

THE VISIONARIES . . . unlikely companions

In 1885, when young Michael Murphy was born on the 480-acre family ranch in Mendon, Utah, 23-year-old Bernard Maybeck¹, somewhat newly graduated from École des Beaux-Arts, Paris², was working in New York for Thomas Hastings, École classmate, participating in Hastings projects, which included the Ponce de Leon and Alcazar Hotels in Florida.³

In 1895, Maybeck, 33, had worked his way to San Francisco and was well on his way to a distinguished career. Michael Murphy, 10, was on his way to helping his mother establish the second homestead on what is today known as the Curlew National Grasslands—a failed government homesteading location in Southern Idaho. The widowed Emma Murphy family had suddenly gone from riches to rags. Michael would help his mom with building the largest log house in the valley, cutting, transporting, and selling logs to other homesteaders building a dream.

In 1902, called to Carmel by James Franklin Devendorf, young Michael, age 17,⁴ built his first Carmel-by-the-Sea structure—a modest home for his mom and five of her youngest (of 12) children, Michael one of them. He would fetch the bathwater, fill the tub, and take first dibs on using it.

In 1902, 40-year-old Bernard “Ben” Maybeck was designing homes in the Berkeley hills, an unbuilt structure for the University of California, and homes in San Francisco.⁵ Some extant—just as is the First Murphy—saved, in 1991, by the City of Carmel and a well-organized team of volunteers who donated both time and skills.

In 1910, 48-year-old Maybeck designed the extraordinary First Church of Christ Scientist in Berkeley.⁶ In 1917, 32-year-old M. J. Murphy designed and built the First Church of Christ Scientist at the corner of Santa Rita & 5th in Carmel.⁷

In 1918, Ralph Chandler Harrison, Associate Justice of the California Supreme Court, died. Judge Harrison had an extensive personal library—he served 27 years with San Francisco Library Board of Trustees.⁸ The Harrisons were passionate book collectors. Mrs. Harrison took comfort in having books about her—from collectors’ editions to just good reads.⁹ Ella Spencer Reid

¹ Woodbridge, Sally B.; *Bernard Maybeck Visionary Architect*; Abbeville Press Publishers, NY; 1992; Bernard Maybeck, b. 1862; p. 15. d. 1957.

² Woodbridge, Sally B.; *Bernard Maybeck Visionary Architect*; p. 15.

³ https://berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley_landmarks/maybeck_on_grove.html; accessed 22 February 2025.

⁴ Author’s personal knowledge

⁵ Woodbridge, Sally B.; *Bernard Maybeck Visionary Architect*; *Buildings & Projects*; pgs. 225 – 236.

⁶ Woodbridge, Sally B.; *Bernard Maybeck Visionary Architect*; p.89.

⁷ “A Diversity of Murphy’s, *Carmel Preservation Foundation*, tour guide, undated, approx. 1990-1995.

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_C._Harrison, accessed 23 February 2025.

⁹ Sources: <https://californiarevealed.org/do/66a2fae4-9283-4762-bb10-b0691ba87aa2>; and, “History,” Neal Hotelling, *Carmel Pine Cone*, May 3 & 13, 2022.

Harrison donated land and funds for a new and larger library for the village she would adopt as her home. She had Jo Mora design a building because he was on the Library Board of TTEEs.¹⁰ Timing was poor – WWI and a flu pandemic.

In 1919, Mrs. Harrison, niece of Whitelaw Reid, Ambassador to England and publisher of the NY Herald Tribune, recent widow of Ralph Chandler Harrison, moved to Carmel. She and her lady friends had been visiting Carmel since 1914. She liked the pace.

Carmel's Board of TTEEs and the community were not of one mind. Mrs. Harrison's project proceeded slowly.

In 1919, M. J. Murphy was building Tor House for Robinson and Una Jeffers. M. J. and Edna Murphy loaned the Jeffers family the use of the Murphy twin's stroller. Twins Rosalee and Kathaleen Murphy were born in 1914. Donnan and Garth Jeffers were born in 1916.

And in 1919, Bernard Maybeck designed San Francisco's idyllic Forest Hill Neighborhood Association Building.¹¹

In 1922, Ella Spencer Reid Harrison died in a fire in her Carmel cottage. Her personal book collection and the Mora library plans, per Neal Hotelling, historian, died with her.¹²

Harrison Memorial Library did not proceed apace.

Mr. Maybeck's output is well-documented, universally known, revered and includes the Palace of Fine Arts (1913-15); Phoebe Hearst's Wynton (begun 1899); the Packard Automobile Showroom, San Francisco (1926); Byington Ford House (1922), Pebble Beach.¹³

AND . . .

Murphy went on to build, among many, the Highlands Inn, Monterey Peninsula Country Club, La Playa Hotel rebuild after a fire, Pine Inn, The Hacienda at the Santa Lucia Preserve, Carmel's first bank, and my favorite—the Kluegel home on N. Camino Real . . .¹⁴ Many were his design. "*Plans Drawn and Built by M. J. Murphy*" w his characteristic signature.¹⁵

THEN . . .

¹⁰ "History," Neal Hotelling, *Carmel Pine Cone*, May 13 & 20, 2022.

¹¹ <https://foresthill-association.com/clubhouse/about-clubhouse/>; accessed 23 February 2025.

¹² "History," Neal Hotelling, *Carmel Pine Cone*, May 13 & 20, 2022.

¹³ Woodbridge, Sally, *Bernard Maybeck Visionary Architect*, pgs.226-235.

¹⁴ Various sources, CBTS records, M. J. Murphy, Inc. records; Carmel Preservation; Rosalee Murphy Gladney; Seavey, Kent, *Carmel A History in Architecture*, Arcadia Publishers, 2007.

¹⁵ *Structures of the Period, Carmel-by-the-Sea, California*; Promotional Booklet, M. J. Murphy, Inc., approx. 1930.

In 1926, Chapel Judson, artist and retired Professor of Art who was instrumental in forming the art department at UC Berkeley, and husband of Sydney Yard's daughter, relocated to the Monterey Peninsula after the Judson's Bay Area home burned.¹⁶ Sydney Yard was the first professional artist to settle in Carmel-by-the-Sea, 1905.¹⁷ The Judsons hired M. J. Murphy to design and build their Pebble Beach home at 1456 Riata Road. The 1927 Harrison Memorial Library design imitates, using more modest materials and size, the 1926 Chapel Judson home. This is a not unusual design choice by many in the fields of architecture and building.

A year later, in 1927/28, Maybeck and Murphy, two successful men with backgrounds and education that didn't meet at any corner, would come together on the NE corner of Lincoln & Ocean Avenue in Carmel-by-the-Sea to create Ella Harrison's dream: the Ralph Chandler Harrison Memorial Library. B. R. Maybeck, Consulting Architect / M. J. Murphy Architectural Drawing.¹⁸

Notable characteristics of Murphy designed buildings often include multiple interior levels in which one passes through one room to stairs up or down to the next room. Built-in cabinetry may fill in sometimes wasted-space. Structures are typically placed well-back on the building site, entries uniquely placed not in the prominent exterior front, but through a chalkrock path and courtyard to an unobtrusive side of the structure and a welcoming front door. All these Murphy traditions are present in Harrison Memorial Library.

It could factually be stated of the above-mentioned talented and successful visionaries that all but one came from privileged upbringings, privileged lives. All but one had received the very best formal education. M. J. Murphy whose formal education ended when he was 10-ish, was an autodidact, a skilled designer of buildings varying from modest cottages to grand public structures. He and his wife, Edna, were workaholics. Edna worked at the business of M.J. Murphy, Inc. until the day she died in 1954. Young Michael Murphy began working at age 10. In 1940, when 55, M. J. retired to their home on the McKenzie River.

I would like to share this excerpt from pages 12 & 13 of the DPR for the Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco. DPR's are not infallible, in fact, the DPR on the First Murphy contains more than one error.

“ . . . Willis Polk — a leading San Francisco architect . . . — was given the plum commission to design the Palace of Fine Arts. Overworked and unable to conceive a satisfactory solution for the

¹⁶ https://www.askart.com/artist/Charles_Chapel_Judson/3465/Charles_Chapel_Judson.aspx, accessed 24 February 2025.

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sydney_J._Yard; accessed 24 February 2025.

¹⁸ Blueprints on file, Harrison Memorial Library, History Room.

site, Polk invited the Exposition draftsmen to make suggestions. In her pioneering study *Five California Architects*, Esther McCoy recounts. . . .
 . . . With his usual loose and atmospheric approach to preliminary design, he sketched a gallery, an elliptical colonnade and rotunda in charcoal. . . . The sketch was passed along by Polk to other members of the Architectural Commission; the person most impressed by the sketch was Henry Bacon of New York, designer of the Lincoln Memorial. 'You will hear of this some day [sic],' he promised Maybeck.³ [sic] Ignoring protests from some of the exposition directors **who wanted only recognized architects with a demonstrated record of major commissions**, Polk magnanimously turned over his assignment to Bernard Maybeck. Then 51 years old, the architect was chiefly known for residential and church design, as well as for his unworldly eccentricity. Despite Maybeck's education at the Ecole[sic] des Beaux-Arts and his influence as a teacher, many did not take him seriously; a colleague remarked. . . ."¹⁹ [author emphasis]

Paraphrasing, I suggest that by giving Maybeck design credit for Harrison Memorial Library, many do not take M. J. Murphy seriously, deferring to the now widely and deservedly recognized Bernard Maybeck, who, himself, once was not taken seriously.

Murphy papers were destroyed. There are precious few. They share a Rubbermaid tub with the paternal side of Edna & MJ's grandson's father, Andy Gladney. So, I visited the Maybeck archives, Wurster Building, UC Berkeley. No structure plans. There are drawings for light fixtures, some furnishings, a fireplace. And letters. Three of them. The letters are in your packet.

James Franklin Murphy, M. J. and Edna's son, born 1904, took a leading part in the business following his 1924 graduation from U. C. Berkeley. Frank's "death bed," 1978, comment was, "Don't let them tell you Maybeck designed the library. Dad did." His sister Rosalee Murphy Gladney died in 2003. I have a note among my papers: "Don't let them tell you Maybeck designed the library. Dad did." Frank and Roe remembered watching their dad create plans late into the night, an oil lamp his light. Roe remembered her father would meet Maybeck at the Monterey Train Station, take him to Carmel to look at the project. Maybeck would sign-off, then M. J. would return him to the train station.

Maybeck died in 1957, age 95.²⁰ M. J. Murphy died in 1959, age 74.²¹

A timeline 1918 to 1928, of the design and development of Harrison Memorial Library is included in your packet.

My closing request:

¹⁹ DPR, 2013, Palace of Fine Arts.

²⁰ "Bernard Maybeck Dies in Berkeley," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, 4 October 1957.

²¹ Oregon Death Index 1898-2008; Vida, Lane County; 5 March 1959;

Murphy descendants respectfully request approval to donate a small, approximately 5" or 6" x 12," bronze plaque for the library to be placed in an inconspicuous location at the main exterior entry that correctly states, as noted on the 1927 building plans:

B. R. Maybeck, Consulting Architect
M. J. Murphy Architectural Drawing & Superintendent of Construction
1927-1928

The plaque, if approved, would be in honor of William F. Beckett II. I met Bill, a first cousin in 2015 due to a Pine Cone article. I met with him then and would interview him several times. Until the pandemic. And then he died. May 2022. He was 98 years old and sharp. In Bill Beckett's younger years, M. J. Murphy acted the role of grandfather. I learned much of the nitty-gritty of our shared great uncle through Bill's happy memories. When Bill was 10, M. J. gave him his first library card. Harrison Memorial Library was Bill Beckett's steady companion during his twilight years. It is he who, a few years ago, suggested a plaque crediting M. J.

What, please, is the process for approval / acceptance of the proposal?

I note that at the 5 April 1994 City Council meeting, item H, VII, on the Consent Agenda states: *Adopt Resolution No. 94-47 agreeing to cosponsor the Maybeck Plaque Donor Acknowledgment on 15 May 1994 with the Camel Public Library Foundation.*²²

I have not seen the plaque and wonder if it correctly states the above information.

Thank you,

Robin Aeschliman on behalf of the Michael Murphy and Emma Hagle Wilkinson Murphy descendants.

26 February 2025

²² Agenda, Carmel City Council, *Carmel Pine Cone*, 31 March 1994, p.10.

- 23 September 1926 Board of Trustee meeting, City of Carmel-by-the-Sea. Reported that Maybeck could not take entire charge of the library plans and construction supervision, but would advise and consult with Mr. Murphy.
- 8 November 1926 Letter to Maybeck from M. J. Murphy.⁵ Requests the return of 'our' original sketch of proposed Carmel Library.
- 9 November 1926 Letter to Murphy from Maybeck & White, states drawings were sent "yesterday."⁶
- 23 November 1926 Board of Trustee meeting, City of Carmel-by-the-Sea. Murphy plans shown. Maybeck large color sketch. Murphy directed to provide probable cost of the building in accordance with the submitted plans.
- 16 December 1926 Board Meeting. Bill for Maybeck presented, 1st installment. Murphy told of the plans for the library and explained various details at length. Outside finish discussed, decision to let Maybeck decide. Heating discussed; decision made. Decision to have Murphy prepare blue prints and specifications in accordance with the ideas brought out by plans and discussions; such prints and specifications to be shown to Maybeck and passed by him.
- 31 December 1926 Letter, John B. Jordan to Maybeck.⁷ Request for fireplace drawing. Jordan owned the Pine Inn and was Mayor of Carmel.⁸
- 31 January 1927 Date of arched window architectural drawing.⁹ Document in personal file is a photo, not original, and not entirely legible. Drawing, per photo, by Maybeck or Murphy; credit ambiguous.

⁵ Maybeck Archives, Wurster Hall, UC Berkeley; Murphy signature followed by a small "E" [suggests Edna Murphy signed].

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ https://localwiki.org/montereycounty/List_of_mayors_of_Carmel-by-the-Sea%2C_California; accessed 23 February 2025.

⁹ Kent Seavey, Architectural Historian; photo captured during HML Foundation lecture, 16 February 2022; https://vimeo.com/629410258?embedded=true&source=video_title&owner=29018550, accessed 14 March 2022.

- 23 February 1927 Board of Trustees meeting, City of Carmel-by-the-Sea.
Discussion of library plans.
Lights: decision to install per Pacific Gas & Electric Company layout.
Specifications prepared by Murphy and approved by Maybeck were discussed—suggestion of several changes and additions made, two board members were requested to take up the modifications with Murphy.
- 8 July 1927 Informal meeting, unsigned note-taker.
Wood, Jordan, Murphy, Campbell and unnamed note-taker present.
Contract of HML signed; \$20,373.00; bonus of \$10,500 for faithful performance filed by Murphy.
- 14 July 1927 Permit issued to M. J. Murphy for Harrison Memorial Library. Item 10 on permit: “Time to be engaged in building.” Answer: *120 days*.¹⁰
- 14 December 1927 Board of Trustee Meeting, City of Carmel-by-the-Sea.
Murphy instructed to prepare a design for a wall around the lot, to give an estimate of the cost of a rain water gutter on the side of the building.
Cracks in concrete floor discussed, repairs completed according to the best practice of the day; examination scheduled.
Linoleum color discussed; decision made.
Lighting fixtures discussed in detail: decision to adopt Maybeck design and Murphy to construct and install.
- March 1928 Harrison Memorial Library completed.
NOTE: Kenneth H. Cardwell in his study of Maybeck, Artisan, Architect, Artist, states in the Chronological List of Executed Work and Projects: “*The dates listed represent as accurately as possible the **start** of the construction of a project.*” 1928 is listed as the date for Maybeck’s participation in HML. If accurate, there’s a conflict between the city information and the Maybeck information. The listing, [the only entry in the book for HML]: 1928 March / Harrison Memorial Library, Carmel, CA.¹¹[Author emphasis]

¹⁰ Application for Building Permit, No. 1918.

¹¹ Kenneth H. Cardwell, *Bernard Maybeck Artisan, Architect, Artist*; (Peregrine Smith Books, Salt Lake City, 1977), 239, 245. NOTE: Sally B. Woodbridge, Photography by Richard Barnes; *Bernard Maybeck Visionary Architect*; (Abbeville Press Publishers, New York London Paris, 1992); pgs. 225, 235; provides the same information and credits Cardwell.

hanison

BUILDING MATERIAL
BUILDER'S HARDWARE
SASHES, DOORS
PAINTS, GLASS
CABINET WORK

M. J. Murphy

Building Materials

Estimates on All Kinds of Work

YARD, SAN CARLOS BETWEEN OCEAN AND 7TH
OFFICE, 9TH AND MONTE VERDE ST.

LUMBER
CHALK ROCK
SAND, GRAVEL
CEMENT, LIME
BRICK, TILE

P. O. Box 597, Carmel-by-the-Sea, California

November 8th. 1926

Mr. B. R. Maybeck,
c/o Messrs. Maybeck, Howard & White,
Lick Building,
San Francisco, Calif.

Dear Mr. Maybeck:-

We would thank you to kindly return to us our
original sketch of proposed Library to be built in Carmel.

Yours very truly,

M. J. MURPHY,

by



Nov. 9, 1926.

Mr. M. J. Murphy,
P.O. Box 597,
Carmel, Cal.

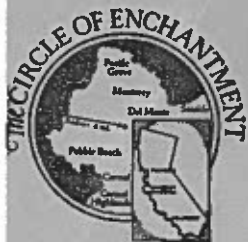
Dear Mr. Murphy:-

In response to your letter received this morning, I wish to state that I sent the drawings to you yesterday, so you will likely receive them today. Kindly advise us if you do not receive them.

Maybeck & White,

Per

Sec'y.



PINE INN
CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA
CALIFORNIA

Open the Year Round
American Plan
JOHN B. JORDAN
Proprietor

31st December, 1926.

Mr. B. R. Maybeck,

Tick Building,

San Francisco, Calif.

My dear Mr. Maybeck,

From our last call on your office I understood that you were to send us a detailed drawing of the fireplace. Mr. Murphy now has reached the point where he needs it and is calling upon me for it. Will you kindly let me know when we may expect it.

Wishing you a happy New Year,

Sincerely yours,

John B. Jordan



OKING NORTH

B.R. MAYBECK - Consulting Archt

M.J. MURPHY - Architectural Drawing

~~Superintendent of Construction~~

DRAFTING - ROOMERS

1/31/07

Extraordinary - Rec'd
Business
2/26/2025
HML Board of
Trustees

Members of the Harrison Memorial Library Board of Trustees
% Harrison Memorial Library
Carmel-by-the-Sea, California

RE: Meeting of 26 February 2025, Extraordinary Business (A)
Presentation by Robin Aeschliman

Dear Members of the Board,

In his commencement address at Yale University in June 1962, President Kennedy commented "The great enemy of truth...(is) the myth---persistent, persuasive and unrealistic."

After ninety-eight years of myth, it is time to accept the truth: Michael J. Murphy was the principal designer of the Harrison Memorial Library. The record is clear and concise, abundant and available, factual vs. the reigning fiction.

There is a certain cache to a renown architect's name being attached to the Harrison Memorial, but it isn't a tenet loyal to our history. Bernard Maybeck's fingerprints touched segments of the design; Murphy's fist gripped the accepted plans.

One need to look no further than the Murphy scheme for the C. Chapel Judson house in Pebble Beach to notice the "identical twin" mirror to the HML. The Judson house was drawn and constructed less than one year before the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea sought proposals for the to-be-built HML.

But a century later, the written record tells us more, much more, than just the solo, singular photo of the Judson home.

In response to the call for design proposals issued by the City in July 1926, nine local Monterey Peninsula designers, architects and builders responded. On Friday, 20 August, the Board met at the home of Trustee George Wood to review the submittals—there was no Brown Act in 1926!

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Trustees expressed agreement for a "Spanish type of building...but none of the plans submitted were entirely satisfactory." (Footnote A)

Trustees Larouette and Fenton suggested that a committee be appointed "to confer with Architect Maybeck in San Francisco." (Footnote B) That proposal was accepted.

Within one month following the 20 August meeting, Wood and colleague John B. Jordan travelled to San Francisco and met with Maybeck at his office in the Lick Building. Of the nine submitted proposals, they took Murphy's to Maybeck.

Upon returning to Carmel, a Board meeting was called for Thursday, 23 September. At that session, Jordan reported that Maybeck "could not take entire charge of the library plans and construction supervision, but that he would advise and consult with Mr. Murphy at all stages of the proceedings..." (Footnote C) Note the reference to Murphy.

The Maybeck archives at UC Berkeley contain the plans of the various elements that the architect developed for the HML project--the fireplace, reading tables, lighting, interior and exterior color schemes, and the garden wall. There are no preliminary plans or construction drawings of the Harrison in the archival collection.

Documentation reveals that the two trustees (Wood, Jordan) took the Murphy plans on the trip to San Francisco between the August and September board meetings. Murphy wrote to Maybeck on 8 November 1926, asking for the return "to us of our original sketch of the proposed Library to be built in Carmel." (Footnote D)

On Tuesday, 23 November 1926, the Board met at 5 pm. The minutes of the Trustees meeting states "The plans of Mr. Murphy were shown, as was a large color sketch by Mr. Maybeck." (Footnote E)

Also at this meeting, Murphy, not Maybeck, was given authorization to proceed with developing "the probable cost of the building in accordance with the plans submitted, and that these plans be accepted tentatively as a basis for estimate." (Footnote F)

Interestingly, Murphy, and not Maybeck, was tasked with developing the cost of the building in accordance with the plans submitted. Murphy would not be selected as the contractor for the library until July 1927.

Jordan wrote Maybeck on 31 December 1926, penning "I understand that you were to send us detailed drawing of the fireplace. Mr. Murphy now has reached the point where he needs it and is calling upon me for it." The information in Jordan's correspondence is consistent with the Maybeck archives at UC Berkeley. Maybeck designed the fireplace to assimilate into the Murphy drawings.

In August 1927, during the construction of the library, Willard K. Bassett, owner-editor of The Carmel Cymal newspaper, proposed a series of questions to Murphy via an "open letter" in the publication, about the library project, including inquiries regarding the roles of Murphy and Maybeck.

Amongst the questions posed was “And who drew the plans for this building you are constructing? Bernard Maybeck, the noted architect, didn’t, did he? They were drawn in your office, weren’t they? Bernard Maybeck telling the Carmel city council that after your draftsman drew them, he wold (sic) ‘criticize’ them.” (Footnote G)

Even in 1927, the Maybeck role in the design of the Harrison Memorial Library was being questioned.

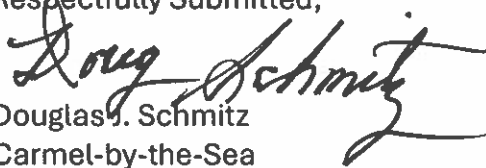
Murphy never responded to Bassett. Yet, Editor Bassett had it correct; the role of Maybeck was to review the plans drawn by Murphy and to assimilate a fireplace, lighting, and a garden wall into the project.

The promise of history is that eventually the truth prevails.

May the high court of Carmel history, that ultimate and eternal judge of your endeavors, find that this Board, at this meeting, in this chamber, on this date, ninety-eight years later, abolished the myth---and advanced and advocated—the truth.

Michael J. Murphy designed the Ralph Chandler Harrison Memorial Library.

Respectfully Submitted,


Douglas J. Schmitz
Carmel-by-the-Sea

24 February 2025

Attachment: Footnotes

HMLFOOTNOTESFEB25

- (A) Library Trustee Minutes, 20 August 1926
- (B) Ibid.
- (C) Library Trustee Minutes, 23 September 1926
- (D) MJ Murphy Letter to B.R. Maybeck, 8 November 1926
- (E) Library Trustee Minutes, 23 November 1926
- (F) Ibid.
- (G) Carmel Cymbal, 31 August 1927