# THE EPOCH TIMES ARTS CULTURE CULTURE



Architect Julia Morgan is best known for her work on the Hearst Castle. Front view of the castle in San Simeon, Calif.

### ARCHITECTURE

# The Genius of Collaboration

Architect
Julia
Morgan's
valuable
contributions

### Architect bob kirchman

Sometime early in the 20th century, a diminutive woman smartly dressed in a modest dark suit stepped onto a construction site. She was soft-spoken, but when she spoke, "grown men tremble[d]." She was a master builder, an architect in the same class as Richard Morris Hunt and Stanford White. Indeed, she was the contemporary of these legendary designers—and her work stands firmly alongside theirs.

Yet for years, her work was relatively unknown. She is known as the designer of William Randolph Hearst's "Hearst Castle," but her career produced so much more. In fact, her biographer, Victoria Kastner has a list. There are well over 700 buildings for which she is the architect of record, as well as some significant structures that she clearly contributed to without attribution. Kastner's "Julia Morgan: An Intimate Biography of the Trailblazing Architect" is a fitting tribute to this amazing person, who is often forgotten because she did not seek recognition. This straightforward telling of her life's story is a refreshing read, particularly if you are looking for inspiration, not only as a designer but also as a human being.

What developed from that initial meeting with newspaper magnate W.R. Hearst turned into a 28-year collaboration.

Continued on Page 4





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TRADITIONAL CULTURE

### A Lost Tool of Learning: Rhetoric and Why It Matters

**JEFF MINICK** 

earch online for "the meaning of rhetoric," and you'll find the word typically defined as speech or writing intended to persuade others. Some sources list as a secondary meaning bombastic or sentimental speech and writing, often deceitful in their attempts at persuasion. "He's just gaslighting us," someone might say of a politician's appearance. "It's all just hot air and rhetoric."

If asked, most Americans might be unable even to define rhetoric, much less explain why or how it might be studied and deployed. To fault them for their ignorance would be wrong, for with the exception of students in homeschools, classical academies, and some liberal arts colleges, most people aren't exposed to rhetoric—neither the word nor its worth.

It wasn't always this way. From the ancient Greeks to the first years of the 20th century, rhetoric was a part of education, just like geometry or literature. The ability to espouse a cause, to handle the English language with skill and power in writing, from a podium or even in conversation, and to entertain and enlighten vour listeners was considered the mark of an educated man or woman.

### A Brief Early History

In a world without electronics or the  $printing \, press, the \, ability \, to \, speak \, well$ to convince a jury, to address an assembly of your fellow citizens, to rouse soldiers to war, to eulogize a friend, and much more—was considered a crucial element in education.

In ancient Greece, particularly in Athens, sophists began teaching rhetoric to the young, with a focus on winning an argument through emotional and manipulative language, sometimes at the expense of truth. Disgusted by these practices, and perhaps to polish up its image, Aristotle wrote "The Art of Rhetoric," a guide that influenced Western oratory for the next two millennia and that even ns of persuasion, like combining logic with feeling and employing different rhetorical devices that add prowess and beauty to the argument. Perhaps most importantly, he opposed the sophists by contending that truth, or at least the search for a truth, was a foundation stone for rhetorical art.

Romans like Cicero and Quintilian studied Aristotle's text and wrote such guides themselves. Quintilian, for instance, developed a system of Five Canons of Rhetoric, leading students from developing their topics and arguments to memorization to the actual delivery of the speech itself. Like Aristotle and Cicero, his ideas and writings were studied and disseminated for centuries after his death. The bookend theologians of the Middle Ages, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, were both well aware of the tools and uses of rhetoric, though we find them in Augustine's writings to a far greater extent than in those of Aquinas, who aimed at a systematic examination of Christian beliefs.

#### A Foundation Stone of the Liberal Arts

The invention of the printing press brought a greater emphasis to rhetoric as a tool for composition as well as for oratory. Through broadsides, manifestos, and books, skilled writers could make their case for ideas that surpassed the reach and power of transient oral deliveries. From Martin Luther to John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, a teeming company of philosophers and thinkers brought rhetorical devices to their pen-and-paper

And this interest in rhetoric shaped the liberal arts as we think of them today. Even in the ancient world, teachers of rhetoric encouraged the study of poetry, language, and history not only as subjects in their own right but also as fertile fields from which to glean ideas for debate and discussion. From the 18th century up through the early 20th century, these subjects were at the heart of most American universities, with a special emphasis on rhetoric. The power of



The study of rhetoric is a key part of true learning and a classical education.

these programs may be discerned even in their trickle-down effects. Abigail Adams, for instance, often rued her lack of Latin and Greek, yet her correspondence is filled with rhetorical devices and with references to mythology, history, and literature. Abraham Lincoln had little formal schooling, and though historians frequently mention his reading of the Bible and Shakespeare, the grammar books he read and sometimes memorized in his youth also hewed his composition skills. It is for these reasons that rhetoric was long known as the "Queen of the Liberal Arts," and as Richard Weaver stated, "the most humanistic of all the disciplines."

### A Responsible Rhetoric

Richard Weaver (1910-1963) was an intellectual historian and scholar who taught English and rhetoric at the University of Chicago. There, he insisted on teaching freshman composition every year, hoping that these young people would develop their writing skills according to the ancient principles of his discipline.

In an address delivered just before his death, "Language Is Sermonic," Weaver pointed out the low state into which rhetoric had fallen in modern times. At the same time, he advocated for an ethical rhetoric: not only presentations in speech and in writing that not only employ rhetorical tactics, but also a strategy that aims, in one way or another, at truth. He warned as well of the dangers we face today casts its shade over this subject. when a speaker or writer misleads us. Here, he set up a system of the ways and "As rhetoric confronts us with choices involving values," he says, "the rhetorician is a preacher to us, noble if he tries to direct our passion toward noble ends and base if he uses our passion to confuse and degrade us."

In a 1955 address, "A Responsible Rhetoric," Weaver focuses on this last idea in a less technical fashion. Here, he states forthrightly: "Responsible rhetoric, as I conceive it, is a rhetoric responsible primarily to the truth." He then gives examples of what occurs when that responsibility is ignored or deliberately shunned.

Today, the five-paragraph essay with its thesis, its three supporting arguments, and a conclusion restating the thesis a form still taught in some classrooms today—is a fragment left from the days when rhetoric, logic, and grammar sat in the high court of the language arts.

### **Damages Done**

By its very definition—the art of persuasion—rhetoric is with us everywhere we turn. After all, what are advertisements if not enticements to buy a certain brand of soap or a new car? An employer calls together his sales staff and exhorts them to sell more product, giving reasons for doing so and tips on increasing sales. They in turn phone their contacts and attempt to press a sale. It's all rhetoric, but of a baser form than the one advocated by Richard Weaver and so many others.

Yet that is the form we see today in our politics. Those running for or serving in office are often walking, talking billboards made up of slogans and sound bites, but with facts and truth often concealed from the public eye.

In addition, those untrained in rhetoric may fail to detect fallacies and deceits in the positions taken by those in authority. In "Why Study Rhetoric?" Trent Leach, a teacher at a Latin school in Topeka, Kansas, nails this idea: "If I misuse grammar, I make poor sentences. If I misuse logic, I make bad arguments. But if I misuse rhetoric, I use people and lead them into all manner of falsehoods."

### Hope on the Horizon

In "Classical Rhetoric 101: An Introduction,"



Kate and Brett McKay, who run The Art of Manliness website, note this same advantage, writing that the study of rhetoric makes you a better citizen, able to discern the smoke and mirrors propositions that inevitably occur, and that it "protects you from intellectual despotism." They also dwell on the positives of this art, emphasizing the importance of the art of persuasion in our everyday dealings with such people as our employers, our

Aristotle set up a system of the ways and means of persuasion.

friends, and our children. In a time that labels itself the "age of communication," rhetoric deserves a prominent place in the core curricula of education, and many schools, most of them modeled on classical education, are working toward its restoration. If their efforts eventually prove a success, producing more and more young people trained in this discipline, both our country and our culture will become vastly improved.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust On Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning As I Go" and "Movies Make The Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va.

Medieval theologian St. Augustine used rhetoric as a tool for learning. "St. **Augustine Reading** Rhetoric and Philosophy at the School of Rome,' 1464-65, by Benozzo Gozzili. rhetorical devices in his writings. John Locke," 1697. by Godfrey Kneller

PUBLIC DOMAIN

PUBLIC DOMAII

Aristotle's "The Art of

Rhetoric" was a guide

to oratory for centuries.

"Aristotle," 1653, by

Luca Giordano.

**TRUTH and TRADITION** In Our Own Words



With diligent effort, a journalist can map a part of the journey and present it to readers, hoping to help them navigate their own realities.

Petr Svab Reporter

### The World Through a Journalist's Eyes

Dear Epoch VIP,

Thank you for your continuing support—we are at your service. My name is Petr Svab and I've been covering politics, courts, police, immigration, economy, and other topics during my 16 years at The Epoch Times.

#### It is my pleasure to work for a newspaper that stands for values I can wholeheartedly endorse and fittingly summed up in our motto of Truth and Tradition. I believe that truth is the living world, and an infinite

journey of exploration. The more topics I tackle, the more issues I delve into, the more I realize how complex, multifaceted, and enormous the world truly is. We can never dream of grasping it all, but, with diligent effort, a journalist can map a part of the journey and present it to readers, hoping to help them navigate their own realities.

Moreover, I've found, a journalist can open doors closed to others, give readers the facts of the story, the context that enlightens them, as well as the insights of the participants.

I remember walking the streets of West Baltimore a few years ago. My plan was just to interview some local business owners to see what the city was doing about some of its issues—from piles of trash and abandoned houses to homelessness and crime.

Within five minutes of my arrival, a man on the street noticed me and started to shout: "Guy with a camera! There's a guy with a camera here!"

as I approached. "Are you a cop?" asked one of them. He was a young man with wide eyes that looked like they'd already seen

A group of young men further up the street took notice

more than their share I introduced myself and my business of the day, handing the gentleman my card. The young man's expression softened as he realized I was here to report on a story—the story of his home.

As it turned out, the young man was not only ready to share with me his insights on the local issues, but also to offer advice on where to find what I was looking for. We parted ways with a handshake.

In all my experience talking directly to the people

involved in various events, the truth seldom (if ever) favors partisan narratives—it's much more colorful: sometimes humorous, other times tragic.

Consider the story, for example, of Trayvon Martin. According to some, an innocent child killed by a racist man. According to others, a thug killed in self-defense. But after filmmaker Joel Gilbert retraced Martin's last moments, weeks, and months, it turned out neither narrative was quite true. Gilbert told a story of a young man whose life was falling apart and ultimately plunged into a tragedy that nobody wanted.

So if that's truth, what is tradition, then? For me, it is the lessons of history. It's the distilled universal wisdom collected by our ancestors over millennia—the timeless lessons of the enlightened, the sages, and the saints. This treasure chest of the past is where we can turn to help us better understand the truth at present.

My work is to safeguard this treasure, let it live through the pages of The Epoch Times and the hearts of our readers.

While it may seem the foundations of the civilization itself are now under attack, I truly believe our readers will be best equipped to withstand the storm—through clarity and peace of heart. For whatever the future holds, I believe the path will be less treacherous for those who walk it steadily, making choices informed both by truth and tradition.

What I pledge to you is yet more meticulous research, analysis, and fact-finding. I'll do the digging for you, while letting you make up your own mind. Furthermore, I'll also hone my wit to give you an ever-better read along the way. Yes, we strive to be an influential media in the world,

but I believe that our true success is measured in minds sharpened, hearts uplifted, and lives improved.

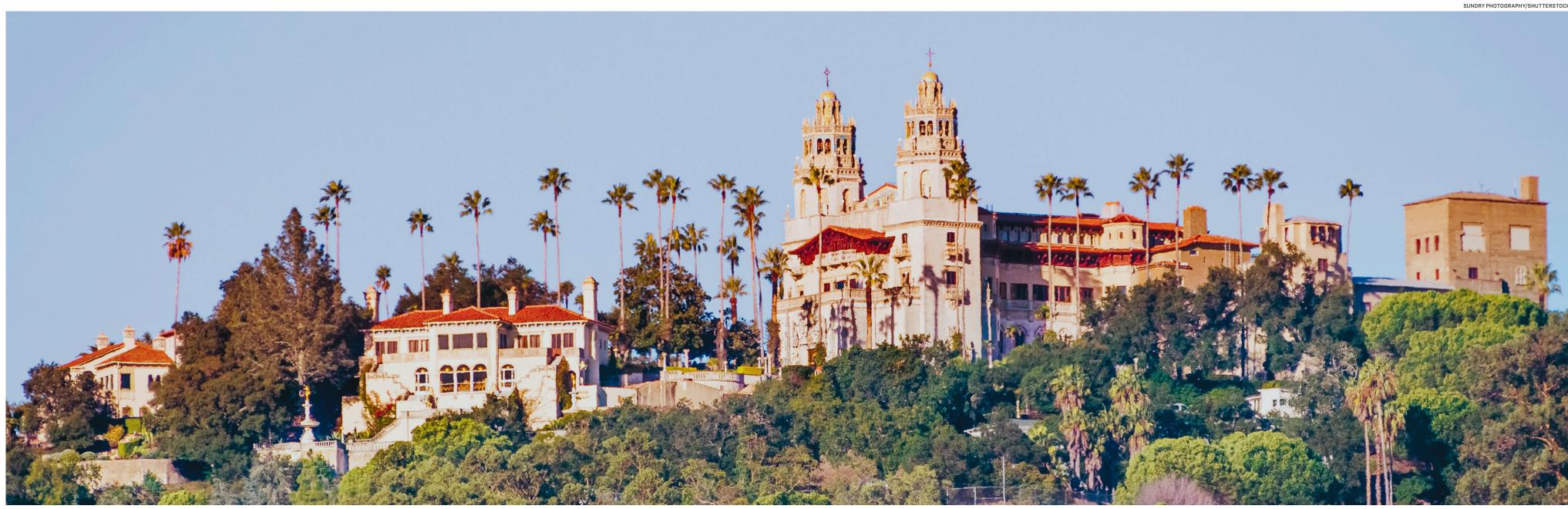
Once again, thank you for joining us on this journey. We do live in truly epochal times, wouldn't you say?

In Truth and Tradition,

Petr Svab The Epoch Times



Learn more at **EpochSubscription.com** 



La Cuesta Encantada, now simply known as Hearst Castle, sits atop a hill in California's Santa Lucia Mountain Range.

**ARCHITECTURE** 

### The Genius of Collaboration

Continued from Page 1

### **Early Influences**

her three brothers. Charles Morgan was an of movers and shakers. East Coast man—a distant cousin of J.P. Morgan—and maintained close ties with family in **Choosing the Path Less Traveled** New York. The family settled in Oakland, Cali-Morgan decided that she would pursue archifornia, across the bay from San Francisco and tecture. The University of California, Berkeley the terminus of the transcontinental railroad. had no architecture program, but she enrolled As a young girl, Morgan traveled with her fam-in the engineering school, becoming the only ily across the country frequently. Oakland was woman in her class to earn a degree in civil a neighborhood of fine Victorian homes, as engineering. Morgan then set her sights on was Brooklyn Heights, where she often sum- further education at the École des Beaux-Arts mered with her grandparents.

tomboy escapades. She would punish the girl by making her practice an extra hour on the violin. Although Morgan hated the punishment, she loved the music and became an accomplished violinist. In fact, as she completed high school, Morgan contemplated three trajectories for her life. She considered making a career for herself in music, medihome and missing the opportunity to develop her gifts professionally.

family. Her three brothers in particular were first time. There is no record of this meeting, a very important part of her life. All three died however. tragic deaths and Julia devoted much of her private life to caring for them, particularly as their health waned. She cultivated strong friendships with colleagues and clients. She ish Mission-style bell tower that featured a set

was a careful listener, giving undivided, focused attention to her client's design dreams. She was generous to a fault, even gifting some Julia Morgan's story begins with her birth in of her associates with houses. She lived simply, San Francisco on Jan. 20, 1872. She was the and blessed others from her good fortune. second of Charles and Eliza Morgan's five chil- She was a woman of faith who maintained dren. She was the oldest girl and dearly loved her integrity even as she worked in a world

in Paris. The school, which emphasized clas-She was an athletic child, who loved to sicism and visualization of architecture, was climb trees and play on her brothers' gym- where Richard Morris Hunt had trained. It had nastic equipment. Her mother, brought up in recently added more engineering emphasis, strict Victorian mores, tried to discourage her and women were beginning to be admitted. Morgan was one of the first to actually complete the program and become accredited. Upon her return to San Francisco in 1902, she became a licensed architect in California.

Initially working for John Galen Howard, Morgan designed several important campus buildings, one of which was the William Randolph Hearst Greek Theatre at UC Berkeley. cine, or architecture. However, she had no Though Howard was the architect of record, desire to become the model Victorian wife, it is pretty certain that the classically trained forever sentenced to running her husband's Morgan produced the actual design. The amphitheater was a gift from the Hearst family to the college, and perhaps it was through She was, in her own way, still a woman of this project that she met W.R. Hearst for the

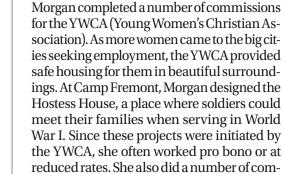
In 1903, Morgan received her first major commission from Mills College's co-founder Susan Mills. It was for "El Campanil," a Span-



A studio portrait of architect Julia Morgan in 1926.

There are well over 700 **buildings** for which she is the architect of record.

The façade of Hearst Castle's Casa Grande with 16th-century convent doors.



Hearst newspapers.

Only Take 6 Months

A 'Small' Project That Should

led the herculean effort.

of 10 bells originally cast for the 1893 Columbi-

an International Exposition in Chicago. They were the gift of industrialist David Hewes,

and Morgan set them off in a series of arched

openings so that they would be prominently

The towers and other buildings Morgan designed for the campus were built of reinforced

concrete cast in a traditional form. The use of

this material was considered new and innova-

tive at the time. Ultimately, it would be one of

Morgan's greatest contributions to building

In 1904, Morgan established her own prac tice, and the Mills College bell tower was com-

pleted. Just two years later, all the buildings

of San Francisco would be severely shaken.

Chaos ensued as a 7.9 magnitude quake dev-

astated the city in 1906. At Mills College, dev-

astation was severe, but the two-year-old bell

tower stood soundly without a crack. Morgan's

San Francisco's Fairmont Hotel had just

been completed at the time of the quake. It

was completely gutted by the fires that fol-

lowed the earthquake—nothing more than

a blackened shell. The owners selected Stan-

ford White, of the New York firm of McKim,

Mead and White, to oversee the rebuilding.

But White was murdered at Madison Square

Garden before he could begin the work.

Morgan was chosen to take over. No one was

even sure that the shell could be saved—the

foundation of the building had shifted seven

feet! Morgan worked in a shack on the site,

calculating the engineering for the project. A

year later, the hotel was completely rebuilt and

opened again. She had quietly and confidently

In addition to hundreds of private homes,

mercial projects, including the offices of the

Morgan's schedule was full with projects for

the YWCA. She worked from this mindset: "Don't ever turn down a job because it's be-

neath you, [or] because you think you want

to do something larger." When William

Randolph Hearst approached her to design

a "small bungalow" on a hill at his San Simeon

ranch, she listened. The ranch had belonged

to the Hearst family for years, and for W.R.

Hearst, the hilltop was a family retreat and

engineering had proved brilliant.

construction.



camping spot. Hearst, however, remarked to Morgan that he was getting too old to sleep in tents. He initially proposed a small house a project that would not take more than six months. With her family responsibilities and an ever growing number of projects, she could have easily turned it down. Instead, she began what she labeled simply as "Project 503." What developed from that initial meeting turned into a 28-year collaboration.

The "simple bungalow" became a group of cottages. The group of cottages became a Mediterranean village in 16th-century Spanish Renaissance style. The hill became La Cuesta Encantada (The Enchanted Hill). The central feature of the project became La Casa Grande on its central plaza. The façade of Casa Grande was derived from Cathedral Santa Maria la Mayor in Ronda, Spain. Morgan worked pieces of historical artwork acquired by Hearst into the architecture. Most notable are a pair of 16th-century convent doors. In order to fit them into the façade, Morgan had master ironworker Gustaf Edward

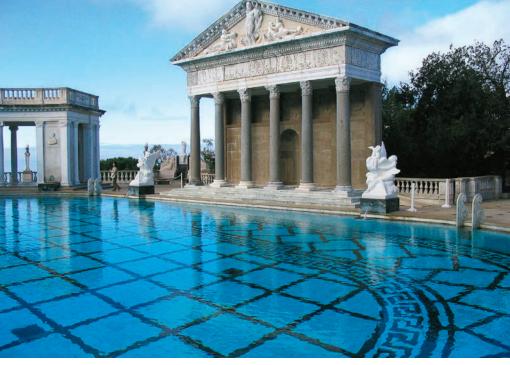


El Campanil, the beautiful bell tower on the campus of Mills College in

Oakland, Calif., in 1906.

Library of Congress.

(Right) Julia Morgan designed the Hostess House, a place where World War I soldiers could meet their families. Photographed circa 1915 to 1920. Library of Congress.



Trinkkeller create a matching archway piece over the historic doors.

(Right) The Neptune Pool at the Hearst Castle.

Fairmont Hotel in San

Francisco, circa 1920.

Library of Congress.

(Left)

Trinkkeller was but one of many craftspeople Morgan hired and supervised during the decades of construction. Not everyone she brought out to the site lasted. The remote location was too distant. Morgan's expectations were exacting, and her dedication to historical accuracy was legendary. She would come out to the jobsite, spend a whole day supervising, and then return to her busy life in San Francisco. Some tile mechanics were chagrined when she returned from San Francisco only to say that their work was "too perfect." The tile setters were forced to break out areas of their work and re-lay them so as to create the

impression of ancient tile that had settled. As the project grew in scope, features such as the Neptune Pool were built. It was a grand project, which could be compared to Hunt's Biltmore Estate, but it was not one colossal house. It was always a series of houses. Building continued until W.R. Hearst literally ran out of money. It remains unfinished to this

day, but Hearst Castle and its surroundings have enthralled thousands of visitors for

DONALD R. NEUDECKER/SHUTTERSTOCK

Although able to succeed in grand projects for the wealthy, Morgan was most devoted to projects such as the YWCA commissions. The Asilomar Conference Grounds, developed for the YWCA in Pacific Grove, California, contain some of her most beautiful designs. The Craftsman-style buildings, with their exposed beams and use of natural materials, honor the site. Eleven of the 16 buildings she designed there still survive and still welcome guests. Typical of her work for the YWCA, they provide a beautiful and inspiring setting for visitors—something Morgan always tried to do for all who would enter her buildings.

Bob Kirchman is an architectural illustrator who lives in Augusta County, Va., with his wife Pam. He teaches studio art to students in the Augusta Christian Educators Homeschool Co-op.





Kitty Wells posing with her guitar in 1956. Photograph by Walden S. Fabry in Nashville, Tenn. The Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection, Library of Congress.

**COUNTRY MUSIC** 

# Soulful Country Ballads and Downhome, Southern Cooking

**REBECCA DAY** 

ne of country music's bright-

husband, Johnnie Wright, throughout the '30s and '40s, her 1952 breakout hit "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk est stars, Kitty Wells amassed Angels" ushered her forward to become 64 Top 40 hits during her one of country music's bestselling recordtenure performing from ingartists. Her relatable lyrics and emo-1936 to 2000. Getting her tional vocals made her music a staple in start by recording gospel music with her countless households, and her knack for down-home Southern cooking meant that her recipe books were staples in kitchens across the South as well.

A Nashville Native With Gospel Roots Born Ellen Muriel Deason in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1919, Kitty Wells grew up in a big, musical family. Her mother, Myrtle, loved to sing gospel music; and

her father, Charles, taught her how to play guitar. When she was still just a teen, she performed regularly with her siblings as The Deason Sisters on radio-hosted variety shows.

### **Fans loved Kitty Wells'** inviting Southern warmth.

When she was 18, she fell in love with fellow musician Johnnie Wright and they got married. With a shared love of music, they began performing together. It was actually Johnnie who came up with Kitty's moniker, borrowing the name from a character in one of his favorite old folk

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Wells focused on performing and recording gospel music but experienced little commercial success. By the early 1950s, she was a mother of three and was considering hanging her hat up for good after decades of traveling and performing.

While she enjoyed the many years she spent working as a professional musician, she also loved family life and felt a sense of pride and fulfillment as a homemaker caring for her loved ones. This authentic duplexity would play a pivotal role in her career as a country music star later on.

### **One Last Recording Session**

In 1952, Wells decided to enter a recording studio for the last time. She wasn't crazy about the song she was scheduled to record, but her management team thought her vocal range was ideal for it. Her languid, expressive voice lent itself well to the country western ballad "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels." While Kitty was most excited about the payment she received for the service she provided, she had no idea just how popular the song would become.

The song didn't receive much airplay. But her genuine live performances coupled with grassroots word-of-mouth promotion prevailed. Country music listeners clamored for the heartfelt tune, purchasing over 800,000 copies of the single after its debut, and sending it all the way to No. 1 on country charts. Soon, Kitty found herself performing across the nation and on America's country group, The Crazy Daysies.

most-watched prime-time variety shows. Even at the peak of her success in the 1950s and 1960s, Kitty remained a steadfast matriarch to her family and released collaborative records with her husband. In 1969, she got the whole family involved when she and her husband were offered a syndicated TV show, which she appropriately named "The Kitty Wells and Johnnie Wright Family Show." Aside from performances together, the pair also brought their three children on stage to perform with them while filming the show.

**Kitty Wells Country Kitchen Cook Book** Fans loved Kitty's understated, traditional dresses and inviting Southern warmth. Known as the "gutsy good girl," she carved out a niche for herself that authentically promoted family values and a more modest approach to living.

While many artists simply released songbooks featuring lyrics and music to go along with their records, Wells wanted to connect with her audience on a deeper level. In true Southern fashion, she knew that the best way to do that was through food—one of the South's most important and enduring cultural pillars besides country music itself.

Although Kitty released several different recipe books, the first edition she authored remains the most popular. "Country Kitchen Cook Book" debuted in 1964 and showcases her family's favorite recipes. Southern dessert mainstays like 7-Up Pound Cake and Banana Bread are included, each with a little ingredient twist by Kitty to add unique flavor. Kitty's famous Orange Coconut Cake makes an appearance as well—a grand, old-fashioned-style sweet treat that was her husband's favorite.

While raising a family, recording, and performing, Kitty and Johnnie somehow found the time to also run a country store in Madison, Tennessee, close to their Nashville home. The small-town destination offered locally grown food and one-of-a-kind gifts and crafts designed by Southern artists.

Wells's country-inspired recipe books became household favorites much like her music, passed down from one generation to the next. Sometimes referred to as the Queen of Country Music, or simply "Queen Kitty," she combined her love of family with her love of music and produced a wholesome, commendable legacy that country music fans continue to admire even today.

Rebecca Day is an independent musician, freelance writer, and frontwoman of

Readers will become immersed in the in-

### Riveting Read on the Republican Convention of 1860

**ANITA L. SHERMAN** 

My grandfather on my mother's side was a self-taught lawyer. His jurisprudence was practiced in Socorro, New Mexico, in the late 1800s. Some of my relatives say that he lobbied for statehood, though that effort didn't succeed in New Mexico until 1912.

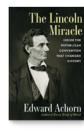
It was more than 50 years earlier, in 1860, that another self-taught lawyer was lobbying his case against a field of 11 at the Republican National Convention held in the bustling city of Chicago. A little-known Illinois country attorney, Abraham Lincoln, was seeking the Republican nomination for president.

Lincoln was antislavery and pro-Union. While the Northern and Southern states had drawn lines on the slavery issue, it was the Northwest Territory, and future states like New Mexico, that loomed as an unknown in terms of whether they would reject or accept slavery. Where they landed on the issue would add or detract from allegiances already established in the East.

In 1860, the issue of slavery topped a contentious list of divisive topics that included racism, unbridled immigration, the economy, and prohibition, to name a few. The political climate was raucous and unnerving, particularly for those seeking public office.

### **Comprehensive and Compelling**

It is against this tumultuous background that historian and author Edward Achorn crafts a



THE LINCOLN MIRACLE: INSIDE THE REPUBLICAN **CONVENTION THAT CHANGED HISTORY'** By Edward Achorn Atlantic Monthly Press Feb. 14, 2023 512 pages

riveting read that is laser-focused on a six-day period starting on May 12, 1860, and ending on May 18, when Lincoln secured the nomination to be the Republican candidate for president on the third ballot.

"The Lincoln Miracle: Inside the Republican Convention That Changed History" is aptly titled. "Miracle" is no doubt the word to use when describing the extraordinary events that took place during that period in America's history.

Aside from giving readers a detailed profile of the various candidates in the running most notably New York Senator William H. Seward, who was the prominent politician most favored to secure the nomination— Achorn infuses a procession of other chaotic ingredients, including a host of influential newspaper editors, power brokers like Horace Greeley and Thurlow Weed, rising youth groups like the Wide Awakes, and the strength of abolitionist and prohibitionist sentiments.

It was a raucous and contentious time in America, perhaps even worse than what we're

The Republican National Convention held in Chicago in 1860 was described by some as a saturnalia, fashioned after boisterous Roman festivals. It was indeed a near fantastical event held in a recently constructed building known as the Wigwam. Designed to hold thousands and acoustically designed so that voices would carry, it was lavishly and lovingly decorated inside by crews of dedicated women.

Achorn, again, does the reader a keen and educated service by describing the rise of the city of Chicago itself. In the early 1830s, it was a few buildings clustered next to the Chicago River. By 1860, its population had swelled to some 110,000 inhabitants who brought not just industrial growth, but also growing pains in the form of poor sanitation, crowded streets,

and congested railway stations. Delegates poured into the city from all across the country. If they were fortunate, they were able to secure rooms in the few prominent hotels; many were willing to share a room.

In his book, Achorn does a brilliant job of painting a colorful, vibrant, and complicated picture that successfully incorporates many themes. While readers already know the outcome of Lincoln becoming America's 16th president, the book is a page turner as the behind-the-scenes chicanery looms ever large and prescient.

### It was a raucous and contentious time in America.

The Civil War, A Country Divided

The issue of slavery in America was brewing decades before the Republican Convention. But by 1860, it was a boil ready to burst. Lincoln knew this, but he was hoping that sentiment would subside. It didn't, resulting in the secession of the Confederate States of America and its subsequent attack against a United States military garrison at Fort Sumter in South Carolina on April 12, 1861.

tensity of that divide as Achorn poignantly describes the level of vehemence, brutality, and violence that ran rampant over the chasm surrounding slavery. Many in the South were bent on seceding. Lincoln's securing the presidency (thanks to Northern voters) only bolstered that cause.

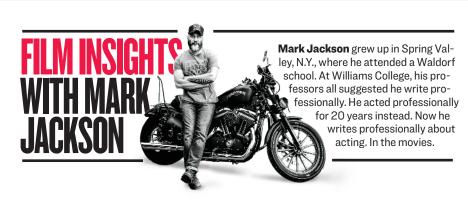
This is a tome, but don't let the more than 500 pages scare you. Actual reading pages are 444. Still long, but well worth the read. What a story—a long shot, rural lawyer ascending to the presidency and changing America's course in a most pivotal manner.

Achorn's book is one of many in the legendary library of Lincoln literature, but it is an essential read not only for Lincoln aficionados but also for anyone who is a compassionate consumer of our nation's political history.

Anita L. Sherman is an award-winning journalist who has more than 20 years of experience as a writer and editor for local papers and regional publications in Virginia. She now works as a freelance writer and is working on her first novel. She is the mother of three grown children and grandmother to four, and she resides in Warrenton, Va. She can be reached at anitajustwrite@gmail.com



Drawing of the Wigwam's interior during the 1860 nominating Note the second-story gallery and curved ceiling structure for better acoustics





Opening credit roll in the high school film that begat all classic American high school films, "American Graffiti."

## A Golden Anniversary Celebration

### The enthralling genius of director George Lucas's first hit

#### **MARK JACKSON**

"American Graffiti," the 1973 landmark teen drama that was a game-changer in the history of American cinema, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

### **Beginnings**

A long time ago in a galaxy (or maybe a kitchen) far, far away—before making movie history with "Star Wars"—young George Lucas was an aspiring filmmaker, coming off a commercially disappointing film debut, and thinking about his next move in Hollywood.

Lucas's production company co-founder, Francis Ford Coppola, white-hot after directing "The Godfather," challenged Lucas John and Carol to write a mainstream audience-appealing film. Rising to the challenge, Lucas wrote "American Graffiti."

Lucas shot this low-budget rock 'n' roll jukebox film in approximately one month, in the NorCal towns of San Rafael and Petaluma. The sleeper hit of '73, it was full of groundbreaking cinematic innovations, one of which is the catapulting of unknown actor-casts to future movie stardom via high school movies.

Graffiti" would secure for Lucas the financial backing and film-helming confidence to tackle "Star Wars" and was also the first time he and longtime collaborator Harrison Ford worked together. Young Ford's star-making turn as bad-boy hot-rodder Bob Falfa in his '55 Chevy was a dry run for galactic bad-boy Han Solo in his hot-rod spaceship, the Millennium Falcon.

"Graffiti," featuring a culturally resonant, nonstop soundtrack of 41 golden-oldie hits, is one of the most influential coming-of-age films ever made, suffused with nostalgia and teenage rebellion in the bittersweet final days betwixt adolescent innocence and imminent poem about the Hero's Journey that looks like pearing around a corner. a truly gifted director.

### **American Graffiti**

"American Graffiti" takes place in Modesto, California, in 1962, the twilight of American innocence, at the start of the Vietnam War but before the Soviet-communist-planted seeds of subterfuge took root in America via drugs, assassinations, free love, divisive racial tension, and political protesting, to name a few.

Born from Lucas's autobiographical experiences of 1950s car cruising and early rock 'n' roll culture, it tells the story of a group of teenage friends and their adventures and misadventures over the course of one night.

### The Characters

In this region of "The Valley," hanging out at neon-lit Mel's curb-service diner is the starting point of every Modesto youth's weekend night. At Mel's, the shakes are thick, the burgers juicy, and roller-skating carhop waitresses zip around, balancing heaped trays. Then, it's off to cruise Main Street in muscled-up hot rods meant to entice the girlies, as well as engine-revving challenges, and tire-squealing peel-outs at stoplights.

The four main characters are straightarrow Steve Bolander (Ron Howard), badboy drag racer John Milner (Paul Le Mat), Coke-bottle-glasses-wearing nerd Terry "The Toad" Fields (Charles Martin Smith) and the true star of the movie—the other nice guy-the slightly whimsical Curt Henderson (Richard Dreyfuss).

The revelations they experience over the course of the night end up having a profound impact: They are either revealed to the audience in a new light or see the world around them in a new light.

### To Stay or Go

Recent grads and best buddies Curt and Steve are heading East to college in the morning, but brainy Moose Lodge scholarship winner Curt is getting cold feet.

Meanwhile, former class president Steve attempts to break up with longtime steady girlfriend (Curt's sister and head cheerleader Laurie Henderson, played by Cindy Williams) because he wants the freedom to

fool around at college. His smarmy, gaslighting treatment of Laurie reveals that underneath the all-American boyish good looks and smalltown politeness—he's not really

John Milner (Paul Le Mat), the town's 22-year-old local drag-racing legend, with his powerful '32 yellow Ford Deuce Coupe and his T-shirt-sleeve-rolled Camel pack, still acts like it's 1958, trying to pick up high school girls. Milner's the template for Matthew McConaughey's character Wooderson in Richard Linklater's "Dazed and Confused" (the entirety of which is actually an homage and update of "Graffiti").

On this particular night, Milner ends up getting practical-joke bamboozled by a carload of cuties and stuck driving one of their bratty, blue-streak-talking, 13-year-old little sisters around. After his initial disgust at Carol's (Mackenzie Phillips) age, and his hysterical attempts to explain her embarrassing presence to his fans by saying that he's babysitting his cousin, they end up having a blast together.

The scenes of Milner's slow transformation into a protective, heroic, older brother are the most touching, memorable, and funniest in the movie. Most of their comedic moments come from Carol's skinny, precocious young self repeatedly attempting to "get a little action" and throwing herself at the dashing older man, causing him to be shocked and to loudly and vehemently rebuff her foolishness. Deep down, they both know she's bluffing.

### Curt and the Pharaohs

Meanwhile, Curt, cruising with Steven and Laurie, gets completely obsessed for the night with a beautiful, mysterious blonde in a white adulthood, eventually becoming a film of Thunderbird (Suzanne Somers), who mouths genuine sociological importance. It's a comic "Ilove you" at him at a stoplight before disap-

> Curt also survives getting "kıdnapped" by the Pharaohs, a local greaser gang, and put through a cop-car-destroying gang initiation by the sly and perennially bemused gang leader Joe (Bo Hopkins).

> Hopkins's Joe, while seeming somewhat out of place (the two other gang members are Latino), is a true alpha with keen perception. He's the only one who knows that the mythical Wolfman Jack does not broadcast out of Mexico, as cohort Carlos thinks, or circle around in a plane that never lands (Carol's understanding of the Wolfman myth). Joe knows that Wolfman's radio tower is right out on the outskirts of town. He also knows that the beautiful T-Bird blonde Curt fancies is a "dirty-dollar Sherry."

> What's fun about the Pharaohs subplot is that while Curt's being trapped in the Pharaohs' back seat definitely has a hostile racial element to it, he turns the tables on it and gains the gang's respect, which is a turning point in his understanding that he's truly outgrown his environment.

### Toad and Debbie

While all of the above is happening, nerdloser Toad is ecstatic that Steve has bequeathed him the use of his car while he's away at college. Cruising around, constantly faced with

the fact that even a cool car won't make him

The sleeper hit of '73, it was full of groundbreaking cinematic innovations

'American

George Lucas

Francis Ford Coppola

Richard Dreyfuss,

Ron Howard, Paul Le Mat, Charles

Phillips, Candy

Wolfman Jack

**Running Time** 

MPAA Rating

**Release Date** 

\*\*\*\*

1 hour, 50 minutes

Bo Hopkins

Martin Smith, Cindy

Williams, Mackenzie

Clark, Harrison Ford,

Director

**Producer** 

Starring

cool, to his own amazement, Toad actually manages to pick up Debbie (Candy Clark), a bleached blonde looking for liquor and cheap thrills. "Buenas Noches!!" shouts Toad as a pickup line. Debbie's thrilled to be told that she looks like Connie Stevens and Sandra Dee.

Clark and Smith almost steal the movie from Le Mat and Phillips with equally funny lines:

**Debbie (Clark):** Maybe it's the goat-killer, and he'll get somebody, and we'll see the whole thing."

**Toad (Smith):** I don't wanna see the whole thing!!! Who do you think will take the regionals this year???

Terry's main lesson of the night is that merely being his highly intelligent self (instead of lying about his "hunting ponies" that he uses to "hunt bears with") is enough to impress a girl.

The long night leads to the final showdown between challenger Bob Falfa (Harrison Ford) in his black, monstrously beefed-up '55 Chevy Bel Air, and Milner.

### **Loser Revelations**

Back to Curt (basically a stand-in for Lucas). While attempting to bask in the nostalgia of his high school memories, Curt has a series of revelations about people he didn't think were losers, but who are, in fact. The high school teacher he once looked up to is sleeping with a female high school student, and his excuse for quitting Middlebury College stinks of the similar self-deceptions that all Curt's friends will soon be using.

Curt demystifies Wolfman Jack, gains the respect of the Pharaohs he formerly feared, learns the woman of his dreams is a prostitute, and witnesses the pontificating Steve dwindle into a backsliding coward. Curt's the only one who realizes how fleeting it all is. He knows if he gets on that airplane tomorrow the village life he returns to. If he returns.

The film's multiple intersecting narratives and the use of a diegetic soundtrack (heard by the film's characters as well as the audience) create a tangible sense of time and place. Throughout, the voice of all-night deejay Wolfman Jack's comedic patter emanates from various car radios, functioning as the film's de facto narrator. The reason every new movie featuring young people from 1973 to the present features a pop soundtrack is due to this groundbreaking feature from "American Graffiti."

### That's a Wrap

Many other films came along later that duplicated the one-night structure of "American Graffiti," telling a story with a gang of characters. But "Graffiti" catches not only the charm and tribal energy of the teen-age 1950s but also the listlessness and the resignation underscoring it all.

As The Beach Boys' "We've been having fun all summer long" fades during the credit roll, it's hard to shake the sad feeling that the end of summer heralds the end of fun. "American Graffiti" shares powerful nostalgia with "Gone With the Wind," which is why it always leaves you with a bittersweet ache.

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Harrison Ford in the

him to stardom in

"American Graffiti."

role that help propel

**DOCUMENTARY RECOMMENDATION** 

### A Revelatory, Must-See Documentary on Homeschooling

IAN KANE

y most accounts, the year 2020 was pretty traumatic after all we witnessed and experienced, with the widespread overreach in both the public and private sectors that limited our rights.

However, there was a silver lining during that tumultuous period. The lockdown inspired many people to embrace their inner entrepreneurs and start their own homebased businesses. And when children of all ages were sent home to continue their studies online, parents got a good look at what they were being taught.

For parents, it was a revelation to realize that many public and private schools are little more than Marxist brainwashing centers, with agendas such as critical race theory (CRT), anti-American revisionist history, and homosexual and transsexual ideologies being aggressively pushed on our youth.

So just like many people began their own home businesses, parents across the country started to homeschool their kids.

Actor and filmmaker Kirk Cameron's (of "Growing Pains" fame) 2022 documentary, "The Homeschool Awakening," focuses on the many parents who have opted to pull their kids out of public schools and educate them at home.

The film consists of interviews with 17 different families from various socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds who have chosen to homeschool their kids. There are also interviews on the topic with journalists, former teachers, and others in education.

The film kicks off by showing corporate news clips of the COVID-19 shutdown of schools, as well as interview snippets of fearful parents not knowing what to do when their kids are ordered to go home.

We are then introduced to the families and learn of their initial misconceptions about homeschooling. Many of them speak of the skepticism they first felt when homeschooling was brought up. Even Kirk and his wife, Chelsea, mention how they were initially doubtful about homeschooling.

# Who can better teach children than their parents?

#### **US Education in the Past**

Journalist, author, and educator Alex Newman does a great job of giving a historical perspective on schooling in the United States. He talks about how the Pilgrims passed a law called "The Old Deluder Satan Act" in 1647 that emphasized teaching people in the original colonies how to read. In their wisdom, the Pilgrims knew that if people were literate, they'd develop into upstanding citizens with strong faith in God.

Newman describes the large role that the church once filled for private academies and other institutions. However, in the 19th century, the first secretary of education, Horace Mann, began setting up the first public schools in Massachusetts. More and more states started "jumping on the bandwagon," and public schools began popping up all over the United States.

In 1962, the Supreme Court ruled that prayer in public schools was "unconstitutional." That crucial ruling paved the way for another ruling by the Supreme Court in 1963 that prohibited Bible readings in pub-



Kirk and Chelsea Cameron reveal their initial reservations about homeschooling before discovering its many benefits, in "The Homeschool Awakening."

lic schools. "That was a fundamental turning point in the history of the United States, when we officially said to God, 'You're not welcome in the education of our children anymore," Newman states.

Conversely, homeschooling parents are able to determine what subjects their kids are taught, and thus many are once again infusing faith into their young ones' curriculums.

### **Dispelling Myths**

The film goes on to dispel many of the myths and fears that may be preventing some parents from considering homeschooling. One of the biggest falsehoods is that parents aren't properly qualified to teach their kids. However, as the documentary shows us, parents are not only more invested in their kids since they love them, but they've already been teaching their kids for their entire lives. Parents have taught them how to walk, talk, carry themselves, and so on, since birth. Who would be better positioned to teach children than their own parents?

And for those who aren't sure whether homeschooling is allowed in their state, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, homeschooling is legal in every state—and as a movement, it's exploding. Between the 2020 and 2021 school years alone, homeschooling in U.S. households doubled.

This documentary doesn't use a one-size-fits-all approach. It's highly informative for people who are considering homeschooling, as well as for folks who have already

been homeschooling, yet want more information and useful tips. As more and more parents decide to homeschool their kids, whole communities of like-minded folks have been springing up all over the place.

"The Homeschool Awakening" is an insightful documentary about a movement that is spreading like wildfire. This film is so informative and engaging that it's the perfect vehicle for educating people on this "awakening." Please share it with your friends and family members who may not know much about it.

"The Homeschool Awakening" is available on Pureflix and Amazon.

Ian Kane is an U.S. Army veteran, author, filmmaker, and actor. He is dedicated to the development and production of innovative, thought-provoking, character-driven films and books of the highest quality.

#### 'The Homeschool Awakening'

**Director** Caleb Price

Running Time 1 hour, 40 minutes

MPAA Rating Not Rated

Release Date June 13, 2022

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