

Biographical Sketch - Lilian J. Rice

Lilian Jeannette Rice was born June 13, 1889, to parents, Julius and Laura Rice of National City, California. Both father and mother provided a strong early influence, encouraging Lilian to strive beyond the normal range of opportunities available to women at the turn of the century. With a college career in mind, Julius, a leading educator in National City and San Diego public schools, guided his daughter's academic growth, while his wife, Laura, an artist, offered her creative inspiration.

In 1906, Lilian entered the University of California at Berkeley. During the next four years she watched a new campus take shape under the direction of John Galen Howard, head of the School of Architecture. Howard's master plan for the university called for a regional approach which reflected the environmental aesthetics proposed by the advocates for a definitive Bay Area style. This concept of an indigenous architecture greatly influenced Lilian's decision to become an architect and would later characterize all of her work.

Upon graduation in 1910, Lilian returned home to National City. For a time she worked as a draftsman in the office of Hazel Wood Waterman, a former Berkeley art student who later studied architecture under Irving Gill before branching out to practice on her own. Lilian also taught mechanical drawing and descriptive geometry at San Diego High School and San Diego State Teachers College.

About 1921, Lilian joined the architectural firm of Richard Requa and Herbert Jackson, a move which had an enormous impact on her life. Through Requa she again found the notion of a regional ideal. His use of Spanish,

Moorish and North African motifs as appropriate expressions of the Southern California climate and landscape, echoed the views of Bay Area architects. Lilian's association with Requa and Jackson enabled her to not only perfect her skills as an architect, but reinforced her earlier exposure to an indigenous architecture.

In 1922, the Santa Fe Land Improvement Company, a division of the Santa Fe Railroad, offered a commission to Requa and Jackson to design and supervise the planned community of Rancho Santa Fe. The former Spanish land grant, with its remnants of old adobes and romantic associations, seemed an ideal area to develop as country estates. Projects in town, however, caused Requa to turn the commission over to his associate, Lilian Rice.

Between 1922 and 1928, Rancho Santa Fe materialized into one of the most unusual communities ever designed. One novel feature Rancho Santa Fe had to offer was the civic center around which the community functioned. Here, a unique blend of Spanish-Colonial architecture, imagination and artistry combined to produce a centralized commercial district for efficient service to local residents. Lilian's skillful interpretation of Spanish motifs, her knowledge of the area's historic associations and appreciation for its natural beauty, resulted in an urban environment that incorporated both public buildings and commercial and residential structures as part of a well-conceived plan that enabled homeowners and business interests to flourish side by side. Through her efforts and dedication to the concepts envisioned by the Santa Fe Land Improvement Company, she not only created a near-perfect environment which captured the essence of the Spanish-Colonial era, but adapted it in such a way so as to protect and enhance the natural landscape. Sensitive use of plants native to a Mediterranean climate and

careful avoidance of obtrusive elements that might detract from the harmony established between building and topography, established a strong regional identity that would characterize the community of Rancho Santa Fe thereafter.

Along with development of the civic center, Lilian found time to design a number of country residences in the Rancho Santa Fe area. In the late 1920s, she ended her association with Requa and Jackson and opened her own office in the civic center complex. Lilian continued to practice architecture until her death in 1938.

During her career, Lilian earned a solid reputation as a competent architect, receiving awards from the American Institute of Architecture for the Valenciana Apartments in the civic center and for the Zlac Rowing Club in Pacific Beach. Other noteworthy designs included the townhouses along Paseo Delicias in Rancho Santa Fe, the Hamilton Carpenter Residence on El Mirador, and the Robinson House on Ludington Lane in La Jolla.

As a proponent of architectural controls, Lilian served on the original committee of Rancho Santa Fe residents who formed the Art Jury, a governing body which still functions today to ensure design guidelines are maintained. As an early environmentalist, she stressed simplicity of design and always sought to achieve a balance between building and topography. Combined with her faith in architecturally controlled communities, she envisioned a time when city planner and architect would cooperate to create communities sensitive to their surroundings and to people's needs.

Intended as a prototype for planned communities of the future, Rancho Santa Fe remains today as one of the few early 20th century developments which retains

much of its original character. Perhaps the degree to which residents today still zealously guard their covenant of protective restrictions, is, in part, some measure of Lilian Rice's successful attempt to establish a lasting regional identity.