

FORTUNE HEARST AT HOME - MAGGIO 1931 - SALOMON

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Hearst at Home

... in his great summer palace in California. Case notes on its history, its court life, and its contents.



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NO MAN, not even William Randolph Hearst himself, knows, or can intelligently estimate, the value of his ranch at San Simeon, California. It lies, over 240,000 acres* of it, midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, stretching up into the mountains from its fifty miles of ocean front, and on it stand Spanish castles. In the fabulous Casa Grande which crowns it, and in

* There are locally three more to an average city block. See article Donald Park, New York.

the great guest houses surrounding that enormous building, are *chefs-d'œuvre* from the collection of objects of art in the world. They fill the acres of great halls, guest rooms, bowling alleys, reception, libraries, movie theatres, swimming pools, and elevators; they overflow the vast two-acre cellar which underlies La Casa Grande; they are dammed into a mountain of packing cases a block long which lies, weathering in the sun, at the foot of the hill. And, closer to their sources, they are dammed into a block-square storage house at 142nd Street off Southern Boulevard in New York City, which must now acquire more acres to hold them, even great San Simeon being inadequate.

The land at Simeon is assessed at only \$5,551,000. Very rough figures point to \$15,000,000 as a possible expenditure thereon to date. There are not a few men who can honestly claim to have sold Mr. Hearst \$5,000,000 worth of antiques, and at least one can account for \$7,000,000 or \$8,000,000. But no accurate tabulation of the whole exists. There is no order to Mr. Hearst's buying beyond his extremely sharp eye for what he wants. When he gets what he wants, it may be sent to San Simeon within the week, while a wing is torn down and rebuilt so house it in a style to which it may never have been accustomed—or it may lie in the



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MR. HEARST AND A GUEST'S APPROACH TO HIS RANCH

The picnic table (three deep and a day) which brings the Hearst party by night even on a siding until all wait naturally. From the window of the limousine in which one later climbs La Casa Encantada (the Enchanted Hill), one glimpses



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a line of the wild animals which roam its slope. From the same vantage point one's first view of Casa del Sol and the other great guest houses. Beyond, the towers of La Casa Grande rise, back westward over the Pacific.

dealer's cellar for years, apparently forgotten by its purchaser.

There is nothing in the world quite like Mr. Hearst's ranch. Later, we will return to its objects d'art; first, it may be convenient to have a rough sketch-map of its geography.

The Southern Pacific Railway, running between Los Angeles and San Francisco, north-bound, circles inland at San Luis Obispo. Here, on occasions, the private train which brings the Hearst guest rests on a siding. Forty-three miles up the coast from San Luis Obispo reaches the tiny fishing village of San Simeon. Pilgrims of the private train, arriving leisurely, are met there these forty-three miles out, at San Simeon, turn inland and ascend to the castle 2,000 feet above in the hills. To make a map, sketch a vertical line indicating the coast line, a jog in the center for San Simeon Bay. Up from this jog, trace a very wavy, curlicuing line, winding inland. It is the road up the slope which is called La Cuesta Encantada, the Enchanted Hill, a beautiful, wide, carefully-laid

gravel road whose windings flatten a slope so steep that in the old days Hearst clung to the tail of a horse as he pulled up. On the crest of the hill are grouped the main buildings.

At the base of this hill you passed the air field on which may last late Hearst newspapers from adjoining cities. George Hearst in his new trimotor, or almost any belated guest. Mark this with a square. Farther along, mark a dot for the headquarters of a cattle ranch which prospers, a small industry on the Hearst domain. Well along the road up the hill sketch a large circle, bisected by the motor trail. The circle indicates a high—a very high—wire fence which incloses many square miles over which roam herds of wild animals. It is high because deer therein can jump high. The road enters and leaves it through special pull gates. Continue on up the road, through what will be Sequoia forests a thousand odd years from now, then give it one last swing and end it. It has reached an elevation of over

2,000 feet. Standing there, you can look back, out over the hills to the Pacific; then look around you to find Moorish palace amid enchanted gardens all topped and art-off by the great twin towers of the Spanish mission cathedral which is La Casa Grande.

You are now at the heart of the Hearst estate. Enter La Casa Grande to find what is accurately called the Great Hall. Beyond it is the dining hall, the one that can seat 150 people, from whose great ceiling Siennese lanterns hang. Back of the dining hall, two wings stretch. In the north wing is a theatre and a bowling alley. The south wing is dedicated to service. In the patio between the two wings rests a lovely Venetian well, brought from Hearst's father's ranch at Pleasanton, the ranch which was named for that very well, La Hacienda del Pozo de Verona. Returning to the sea front of the castle, one looks out over the three guest houses; Casa del Sol, facing into the setting sun; Casa del Monte on the north, closer to the mountains; and Casa del Mar, to the



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THE GREAT DINING HALL

One hundred and fifty may banquet here, under 19th-century altars, Siennese festival lanterns. The reasonable Gothic chimney pipes, original and perfect, come from the Chateau de Joux, was dismantled during the French Revolution.

The 16th-century refectory tables are from an Italian monastery. The Finnish tapestries show scenes from the Book of Daniel. Torchiers are Italian, candlesticks 17th-century Spanish, bought in Seville. Austerian. Old English silver graces the tableland.



IT IS MORNING AGAIN

While his guests relax after breakfast, Mr. Hearst and Secretary Williams go over early dispatches. Scattered through the garden behind them is one of the world's finest collections of antique stupas.

Hearst to take it to America was finally passed, it was found that he had already abdicated by per cent of it. The remainder being hardly worth fighting for, it passed out of Europe and found its way to the Bronx unmolested. Its removal entailed building a road from the mountain top down to the railroad. The dismantling—unloading, crating, packing—cost more than the structure itself.

Elsewhere in Europe, the Hearst eye lit upon a ceiling in a ruined castle. It was bought and paid for; a crew came to take it away. But the peasants who had lived under its spell, for centuries ruled by its former owners, would not have it touched. Guards were posted, riots threatened. Then, apparently, the attempt was abandoned. Weeks passed; suddenly the ancient ruin collapsed. The peasants, faced by the fury of a providence destroying what they had sought to protect, at last let Hearst remove what was left of the ceiling. That it had been little damaged was due, perhaps, to the fact that the fall had been caused by wily Hearstians. Each night they had removed a single stone from the foundations until the whole collapsed of its own weight, carrying the opposition of the countryside with it.

Hearst buys at auction himself, well known to dealers, little recognized by the idly watching public. He has a score of pseudonyms, one for each type of auction—furniture, books, silver, etc. W. R. Woods is one name he uses. He is one of four who constitute the active clientele of an armor shop in Berlin. The others are Secretary Mellon, Henry Ford, and an Hawaiian sugar potentate. He is very slow pay, driving dealers frantic at times. But they have never lost. There have been times when his apparent extravagances have worried those who had to balance his books. Once, when walking with one such, his fancy touched on a stuff-box in a Fifth Avenue shop. When his executive threw up his hands in horror at the price, Mr. Hearst shrugged his shoulders and walked out. But, as he left, he winked solemnly at the dealer and slipped the tiny box in his pocket.

In the library above the Great Hall, there are assembled the art catalogues of every house of importance in the world. Their leaves are scribbled a few hours after their arrival; guests idling through them find hieroglyphic marks. The wires which carry the fate



Photo © Dr. Fred Salzman

TO THE POOL

These broad steps lead down from the pavilion of the Great House to the pool of Carrara marble below. The path, made by the guest leaves, runs over the hills to the sea at every morning. Morning is the hour of the lark.

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VISTA OF THE OUTDOOR POOL.



GUEST HOUSES AND GARDENS



MORNING PLUNGE

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of newspapers also fulfill the desires awakened by these catalogues.

IF ANECDOTES having to do with Mr. Hearst's acquaintances are as the sands of the sea, so are tales of the scale of his operation at San Simeon. Whole liners have been chartered to transport treasures from Europe, through the Panama Canal to his ocean doorstep. The dump of packing boxes, already noted lying at the foot of the hill, contains an English house whose arrival at San Simeon must have caused consternation to the architect already completing the Spanish-Moorish ranch on the hill. Some day Mr. Hearst plans to set it up "a day or two's ride from La Casa Grande." Mr. Hearst plans Sequoia forests to mature hundreds of years hence; he has never had a live tree chopped to make room for any improvement. One secretary experts told him it would cost \$150,000 to import certain trees. "Well . . ." said Mr. Hearst. The trees are at San

Quarto potere (Citizen Kane) è un film del 1941 scritto, diretto, prodotto e interpretato da Orson Welles. Primo lungometraggio del regista, girato all'età di soli 25 anni, è liberamente ispirato alla biografia del magnate dell'industria del legno e dell'editoria William Randolph Hearst: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-r0b_XeRkG4