

Background information
Frank Lloyd Wright

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S TALIESIN

Taliesin was Frank Lloyd Wright's home, workshop and architectural laboratory for 48 years (1911-1959). Nestled on the brow of a hill near Spring Green, Wisconsin (about 40 miles west of Madison), it commands a sweeping view of the valley settled by Wright's Welsh ancestors in the mid-1800s.

Architects, historians and architecture critics alike have praised Taliesin as a masterwork and a triumph of design. Robert Campbell, Pulitzer Prize-winning architecture critic, called it the "greatest single building in America." The *New York Times* described it as a "stunning collage of Wright's ideas magnificently composed." In 1976, Taliesin was designated a National Historic Landmark, the highest honor bestowed on historic properties by the federal government.

In 1904, Wright's mother Anna Lloyd Wright purchased the land on which Taliesin stands. It was a familiar site to Wright who played there as a boy during summer visits to his Uncle James' farm. Wright loved the hill and knew instinctively that any building built on the hill would destroy it.

"I knew well by now no house should ever be *on* any hill or *on* anything. It should be *of* the hill, belonging to it," Wright wrote in his *An Autobiography*.

As was the custom of Wright's ancestors, he named his home, calling it Taliesin (tally ES in). "Taliesin was the name of a Welsh poet. A druid-bard or singer of songs who sang to Wales the glories of Fine Art. Literally the Welsh word means 'shining brow,'" Wright said.

After the fire, Wright moved into a back bedroom next to the studio and began almost immediately to reconstruct Taliesin. Not all had been destroyed – workshops, farm buildings and the studio were spared. By the end of 1915, Taliesin II, as Wright called it, was nearly complete.

Over the next few years, Wright spent much of his time in Tokyo supervising the construction of the Imperial Hotel and in California working on several residential designs. After 1924, Taliesin again became the center of Wright's life and activity.

In 1925, tragedy struck once more when faulty wiring caused another fire. Again, Wright began to rebuild. As he did the first time, Wright incorporated parts of the earlier structure into the new construction.

"The limestone piers, walls, and fireplaces of Taliesin II had turned red and crumbled in the fire, but I saved many stones not destroyed, so dyed by fire, and built them together with the fragments of great sculpture I had raked from the ashes into the new walls adding a richness to them unknown before," Wright said, "Whereas the previous buildings had grown by addition, all could now be spontaneously born."

Until his death in 1959, Frank Lloyd Wright never stopped adding to, or changing Taliesin. It was his principal residence and the longest ongoing architectural project of his career. This, Taliesin may be the most complete embodiment of what Wright thought and how he lived.

Taliesin is the heart of a complex of buildings Wright designed for his family on the 600-acre estate. The other Taliesin estate buildings are the Romeo and Juliet Windmill (1896), Hillside Home School (1902, studio addition 1932, theater

1952), Tan-y-deri House (1907), and Midway Farms (1930s and 1940s) and the Riverview Terrace Restaurant (1953).

In partnership with Taliesin's owner, the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, the private, non-profit Taliesin Preservation Inc., works to preserve Wright's Wisconsin property and its six major buildings. In 1993, Taliesin Preservation purchased the Riverview Terrace Restaurant and reopened it as the Frank Lloyd Wright® Visitor Center, returning it to the use Wright intended – as a gateway to the Taliesin estate.

Taliesin Preservation offers guided tours of the site from May through October. All of the tours begin in the Visitors Center, which also offers exhibits, models, a bookstore and café with panoramic views of the Wisconsin River. For tour information, call 608.588.7900. More information about Frank Lloyd Wright, Taliesin and the work of Taliesin Preservation is available at www.TaliesinPreservation.org.

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