club as a social interest.” Others protested that the club should serve members’ social needs, and stressed the importance of a garden—a stipulation that would eliminate a downtown location.⁷⁶

To Tolhurst’s point, the club had in fact further strengthened their civic influence during the years of real estate indecision. Of clubwomen in 1913 writer and former literary editor of the *Los Angeles Times* Willard Huntington Wright wrote:

⁷² Note in Friday Morning Club Minute Book, 1905, Album 32, FMC Ephemera, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

⁷³ Margaret Sartori’s husband, an officer with the Security Savings Bank, helped the club secure a \$40,000 loan at 5.5% interest. Letters to and from Security Saving Bank, October 29, 1908, and March 8, 1909, Friday Morning Club Minute Book, FMC Ephemera, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

⁷⁴ Christman surmises that club leaders were referring to California Civil Code §360 which stated that no corporation could acquire or hold any more real property than was “reasonably necessary” for the transaction of its business (repealed in 1947). Nowhere in the code is a specific time limit mentioned, however. Christman, “The Best Laid Plans,” 114.

⁷⁵ The city “center” was shifting south and west from Spring and Third Streets toward Sixth and Hill Streets. Undated Clipping, Scrapbook, FMC Ephemera, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 148.

⁷⁶ “Club Women Plan Fine New 8-Story Home,” *Los Angeles Examiner*, March 8, 1913.

Women in Los Angeles . . . are the leaders of most of the ‘movements.’ They vote, storm the curbstone tables to sign petitions of protest against immoral trafficking, attend citizens’ meetings, lecture on proposed ordinances and organize political clubs. Many of them hold public offices. Their pictures appear in the daily papers, labeled ‘leading citizens.’ Their support is sought by politicians. They bristle with genuine importance. They are a public factor to be reckoned with. Docility is not one of their virtues. Nor are politics and public improvement their only forte. Here . . . we get a whiff of the spirit of Los Angeles—the aggressive cologne of a village trying to improve itself.⁷⁷

Suffrage in particular had stirred FMC enthusiasm: members voted as early as March 1893 to endorse a suffrage bill under consideration in the state legislature and had supported the cause ever since. During the 1911 drive FMC women led lobbying efforts and campaigned throughout Southern California for state passage. When Equal Suffrage won in October 1911 Severance, at ninety-one, was given the honor of being the first woman to register to vote in L.A. Following this victory the FMC was increasingly devoted to political crusades, supporting immigrant education, mothers’ pensions, an eight-hour workday for women, humane treatment of women prisoners, salaries for probation officers, and the appointment of female police officers.⁷⁸ Tolhurst’s emphasis on the professional and civic aspects of membership recalled the club’s 1890s-era stipulation to their rental agent—only spaces proximate to male sites of power considered—and reinforced the importance of place. Put to a vote in 1914, FMC women elected to revive their original plan to buy out the Club House Association for \$54,250 and rebuild in their current location, in easy reach of the city’s civic and commercial center.⁷⁹

Unfortunately for having endured almost a decade of indecision the club would again have to put building plans on hold, this time for the war effort. Construction in general was nearly halted during World War I, and members busied themselves with philanthropic and patriotic activity. The rapidly evolving urban center continued to be rife with needs in this period, and FMC women continued to extend their political role. From their ranks were the first woman elected to the City Council in 1915, several members of the City Mothers’ Bureau and officers of the Woman’s Court (equal to semi-official police enforcement status), the Vice President of the Los Angeles Society for Social Hygiene, and multiple officers of the CFWC.⁸⁰ In the years following the FMC

⁷⁷ Willard Huntington Wright, “Los Angeles: The Chemically Pure,” *The Smart Set: A Magazine of Cleverness*, January 1913.

⁷⁸ Christman, “The Best Laid Plans”; Hubbell and Lothrop, “The Friday Morning Club: A Los Angeles Legacy;” Raftery, Judith, “Los Angeles Clubwomen and Progressive Reform.”

⁷⁹ “Friday Morning Building Plans Not Acted Upon,” *Los Angeles Examiner*, April 25, 1914; “Friday Morning Club to Build New Home,” *Los Angeles Examiner*, April 26, 1914.

⁸⁰ Estelle Lawton Lindsey was the first female City Council member; she was also chair of the Public Welfare Committee. Althea Gibbs and Mrs. A. W. Francisco were members of the City Mothers’ Bureau; Bertha Lovejoy Cable, an officer of the CFWC; Rose Baruch, the Vice President of the Los Angeles Society for Social Hygiene. “Sebastian’s Majority Over Four Thousand,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 3, 1915; “Moral Question Will Be Discussed at Mass Meeting to Be Held Tonight,” *Los Angeles Tribune*, November 5, 1915.

fought for and won street grading and pavement, municipal garbage removal and other utilities, building inspections, improvements in public safety, legislation governing use of space, and the planting of shade trees.⁸¹

Part IV: Allison & Allison and the Mediterranean Revival

By 1919 when the FMC turned again to building, their membership had grown to almost two thousand, with thousands more attending meetings, forums, and events. Visiting political and cultural dignitaries regularly appeared before a membership composed of the region's most famous female reformers, artists, philanthropists, professionals, and business leaders. As the largest organization in the GFWC, some one million clubwomen nationwide knew of their existence through newsletters and magazines.⁸² In an article from June 1919, FMC president Kate R. Lobingier detailed the club's preliminary plans: building laws would not permit them to expand the current building, so they would sell the Woman's Club House and have it removed from the lot. For their new building they planned to take out a \$150,000 loan at five and one half percent interest, the interest to be covered by increasing monthly member dues by \$0.42, and the principal paid from an estimated \$20,000 yearly income drawn from rentals and programs.⁸³

Debate over location began afresh with the renewal of the building conversation. Most members, especially those serving on municipal commissions, preferred the current Figueroa location for its easy access to downtown, while a vocal, mostly older, minority wanted to build a new clubhouse in a more residential area.⁸⁴ Josepha Tolhurst, again expressive on the matter, cautioned, "If we go away from this site we will go out and spend our lives decorating silly tea rooms, we will drown our identity, the soul of our club. We will smother in satin sofa cushions and become the type of the sofa-sitting women, commonplace, platitudinous, when we want to be analysts of ideas, critical, ironical, regarding no opinion as final."⁸⁵ Tolhurst may have been referring disparagingly to the Ebell Club, the second largest member of the GFWC, whose Arts and Crafts clubhouse was located five blocks south of the Woman's Club House at 1500 Figueroa. Unlike the FMC, the Ebell's mostly social mission did not require physical proximity to downtown. Thus in 1920 when seeking larger quarters the Ebell, in explicit disapproval of the FMC's increasing political activity, chose the distant residential Westlake District for their new setting.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Christman, "Best Laid Plans," 237-8; Severance, *The Mother of Clubs*, 44.

⁸² Davis, "Clubwomen of Los Angeles."

⁸³ Myra Nye, "Friday Morning Club," *Los Angeles Times*, June 15, 1919.

⁸⁴ Myra Nye, "Discuss Club Site Problem," *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1921; Myra Nye, "Club Debates Building Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 1921; "Friday Club on Verge of Split," undated clipping, Scrapbook 3, FMC Ephemera, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. During the 1910s this area had become a community of clubs, with the Jewish Concordia Club at the corner of 16th Street, and the Masonic Temple & German Turnverein Hall on the next block. According to Christman, with the "new Woman's Athletic Club less than three blocks away, on Flower Street between Seventh and Eighth Streets, and the Young Women's Christian Association moving across the street to 940 Figueroa, this section of the city promised to become a center of women's activity." Christman "The Best Laid Plans," 7, 118.

⁸⁵ Myra Nye, "Fire Flies at Club Meeting," *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 1921.

⁸⁶ Christman, "The Best Laid Plans," 118-120.

Put to a vote in October 1921 FMC members elected to stay centrally located on Figueroa Street and build a Class A (highest-grade in the degree to which the building would be “fireproof”) structure on the lot. Speaking to members after the vote president Lobingier explicitly linked site and the power of their civic identity. Located in what she predicted would soon be “the very civic center” of L.A., their clubhouse would service club and city equally. “I’m fighting for this town and not just for this club. . . for the city I love as well as for the club I love,” she said. Their clubhouse would “stand for the education, the arts, and a part of the civic life of Los Angeles.”⁸⁷ Since 1911 the club had opened their doors to the public on Sunday afternoons, repeating their presentations for those unable for lack of time or money to enjoy regular membership. All seven hundred seats in the Woman’s Club House would fill on these occasions. The club saw this act of providing educational opportunities “for all the people, irrespective of age, money and time” as their “municipal duty,” saying,

There are thousands of men and women in large cities who hunger for music, pictures, theaters, lectures and other allied privileges, who have neither the week day time nor the money to afford them. The Friday Morning Club realized that to maintain a club with the equipment, force, auditorium and programs to be enjoyed exclusively by the thousand and more members was in a way selfish pleasure, and it was an easy and inexpensive matter to share these opportunities.⁸⁸

Further, smaller clubs would again be able to lease meeting rooms in the new building, and the theater and auditorium spaces would also be available for rent.⁸⁹ In accordance with these policies, the FMC would not just be located *in* the civic center of L.A. Their new auditorium, as the gathering site for groups devoted to improving the physical, intellectual, and social condition of L.A., would *be* the city’s civic center.

To bulk up the building fund the initiation fee was raised from \$10 to \$15 in October 1921, and the process of selecting an architect for their new building began immediately. Five FMC members made up the Planning Committee and began to solicit and evaluate architects with public, rather than residential, portfolios. Specifically they sought architects with experience designing large civic buildings rather than strictly commercial properties.⁹⁰ Several members were already acquainted with the architectural firm of Allison & Allison from their mutual efforts to create an L.A. City Planning Commission. Back in 1917 the FMC had been invited to a meeting of the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) where they and other clubs pledged their cooperation to secure the ordinance needed to create the commission. The speakers, “all of whom discussed the question of city planning from some specific point of view,” included architect James Allison, president of the Southern California Chapter, AIA, Mrs. Seward A. Simons, FMC president, and Mrs. J.J. Abramson,

⁸⁷ Myra Nye, “Friday Morning Club to Build,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 29, 1921.

⁸⁸ Laura Grover Smith, “What Every City Wants,” *The Woman’s Bulletin* 1 (June 1912), 14.

⁸⁹ Hubbell and Lothrop, “The Friday Morning Club: A Los Angeles Legacy,” 84; Myra Nye, “Friday Morning Club to Build,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 29, 1921.

⁹⁰ The Planning Committee consisted of the president, one member of the Advisory Council, one charter member, one member of the Board of Directors, and one member selected at large. Hubbell and Lothrop, “The Friday Morning Club: A Los Angeles Legacy;” Christman, “The Best Laid Plans,” 144.

chairman of the City Planning Committee of the FMC.⁹¹ When the City Planning Commission was created in 1920, the FMC, as one of the city's largest recognized civic groups, was invited to nominate a member to the new government agency.

The ordinance to create the City Planning Commission passed at an opportune time, as the need for comprehensive planning accelerated significantly in 1920. A million and a half people would stream into greater L.A. in the coming decade, and new office buildings, department stores, churches, schools, hospitals, clubs, theaters, hotels, and apartment buildings would be suddenly necessary. Permits for \$185MM worth of new construction were issued in 1923 alone—a record not broken until 1945.⁹² Allison & Allison gained recognition and acclaim during this building boom for their numerous and well-received public and commercial structures, many of which were in the Mediterranean Revival style that would come to dominate the architecture of Southern California in the 1920s. They had entered the 1920s “on a crest of good will and success,” and at the end of 1921 the FMC Planning Committee entered talks with the firm to design their clubhouse.⁹³

Brothers James Edward and David Clark Allison were native Pennsylvanians who brought their firm to L.A. in 1910. The city's downtown during this period was dominated by Neoclassical and Beaux-Arts structures, referencing grand classical models with academic precision, and the Allison brothers brought with them a strong tradition of historical forms. Elder brother James had gained hands-on design experience through draftsman work in the 1890s, spending one year in Chicago with Adler & Sullivan and another with the Pittsburgh branch of Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge. The rugged stone masonry and massive broad arches of the Richardsonian Romanesque were favored in American city-building at the time, and James employed the Romanesque almost exclusively. David favored the Beaux-Arts historical mode, having studied at the Atelier Duquesne of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts from 1908 to 1909. By the late 1910s both brothers had wearied of strictly historical modes; they called the Beaux-Arts style a “maze of structural contradiction.”⁹⁴ They endeavored to identify and define a new regional architecture—one that blended current educational concepts, historical legitimacy, and the underlying festivity of semi-tropical Southern California. For architects schooled in historical correctness, the loose adaptation that characterized Mission Revival would not suffice. Their solution was to replace Mission Revival with a mode made popular and fashionable by the San Diego Panama-California Exposition of 1915: Mediterranean Revival.⁹⁵

⁹¹ “Architects Give Impetus to City Planning,” *Southwest Contractor and Manufacturer* 18, no. 11 (January 13, 1917), 8.

⁹² Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 212.

⁹³ In 1923 a special issue of *The Building Review* was devoted to the work of Allison & Allison and carried 108 lush half-tone plates and an essay by Irving F. Morrow. Irving F. Morrow, “The Work of Allison & Allison, Architects,” *The Building Review* 23, no. 2 (February 1923). Quotation from Stokes, “In a Climate like Ours,” 53.

⁹⁴ Allison, “Suggestions on the Decorative Use of Concrete.”

⁹⁵ Bertram Goodhue and Carleton Winslow Sr.'s blending of the regionalism of Mission Revival with exuberant, Churrigueresque elements of Baroque Spain and Renaissance Mexico and Italy at the 1915 San Diego Panama-California Exposition “came to serve the same purpose for the second phase of the Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California as had the Chicago Exposition of 1893 for Neo-Classical architecture throughout the whole of America.” Buildings representing California were “full-dress models

Known as the second phase of the Spanish Colonial Revival, the Mediterranean Revival blended the regionalism of Mission Revival with exuberant, Churrigueresque elements of Baroque Spain and Renaissance Mexico and Italy. This “distinctive architecture of Southern California,” according to the *Allied Architects Association of Los Angeles*, would perpetuate the “collective memory” of the Mediterranean, in a region that was ecologically and culturally analogous. Like the Mission Revival, the imagery contributed to a story of progress by which “Indians, half breeds, and negroes, conscripts and undesirables,” controlled by the grand and glamorous Spain, shaped the cultural landscape of the region, which was eventually and inevitably succeeded by the more rational and civilized culture of North America.⁹⁶ The full potential of the Mediterranean Revival included reference to the meaningful historic roots of the region, coupled with the ability to realize theatrical and dramatic space.

Though the language of revival was still culturally relevant, with the Mediterranean Revival there was no longer a need to assuage anti-modern sentiment. “Up to date” was a high compliment in the jargon of the period, and although the exterior of a Mediterranean Revival building may evoke an earlier time there is a progressive aspect to the style. The use of reinforced concrete, a new material and structural form, lent an experimental flavor to the second phase of Spanish Colonial Revival. Here was an idiom that evinced innovation and novelty while still acknowledging regional history, and the broader historical correctness of European traditions.⁹⁷

Based loosely on Italian *palazzi*, Mediterranean Revival structures tend to suggest a massive quality: sculptural volumes with symmetrical primary façades and high stone base making up the lower stories (see figure 1.14). Hipped or gabled roofs are covered in arched red clay tile, and light-colored stucco wall planes are interrupted by arcaded porches and deep, arched door and window openings, often infilled with wrought iron grilles. Balconies and other decorative elements made of cast iron are typical, as are ornate doors and enriched door surrounds in materials mimicking stone. Inside, space is treated as a series of independent volumes, with little spatial flow from one area to another. The Allison family wholeheartedly embraced the style, hoping that in their translation it would convey the impression of being “essentially Southern [Californian] and American, rather than as being essentially Spanish or Mexican or Italian.”⁹⁸

A truly prolific pair, the Allison family became the de facto authors of a definition of “Californian” in the first half of the twentieth century, and served as the semi-official spokesmen for the architectural establishment of the region.⁹⁹ As historian Kevin Starr notes, “a significant percentage of three generations of Southern Californians” have

of what the architecture of the region *ought* to have been, and consequently patterns for what it ought to become.” Gebhard, “The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895-1930),” 136; McClung, *Landscapes of Desire*, 98.

⁹⁶ Harwood Hewitt, “A Plea for a Distinctive Architecture in Southern California,” *Allied Architects Association of Los Angeles Bulletin* 1, no. 5 (March 1, 1925), n.p.

⁹⁷ For a discussion of the give-and-take relationship between the avant garde architecture of the 1920s and the Spanish Colonial Revivalists, see Gebhard, “The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895-1930).”

⁹⁸ James Edward Allison, *Modern School Houses; Being a Series of Authoritative Articles on Planning, Sanitation, Heating and Ventilation*, 1915, as quoted in Stokes, “In a Climate like Ours,” 26-27.

⁹⁹ Gebhard, “The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895-1930);” Stokes, “In a Climate like Ours;” Starr, *Material Dreams*.

attended grammar school, high school, and college in Allison & Allison buildings, worshipped in their creations, attended their clubs, shopped at their department stores, read in their libraries, worked in their factories and warehouses, used their post offices, banks, and office buildings, were admitted to their hospitals, and finally, were laid to rest in their mausoleums or memorial parks. Moreover, they did all this “in buildings which each bore the Allison & Allison imprint of solidity, scholarly reference, and appropriately assertive public presence.”¹⁰⁰ The firm had extensive experience designing buildings for complex institutions with a wide variety of functions, making them an appealing choice for a women’s club who wished to build a civic center meant to serve a wide variety of community users. In April 1922 the FMC announced that preliminary plans by the Allison brothers for a five-story, \$400,000 clubhouse had been submitted and were provisionally approved. The architects were quoted on their satisfaction in receiving the commission and promised to express in built form the “individuality and the high ideals” that characterized the activities of the organization.¹⁰¹

After World War I clubhouses had become big business for clubs and architects alike in California. Newspaper articles dramatized competition among architectural firms for projects, touting clubs’ substantial budgets and building plans. Hence the 1922 annual CFWC convention, held that year in L.A., included an exhibit on clubhouses to acquaint and instruct women on the business of building. Only around forty of the one hundred and sixty-two district clubs owned a building at the time but nearly all had ambitious plans, and often the funding was already collected. The exhibit included photographs along with interior and exterior sketches of ninety-six existing clubhouses in California, as well as those from all over the country for comparison. Another part of the exhibit required the participation of local leading architects “well known to clubdom” to speak on panels. Hunt & Burns (Los Angeles Ebell, the Highland Park Ebell, and the Whittier Women’s Club), Arthur Benton (the Woman’s Club House and the Long Beach Ebell), and Clark Phillips (the second Long Beach Ebell clubhouse) were all in attendance. David Allison presented an illustrated lecture with slides of clubhouses from various states, of which he pointed out the good and poor features of each. He closed with the subject said to have generated the most excitement of the exhibition overall: the proposed FMC clubhouse. A delegate reported later, “This really represents the last word in clubhouses and embodies the experience of many years’ work on public buildings. The lecture was a very clear, concise lesson in architecture. Allison demonstrated the futility of trying to inculcate a brand new type of architecture—rather he laid emphasis on the constant building upon that which is good.” Attendees reportedly interjected numerous times, asking the speaker to repeat himself so that they could take exact notes.¹⁰²

Allison’s reference to the practice of building upon existing successful formulae was a double entendre. His comments simultaneously invoke his training in the Beaux-Arts principle of employing classical forms and also his firm’s dozens of well-received recent projects, most of which served public or community purposes. Specifically, Allison was likely pointing to their current building project, the University Club, also

¹⁰⁰ Starr, *Material Dreams*, 213.

¹⁰¹ “Building Plan Completed,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1922.

¹⁰² Adeline C. Lorbeer, “Clubhouses and Ground Exhibit, Interesting Feature,” *The Club Woman* 14, no. 7 (April 1922); Mrs. Ingle Carpenter, “Clubhouse Pictures and Plans of Clubhouses Popular Exhibit,” *The Club Woman* 14, no. 9 (June 1922).

located downtown, a few blocks away at Sixth and Hope Streets. Founded in 1898 by a collection of male university grads, they were—like the FMC—a large and wealthy club with a \$400,000 starting budget seeking a multi-story, class A “fireproof” downtown clubhouse fronting the street and combining the organization’s urbane and residential character.¹⁰³ In April 1922 the building was receiving its finishing touches before opening in July (see figure 1.15). Praised in California as “one of the outstanding achievements of its architects’ career” and “one of the most substantial additions to our architectural heritage which has been made for some years past,” one of the reasons the building was considered noteworthy was the architect’s handling of materials—in this case, concrete.¹⁰⁴ The University Club marks the beginning of what became an Allison aesthetic staple in the 1920s: the trend of allowing “surface details” to remain in their “natural” state. At the Italian Renaissance University Club Allison & Allison experimented with exposed concrete on the exterior and interior, in which they left the form marks and irregularities of the wall evident beneath a thin coat of waterproofing stucco. The structure is ornamentally restrained save for the entrance (see figure 1.16) and first story street front, which the architects faced with a “wet” cast concrete, a method producing a finish closely resembling natural stone studded with air pockets. Prior to the onset of this trend American and European architects were inclined to use concrete in a merely utilitarian way—as a working surface in which to embed brick or tile veneer. Inexpensive, sanitary, seismic and fire resistant, reinforced concrete was first used by the Allisons in their school buildings in the late 1910s. The success of these buildings, combined with the club’s modest budget, led the firm to adopt reinforced concrete construction in the University Club.¹⁰⁵

Soon David Allison was expounding on concrete’s expansive design possibilities. The “older sisters” of reinforced concrete—stone, marble, granite and terra cotta—have generally been “called into the front parlor to meet the guest,” he wrote in *The Architect and Engineer*. Concrete, the “more humble maiden,” historically acted the part of the scullery maid, asked only to perform common and hard manual labor, and thought of in a different decorative class than her sisters. Allison emphasized concrete’s ability to respond “just as readily, almost humanly, to a little attention, a little kindness, and a little loving.” To his fellow architects he proposed:

If we are willing to spend but a fraction of the cost of carving and working granite, stone and marble, upon the building of plaster moulds or in ornamenting surfaces with scraffito, or stucco in its many forms, absolutely any degree of architectural richness desired may be attained, and that at a cost very much less than in any other material of like permanency.¹⁰⁶

At the University Club concrete is celebrated and embraced as an artistic medium, despite initial protest from the club over the connotation of such a rough surface. “The argument was advanced by some that such crudity was better adapted to a roundhouse than to a

¹⁰³ “University Club Building,” *The Architect and Engineer* 65, no. 1 (April 1921), 106.

¹⁰⁴ Morrow, “The Work of Allison and Allison, Architects.”

¹⁰⁵ David C. Allison, “Suggestions on the Decorative Use of Concrete,” *The Architect and Engineer* 86, no. 3 (June 1926), 98–105.

¹⁰⁶ Allison, “Suggestions on the Decorative Use of Concrete.”

university club,” Allison recalled. “Some felt that it should be smoothed up like a stiff shirt front.” Such objections were overcome in part by the suitability of concrete to the Mediterranean Revival mode, with its modern spirit, and the possibility to achieve scale and impact while working with a budget. Inside, working with a large number of rooms and limited funds, Allison & Allison experimented again rather progressively with concrete. Colored stains transformed “an ordinary gray cement floor to one similar to rich old tiling, suitable to the use of Oriental rugs.” Making further use of the plasticity of the material, ceiling beams were also painted and stained to invoke “the old wooden ceilings of France and Italy.”¹⁰⁷

When the FMC selected Allison & Allison as their architects, they chose a firm associated with schools and other civic buildings, and also with the Mediterranean Revival, thus simultaneously connoting modernity and regional rootedness. They were building a base of operations that would serve as a symbol of the club’s allegiance to the cause of improving L.A. It also would communicate their permanence, and their hopes for the future of their city.

Part V: The FMC Clubhouse

The steps toward construction were set in motion in mid-1922. The estimated cost of building had risen from \$400,000 to \$550,000 so the club took out a ten year, \$350,000 loan. FMC members were responsible for raising the remaining \$200,000. Their building plans having been on hold since before WWI, the clubwomen were reenergized by the task. President Lobingier remarked on “the thrill that comes from eager united behavior,” calling the new building a “sermon in stone” that “will stand as a perpetual reminder of the unity and devotion of women.” Members bought life memberships, gave monetary gifts, and conducted public fundraising activities. One member cooked and sold frankfurters at a fundraising event. The president boasted that when they tell “business men” about their finances—that dues are \$15 per year, and they plan to erect a building to cost \$500,000—the men “look incredulous.”¹⁰⁸ The clubhouse would include a large auditorium and stage, a dining room served by a commercial kitchen, club meeting rooms, an art gallery, and a library. The new headquarters would replace the 1899 building, which would have to be demolished or moved. Opportunely, the Catholic Women’s Club came before the Board and proposed to purchase the former clubhouse for \$2,000. The Board accepted, and in October 1922 the old clubhouse was moved off their land after being cut into several sections.¹⁰⁹ The FMC took up rented quarters for the duration of the building campaign.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Friday Morning Club, “Notices: A Crisis in Our Club,” *The Club Woman* 14, no. 9 (June 1922); Friday Morning Club, “Notices: Cost of the New Clubhouse,” *The Club Woman*, April 1923.

¹⁰⁹ “Catholic Club Buys Building,” *Los Angeles Examiner*, May 10, 1922. The old clubhouse still stands in the Westlake District at the corner of San Marino Street and Menlo Avenue but has been modified beyond recognition. The building is now used as a church.

¹¹⁰ Members met first in the Morosco Theatre and maintained offices in the Garland Building; later they moved their meetings to the Philharmonic Auditorium and rented office space in the Security Bank Building. During the three years of clubhouse construction the Board met 145 times. Hubbell and Lothrop, “The Friday Morning Club: A Los Angeles Legacy,” Friday Morning Club, *The Friday Morning Club Yearbook, 1922-1924*, 13.

For the remainder of 1922 the Board worked on finalizing the provisional building plans. The firm presented at least four different iterations to the Board, all of which were more ornamented than what the club desired (see figures 1.17 and 1.18). Two early versions included statuary, both perched along the roofline and set into wall niches throughout the façade. One version presented two towers instead of the eventual one; another stretched the triple arched entranceway up across all five stories of the building. The simple sash windows of the final version were imagined in successive versions as arched, or crowned by a pediment, or surrounded by a florid decorative frame. The Allison's pitched awnings, carved escutcheons, crenellations, and the elimination of a rusticated base. Adamant in their mission to build a civic structure that bespoke solidity, quiet, humility, and poise, club members grew frustrated. The Board reported having spent "hours of time trying to eliminate all expensive details that were not essential to the plan. It took many weary weeks for the Board to work over the plans with the architect."¹¹¹ Keeping down the expense was the club's primary concern, and they reported in January 1923 that they were, finally, fully satisfied with their architects' slightly less ornamented, compliant, plans (see figure 1.19).¹¹² "So carefully was the work done that in the end we did not have to make any changes and the plans were given to the contractors exactly as they came from the hands of the architect," the Board noted.¹¹³ Exerting control over costs was crucial to the club's goal of building a no-nonsense structure to serve as the setting from which to influence public opinion. Members were determined that they not limit themselves to making a swank statement about their social cachet. They would not be consumed by the material details of their clubhouse, "decorating silly tea rooms" and "smothering in satin sofa cushions."¹¹⁴

Approved plans were given to contractors in February 1923 and groundbreaking was in March. To save money the club chose to act as its own contractor. Under Allison & Allison's supervision, bidded contracts were awarded to plumbers, painters, electricians, and others. In February 1924 the total cost of the project had grown to \$611,000, including architects' fees, much of the furniture and fixtures, stage machinery, and kitchen equipment. A meeting called to discuss raising dues from \$15 to \$20 generated significant deliberation. Many members felt they could not afford the increase. Further, their energetic fundraising efforts had already raised \$246,000 for the Building Fund. Not explicitly stated but implied was the notion that increased dues would not necessarily correlate with increased perks. For an organization that proudly eschewed a social charter and whose objective in building more closely resembled that of city hall or a school than a social club, it was difficult to justify the added expense. David Allison was brought in to sell the project to the detractors. Taking assembled members on an imaginary tour of inspection from the first floor to the roof, he stated that, in furnishing the building, the Board "were the best purchasing agents he had ever met, for they had made the money go farther that (sic) he had deemed possible." The motion passed. The

¹¹¹ Friday Morning Club, *The Friday Morning Club Yearbook, 1922-1924*, 16.

¹¹² The final version, while slightly more modest, is still full of architectural detail: columns, finials, cornice line detailing, cast or incised ornament, and more.

¹¹³ Friday Morning Club, *The Friday Morning Club Yearbook, 1922-1924*, 16.

¹¹⁴ Nye, "Fire Flies at Club Meeting."

total value of their clubhouse and lot, David Allison and president Lobingier estimated, was between \$700,000 and \$800,000.¹¹⁵

April 1924 marked the opening of the monumental new home of nearly three thousand FMC members. Whereas in their first clubhouse the architectural imagery was Arcadian, capitalizing on nostalgia and the concept of unsullied nature, the second clubhouse is unabashedly of the city. The acts that had challenged the boundaries of appropriate female behavior in the late nineteenth century had since become commonplace. By the 1920s, after passage of the nineteenth amendment granting suffrage, few contested a woman's right to participate in intellectual and civic affairs. The FMC's second clubhouse thus readily embraces an urban, institutional identity. This identity is communicated materially; through the club's setting and scale; and with signage.

The clubhouse manifests as a sculptural mass, a concrete machine for improving L.A. (see figures 1.20, 1.21, and 1.22). It was important to members that they not create "a piece of machinery that is more valuable and greater than its product will be."¹¹⁶ This meant that "meretricious ornament" would be steadfastly avoided.¹¹⁷ A machinelike institution also required a variety of flexible spaces capable of serving a wide variety of community users, and a large performance space and kitchen, each equipped with modern appliances, to generate revenue and allow the club to stay focused on serving civic needs. The interior space of a typical Mediterranean Revival building was divided into separate, highly independent spaces with little flow from one area to another.¹¹⁸ The FMC clubhouse follows this formula in plan and in organizational theory. For example, on the first floor two adjoining lobbies, one for the club and one for theatergoers, provide a separation of functions; the fifth floor consists of four different meeting rooms separated by pocket doors (see figures 1.23, 1.24, and 1.25). Further, the physical plan reflected the highly bureaucratic structure of the club itself. At the 1922 CFWC conference where their clubhouse design had been lauded, FMC charter member Mrs. D.G. Stephen gave advice to other clubs looking to build. She laid special emphasis on the dividing and subdividing of committees in order to avoid duplication of club efforts. For any one committee she recommended the appointment of a General Chairman, who in turn would name up to eighteen sub-chairmen to work along the various lines required of the project.¹¹⁹ At their new clubhouse, a wide range of spaces accommodated a wide range of users, arranged on different floors for symbolic and practical distinction (see figures 1.26, 1.27, 1.28, and 1.29).

The FMC's vision of clubhouse-as-urban-machine is also reflected in the choice of concrete as the main building material. As with their University Club, Allison &

¹¹⁵ Note that the FMC had bought out the Club House Association for \$54,250 less than ten years prior. Friday Morning Club, "Notices," *The Club Woman*, March 1923; Hubbell and Lothrop, "The Friday Morning Club: A Los Angeles Legacy;" Friday Morning Club, *The Friday Morning Club Yearbook, 1922-1924*, 18; \$700,000-\$800,00 estimate comes from "Dues Increase Finishes Work," *Los Angeles Times*, February 10, 1924.

¹¹⁶ Mrs. Joseph F. Sartori, "Mrs. Gibson The Clubwoman," in *Mary S. Gibson, Pioneer: A Memorial, Los Angeles, California, 1930*, ed. Friday Morning Club (Los Angeles, Calif.: The Club, 1930), 31-35.

¹¹⁷ Hubbell and Lothrop, "The Friday Morning Club: A Los Angeles Legacy;" Friday Morning Club, *The Friday Morning Club Yearbook, 1922-1924*, 16.

¹¹⁸ Gebhard, "The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895-1930)."

¹¹⁹ Carpenter, "Clubhouse Pictures and Plans of Clubhouses Popular Exhibit."

Allison celebrated concrete's malleability. The ceiling in the main theater—the grandest room in the building, with seating for over one thousand—is molded to look like wooden coffers (see figure 1.30). Painted concrete ceiling beams and colored stains on floors give the appearance of wood or terra cotta in the second floor library, third floor recital hall, and fourth floor lounge and dining room (see figures 1.31, 1.32, 1.33, 1.34 and 1.35). On the exterior, the possibilities of concrete are exhibited with cast or incised ornament in leaf and floral patterns on arches, and a balustrade cast in a pierced snowflake pattern (see figure 1.36). Save for subtly modeling the industrial material into imitation stone blocks at the first two stories, no effort is made to mask the concrete exterior. As a result, the clubhouse is of a piece with another machine in the vicinity: passing cars.

And this audience of passing cars was sizeable. A 1924 study ordered by the City and County Traffic Commission to examine the city's automobile use found that almost thirty-two thousand cars passed the FMC clubhouse each day.¹²⁰ The Board clearly knew the significance of *place* in the rapidly growing city—members had been serving on the City Planning Commission for years. Their location on busy Figueroa Street had thus been strategically chosen to communicate institutional power and importance to a large audience.¹²¹

To the trolley passengers, automobile drivers, and pedestrians passing by, the sheer size of the clubhouse also communicated organizational consequence. The building takes up the entire one hundred-foot frontage on Figueroa Street, and stretches back for one hundred and fifty-three of the one hundred and sixty-six-foot deep lot. Extensive mezzanines above the first and third floors add monumentality to the façade. Further, it is a five-story structure built to the scale of a seven-story structure, rising a full story higher than its six-story neighbor. This lends the clubhouse a distinctly different character than its domestically scaled predecessor, the Woman's Club House. The built context surrounding 940 Figueroa Street changed dramatically between 1899 and 1924, effectively from rural to urban, and the new building responded in kind to its dense, cosmopolitan context.

Like at the preceding Woman's Club House a colonnade stretches the length of the façade, but the impression is quite different. The Arcadian Mission Revival clubhouse was meant to complement and capitalize on L.A.'s natural paradise; thus the colonnade was deep, draped with ivy, and meant to provide shelter for members enjoying the outdoors. At the 1924 clubhouse, however, the shallow colonnade is not meant for people to linger under. Instead, the colonnade acts as a scaffold for signage, thus interacting with the speed and scale of its urban setting. The northern side of the building also responds to its urban site with a painted billboard advertising the club, maximizing the building's potential to act as signage.

Other architectural choices on the exterior communicate their status as a civic institution, and the accompanying sense of openness that status implies. In *The Club Woman* magazine the FMC press chairman gushed, "With the Friday Morning Club's new spacious building there are possibilities in dispensing hospitality and friendliness

¹²⁰ Referencing the 1924 census, this same study estimated approximately 1,000,000 living within city limits. Frederick Law Olmsted et al., *A Major Traffic Street Plan for Los Angeles* (Los Angeles, 1924), 11, 67.

¹²¹ Reference is to the vote in October 1921 when FMC members elected to stay in their current location and build on the lot. Nye, "Friday Morning Club to Build."

that have never been available before.” Though the president was quick to remind readers, “although hospitality plays an important part in club life, after all the program is the thing.”¹²² Two messages, carved in concrete on the façade, declare the notion of civic engagement to passersby. The first is a quotation from Caroline Severance from the group’s first cornerstone laying: “We dedicate this building to the highest welfare of our homes, our schools, our city, our country and the world. We pledge ourselves that nothing human shall be foreign to our sympathy and our helpfulness.” With this quotation the club rhetorically scaled up their contribution to match their monumental clubhouse, enlarging their sphere of influence well beyond L.A. The second message—the club motto, carved above the front door—works in tandem with the first to humanize the institutional effort, and communicate hospitality to passersby: “In Essentials, Unity; in Nonessentials, Liberty; in all things, Charity.” The building’s main entryway is prominent, centered in the colonnade and marked by a monumental triple arch. A second set of triple arches on the third floor mirror those below, helping to emphasize the grand, public, entrance from a distance. Parking was behind the building, so the entry welcomed not only those who pulled up to the curb but also guests arriving on foot.

Rounding off the message of openness, a lit marquee sign advertised the educational and cultural resources currently on offer at the building’s theater. The club considered it a mark of their success that before the building even opened they had already arranged for several clubs to act as tenants, paying monthly for the use of a meeting room or the dining room. Louis O. MacLoon had signed on as a five-year tenant, operating the theatre as The Playhouse with shows six evenings and two afternoons per week. Expressing their wish to remain operationally flexible, the club had “tried to build an auditorium that should really be a theater but should not look like one.”¹²³

Finally, the physical building itself was also meant to be a civic contribution to L.A. The Board boasted that “Meetings taking place in the clubhouse are enhanced by the beauty of their surroundings, the speakers come under its influence as well as the audience,” and called their new building “a lesson in art and architecture for the community.”¹²⁴ The Southern California Chapter of the AIA concurred on the building’s merits, awarding to Allison & Allison a certificate of honor in 1924 for the design. The clubhouse advertised the FMC’s status as an established institution in L.A. and signified their support of a regional specificity that set their city apart.

By 1924 the club had secured its position as one of L.A.’s leading civic institutions and the opening of the imposing clubhouse symbolized its prominence. Weekly academic lectures and political debates drew thousands. With membership came educational, and, importantly, leadership opportunities. Each of the club’s numerous committees was meticulously arranged into distinct hierarchical positions, and members could work their way up the leadership ladder, ultimately gaining the right to direct the organization at large. Club bulletins lauded the fact that only four years after women won the right to vote nationwide, thirty-three members had or were serving in city

¹²² Mrs. Frederick Hickok, Press Chairman, “The Friday Morning Club,” *The Club Woman* 15, no. 2 (November 1924), 6.

¹²³ Hubbell and Lothrop, “The Friday Morning Club: A Los Angeles Legacy”; Friday Morning Club, *The Friday Morning Club Yearbook, 1922-1924*, 16.

¹²⁴ Friday Morning Club, *The Friday Morning Club Yearbook, 1922-1924*, 33; Friday Morning Club, *The Friday Morning Club Yearbook, 1924-1925*, 55.

government, seventeen members at the state level, and three in the federal government. In the first nine months of being open they added one hundred fifty-one new members and served nearly seventeen thousand meals. They planned to take in \$75,000 in income from rentals and dues—\$30,000 more than they needed to cover their taxes, payment on principal, and interest.¹²⁵

Part VI: Decline

Ironically, the opening of the FMC's new headquarters preceded a steady decline in club visibility and activism, and the shift to a more passive, social-oriented existence. Membership, which had increased every year since 1891, began to fall in 1925. By 1929 they had lost five hundred members. They lost another seven hundred in the four years following the crash. An atmosphere of doubt and pessimism set in. This pattern reflected a nationwide trend: even as women's clubs engaged in expensive building campaigns in the 1920s, the movement was already in decline. Club life was becoming culturally obsolete. In part, clubwomen had worked themselves out of a job. A general falling away from organizational activities by American women in the 1920s, combined with generational differences that made club life unappealing to the "New Woman," contributed as well. Lastly, conditions specific to L.A. in general and the FMC in particular help to explain the decline of the organization.

Reflecting national trends, in the late 1920s FMC women who had fought so hard for a public, political life found that their club was no longer the only avenue into action. Whereas earlier members had considered club work their "career," the second generation of club leaders had more employment options, especially in social work. As more California women were being appointed to government boards and commissions through which they exercised formal political power, the urgency of the club's existence declined.¹²⁶ Suffrage had been a double-edged sword, as well. The vote had once provided a common rallying point for women but there was less agreement about how to use it. The rise of partisanship within the club necessitated the scaling back of political forums in the 1920s, replaced by more social activities and general interest lectures. In 1929 the *Los Angeles Times* reporter who had covered the FMC since 1919 reported:

A definite change that has come about in the women's club movement . . . was exemplified strikingly by the Friday Morning Club yesterday. . . . Contrary to recent custom the banquet hall was filled with women in eager anticipation of the discussion indicated. A careful avoidance of every subject that now vitally interests the people of Los Angeles in a civic way, was evident. During the reading of a paper, a fourth of the audience left. . . . Today if a club woman wishes to do definite civic work she must cut loose from her club and do that work independently.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Davis, "Clubwomen of Los Angeles," 73; Friday Morning Club, "Notices," *The Club Woman*, February 1925.

¹²⁶ Debra L. Gold Hansen, "Clubs (Women's) in the West," in *Encyclopedia of Women in the American West*, ed. Gordon Morris Bakken and Brenda Farrington (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2003), 61.

¹²⁷ Myra Nye, "Of Interest to Women: Change in Club Methods Noted; Friday Morning Women Hold All-Day Session; Only Mild Discussions on Topics Take Place," *Los Angeles Times*, January 9, 1929.

The FMC changed from a large, aggressive women's association dedicated to L.A. into a much smaller organization dedicated to the social lives of its members. Generational differences dealt another blow. For the girl coming of age in the 1920s, the rigid rules of her mother's club seemed outdated and obsolete. The "New Woman" was more likely to reject the homosocial world in favor of assimilation with men's values, symbols, and institutions. Further, during the Depression membership fees became a luxury that many could not afford.

At the same time, changing regional settlement patterns diminished the relevance of a downtown club. In 1891 most FMC members lived within a short distance of the city's central business district. But during the 1920s L.A.'s swelling middle and upper classes began a pattern of decentralization, moving to the more distant suburbs of Pasadena and westward along Wilshire Blvd. For a club based on an urban civic presence, the demise of the civic core of L.A. meant the demise of their mission.

The FMC had also found in the late 1920s that the material details of such a large clubhouse and theater were an unwelcome burden and distraction for longtime members. In the 1928 club yearbook the president described a sense of pervasive disillusionment:

The theater has provided scope for some new and many funny as well as annoying experiences. I hope the day is not far distant when we may have the use of our auditorium without the necessity of a theater lease. . . . Clubs lose their individuality . . . when the financial issue becomes too prominent, or when the main objectives become too confused. During the building of the Clubhouse and immediately after its occupation, an unusual amount of time and attention to material details has been necessary. This year the Board has tried to regain the weight of public opinion which the Friday Morning Club used to wield. Conditions are different. . . . During the past year not one resolution has been passed.¹²⁸

Conditions continued to worsen in the years following. In the 1933 yearbook the club declared the ownership of a theater to be "a liability and not an asset."¹²⁹ To sustain itself between theater productions in the 1930s, the company renting the auditorium began showing Chinese films and broadcasting live radio shows. The grand clubhouse became primarily an entertainment space. In 1935 the club was forced to rent the entire facility to private companies. In 1977 the FMC sold the building to the Society for the Preservation of Variety Arts (SPVA), which leased the fifth floor back to the club.

The building was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 while owned and occupied by the SVPA. The FMC left the building in 1985 and their membership of one hundred met in an office suite on Wilshire Boulevard for a few years. The club has since disbanded. The clubhouse at 940 Figueroa Street is currently vacant.

Conclusion

¹²⁸ Ethel Louise Turner, "President's Report," *The Friday Morning Club Yearbook, 1927-1928*, 15.

¹²⁹ Friday Morning Club, *The Friday Morning Club Yearbook, 1931-1933*, 18.

The FMC's monumental 1924 building openly advertised the club's civic role in L.A. The circa-1899 Woman's Club House, while slightly less monumental, was no less public, and no less of a civic offering. Together they signify the institutionalization of women's work in a diverse set of areas: children's education, sanitation, juvenile courts, and women's suffrage. Club members associated themselves with the civic life of their city, and thus the character of their clubhouses is an expression of that civic life. In fact, the degree to which the 1924 clubhouse expressed the club's civic life made it impossible for the organization to pivot to purely social functions when circumstance compelled.

The Woman's Club House, especially, communicates the FMC's efforts toward an important local project: regional promotion. Just like male boosters, journalists, and chambers of commerce, Caroline Severance and her successors used a set of visual and rhetorical symbols to promote and lay claim to Southern California and its many charms. The creation of a romantic fantasy past, celebrated through Spanish Colonial Revival architecture, and the concept of "America's Mediterranean" were both FMC mechanisms used in the service of regional growth. They were also proverbial nods to Californians as the new colonizers. What's more, invoking antimodernism with a pre-modern reference like Arcadia helped ease accommodation to the new mode of women as civil servants and change-makers in the club's early years.

The second, 1924 clubhouse, reflects the increasingly important role of women in L.A. in the 1920s. Though the language of Spanish Colonial Revival was still culturally relevant, the clubhouse is more notable for its urban character. Their vision of clubhouse-as-urban-machine was expressed in a flexible structure that responded to its dense, cosmopolitan environment, stood open to all, and from which they could create change in L.A. The second clubhouse still stands but few realize that the quiet, vacant building represents decades of concerted effort to shape the city surrounding it.

Perhaps it is fitting, even appropriate, that the clubwomen's efforts are largely unknown. L.A., and the region which surrounds it, has a long history of reimagination and transformation. It is a city "that is forever erasing itself," with a tendency toward cultural freedom that worked in the clubwomen's favor.¹³⁰ Only because L.A. accepts change so readily was the environment hospitable to politically active women. In addition, the FMC marketed the region using a historical narrative that only looked back in order to justify moving forward. Even as they lobbied to create the Camino Real and built revivalist clubhouses, they did so to promote a thoroughly modern, progressive image of L.A. Lastly, if their wish was to impress themselves on the history of their city, they succeeded wildly in that effort. Their achievements—suffrage for California women, kindergartens in public schools, playgrounds, a juvenile court system, and more—are so seamlessly incorporated into our notion of American civic offerings so as to appear almost inevitable.

¹³⁰ Nicolai Ouroussoff, "St. Vibiana's Survival Could Offer Link to Past," *Los Angeles Times*, November 30, 1996.

Figures for Chapter One

Year	Los Angeles	California
1850	1,610	92,597
1860	4,385	379,994
1870	5,728	560,247
1880	11,183	864,694
1890	50,395	1,213,398
1900	102,479	1,485,053
1910	319,198	2,377,549
1920	576,673	3,426,861
1930	1,238,048	5,677,251

Figure 1.1: Total Population, Los Angeles City and California, 1850-1930. Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Population Density, 1850-1930. Accessed October 19, 2015.

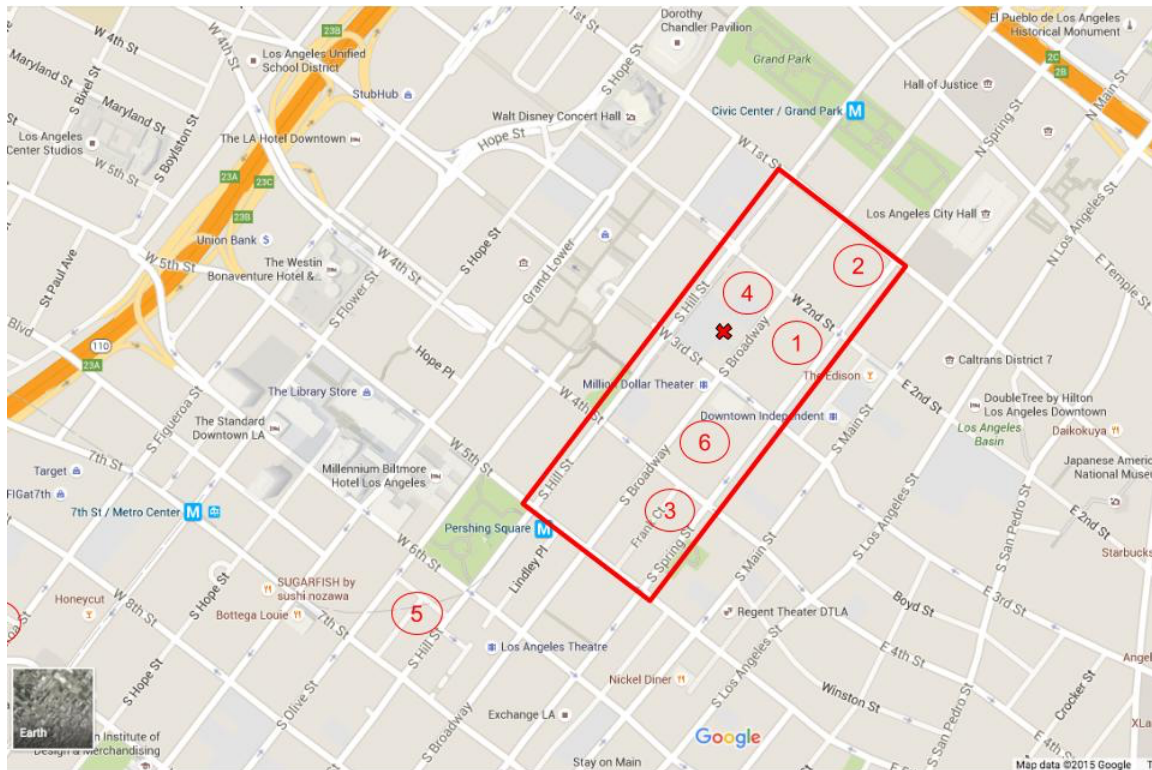


Figure 1.2: Friday Morning Club (FMC) locations, 1891-1900.



Figure 1.3: View of Mission San Juan Capistrano, Joseph Foxcroft Cole, 1885. Source: The Bancroft Library.



Figure 1.4: Architect Arthur Benton sketching at Mission San Juan Capistrano, about 1896. Source: Karen J. Weitze, "Arthur B. Benton," in *Toward a Simpler Way of Life: The Arts & Crafts Architects of California*, ed. Robert Winter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).



Figure 1.5: The Woman's Club House, undated. Source: California Ephemera Collection, UCLA Library.



Figure 1.6: The Woman's Club House living hall, undated. Source: Jones Family Papers, UCLA Library.



Figure 1.7: The Woman's Club House auditorium, undated. Source: California Ephemera Collection, UCLA Library.



Figure 1.8: The Woman's Club House library, undated. Source: California Ephemera Collection, UCLA Library.



Figure 1.9: The Woman's Club House exterior, covered in foliage, about 1900. Source: California Ephemera Collection, UCLA Library.



Figure 1.10: The Woman's Club House lush, tropical exterior, undated. Source: California Ephemera Collection, UCLA Library.

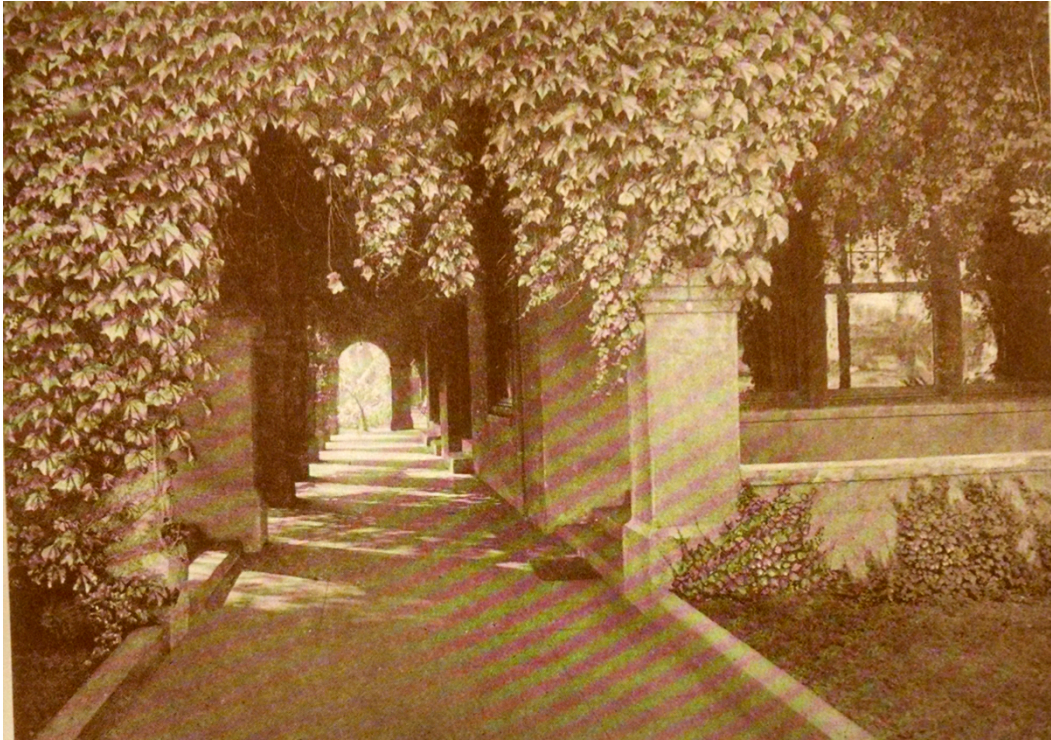


Figure 1.11: The Woman's Club House arcade, undated. Source: California Ephemera Collection, UCLA Library.



Figure 1.12: The residential West Adams district of L.A., 1907. Source: Los Angeles Public Library, Security Pacific National Bank Collection



Figure 1.13: The residential West Adams district of L.A., 1900. Source: Los Angeles Public Library, Security Pacific National Bank Collection.



Figure 1.14: The Mediterranean Revival Bliss House by Carleton Winslow Sr., 1916. Source: Virginia McAlester and A. Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Knopf, 1984).

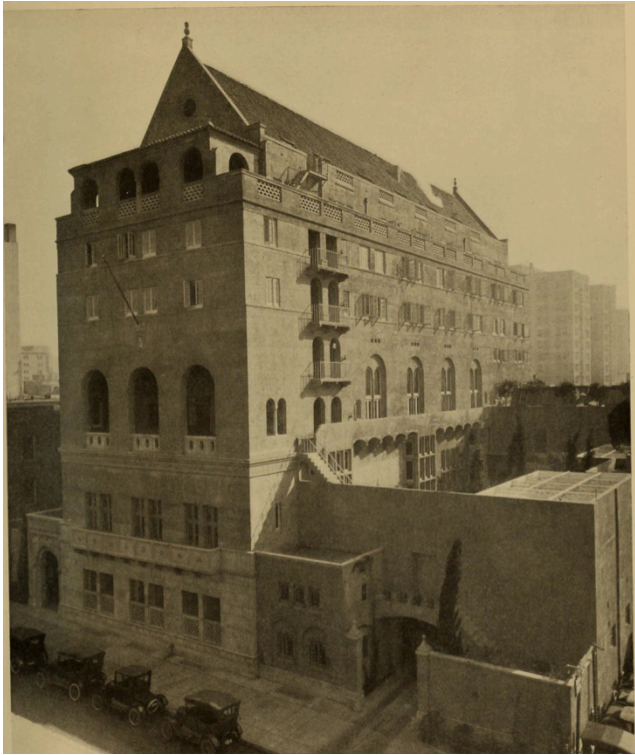


Figure 1.15: The University Club by Allison & Allison, 1923. Source: Irving F. Morrow, “The Work of Allison & Allison, Architects,” *The Building Review* 23, no. 2 (February 1923).

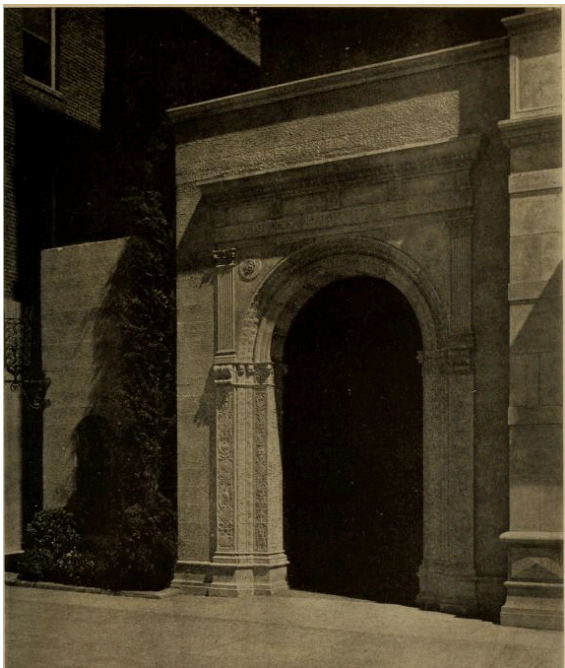


Figure 1.16: The University Club by Allison & Allison, entrance, 1923. Source: Morrow, “The Work of Allison & Allison, Architects.”

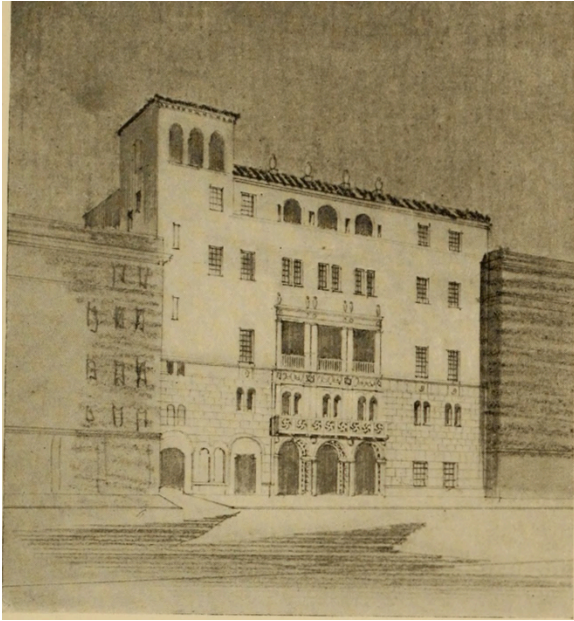


Figure 1.17: Preliminary sketches of the FMC by Allison & Allison. Source: Morrow, "The Work of Allison & Allison, Architects."

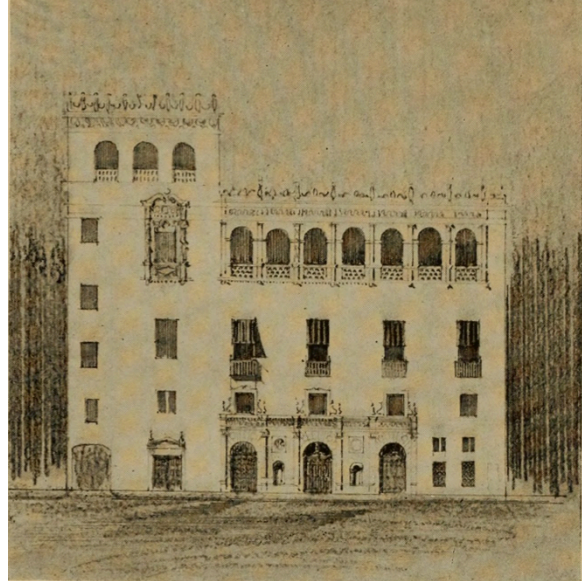
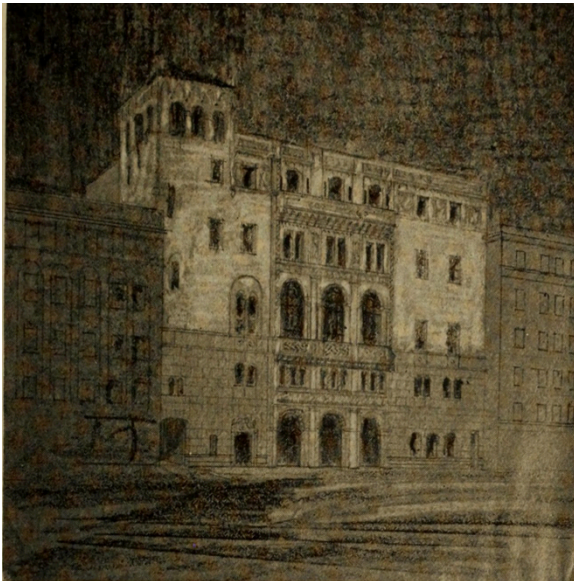


Figure 1.18: Preliminary sketches of the FMC by Allison & Allison. Source: Morrow, "The Work of Allison & Allison, Architects."



Figure 1.19: Approved sketch of the FMC by Allison & Allison. Source: Morrow, “The Work of Allison & Allison, Architects.”



Figure 1.20: View of the FMC in context, 1925. Source: Los Angeles Public Library, Security Pacific National Bank Collection.



Figure 1.21: View of the FMC in context, 1926. Source: Los Angeles Public Library, Security Pacific National Bank Collection.



Figure 1.22: The FMC's north and west sides, 1980. Source: Historic American Buildings Survey, National Parks Service, Department of the Interior.



Figure 1.23: FMC first floor entrance for theatergoers. Source: Cap Equity Locations website.



Figure 1.24: FMC fifth floor clubrooms. Source: Cap Equity Locations website.



Figure 1.25: FMC fifth floor clubrooms with pocket door separation. Source: Cap Equity Locations website.

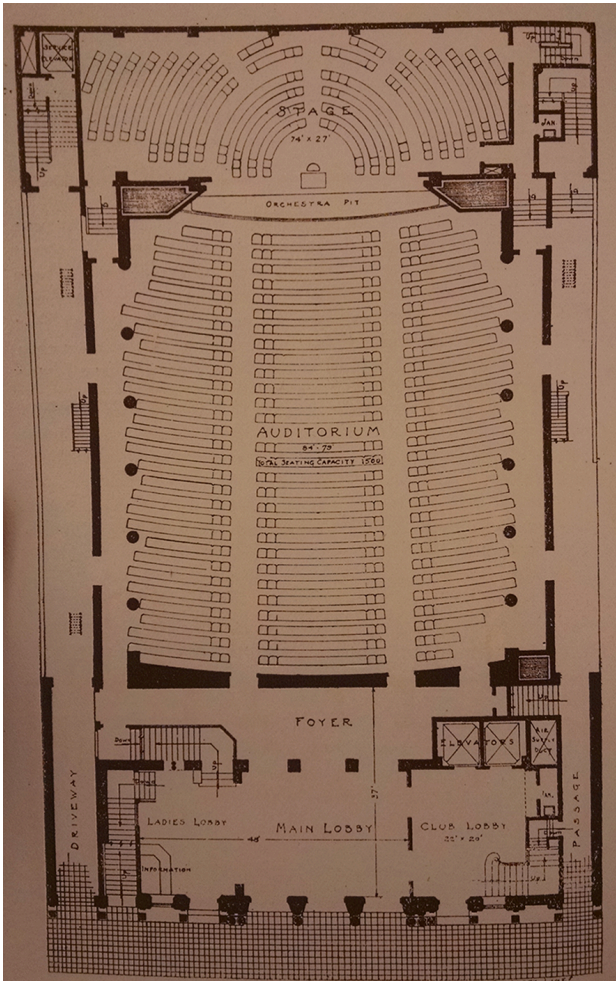


Figure 1.26: FMC first floor plan. Source: FMC Ephemera Collection, Huntington Library.



Figure 1.27: FMC second and third floor plans.

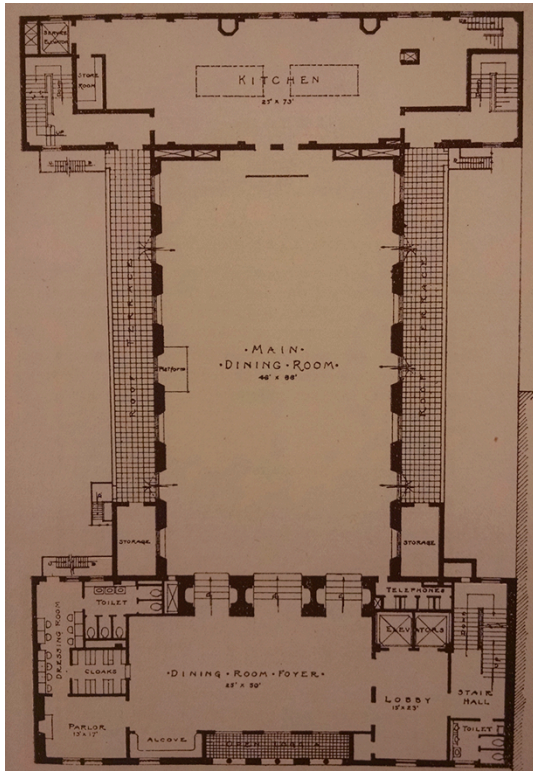


Figure 1.28. FMC fourth floor plan. Source: FMC Ephemera Collection, Huntington Library.

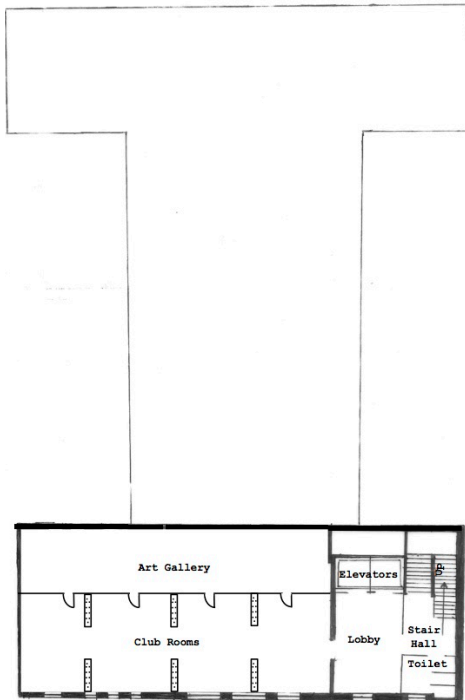


Figure 1.29. FMC fifth floor plan.



Figure 1.30: FMC first floor theater. Source: Cap Equity Locations website.

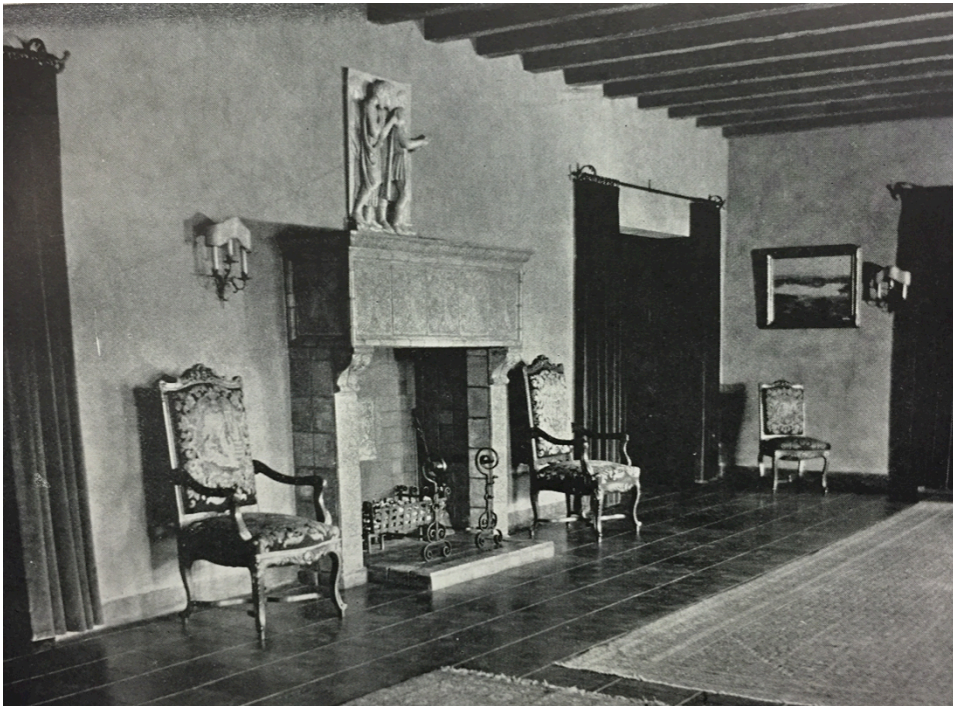


Figure 1.31: FMC second floor library with reading alcoves covered by curtain, 1924. Source: "A New Club Building in Southern California: Portfolio of the Friday Morning Club of Los Angeles," *The Architect and Engineer* 79, no. 1 (October 1924).



Figure 1.32: FMC second floor library. Source: Cap Equity Locations website.



Figure 1.33: FMC third floor lecture or recital hall with painted concrete piers, 1924. Source: "A New Club Building in Southern California," *The Architect and Engineer*.

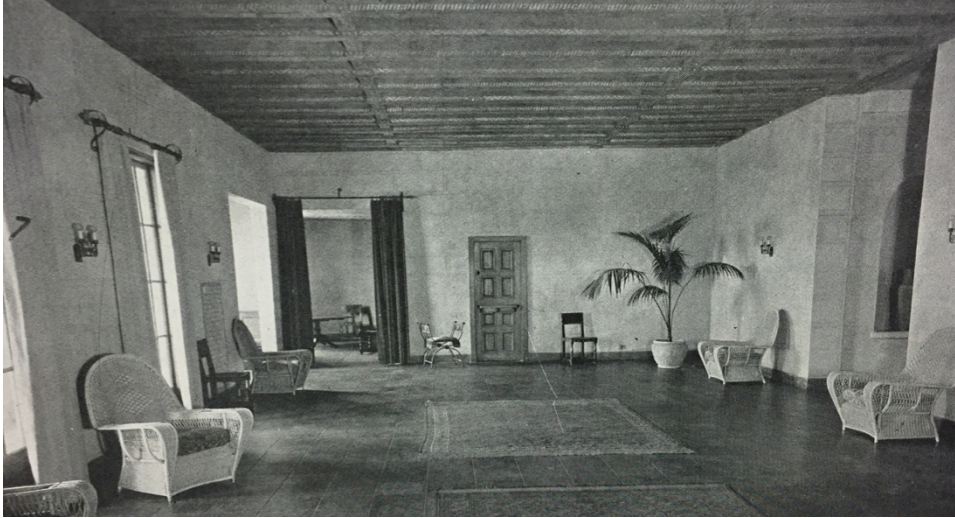


Figure 1.34: FMC fourth floor foyer outside main dining room, 1924. Source: "A New Club Building in Southern California," *The Architect and Engineer*.



Figure 1.35: FMC fourth floor main dining room, 1924. Source: "A New Club Building in Southern California," *The Architect and Engineer*.



Figure 1.36: The FMC's west-facing front façade, detail of entrance and windows, 1980. Source: Historic American Buildings Survey, National Parks Service, Department of the Interior.

Chapter Two

The Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco

Introduction

Designed by Bliss & Faville, the Woman's Athletic Club (1915-1923; see figure 2.1) is a six-story, red brick private club located on a dense, midblock site at 640 Sutter Street in the commercial district of Union Square.¹ The building opened in 1917 to a private membership of around one thousand, offering athletic facilities, hotel rooms, several dining rooms, lounges, and meeting rooms, along with Turkish baths, massage, and hairdressing departments for the “twin goals of fitness and beauty.”²

Current club rules dictate that members and guests maintain a neat, well-groomed appearance in all public areas of the building at all times. Jeans or athletic attire are not permitted except in designated, private areas. Laptops and cameras are prohibited in the public rooms of the clubhouse and cash is not accepted anywhere. To gain membership one must be nominated by a current member and “seconded” by two others. There have never been any male members of the club.

The clannish atmosphere is reinforced by a building almost completely sealed off from the outside world. The single, understated entrance is sunk behind an ornately carved two-story terra cotta and marble arched entryway and, today, controlled by a security camera trained on a set of heavy paneled doors. Windows at the ground level are narrow, with shades drawn to prevent peering in. The fortress-like facade stretches over a full third of the block, a modified Renaissance *palazzo* form with plain lower floors topped by a piano nobile that signals the presence of the ceremonial rooms.

A lavish, inward-facing building with stringent social, financial, and racial barriers to entry, the Woman's Athletic Club (WAC) building was meant to inform society's notions of organized womanhood. In contrast to the Friday Morning Club (FMC), where women built a clubhouse-as-civic-institution to demonstrate their influence, institution building for elite WAC women involved the ability to build purely for leisure and exercise. Whereas the FMC defined their sphere of interest to include much of Los Angeles County, the WAC was created to serve its members—not for them to serve the community. The WAC message, in effect, was equivalence with men's clubs. And like men's clubs whose existence was solely intended to provide a place for sociality, the building of the WAC clubhouse, or placemaking, was their defining moment, their *raison d'être*.³ Their clubhouse reflects this mission in aesthetic, program, plan, and prescribed use.

Unlike the FMC, where members refused to be consumed by the material details of their clubhouse and sneered at “decorating silly tea rooms,” WAC interiors were carefully planned to be sumptuous and impressive.⁴ Luxury and upper-class domesticity

¹ In October 1965 the Woman's Athletic Club changed its name to the Metropolitan Club, but I will be using the club's original name throughout this dissertation.

² Carol Green Wilson and Lawton Kennedy, *The First 50 Years of the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco* (San Francisco: The Metropolitan Club, 1962).

³ With the term “placemaking” I refer to the act of defining and creating a space for oneself, not to the formal urban planning process of shaping the public realm in order to maximize shared value.

⁴ Myra Nye, “Fire Flies at Club Meeting,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 1921.

infuses the club, even in its commercial spaces, lending it an intensely soft, discreet, feminine character. Aware that an assembly hall would be an underused space at the WAC—there was talk during formation of plans to include lectures in the regular club offerings but they never materialized to any significant extent—it was not included in the layout. The club is instead arranged around a substantial and impressive array of recreational and commercial facilities: gymnasium, pool, tennis courts, hairdresser's, bar, and many private dining rooms, lounges, game rooms, and hotel rooms. The ground floor is reminiscent of elite men's clubs, with architectural refinements and exclusions to demarcate particularly hallowed, members-only, ground.

The WAC also differs from the FMC in overall plan, with many small, segmented spaces that provide an intimate feel. Small-group sociability is built in, with dining rooms at different scales to accommodate members' various entertaining needs: one grand, imposing, and ornate for one hundred and fifty guests, and several "smart and dainty" others meant to accommodate fifty or fewer. In many ways the WAC was framed as an upgraded extension of members' expensive homes, signaling a bourgeois version of organized womanhood that depended on class-bound territorial boundaries. During the club's early years "white-aproned maids" on "soft-slipped feet" were said to "discreetly whisper" when addressing members. Members could summon staff to any lounge space with a bell.⁵

Formed in the boom years of the women's club movement, the WAC counted on the patronage of the next generation of clubwomen to continue the tradition of female separatism and collective action. Juvenile and junior members were a subject of constant focus at the WAC: in their athletic competitions, their social activities, and their membership numbers.⁶ Ultimately members' attempts to pass the mantle of female separatism to their children fell short as the younger "New Woman" of the 1920s and 1930s was diverted by broader changes that signaled an end to separatism. For a generation with "new permission to bicycle and dance, attend coed universities, and embark on a wide range of careers,"⁷ the act of promoting the culture and the solidarity of the female elite through placemaking alone seemed archaic. Such social changes implied an end to barriers, and forecast true equality between the sexes. A separate woman's world paled in comparative significance.

Though the organization has struggled significantly since the heyday of peak membership and interest, roughly 1917 to 1919, of the three clubs examined in this dissertation the WAC has been uniquely able to maintain its original functionality. The institution has survived through reluctant accommodation and currently functions as an exclusive, single-sex athletic and social club—much like the men's clubs that they were modeled on, architecturally and organizationally. Weddings are held here during most spring and fall weekends. Inside, people speak in low tones in carpeted hallways and empty public rooms. This is the little-altered place where the women who formed the

⁵ "Women's Athletic Club Is Opened," *The San Francisco Call and Post*, February 5, 1917; "Big New Club for Athletic Women Opened; Handsomely Equipped Place Is Declared Finest of Its Kind in Country," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 5, 1917.

⁶ Juvenile and junior members were aged seven to twelve and twelve to eighteen, respectively.

⁷ Karen J. Blair, "The Limits of Sisterhood: The Woman's Building in Seattle, 1908-1921," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 1984, 45-52.

club and the generations of San Francisco women after them have socialized, exercised, slept, dined, and entertained in like company.

Part I: Formation

The idea for an athletic club for women in San Francisco grew out of Elizabeth Taylor Pillsbury's 1912 visit to the recently completed Woman's Athletic Club of Chicago. Middle aged, upper middle class, and married to a prominent San Francisco attorney, Pillsbury admired the first athletic club for women in America, and identified a need for a similar space in her hometown.⁸ Founded in 1899 "by ladies, for ladies," the club's prestigious membership included the wives of many distinguished Chicagoans, who confidently billed their club as a rendezvous exclusively for relaxation and "the physical culture of the fair sex." The media boasted of their "thoroughly equipped quarters on which 60,000 feminine dollars have been spent," and the activities offered there—diving and swimming, calisthenics, and gymnastics among them—were meant to serve as antidote to the intellectual strain of "weighty discussions and philosophical club papers" caused by members' other club subscriptions.⁹ Pillsbury returned home to San Francisco and convinced her friends of the need for the first such club in the West. Most of the early organizers of what became the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco (WAC)¹⁰ were listed in the *Social Register*, a directory of prominent American families who formed the social elite.¹¹ Typical for this period, only two are known to have been college graduates. Most were married.¹² Many were already affiliated through their husband's and father's exclusive club memberships, in the athletic San Francisco Golf and Burlingame Country Clubs, and the social Pacific Union, Bohemian, Olympic, and University clubs.¹³ And *all* were already members of other, existing women's clubs themselves. Specifically, most founding members belonged to one or both of city's most exclusive women's clubs, the Town and Country or the Francisca Club.¹⁴ To establish a club with an explicitly non-altruistic charter, though, would be a marker of status beyond what their memberships in more typical civic-minded organizations already proffered.

In general, the focus of the women's club movement evolved from the literary and cultural education of their own members, to local projects of social service, to forming

⁸ Wilson and Kennedy, *The First 50 Years of the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco*, 3.

⁹ "The 'Only and Original' One," *The Denver Evening Post*, March 16, 1899; "Chicago Woman's Athletic Club," *The Union Signal; a Journal of Social Welfare*, March 16, 1899.

¹⁰ The Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco was renamed the Metropolitan Club in 1966 but is referred to here by its original name (though abbreviated to WAC).

¹¹ Here I define the early organizers as the 26 women who served on the Board of Directors in 1914-1916.

¹² California Federation of Women's Clubs, *Club Women of California: State Register and Directory* (San Francisco: The Independent Press, 1916).

¹³ Social Register Association, *Social Register San Francisco 1922* 36, no. 11 (1922).

¹⁴ Cholly Francisco, "Athletics Has Interest of Society Women Who Are Organizing a Club," *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), June 14, 1914; Notably, the Town and Country Club was defiant in its identity as a purely social club, not unlike several prestigious men's clubs. As described by the *New York Sun*, "A unique club for women has been started in San Francisco. This is the first club organized by women with no underlying motive to uplift the world or themselves." Town and Country Club, *Town and Country Club, 1893-1993* (San Francisco: Town and Country Club, 1993), 9-10.

regional and national federations for political influence around 1900.¹⁵ Individual clubs, however, followed their own pattern. Some centered on “self-cultivation,” while others concentrated on community service projects. In San Francisco, organizations dedicated specifically to expanding women’s public role proliferated. The women of these clubs treated political power not as a vehicle for a specific reform, such as temperance or morals, but as a means to advance women’s general influence in education, employment, and local politics.¹⁶ In Oakland, some women’s groups turned to charitable institution building, organizing benevolent associations and philanthropic establishments through the assertion of a superior female moral authority. In a method that architectural historian Marta Gutman explains was commonly used to assist and regulate the urban poor, Oakland women renovated existing buildings for their charitable purposes, drawing a connection between environmental and moral repair.¹⁷ Though their spatial strategy differed from Oakland women’s in scale, expression, and focus, the women of the WAC conceptualized their efforts as no less socially or politically charged. In their eyes, an equally valid form of institution building involved creating a power base for themselves, demonstrating in public their sophisticated understanding of the capitalist economy, property rights, and wealth accumulation. Their club not only contributed to the growth and modernization of the municipality, but also served as a mode of political expression. In the WAC clubwomen were attempting to build like men.

Pillsbury and the other founders of the as-yet-unnamed club consulted with the directors of local men’s organizations and added the names of their wives to the prospective member list. In June 1914, the development of the club became a public effort with a front-page article in the *San Francisco Examiner*.¹⁸ Titled “Athletic Club for Women | Men’s Places to be Rivalled | Society Backing Innovation,” the article is dominated by a pen-and-ink Gibson Girl-esque illustration of club board member Mrs. Norris Davis, suggesting that an interest in athletic pursuits is not a de facto disavowal of femininity and delicacy (see figure 2.2). “Society” members were given the signal that their kind had signed off on this change, and society at large could also rest easy that these changes would not overturn gender norms. An article the following week in the *Examiner* went into more detail:

Among San Francisco society women the latest manifestation of ultra-modern life is the organization of a woman’s athletic club. With all the city’s multiplicity of clubs, covering every imaginable purpose to which a club could be put, there still was none which filled the demand for a club where women could combine mental and physical attainment.¹⁹

In fact, in 1914 there were already seven facilities in the city combining educational and recreational opportunities for women. While efforts to organize their own athletic club

¹⁵ Ellen Carol DuBois and Lynn Dumenil, *Through Women’s Eyes: An American History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2005), 298.

¹⁶ Jensen, 47.

¹⁷ Marta Ruth Gutman, “On the Ground in Oakland: Women and Institution Building in an Industrial City” (Ph.D. diss., 2000).

¹⁸ “Athletic Club for Women | Men’s Places to Be Rivalled | Society Backing Innovation,” *San Francisco Examiner*, June 8, 1914.

¹⁹ Francisco, “Athletics Has Interest of Society Women Who Are Organizing a Club.”

were underway, bourgeois women were also involved in establishing clubs for working class women and girls that incorporated physical activity in their programs. Pillsbury and five other founding members of the WAC were on the Board of Directors for one such organization, the Recreation Club for Girls Who Work.²⁰ Though its stated goals were different than an elite athletic club's, most of the activities offered were strikingly similar, and were not limited to physical exercise alone. The working girls could avail themselves of classes every evening, talks or musicals, dances on Saturday nights, and Sunday afternoon teas.²¹ Workingwomen's clubs were rarely organized by wage earning women themselves but instead were the uplift projects of middle- and upper-class women. The Recreation Club for Girls Who Work also offered out of town excursions during the summer months, "thus avoiding the temptations of the Sunday picnics."²²

The implication that "working girls" needed to be specifically, geographically steered from a nonspecific activity—Sunday picnics—is evidence of what historian Sarah Deutsch calls a "moral geography." In her influential *Women and the City* Deutsch explains how in turn-of-the-twentieth-century American cities, middle-class and elite matrons constructed moral geographies that defined almost all spaces except their own homes as dangerous spaces for young working-class women. Cities were full of snares and temptations they themselves might be able to withstand, but the financially vulnerable working-class woman could not.²³ The mapped moral geographies of elite clubwomen were connected to the claims they made to a place in the public realm. When wealthy women ventured into mixed-gender and mixed-class spaces—a Sunday picnic or a bohemian restaurant, for example—their class position allowed them to remain unsullied. Further, many restaurants, theaters, promenades, and department stores existed specifically to serve them. In the decades after the Civil War, commercial culture, technological change, and a market economy had helped redefine which public spaces middle- and upper-class women could inhabit. Astute entrepreneurs had "feminized" popular entertainments accordingly, and created new ones specifically for them. Many of the spaces that upper class, American-born, white women frequented were single-gender, and others, such as theaters and downtown cafes, were sorted by class. Elite women's experiences therefore often reinforced their sense that the city, and particularly, its downtown, was theirs.

By creating separate athletic clubs that existed explicitly to steer workingwomen from trouble, elite women satisfied and reinforced their entrenched notions of spaces safe and unsafe for different classes of urban women. Referred to as settlements in a report published that year by The Commonwealth Club of California, workingwomen's clubs

²⁰ Sarah Deutsch reminds us that white reformers' anxiety over the moral safety of working girls largely concerned *white* working girls: "Most dismissed black women as inherently immoral. While black reform women struggled to assert their own respectability and to work for the uplift of the race as a whole, non elite black women, largely domestic servants and so excluded from the category "working girl," struggled simply to be visible." Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 90.

²¹ *Transactions of the Commonwealth Club of California*, vol. 8 (Commonwealth Club of California, 1914).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940*, 90.

subscribed to the settlement movement concept that sports could energize public virtue.²⁴ All activity was supervised and directed at these settlement clubs, expressing elite women's preference for ordered leisure spaces that preserved personal restraint and bodily integrity. At the same time, they provided collective space and services rarely available to financially marginalized women working long hours in overcrowded cities. According to physical educators and urban reformers, the rise of the industrial world had created a situation in which cooperative effort had been supplanted with individualistic effort, and sports could teach women the rules of fair play, self-control, cooperation, responsibility, and reason.²⁵ Around 1900, exercise was newly and widely prescribed for both working- and elite women alike.

Exercise for Women

However much ideas about exercise for women changed during this period, they remained social and ideological, and varied especially according to class. The very notion that women should participate in athletics in the United States developed slowly and unevenly over time. Though the majority of American women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did hard physical work on a farm or in other working circumstances, there were early concerns about inactivity among some urban women. In the eighteenth century trading centers of the eastern coast many women lived a life of comparative ease, and the “delicate, fragile and dependent” corseted woman was much admired.²⁶ Dancing was the most popular form of exercise for women, and was prescribed for that purpose. Formal physical education for women had begun as early as the 1820s in girls' schools, where walking, light calisthenics, and domestic chores were also part of the curriculum.²⁷ The latter half of the nineteenth century saw widespread concern that the health of Americans, especially American women, was in decline—a concern linked to industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. An 1860 edition of the magazine *Godey's Lady's Book* surmised that American women were fragile, delicate, and incapable of enduring any hardship.²⁸ Influential books such as the 1874 *Sex in Education* set forth the idea that females were innately weaker in body and mind; because they could not endure physical and mental activity at once, their education should exclude the physical.²⁹

Dissenting voices soon joined the conversation. Writers, mostly women, argued that the “weaker” gender was not innately frail but that women simply needed more exercise—albeit of the restricted kind, such as running up and down stairs with the mouth

²⁴ Middle-class reformers “settled” in the slums of American cities around 1900 to share and improve the lives of the poor. Reformers worked to assimilate and ease the transition of immigrants into the labor force by teaching them middle-class American values.

²⁵ *Transactions of the Commonwealth Club of California*; See Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982); Mark Dyreson, *Making the American Team: Sport, Culture, and the Olympic Experience* (University of Illinois Press, 1998), 108.

²⁶ Dorothy S. Ainsworth, *The History of Physical Education in Colleges for Women* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company 1930), 2.

²⁷ Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1983), 90.

²⁸ “Health of American Women Deteriorating,” *Godey's Lady's Book*, May 1860, 467.

²⁹ Edward H. Clarke, *Sex in Education; Or, A Fair Chance for Girls* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1874).

closed to prevent overexertion. Dr. Mary Taylor Bissell, public health advocate and staunch promoter of sport for women, said, “chronic ill health would end” for those who were physically active.³⁰ Growing numbers of women were experiencing the benefits of organized sports at newly established women’s colleges. At Mills College in Oakland, for instance, an institution modeled on Vassar College, women were required to take gymnastics, calisthenics, dancing, or domestic science. Because the women flourished with exercise, women’s colleges brought about a startlingly swift reversal in popular thought. By the mid-1880s, it was widely recognized that exercise improved women’s health, though there were few options for organized female exercise outside of women’s colleges.³¹ In 1886, the first known purpose-built athletic club building for women, Miss Mary Allen’s “Ladies’ Gymnasium,” opened in Boston.³² The YWCA also built gymnasiums for working women in the last twenty years of the century. On the whole, the fragile female became an antiquated picture over the course of the nineteenth century. Though the identity of the “New Woman” shifted across time, compared to her fragile, consumptive sister of the 1800s, the New Woman around 1900 used her robust figure for exercise, wore sensible clothes, and exuded health. Advertisements for healthful foods and hygienic products featured radiant, active young women. In both image and in fact, a new model of able-bodied womanhood had appeared.³³

For the elite at the beginning of the twentieth century, the appeal of exercise stemmed as much from the social benefits as the hygienic. Newspaper society columns regularly covered the athletic activities of women in wealthy vacation destinations like Newport, Rhode Island and Monterey, California, helping to form an associative link between sports and elite society. In San Francisco, Olympic Club members’ wives had access to an exercise class as early as the 1870s. The Burlingame Country Club, to which at least nine of the husbands of the founding members of the WAC belonged, admitted women as “special golf members” in 1900, though different speeds and styles of play resulted in separate days for men and women on the course.³⁴ Welcoming an overall greater interest in sports and games, Pillsbury and her peers approached athletics in ways that distinguished them from the masses—for one, by the very activities they chose. Tennis and other pursuits that required elaborate and expensive facilities held special appeal.³⁵ As defined and enclosed spaces devoted exclusively to leisure, athletic clubs

³⁰ Mary T. Bissell, “Emotions Versus Health in Women,” *Popular Science* (February 1888), cited in Louise Michele Newman, *Men’s Ideas/Women’s Realities: Popular Science, 1870-1915* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1985), 48, 52; Gregory Kent Stanley, *The Rise and Fall of the Sportswoman: Women’s Health, Fitness, and Athletics, 1860-1940* (New York: P. Lang, 1996), 25, 42-43.

³¹ Martha H. Verbrugge, *Able-Bodied Womanhood: Personal Health and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Boston* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 94.

³² Stephen Hardy, *How Boston Played: Sport, Recreation, and Community, 1865-1915* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1982), 143.

³³ Verbrugge, *Able-Bodied Womanhood: Personal Health and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Boston*, 94.

³⁴ Doris Muscatine, *Old San Francisco: The Biography of a City from Early Days to the Earthquake* (New York: Putnam, 1975), 350; Mitchell P. Postel, *History of the Burlingame Country Club* (San Francisco: Burlingame Country Club and San Mateo County Historical Association, 1982), 84.

³⁵ In contrast, the cycling craze that swept America in this period was shunned by the upper classes on account of its popularity with the middle class. From an 1894 article on the pursuit of sports in America: “Cycling, in fact, is the amusement par excellence of the people, and is not taken up as a regular sport by the upper classes. The cycling set is by no means the same as that engaged in tennis, riding, and other

were the most costly of women's clubs, both in terms of plant equipment and in dues paid by members. Although sport was not the only activity pursued there, it occupied a major place (in the case of the WAC, four floors) and thus became integrated into the concept of leisure itself. Their athletic club, then, was a symbol of a quite different, pleasure-oriented ethic than that prescribed to the majority of the public. Unlike working Americans who claimed that sport instilled in players those traits that empowered them to do life's work, the rich appreciated sport specifically for its inutility.³⁶

The Men's Club Model

In fact, lavish clubhouses referenced a specifically male variety of leisure. The WAC would distinguish itself from its peers through its similarity to elite American men's clubs, a designation notable for two reasons. Unlike most women's clubs whose achievements were measured in civic transformation, men's clubs were famous for their focus on the social and leisure activities of their members.³⁷ Second, for these urban fraternities, the building of their clubhouse was their defining moment, their *raison d'être*.³⁸ The WAC would be the first women's club in California designed on the model of a Renaissance *palazzo*, a style typically associated with men's clubs. The male athletic club movement had begun with the founding of the New York Athletic Club in 1866, whose model was immediately replicated by a number of similar organizations in cities along the East Coast.³⁹ By the 1880s, competition among men's athletic clubs for status and prestige intensified the penchant for extravagant clubhouses, robust programs of nonathletic activities, and increasingly selective membership policies. In short, they began to acquire more and more of the characteristics of purely social clubs. At leading clubs, lounge, sleeping, and dining rooms became the norm alongside gymnasiums and swimming pools. These additional facilities were meant to swell membership numbers by

sports. It is essentially popular —the principal form of outing of the vast majority of the middle classes, the smaller shopkeepers, tradesmen, mechanics, clerks. . . . I do not mean that the upper classes do not take to cycling; it would be absurd to say so; but they are too few to give their stamp to cycling. The women, especially of the upper classes, if they cycle at all, are not apt to use their wheels in public." Elizabeth C. Barney, "The American Sportswoman," *Fortnightly Review* 62 (1894), 263–77.

³⁶ Donald J. Mrozek, *Sport and American Mentality, 1880-1910* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 118.

³⁷ A typical repertoire of features included one or more lounges, bars, dining rooms, libraries, smoking rooms, card rooms, and a few overnight rooms. Originally located in converted houses or rented spaces, many men's clubs in American cities began commissioning purpose-built luxurious clubhouses beginning in the 1880s and 1890s. Women's clubs followed a similar pattern, albeit later and generally at a smaller scale. Michael R. Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco, Now Named the Metropolitan Club, 640 Sutter Street, San Francisco* (San Francisco: 640 Heritage Preservation Foundation, 2004); "Athletic Club for Women | Men's Places to Be Rivalled | Society Backing Innovation," *San Francisco Examiner*.

³⁸ Barbara J. Black, *A Room of His Own: A Literary-Cultural Study of Victorian Clubland* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2012), 75.

³⁹ Examples of men's athletic clubs built shortly after the debut of the N.Y.A.C.: in New York: the Riding Club, Berkeley Athletic Club, the Riding and Driving Club, Richmond County Country Club, Meadow Brook Country Club, and the Rockaway; in New Jersey: the Essex County Country Club, and the Morristown Country Club; in Boston: the Myopia; in Philadelphia: the Philadelphia Country Club; in New Orleans: Southern Athletic Club; also others near Chicago, Detroit, Cincinnati, and Cleveland. Willis and Wettan, "Social Stratification in New York City Athletic Clubs, 1865-1915."

attracting nonathletic members; they also would help to keep aging athletes active in club matters.⁴⁰ WAC founders took great care to equate themselves in approach and practice with such clubs. “It is our wish to make the club a parallel to the best men’s clubs in the city,” Mrs. James Ellis Tucker told a reporter for the *San Francisco Examiner*.⁴¹ They would be “no more of an altruistic or philanthropic enterprise than a man’s athletic club is, many other organizations being maintained and supported by these women for whatever altruistic work they may care to engage in.”⁴² A 1933 retrospective on women’s activity during the previous three decades describes athletic clubs that had flourished with conspicuous success in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago. They offered “an infinite variety in their service to their members. Comfortable bedrooms, luxurious libraries, good living rooms, all kinds of athletic equipment, reducing machines, Turkish baths and beauty parlors.” The study names the initiation fee to the WAC as \$500 and dues as \$50 annually. Though this initiation fee is incorrect—joining fees were never higher than \$300 in the years leading up to 1933—the study claims that the amenities easily justify the price.⁴³ While the writer notes that the fees were high for a women’s club, nonetheless, they were modest compared with the costs required to affiliate with an athletic club for men offering similar advantages.⁴⁴

In their adaptation of the men’s club model, WAC sportswomen would prove especially adept in exploiting the potential of sport as a means of community. Typically inclined toward less abrasive competition and less concerned with winning than men, women could pursue sport as an end in itself; in the process, they showed how sport could “act within a group to strengthen the sense of cohesion by permitting individuals to share a common action.”⁴⁵ Like all voluntary associations, athletic clubs mediated between the individual member and the wider world, offering a sense of identity and association. In the early decades of the twentieth century, women who could afford to do so began to exploit athletic clubs as social centers away from the home; this popularity accounted for much of the demand for the ever-increasing plushness and comfort of the clubhouses.⁴⁶

Another particularly persuasive inducement to athletic participation was the elite class’ newly revived love affair with all things Neoclassical, and in particular ancient Greece. Announcing the formation of the WAC, a *San Francisco Examiner* society page columnist with the nom de plume “Cholly Francisco” describes how “the Renaissance of the Greek ideals” of beauty and strength inspired its members: “The ancient desire of making the body a finer instrument more readily obedient to the mind, is insistently apparent in the activities of the dominating class of society today.” Francisco goes on to

⁴⁰ See: The New York A.C. and the Manhattan A.C. *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴¹ “Athletic Club for Women | Men’s Places to Be Rivalled | Society Backing Innovation,” *San Francisco Examiner*.

⁴² Francisco, “Athletics Has Interest of Society Women Who Are Organizing a Club.”

⁴³ \$300 in 1915 is equal to \$6,900 in 2015 terms. Here and throughout, all comparative dollar amounts are calculated courtesy of westegg.com/inflation. Sophonisba Preston Breckinridge, *Women in the Twentieth Century, a Study of Their Political, Social and Economic Activities*. (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 82.

⁴⁴ The costs of belonging to a male athletic club in New York in 1893: N.Y. A.C. initiation fee \$100, yearly dues \$50; University A.C. initiation fee \$100, yearly dues \$50; Manhattan A.C. initiation fee \$50, yearly dues \$40. Willis and Wettan, “Social Stratification in New York City Athletic Clubs, 1865-1915.”

⁴⁵ Mrozek, *Sport and American Mentality, 1880-1910*, 143.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

connect the fetishization of ancient aesthetic ideals—already tied to women’s physical condition—to the growing role of women in modern society:

The varying expressions which this revival of an almost forgotten cult is taking, tell a unique and interesting story of the ambitions and aims of society. . . . Above all is this true of the world wherein women express themselves. The simplicity, directness, and strength, elemental in Greek art, are forces which are opening new worlds to women today. . . . As for the women of the ‘leisure class,’ they are the most occupied of all. If it is true that motion liberates thought, then the handball court and the gymnasium must bear their responsibility for woman’s growing importance in the world’s affairs.⁴⁷

Francisco posited a direct relationship between women’s access to organized exercise and their increasingly influential role in modern society, and locates both phenomena in classical architecture.

The concept that sport would change women beyond changing their bodies appeared elsewhere, conceived of more broadly as an adjustment to their overall manner and style. Even if she played sports as no more than a pretext for social interaction, this alone virtually insured some alteration—a quickening—of a woman’s personal attributes. Elizabeth Barney wrote in an 1894 review of athletics in America that from playing tennis women gained in swiftness of thought, rapidity of judgment, and accuracy of movement. These improvements would make them more pleasing to men, for whom these qualities were considered inherent virtues:

Those who love it . . . attain a degree of scientific skill which, though of course lacking the strength and swiftness, will readily bear comparison with the accuracy, quick thought and rapid calculation of the average masculine game. . . . One good player develops another until it is very generally true that the club that cannot furnish a set of ladies’ singles or doubles, which is interesting to watch from a true sportsman’s point of view, considers itself a failure; and men are taking it very much less for granted that girls are handicaps, and mixed doubles therefore a bore.⁴⁸

H.C. Chatfield-Taylor wrote in 1896 of the same trend in Chicago, observing that “money-grubbing and gossip” were no longer the dominant pursuits of women since their entry into the world of sport. The active cultivation of physical health through sport produced evidence of a “delight in action” that supposedly brought women into step with the American male.⁴⁹ Fitness, then, applied not just to the notion of a woman’s physical body but also to her ability to rationalize, think, and generally keep company with men. In that sense sport became another factor, alongside suffrage and meaningful pursuits outside the home, by which women sought gender equivalence. Certain women were able

⁴⁷ Francisco, “Athletics Has Interest of Society Women Who Are Organizing a Club.”

⁴⁸ Elizabeth C. Barney, “The American Sportswoman,” *Fortnightly Review* 62 (1894), 263–77.

⁴⁹ H.C. Chatfield-Taylor, “Country-Club Life in Chicago,” *Harper’s Weekly* 40 (August 1, 1896), 762; Mrozek, *Sport and American Mentality, 1880-1910*, 113.

to embrace athletic competition as enthusiastically as did their male peers because of wealth and social status; those same qualities conferred upon them permission to build.

Context

The experience of being a bourgeois woman in San Francisco at this time played a critical role in the collective decision to organize, fund, and erect a club building. In California in general and in San Francisco in particular, women had been working for some time already for influence and prominence in both the symbolic and built landscape. After the 1848 California Gold Rush San Francisco was transformed from a sleepy backwater into a focal point of economic opportunity. The population increased tremendously: the 1848 Federal Census in San Francisco confirmed a population of eight hundred and twelve; by 1849, the population was approximately twenty-five thousand.⁵⁰ The female population grew much more slowly. At the end of the 1860s there was only one woman for every two men. The number of men and women did not reach parity until 1910, when the population had grown to almost half a million persons.⁵¹ Given the profound social and economic changes that occurred in San Francisco around the turn of the century, “social distinctions were difficult to discern due to population growth and newly acquired wealth. With social relations, manners, and appropriate behavior in a state of flux, traditional methods of displaying oneself and recognizing others of similar status became more difficult.”⁵² Early on, women had organized themselves into class and ethnic communities that were a visible part of the city; voluntary associations, in addition to offering a sense of community, gained new significance as a symbol of belonging in a climate of transformative change. Indeed, the city’s diverse population, its improved communications, and increased toleration of the novel or untested proved fertile ground for the growth of the athletic club. In this sense clubs did not confront the city but were a “rapprochement with its new order.”⁵³

Middle and upper class Anglo-American women in particular flourished in this economic environment, in part due to a set of state property laws written in 1850 that had continuously protected their right to own and control real estate acquired independently both prior to and during marriage. In 1879, women gained the right to control their finances separately from their husbands.⁵⁴ Further, when they established clubs in the 1880s and 1890s, women developed another vehicle for influencing local and state growth and development. As property owners, they knew the economic value of institutions that would attract out-of-town visitors and grow real estate values citywide. Thus even before they won the right to vote in state elections in 1911, bourgeois women all over California had been helping to define their cities financially and culturally through their clubs.

⁵⁰ “Historical US Census Populations of Places, Towns, and Cities in California” accessed May 13, 2015, <http://sfpl.org/index.php?pg=2000027601>.

⁵¹ Joan M. Jensen and Gloria Ricci Lothrop, *California Women: A History*, Golden State Series (San Francisco, Calif: Boyd & Fraser Pub. Co, 1987), 37.

⁵² Mary Rech Rockwell, “Elite Women and Class Formation,” in *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 153–66.

⁵³ Hardy, *How Boston Played*, 143-146.

⁵⁴ Robert Grayson, *California’s Gold Rush* (ABDO, 2012), 41.

Class Formation

As a source of social unity and stability in the ever-changing city, clubs also enabled elite women to monitor and control access to class status. In a process that historians Sven Beckert and Julia Rosenbaum define as bourgeois class formation among the economic elite, cultural practices served as the premise for class consolidation among a group of professionally diverse but commonly capital-rich urban Americans.⁵⁵ Women like Pillsbury and her friends who shared elite tastes and habits, manners and ideas—home design and decoration, holiday itineraries—created a class culture through shared practices—leisure pursuits, urban activities, and philanthropy. These customs were closely related and mutually facilitating. A shared habit—in this case, sports for leisure—served as the basis for the formation of a social network, giving them a shared sense of purpose. Their social network in turn formed the basis for the construction of a social institution: a club and a clubhouse. A clubhouse, in turn, could organize and reorganize space, embedding bourgeois culture into the larger society and further expanding their economic and social reach. In this way, the WAC was an institutional and organizational reproduction of the bourgeoisie. Through the intricate social ritual of gaining membership to a club and subsequent access to certain cultural activities, members would establish a sense of tradition and continuity, and empower the bourgeoisie to replicate its values and interests over successive generations. They were building an institution that would stabilize their collective power, promoting the culture and the solidarity of the elite through placemaking.

Among the early members of the WAC were several women who had already demonstrated their interest and practical experience in placemaking as linked to class and gender: financing, furnishing, and operating “women’s” exposition buildings. Eight of the founders were active on the Woman’s Board of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE), a fair organized to celebrate the completion of the Panama Canal and the four hundredth anniversary of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa’s “discovery” of the Pacific. In addition to the observation that San Francisco was firmly on its feet following the devastating earthquake and fire of 1906, fairgoers found a world where women’s rights—to vote, a right bestowed upon California women in 1911; own property; and generally make a place for themselves—were visually evident. For one, unlike previous expositions in Chicago and Saint Louis, where a woman’s board was adjunct to the general administration, the Board at the PPIE was both independent and independently funded. Phoebe Apperson Hearst, one of the wealthiest women in America, was president of the Board. The group furnished, maintained and administered all social functions in the California State Building, a massive structure covering five acres and the official host building of the Exposition. Over the nine months of the fair they hosted over six hundred and fifteen festivities in the building—balls, conferences, banquets, tea dances, and concerts. Every Sunday the public was invited to dance in the ballroom under the “careful supervision” of the hostess-in-charge, and each afternoon,

⁵⁵ For more on culturally based bourgeois class formation, see Sven Beckert and Julia B. Rosenbaum, *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

ladies from different Bay Area counties received dignified guests, “giving a delightful home atmosphere to the Host Building.”⁵⁶

In another form of placemaking, the Board’s erection of the *Pioneer Mother* statue at the PPIE reinforced the fair’s larger rhetorical celebration of the white conquest of native California. Prominently placed for the benefit of the fair’s nineteen million visitors and the direct result of the Board’s public fundraising campaign, *Pioneer Mother* depicts a white mother with her two small children, a participant in the mid-nineteenth century overland migration that assisted in the decimation of the native Californian population. Its inscription read, “Over rude paths beset with hunger and risk she pressed on toward the vision of a better country. To an assemblage of men busied with the perishable rewards of the day she brought the three-fold leaven of enduring society, faith, gentleness, and home with the nurture of children.”⁵⁷ The monument suggested the relationship between white women, civilization, and nation building. This formulation asserted the pioneer mother as *the* mother of the nation, a position that endowed white, middle-class women with the power essential to the creation of “civilization.”⁵⁸ The fundraising actions of the Board, the statue itself, and its accompanying rhetoric all asserted the importance of white middle class women in California culture.

Associations like the WAC, where the economic elite gathered in homosocial networks and pooled their strength and resources, were thus central not just to a sense of identity-based cohesion for San Francisco bourgeois women; they could also translate into the collective action of building, as they had at the PPIE. The fact that their association was formulated around sports carried particular implications for their architectural project. The pursuit of sports for leisure would allude to their power, economic and otherwise; their lack of fierce internal athletic competition would enhance the potential of sport as a means of community, creating strong social connections and stabilizing their collective power; through exercise they would improve their mental fitness, bringing them into step with men. Further, having managed a women’s building at a world’s fair, a typical women’s club practice begun in 1876 with the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition and since made routine, they had experience proclaiming their agenda in built form.⁵⁹ For all of these reasons, it is not surprising that the women of the WAC felt justified in pursuing a building format typically associated with male power.

As previously noted, WAC founders took great care to equate themselves with men’s clubs in San Francisco. These included the Olympic, having just completed its new clubhouse at Post and Mason Streets in 1912, and University, under construction at Powell and California Streets that same year. The University Club was designed by the WAC’s future architects Bliss & Faville, and both the Olympic and University club buildings were based on the model of a Renaissance *palazzo* built in red brick and terra

⁵⁶ Anna Pratt Simpson and Panama-Pacific International Exposition Company, *Problems Women Solved: Being the Story of the Woman’s Board of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (San Francisco: Woman’s board, 1915), 95-96.

⁵⁷ Panama-Pacific International Exposition Company, *The Blue Book: A Comprehensive Official Souvenir View Book of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition at San Francisco, 1915* (San Francisco: R. A. Reid, 1915), 9.

⁵⁸ Abigail Markwyn, “Encountering ‘Woman’ on the Fairgrounds of the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition,” in *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World’s Fairs* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 180.

⁵⁹ Andrew M. Shanken, *Into the Void Pacific: Building the 1939 San Francisco World’s Fair*, 2014, 184.

cotta, with a pronounced piano nobile and subsidiary floors housing hotel rooms and service areas (see figure 2.3).⁶⁰ The WAC would also be modeled after men's clubs in other important ways: it would be a commercial enterprise, unlike typically civic-minded women's clubs, and its linchpin would be bourgeois sociability. Their building would be designed to provide members with services, not to enable them to serve others. In other words, it would be a men's athletic club for women. In contrast to the customary dichotomy of female versus male responses to club formation in which women gathered to engage in productive work in the municipality and men gathered to drink and socialize, WAC women were not interested in being the "good" counterpart to men's clubs. Instead, the WAC represents the search for equivalence.⁶¹

Part II: The Building Campaign

The 600 block of Sutter Street in San Francisco on which the Bliss & Faville-designed six-story WAC building would rise in 1915 was a steep brush-covered sandy slope only fifty years prior. The earliest buildings on this block were built mostly or entirely of wood and were all destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and subsequent fire (see figures 2.4 and 2.5).⁶² In 1913, Caius Tacitus Ryland, the son of a wealthy banker and real estate developer in Santa Clara County, bought the entire future site of the club on Sutter Street between Mason and Taylor Streets.⁶³ By mid 1914 Ryland was in discussions with the WAC to construct a clubhouse on half of the square site and lease it to their newly formed corporation.

WAC founders hoped to open the doors of their club building on May 1, 1915, in time for the Exposition; in mid-1914 they heightened their recruiting efforts accordingly. To finance their building, the clubwomen sought one thousand members who would each pay a \$25 initiation fee and dues of \$5 per month when the building opened. Though seven hundred and ten women had signed onto the membership roster by February 1915 many had not yet actually sent in their initiation fee, delaying the acquisition of a building site. Members were pressed to fulfill their financial obligations, and to close the recruitment campaign by drawing upon their existing networks to propose one or more

⁶⁰ The Olympic Club modeled their club on the Palazzo Massimi in Rome, with a second level piano nobile housing the main rooms and upper level hotel rooms. According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the usual clubhouse organization was reversed at the University Club. There the piano nobile was at the top of the building and hotel rooms were in between the ground level and the piano nobile. "Birds of a Feather Flock Together in the University Club; Men of Learning Establish Themselves in Attractive Home; Housed in Building with Splendid View on Crest of a Hill," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Dec. 12, 1913.

⁶¹ For an amusing portrait of precedent for this dichotomy, see Laurel Ulrich's *The Age of Homespun*. Ulrich juxtaposes the Daughters of Liberty's response to the looming Revolution (virtuous all-day spinning matches and industrious productive labor), against the of the Sons of Liberty's (referenced by contemporaries in terms of consumption; the Sons loved drinking and roast pig). Laurel T. Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (New York: Knopf, 2001), 183.

⁶² The first structure there was a small dwelling erected in 1865. Three more buildings were added to the site in 1874, and the original, first dwelling was replaced by a large boarding house, The Westminster House, in 1875. By 1894, all four buildings were owned by enterprising real estate investor Andrew B. McCreery, who owned at least one third of this entire Sutter Street block, including frontage on Bush Street to the north. Michael D. Lampen, "The Metropolitan Club — Early History of the Site," 1991, San Francisco Architectural Heritage.

⁶³ San Francisco City and County, *Sales in 50 Vara Survey; Sales Book 2, Part 2* (Office of the Assessor/Recorder, n.d.), 193.

names each for membership. Any proposed member would have to be “seconded” by two existing members and then pass a vote by ten out of twelve.⁶⁴ This policy ensured a membership made up entirely of known quantities: society matrons recruited their friends, daughters, and daughters-in-law, and reserved the right to blackball undesirable candidates.⁶⁵ In another declaration of identity, membership would be limited to white applicants. While this was standard practice for most clubs of the period—members of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs had formally voted to exclude African American women from their organization in 1902—these membership policies did more than create a restrictive group.⁶⁶ WAC women, through actions overt and covert, formal and informal, were announcing that some women—white and financially secure—were capable of major institution building projects and other women were not. Further, these actions by WAC women and their enthusiastic proponents served to racialize and classify ideologically athletic clubs.

In this regard, cultural theorist Stuart Hall notes the constitutive role of ideology in structuring the hierarchical relations of group inequality. Hall explains that how “things” (in this case, a building) are represented and the regimes of representation in a culture play a formative, not merely reflexive, role.⁶⁷ In the case of the WAC, a lavish club building for elite white women would not just represent their place in San Francisco’s social and political life. Rather, the acts of fundraising and publicity, the existence of their club’s social and racial barriers to entry, along with the establishment of separate athletic clubs for working class women, were all systems of representation meant to inform society’s notions of organized womanhood. A club building provided a protected interior social space that furthered the athletic and other objectives of its members. It also stood as an extravagant, tangible, and aesthetically pleasing proclamation of the indelible link between gender, race, and elite class standing in the world of women’s clubs during the Progressive Era.⁶⁸

In August 1915, with the fair already six months underway, directors decided to hasten the fundraising campaign by offering life memberships. In a letter circulated to prospective members the club promised a gymnasium, saltwater swimming pool, squash and tennis courts, Turkish bath, beauty parlor, auditorium, lounging room, lunchroom and a limited number of bedrooms for occasional overnight stays.⁶⁹ Membership was recruited largely from among the ranks of existing Francisca and Town and Country Club members.⁷⁰ The legal description of the club’s primary purposes were: “To foster and encourage physical exercises, physical culture and athletics and to promote social

⁶⁴ Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 1 [San Francisco, 1915-1919].

⁶⁵ A small number of Jewish women would be admitted starting in 1923. A maximum of 200 Jews could be members at any given time, out of a total membership of 2,000 (Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 4 [San Francisco, 1924].

⁶⁶ Gayle Ann Gullett, *Becoming Citizens: The Emergence and Development of the California Women’s Movement, 1880-1911* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 123.

⁶⁷ Stuart Hall, “New Ethnicities,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley & Kuan-Hsing Chen (New York: Routledge, 1996), 441–49.

⁶⁸ Gullett, *Becoming Citizens*, 117-119.

⁶⁹ Driscoll, *Scrapbook*.

⁷⁰ Francisco, “Athletics Has Interest of Society Women Who Are Organizing a Club.”

intercourse among its members; to maintain a club-house, gymnasium, general athletic equipment, and all accommodations of every description for the use of its members.”⁷¹

The Site

Like the two-block area in downtown Los Angeles discussed in chapter one where three major women’s clubs clustered in an early twentieth-century “Civic Center of Women’s Activities,” the WAC building was part of a network of female-centered establishments along Sutter Street in downtown San Francisco.⁷² Well before the club chose its site, several establishments that catered to women were already located in the immediate Union Square area: the 1907 Hammersmith Jewelry building, the 1908 White House Department store, the fashionable art goods store Vickery, Atkins and Torrey, and the Goldberg Bowen specialty foods merchant, both 1909, were all nearby on Sutter Street. Once construction was underway in 1915 the WAC building itself became part of the street’s attraction for new businesses and institutions catering to women. A two-story building described as housing studio, art, and auction rooms went up on the same block in the same year; it was later occupied by the Manson School for Private Secretaries and by the Curtis Stewart Fur company.⁷³ In addition, on these blocks developed San Francisco’s densest concentration of women’s clubs. The Francisca Club rented space above Vickery, Atkins and Torrey beginning in 1909, and the Sorosis Club built a clubhouse at 532 Sutter Street in 1910. By 1916 six clubs were renting quarters within one or two blocks of the WAC under construction.⁷⁴ The YWCA went up next door at 620 Sutter Street in 1918 and the Francisca Club built a permanent clubhouse at 595 Sutter Street in 1919. Another Bliss & Faville building, the twelve-story Woman’s Club of San Francisco was built at 609 Sutter Street in 1927. The *San Francisco Chronicle* referred to the 500 block of Sutter Street as “the home of the smart decorators shops of the city and many of the fashionable women’s clubs.”⁷⁵

In addition to the ideological positioning by boosters and entrepreneurs that promoted the downtown shopping landscape as meant for white, and upper and middle class women, another element made Union Square the logical choice for clubhouses: the streetcar cut a direct path there from members’ neighborhoods (see figure 2.6). Rapid transit networks developed at the end of the nineteenth century enabled women to travel from home to downtown easily and in a sanitized, safe environment that conformed to middle-class standards of feminine respectability. For residents of the tony residential neighborhood Pacific Heights especially, where most WAC founding members lived, the

⁷¹ California Secretary of State, “Articles of Incorporation of Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, No. 80932.,” October 25, 1915.

⁷² The Friday Morning Club, the Woman’s Athletic Club, and the YWCA comprise the “Civic Center of Women’s Activities” in Los Angeles. Gail Lee Dubrow, “Preserving Her Heritage: American Landmarks of Women’s History” (Ph.D. diss., 1991), 203.

⁷³ “Classified Ad 2 -- No Title,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 16, 1913; “Display Ad 9 -- No Title,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 29, 1910, as cited in Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places*, 27-28.

⁷⁴ The Cap and Bells Club at 315 Sutter, the Papyrus Club at 420 Sutter, the Forum Club at 525 Sutter, the Corona and Mills clubs at 536 Sutter, and the Council of Jewish Women at 430 Mason. Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places*, 34; California Federation of Women’s Clubs, *Club Women of California: State Register and Directory*, passim.

⁷⁵ “New Downtown Buildings,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 6, 1920.

midday Sutter Street streetcar offered a “shopper’s special” that was almost entirely populated by women.⁷⁶

Construction

In the period between the start of their discussions with Ryland and the start of construction in December 1915, for reasons not formally recorded in club minutes, the Board of Directors overturned the original idea that they would rent space in the building to other women’s organizations.⁷⁷ Perhaps the Board was buoyed by their multiple reconnaissance missions to the single-occupant Chicago Woman’s Athletic Club, where they learned that the business of the club not only paid for running expenses but actually turned a profit.⁷⁸ Construction on the San Francisco WAC began in December 1915 on the eastern half of the site. The other half of the lot remained vacant until clubwomen purchased the land from the executors of Ryland estate and built an addition that doubled the size of their building in 1923. After the addition was completed, the two lots were merged into a single property. The last piece added to the WAC holdings was a vacant lot directly to the west of the building, acquired from former club president Edna Black in 1925 and turned into a parking lot in 1935.⁷⁹

When construction began on the WAC in 1915, every other women’s club in California—they had become common features of most California towns and cities—was residential in size; theirs was the first commercial-scale woman’s club.⁸⁰ When the woman’s clubhouse as a building type emerged around the turn of the century, early designs were similar in scale to large houses, referencing their original, nonthreatening meeting place in members’ parlors. Though their existence was framed in domestic terms (“Homelike Atmosphere Pervades The Women’s Club Federation,”⁸¹ a newspaper headline noted in 1912), a club was a business institution and a club building a huge capital investment with significant financial implications. Architecture and décor were often deployed as mediators to smooth the sometimes-uneasy ideological reckoning of women doing public work.

In addition to being residential in scale, women’s clubs were often residential in their iconographic references. The 1907 half-timbered Tudor Revival Ebell Club in Oakland, for example, was decidedly domestic, with a steeply pitched gable roof punctuated with small dormers and playfully elaborate masonry chimney thought typical of British Tudor houses (see figure 2.7). In size it suggested a large house or a small apartment building. The Friday Morning Club’s first, ca. 1899 homelike Mission Revival clubhouse featured the deep overhanging eaves and multiple porches popular in its surrounding residential Los Angeles neighborhood (see figure 2.8). Two San Francisco

⁷⁶ Jessica Ellen Sewell, “Gendering the Spaces of Modernity: Women and Public Space in San Francisco, 1890-1915” (Ph.D. diss., 2000), Sewell, 87.

⁷⁷ “Athletic Club,” *San Francisco Examiner*, February 9, 1915.

⁷⁸ Grace Armistead Doyle, “San Francisco Women Building Athletic Club for Their Exclusive Use,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 26, 1915; “Opening of Athletic Club Week’s Big Social Event,” *San Francisco Examiner*, February 11, 1917.

⁷⁹ Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places*.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁸¹ Mary Miller, “Homelike Atmosphere Pervades Women’s Club Federation,” *San Francisco Call*, May 23, 1912.

clubs did buck the residential location trend to occupy urban buildings in commercial districts, but they still conveyed associations with home in scale and style. The space above the store Vickery, Atkins, and Torrey (536 Sutter) that was rented out to several different clubs at different times sported a row of rustic Greek columns on the façade similar in character to a Craftsman bungalow. The Town and Country Club space, located above a commercial ground floor at the corner of Stockton Street and Maiden Lane facing Union Square, had a conservative brick façade visually similar to Colonial-era row houses in Boston or Philadelphia.

Bliss & Faville

In the early months of 1914 the WAC hired architects Walter Danforth Bliss and William Baker Faville to design a commercial building meant to straddle the architecturally articulated ideological line between work and home.⁸² While the reasons for choosing this particular firm are not recorded, the social connections are obvious. Bliss & Faville had launched their San Francisco practice in 1898, and in the years after the 1906 earthquake designed houses for prominent San Francisco women and their families. Four co-founders of the WAC commissioned such a home.⁸³ The architects were part of the same elite social circles as the clubwomen. Most significantly, Elizabeth Pillsbury was a sister-in-law to Walter Bliss.⁸⁴ Further, the firm had recently designed the nearby University Club to which four of the founders' husbands belonged. Finally, the architects were deeply involved in preparations for and operation of the PPIE, as were many of the WAC founders.⁸⁵

Walter Bliss (1872-1956) belonged to a family that the *San Francisco Call* labeled in 1910 as “among the wealthiest in the city.”⁸⁶ His father was Duane L. Bliss, a wealthy Lake Tahoe lumberman, banker, railroad and resort developer, and part of a network that would lead Walter to one of his firm's first commissions in 1901 — the sprawling, shingled Tahoe Tavern. Bliss graduated from M.I.T. in 1895 and worked for McKim, Mead & White in New York from 1895 to 1898, at the time the largest and best-known architectural firm in the country, and the firm that had designed many of the city's

⁸² The very first mention of the architects as affiliated in any way with the WAC is the June 1914 *San Francisco Examiner* article saying that they had been hired to design the building: “Athletic Club for Women | Men's Places to Be Rivalled | Society Backing Innovation,” *San Francisco Examiner*.

⁸³ Those four members are identified as I.W. Hellman, Erhman, W.M. Newhall, R.D. Girvin. *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Pillsbury's husband Horace had a sister, Edith, who was married to Bliss.

⁸⁵ In September 1911, roughly two years before the WAC hired Bliss & Faville, Faville was appointed to the Executive Council of the Architectural Commission of the PPIE, the group responsible for all architectural planning and design. In addition, Faville was assigned the highly challenging task of designing the entire exterior wall, which united eight palaces in one immense rectangle, forming the outward-facing image of the Exposition. Faville chose a restrained treatment for what he called “the Great Wall.” Its principal features were a succession and variety of portals, niches, and arcades that served to break up an otherwise ornamentally bare facade. For each of these eight buildings Faville also designed interiors, domes, and the passageways connecting the various courts. In addition, Faville designed the Florentine Court and the Venetian Court inside the central group of eight palaces. William B. Faville, “Phases of Panama-Pacific International Exposition Architecture,” *American Architect* 107 (January 6, 1915), 6; Louis Christian Mullgardt et al., *The Architecture and Landscape Gardening of the Exposition* (San Francisco: P. Elder and Company, 1915), 100-101.

⁸⁶ “Engagement of Edith Pillsbury and Walter D. Bliss,” *San Francisco Call*, May 29, 1910.

top men's clubs, including the ca. 1890 Century Club. In 1898 Bliss moved to San Francisco and in 1910 he married Edith Pillsbury, who belonged to one of the oldest families of the city.⁸⁷ William Faville (1866-1947) was born in San Andreas, California but grew up in Buffalo, New York, where he apprenticed for the architectural firm Green & Wicks. Faville also graduated from M.I.T., where he and Bliss met, and also worked as a draftsman from 1895 to 1898 for McKim, Mead & White in New York.⁸⁸

The breadth of the firm's work spanned virtually every type of building during Bliss and Faville's years there: their commissions included houses, mansions, hotels, apartment buildings, churches, university and civic buildings, and libraries. In their designs they applied the principles of Beaux-Arts architecture, adopting a classical Greek and Roman stylistic vocabulary as filtered through the Parisian *École des Beaux-Arts* and the City Beautiful movement principles of order and formality. According to some experts on the firm, their most important legacy was the group of distinguished architects of the succeeding generation who trained there. Many left the firm to establish major firms or partnerships of their own, Cass Gilbert, Carrère and Hastings, and John Galen Howard among them. Bliss and Faville took the classicizing influence of McKim, Mead & White with them to San Francisco, where they launched a practice in 1898.⁸⁹

In the beginning the pair built upon Bliss' family connections to secure commissions. One of their first was a Dutch Colonial house for Bliss's parents at 2898 Broadway in 1899. In 1901 when California's new architectural licensing law took effect Bliss and Faville both automatically received a license on the basis of their experience alone. The pair's early period, which included two bank buildings and the 1902 Oakland Library (see figure 2.9), was defined by an "enthusiasm for the antique."⁹⁰ These studies in pure classicism were praised, not pilloried, for their obvious basis in McKim, Mead & White prototypes. Speaking of the 1906 Bank of California, an article in *The Architect and Engineer* said the general resemblance of the design to that of the McKim, Mead, and White Knickerbocker Trust Company in New York "will, of course, strike everyone who is familiar with the latter building; but the architects are to be congratulated rather than condemned for their frank and intelligent attempt to make . . . a revised version of a good thing."⁹¹ The subsequent period of the firm's development involved a departure from their early work along formal academic lines to what critics called essays in the "distinctly Italian" sense: the 1913 University Club among them. The pair continued to enjoy enormous success in the architectural press. In January 1914 prominent critic B.J.S. Cahill praised their work in a lengthy feature, saying, "The career of Bliss & Faville is particularly free from sordid and undignified strife." These conditions, he writes, produced "results that have brought credit to the status of architecture on the Pacific Coast, as well as inspiration to their brethren and pleasure to the public, who enjoy the many-sided benefits conferred by well-arranged and beautiful buildings."⁹² Sixty-three photographs of their buildings followed, captured in elevation, plan, detail, and

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Leland M. Roth, *The Architecture of McKim, Mead & White, 1870-1920: A Building List* (New York: Garland Pub., 1978), 35.

⁸⁹ Allan Greenberg and Michael George, *The Architecture of McKim, Mead, and White, 1879-1915*, 2013, x.

⁹⁰ B.J.S. Cahill, "The Work of Bliss & Faville," *The Architect and Engineer* 35, no. 3 (January 1914), 48.

⁹¹ "The New Bank of California," *Architectural Record* 19, no. 6 (June 1906), 470-71.

⁹² Cahill, "The Work of Bliss & Faville."

perspective. The pair's final stylistic period before the firm dissolved in 1925—and the era into which the WAC commission fits⁹³—is marked by the adoption of the “early Italian manner.” *The Architect and Engineer* defines this as a style in which “materials of the cheaper kind such as brick and terra cotta are wrought into forms of unexpected elegance,” a “democratic development” in the eyes of critics.⁹⁴ True to form, the design of the Sutter Street facade of the WAC references a McKim, Mead & White prototype derived from early Renaissance palaces (*palazzi*) characteristic of Florence. It has a character distinct from its ancestral models in part due to materiality: rough burned red brick laid in common bond, and cream colored terra cotta decorative trim.

Although the WAC corporation originally leased their clubhouse from property owner Ryland, the space was purpose-built for their use. Unlike many women's clubs which first existed in members' homes or in rented space, the WAC as an organization did not exist until its building opened in January 1917.⁹⁵ The first mention of the shape their building would take came in January 1915 when *Building and Engineering News* reported preliminary plans for construction expected to commence in two months.⁹⁶ After several iterations in the number of floors and materials, Ryland applied on December 11, 1915 for a building permit for a \$95,000, six-story building of Class B construction (mid-grade in the cost of materials and the degree to which the building would be “fireproof”) with a steel frame, brick walls, concrete floors, interior hollow tile partition walls, and metal windows. The club would have steam heat, an oil-burning furnace, and an elevator.⁹⁷ Construction bids went out at the end of December 1915. Just a few weeks later

⁹³ Faville's extensive involvement with the PPIE and his position as president of the San Francisco Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1915-1916 may explain why only Bliss' presence (regularly noted in Board of Directors meeting minutes and in Mrs. Angus Gordon Boggs' Scrapbook), not Faville's, is noted in the records of day-to-day contact with the WAC. A 1947 entry in Boggs' Scrapbook includes an unattributed obituary for the firm's head draftsman (and Bliss' partner after the firm dissolved in 1925), Julian Stewart Fairweather. Fairweather (1878-1947) joined the firm before 1904 and received his architectural license in 1910. According to the obituary, Fairweather “planned the Matson Building, the Balboa Building, the State Building, the Hotel Oakland, the Western Woman's Club, and the Woman's Athletic Club.” It may be that design responsibility fell substantially upon Fairweather, though I could find no other mention of his specific involvement. Mrs. Angus Gordon Boggs, *Scrapbook*, 1920-1948, The Metropolitan Club Archives.

⁹⁴ Cahill, “The Work of Bliss & Faville,” 49.

⁹⁵ The Century, California, Town and Country, Sorosis, and Francisca clubs all began in members' homes before eventually deciding to build a clubhouse.

⁹⁶ “Athletic Club,” *Building and Engineering News*, January 20, 1915.

⁹⁷ The permit actually names seven “stories,” but this appears to be simply a matter of semantics, calling out a mezzanine or penthouse in addition to the principal floors. San Francisco, City and County, “Board of Public Works. Building Permit Applications,” December 11, 1915. Exterior walls are described in the building permit application as “reinforced brick.” This detail appears nowhere else in WAC records, but if correct makes their building an unusual example of a structure designed specifically to withstand earthquake damage. The benefits of combining the tensile strength of iron or steel with the compressive strength of masonry was evident to those familiar with the potential damage of earthquakes in the nineteenth century but the practice was not widely adopted before 1920 in the US. A rare example of such construction methods, the Palace Hotel designed by John Gaynor opened in San Francisco in 1875 with three-foot-thick brick walls reinforced by iron bands every four feet. This formed a kind of iron basket that encircled the building, providing for a space where “human life and limb should be secure against fire or earthquake.” Indeed, the Palace Hotel is one of the few large structures that endured the 1906 earthquake, only to be burned by the subsequent fire. Stephen Tobriner, *Bracing for Disaster: Earthquake-Resistant Architecture and Engineering in San Francisco, 1838-1933* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2006), 73; “The

Building and Engineering News printed a list of accepted contracts—by whom and at what cost—for concrete, steel, sheet metal, carpentry, plastering, excavation, and plumbing.⁹⁸ Ryland was responsible for building the clubhouse, which the WAC corporation would rent for a fixed \$1,500 monthly fee for a twenty-year term. The club paid to Ryland a deposit from which their monthly rent would be deducted for the first twenty-two months of their lease.⁹⁹ The Board retained the authority to oversee and approve any changes to the building plans made after their signoff in December 1915. An option for the club to purchase the building at cost (what the land and building had cost Ryland, not accounting for depreciation) was also written into the contract.¹⁰⁰

After construction began in January 1916 club organizers focused their energies on furnishing and equipping the interior. Committees were formed to address gymnasium furnishing, house furnishing, “the matter of buying linens for the club rooms and restaurant,” the design and color of bathing suits, and the design and color of maids uniforms.¹⁰¹

Construction on what would soon become the east wing of the clubhouse was completed in January 1917 at a cost of \$160,000 (see figure 2.10). The roster listed one thousand members and fifty-seven employees with a \$3,900 monthly payroll. Initiation fees were raised from \$25 pre-opening to \$100 after opening in 1917; dues remained set at \$5 per month.¹⁰² The first board meeting was held on January 15, 1917, and the building formally opened on February 4 with a lavish reception to which the mayor of San Francisco, officers and directors of clubs around the Bay Area, heads of local University athletic departments, and the president of the YMCA were invited. Over the course of the following week, multiple member receptions generated a crush of visitors likened in the press to the “big days” at the California building at the PPIE “when everybody and his wife would turn out for some occasion of note.”¹⁰³ Such spectacles of wealth and institutionalization further reinforced the effect of active bourgeois class formation at the WAC.

Part III: Form

Palace Hotel,” *Overland Monthly* 15, no. 3 (September 1875); “Athletic Club,” *Building and Engineering News*, September 8, 1915.

⁹⁸ The total value of the aforementioned building contracts came to \$57,604, more than half of the estimated building cost listed on the permit application. Contracts were awarded to the following: P. Montague Company (excavation; \$2,900), Victor Stanquist (concrete; \$7,550), Dyer Brothers (steel; \$16,900), Forderer Cornice Works (sheet metal; \$1,122), J. Harold Johnson (carpentry; \$13,800), J.C. McLeod (plastering; \$7,389), James H. Pinkerton (plumbing; \$6,200), and Central Electric Company (electrical; \$1,743). “Brick Athletic Club,” *Building and Engineering News*, January 12, 1916; “Brick Athletic Club,” *Building and Engineering News*, March 1, 1916. No contracts or costs for painting, terra cotta, hardware, elevator, kitchen, equipment, furnishings, or other features have been found.

⁹⁹ They paid a \$33,000 deposit (\$15,000 upon signing and \$18,000 upon move-in). Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 1.

¹⁰⁰ The minutes record this provision: “No variation whatever shall be permitted from said plans and specifications without first submitting the same to the Building Committee of The Club, or to the President, and obtaining in writing an approval of any such variation;” Contract from December 15, 1915. Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 1.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ “Opening of Athletic Club Week’s Big Social Event,” *San Francisco Examiner*, February 11, 1917.

In its physical form, the WAC tells multiple and competing gendered stories of social and visual association. Capitalizing on male social approval and architectural references, WAC women rhetorically suggested their ability to build as men could. Ultimately, though, the gendered space proved a somewhat weak strategy to convey the potential power of separatism.

The building consists of two main bodies or wings, the original 1917 structure and the 1923 addition, connected at their north and south ends with a light well between, forming an overall U-shape. The two wings are provided with a unified interior and a continuous, symmetrical, seven-bay facade. The building covers most of its square site save for a one-story wing at each end of the Sutter Street facade.¹⁰⁴ Each floor is organized in three parts corresponding to the three sections of the building: the segment along Sutter Street and the two wings of the building perpendicular to Sutter Street. The ornamental exterior is clad in brick with terra cotta and iron trim and punctuated by an ornately carved two-story terra cotta and marble arched entryway set in a rectangular frame and crowned by a corbelled balcony (see figures 2.11 and 2.12). Like Renaissance *palazzi*, which were working buildings at the base and housing above, the three lower floors are treated plainly. Groups of three double-hung windows are unified by a simple terra cotta stringcourse above a simple, rusticated base that anchors the building to the sidewalk. The fourth floor is the piano nobile, or the principal story, its ceremonial rooms indicated by the story's height, the high arched windows, and applied ornamentation. A decorative brick framing pattern, a terra cotta keystone, and a corbelled terra cotta balcony with wrought iron railing adorns each of the seven arches on this story. On either side of the central arch in the spandrels of the fourth floor is a cartouche with an escutcheon depicting the logo and initials of the Woman's Athletic Club: WAC (see figure 2.13). A giant two-story Corinthian colonnade in front of a recessed brick wall and behind a wrought iron railing dominates the fifth and sixth stories. The overhanging eaves of a red-tile gable roof terminate the facade's monumental proportions.¹⁰⁵

With the *palazzo* form Bliss & Faville were acting in the tradition of McKim, Mead & White, their former employers and those credited with having introduced and maintained the Italian Renaissance as a popular architectural referent in the US in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Once McKim, Mead & White "discovered" Renaissance classicism as a repertoire of infinite variations on a theme, they found it a convenient way to delegate work to their employees during busy periods, reportedly sending assistants to the library to perfect the details.¹⁰⁶ Bliss and Faville both worked at McKim, Mead & White during the design of a series of men's clubs and branch libraries for the New York Public Library (NYPL) system that follow the *palazzo* prototype in plan, proportion, and detail. After leaving New York for San Francisco in 1898 the architects maintained their connection to their former firm through publications, and as supervising architects for a McKim, Mead & White project at the University of Nevada

¹⁰⁴ These are setbacks for light and air.

¹⁰⁵ The decorative treatment of the facade is carried around the sides but extends only as far as the area covered by the gable roof over the front wing of the building. East and west wing are treated differently given their different construction dates. On both ends, the wall is unadorned up to the fifth floor level. The side and rear walls of the east wing are plain brick with double-hung windows; the side and rear walls of the west wing are rough reinforced concrete, also with double hung windows. On the roof, the mechanical and elevator penthouse is clad in brick and embellished with a pilaster order.

¹⁰⁶ Leland M. Roth, *McKim, Mead & White, Architects* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 94.

in Reno in 1906-1908.¹⁰⁷ Thus it is unsurprisingly easy to locate an antecedent for the WAC in McKim, Mead & White's oeuvre: the 1908 Saint Gabriel's Park NYPL branch.¹⁰⁸ The original 1915 WAC building bears an unmistakable resemblance to St. Gabriel's in many of its exterior particulars: tripartite composition, rusticated base, prominent piano nobile with tall arched windows, colonnaded upper story, gable roof with overhanging eaves, and Palladian motif on the side wall (see figure 2.14). The library had been closely modeled on a type of Florentine *palazzo* best represented by the fourteenth century Palazzo Davanzati (see figure 2.15).¹⁰⁹ Palazzo Davanzati and its descendants St. Gabriel's and the WAC all depart from the typical *palazzo* format in their lack of an interior courtyard, a space usually accessed through main entrance, all four sides of which are surrounded by an arcaded loggia. The absence of the central court required for outdoor leisure (the result of a small building site) is corrected for at St. Gabriel's and Palazzo Davanzati with a large loggia on the top floor. The WAC addressed its dearth of open air space with a well-ventilated two-story tennis court (see figure 2.16), located on the fifth and sixth floors and signaled on the exterior by the two-story colonnade. When the western wing of the club was built in 1923 the original entrance was bricked over and a new grand entrance built in the center of the expanded facade.

Neither the architects nor the club recorded their rationale for choosing the *palazzo* as a model, but the connotation is unambiguous. Historians characterize the Renaissance ideal as suggestive of "a cultivated society, one of patronage and understanding of the arts," hence this was implied when American metropolitan leaders of financial and social life embraced it for their homes, clubs, and institutional buildings.¹¹⁰ Taken in its original context, the patrician palace of 1300-1600 was an emphatic assertion of the presence of its builder, his family, and his dynasty. Said builders were often successful merchants. Architecture became one of the most important status symbols in Italian society, signifying wealth, and special knowledge and taste. The *palazzo* also embodied the continuity of the patrilineal family. The stately home, its towering facade embellished with coats of arms, was referred to by his name and passed down from father to son.¹¹¹

Nineteenth-century men's clubs in American cities adopted the *palazzo* form as a matter of course. Freely quoting *palazzo* elements, the WAC building speaks a language of power particularly coherent to the men of San Francisco. It refers not only to the cultivated ideals of the Italian Renaissance but also to the American adoption of the form as a symbol of urban economic power and masculinity. The rough, plain red brick and minimal ground level ornament exude a workman-like air of business and preparedness which serve to distinguish the WAC from its fluffier counterparts as a distinctly commercial club—eighty-four thousand square feet at a time when most women's clubs

¹⁰⁷ The project involved replanning the campus and work on the Mackay School of Mines. Roth, *The Architecture of McKim, Mead & White, 1870-1920*, 103, 201.

¹⁰⁸ Formerly located at 303 East 36th Street and demolished in order to construct the Queens-Midtown tunnel in 1938-1939.

¹⁰⁹ Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and John Montague Massengale, *New York 1900: Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism, 1890-1915* (Rizzoli, 1983), 101.

¹¹⁰ Marcus Whiffen and Frederick Koeper, *American Architecture: 1860-1976* (MIT Press, 1983), 270.

¹¹¹ Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300-1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 213, 219.

were residential in scale. Its restrained architectural vocabulary and muscularity speak appropriately to the association with athleticism and strong bodies. The carved stone escutcheon suggests the continuation of a strong matrilineal family—the younger generation of members who would reproduce the power of the women who had proven their ability to modernize the municipality through institution building.

Space

In addition to the symbolism implied by the *palazzo* form, the WAC building was also overlaid with several different, even contradictory, nineteenth century-specific gendered architectural narratives. In some ways, it followed the typical arrangement of the “modern” early nineteenth century hotel. For one, ownership was kept separate from management with a proprietor to lease and furnish the building (and retain ownership of the furnishings). Also, a professional architect was brought in to design a new building instead of converting an existing one. Further, in another self-conscious projection of masculine strength, innovation, and wealth, Ryland and the clubwomen embraced the latest, most extensive technological systems that money could buy.¹¹² While the WAC building was in fact quite technologically advanced, incorporating reinforced brick, elevators, and modern kitchen equipment, in a holdover from Victorian domestic life, members promoted a rhetoric of comfort, an easily recognizable symbol of femininity.¹¹³ The media stressed the variety and character of amenities in terms that recalled the temperament and disposition of the nineteenth-century feminine ideal: a building of delicacy, comfort, and refinement that would soothe, calm, and fortify members. The “luxurious appointments and conveniences” of lounges, reception rooms, and beauty parlors appear again and again in news coverage. Touting the restful intimacy of the space, the *Examiner* noted the existence of quiet rooms, silent rooms, rest rooms, and retiring rooms.¹¹⁴

The ambiguity of this architectural narrative suggests that exploration of a broader aspect of architectural production—namely, space—can yield complex and layered forms of meaning. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s theory of socially produced space, architectural historian Mary Pepchinski explains how space can be regarded as more than just a physical dimension. Space can also be understood as “a more ephemeral quality,” the result of several processes: the manner in which a building is used; the representations created to depict it (writings, drawings, photographs); and the memories associated with it (embodied in texts that range from personal recollections to published criticisms).¹¹⁵

¹¹² Molly W. Berger, “A House Divided: The Culture of the American Luxury Hotel, 1825–1860,” in *His and Hers: Gender, Consumption, and Technology* (University of Virginia Press, 1998), 42.

¹¹³ Katherine C. Grier, “The ‘Blending and Confusion’ of Expensiveness and Beauty: Bourgeois Interiors,” in *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 87–100; T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (University of Chicago Press, 1981), 15;

¹¹⁴ “Athletic Club,” *San Francisco Examiner*, February 9, 1915; “Gossip Heard Here and There,” *San Francisco Examiner*, May 16, 1915; “Work on Club to Start Soon; Plans for Women’s Athletic Building Approved and Funds Are Pledged,” *San Francisco Examiner*, August 22, 1915; “Women’s Club Plans Finished,” *San Francisco Examiner*, December 26, 1915.

¹¹⁵ Mary Pepchinski, “Woman’s Buildings at European and American World’s Fairs, 1893–1939,” in *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World’s Fairs* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 202; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

Defined in this way, the “more subjective and temporal aspects of a building—experience, depiction, and remembrance—assume greater significance, and the tangible and quantifiable attributes recede in importance.”¹¹⁶ The character of the production of gendered space at the WAC was certainly layered, even contradictory.

Specifically, women and their affairs dominated the images and the flowery, domestic language used to describe the building. Moreover, its patronage, and the memories and stories rising from its use involve only women. In this sense, the WAC is gendered female. Yet space was also produced there in other ways. The manner in which the building was used was intended to demonstrate equivalence with men, and its architectural referents (*palazzi*) and visual associations (men’s clubs) were male. The organizational approach practiced within (a club with a purely social charter) was also gendered male. Further, members attached the utmost importance to male approval.

The entry for the WAC in the 1922 edition of *Who’s Who Among the Women of California* confirms this sentiment. The story told of the building is as much the story of the respect the club commanded from men. The club’s history, the entry says, involved some initial playful skepticism, but ultimate approval: “When the small group of representative San Francisco women first planned to have a club, and a club building, something after the manner of a men’s club . . . many husbands of the women who had dreamed of such a plan, many business men who admired the business audacity displayed, gallantly withheld smiles.” When the women made their dream a firm realization, *Who’s Who* reported, these same men were stirred to “profound respect.”¹¹⁷

Male social approval in the case of the WAC was not just a perk; it was a precondition for building. Despite the overwhelming role of women in the organization members were almost always referred to in the press and even in internal club minutes by their husband’s names. The concept of validation by patriarchal approbation suggests a problem central to the WAC’s inability to generate their daughters’ interest in the club.¹¹⁸ Clubwomen needed to *exploit* the building’s status as a gendered space in order to present an effective argument about the power of female separatism to the younger generation. Placemaking was the first step, but in the case of the WAC, it was the only step they took. In other words, the ability to build as men could grant them special status, but this position alone was not enough to guarantee that the building would convey a compelling statement about homosocial elite women’s culture. In this way, the gendered space was a not a particularly robust strategy to impart ideas about power through separatism.¹¹⁹

Part IV: Expansion

For a brief period, though—roughly two years from its grand opening in February 1917—members relished their achievement of placemaking. Once complete, the building was open from 8am to 10pm daily. The Board of Directors launched a monthly *Club Bulletin* to be circulated to members, listing classes and lessons, holiday celebrations,

¹¹⁶ Pepchinski, “Woman’s Buildings at European and American World’s Fairs, 1893–1939.”

¹¹⁷ Louis S. Lyons and Josephine Wilson, *Who’s Who Among the Women of California: An Annual Devoted to the Representative Women of California* (Security publishing Company, 1922), 47.

¹¹⁸ Judy Sund, “Columbus and Columbia in Chicago, 1893: Man of Genius Meets Generic Woman,” *The Art Bulletin* 75, no. 3 (1993), 443–66.

¹¹⁹ For more on this concept see Pepchinski, “Woman’s Buildings at European and American World’s Fairs, 1893–1939,” 202.

memos, and special events. The March 1917 *Club Bulletin* includes entries for the dining room (male guests may join for dinner on Wednesdays only), hydro-therapeutic and hairdressing departments (respective offerings and how to make use of them), gymnasium (Physical Director hired and classes begun), basketball (teams forming), and tennis (lessons by appointment).¹²⁰ In November 1917 the *San Francisco Chronicle* recounted the condition of the club as described by two of its highest officers. Treasurer Edna Black reported that the club was on a financially sound basis, saying “it is now fully paying the operating expenses,” and “the only period of financial loss was during the first three months after the club opened in its own quarters.” President Pillsbury declared, “The Woman’s Athletic Club already has proved successful. Our membership continues to increase, we are financially sound and earning our way, and altogether it has proved the most successful venture of the kind ever undertaken here.”¹²¹ In the fall of 1918 the club celebrated another milestone in its development: the \$50,000 worth of furnishings and equipment owned by the club had been fully paid for out of the proceeds of its operations.¹²² By the beginning of 1919 the club boasted around fifteen hundred members; roughly fifteen percent, or about two hundred, were juvenile or junior members.

The Campaign

By August of 1919, the club’s popularity had become irksome to members, the clubhouse deemed “inadequate to furnish proper accommodations for this membership in many departments.”¹²³ The lobby, reception room, cloakroom, office, dressing room, Turkish baths, showers, and pool all crowded onto the first floor and were all too small. The “silence rooms” for rest and relaxation were no longer silent due to the newly opened YWCA swimming pool next door (see figure 2.17). The four guest bedrooms for transient use were in constant demand by the one hundred and thirty-two out-of-town members; permanent rooms were also desired by almost thirty members wanting to make the club their home.¹²⁴ The Board worried that if the WAC did not expand a competitive athletic club would form to receive disaffected members. In December 1919 members convened for a special meeting regarding refinancing and expansion. Also present were several men on hand to answer questions and fortify member morale. Their lawyer Baldwin, architect Bliss, and Mr. Humphreys, president of the Olympic Club, delivered “a very encouraging talk” on how “the growth and progress of any club was inevitable with the right club spirit.” The motion for a \$325,000 bond issue carried unanimously: \$45,000 to purchase the vacant lot directly west of the club, and \$280,000 to erect and furnish a building to be unified with their present, rented clubhouse. In February 1920 the

¹²⁰ “Club Bulletin” (Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, March 1917), The Metropolitan Club Archives.

¹²¹ “Women’s Athletic Club Re-Elects All Officers for Year,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 10, 1917.

¹²² “Club Cancels Debt and Makes Merry; Dinner and Dance at Women’s Athletic Club Celebrates Their Freedom from Indebtedness,” *San Francisco Examiner*, September 12, 1918.

¹²³ *Woman’s Athletic Club Annual Report* (San Francisco, 1919).

¹²⁴ Board of Directors, “Statement of Existing Conditions on Which to Base Future Planning of Club” (Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, March 15, 1921), The Metropolitan Club Archives; Wilson and Kennedy, *The First 50 Years of the Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco*, 8.

Board contracted with Bliss to make plans for a new steel-reinforced concrete construction building that would roughly double the size of the club, and authorized a contractor to buy the recommended reinforcing steel. In April they submitted renderings of the proposed building to be run in the *San Francisco Examiner* (see figure 2.18); in October Bliss was authorized to seek prices for furnishings.¹²⁵

The order in which the Board proceeded when seeking to double the club footprint in 1920 is notable, even misguided, for several reasons. For one, while membership was growing at a steady pace, nearly doubling from one thousand in January 1917 to seventeen hundred in December 1920, their financial forecast did not appear promising for the long term. The president's report presented at the annual meeting showed a \$3,781 operating loss for 1920. Members were not using the club's expensive facilities—the gymnasium, dining rooms and beauty parlors among them—on a regular basis. According to a *Club Bulletin* issue many members failed to “appreciate the beneficial advantages of the gymnasium classes and the daily swim because they have never tried them.”¹²⁶ This was especially problematic given that, per their financial model, departmental revenues were supposed to supply fifty-nine percent of their working budget (see figure 2.19). The \$3,781 operating loss was only offset by \$24,350 from one-time initiation and lifetime membership fees, a pattern they could not expect to continue. Initiation fees had skyrocketed from \$150 to \$250 in October 1920, up one thousand percent from \$25 in 1915, and the market would not bear another increase.¹²⁷ Only two and a half percent of their funds were supposed to come from initiation fees. Dues were meant to make up thirty-seven percent of their funds, and these had stayed fixed at \$5 per month since 1915.¹²⁸ Even more misguided was the Board's apparent failure to consult with the owner of their rented building before they made extensive plans to cut through the walls and join it to a new structure. Ryland had died in 1918, and Mrs. Agnes Denny had been appointed executor of the estate. Based on Denny's refusal at the end of 1920 to let the club make major alterations to their present building the Board quickly revised their plans. In January 1921 a campaign to purchase the building from Denny began.¹²⁹

The acquisition campaign was marked by adversity from the start. Against their lawyer's advice that such a proposition would “probably provoke resentment,” the WAC Board offered to Denny an arrangement in which she would accept bonds in lieu of cash for the purchase price of the building—bonds backed by the value of the property itself. Effectively, they suggested that Denny accept her own property as security for its purchase price. She refused, and a negotiation process lasting nearly two years ensued. In May of 1921 the Board broke the news to members that their \$325,000 worth of bond

¹²⁵ Bliss consulted with a Mr. William D. McCann on furnishings and ultimately employed his services. Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 2 [San Francisco, 1919 – 1923].

¹²⁶ “Club Bulletin” (Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco, October 1926), The Metropolitan Club Archives.

¹²⁷ \$250 in 1920 is equivalent to around \$3,000 in 2015 terms. For reference, the Friday Morning Club in Los Angeles initiation fee was \$25 (\$340 in 2015 terms) in 1922, increased from \$15 in order to raise funds for a new, bigger clubhouse. Mrs. Henry Christian Crowther, *High Lights: The Friday Morning Club, Los Angeles, California, April 1891-1938*. (Los Angeles, 1939), 47-48.

¹²⁸ *Woman's Athletic Club Annual Report* (San Francisco, 1947).

¹²⁹ Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 2.

subscriptions would not be enough, attributing the additional \$100,000 needed to inflated building costs. They appealed to their membership of around seventeen hundred members (up only by thirty-four since December 1920), less than half of whom had subscribed, to purchase bonds liberally and quickly. While still in talks with Denny throughout 1922 the Board continued to meet with their architect and contractor, finalizing plans for a new building in September 1922—the same month they settled with Denny on a purchase price of \$213,547 for the existing building, paid for with a mixture of cash and a loan taken at seven percent interest.¹³⁰ *Building and Engineering News* reported shortly after that grading contracts had been awarded. The building would cost \$250,000, and individual contracts had been accepted for concrete and carpentry, glass and glazing, sheet metal, ornamental ironwork, electrical, plumbing, heating, painting, roofing, and elevator service.¹³¹ Construction on the addition began in November 1922 and was completed in December 1923. The building was closed for the final month of construction while the original east building and the addition were connected. The expanded club had a new squash court, dining room, and outdoor tennis court on the roof; new lounges and card rooms; forty additional hotel rooms and twenty employee bedrooms; a larger hairdressing department, swimming pool, and lobby.¹³²

Compared to the attention from the opening of the original 1917 building, however, the media was almost silent on the 1923 expansion. The craze of women's clubs was fading, state- and nationwide in the 1920s, even as members still engaged in extensive building campaigns.¹³³ When contextualized in the larger sweep of American cultural trends, the rise and wane of interest in clubs follows a typical trajectory. In fact, the younger generation's delight in the 1920s with the fads that diverted them from clubs—jazz, swing, contract bridge—can be characterized much the same as we characterize the fad of joining clubs in the years prior. In a history of popular recreation Foster Rhea Dulles described how the American public throughout its history has been carried away by successive trends: “In the 1890s this same instinct to take up whatever was new or different . . . was evident in the tremendous growth of fraternal organizations and women's clubs, in the avidity with which the public welcomed refined vaudeville, and in the interest excited by amateur photography.” The twentieth century brought a

¹³⁰ The only plans that exist for the 1923 Bliss & Faville building are incomplete. There are two sets, one dated February 8, 1922 and a revised version dated September 19, 1922. *Ibid.*

¹³¹ A.A. Brown of the San Francisco Motor Drayage Company led construction, and contracts were awarded to the following: Mission Concrete Company (concrete and carpentry), J. McLeod (plumbing), Scott Company (heating), A. Quandt & Son (painting), C.J. Hillard Company (ornamental iron), Heidt Cornice Works (sheet metal), Otis Elevator Company (elevator), W.P. Fuller & Company (glass and glazing), Standard Electric Company (electrical), and Atlas Roofing Company (roofing). No decisions on marble and plastering contractors have been found. “Athletic Club,” *Building and Engineering News*, September 2, 1922; September 16, 1922. Except for excavation, construction on the addition did not begin right away. The building permit was withdrawn November 9, 1922 and only re-approved after contractor Brown agreed to build “concrete retaining walls from street line to bottom of excavations, resetting of granite curbs” and a temporary sidewalk. San Francisco, City and County, “Board of Public Works. Building Permit Applications,” November 9, 1922; November 13, 1922.

¹³² The club expected to pay the interest on bonds as well as property taxes, insurance, and repairs on the new building with revenue collected from the new employee rooms (rented at \$10 per month for an estimated \$2,400 per year) and member hotel rooms (rented at varying rates for an estimated \$29,200 per year). Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 2; “Arrange Affairs,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 24, 1923.

¹³³ Shanken, *Into the Void Pacific*, 184.

vehemence greater still for new fads and fancies, and in “the ballyhoo years of the ’twenties this zest for novelties had become almost a mania.”¹³⁴

Contrary to the Board’s expectations regarding expansion, both their financial position and membership figures continued to disappoint. January 1924, their first full month in the lavish new club, brought an operating loss of \$3,340 and a net loss of \$290. New members were not being added; enrollment still hovered around two thousand in mid-1924.¹³⁵ The first formal recognition of the club’s compromised financial position came at the annual meeting in January 1925. President Amy Long read a report summarizing the WAC’s 1917-1925 financial performance which, according to meeting minutes, showed “that the club is in a poor financial condition,” with regular losses reported in the dining room and beauty parlor departments. A male efficiency expert was hired to revamp the culinary department in March 1925, but net and operating losses persisted. In a fog of optimism in July, the Board voted to purchase the vacant lot west of the new building in order to protect their current building. They paid \$78,788, a sum borrowed in two parts from two different banks. Out of the twenty-one hundred total members, all twelve hundred “regular” members (not absentee, juvenile, or junior) were assessed \$60 to finance the lot purchase.¹³⁶ Twenty-four regular members resigned immediately, presumably in protest. In an act tantamount to intimidation, the Board moved in October 1925 that resignations would be accepted only *after* assessments were paid; all refusals to pay would be posted on the lobby bulletin board.¹³⁷

The space of the lobby bulletin board served as a center of power for the authorities of the WAC. In a practice typical at many clubs, all member donations were posted there, highlighting the centrality of wealth, and social pressure, to club culture. Even more powerful, the name of any member suspended on account of dues delinquency was posted, along with the amount owed, the date of suspension, and her photograph. With the bulletin board they gave material expression to a social function tacit but central to the WAC: to demonstrate the power of elite, white, female separatism. The bulletin board’s location in the lobby is also redolent of placemaking. What happened there was transient but crucial to the social function of a club. An interstitial space with no specific function, a lobby waits to be given meaning through narratives and activities. In placing the powerful bulletin board there, the Board manipulated the programmatic and social ambiguity of the space. While narrative was needed for the lobby to have meaning, the lobby also spatialized, and concretized, the narrative. Guarded by heavy doors and an imposing doorman, one’s very presence in the WAC lobby signaled belonging, and hence ideological adherence.¹³⁸ WAC women had created group consciousness by banding together, but the double edge of such consciousness lent itself to conservative policing of their boundaries—boundaries defined by wealth and class. The WAC building itself was

¹³⁴ Foster Rhea Dulles, *America Learns to Play: A History of Popular Recreation, 1607-1940* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1940) 332-335.

¹³⁵ Despite requests from Jewish applicants, the club policy to admit only 200 Jewish members at a time remained fixed. Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 1-6 [San Francisco, 1915-1926].

¹³⁶ \$60 in 1925 is equivalent to \$814 in 2015 terms.

¹³⁷ Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 4 & 5 [San Francisco, 1924-1926].

¹³⁸ “Big New Club for Athletic Women Opened; Handsomely Equipped Place Is Declared Finest of Its Kind in Country,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 5, 1917.

the most powerful instrument in their class maintenance strategy, deployed in appearance, interior spatial arrangement, and use to physically ground the abstract ideology of class and gender in space.

Program

In its earliest iteration the women's club was primarily an opportunity for assembly, hence the tendency to gather in a member's parlor or rent a single meeting room in a hotel. When women first began commissioning clubhouses the buildings centered on a large, multipurpose assembly room used for meetings, dances, performances, and lectures (see figure 2.20). Aware that an assembly hall would be an underused space at the WAC—there was talk during formation of plans to include lectures in the regular club offerings but they never materialized to any significant extent—it was not included in the layout. The club was instead arranged around their substantial and impressive array of recreational and commercial facilities.

In this way the WAC was similar to a turn-of-the-century YMCA building. Originally formulated as Christian clubhouses offering young men moral ballast in potentially injurious commercial landscapes, YMCA buildings underwent a modernization of form around 1900 and became freestanding civic institutions and purveyors of commercial and recreational services. Responding to increasingly fierce competition for young men's time and taking cues from a mass culture that valued leisure and entertainment, Y buildings replaced parlors and assembly halls with swimming pools, dormitories, lunch counters, and billiard rooms.¹³⁹ Facilities at the YMCA and the WAC both represented the latest thinking on gymnasium design. Unobstructed floor space, good ventilation, and specially designed lighting would provide for athletes a malleable and expansive space in which to exercise (see figures 2.21 and 2.22). With extensive residential and hotel quarters, multiple dining, lounge, and game rooms, and comprehensive athletic and beauty facilities, WAC women conceived of their building as different from its antecedent in other women's clubs. Like the modernized YMCA building was to its predecessors, the WAC was not a provisional wedge into commercial culture but an expression of their certain, existing integration. The building was conceived of as a source of revenue, permanency, and prestige, not merely an attempt to integrate women into the public sphere. All spaces would be explicitly designed as either leisure- or revenue-producing features that served the needs of members.

On the interior, the WAC reproduces a familiar feature of elite, Victorian-era residences: the overall plan and flow is completely segmented, with specialized spaces connected by highly articulated connections—halls and doors, arches, and stairways (see figures 2.23a – 2.23c). Motion throughout is carefully choreographed. Multiple unobstructed spaces facilitate chance encounters, but a lack of furniture—there are only two chairs in the large lobby, for example—discourages lingering in spaces not sanctioned for sociality. Room thresholds are shallow and access is commonly by one doorway. This is a significant departure from men's clubs, whose plans more faithfully reproduced the *palazzo* format with radial arrangements of social spaces that flowed into each other (see figures 2.24a, 2.24b and 2.25). The ca. 1899 University Club in

¹³⁹ Paula Lupkin, *Manhood Factories: YMCA Architecture and the Making of Modern Urban Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 111-115.

Manhattan, for example, substitutes a double-height main hall instead of a central courtyard as its central organizing principle. This lets light into the dense city block, creates rings of accessible space, a visual and legible plan, and a hierarchy of spaces. Such an arrangement also allowed for more prolonged spontaneous interactions, an advantage at an institution meant in part to offer networking opportunities to members.¹⁴⁰

The grand ground floor at the WAC is reminiscent of elite men's clubs, with architectural refinements and exclusions to demarcate particularly hallowed, members-only, ground. At men's clubs the ground floor was the largest space; it was also the only space where members could receive visitors. When a member brought a guest to his club, they were both required to dine in the "stranger's" room. The WAC replicates the men's club model, with an impressive entry and well-appointed lobby (see figures 2.26 and 2.27) to welcome clubmembers; in the fashion of a men's club (or a Victorian-era residential foyer that limited interior access to unexpected guests), a so-called "stranger's" room contained the rare non-member's call (see figure 2.28). Entertaining rooms—the main bar with walnut paneling and stone fireplace (see figure 2.29), two lounges with vaulted ceilings, decorative plasterwork, and chandeliers (see figures 2.30 and 2.31), the main dining room, a large high space with two rows of columns and a stone fireplace on axis (see figure 2.32), and two smaller, private dining rooms, the Tapestry Room and the Persian Room (see figure 2.33)—are clustered on the fourth floor. Hotel and service rooms are on the second, third, fifth, and sixth floors.

Complicating any gendered reading of the building is the obvious involvement of men affiliated with, perhaps even controlling, the WAC construction project. The club's lawyers and architects were consistently present at meetings called to discuss expansion and funding. Men's clubs were also routinely consulted. It is not known to what extent the original male owner from whom the club leased the space participated in design or construction discussions. However, all documents regarding the clubhouse interior—program, furnishings, and use—bear WAC Board and WAC member names only; women thus controlled the interior. If the building exterior projected traditionally male emblems of capitalist success and strength, the interior answered with an assertion of the power of feminine culture. Luxury and upper-class domesticity infused the club, even in its commercial spaces, lending it an intensely soft, discreet, feminine character that contrasted with the conspicuously muscular exterior. The club interior's gendered character, and the related hierarchical conventions of a bourgeois woman's social life, took on heightened proportions as they played out in the exaggerated scale of a public building.

Several of the interior spaces are and were always highly decorated, the ground floor entrance lobby and swimming pool, the fourth floor main dining room, Tapestry Room and lounge, and the fifth floor boardroom (see figure 2.34) among them. The cultivation of physical and sensory enjoyment from such opulence contributes in large part to the feminine character of the building. Media coverage from the 1917 and 1923 grand openings fully conveyed each room's costly elegance in gushing terms. Floors throughout the building were "covered with soft carpet that had been woven to order" and "echoed no unruly footfall." The tile-lined indoor swimming pool is located across the

¹⁴⁰ Amy Milne-Smith in *London Clubland* states, "Men patronized their clubs for good conversation, drinks, and networking opportunities." Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in Late Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 30.

rear of the first floor and connected by stairs to the basement level cabanas (see figure 2.35), in a room decorated with crown moldings and orders topped by mermaid-figure capitals (see figure 2.36). The games room and lounge were appointed with old English walnut furniture upholstered in rose-colored velvet, silk, and flowered chintz. There members could “settle down in the soft cushions of an over-stuffed chair and confide the most feminine and intimate matters away from masculine ears.” Rooms for socializing dripped with intricate carvings, damask hangings, velvet curtains, and mirrors. Hanging baskets and potted plants were everywhere. Dining rooms at different scales accommodated members’ various entertaining needs: one grand, imposing, and ornate for one hundred and fifty guests, and several others “smart and dainty” meant to accommodate fifty. “White-aproned maids” on “soft-slipped feet” were said to “discreetly whisper” when addressing members.¹⁴¹ In 1919 a new house rule placed a bell in each lounge space so that members could summon a maid when needed. The rules also dictated that a maid or employee of the club caught accepting any gratuity or tip would be dismissed at once. That same year, new signs in club restrooms requested silence from the staff when present there. The club was framed as an upgraded extension of members’ expensive homes, signaling a bourgeois version of organized womanhood that depended on class-bound territorial boundaries. To reinforce the inalienable, entrenched status of class categories at the WAC, the Board passed rules in 1920 prohibiting club employees from being guests in the dining room, and formally preventing their daughters from becoming members. In 1926, a motion to ban employees from using the pool passed unanimously.¹⁴²

The cost of this opulent interior was significant. A list of furnishings provided by their 1923 superintendents of construction MacDonald & Kahn shows that the club spent \$15,000 over what their \$60,000 budget allowed.¹⁴³ Yet WAC women were proud of how much they had spent on their club. At the aforementioned 1920 annual meeting, members literally *cheered* the president’s report describing a \$3,781 operating loss offset by \$24,350 worth of membership fees.¹⁴⁴ Perhaps the explicit connection between their dollars and the club’s continued operation was empowering. Historian William Leach describes how, during this period, spending money had become a woman’s “job.” According to Leach, the experience of shopping in the newly founded department store had helped engender a new culture of *being* for women. By 1915 women were responsible for more than eighty percent of consumer purchases in the United States, giving them a new measure of economic power. Female shoppers were also free to move

¹⁴¹ “Women’s Athletic Club Is Opened,” *The San Francisco Call and Post*, February 5, 1917; “Big New Club for Athletic Women Opened; Handsomely Equipped Place Is Declared Finest of Its Kind in Country,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 5, 1917; “Woman’s Athletic Club Opens Door: Orangeade and Early Hours Combined with Beauty Parlor Are Among Its Chief Attractions,” *The Bulletin*, February 6, 1917; “Man Is Found Indispensable to Woman’s Club,” *San Francisco Examiner*, February 14, 1917; “Arrange Affairs,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 24, 1923.

¹⁴² Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 2; Boggs, “Scrapbook”; Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 6 [San Francisco, 1926-1940].

¹⁴³ Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 4.

¹⁴⁴ Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 2.

more comfortably in the public domain, and lavish customer service made them aware of their status as individuals worthy of being served, not just of serving.¹⁴⁵

Service

As was characteristic of most all clubs, male or female, at the time, the relationship between served and servant was also translated into the design of the building itself. All productive activity at the club was artfully concealed. A service elevator and stairs at the east end of the Sutter Street wing are segregated from the main staircase and main elevators at the west end and center, respectively, of the Sutter Street wing. A veritable but mostly hidden factory existed within the structure to produce services that members literally and figuratively consumed on site.¹⁴⁶ Club staff was largely confined to spaces of their own: maids and janitors operated from service stairwells and closets, and dining room employees were based in the pantry.¹⁴⁷ An entire class of women lived and worked in the club, divided into departments: athletic instructors; kitchen and dining room workers (waitresses and hostess); house workers (housekeepers, maids, and janitors); and personal service employees (hairdressers, masseuses, and attendants). In 1921 when club manager Anne E. Kalde compiled a list of members' complaints about the original, 1917 building, almost all of the buildings "problems" center around staff visibility, especially during employees' leisure time:

- The service pantry for the private dining room is also used as a dining room for seventeen employees. When large luncheon parties are held in the private dining room, service tables must be set up in the hall . . . for these employees to eat.
- Balcony above the kitchen . . . is also used as a dining room by the house and kitchen and dining room employees, who carry their meals up on trays. The ideal arrangement for the feeding of a large number of employees is what is known as a "Help's Hall" where their food is served to them from a steam table, and they do not come in contact with the food that is served to the members in the dining room.
- With the present arrangement, [tennis players] . . . are compelled not only to share the elevator with the kitchen employees, but after reaching the fourth floor must cross to the front hall and walk up three flights of stairs.¹⁴⁸

This document of complaints became the Board's Statement of Existing Conditions on which the 1923 expansion of the club was based, codifying the hierarchy of its inhabitants by making some less visible.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ William R. Leach, "Transformations in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925," *The Journal of American History* 71, no. 2 (September 1, 1984), 333.

¹⁴⁶ Feminist geographer Daphne Spain's notion of gendered space illustrates this general concept: initial status differences create certain types of spaces; the resulting, institutionalized spatial segregation reinforces those initial advantages. In the case of the WAC, the difference in status was not according to gender but according to class. Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

¹⁴⁷ Driscoll, *Scrapbook*.

¹⁴⁸ Board of Directors, "Statement of Existing Conditions on Which to Base Future Planning of Club" (Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco, March 15, 1921), The Metropolitan Club Archives.

While the dynamic between club members and the staff appears to have generally gone unquestioned, there was at least one instance of labor-management conflict. In 1940 representatives of the bartenders', waitresses and cooks' unions called upon the club and asked to speak to employees, citing the 1935 National Labor Relations Act that would protect employees if they wished to join. The reps were turned away while the Board "gathered several prominent men, husbands of members, to give advice regarding the problem" before taking action. In the meantime, the WAC manager was dispatched to meet with managers of the Bohemian, Olympic, Concordia, Union League, Family, and University clubs to ascertain their union status. They found that most men's clubs in San Francisco had unionized, with the exception of the Olympic Club, who had provoked a strike and won. None of the other women's clubs with which they consulted had unionized.

In December 1940 the Board held a meeting with their attorneys and club manager to discuss options regarding their ninety-eight employees. One of their attorneys warned of picketing, saying that "the union people . . . could discontinue delivery of food. They could attempt or demand a closed shop." The manager saw "the handwriting on the wall. To cooperate is the answer in order to run the club successfully." Current club president Mrs. J.W. Atkinson decided to "prolong arbitration, get as much as we can and want from the unions, but eventually agree. We must run the club ourselves and do our own employing and firing." By the following month, though, the WAC had decided not to concede to union demands, positioning their club as a home rather than a commercial space and defending their right not to unionize on those grounds. Even to entertain the prospect of a labor conflict was to challenge their notion of the club as their *home*, and so members dismissed the threat. "It would be difficult for the unions to make a picket line against a club like this," they reasoned, "especially a women's club." Further, in a statement of class hierarchy, members were prepared to cross a picket line in an act of genteel protest. "Many women deliberately buy *more* when a picket line has been thrown about a place," they declared [emphasis original]. Though the conflict was still unresolved the Board refused to attend subsequent meetings regarding union demands, instead dispatching male representatives. In a meeting in February 1941 union representatives "tried to insist upon demanding a strike immediately upon the club" but were dissuaded by the mediating head of the San Francisco Labor Council. The WAC had advised their lawyer in advance not to submit to unionization even in the face of a strike, and in the end the club was not forced to unionize in 1941.¹⁵⁰ They surmised afterward that they in particular had been thought "vulnerable" to union agitation because WAC "wages were in some cases substandard compared to union wages," because reps thought clubwomen "ignorant of business matters and union affairs and . . . easily intimidated," and because "they considered our club the largest and one of the best."¹⁵¹ When they planned to demonstrate their disregard for union wages, especially by crossing a picket line, members were again imbuing the space with a class element.

¹⁴⁹ There was also a motion passed separating members' lockers in the basement from employee lockers. Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 5.

¹⁵⁰ In 1956, after "unions threatened to picket the Club and stop all supplies and services," the staff became unionized, "the last of the downtown clubs" to do so. Wilson and Kennedy, *The First 50 Years of the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco*, 62. Union affiliation dissolved in the 1980s; Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places*.

¹⁵¹ Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 6.

Part V: The Future

The club was meant to do more than serve as an extravagant proclamation of elite class standing, however. Members had created a power base for themselves by forming social networks and raising money to build. Yet they relied on reproduction for a lasting legacy: the continuation of their influence would come in the cultivation of the next generation of clubwomen, the young elite separatist-to-be. But as previously mentioned, WAC women's symbolic and literal construction of space was of little interest to the next generation. This failure was also tied up with sweeping social changes involving the devaluation of women's culture in general and of separate female institutions in particular.

From the club's earliest days the membership was meant to include a substantial under-eighteen set, and the club's athletic facilities were always meant to serve as the major draw. General Federation of Women's Clubs president Alice Ames Winter wrote in 1925 that the movement for junior membership was making headway all over the country. Importantly, junior membership would ensure that the fulfillment of current club initiatives could "depend not on today but on tomorrow." Winter recommended having juniors help with adult members' philanthropic work, assisting in the establishment of libraries, recreation centers, playgrounds, and kindergartens, and participating in existing programs including book reviews, civic forums, and citizenship.¹⁵² In the case of the WAC, however, club "initiatives" were strictly limited to athletic and social pursuits, and thus that is what their junior membership would be expected to perpetuate. A 1914 article published during the formative years of the WAC reported, "As many of the women interested have young families growing up, an important department of the club will be devoted to the physical training of children."¹⁵³ When operational, the building's athletic facilities—gymnastics, swimming, dancing, basketball, fencing, hockey, volleyball, and tennis were all offered—were discussed in club documents almost exclusively in the context of their use by younger members, who made up roughly fifteen percent of the total membership between 1915 and 1930.¹⁵⁴

For a few brief years after opening in 1917 the younger members of the club were enthusiastic and active club patrons. They held birthday parties at the pool and competed in swim meets and tennis tournaments. In the *Club Bulletin* they were chastised for playing too boisterously and not answering when called by parents or chauffeurs for pickup; the monthly publication also announced their athletic competitions and victories. In March 1922 members were notified of an upcoming juvenile gymnasium class demonstration, calling the class "a very interesting part of the Club's work" which all members should observe.¹⁵⁵ Juvenile and junior initiation and monthly fees were intentionally set and kept low to encourage growth and retention.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Alice Ames Winter, *The Business of Being a Club Woman* (New York & London: Century Co., 1925), 152, 156.

¹⁵³ Francisco, "Athletics Has Interest of Society Women Who Are Organizing a Club."

¹⁵⁴ Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 1-6.

¹⁵⁵ "Club Bulletin" (Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco, March 1922), The Metropolitan Club Archives.

¹⁵⁶ In 1914, the junior initiation fee was \$10 and monthly dues were \$2.50; the juvenile initiation fee was \$5 and monthly dues, \$1.50 (compared to the adult initiation fee of \$25 and \$5 monthly dues). In 1924, the

The disappointing financial and membership figures that the WAC experienced after their 1923 expansion, however, applied equally to the younger contingent. Interest in the athletic facilities—an expensive new squash court, tennis court, and enlarged swimming pool—lagged considerably. In October 1926 the *Club Bulletin* reported on “many members who do not appreciate the beneficial advantages of the gymnasium classes and daily swim” because they “never try them.”¹⁵⁷ Dismissing separatism in favor of more mixed-gender, less-regulated forms of sociality, the girl coming of age in the 1920s no longer embraced the values and beliefs of her mother. For this “New Woman,” new sexual rights—to court in public, wear shorter skirts and rouge, and in other ways thumb their noses at the restricted and corseted world of their mothers—appeared as a bellwether for a still larger emancipation to come. With their rigid rules regarding membership and comportment, women’s clubs exemplified the prohibitions of authority and the arbitrary constraints imposed on women. Historian Loren Baritz writes that it was recognized even at the time that this rebellion was different from the ordinary difficulties generations always had with each other. “The difference lay precisely in the seriousness of what was now being attempted, not merely freedom to try one’s wings, but a challenge to the right of the older generation to continue doing business as it wished.”¹⁵⁸ The WAC’s foundering stemmed in large part from their inability to combat the supremacy of the newer ideology of integration.

In 1927 the Board began a long and ultimately unsuccessful campaign to “stimulate and encourage athletic activities” by growing their junior and juvenile membership. Year after year they slashed initiation fees and dues for members under eighteen. In 1934 the fee required of juniors transitioning to adult memberships was eliminated, and in 1935 the club conducted a membership drive that aimed to enlist new young members by offering free initiation. Not until 1935 did the club approach the problem from a different angle, when president Helen Lamont proposed that juniors be allowed to invite male escorts into the club for an evening. On an appointed Friday night, young male guests would have access to the pool, tennis courts, and gymnasium, and supper afterward (previously, men had only been allowed to dine at the club one night per week as the guest of an adult member, and they had never been allowed to use the athletic facilities).

Lamont’s efforts were late in coming. The club had been operating at a substantial loss for over five years by 1935, the pace accelerating month to month. Declining membership was their biggest problem. Women’s clubs in general had fallen out of fashion, replaced by new, captivating fads. Between September 1929 and January 1935, twenty percent of their roster had resigned—over five hundred members. In a marked shift, the Board now responded to member resignations with personal letters asking them to reconsider. From 1933 to 1935 the organization reported a net loss of \$49,000.¹⁵⁹ Equally problematic, in a panic over disuse of the club’s various departments, the Board authorized substantial cosmetic interior improvements every year between 1929 and

junior initiation fee was \$60 and monthly dues, \$3.50; juvenile initiation fee was \$30 and monthly dues, \$2.50 (compared to the adult initiation fee of \$250 and \$5 monthly dues).

¹⁵⁷ “Club Bulletin” (Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, October 1926), The Metropolitan Club Archives.

¹⁵⁸ Loren Baritz, *The Good Life: The Meaning of Success for the American Middle Class* (New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1989), 85-93.

¹⁵⁹ Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 6.

1938, often multiple times per year. Meeting minutes are full of choices on repointing, redecorating, and reupholstering, and which model of ice shaving machine to purchase.¹⁶⁰ Their March 1935 financial report recognizes that “resignations have been forced by economic circumstances,” referring to the mass unemployment and economic stagnation of the Great Depression, “and removals from the city, yes, but also good members have resigned because they were no longer attracted to the club.” There are no recorded attempts at generating member interest from a cultural perspective by bringing in speakers or organizing stimulating events. Nor did they relax house rules: in 1940 a motion passed banning members from wearing slacks in the lounges or dining room, adding, “infractions are to be reported immediately by maids to the manager or the office.”¹⁶¹

Throughout the 1930s, the Board effectively denied the club its opportunity for rebranding. Further, the money spent on remodeling was only available to the Board because they had been neglecting their financial obligations. Their first mortgage of \$400,000 had been placed on the club in 1924 and in 1935 no payment had ever been made on the principal. The club took out a second mortgage and passed on those payments as well in 1935. They also passed on the 1935 bond redemption payments to members, and did so again in 1936. Angry members threatened at the annual meeting “if the bond holders wanted to get together and sell this club out at public auction, they could do it.”¹⁶² Overall, the WAC defaulted on bond interest and mortgage payments twelve times between 1935 and 1940. In 1941, after the club brought in \$16,000 less than the previous paltry year, the Board considered discontinuing the athletic department for extreme lack of use—cited at only one percent of the overall membership. By then, junior and juvenile members made up less than five percent. Ultimately members’ attempts to bequeath the club to their children collapsed, as their heirs succumbed to an overly optimistic illusion that new opportunities for some women forecast success for all.¹⁶³

Conclusion

Successive decades brought further decline. The 1943 Annual Report notes “restricted services throughout the club,” due in part to the war effort and in part to disinterest. Demographic changes after World War II took members out of San Francisco and into the suburbs, and programs for children and teenagers were eliminated entirely. Many years of deferred maintenance had left the club’s facilities in need of attention. After the original fifty-year incorporation of the WAC expired in October 1965, the club was reincorporated and its name changed to the Metropolitan Club, reflecting the diminished attraction of the athletic facilities for many members. That same year the gymnasium was transformed into an auditorium. The WAC’s inability to appeal in the

¹⁶⁰ There was some precedent for the concept that redecoration could save a club: in 1888 White’s (the oldest and one of the most prestigious men’s clubs in London) was in crisis with only 200 paying members, 550 vacancies, and no prospects. A new manager determined to revive the fortunes of the aristocratic club set out on a massive renovation and redecoration scheme to lure new members. Within a year, the club’s fortunes returned. While the prestige of White’s was legendary, its members also expected a certain level of luxury. Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, 117.

¹⁶¹ Woman’s Athletic Club of San Francisco, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 6.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Blair, “The Limits of Sisterhood.”

1920s and 1930s to younger members expected to shepherd the club into the future was only one of several problems. Mismanagement was another. Their failure to satisfy the shifting needs of women, coupled with unavoidable generational differences and changing trends, rendered club life irrelevant for many.

Empowered by their wealth and status, bourgeois women's agency in San Francisco enabled them to build. They built, big, grand, and proud, making a statement about their organizational and financial acumen, and in the end it appears that they overbuilt. Despite repeated reports of financial uneasiness, the WAC continued to spend and expand beyond their means in the 1920s and 1930s. The ability to build as men could granted the WAC a special status, but this position alone was not enough to guarantee that the building would convey a compelling statement about homosocial elite women's culture, or that this statement would resonate with a rising generation comfortable in the public sphere and able to partake in the emerging mixed-gender amusements of the day. In this way, the gendered space was an inadequate strategy to impart ideas about power through separatism. More powerful to the junior membership was the draw of jobs and entertainment traditionally enjoyed only by men. As they sought entry into the public sphere, their mother's club communities became less relevant. "Feminized" social spaces deemed necessary at the beginning of the twentieth century were no longer crucial.

Though gendered space, considered another way, is exactly what marks the WAC as a survivor, in comparison to scores of failed women's clubs from the early twentieth century across California and nationwide. The club's architectural and organizational appropriation of features typical to men's clubs—and the resulting focus on exclusivity, comfort, and built-in small-group sociability—proved the consistent, lasting draw. Like the men's clubs around the corner on which it was modeled, the WAC persists as a discreet downtown presence, offering a quiet, private retreat to its single-sex clientele.

Figures for Chapter Two



Figure 2.1: The Metropolitan Club, 640 Sutter Street, San Francisco. Photo by author, June 2014.



Figure 2.2: Article announcing club formation. Source: *San Francisco Examiner*, June 8, 1914.



Figure 2.3: The University Club, 800 Powell Street, San Francisco. Source: The University Club. www.uclubsf.org. Accessed June 14, 2015.

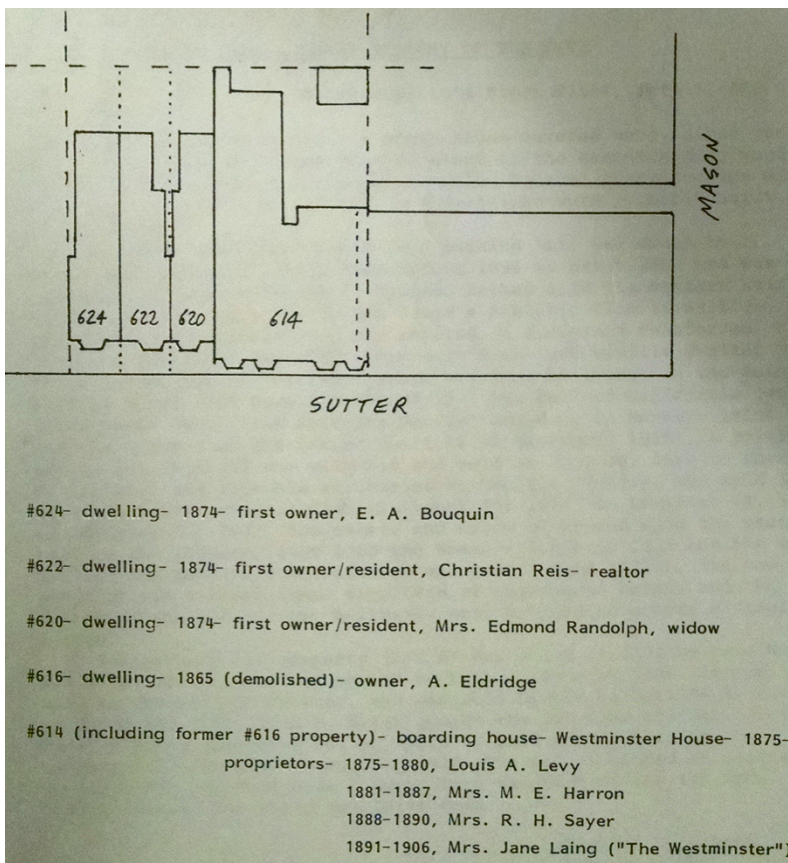


Figure 2.4: Early site context. Source: *The Metropolitan Club— Early History of the Site*, San Francisco Architectural Heritage, 1991.



Figure 2.5: View of the Woman's Athletic Club (WAC) site from the Mark Hopkins Mansion. Source: Muybridge, Eadweard J. *Panoramic San Francisco, from California Street hill, 1877*. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. Accessed June 14, 2015.



Figure 2.6: Sutter Street streetcar. Source: San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco History Center Historical Photograph Collection.



Figure 2.7: The 1907 Ebell Society Club House. Source: Oakland Public Library, Oakland History Room and Maps Division.



Figure 2.8: The 1899 Friday Morning Club (called the Woman's Club House). Source: The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.



Figure 2.9: The 1902 Oakland Library. Source: *The Architect and Engineer* 35, no. 3, January 1914.



Figure 2.10: The 1917 east wing of the WAC building. Source: *Who's Who Among the Women of California*, 1922.



Figure 2.11: The club's ornamental exterior. Source: Google Maps. Accessed June 12, 2015.



Figure 2.12: The WAC as pictured in 1962. Source: *The First 50 Years of the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco*, 1962.



Figure 2.13: The spandrels of central arch on the fourth floor with cartouches depicting the logo and WAC initials. Source: The Metropolitan Club Archives.

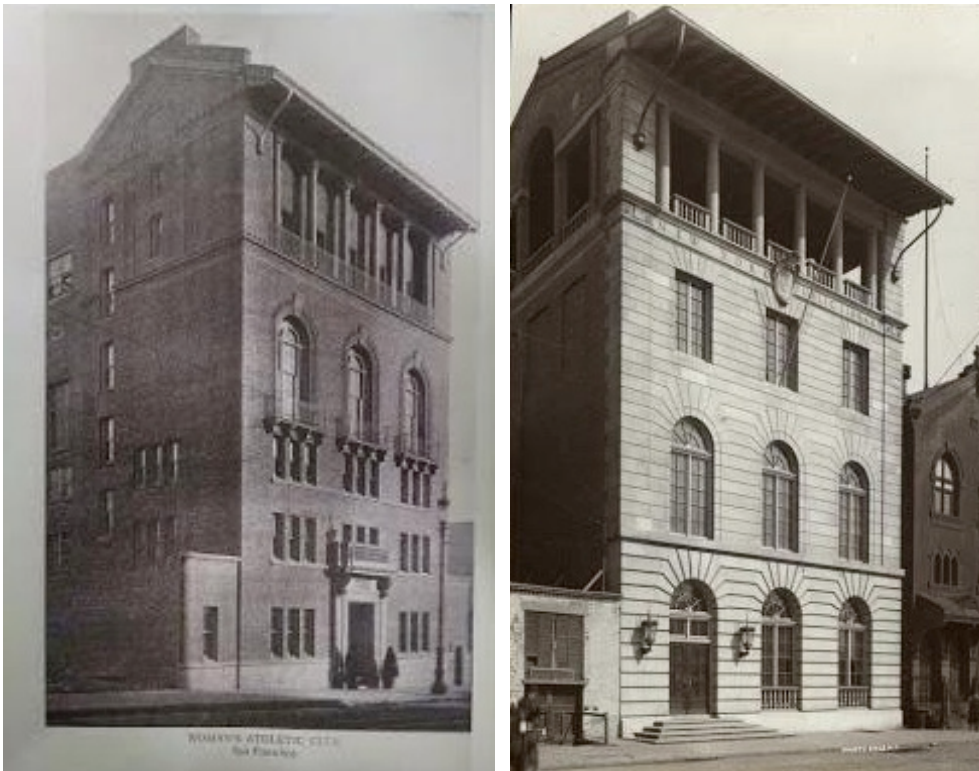


Figure 2.14: The 1917 east wing of the WAC building on the left and the 1908 Saint Gabriel's Park New York Public Library branch on the right. Source: *Who's Who Among the Women of California*, 1922, and The New York Public Library Digital Collection. Accessed June 20, 2015.



Figure 2.15: The 14th c. Palazzo Davanzati. Source: Centro di Cultura Formazione di Firenze.



Figure 2.16: The two-story tennis court at the WAC. Source: The Metropolitan Club Archives.



Figure 2.17: The WAC shows as a sliver to the left of the newly built YWCA building in the center. Source: *The Architect and Engineer* 57, no. 2, May 1919.



When the addition to the Women's Athletic Club, Sutter street, is completed, San Francisco can boast of the largest club of its kind in America! The present quarters are to be doubled in size, at a cost of \$250,000. The accompanying illustration is from a drawing of the completed structure by Bliss & Plaville, architects.

Figure 2.18: Rendering of the proposed WAC expansion. Source: *The San Francisco Examiner*, May 1, 1920.

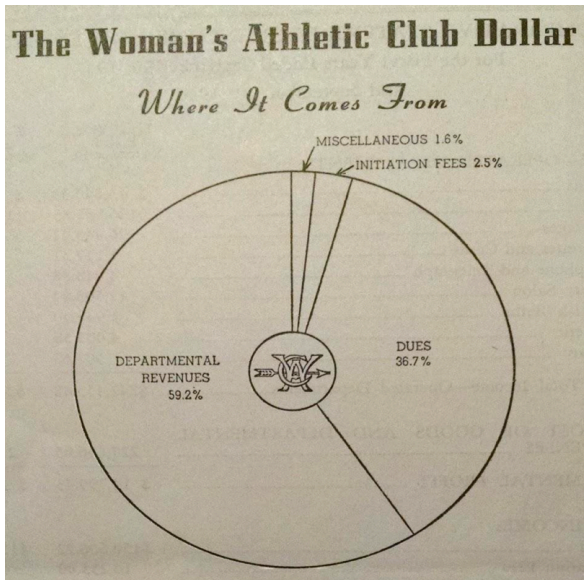


Figure 2.19: WAC organizational financial model. Source: The Metropolitan Club Archives.

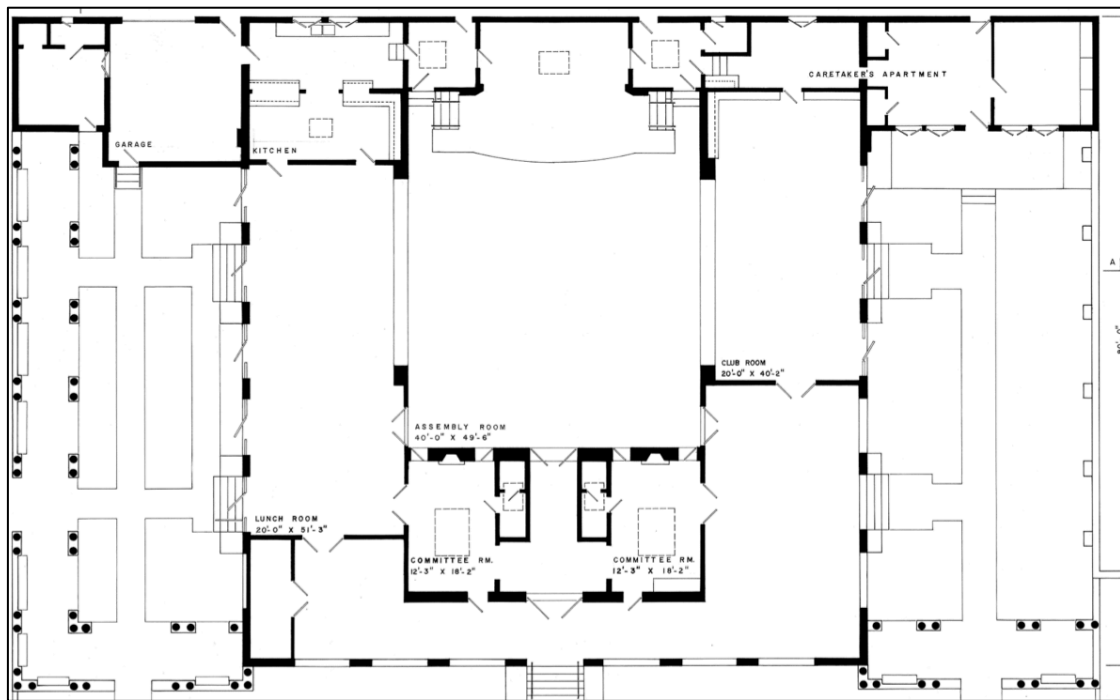


Figure 2.20: Plan of the La Jolla Woman's Club, 1913-1914, by architect Irving Gill, centered around an assembly room. Source: Historic American Buildings Survey, 1957.

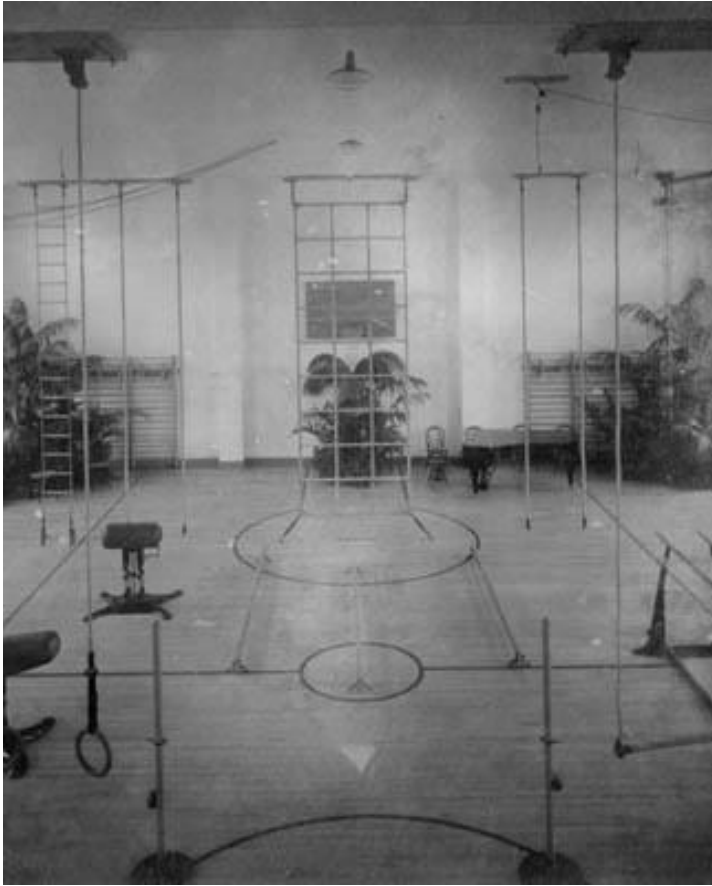


Figure 2.21: The WAC gymnasium, as pictured in 1918. Source: The Metropolitan Club Archives.

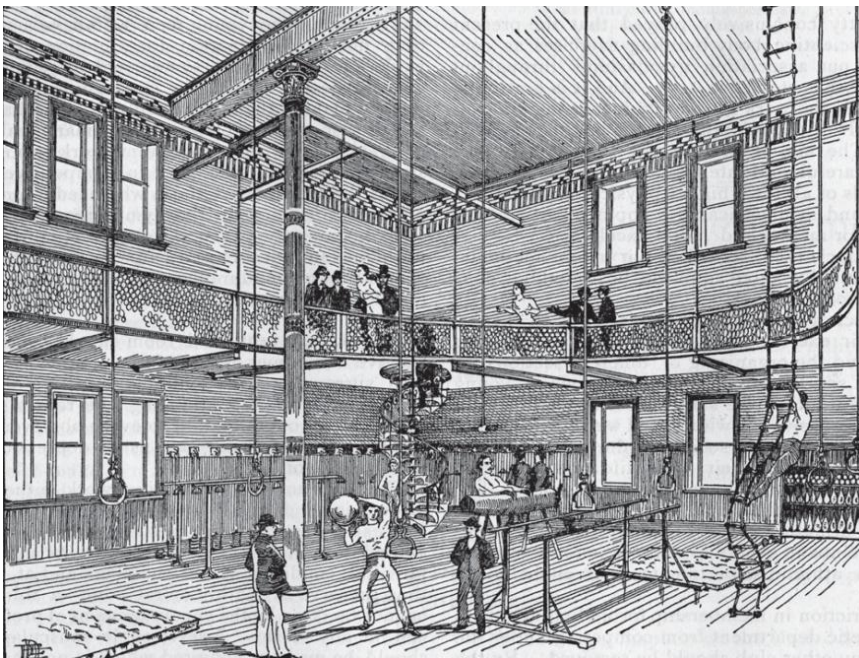


Figure 2.22: The gymnasium at the Bridgeport YMCA, Bridgeport, Connecticut, 1892. Source: *Manhood Factories*, 2010.

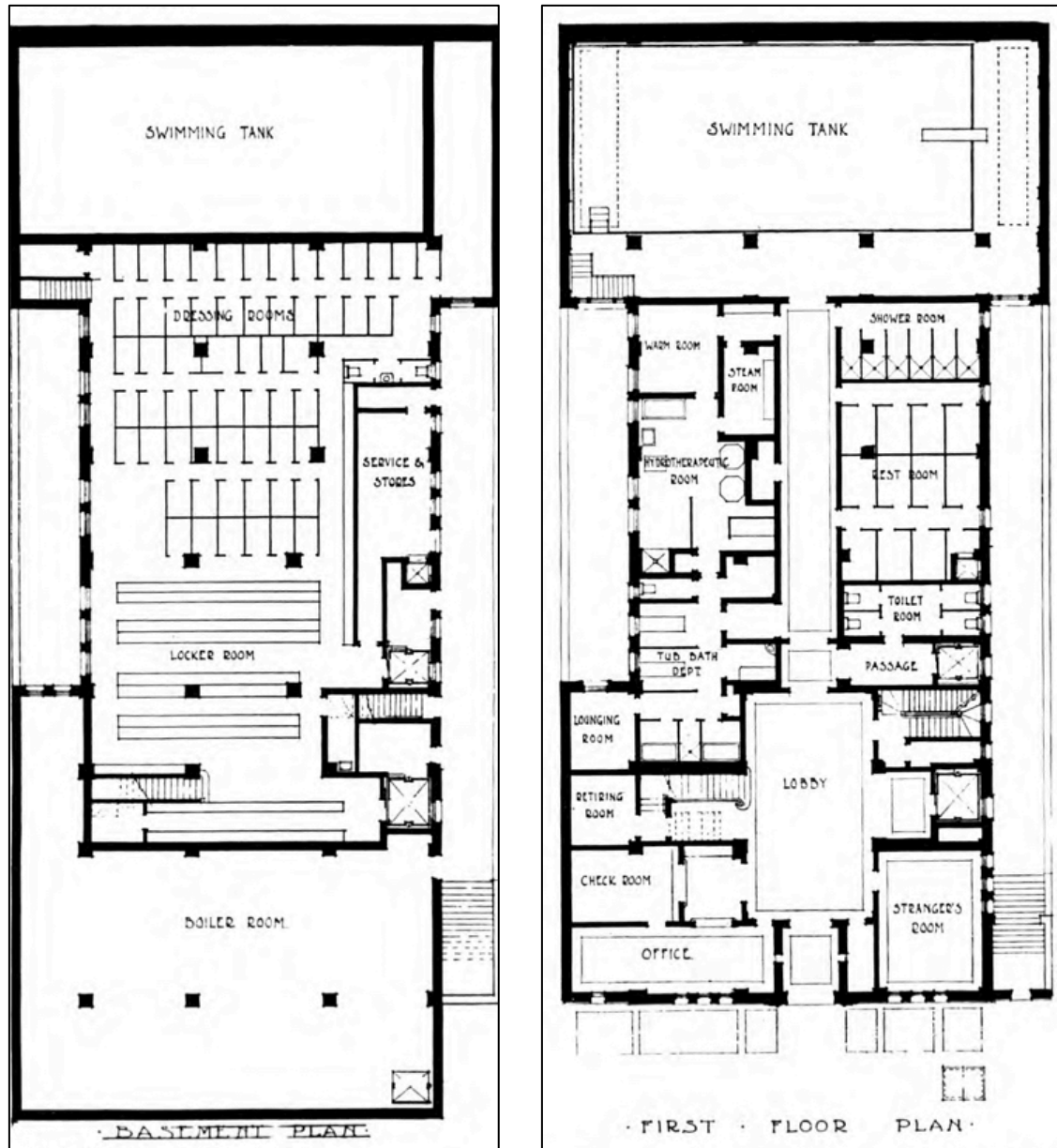


Figure 2.23a: Basement and first floor plans of the 1917 WAC, Bliss & Faville. No plans for the 1923 addition exist, but the distribution of recreational and commercial facilities across each floor remained constant, as did the ratio of served to servant spaces. The basement continued to house the pool, locker room with cabanas, and service areas; the first floor continued to house the lobby, beauty facilities, cloakroom, and “stranger’s” room. Source: *The American Architect* 12.1, 1917.

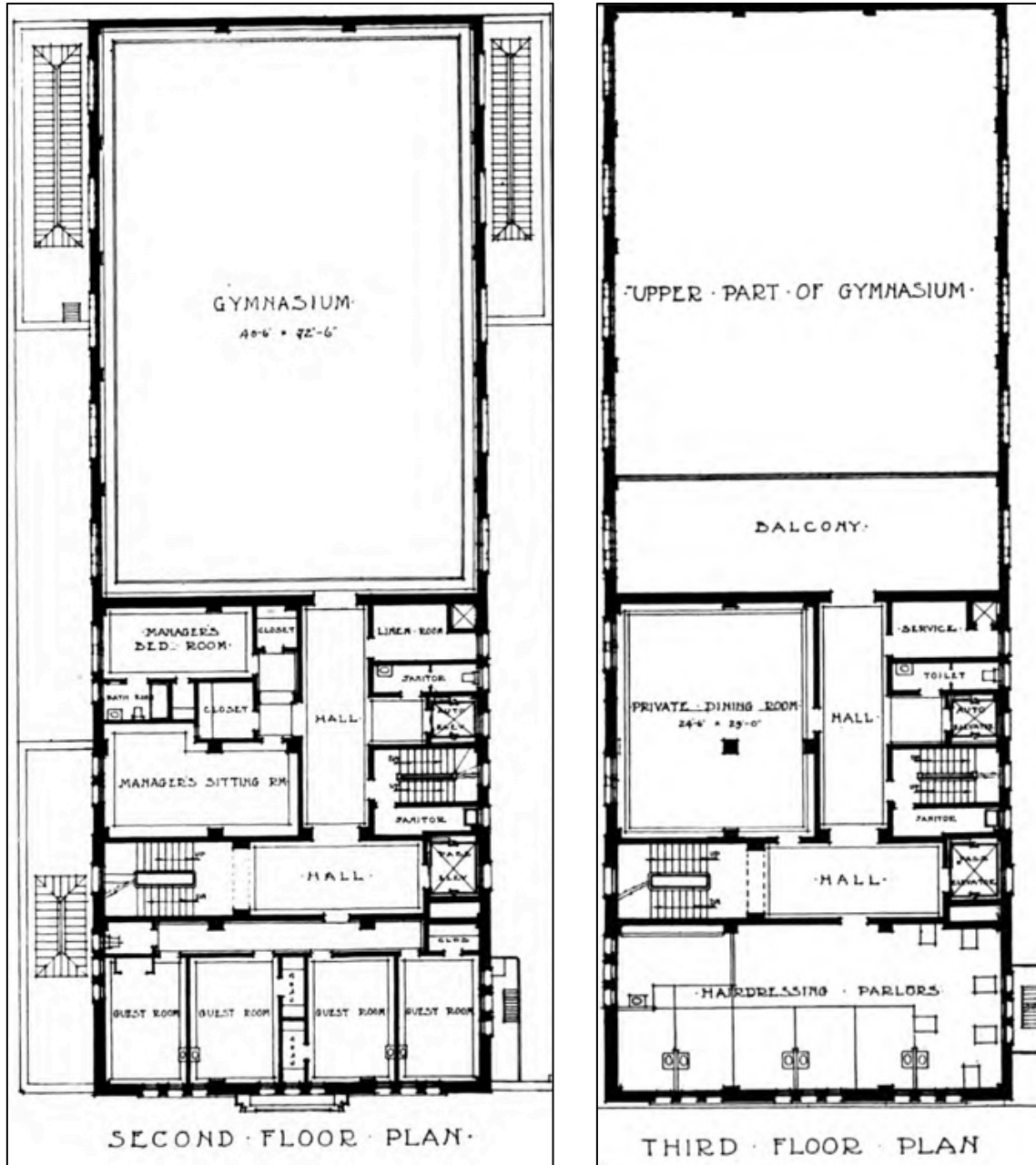


Figure 2.23b: Second and third floor plans of the 1917 WAC. The 1923 expansion added more hotel and maid's rooms to the second and third floors. Source: *The American Architect* 12.1, 1917.

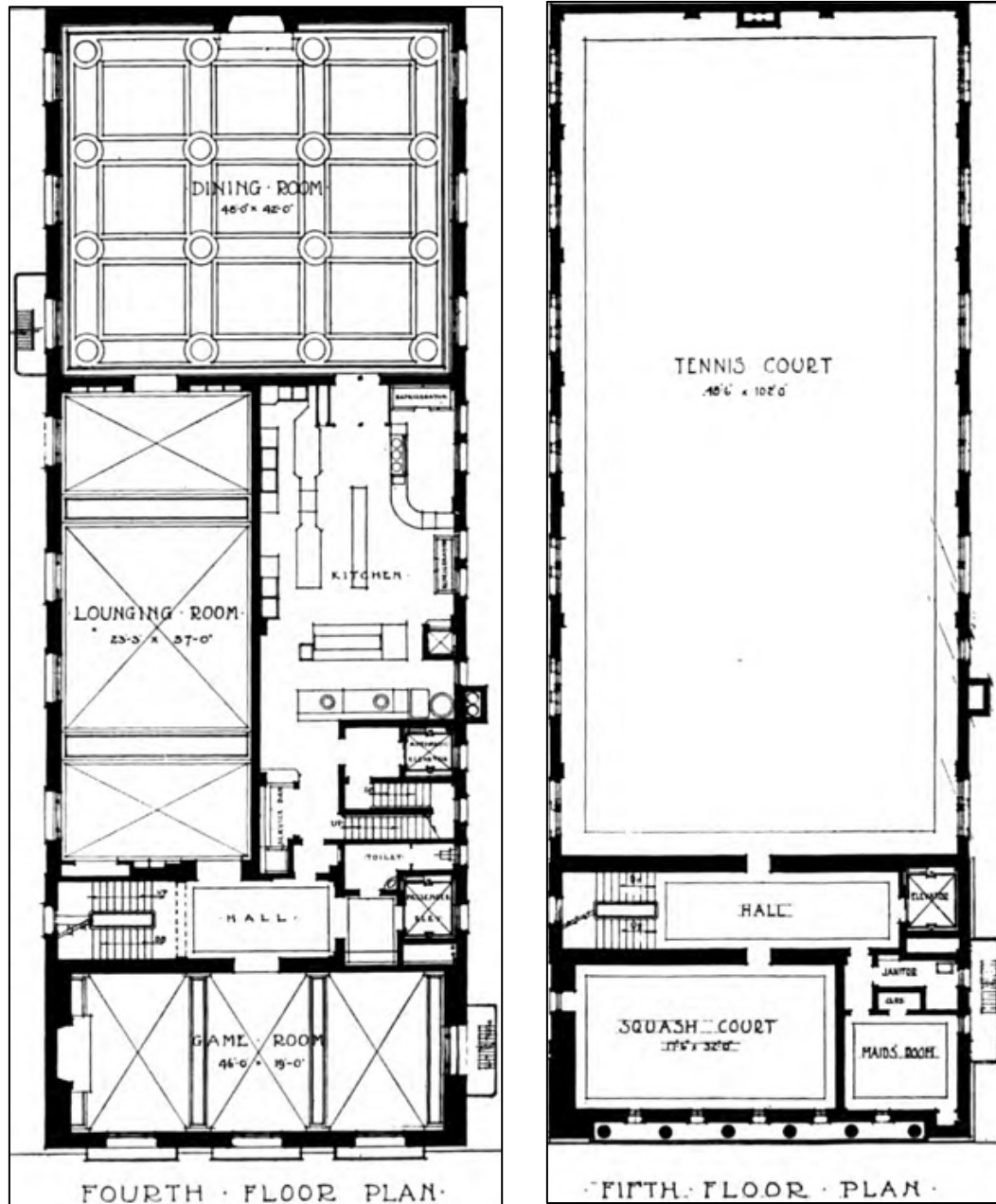


Figure 2.23c: Fourth and fifth floor plans of the 1917 WAC. The expansion added one additional lounge space and two private dining rooms to the fourth floor. On the fifth floor additional hotel and maid's rooms were added in 1923, as was a card room; in 1928 the squash court was converted to a boardroom. Source: *The American Architect* 12.1, 1917.

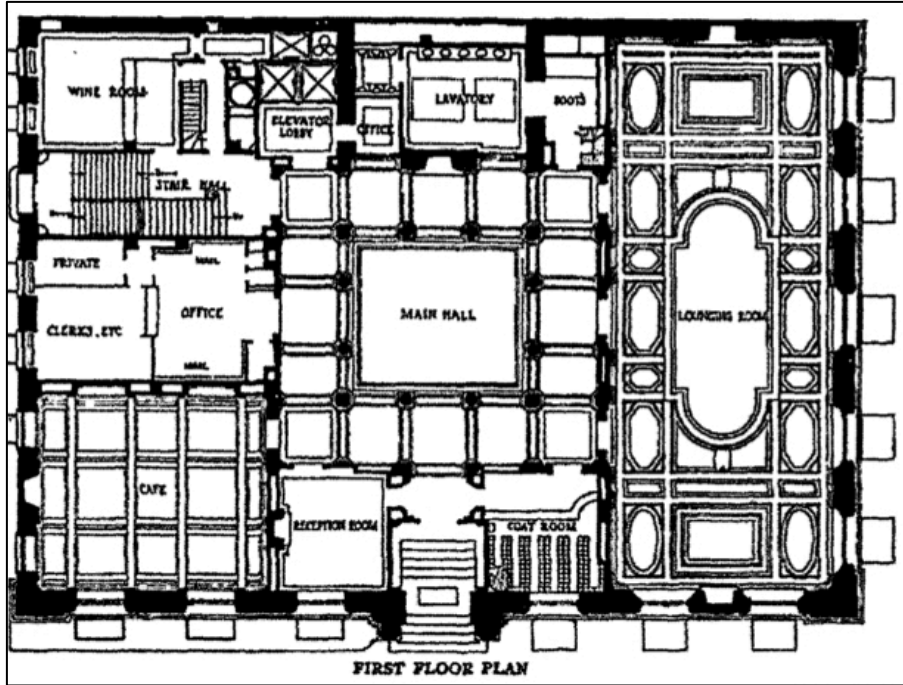


Figure 2.24a: Plan for the first floor of the men's University Club in Manhattan, 1899, McKim, Mead & White. Source: *A Monograph of the Works of McKim, Mead & White, 1879-1915*, 1973.

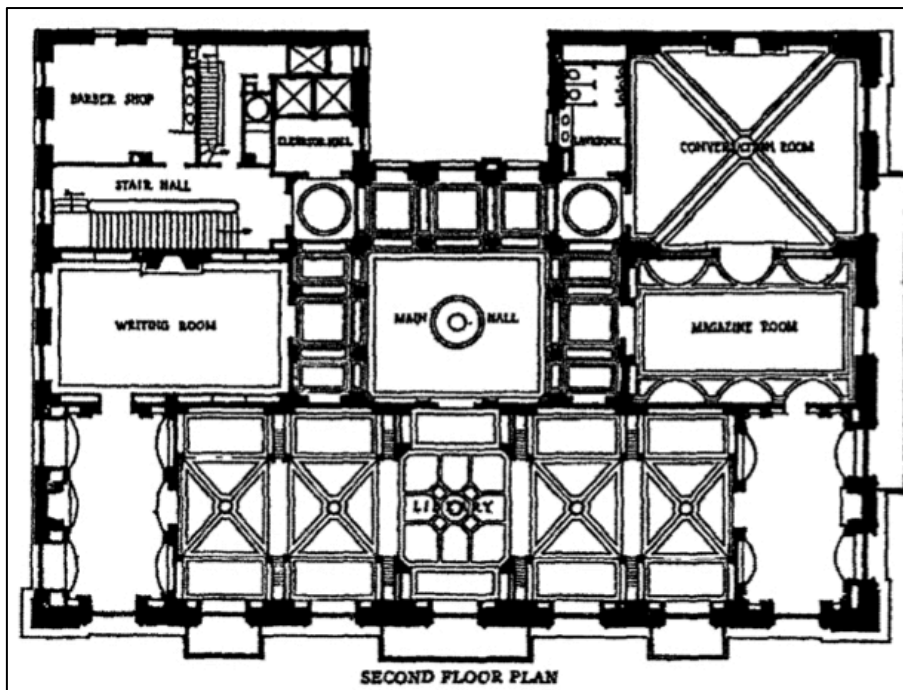


Figure 2.24b: Plan for the second floor of the men's University Club in Manhattan, 1899, McKim, Mead & White. Source: *A Monograph of the Works of McKim, Mead & White, 1879-1915*, 1973.

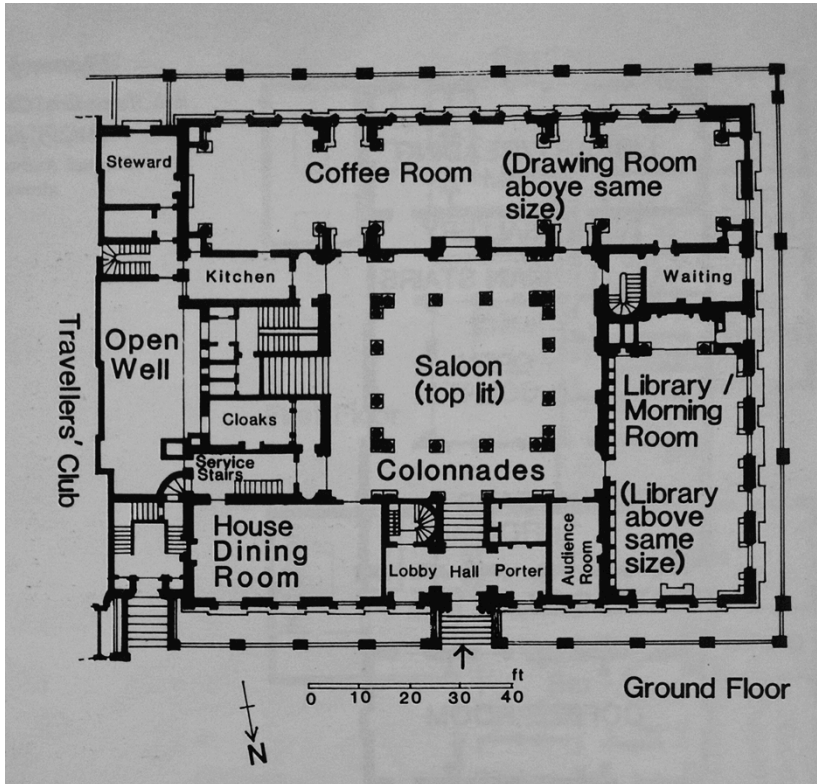


Figure 2.25: The radial plan of the men's Reform Club in London, 1837-1841, Charles Barry. Source: *Buildings & Power*, 1993.



Figure 2.26: Lobby of the WAC. Source: The Metropolitan Club Archives.



Figure 2.27: The WAC lobby with original black and white checkerboard floor (probably of marble or terrazo) as pictured in 1962. Source: *The First 50 Years of the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco*, 1962.



Figure 2.28: The WAC first floor library, formerly the “stranger’s” room. Source: The Metropolitan Club Archives.



Figure 2.29: The WAC fourth floor main bar. Source: The Metropolitan Club Archives.



Figure 2.30: One of the fourth floor WAC lounges, formerly the Games room. Source: The Metropolitan Club Archives.



Figure 2.31: Another fourth floor lounge at the WAC. Source: The Metropolitan Club Archives.



Figure 2.32: The WAC main dining room as pictured in 1962. Source: *The First 50 Years of the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco*, 1962.



Figure 2.33: The WAC fourth floor Persian Room. Source: The Metropolitan Club Archives.



Figure 2.34: The WAC fifth floor boardroom. Source: The Metropolitan Club Archives.



Figure 2.35: Basement-level cabanas at the WAC: wood cubicles that function as changing rooms for members. Source: The Metropolitan Club Archives.



Figure 2.36: The WAC pool as pictured in 1962. Source: *The First 50 Years of the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco*, 1962.

Chapter Three

The Berkeley Women's City Club

Introduction

If the Friday Morning Club in Los Angeles institutionalized women's club efforts, the Berkeley Women's City Club (BWCC) professionalized them. An impressive number of voluntary organizations were competing for members and members' dues in Berkeley in the mid 1920s. In the small but growing city of seventy-five thousand there were eighteen women's clubs alone.¹ There were also one hundred and six other groups, some of which admitted only women, some only men, and some mixed. Clubs were scattered throughout the city and met in rented auditoriums, hotels, and restaurants.

Several intrepid women's clubs endeavored to create space in this crowded organizational landscape by building a clubhouse of their own. In a pattern typical of other clubs in California and nationwide, first came an intense effort to acquire a lot, and another to collect sufficient capital for construction. Those that did manage to build in many cases had not fully planned for the cost of maintenance, taxes, upkeep, service, repairs, and incidental expenses of owning a clubhouse. Faced with stiff competition, they were unable to raise dues. The structures meant to stake a claim for modern womanhood became liabilities and cash drains. In response to the trying experience of organizations like the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco (WAC), the BWCC aimed to break this pattern.

One block south of the UC Berkeley campus at 2315 Durant Avenue the ca. 1930 castle like BWCC building is the professional response to the problem of 1920s women's clubhouse-building. The brainchild of an accountant and a women's club president, the BWCC aimed to address the issue of many clubs trying to maintain many clubhouses by creating a single, unifying center. They would avoid duplication by joining forces to share the cost and responsibilities of property ownership. Crucially, professional women would manage the club's finances and operations; the general membership would be only "barely conscious" of the management of their club home.

Club organizers saw their building campaign as an opportunity to explain women's contributions to Berkeley's urban growth, commercial prosperity, and beautification. They affiliated with the local Chamber of Commerce and touted their project as an artistic contribution that could help Berkeley in its efforts to distinguish itself from Oakland and San Francisco.² Frequent media mentions of the clubhouse highlight the cost of construction and enumerate the number of workers required to build and maintain such a structure.³ Well before the clubhouse opened the Board had already arranged multiple income streams apart from the typical dining room revenue and member dues. They would collect rent from in-house businesses, other clubs, bedrooms, and other properties the BWCC owned, along with fees from weddings and other private parties.

¹ Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, "1927 Annual Report to the Board of Directors," December 1927, 2.

² "The Women's City Club and Public Service," *Berkeley Women's City Club Bulletin*, July 1929, 4.

³ "\$400,000 Home of Women's City Club Officially Opened," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, January 20, 1930; Hollis R. Thompson, "Berkeley Looking Forward to Big 1930 Development," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, January 1, 1930.

The organization would attempt to appeal to professional women, especially the *new* New Woman of the 1920s who had historically proven uninterested in club life. When the term was coined in 1894 the New Woman was young, physically strong, fearless, and independent of spirit. By the 1920s, the New Woman was characterized instead by her meaningful work, her economic independence, and her conviction that a full life called for marriage and children as well as a career.⁴ Education at the BWCC (formal courses, not informal lectures) would be a key offering. Classes would meet at noon or in the evening on weekdays to accommodate businesswomen and businessmen. Social events at the club were also coed. Forty-two reasonably priced residential rooms offered unmarried women or widows a place to live, eliminating domestic duties for those with active lives and little time for housework.

Further, the BWCC hired the consummate New Woman to design their clubhouse: the professional, independent, and successful architect Julia Morgan. Though Morgan was older than the typical New Woman coming of age in the 1920s the BWCC recognized that the literal and symbolic association with Morgan would signify the continued relevance of women's clubs. For the women of the BWCC Morgan designed a grand building organized around a cloister and a swimming pool, with public spaces on two floors and a tower to house the residential rooms. Morgan's free, imaginative use of Romanesque and Gothic elements created a mood that is simultaneously old world medieval, quintessentially Californian, and professional, all at once.

The BWCC effectively combined the Friday Morning Club's (FMC) and the WAC's approaches, with a clubhouse that looked outward to the local economy and also provided a cloistered environment for sociality and self-cultivation. Like the FMC, the BWCC embedded its mission into its municipality's. Both organizations were functionally divided into committees of interest, and represented an institutionalized approach to female association. Also like the FMC, the BWCC building was designed to be effectively public. Though despite being a significantly larger building, with a larger membership during its peak days, the BWCC building does not divulge its institutionality so plainly.

Coincidentally, the BWCC Board of Directors attempted in 1928 to hire the very architects who had designed the FMC's second, 1924, clubhouse but were subverted simply by circumstance. They instead hired an architect with extensive experience designing buildings for women's organizations and also residences. The result is a clubhouse that bears more of a resemblance to the WAC than the FMC, with ample amenities and spaces that members can rent for personal entertaining or private exercise. The overall plan is segmented and circuitous, with many turns, corners, and vestibules that make for unexpected areas of privacy. Though both the FMC and the BWCC are based on the *palazzo* form, massing at the BWCC is arranged into a complex of blocks of varying scales instead of a single block. The Berkeley clubhouse also lacks blatant signage on the exterior. Taken together, these choices create the feeling of being in a nearly domestically scaled building.

Though the club enjoyed success in its early days, unfortunately, as with all other clubs, the tide of depression, war, and sweeping socio economic changes of the following decades proved powerful. The BWCC and its clubhouse were created to be frank and modern for the *new* New Woman of the 1930s, a character—and *caractère*—that would become quickly out of step

⁴ For more on the history of the "New Woman" see Jean V. Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman: The Women's Movement in America, 1875-1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003).

with women's quickly changing lives. Membership dropped from four thousand and five hundred in 1930 to three thousand and five hundred in 1936, to less than three thousand in 1945. In 2008 less than two hundred names appeared on the membership roster.

Ultimately, though, the clubhouse's flexible program and diversified business plan have kept the doors open despite flagging interest. The residential rooms are now hotel rooms and the restaurant is open to the public. The first wedding of many took place in the clubhouse in February 1931, three months after the grand opening; conferences and other event rentals occur weekly. It is perhaps apropos of the club's professional approach to club management that they were willing to adjust the focus of their organization when circumstances required. Though the organization's purpose has changed, their building has changed very little.

Part I: Formation

As demonstrated through the experience of the Woman's Athletic Club in San Francisco, in California in the 1920s many women's clubs struggled to build and maintain functioning clubhouses. The Berkeley Business and Professional Women's Club (BPWC), for example, desired a clubhouse but lacked the funds. The group functioned as the female counterpart to a Rotary or Kiwanis Club, open to all business and professional women. The 1925 membership roster included beauticians, realtors, teachers, doctors, store clerks, and small business owners, along with an assistant probation officer, a "china decorator," and a YMCA "house mother."⁵ Monthly dues—a significant part of the revenue needed to construct and maintain a building—were modest, as most members belonged to at least one other organization. For in Berkeley in the mid 1920s there were a whopping one hundred and twenty-four groups competing for a person's dues. In a population of only around seventy-five thousand, there were eighteen women's clubs and one hundred and six other organizations, some of which admitted only women, some only men, and some mixed. Clubs were scattered throughout the city and in many cases existed in the absence of regular headquarters.⁶

BPWC member Olga Beebe related the club's situation to friend and fellow clubwoman Purle Athearn in 1925. Athearn, current president of the League of Women Voters in Berkeley and former president of the Berkeley Twentieth Century Club, reportedly offered a complete and eloquent answer to Beebe, solving her particular dilemma and the general pattern of club dispersion:

Why not build a Community Club House which will be what the modern woman wants? It can be made to accommodate other women's organizations and it can provide all those features of the modern clubhouse which women of this day demand but which no individual group can afford to supply.⁷

⁵ *Business Women's Herald*, July 1925.

⁶ These 124 organizations mentioned do not even include the fraternities and sororities associated with the University of California, of which there were an unusually large number in Berkeley, but it does include some clubs that were men-only. Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, "1927 Annual Report to the Board of Directors," 2.

⁷ Athearn may have gotten the idea from the Women's City Club of Oakland, whose Renaissance Revival clubhouse housed various organizations. Construction began in November 1927 and so could have certainly been in the planning stages in 1925. Quoted in "History," *Berkeley Women's City Club Bulletin*, September 1927.

Beebe, who worked as the chief accountant for the American Trust Company in Berkeley, brought Athearn's idea to another fellow clubwoman, Dr. Kate Gompertz, and together they presented the concept to the BPWC in 1926. A committee was formed to consult with other women's organizations in Berkeley on the feasibility of combining the efforts of multiple clubs into a single organization and building. The idea was met with enthusiasm, and in April 1927, fourteen clubs—the California Writers' Club, College Women's Club, Parent-Teachers' Association, and the Berkeley Piano Club among them, in addition to the BPWC— assembled in rented quarters at the Mercantile Bank Building for the first meeting of the new Berkeley Women's City Club (BWCC). Their first order of business was to elect Athearn president and Beebe treasurer.

The professional character of the founding members, along with Athearn's reference to what the "modern woman" wants in a "modern clubhouse," are key to understanding what distinguishes the BWCC from other, earlier women's clubs. Professionals were the *new* New Woman of the 1920s. When the term was coined in 1894 the New Woman was young, physically strong, fearless, and independent of spirit. By the 1920s, after significant gains in her educational and political attainment, the New Woman was characterized instead by meaningful work, economic independence, and the conviction that a full life called for marriage and children as well as a career. In 1927 *Harper's* defined this new, modern woman, calling her a "Feminist—New Style." Though she "admires the pioneer feminists for their courage," and "pays all honor to them," she "does not want to wear their mantle." She thinks they "bear a grudge against men" and "exploit their sex for the sake of publicity." They "rant about equality when they might better prove their ability." The truly modern ones, *Harper's* argued, are the "constantly increasing" group of women who find meaningful work, and balance it with their desire to be wives and mothers. The "Feminist—New Style" is not "one of the many women who look upon their jobs as tolerable meal-tickets or as interesting pastimes to be dropped whenever they may wish. On the contrary, she takes great pride in becoming a vital factor in whatever enterprise she has chosen, and she therefore expects to work long hours when the occasion demands."⁸

When she was not working, the modern woman of the late 1920s socialized in mixed company. The "Feminist—New Style" liked the company of men, even preferred it. The new venues and modes of heterosexual sociability that emerged after 1900 had since become acceptable to the respectable middle classes, and to the middle-aged. Husbands and wives played golf or tennis together, or enjoyed other leisure activities in mixed groups.⁹ At the BWCC, the New Woman member could drop by the club at noon, spend her lunch hour attending a coed class, and then get back to her office in downtown Berkeley where she worked hard at white-collar a job that brought her personal satisfaction.

BWCC founding members applied for a club charter in August 1927, their purpose listed as promoting "social intercourse and the pleasure and happiness" of members. They incorporated shortly thereafter and appointed a small committee to investigate building site options. The committee considered forty-five sites, judged on the basis of several criteria: location ("it should be central, easily accessible at all times and from all parts of the city, with good transportation at

⁸ Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, "Feminist—New Style," *Harper's*, no. 155 (October 1927), 554–62.

⁹ Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman*, 116–117.

hand”), business advantage (“should be at least fair to begin with and should anticipate an increased valuation in time”), setting (“visualization in its setting and the outlook of the completed building should be as harmonious as possible”), along with the amount of parking and ground area obtainable, price, terms of purchase, and present and future income or expense. At a meeting of the Board of Directors in December 1927 president Athearn was authorized to purchase three lots, a total of thirty-three thousand square feet, in the middle of a block between Ellsworth and Dana Streets and bordered by Bancroft Way to the north and Durant Avenue to the south. “Durant offers a magnificent opportunity for a garden entrance to the Club proper, where an imposing facade will add to the beauty and importance of that section of the city,” the committee noted. The site was chosen for its close proximity to the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) campus and its situation “downtown” yet apart from the “congested business section,” as they were several blocks away from either of the main commercial thoroughfares, Telegraph and Shattuck Avenues.¹⁰ Streetcars passed the Bancroft Way frontage and a station of the Southern Pacific and Key System were located less than one block away.¹¹ Their building would be in the geographical center of Berkeley, in a neighborhood of churches, gracious residences, and former residences turned apartment houses (see figure 3.1). A building site committee member who also served on the Berkeley City Planning Commission assured the club that Durant “would be kept as a residence boulevard [sic.], and that business would be encouraged to develop” on Bancroft Way.¹² Such a location would be conveniently accessible to women working or shopping in downtown Berkeley.

The BWCC building was the informed response to the 1920s problem of women’s clubhouse-building in California and nationwide. For years clubs had followed a like pattern: groups began by gathering in the homes of members and eventually took up rented quarters in hotels, schools, and churches. These spaces inevitably proved inconvenient or too small for their purposes, so many clubs set about building clubhouses of their own. There would be an intense effort to acquire a lot, and another to collect sufficient capital to build. Even when ownership and occupancy were complete, the problem was not half solved. Often clubs had not fully planned for the cost of maintenance, taxes, upkeep, service, repairs, and incidental expenses, and members were assessed repeatedly to meet deficits. Clubs had to open their doors for rentals—to other clubs, to lecturers, and for social functions. Competition increased with each new clubhouse that went up, and groups desperate to retain their members were unable to raise dues.

¹⁰ In the late 1920s the southern border of the UC Berkeley campus was two blocks north of the future site of the BWCC. The blocks between Allston and Bancroft Ways were scheduled to become part of the campus and are marked “Streets to be Vacated” on a 1929 Sanborn map. With this change the campus border would be only one block north of the BWCC. “Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 - Berkeley, California.” (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1929).

¹¹ During the period of rapid growth for the East Bay (1900 to 1930) the region developed one of the most extensive streetcar networks in the country, owned by the Key System and Southern Pacific. Richard Walker, “Industry Builds out the City: Industrial Decentralization in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1850–1950,” *Manufacturing Suburbs: Building Work and Home on the Metropolitan Fringe*, 2004, 117.

¹² A 1929 Sanborn map of the block reveals that the two single-family Queen Anne homes razed to make room for the clubhouse had been converted to boardinghouses in the years between 1911 and 1929. Thus the introduction of a residential clubhouse would not change the zoning category nor the character of the lots. *Berkeley Women’s City Club Bulletin*, January 1928; Berkeley Women’s City Club, *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 1, April 1928, “Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 - Berkeley, California.” (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1929).

The structures that had helped to shape the geographic and spatial landscape for modern womanhood had become significant cash drains.

A “community club house,” their “great unifying center,” would solve the housing problem of many clubs trying to maintain many clubhouses. To join forces was to avoid duplication and overlapping of individual club’s efforts, and to introduce “efficiency and expediency” to the process of accommodation. Outside clubs that wished to maintain their autonomy could operate as a discrete unit, renting one of several meeting rooms at the club (each of which had an attached kitchenette, cloak, and powder room) for a small fee. Alternately, the constituent body of an outside club could collapse their membership into the larger BWCC body, taking advantage of new and enlarged opportunities for club service. Individuals could also belong to the BWCC without any other club affiliation, though new applicants needed endorsements from two existing club members.¹³

Crucially, committees composed of skilled women with demonstrated professional experience would manage the BWCC’s financial and property matters. The general membership would be only “barely conscious” of the management of their club home; as such, they could focus fully on the work of their club, and on keeping enrollment numbers up.¹⁴ This managerial ethos is consistent with the professional character of the club; it is also tied to the early twentieth century emergence of the American modern business enterprise. In 1941 American philosopher and political theorist James Burnham reflected on the state of the managerial economy after World War I. Burnham observed that the visible, powerful hand of management was currently at the forefront of American industry. He touted the rise of the “managerial class,” and the modern, consolidated, multiunit enterprise.¹⁵ The BWCC capitalized on these principles and created a rationalized, professional approach to a women’s club and clubhouse. They embraced volume by combining multiple organizations into one; this administrative coordination would enable them to charge lower dues, thus increasing their chance of success. The different committees of the BWCC—Garden, Hospitality, Finance, Furnishing, and others—would make up a middle management of sorts, monitoring the performance of the units under their command and coordinating the relevant flow of activities and materials. The Board of Directors—Top Management, in contemporary business jargon—would evaluate and coordinate the activities of middle management and plan and allocate resources for the enterprise as a whole.¹⁶

The tendency toward professional clubhouse management was emerging elsewhere at the end of the 1920s. In 1928 and 1929 *The Woman’s Journal* published a *Handbook of Women’s Clubhouses*, offering explicit advice on every aspect of clubhouse building collected from clubs nationwide. The 1928 *Handbook* calls clubhouses “A New Business,” and attempts to “throw light on many puzzling details of clubhouse management.”¹⁷ Club presidents, Managing Directors, and Building Committee Chairs penned articles on “Financing the Clubhouse,”

¹³ “Service to Women’s Clubs,” *Berkeley Women’s City Club Bulletin*, August 1927.

¹⁴ *Berkeley Women’s City Club Bulletin*, August 1927, 4.

¹⁵ See James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution; What Is Happening in the World* (New York: John Day Co., 1941).

¹⁶ See Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1977).

¹⁷ “Women’s Clubhouses—A New Business,” in *Handbook of Women’s Clubhouses* (New York: *The Woman’s Journal*, 1928), 1.

“Making the Clubhouse Pay,” “The Efficient Kitchen,” and “Keeping the Clubhouse Clean.” The exact amount spent on various clubhouse maintenance projects is often mentioned in an effort to help fellow clubwomen plan and control costs for their own buildings.¹⁸

In a nod to home economics, the 1929 edition praises the work of club officers who, even without professional training, professionally manage “great hotel-like buildings, with the many problems and the heavy financial responsibilities involved.” These women “bring to bear the same qualities of good housekeeping, thrift, and efficiency that they have learned to use in their own households.”¹⁹ Home economics, the profession devoted to applying scientific rules to home management, had grown from nineteenth-century formal instruction in the domestic arts and gained traction from works like Catherine Beecher’s 1841 *Treatise on Domestic Economy*. Beecher’s *Treatise* argued that homemaking was a demanding profession, requiring skill, efficiency, and precise training; her book helped to formalize the ethic and vocabulary of household management. The profession grew in the period 1880-1910 and by the 1920s collegiate home economics programs focused on job opportunities for women as home economics teachers, nutritionists, and textile experts.²⁰ At the BWCC, the emphasis on expertise and a rationalized approach toward clubhouse management drew on the ethos of home economics, combined with the managerial system of the modern business enterprise.

Revenue at the BWCC would come from a variety of sources: dues, multiple dining and assembly rooms, club lounges, and their athletic department; as well as rent from four floors of residential hotel rooms that were envisaged as housing for professional, single women.²¹ Revenue would also flow from female-owned shops, offices and studios.²² Their club building would be unapologetically commercial, and their club identity and management unapologetically professional. Their architect Julia Morgan, a lesson in women in business in and of herself, would reflect and reinforce this professional identity.

From the outset the words “business” and “Chamber of Commerce” appeared in media coverage on the club. The BWCC would not only “eliminate economic waste of the individually owned clubhouse,” it would function as a boon to the city’s overall economic prosperity.²³ A mutual interest between the Chamber of Commerce and the BWCC reflects a larger nationwide trend. A fever for city planning and grandiose architecture swept the country in the early twentieth century in response to world’s fairs in Chicago, St. Louis, and San Francisco. Boosters, Chambers of Commerce, architects, and planners worked to improve their cities, making them fit

¹⁸ *Handbook of Women’s Clubhouses* (New York: The Woman’s Journal, 1928); *Yearbook of Women’s Clubhouses: Second Annual* (New York: The Woman’s Journal, 1929).

¹⁹ The 1929 edition was called *Yearbook* instead of *Handbook*. Gertrude Foster Brown, “Fitting the Clubhouse to the Club,” in *Yearbook of Women’s Clubhouses: Second Annual* (New York: The Woman’s Journal, 1929), 3.

²⁰ Catharine Esther Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy: For the Use of Young Ladies at Home, and at School* (Boston: T.H. Webb, 1841); Helen Tierney, “Home Economics,” in *Women’s Studies Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (Westport CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999), 656.

²¹ *Ibid*; “About Our Members,” *Berkeley Women’s City Club Record*, March 1931.

²² The BWCC property occupies the middle of a block between Ellsworth and Dana Streets, with south frontage on Durant Avenue and north frontage on Bancroft Way. Their original plan was to raze the apartment buildings facing Bancroft and construct ground floor “business quarters” for women. This plan was scrapped in favor of keeping the apartment buildings as they were for tenant rental and instead providing space for a beauty salon and retail spaces inside the clubhouse itself. *Berkeley Women’s City Club Record*, November 1930, 14.

²³ “Young Berkeley City Club Has Prospered Since Birth,” *Oakland Tribune*, July 28, 1929.

to compete in a larger linked system of urban centers. Sensing an opportunity, the YMCA and organizations like it seized upon the prevalent ethos of local boosterism to portray their buildings not only as good investments, but also as necessary elements of civic life. Every town that wished to participate in the national corporate system required institutions that fused the commercial, civic, and public interests of the town.²⁴ In California cities and towns the tremendous population growth and development that had proceeded almost unabated since statehood in the mid nineteenth century provided particular potential for civic investment in material growth.

The connection between the Chamber of Commerce and the BWCC is evident from the very first edition of the club's newsletter. An article explains how, for years, the women of Berkeley have been apt to attend luncheon or club meetings in San Francisco or Oakland and stay on to visit nearby shops. Without the right facilities in Berkeley—clubs with appealing restaurants, conveniently located in or near shopping districts—the modern woman (what with her car, leisure time, and some disposable income) would continue to practice her “out-of-town habit.” Direct automobile ferry service between Berkeley and San Francisco, established in 1927, had made it ever easier for the Berkeley woman shopper to spend her days in San Francisco. Decades of public support for a trans-bay bridge crossing promised that the trend would only accelerate.²⁵ Their clubhouse, the BWCC argued, would incite women to stay and shop in Berkeley out of convenience. It would also stimulate local demand for other commodities:

More public and ceremonial luncheons and dinners mean greater demand for food supplies. Social activities demand dress suited to the occasion which, in turn, stimulates business in women's wear. Employees of such a building live somewhere within the city in homes rented or owned, and therefore the real estate man and property owner profit.²⁶

The Berkeley Chamber of Commerce even went so far as to call the BWCC “almost an auxiliary of our commerce body,” and promised to consult the club on “problems which require the best thought of our leaders in the community.”²⁷

Club concern over Berkeley women's out-of-town shopping habit recalls the Progressive Era connection between consumer issues and the social and political campaigns of women's clubs. Americans became consumers around the turn of the century. Instead of purchasing goods via face-to-face relationships with people from their community they bought factory-produced items from big, centrally organized, national companies. The emerging consumer identity was especially well established among middle- and upper class women, many of whom were active in the Progressive movement and concerned with growing corporate monopolies and the social

²⁴ Paula Lupkin, *Manhood Factories: YMCA Architecture and the Making of Modern Urban Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 97.

²⁵ The concept of a bridge spanning the San Francisco Bay had been under consideration since the mid nineteenth century, and support for a trans-bay crossing grew in the 1920s as a result of increased automobile use. In 1929 the California Legislature would establish the California Toll Bridge Authority with the responsibility of connecting San Francisco and Alameda County with a bridge.

²⁶ “An Asset to Business,” *Berkeley Women's City Club Bulletin*, August 1927.

²⁷ George Friend, President, Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, “Community Promotion and the Berkeley Women's City Club,” *Berkeley Women's City Club Bulletin*, July 1929.

problems associated with industrialization and “big business.”²⁸ A shop-at-home campaign was thus an extension of the Progressive Era rhetoric that pitted “the people” against “big business,” and a form of consumer activism.

For their part, the Chamber of Commerce had other reasons to take interest in the building activities of the BWCC. Women in Berkeley had long been involved in a range of civic affairs. In 1906 the city charter was amended to allow women to vote on school issues—only—and to serve on the school board. In 1907, the suffragist Political Equality Society affiliated with the Chamber of Commerce, explicitly endorsing the work of advancing and elevating the city. In 1923 a woman was elected to Berkeley’s first City Council. All of this was in addition to the many service, welfare, and “improvement” clubs through which women made municipal waves in Berkeley.

Regional urban rivalry provided another stimulus for the Chamber of Commerce to cut across gender lines and engage women’s clubs in the project of community development. In addition to being a form of late-Progressive Era consumer activism, anxiety over Berkeley women’s out-of-town shopping habit was indicative of a broader intra-bay competition, waged over population numbers, industrial production, and city building. Until the very end of the nineteenth century Oakland and Berkeley had posed little threat to San Francisco capitalists. But after the depression of 1893–1895 Oakland and the East Bay began a rapid ascent; Oakland was one of the three fastest-growing cities in the United States between 1900 and 1930, and development spilled over into the neighboring towns of San Leandro, Berkeley, Alameda, and Emeryville. San Francisco struggled to catch up. In 1906 the earthquake and fire doubled Alameda County’s population and industry overnight, and the newly formed cities of the East Bay competed amongst themselves for residents, land, and industrial manufactures. Oakland attempted to annex Berkeley at least twice, first in 1894 and again in 1908. In 1920 Berkeley itself annexed surrounding unattached territory, increasing taxable property and boosting its population substantially, and set to work making a “better Berkeley.”²⁹

Much of this work involved construction, and then reconstruction after a 1923 fire. Women’s clubs were taking part, acquiring sites for new structures or renovating existing mansions into clubhouses. “Clubwomen are building,” a 1928 newspaper article observed. “They are business women and by all indications they intend to play an important role in changing the skyline.”³⁰ The *San Francisco Chronicle* noted that East Bay communities were “becoming noted” for the quantity and elegance of their “feminine club structures.” Clubwomen were said to be “adding materially to the architectural development” of Berkeley and Oakland through their club buildings, and that “the people with money to invest are gladly using it to aid the women in their building projects.”³¹ This concept, that people outside of the club itself would invest in a

²⁸ Susan Strasser, “Customer to Consumer: The New Consumption in the Progressive Era,” *OAH Magazine of History* 13, no. 3 (1999), 11.

²⁹ Writers’ Program of the Work Projects Administration in Northern California, *Berkeley, the First Seventy-Five Years* (Berkeley: The Gillick Press, 1941), 113; Richard Walker, “Industry Builds out the City: Industrial Decentralization in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1850–1950,” *Manufacturing Suburbs: Building Work and Home on the Metropolitan Fringe*, 2004, 15.

³⁰ “Organized Women Accorded Place as Building Factor,” January 1, 1928, Scrapbook, Berkeley City Club Archive, Berkeley City Club.

³¹ “Women as City Builders,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 8, 1927.

club building project, illuminates a less measurable Chamber of Commerce project: generating in Berkeleyans a sense of commitment to their town.

Male municipal leaders repeatedly lauded the BWCC for their efforts in generating loyalty and cohesion in Berkeley. The City Manager published a piece in the club's *Bulletin* saying, "The leadership and follow-ship of Berkeley women will do whatever they attempt for the fine city which is ours."³² George Friend, president of the Chamber of Commerce was even more direct in his *Bulletin* article:

The Chamber of Commerce has followed with a great deal of interest the development of the Berkeley Women's City Club, recognizing in your splendid organization an instrument of great good in the future development of our community. . . . The location of our city so close to Oakland and San Francisco, and the many and varied interests of our citizenry has made it difficult to create in Berkeley that unity of thought and spirit which is so typical of California cities. . . . We feel that your organization will be a great factor in aiding us to create loyalty to Berkeley . . . which is so necessary to the commercial prosperity of a community.³³

Financial practicality and efficiency had motivated the club's formation, and its benefits were touted in utilitarian, empirical terms. The BWCC would induce local loyalty through the creation of their club and clubhouse, rounding out the city's offerings for women and thus keeping them "in town" to shop locally. They would also literally generate investment by selling "stock certificates" to the public to raise funds for building.³⁴ During the fundraising period BWCC leaders would classify these "stocks" as "in no sense a gift to the club." They should instead be "considered purely as an investment, an investment however, which gives . . . not only financial value but a sense of pride in having sponsored a project which will contribute so vitally to the welfare and civic advancement of the City of Berkeley." The club was framed as a community project, given that "every woman may become a member of it; every man may associate himself with it as a patron."³⁵ The BWCC building campaign allowed both men and women to stake a financial claim to Berkeley, a project that dovetailed perfectly with the Chamber of Commerce's mission.

The clubhouse would be a veritable community within a community, combining club, hotel, school, restaurant and home for Berkeley women—in particular, the "modern" Berkeley women to whom Purle Athearn referred in her 1925 conversation with Olga Beebe. One young clubwoman of the period put it perfectly when she said that her contemporaries were "not out to benefit society. . . . We're out for Mary's job and Luella's art and Barbara's independence and

³² John N. Edy, City Manager of Berkeley, "Berkeley Women's City Club," *Berkeley Women's City Club Bulletin*, May 1929.

³³ Friend, "Community Promotion and the Berkeley Women's City Club."

³⁴ These were actually mortgage-backed bonds, rhetorically repackaged to capitalize on the timely popularity of the stock market as an investment platform. Karen McNeill, "Women Who Build: Julia Morgan & Women's Institutions," *California History* 39, no. 3 (August 2012), 49; Fred G. Athearn, "Transcript of Address at the Silver Anniversary Dinner of the Berkeley Women's City Club," September 11, 1952, Berkeley City Club Archive, Berkeley City Club.

³⁵ "An Instrument of Progress," *Berkeley Women's City Club Bulletin*, September 1927.

the rest of our individual careers and desires.”³⁶ The contemporary clubwoman wanted an organization that offered her “the greatest aid toward a rich, full life,” and the success of a large and expensive club building depended on how well it met the “varied needs” of this modern woman.³⁷

Part II: Julia Morgan

In April 1928 an ad for a travel planning service appeared in the *Bulletin*:

The Berkeley Women’s City Club is planning a beautiful new club house. Do you leave the work of planning and execution of this splendid project to anyone who may happen to have an idea upon the subject? No! You consult an architect; the best you can find. So it should be when you travel.³⁸

Consistent with the organization’s emphatic endorsement of all things business and professional, the BWCC wished to select an architect with a demonstrated record of keen, practical expertise. They had acquired their desired building site in January 1928 for \$92,600, and had plans to collect rent from the site’s existing properties until they were razed for the new building. The Board of Directors considered the names of architects whose applications were on file and voted unanimously in February 1928 that a combination would work best: namely, Bernard Maybeck paired with Julia Morgan.³⁹

The pairing was not random. The architects had collaborated before, and very recently: in 1927 Morgan designed three pools for the Hearst Women’s Gymnasium, Maybeck’s reinforced concrete neoclassical building on the UC Berkeley campus. Morgan had been a student at UC Berkeley from 1890 to 1894—the first female student in the University’s College of Engineering, at the time the only option for students who wished to study architecture—where Maybeck was an instructor. After graduation she worked for Maybeck as a draftsman before attending his alma mater, the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where she was the first woman to be admitted to its Architectural Section and the first female graduate. A native of the San Francisco Bay Area, Morgan returned in 1902 and became the first woman to be granted an architect’s license in California. After working briefly for John Galen Howard she opened her own architecture office in San Francisco in 1904.⁴⁰ Widely known as the nation’s most prolific woman architect, Morgan completed over seven hundred design projects between 1894 and 1951. She was an icon of the New Woman: a highly educated, independent woman successfully pursuing a traditionally male career.

³⁶ Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman*, 175.

³⁷ Gertrude Foster Brown, “Fitting the Clubhouse to the Club,” in *Yearbook of Women’s Clubhouses: Second Annual* (The Woman’s Journal, 1929), 15.

³⁸ *Berkeley Women’s City Club Bulletin*, April 1928.

³⁹ *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 1, February 1928.

⁴⁰ John Galen Howard famously bragged in 1902 that he paid one of his most talented employees “almost nothing” since that employee was a woman. Morgan set up her own firm quickly after and made a point to pay fair wages to her own staff. Mark A Wilson, *Julia Morgan: Architect of Beauty* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2007), 7.

From Maybeck and from her Parisian training Morgan inherited a sense of comfort working in a wide variety of modes: the Arts and Crafts, Mission Revival, Gothic, and Beaux-Arts among them. Also like Maybeck, for Morgan a building plan was primarily an exercise in space relationships. Neither shied from ornamentation (though, in a difference attributed to their respective dispositions, Morgan's interiors were usually considered less whimsical than Maybeck's), and both used their education in classical architectural styles to inform their design rather than serving as a direct, derivative source of motif.⁴¹

Morgan in particular was an obvious choice as the architect for a women's club. By the time her name was floated in a BWCC Board meeting in 1928 she had already completed dozens of building projects for women's organizations, including clubhouses; social, academic, residential, and recreational buildings for college women and unmarried working women; primary schools and orphanages; hospitals, sanitariums, and nursing residences.⁴² Since her days as an undergraduate at UC Berkeley, Morgan had been a part of the California women's network. With her collegiate cohort she established a chapter of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), organized several sports teams, and chartered the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority.⁴³ The connections she made through the women's network yielded numerous professional opportunities. Morgan met Phoebe Apperson Hearst, chief patron of UC Berkeley, through whom she received decades' worth of work for Phoebe's son, the newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst.⁴⁴ Phoebe Hearst also referred Morgan for work with the YWCA, resulting in commissions for more than thirty buildings in at least seventeen locations for one of the nation's largest and most influential women's organizations. Morgan herself was a member of San Francisco's Century Club. Though Morgan's career undoubtedly benefited from the women's network she did not actively emphasize this female client base. On the contrary, she labored to compose the image of a non-gendered professional, and provided only guarded support for other female architects. Morgan studiously maintained a male/female ratio in her office since she observed that male clients balked at working with a firm dominated by women.⁴⁵

By 1928 both Maybeck and Morgan's projects could be seen all over Berkeley. Within just one mile of 2315 Durant Avenue were scores of Maybeck- and Morgan-designed buildings: by Morgan, two sorority houses, four structures on the UC Berkeley campus, a church, a school,

⁴¹ Though the BWCC clubhouse is quite whimsical by Morgan's standards, Maybeck was known for his eccentricity and his consistently playful and unconventional creations. Elisabeth Kendall Thompson, "The Early Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 10, no. 3 (1951), 20.

⁴² Boutelle estimates the number of projects Morgan designed for women at "approximately half" of her 700 total, but other scholars seem to have settled on approximately 100. Sara Holmes Boutelle, "Women's Networks: Julia Morgan and Her Clients," *Heresies Magazine*, 1981, 91; Inge S Horton, *Early Women Architects of the San Francisco Bay Area: The Lives and Work of Fifty Professionals, 1890-1951* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., Publishers, 2010), 314.

⁴³ Berkeley's first sorority, Kappa Alpha Theta valued academic performance over social affairs but did host social events, including teas with professors' wives and influential society women. Morgan lived at the chapter house instead of her parents' home, "literally loosening her ties to the domestic sphere and allowing her to engage in academic life without distraction." Karen McNeill, "Julia Morgan: Gender, Architecture, and Professional Style," *Pacific Historical Review* 76, no. 2 (2007), 233.

⁴⁴ Morgan probably met Phoebe Hearst during her days at the Ecole, as Hearst provided stipends for all California students studying there. Boutelle, "Women's Networks," 92.

⁴⁵ Boutelle *Julia Morgan, Architect*, 86.

and dozens of private homes and apartment buildings.⁴⁶ Very near to the BWCC clubhouse were at least two private homes, a church, a club, and two buildings on campus designed by Maybeck.⁴⁷

Morgan agreed to approach Maybeck on behalf of the BWCC and present him with the opportunity to collaborate on plans for the club. In March 1928 Morgan found him “unwilling to undertake such work on account of other business in hand.” Perhaps affronted by the very suggestion that she collaborate with another architect, so late in her career and with such an impressive track record, Morgan reported that she was also “very busy at the present time and not eager for the commission.”⁴⁸ Undaunted, the club put forth new suggestions at their next meeting. They settled on another collaboration, between the architecture firms Allison & Allison (of the Friday Morning Club in Los Angeles and many schools in southern California) and Morrow & Morrow (of the Women’s Athletic Club in Oakland and other Bay Area schools, houses, banks, theaters, and hotels).⁴⁹ The two firms agreed, and drew up preliminary plans in April 1928.

The Morrow & Morrow/Allison & Allison collaboration proposed a building which, as was typical of other clubhouses, drew heavily from established typologies. Women’s clubhouses in California had long taken iconographic cues from large houses, around the turn of the century, and later, from public buildings—libraries, schools, and railroad stations, among them. This modified Renaissance *palazzo* iteration of the BWCC building (see figure 3.2) suggests an urban hotel, apartment house, or an office building, with a pronounced air of tallness and institutionality. A two-story entrance block attempts in vain to subdue the looming six-story block set back behind it. Sash windows stretch twelve across the upper stories, telling a clear story of the significant population within.

The following month, complications arose with the contracted architects and negotiations were terminated. In May 1928 the Board voted unanimously on Julia Morgan, again, as their first choice. In June Morgan agreed to move forward as the sole architect for the project. The terms of her contract stipulated that her services would cost the club six percent of their total building budget—the same amount that Morrow & Morrow and Allison & Allison would have split between their firms.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Morgan’s nearby projects include: Hearst Greek Theatre, 1903 (primary designer); Hearst Mining Building, 1907 (decorative elements); Girton Hall (the Women’s Social Hall), 1911; Hearst Gym, 1925 (contributor); St. John’s Presbyterian Church, 1908; Berkeley Baptist Divinity School, 1918; Delta Zeta Sorority House, 1923; Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority House, 1908. List compiled from: Boutelle, *Julia Morgan, Architect*; McNeill, “Women Who Build;” Ginger Wadsworth, *Julia Morgan, Architect of Dreams* (Minneapolis: Lerner, 1990); and the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association.

⁴⁷ Maybeck’s nearby projects include: the Boke House, 1902; the Kennedy-Nixon house, 1914; the Faculty Club, 1902; the Hillside Club, 1906; First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1910; Hearst Gym, 1925. List compiled from: Sally Byrne Woodbridge, *Bernard Maybeck: Visionary Architect* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1992); Mark A Wilson, Bernard R Maybeck, and Joel Puliatti, *Bernard Maybeck: Architect of Elegance* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2011).

⁴⁸ *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 1, March 1928.

⁴⁹ Husband and wife Gertrude Comfort Morrow and Irving Morrow joined their independent offices in 1925. Irving was later and best known as the architect of the Golden Gate Bridge, including designing the towers and lighting and selecting the color.

⁵⁰ *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 1, March – June 1928; March 1929.

Immediately and repeatedly the BWCC touted their choice and the supreme logic of choosing a female architect. “One of the chief factors which determined the unanimous selection of Miss Morgan,” they wrote, “was that it seemed eminently fitting that a woman’s building should be designed by a woman.”⁵¹ Unaware of or unconcerned by Morgan’s consistent practice of deemphasizing her gender, the club seized on the symbolic power of the consummate New Woman—an unmarried, empowered, talented professional—designing for an institution that was being threatened by the very existence of the New Woman. For example, just across the Bay in San Francisco the Woman’s Athletic Club was facing extreme difficulty retaining members, as the junior membership proved uninterested in the homosocial club world of their mothers. The junior generation, with “new permission to bicycle and dance, attend coed universities, and embark on a wide range of careers,” preferred to assimilate with men’s institutions.⁵² Though Morgan was older than the typical New Woman coming of age in the 1920s, the BWCC recognized that the literal and symbolic association with Morgan would signify the continued relevance of women’s clubs, even to those desiring professional equality with men. In their first month in the new clubhouse the Board presented Morgan with a lifetime membership in the club.⁵³ Her status as a club member was mentioned often in club publications and club-vetted media coverage.

For eight months Morgan worked with the Board on successive drafts. An early version (see figure 3.3), submitted by Morgan in September 1928, was for a \$375,000 building with seventy-six bedrooms. After conferring with “leading business, professional and financial experts” the Board requested plans for a less expensive building with fewer bedrooms at a cost of \$275,000 (see figure 3.4).⁵⁴ Local newspapers repeatedly published sketches of the club, elevating the project’s prestige and providing a boon to the BWCC’s membership campaign. After a period of public comment during which drawings were made available to the BWCC general membership, the Board voted unanimously to accept final drawings in February 1929.⁵⁵ Financing for the \$500,000 project—the total cost including grounds, building, and furnishings—was raised through the sale of memberships and through the sale of both mortgage-backed and debenture bonds to members and friends of the club. Several membership campaigns had been launched in the two and a half years since the club’s formation, and on opening day in November 1930, the club roster boasted four thousand and five hundred members.⁵⁶

Part III: The Clubhouse

Form and Materials

⁵¹ *Berkeley Women’s City Club Bulletin*, July 1928.

⁵² Karen J. Blair, “The Limits of Sisterhood: The Woman’s Building in Seattle, 1908-1921,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 8, no. 1 (1984), 45.

⁵³ *Berkeley Women’s City Club Record*, December 1930.

⁵⁴ *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 1, June 1928 – February 1929.

⁵⁵ Early versions of the plans included two extra floors of guest rooms over the auditorium; and a tennis court with terraces and a pool, later scrapped in favor of keeping extant the rental properties facing Bancroft. *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Berkeley Women’s City Club Record*, November 1930.

Contractors broke ground in December 1929 and construction took only eleven months. Morgan was not just the designer; she also handled technical supervision during construction, for which she hired a team of contractors and a structural engineer.⁵⁷ Morgan personally oversaw every aspect of design and construction, including gardens and landscaping, but also light fixtures, linens, and restaurant china.⁵⁸ Highly skilled craftsmen were needed for the ornamental details of the building—carved figurines and mantelpieces, della Robbia roundels, and bas-relief panels (see figures 3.5 and 3.6).⁵⁹ Some accounts contend that in order to create these Morgan hired a number of artisans who were working with her simultaneously at William Randolph Hearst’s San Simeon.⁶⁰ Others report that the della Robbia roundels were purchased by Morgan herself on trips to Florence.⁶¹ For the presence of these craftsmen from San Simeon and for the visual similarity to Hearst Castle, some dubbed the BWCC clubhouse the “little castle.”⁶²

The clubhouse is constructed entirely of reinforced concrete, with cast concrete applied ornamentally. Morgan had studied reinforced concrete construction technology in the mandatory construction course at the École, and was supervising architect of the reinforced concrete Greek Theater on the UC campus while working for John Galen Howard in 1903. The pervasive use of concrete became one of the major themes of Morgan’s career, providing opportunities to create dramatic interior spaces and ornate architectural details at a significant cost savings over traditional construction practices. Walter Steilberg, whom Morgan hired as structural engineer, would later call the clubhouse the most complicated engineering problem of his long career, “the most complicated concrete structure . . . in this part of the country,” only realizable because of Morgan’s input.⁶³

⁵⁷ Morgan hired King Parker of K.E. Parker Co., Builders as contractor, Herbert Washburn as superintendent, and the architect Walter Steilberg, a concrete expert, as structural engineer.

⁵⁸ In a site specifications document Morgan enumerates that “sufficient top soil shall be stacked temporarily where directed to fill planting beds as shown to a depth of two feet.” “Specifications for Club Building for the Berkeley Women’s City Club,” n.d., Julia Morgan Collection, Environmental Design Archives, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, California.

⁵⁹ An English Arts and Crafts Movement style of pottery inspired by the enameled terra cotta creations of Luca and Andrea della Robbia made in Florence during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

⁶⁰ Morgan’s project for William Randolph Hearst that included a castle and guest houses on the Hearst family ranch at San Simeon was a twenty year project, a challenging and unprecedented task that required incorporating architectural sections of castles and monasteries which Hearst had purchased in Europe. A 2013 Historic American Landscapes Survey notes that “To the project she brought numerous highly skilled craftsmen who were working with her simultaneously at William Randolph Hearst’s San Simeon.” Christine Pattillo, Sharon Entwistle, and Daisy Marshall, “Berkeley Women’s City Club,” Historic American Landscapes Survey, (August 2013), 2.

⁶¹ In her master’s thesis on Julia Morgan Johanna M. Kahn cites Morgan’s trips to Florence and claims that she returned with della Robbia roundels for the BWCC clubhouse. She also notes “Some people doubt the authenticity of these artifacts.” Johanna M. Kahn, “A Twentieth-Century Revival: The Italian Renaissance and the Architecture of Julia Morgan” (Master of Architectural History, University of Virginia, 2010), 54.

⁶² Mesic was an advisory editor for *The Architect and Engineer*, in addition to working a model maker and draftsperson for Julia Morgan. She did not use the term “little castle,” but, in reference to the decorative work at the clubhouse, remarked that it was a continuation of and showed “the subtle influence, one might say, of the fine work Miss Morgan has done at La Cuesta Encantada.” Julian C. Mesic, “Berkeley Women’s City Club,” *The Architect and Engineer* 105, no. 1 (April 1931), 31.

⁶³ The complications arose from the need to support the weight of the gymnasium atop the arches of the swimming pool and “other things like that all through the building.” Suzanne B. Reiss, ed., *Julia Morgan Architectural History Project Interviews*, vol. 1, Bancroft Library Regional Oral History Office, University of California, 1976, 111-112.

The architect's use of reinforced concrete was not solely practical, however. Though concrete was certainly favored for being inexpensive, sanitary, seismic and fire resistant, for Morgan the material also allowed a certain directness of expression appropriate for institutional buildings. In a 1927 letter reflecting on her recently completed Honolulu YWCA Morgan called the building "unusually frank and sincere architecturally. There is practically no false work or furring in the building—the girders, beams, great arches, openings of all types, being the structural concrete, sometimes plastered upon, sometimes not, always the form used expressing (or trying to) a given more or less decorative quality."⁶⁴ The no-nonsense expressiveness of concrete, combined with its affordability, made it the ideal material for a YWCA building providing flexible, frank, low-cost housing for working women. In Morgan's own words, the YWCA's function and its expressed form are directly connected.

Morgan's female institutional building projects were often described (both by her and in the press) by their *caractère*, a concept from architectural theory that emphasizes directly associative and emotional effect. Per the doctrine of *caractère* the expression of a building is determined by the characteristics of its occupant or by its function.⁶⁵ A review of the YWCA building interior Morgan designed for the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition called it "airy, cheery, welcoming" and a safe haven for vulnerable girls. Her residential hotels for women were lauded for the "feeling[s] of rest and beauty" they conferred.⁶⁶ For the BWCC Morgan designed a clubhouse whose indoor-outdoor, lushly landscaped, architecturally imaginative *caractère* expresses the club's modern, professional, informed approach to organized womanhood in Berkeley.

The clubhouse is a castle-like six-story structure and one of the largest structures Morgan designed (see figure 3.7).⁶⁷ The landscaping is understated in deference to the façade, with a narrow lawn and low foundation plantings to either side of the formal entrance. A central rectangular block—the residential tower—tops a two-story base that forms flanking east and west wings.⁶⁸ Despite being the tallest building on the block, the clubhouse's institutionality is less pronounced than in the version put forth by Morrow & Morrow/Allison & Allison. Morgan achieved this effect through carefully arranged massing and via a series of transitions that occur upon approach and within the clubhouse.

Open space around three sides of the building (see figures 3.8 and 3.9), including an open parking lot directly to the east, means that the clubhouse can be seen in its entirety from multiple vantage points. However in Morgan's treatment the building is not a soaring, single

⁶⁴ Julia Morgan, "Letter to Nancy Woods Walburn, YWCA Director of Newspaper and Magazine Publicity," September 27, 1927, YMCA and YWCA Records, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University.

⁶⁵ French architect Germain Boffrand (1667-1754) introduced to architectural theory the concept of *caractère* in the 1730s; Jacques-François Blondel (1705-1774) later took up and elaborated Boffrand's theory of *caractère*. The concept was explored and upheld throughout the eighteenth century. Hanno-Walter Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory: from Vitruvius to the Present* (London; New York: Zwemmer; Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 145, 149-150.

⁶⁶ Favro, "Sincere and Good," 123; Boutelle, *Julia Morgan, Architect*, 110.

⁶⁷ The BWCC building footprint is 119 feet across by 155 feet deep and 75 feet high for a total of 46,105 square feet. Only the Main Building at Hearst Castle is larger. Wilson, *Julia Morgan: Architect of Beauty*, 37.

⁶⁸ There are two other ancillary towers: one for the elevator shaft that is attached to the central block and a "lookout tower" that doubles as a fire escape which stands apart at the rear of the building.

mass but instead a complex of blocks of varying scales. The blocks have different surface treatments to reflect their compartmentalized functions. Even within a single block, windows of varied shapes and sizes indicate the respective function and formality of the space within. Paired arches with broad bands of cast concrete decoration and leaded panes define the principal floors, as opposed to the simple rectangular openings with plain glazing in steel casement sash on residential floors. Like Morrow & Morrow/Allison & Allison, Morgan also designed a two-story street level distinct base, recognizing that a pedestrian would only experience the lower stories of the building. But the large footprint of the base, which accommodates all the public rooms of the building, is indiscernible from the street. Thus the viewer is not confronted by the bulk of the structure all at once but instead experiences only the base at street level and the tripartite tower from afar. Morgan's artful adjustment of form into compartmented spaces reflects her grasp of a key concept of Beaux-Arts theory: balance and harmony achieved through an emphasis on mass.

The overall façade is asymmetrical, with a main entrance slightly off center. The cover of the April 1931 edition of *The Architect and Engineer* features a drawing of the striking, reinforced concrete Romanesque entrance arch—highlighting Morgan's understanding of the plasticity of concrete—with a sole person in the doorway, as if one of the residents is answering the door for a guest (see figure 3.10). Visitors to the clubhouse change levels several times upon approach, transitioning gradually from scale to legibility. Three stairs rise from the sidewalk level into the building where one pauses in the vestibule, a low intermediate zone that gives a sense of shelter. The vestibule also allows employees in the office above a chance to visually vet visitors from a screened vantage point (see figure 3.11). The 1931 *Architect and Engineer* article explains, “Adjoining the main entrance is screened the business of operation. Opportunity is given to observe all activities in foyer, on stairs, and at elevators, welcome guests and serve members.”⁶⁹ Another short flight of stairs into the main lobby and one emerges into a legible, manageable space, where, again in true Beaux-Arts fashion, the hierarchy of spaces is immediately apparent. A primary axis that leads to club rooms, courtyards and other public spaces stretches ahead; a secondary axis leading to a men's lounge and the spectator's gallery over the pool is off to the right; a tertiary axis for another club room is to the left (see figures 3.12 and 3.13). The well-lighted mezzanine of the foyer conveys a sense of openness, hospitality, and programmatic coherence.

Morgan's skilled management of transitions on the first two public floors not only obscures the overall size of the building, but also allows for the simultaneous accommodation of multiple clubs and functions. There are two clubrooms on the first floor, in different wings but both with the benefit of natural light from the west courtyard. On the second floor several main spaces—lounges, dining rooms, clubrooms, and the auditorium—are separated by corridors, corners, and service spaces, thus separating distinct activities. This is unlike the public floors of a hotel where multiple auditoria or ballrooms might be directly next door to each other.⁷⁰ Circulation space is ample in the large building but the overall plan is circuitous, with many

⁶⁹ Mesic, 27.

⁷⁰ Hotel expert Paul Groth says that often in hotels, “Phoenix Ballroom one is next to Phoenix Ballroom two.” Paul Groth (Professor Emeritus of Architecture and Geography, University of California, Berkeley), in discussion with the author, March 2016.

turns, corners, and vestibules that make for unexpected areas of privacy, and create the feeling of being in a nearly domestically scaled building.

Morgan paid careful attention to the relationship between circulatory space and privacy at other women's residential institutions as well. At the ca. 1929 Riverside YWCA she designed a light-filled hallway, prompting residents to leave their doors open. This in turn stimulated socializing, and transformed the hall into an active communal space. In large, open dining halls Morgan generally prescribed small independent tables rather than long institutional rows as a means to prompt small group interaction.⁷¹ At Morgan's The Residence (1929-1930, San Francisco), tenants have private dining rooms and kitchenettes on the upper floors. And her ground floor plan for the Honolulu residential YWCA resembles the BWCC's quite closely: residents enter the lobby on axis with a central circulatory space, which is flanked by an open courtyard (see figure 3.14). Multiple club and sitting rooms border the Honolulu YWCA lobby, offering the same multiple small spaces the BWCC so artfully incorporates.

The concept of circulation is a guiding principle in the design of the BWCC clubhouse, achieved most directly through the medieval-style cloister immediately visible upon entry. Morgan was known for integrating landscape and garden design into her site plans. In keeping with her reputation, every public room in the building opens onto or offers views of a garden area. The clubhouse plan centers around two courtyards, wells of light and greenery framed by Romanesque arches and columns (see figure 3.15 and Figure 3.16). Lattice-patterned leaded glass windows and doors open onto the courts and bring in light and air, including into the second-floor areas that overlook the courtyards below (see figure 3.17).

From the beginning club members had envisioned open-air patios, statuary, fountains, and terraces; a Garden Committee was formed in 1927 even before a building site was selected. In all of Morgan's drawings for the club a minimum of six areas are designated for garden space (see figure 3.18). She made gifts of plants to the club, and selected and supervised early shrubbery planting.⁷² Morgan hints at the nature and garden living contained within on the Durant Avenue front, taking the doctrine of *caractère* to almost a poster-like treatment. Stylized rosettes of cast concrete adorn the entrance arch; there is another course of rosettes above, and three more in spandrels on the second floor balcony (see figure 3.19). Other concrete flowers of various sizes and forms appear above ground-floor windows, in tracery openings of the façade, and throughout the interior.

Style and Modernity

Like most women's clubs, the BWCC leans on established typologies and conventional forms. However, the range of building types the clubhouse evokes are far more varied and eclectic than was typical. With its Romanesque and Gothic elements Morgan alludes to the historic architecture of powerful religious, political, and financial institutions—castles, cathedrals, cloisters, and skyscrapers. There are also hints of the nineteenth-century Collegiate

⁷¹ Diane Favro, "Sincere and Good: The Architectural Practice of Julia Morgan," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 9, no. 2 (1992), 123.

⁷² Berkeley Chamber of Commerce and Berkeley Daily Gazette, eds., *The Book of Berkeley* (Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, Berkeley Daily Gazette, 1931), 22; Pattillo, Entwistle, and Marshall, "Berkeley Women's City Club."

Gothic aesthetic, used in dining halls, libraries, dormitories, and chapels at schools such as Bryn Mawr and Vassar. Collegiate Gothic also appears nearby at UC Berkeley in John Galen Howard's Stephens Hall, a concrete structure with a round-arched, rib-vaulted entrance passageway, parapets originally perforated with quatrefoils, a cloistered terrace, and wrought-iron candelabras (see figure 3.20).⁷³ Yet in the architect's execution, precedent serves only as a reference point, not a source for replication.

Per her Beaux-Arts training, Morgan characteristically designed from the inside out. Movement through and within the building largely dictated design. In their original 1927 prospectus on the clubhouse the Board stated simply, "The club building will be carefully planned. Its architecture will be of a type expressive of the spirit of Berkeley."⁷⁴ The building's cloistered form allows for arches, which allow for massive French doors and windows that flood the building with daylight. Minus the medieval stylistic features, the club's indoor-outdoor, lushly landscaped form of architecture is quintessentially Californian, and thus modern in its own way.

Morgan had a history of creative revivalism, often referred to as eclecticism. She was deft with a vast range of styles and materials and often in a single building mixed specific historical motifs with regional characteristics. She referenced vernacular, Medieval, or Spanish Mission building types as needed. Her diversity in design is usually attributed to her willingness to listen to clients' desires as well as her flexibility as an architect. According to Richard Longstreth, for Morgan the "use of history provided a system whereby order and continuity in design could be maintained, without curtailing the creativity or contemporary relevance of her work. There was an internationalism in this attitude, clearly reiterated in her buildings." However, the "diversity of Morgan's designs does not mark her as simply a freewheeling purveyor of fashion."⁷⁵ Morgan's aesthetic and material versatility translated into referential complexity and richness in her work, but she was never derivative. At the BWCC building in particular her free, imaginative use of Romanesque and Gothic elements becomes a sort of freestyle, modern medievalism.

Drawing on Romanesque aesthetic elements, the clubhouse has clear, heavy massing, and thick supporting walls. The main tower is also thick, defined by Romanesque clasping corner buttresses, and with corbelled arches at the top floor. The attached elevator tower and detached "lookout tower" are both ringed by quatrefoils at the top. The main entrance, a wrought iron, Romanesque, recessed, multifoil arched portal is flanked by fluted pilasters and columns and elaborately carved with Romanesque leaf motifs, tendrils, rosettes, shields, and flowered capitals (see figure 3.19). Round arches paired with decidedly Gothic diamond-paned leaded windows appear at the entrance and all over the clubhouse (see figure 3.21). Other Gothic decoration on the lower levels of the exterior (relief sculpture, tracery) provide external form to the great Gothic public spaces of the interior: the foyer, cloister, dining hall, library, and auditorium.

⁷³ Howard's Stephens Hall, formerly the Stephens Memorial Union, was completed in 1923. The parapets were rebuilt as solid walls during structural alterations by George Kelham in 1936. Harvey Zane Helfand, *University of California, Berkeley: An Architectural Tour and Photographs* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 81-82.

⁷⁴ *Berkeley Women's City Club Bulletin*, August 1927.

⁷⁵ Richard W. Longstreth, *Julia Morgan, Architect*, Berkeley Architectural Heritage Publication Series 1 (Berkeley: Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, 1986), 13-14, 19.

Morgan's interchangeable, free use of architectural modes continues inside, where Gothic groined vaulting supports the lobby ceilings; though not strictly Gothic, as the transverse arches are paired with Romanesque rounded arches. From the ceilings hang ornate wrought-iron chandeliers with metal strap work reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts mode (see figure 3.22). A grand staircase is at the far end of the lobby, flanked by carved shield-bearing lions resembling those found at San Simeon, and railings pierced with quatrefoil tracery. The medieval-style cloister (east courtyard) originally had an open loggia at its north end (see figure 3.23); the area was enclosed in 1935, creating a flexible indoor-outdoor space (see figure 3.24).⁷⁶ On the second floor, the main dining room (see figure 3.25) evokes a medieval banqueting hall. Concrete ceiling beams are heavily textured and painted to resemble wood, and a grand fireplace features a Gothic octofoil pattern (see figure 3.26). The library (also known as the Members' Lounge) also features a painted concrete ceiling and immense fireplace and doors leading to a variable-use terrace with a view over the cloister (see figure 3.27). The auditorium (or Ballroom) has space to seat three hundred for weddings, conferences, or other rental events (see figure 3.28).⁷⁷ Behind the auditorium is the Venetian Room with coffered ceiling, now a bar. In the coffers are hand-painted heraldic designs that reference the china Morgan designed especially for the club restaurant (see figures 3.29 and Figure 3.30).⁷⁸ In evidence of Morgan's fastidious attention to detail, the blue of the china is repeated in the blue in the chairs in the main dining room, which is also carried out to the balcony with blue flowerpots.⁷⁹ All public spaces in the building are richly furnished with Asian antiques, and the aforementioned carved figurines, della Robbias, mirrors, sculptures, bas-relief panels, and prints, many of which are rumored to have been selected or commissioned by Morgan herself.⁸⁰ The architect's free use of style for pure visual pleasure, seemingly without associated social critique, represents a form of flexibility and modernity appropriate for a building meant to project a new approach to organized womanhood in Berkeley. Flexibility can be found in program as well. Public clubhouse rooms—private dining and drawing rooms, lounges, a ballroom/auditorium, and several kitchens—allow for variable use, for variable users.

Moreover, Morgan's use of structure as a means of architectural expression is modern. The sculptural quality of concrete makes structural forces visible, most noticeably in the vaulted ceiling of the lobby. The columns and ornamental capitals of the first floor, the grand staircase

⁷⁶ Pattillo, Entwistle, and Marshall, "Berkeley Women's City Club," 4-5.

⁷⁷ All the floors in the public rooms of the club consist of concrete covered with ceramic brick tiles, with two exceptions: the wooden floors of the auditorium and Venetian Room, and tiled bathrooms.

⁷⁸ Member accounts on the degree to which Morgan designed the china differ. Mesic's 1931 article on the club states that "Corroboration is found in the architect's maturing of designs for and on dishes," while an undated document in the UCLA Department of Special Collections says "The china was made in Germany especially for the club. Vignettes taken from an old Spanish shawl supplied the unique pattern." Mesic, 27; Mira Maclay, "The Berkeley Women's City Club," *California Arts and Architecture*, n.d., Harriet Rochlin Collection of Material about Women Architects in the United States, Department of Special Collections, University Research Library, UCLA.

⁷⁹ *Berkeley Women's City Club Record*, November 1930.

⁸⁰ Accounts on the degrees of Morgan's involvement choosing furnishings vary. The March 1957 edition of the *Berkeley Women's City Club Record* reports that Morgan "selected some of our finest furniture and works of art." However, the November 1930 *Record* makes less of Morgan's involvement: "The furnishing committee knew that [Morgan's] concept of the building was a unit. They have tried to catch her vision and make the furnishings a compliment to the architecture." Hicks, "Furnishing the Clubhouse," 34.

tying together the two public levels, along with ornamental arches and beamed ceilings elsewhere are all also clearly constructed of concrete. She goes even further by exposing structure itself in the arches over the pool (see figure 3.31). There rebar doubles as decoration, set inside multifoil tracery, literally exposing the modern technology that made the building possible.

In her biography of Morgan, Sara Holmes Boutelle calls the BWCC pool a celebration of the modern freedom of young women to learn to swim, rather than merely ‘bathe,’ for recreation and health.⁸¹ The BWCC was proud of their swimming pool and publicized their efforts to “waterproof” members, offering a special swimming membership when no other facility in Berkeley was open year-round to women for lessons or for recreational swimming. Morgan had exceptional prior experience designing pools for large urban structures. YWCA buildings, of which Morgan built dozens, included swimming pools in most of their buildings, as did the recently completed Hearst Women’s Gymnasium.⁸² Her most famous pools were built at Hearst’s San Simeon, the Neptune Pool and the (indoor) Roman Pool (see figure 3.32), under construction from 1924-1936 and 1927-1934, respectively. Nicknamed “the plunge,” the BWCC pool measures twenty-five feet by seventy-five feet under great spanning Tudor arches. Tall leaded windows naturally light the room. On the exterior, the pool occupies the entire stretch of the building’s east wing—a measure of its significance. Turquoise tiling in the pool itself makes the water appear azure; the tiles also intentionally echo a color found in flowerpots elsewhere in the clubhouse.⁸³ Ceramic tiles arranged in a zigzag pattern around the room are the only Art Deco-derived design element of the entire club. With the vivid turquoise color of the room, the gigantic arches, rows of tripartite windows, and playful imagery like seahorses in the column capitals (see figure 3.33) the space exudes a fairytale quality.⁸⁴

As on the exterior, the theme of nature—part of the building’s *caractère*—is given a poster-like treatment on the interior. Also, in a nod to the gendered character of the space, images of women are featured throughout the clubhouse. Botanical illustrations, prints of mockingbirds and robins, and Chinese scroll paintings of flowers and cranes hang in the entrance hall, member’s lounge, and restaurant. Chairs, tables, and consoles are carved with baskets of flowers and birds. Figurines of the Virgin Mary, reclining sculptures, and bas-relief panels of women appear in niches, on walls, fireplaces, and as figural brackets (see figure 3.34).⁸⁵ The two motifs literally combine in the cast concrete fireplace surround in the Drawing room, where a woman’s face appears topped with a ginkgo leaf and above a bee-like body.

⁸¹ Boutelle, *Julia Morgan, Architect*, 113.

⁸² Morgan’s Long Beach YWCA pool (1923) is especially reminiscent of the BWCC’s, with reinforced concrete arches in a decorative open design.

⁸³ *Berkeley Women’s City Club Record*, November 1930.

⁸⁴ Originally a skylight opened to decks above for sunbathing and table tennis; it is now roofed over for an open-air terrace. Ornamental lanterns designed by Morgan made evening swimming possible. Boutelle, *Julia Morgan, Architect*, 124-5.

⁸⁵ “Youth,” the life-sized white marble bas-relief of three young girls with bobbed hair dancing is located in the west courtyard and visible from several public rooms. Clara Huntington Perkins (club member, railroad heiress, and owner of a Morgan-designed home in Los Gatos) created the sculpture; it was a gift to the club given on opening day by Morton Wallace in memory of his mother who was a pioneer club member. It was unveiled in November 1931 and installed on the west wall of the court per Morgan’s specifications. Mesic, “Berkeley Women’s City Club”; “Clara Huntington Bas Relief Unveiled at Berkeley City Club,” *Oakland Tribune*, November 21, 1931.

Beyond enriching the architectural experience with naturalistic and allegoric reference, the images of women also recall the architect's expressive use of structure. By making structural forces visible, Morgan references a woman's bodily experience moving through the building. Prominent, straightforward images of women and women's bodies circumvent the metaphor of structure and create psychic identification even more directly, marking the space as feminine in stone and concrete. The thousands of clubwomen who traversed the BWCC building quite literally saw themselves in it.

Clubhouse Use

Club-as-School

After six months in the new clubhouse BWCC president Janet Hartzell reported that the club was running a \$175,000-a-year business. "To come from two small rooms in the Hotel Whitecotton to a large and diversified building, combining club, hotel, restaurant and home, and to have it going to capacity in all departments almost over night," she stressed, was "no mean task."⁸⁶ Expertise and professional management were founding principles of the club, expressed in the makeup of their Board, their staff, operating policies, and their activity offerings.

Whenever possible the BWCC hired employees with professional qualifications. In 1933 and 1934 two successive home economics-trained women worked as clubhouse manager, one of whom had just published a book entitled *House Management Problems of Fraternities and Sororities*.⁸⁷ The BWCC even touted the professional aspirations of their restaurant employees:

In the dining room all but one of our attractive girls are attending college. One of them is working for a medical degree. One is taking a course in journalism, one who was a Greek major in college is now attending a Secretarial school. One is about to receive a teacher's certificate. One of the colored men is within a year of his doctorate in astronomy. . . . Another has received outstanding recognition in Art at the University. . . . We may well be proud of our employees, people of education and ambition in both major and minor positions.⁸⁸

During the early planning stages the Board had conducted a study on the revenue potential of their dining room and found that club dining rooms were often "in the red." Accordingly, they planned for multiple additional income streams. Member dues (\$10 per year for regular members), and rent collected from the Bancroft Way residential properties, the in-club beauty

⁸⁶ Janet M. Hartzell, "President's Report: Read at the Fourth Annual Meeting, May 5, 1931," *Berkeley Women's City Club Record*, June 1931.

⁸⁷ Ruth Lusby graduated from a home economics program in 1918. American Home Economics Association, "Journal of Home Economics, Volume 25, Number 6," July 1933, 546. Barbara Reid Robson's book: Robson, Barbara R. *House Management Problems of Fraternities and Sororities: An Investigation of the Supervision or Assistance Given by Educational Institutions to Fraternities and Sororities in Their House Management Problems*. New York City: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1933.

⁸⁸ Mrs. Henry I. Randall, "Annual Report of the President for the Year 1935-1936," Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, Vol 4, Berkeley City Club Archive, Berkeley City Club.

salon, other clubs, and bedrooms, along with fees for weddings and private card parties, would all supplement dining room revenue. Further, almost all courses and programs would pay for themselves through fees collected from attendees. The *Berkeley Women's City Club Record* reiterated the logic of this policy in 1931, reminding members that dues are “for the privilege of having the clubhouse itself, with its various facilities.”⁸⁹ Only the use of clubrooms for “bridge, music, or relaxation” would not incur a fee. Even swimming in the pool required the purchase of a modestly priced ticket. Per this strategy, successful operation of the club depended on the dues, but also the patronage, of its members.

Even before the November 1930 opening of the clubhouse the BWCC offered opportunities for member patronage, holding paid programs in rented auditoriums, hotels, and restaurants. These offerings continued and expanded upon opening, as the organization endeavored to be the “social, artistic and cultural center of Berkeley.” They held dances, concerts, and teas in order for the large membership to meet each other. They hosted an art gallery in one of the club rooms, reportedly the only gallery in Berkeley at the time and open to the public on designated days.⁹⁰ The restaurant served three to four meals daily. Swimming and gymnastics classes were held regularly. Many different volunteer committees—Hospitality, Finance, Furnishing, Garden, House, Gymnasium and Dancing, Library, and Reciprocal Relations, among them—offered opportunities for member engagement. The clubhouse was an investment in the community: a place for leisure, physical health, and education.

The aforementioned initial impulse to see the building as an investment carried over into everyday use once it was built. The tacit partnership with the Chamber of Commerce to provide jobs, stimulate shopping, and beautify Berkeley with their clubhouse was made explicit in club publications and local newspapers after 1930. Club members were told in the *Record* to reward local businesses for buying advertising space in their publication by strategically directing their purchasing power.⁹¹ “Prove reciprocity to the business firms. . . . Buy from our advertisers. TELL THEM WHY.”⁹² The *Berkeley Daily Gazette* reported that of the \$50,000 appropriated for clubhouse furnishings, “a great deal more than half of this sum has already been expended in Berkeley stores.”⁹³

In the 1920s women throughout the East Bay had staked claims to the growing cities of Berkeley and Oakland by building clubhouses. Building campaigns fostered a sense of inclusiveness, as contributions were collected from hundreds or thousands of individuals. For women who did not own property independently, the purchase of a bond to finance club construction was a form of stockholding. Accordingly, the BWCC's first fundraising campaign had included unsolicited subscriptions from nonmembers interested in the club as a community

⁸⁹ Some lectures or programs were courtesy events, but the majority charged a modest fee for member participation. *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 1, 1929; *Berkeley Women's City Club Record*, November 1931; “Berkeley Women's City Club (Pamphlet),” 1939, Berkeley City Club Archive, Berkeley City Club; *Berkeley Women's City Club Record*, March 1931.

⁹⁰ *Berkeley Women's City Club*, n.d., Harriet Rochlin Collection of Material about Women Architects in the United States, Department of Special Collections, University Research Library, UCLA.

⁹¹ Local building and loan associations often advertised in the *Record* as well. On a given two-page spread, from June 1931 for example, there are three ads placed by building and loan associations, one ad for hair permanents, one for clothes, and one for shoes.

⁹² Gertrude Walsh, “Tell Advertisers Why,” *Berkeley Women's City Club Record*, January 1931, 15.

⁹³ “\$400,000 Home of Women's City Club Officially Opened.”

project.⁹⁴ And for the women involved in the building's management, owning a clubhouse represented a major investment of time and money. The BWCC expanded on the language of capitalism by characterizing membership itself as an investment. "Membership in the Club is an ownership in the property of the Club. A membership then is an investment in real actual and personal property," they explained. "It can be sold or bequeathed and, upon the death of the owner, becomes the property of a female heir. This, we believe, is unique in Women's Clubs in the West."⁹⁵

Education was another important form of investment offered by the club. Through their courses the BWCC most visibly embraced the values meaningful to the New Woman—higher education, work, and socializing, all in mixed-sex groups. Men as well as women could enroll, prompting the *Record* to define the club as an inclusive educational venue: "Not alone are the University of California and the public schools educating our citizens, but our City Club is taking a large part in adult education in Berkeley."⁹⁶ A series of popular courses featured a broad range of both vocational and humanities-based subjects: interior decorating, investing, international relations, art, and drama among them. During a representative year the club offered fourteen courses in which over thirteen hundred out of their four thousand and five hundred members enrolled. Courses generally met at noon or in the evening on weekdays, "to allow businessmen and women of the college city to attend."⁹⁷

In a departure from the nineteenth and early-twentieth century-practices of women's clubs, amateurs drawn from the general membership rarely led programs. Instead, recognized professionals taught their classes and programs. A typical slate of courses and instructors advertised in the *Berkeley Women's City Club Bulletin* or *Record* included: Parliamentary Law (taught by Annie Little Barry, lecturer and published expert on the topic, as well as the President of the California Federation of Women's Clubs), The Art of the Theatre (taught by the managing director of the Berkeley Playhouse), and Training and Practice in Writing (taught by published female writers).⁹⁸ Morgan's multi-use, flexible building meant to accommodate all sorts of functions made it possible for the BWCC to run a veritable school for members and the larger community.

Residential Hotel

The four floors of hotel rooms were another crucial aspect of the BWCC's revenue strategy (see figure 3.35). The forty-two furnished, sunny bedrooms were built as residences for single members who wished to live permanently at the club.⁹⁹ A few rooms were available to

⁹⁴ *Berkeley Women's City Club Bulletin*, July 1929; *Berkeley Women's City Club Bulletin*, November 1929.

⁹⁵ *Berkeley Women's City Club Bulletin*, November 1928.

⁹⁶ "Our Club's Contribution to the Community," *Berkeley Women's City Club Record*, November 1932.

⁹⁷ The club's course offerings (Interior Decorating, for example) are separate from what the club referred to as "classes" (Bird Lore, Body Building, French, Handicraft, etc). This figure is specific to courses. *Berkeley Women's City Club Record*, July 1932; quotation from *Berkeley Women's City Club Bulletin*, April 1928.

⁹⁸ *Berkeley Women's City Club Bulletin*, September 1928.

⁹⁹ The number of bedrooms at the club is listed in different documents as anywhere between 46 and 52. The true number of hotel rooms is 42: eleven rooms per each of the four floors, except for the third floor where two rooms are eliminated by the ballroom's upper stories. "Plans (floors 3-6)," n.d., Julia Morgan Collection, Environmental Design Archives, University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

member-referred guests for short stays. Many have views of the hills and the San Francisco Bay, and three rooms on each floor look onto an interior courtyard. Judging by the 1929 *Yearbook of Women's Clubhouses* that reported on clubhouse building, this arrangement—furnished bedrooms located on upper floors, arranged to take advantage of a view and/or the fresh air of a courtyard—is common to other period residential clubs in California and nationwide.¹⁰⁰ Morgan's YWCAs (in Pasadena, Oakland, and the Chinese YWCA in San Francisco) follow this pattern as well, though without private bathrooms.

The bedrooms are small, made up of a combination living room-bedroom that is, on average, around one hundred and thirty-four square feet, or roughly eleven by twelve.¹⁰¹ Though the overall plan does offer flexibility as several rooms on the south side of the building can be combined to make two-room suites. Each room has a private bathroom and all but the very smallest rooms have a shower over bathtub. Closet space is ample: eighteen square feet of storage are allocated to a one hundred and forty-four square foot room. Luggage rooms in the basement offered additional storage space for long-term residents. Rooms were originally furnished with maple, mahogany, walnut, or lacquered furniture, with convertible daybeds (see figure 3.36). Plaster covered the building's concrete bedroom walls.¹⁰²

Thirty-five out of the forty-two residence rooms were rented when the building opened in November 1930, more than half by women identified on an annotated floor plan as “Mrs.”—presumably widows (see figure 3.37).¹⁰³ Unmarried women reserved the remaining forty percent of the rooms. In general, the smallest, lowest-end rooms (one hundred and twenty-one square feet, \$33 per month, no view, shower only, bordered by another bedroom on either side) were reserved for a “Miss,” while the highest-end suites (five hundred and forty square feet, \$68 per month, at the end of the hall and looking out the front of the building, shower over bath) went to a “Mrs.” At the mid-range level distribution was mixed.

The March 1931 edition of the *Record* states that many women call the club “home—women from all walks of life, certainly, women from every profession. A large group of talented women [are] devoted to education.”¹⁰⁴ Certainly there was a significant need for teacher housing in the area. UC Berkeley had established a teaching certificate program in the 1890s and enrollment ever since had been ninety percent female. In 1920, of the twenty-two thousand-plus female teachers in California, only thirteen percent were married.¹⁰⁵ Six hundred and twenty-one teachers lived in Berkeley as of 1930, so the campus area was home to a high concentration of single women.¹⁰⁶ Longtime UC Berkeley employee Margaret Murdock recalled in 1981 that some female academics used the club as a temporary residence while “getting themselves

¹⁰⁰ See Anne Vanderbilt, “Bedrooms in a Big Clubhouse,” in *Yearbook of Women's Clubhouses: Second Annual* (The Woman's Journal, 1929), 20, 64.

¹⁰¹ This figure does not include the size of the suites.

¹⁰² *Berkeley Women's City Club*, n.d. Harriet Rochlin Collection of Material about Women Architects in the United States, Department of Special Collections, University Research Library, UCLA.

¹⁰³ Paul Groth (Professor Emeritus of Architecture and Geography, University of California, Berkeley), in discussion with the author, March 2016.

¹⁰⁴ “About Our Members,” *Berkeley Women's City Club Record*, March 1931.

¹⁰⁵ Figure comes from Inge S. Horton, *Early Women Architects of the San Francisco Bay Area: The Lives and Work of Fifty Professionals, 1890-1951*, who cites the United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1920, Population Report, Table 22.

¹⁰⁶ Berkeley Chamber of Commerce and Berkeley Daily Gazette, *The Book of Berkeley*, 27.

established and perhaps being sure they were on the tenure ladder” before purchasing a home.¹⁰⁷ The 1933 Berkeley City Directory sheds further light on the personal and professional lives of residents: of the six women for whom any indication of livelihood is given, two are listed as teachers and one as the principal of an elementary school. Another unmarried resident worked as a stenographer and another as the dining room manager at the BWCC clubhouse restaurant. One “Mrs.” is recorded as a widow.¹⁰⁸

According to Paul Groth in his book *Living Downtown*, the price and size of rooms and the demographic makeup of live-in members make the BWCC building a “midpriced” residential hotel.¹⁰⁹ However, the clubhouse’s emphasis on culture and upscale amenities elevate the club to the high end of the midpriced spectrum. Access to a library, swimming pool, and multiple entertaining spaces were not typical of midpriced hotels, nor was the level of service provided. Sixty-six persons worked at the clubhouse in 1931, a ratio of more than one employee per resident and a figure more typical of hotels at the “palace” level.¹¹⁰ BWCC president Janet Hartzell praised the staff’s professional service in 1931:

Everyone in the building has given a service that . . . cannot be paid for in money. They have . . . known no hours, no schedule of time, and when occasion required, have been all things to all people. They have heard thousands of complaints with marked equanimity, corrected what untoward conditions they could, pacified wrathful members, accepted the blame for everything, including underdone steaks, torn hose, a paint besprinkled dress, bad ventilation, lost tickets, uncongenial dinner or luncheon partners . . . a disinterested Board of Directors, generally bad management, a bilious attack, noisy automobiles . . . a monotonous voice on the telephone. . . . There has been given in the club a twenty-four hour service.¹¹¹

Residential hotels came into fashion for middle-income women in the 1920s for the freedom from housework they afforded. According to Groth, the “most enthusiastic” persons being set free from interior decorating, cleaning, laundry, and food preparation were women who wanted to take an active part in city life or whose employment left them too little time for housework. For wealthy women, a residential hotel allowed them to avoid the “servant problem” of hiring, supervising, and firing cooks, maids, and butlers. Of the married women in high-end

¹⁰⁷ Margaret Murdock, “An Interview with Margaret Murdock,” an oral history conducted in 1981 by Suzanne B. Riess, in *The Women’s Faculty Club of the University of California, Berkeley, 1919-1982*, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1983, 51.

¹⁰⁸ Miss Florence Barth taught at Alameda High School, Miss Leola Ross taught at an unnamed Berkeley public school, and Miss May Wade was principal of Cragmont Elementary School. Miss Doris Foresman was hired as the dining room manager at the BWCC in July 1930, before the club opened, and must have also been a member in order to live there. Mrs. Cora Bayley is listed simply as the widow of Charles H. Bayley. L.M. McKenney & Co, R.L. Polk & Co, and Polk-Husted Directory Co, *Polk’s Oakland (California) City Directory, Including Alameda, Berkeley, Emeryville and Piedmont*, 1933.

¹⁰⁹ In 1920s Chicago, Groth reports, a small, single room with bath at a midpriced hotel averaged \$40 to \$60 a month. Paul Erling Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 61.

¹¹⁰ *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 2, April 1931.

¹¹¹ June 1931 *Record* “President’s Report” by Mrs. H.F. Hartzell (the outgoing president)

midpriced hotels in the 1920s, fewer than ten percent had paying jobs. The rest, according to a 1928 study, were “interested in charities and social reform. Many were “like hobos, they have no vocation.”¹¹² The working women in the better hotels were typically teachers, private secretaries, buyers in department stores, executives in other businesses, writers, librarians, or women politicians. Married or unmarried, Groth reminds us, these women “were escaping female roles in traditional households and fully expected to live in hotels for at least several years.”¹¹³ A journalist writing in 1930 aptly characterized residents as the “vanguard” of the New Woman.¹¹⁴

Though from the beginning the BWCC’s hotel rooms were not fully occupied and thus did not provide revenue the Board had hoped for. Occupancy was not one hundred percent upon opening and fell to sixty-six percent in 1934; by then the club employed only forty-six people, down from sixty-six.¹¹⁵ Planning for the summer of 1932, “when the teachers leave,” BWCC house manager Edna Callender cut maid services by half, gave her assistant two months’ furlough, laid off the helper in the laundry room, and got approval from the Board to offer long-term rooms to friends of members.¹¹⁶ In 1933 the Board cut room rates by ten percent, and, surprisingly, opened rooms to husbands and sons of members during the summer months.¹¹⁷ Dining room use also fell short of expectations. Turnover was high among employees, managers, and Board members. With years of depression followed by years of war, and the sweeping socio economic changes of the twentieth century, the existence of an urban, building-centered, private social club would become quite precarious.

Part IV: Decline

Despite their professional, careful management and their efforts to avoid the fate of other women’s clubs the BWCC still experienced the 1930s economic stagnation of the Great Depression. Like other clubs they worked to relieve the effects of the Depression, collecting used clothing for donation and providing the Red Cross with the use of a room and a sewing machine. In the meantime, the organization faced losses in almost all departments during the 1930s and were unable to pay rent to the holding company they had created.¹¹⁸ The *Record* urged members to patronize the dining room, calling it the simplest service a member could render. The Board conducted multiple membership campaigns and offered discounts and promotional rates.

¹¹² Norman S. Hayner, “Hotel Life and Personality,” *American Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 5 (1928), 793.

¹¹³ Groth, *Living Downtown*, 62-64.

¹¹⁴ Quotation in Groth, 64. Groth is quoting from Jefferson Williamson’s 1930 *The American Hotel: An Anecdotal History*.

¹¹⁵ The Board reported that “practically all of our bedrooms were rented when we opened our doors” in May 1931. *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 2, May 1931; vol. 3, April 1934.

¹¹⁶ *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 2, May 1932.

¹¹⁷ Bedrooms priced over \$40 were cut by ten percent; special summer rates were even cheaper. *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 3, March 1933; *Berkeley Women’s City Club Record*, July 1933, 2.

¹¹⁸ Net loss figures are available for the years 1933, 1935, 1936, 1937, and 1939. The average net loss during those years was \$12,881. In 1938 the club made a net profit of \$803. In 1932 the club owed \$30,000 to the holding company for unpaid rent from December 1930 onward. In 1937 the Board summarized their indebtedness as \$47,000 over the previous four years. The holding company Berkeley Women’s City Club, Inc. had been created in 1929. *Berkeley Women’s City Club Record*, November 1930, 14; *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vols. 3-5, 1934-1940; specifically *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 2, October 1932; vol. 4a, October 1937.

Nonetheless, their numbers plummeted, losing one thousand members in their first five years.¹¹⁹ Around one percent of their membership died every year: they lost forty-four members out of four thousand and four hundred during the 1933 fiscal year. In 1935 one hundred fifty members were delinquent on dues, owing one year's worth or more.¹²⁰

Accountants attributed the club's dire financial condition to two overarching problems. One, they had failed to secure a membership of six thousand, the number upon which the building program was founded. Two, operating losses had been sustained since opening day.¹²¹ From 1930 to 1934 five separate house managers and multiple dining room managers struggled to adjust, spending less on food and cutting employee hours and salaries. The Board trimmed the length of the *Record* to save on printing and created a Bond Retirement Fund that gave members the option to donate their initial investment. The bleak financial picture was made momentarily brighter upon the acquisition of a new, male, house manager hired in 1934. Brandon Watson made a series of recommendations to the Board that increased revenue, if moderately: renting the auditorium to UC Berkeley men for supervised dances on Friday nights; updating room furnishings; offering dancing classes for members and their husbands; enclosing the north loggia of the east courtyard to create a card room; hiring a UC Berkeley student to advertise the rental spaces in the club.¹²² Despite temporary relief, the downward trend continued. After 1941, clubwomen resigned in droves. By 1945 the BWCC roster listed fewer than three thousand members.

Conclusion

The BWCC was the professional approach to the 1920s problem of women's clubs. Berkeley clubwomen consolidated their organizations in an attempt to solve the housing problem of many clubs trying to maintain many clubhouses. To join forces was to avoid duplication and overlapping of individual club's efforts, and to make the process of accommodation more efficient. Their emphasis on skilled management was consistent with the professional character of the club; it was also tied to the early twentieth century emergence of the American modern business enterprise.

This was a new approach for a women's club—a modern, professional, informed approach to organized womanhood in Berkeley, also unique for their plan to build a clubhouse from the very beginning. For such an organization Julia Morgan built a clubhouse that expressed *caractère* through materials, program, and style. Morgan's free, imaginative use of Romanesque and Gothic elements created a mood that is simultaneously old world medieval, quintessentially Californian, and professional, all at once.

¹¹⁹ Membership dropped from 4,500 in 1930 to 3,500 in 1936. *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 4, August 1936.

¹²⁰ 134 members out of 3,700 owed one year's worth or more of dues in 1935. *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 3, April 1933; March 1935.

¹²¹ *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vol. 3, April 1933.

¹²² When Watson resigned in June 1937 it was to manage the Women's Athletic Club in San Francisco. BWCC hired another male manager, Mr. Thomas Washburn, who stayed until 1940. *Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*, vols. 3-5, 1934-1940.

The events of the 1930s and beyond were trying for all women's clubs. In 1961 BWCC treasurer Bernice Foley eloquently summarized the issues that all women's clubs had faced over the previous thirty years:

The years of depression followed by the years of war, inflation, uneasy peace, and the sweeping socio-economic changes of the forties and fifties: the increase in the number of women in full-time employment; the development of suburbia; the expanded programs of education and recreation offered by our tax supported agencies; the increasing participation in politics and good-works; the growing appeal of 'outdoor living;' the increased availability of apartments — many of them specifically designed for one person occupancy.¹²³

Coupled with these trends, Foley remarked, had been the steady increase in the cost of services and supplies. "The Berkeley Women's City Club," she remarked, "is one of the fortunate survivors, but it is not without its problems."¹²⁴

The club had stayed afloat during the previous decades with the help of a dedicated cadre of volunteers. Members mended used towels, chair cushions and other linens, served as hostesses and greeters, and worked in the office stuffing envelopes and mailing bills and issues of the *Record*. Paid staff was kept to a minimum. In the 1940s the club busied itself with war activities, selling bonds and volunteering for the Red Cross. Demand for guest rooms fell drastically and finally after the end of World War II, and most rooms were converted to short-term rentals. In 1946 they sold their Bancroft Way rental properties to help pay off the mortgage. By 1979 only eight hundred and forty-seven members remained.

The inability of the BWCC to remain relevant as a women's club, unfortunately, is not an unfamiliar story. The ethos around which the BWCC was formed—a frank and modern clubhouse for the new New Woman of the 1930s—was quickly out of step with women's quickly changing lives. Non-accredited institutions of education became increasingly unnecessary as the century wore on, as more and more women gained admission to institutions of higher education at UC Berkeley and everywhere. Residential hotels fell widely out of favor among both women and men. To the female students at UC Berkeley, living and learning in coed environments, the clubhouse's *caractère* appears anything but modern.

The club's survival can be attributed to a few strategic organizational decisions, and to a shift in focus. In 1962 the club changed their name to the Berkeley City Club and opened their membership to men, formally becoming the mixed-sex organization they had promised to the New Woman. The club began to focus less on their status as a private social club and educational venue and more as a hotel, restaurant, and event venue. In the mid 1970s the clubhouse was given city and state landmark designations and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Ultimately, the clubhouse's flexible program and diversified business plan have kept the doors open despite flagging interest, and though the organization's purpose has changed, their building remains unchanged and fully operational.

¹²³ "Berkeley Women's City Club Reports 1960-61, Report of Treasurer Bernice A. Foley," Berkeley City Club Archive, Berkeley City Club.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Figures for Chapter Three

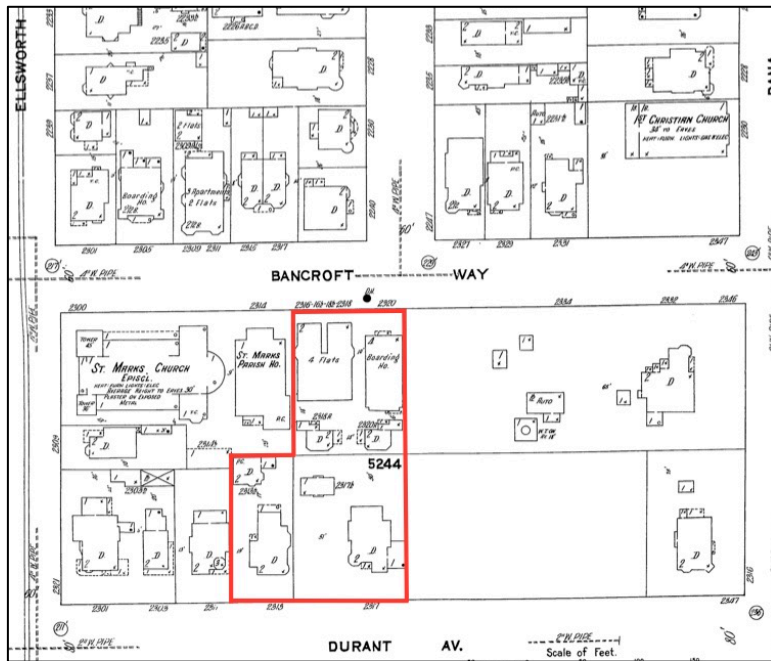


Figure 3.1: The three lots acquired by the Berkeley Women's City Club (BWCC) in 1927 and the surrounding neighborhood of churches, gracious residences, and former residences turned apartment houses. Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970, Berkeley, California, 1911.



Figure 3.2: Sketch for the BWCC by architects Morrow & Morrow, 1928. Source: Environmental Design Archives, UC Berkeley.



Figure 3.3: Architect Julia Morgan's early sketch of the south elevation of the BWCC, 1928. Source: The Berkeley City Club Archives.



Figure 3.4: Morgan's final drawing for the south elevation of the BWCC, 1929; an axonometric sketch of the proposed clubhouse, 1930. Source: The Berkeley City Club Archives; Berkeley Chamber of Commerce and Berkeley Daily Gazette, eds., *The Book of Berkeley* (Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, Berkeley Daily Gazette, 1931).



Figure 3.5: The carved wooden mantelpiece in the BWCC library. Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 3.6: Examples of the della Robbia roundels found in the clubhouse. Source: Photographs by author.



Figure 3.7: The BWCC building. Source: Sara Holmes Boutelle, *Julia Morgan, Architect* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988).

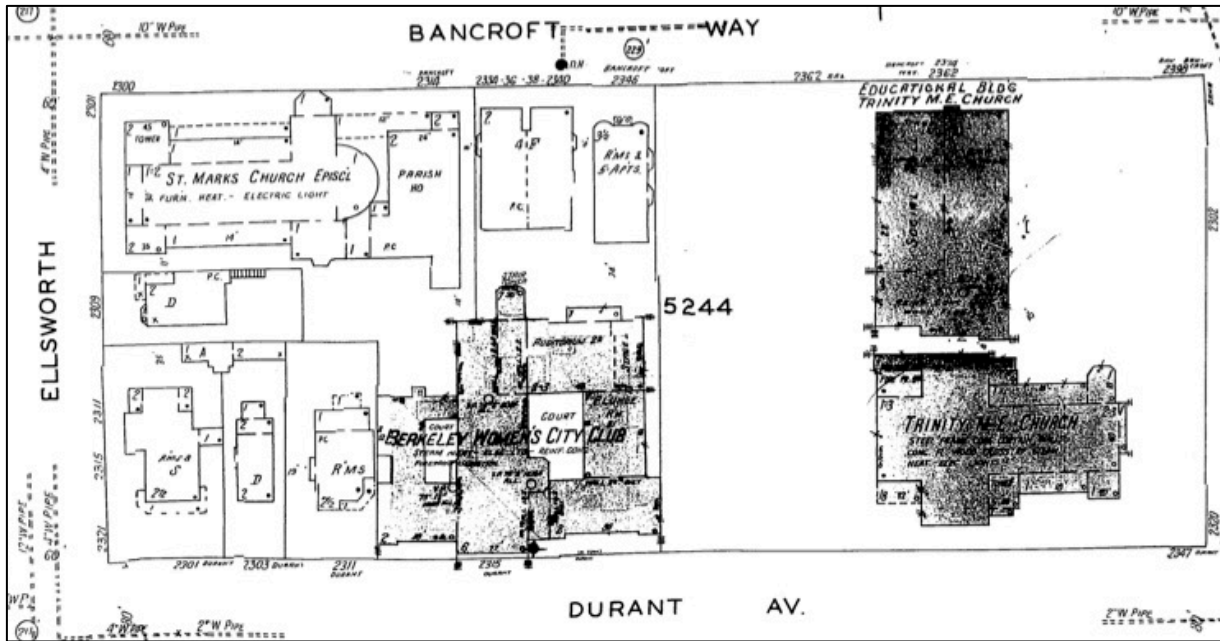


Figure 3.8: The BWCC with open space around it. Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1929-1950.

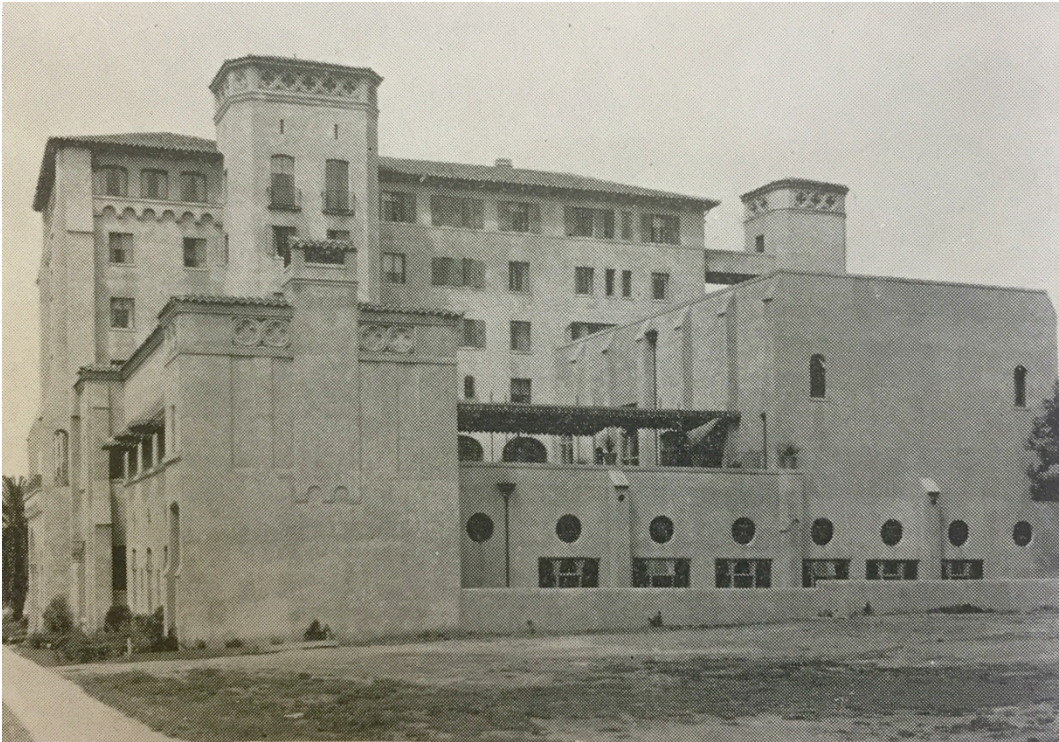


Figure 3.9: View of the north side of the BWCC, 1931. Source: Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, *The Book of Berkeley*.

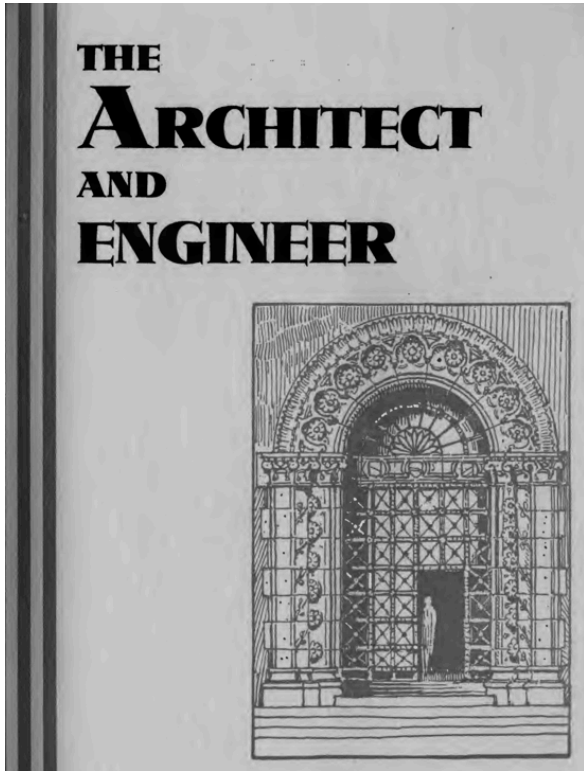


Figure 3.10: The April 1931 cover of *The Architect and Engineer*.



Figure 3.11: Vestibule in the BWCC foyer. Source: Google Maps.

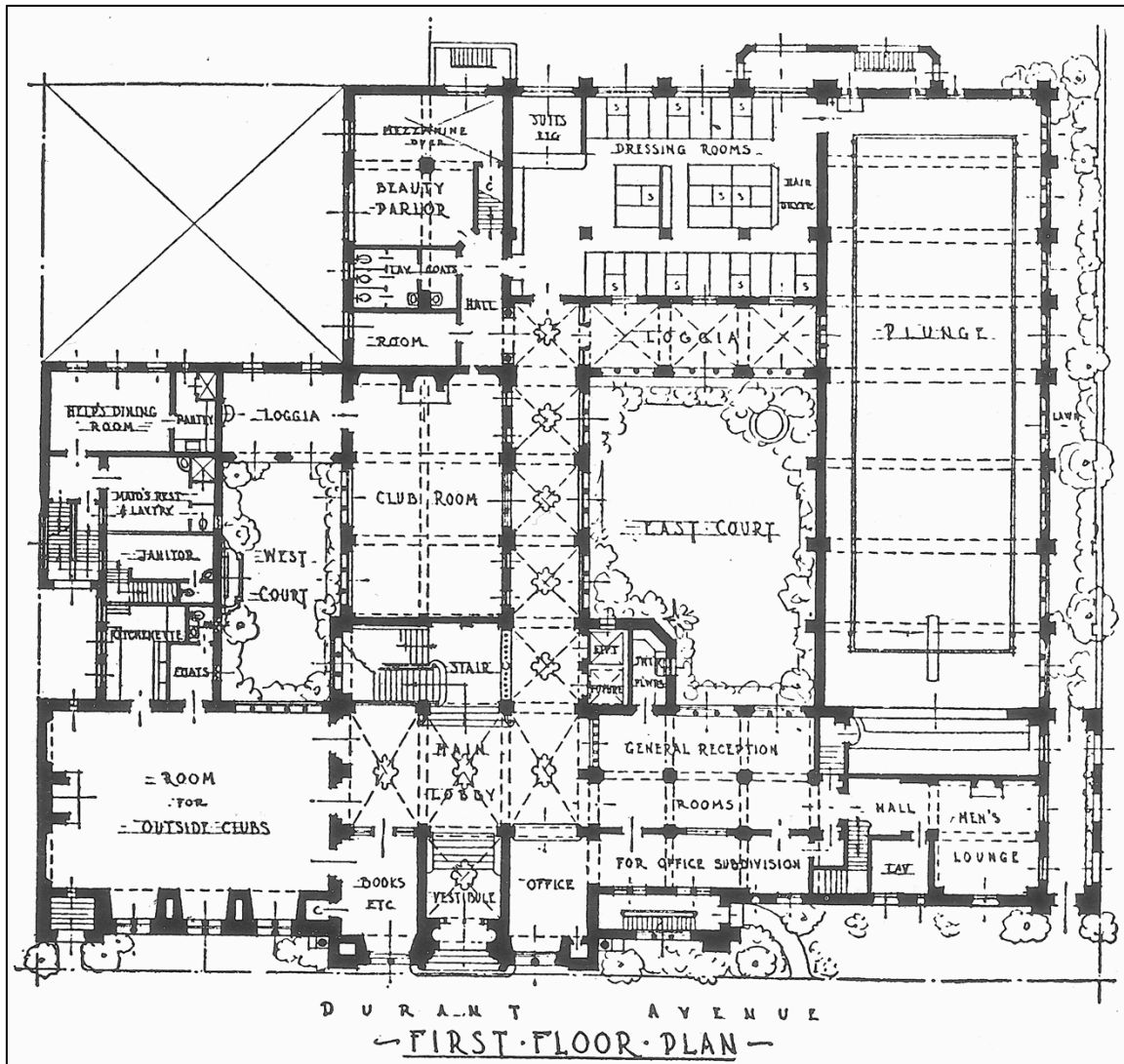


Figure 3.12: First floor plan of the BWCC. Source: Julian C. Mesic, "Berkeley Women's City Club," *The Architect and Engineer* 105, no. 1 (April 1931).

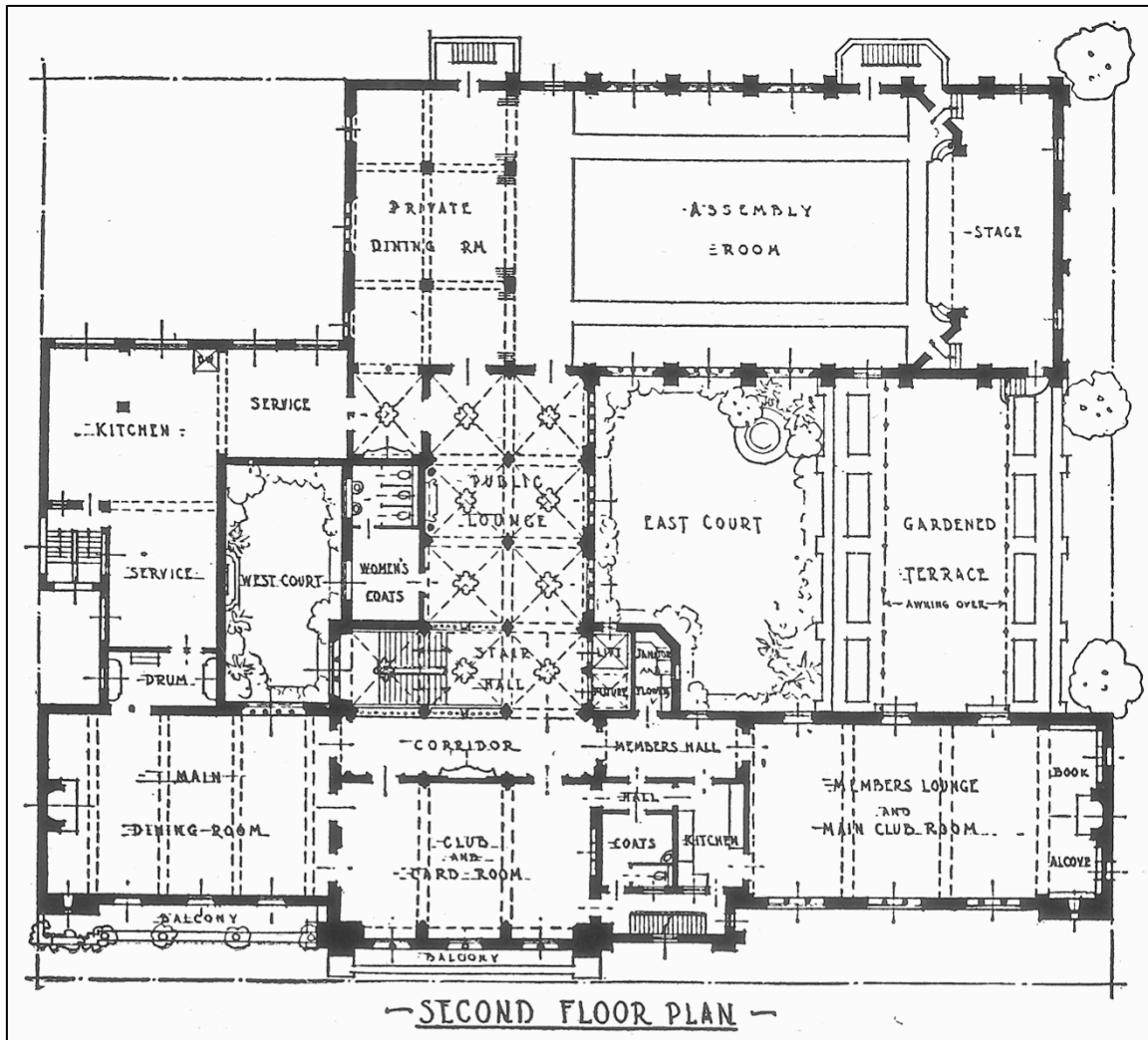


Figure 3.13: Second floor plan of the BWCC. Source: Mesic, "Berkeley Women's City Club."

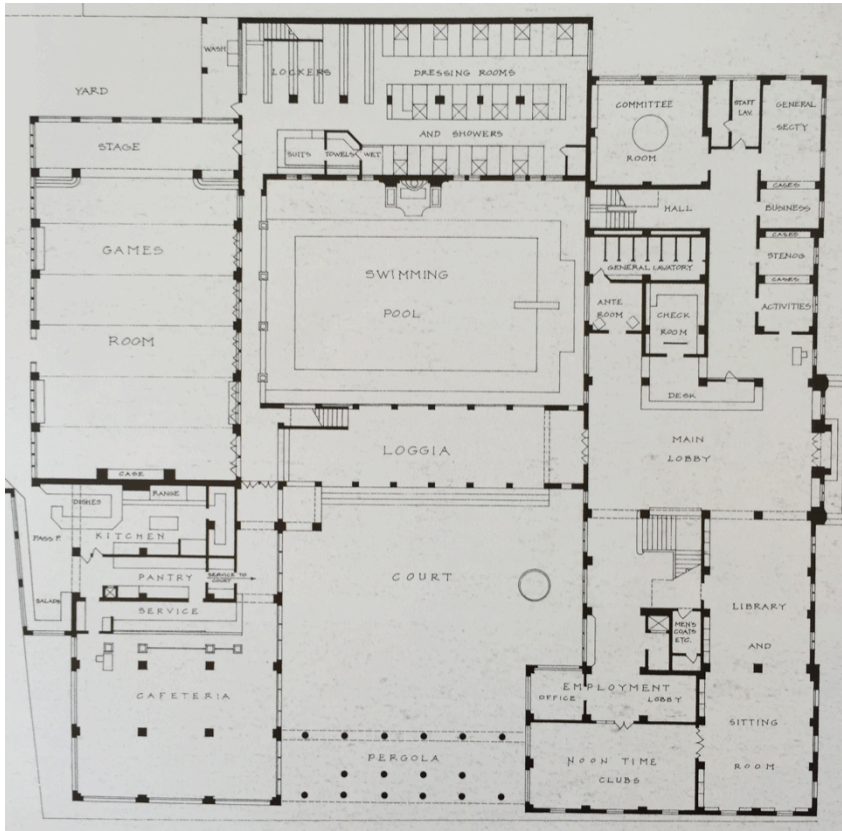


Figure 3.14: First floor plan of the Honolulu YWCA. Source: Boutelle, *Julia Morgan, Architect*.



Figure 3.15: The medieval-style cloister of the BWCC east courtyard. Source: Google Maps.



Figure 3.16: View from drawing room to west courtyard. Source: Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association.



Figure 3.17: Second floor public lounge, showing doors leading to the Venetian room and auditorium. Source: Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association.

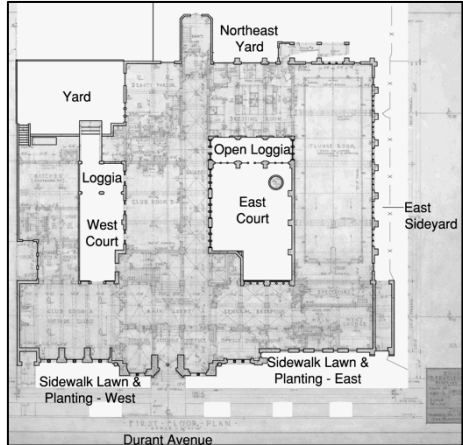


Figure 3.18: Garden site plan of the BWCC. Source: Historic American Landscapes Survey.

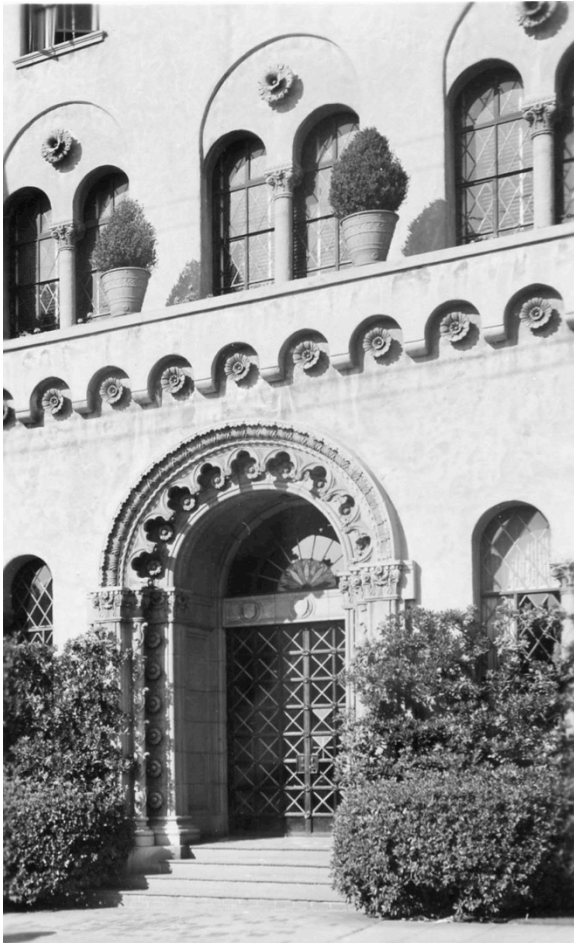


Figure 3.19: Stylized concrete rosettes on the BWCC façade, 1940s. Source: Historic American Landscapes Survey.



Figure 3.20: A passageway of Stephens Hall on the UC Berkeley campus, designed by architect John Galen Howard. Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 3.21: Looking through the gallery to the east courtyard. Source: Historic American Landscapes Survey.



Figure 3.22: BWCC foyer. Source: Google Maps.



Figure 3.23: The formerly open loggia on the north end of the east courtyard at the BWCC. Source: Historic American Landscapes Survey.

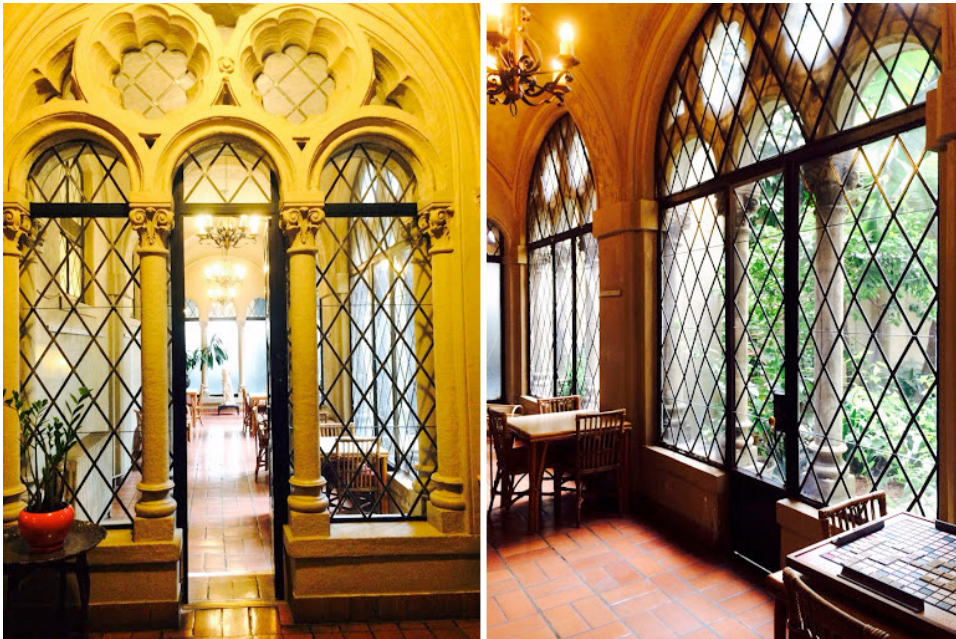


Figure 3.24: The gallery created by enclosing the loggia in 1935. Source: <http://sf.curbed.com/>.



Figure 3.25: The BWCC main dining room. Source: UCLA Department of Special Collections.



Figure 3.26: The cast concrete fireplace in the BWCC dining room. Note the mirror above reflecting the reinforced concrete ceiling. Source: Mark A. Wilson, *Julia Morgan: Architect of Beauty* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2007).



Figure 3.27: The BWCC library, also known as the Members' Lounge. Source: Wilson, *Julia Morgan*.



Figure 3.28: The BWCC auditorium, also known as the ballroom. Source: Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association.



Figure 3.29: Coffered ceiling of the BWCC Venetian Room. Source: Photograph by author.

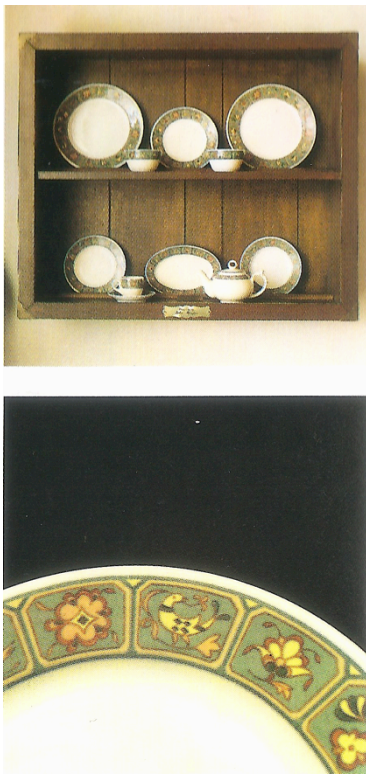


Figure 3.30: Morgan-designed china for the club restaurant. Source: Boutelle, *Julia Morgan, Architect*.



Figure 3.31: The swimming pool at the BWCC, also known as “the plunge.” Source: The National Trust for Historic Preservation.

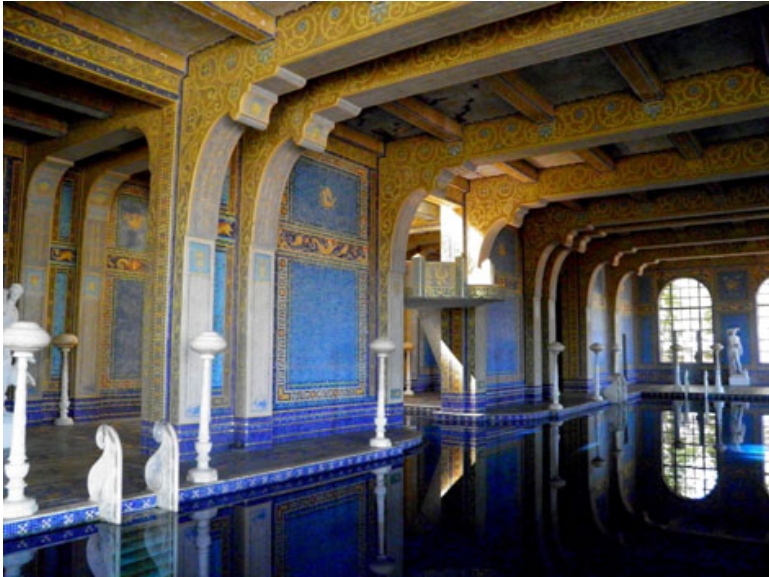


Figure 3.32: The Roman pool at Hearst Castle, by Julia Morgan. Source: <http://hearstcastle.org/>



Figure 3.33: Seahorses hidden in the column capitals in the BWCC pool. Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 3.34: Cast concrete fireplace surround in the BWCC Drawing room; bracket in the fifth floor hallway; bas-relief by Clara Huntington Perkins located in west courtyard. Source: Photographs by author.

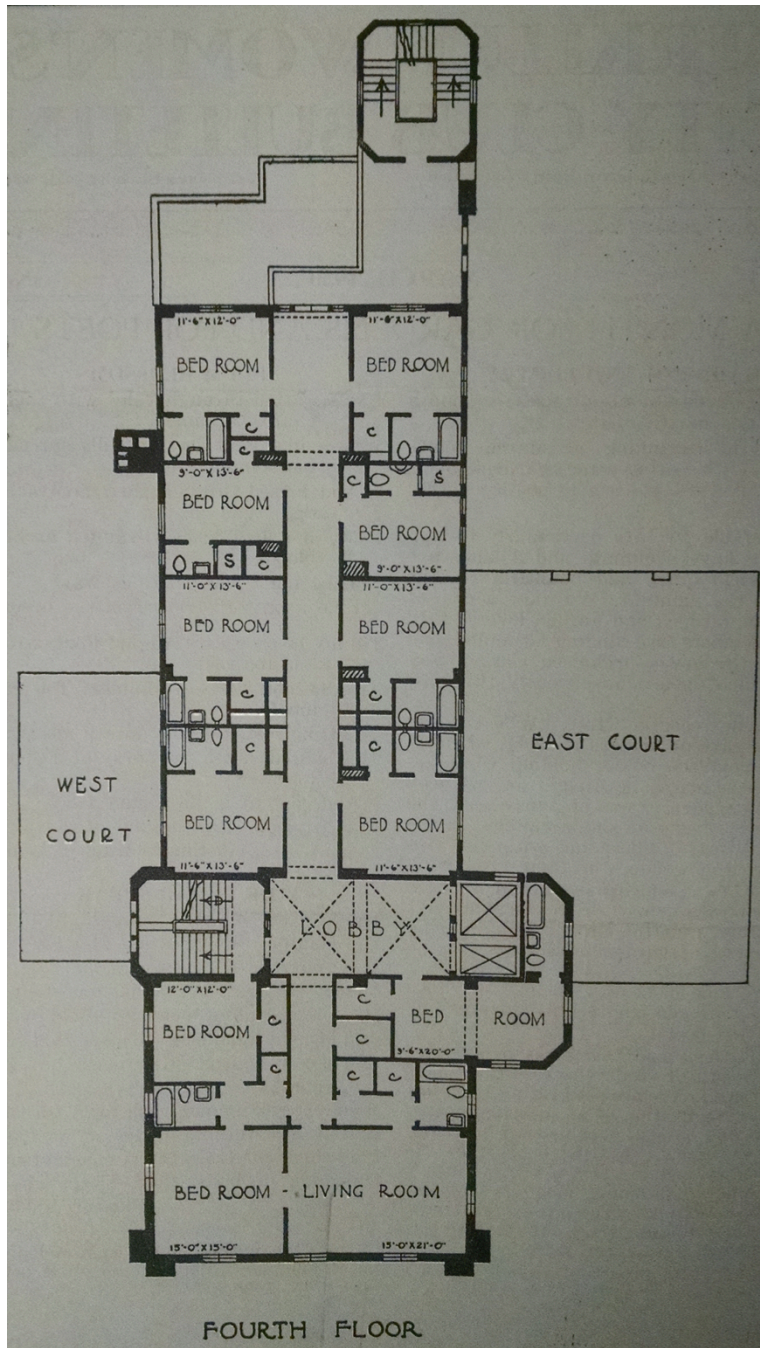


Figure 3.35: Fourth floor plan of the club which “shows what will be typical of other floors devoted to bedrooms, differing only in minor details.” Source: *Berkeley Women’s City Club Bulletin*, March 1930.



Figure 3.36: One of the largest residential rooms in the clubhouse, 1930s; a current, typically sized bedroom in the clubhouse Source: Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association; Berkeley City Club.



Figure 3.37: Portion of the BWCC third floor plan showing occupancy annotations made by the club. Source: Environmental Design Archives, UC Berkeley.

Conclusion

In the early decades of the twentieth century clubwomen claimed physical space in American cities and towns, legibly imprinting their influence upon the landscape. They understood the symbolic and literal significance of building, having started with small-scale physical civic improvement and beautification projects—tree planting, community cleanup, and street lights—and, in some cities, eventually opening libraries, daycare centers, playgrounds, and affordable workingwomen’s housing. In California in particular, with its nascent, blank-slate cities and its female-friendly property laws, women found great opportunity to shape the built environment through their clubs.

When women first began commissioning clubhouses for themselves the buildings centered on a large, multipurpose assembly room. In an effort to establish themselves as institutions in an incipient city, they tended to envision their buildings as the physical counterpart to their municipal good works—clubhouses themselves as public, civic offerings. The Friday Morning Club (FMC) of Los Angeles’ ca. 1899 clubhouse, for example, provided space for other clubs to meet and had an accordingly informal and open plan, with a large auditorium to accommodate public meetings, forums, and events. Early clubhouses were typically residential in scale, with homelike references. The FMC clubhouse went so far as to employ pre-modern architectural references to help make more palatable the very modern phenomenon of politically active women.

As the institution of women’s clubs matured many clubs built monumental structures featuring multiple meeting rooms, ballrooms, restaurants, gymnasias, theaters, libraries, and sometimes, residential quarters. By necessity of the different functions happening in a single clubhouse, plans became more elaborate and complex. The FMC’s second, five-story, 1924 clubhouse—with a theater with seating for over one thousand, a library, recital hall, and restaurant—embraces an urban, institutional identity, communicated materially, through the club’s setting and scale, and with signage.

For clubwomen in the years after World War I the measure of organizational success was the construction of their clubhouse. In print and at conferences clubwomen traded tips on the entire process of building. From each other they learned how to raise funds, purchase the right lot, hire an architect and contractor, and how to operate and maintain a building meant to be part hotel, part restaurant, part YWCA, part country-club-in-the-city, and part social action headquarters.

The legacies of the three clubs explored in this dissertation are very different, and thus set up a useful framework for comparison. The FMC arguably did the most to affect their city at large. Within the political space of their clubhouse members planned other structures to enhance the safety, cultural education, and contentment of L.A. residents; they also plotted landmarks to celebrate the (at times manufactured) history of the region, and thus celebrate the region itself. Though a mere decade after their grand new clubhouse opened in 1924 the club was forced to rent the entire facility to private companies. The club has since disbanded and its clubhouse is vacant. In part the fate of the FMC clubhouse points to the notion that architecture is slower than social change: the building went up during a time of rapid change in L.A., and by the time it was completed it was already outdated. The generation of FMC women who had fought for a public, political life—and fought for an impressive new clubhouse—were confronted by the fact that, in

the late 1920s, their club was no longer the only avenue into action for women. Membership, which had increased every year since 1891, began to fall in 1925.

Another potential contributor to the failure of the FMC after the construction of their new clubhouse is their inclusion of extensive parking facilities. Club members in the 1920s began to commute by private automobile rather than by streetcar; alone in their car, the experience of seeing the city became less of a communal activity for women. This visual disengagement was also combined with physical disengagement as L.A.'s middle and upper classes began a pattern of decentralization and suburbanization during the 1920s. By the end of the decade clubs became less central to the public life of L.A., but also it appears that the life of L.A. became less central to women. The FMC thus turned largely to a mission of female camaraderie and sociability, purposes for which the clubhouse was not intended and could not well serve. The institutional impression of the building was too overwhelming, its public nature too apparent.

Consider the contrasting impressions of the ca. 1930 Berkeley Women's City Club (BWCC) building and the 1924 FMC. The BWCC built a clubhouse that capitalized on the lessons of clubs that came before and built with an eye to the contemporary clubwoman's changed priorities. Their primary concern was not changing the city of Berkeley but merely keeping up their membership numbers. Despite being the tallest building on the block, the institutionality of the BWCC is less pronounced than the FMC's. The BWCC building is not a soaring, single mass but instead a complex of blocks of varying scales. The large footprint of the clubhouse is indiscernible from the street thanks to a two-story street level elevation; viewers are thus not confronted by the bulk of the structure all at once. Once inside, the lobby does not overwhelm with high ceilings and a massive stretch of open space like at the FMC. Instead one emerges into a legible, manageable space, where the hierarchy of spaces is immediately apparent. The BWCC foyer conveys programmatic coherence that lends feelings of intimacy and hospitality—an apt setting for socializing.

In contrast, the Woman's Athletic Club (WAC) of San Francisco, with its clubhouse constructed between 1915 and 1923, was a symbol of members' ability to build like men. Instead of enabling them to serve others, men's clubhouses served their members. Accordingly, the WAC exterior is conspicuously muscular and projects traditionally male emblems of capitalist success and strength. On the interior, however, luxury and upper class opulence infuse the clubhouse, lending it an intensely soft and comfortable character that accord with the ample amenities on offer. The WAC also replicates the men's club model of using architectural refinements and exclusions to demarcate places that are for members only. Their well-appointed lobby welcomed clubmembers in the fashion of a men's club (or a Victorian-era residential foyer that limited interior access to unexpected guests) with a so-called "stranger's" room to contain the rare non-member's call. The WAC reflects a moment in club history when club membership became increasingly linked to class status and some elite clubs turned inward, eschewing all civic or altruistic work. Their clubhouse was built on a tried-and-true architectural model, the exclusive men's club, and as such they have been uniquely able to stay true to their original mission of providing a quiet, members-only quiet refuge in a busy neighborhood.

Historic preservation was on the agenda of a number of women's clubs, both at their peak and after their decline. The FMC had a committee dedicated to regional history and lobbied to widen, pave, and restore the road that had once connected the California missions. They emphasized the practical necessity of rebuilding the road in addition to the potential gains in

beauty, art, and history, and spent years marking it with four hundred mission bell guideposts. Even when clubs tended to turn inward in the 1930s and after, they returned to civic-minded preservation by forming foundations to preserve their clubhouses and acquire landmark designations. The Berkeley City Club Conservancy, for example, was established in 1965 and is currently dedicated to the historic preservation of the BWCC building. In San Francisco, the 640 Heritage Preservation Foundation (incorporated in 2004) raises funds for the preservation of the historic WAC building. Though their heyday was short-lived, clubs left residual vestiges on the built environment. Their buildings are artifacts that reference the women who conceived of them and their notion of their own place within their society. California clubwomen saw themselves as integral parts of their city's civic life, and their buildings reflect that spirit.

Although the dissolution of organized womanhood around 1930 led to the downfall of most women's clubs, it is worth remembering that the motivation for organization was their exclusion from full citizenship, and the common experience of discrimination and confinement. With passage of the nineteenth amendment, and women's increasing entry into historically male-dominated bastions of power and influence, there was no clear goal around which a movement could coalesce. "Womanhood" thus dissolved into many different representative groups. Historian Jean V. Matthews points out that indeed, "it might be seen as a mark of the success of the original impetus for the whole feminist movement that it was now possible for 'Woman' to be fractured into individual women."¹ There is an obvious architectural parallel to this concept. When convention no longer dictated separate, feminized spaces for women, cities responded accordingly with buildings where women and men could learn, socialize, and exercise together, making women's clubhouses obsolete.

¹ Jean V. Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman: The Women's Movement in America, 1875-1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003), 174.

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