

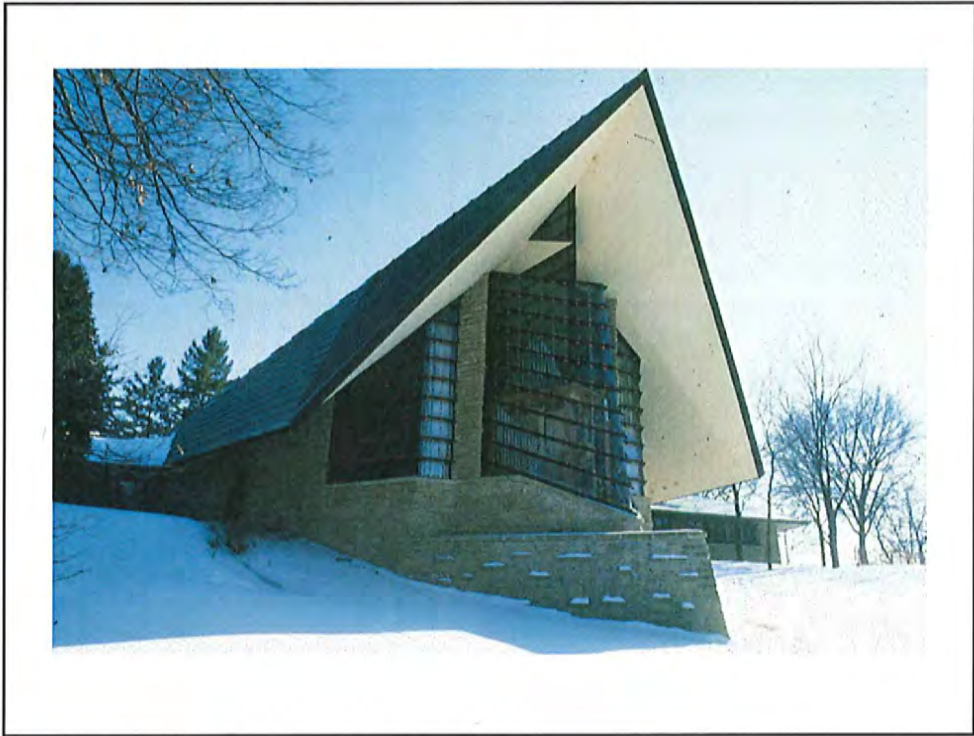


Monona Terrace opened its doors in 1997, but was designed in fact, nearly sixty years before by Frank Lloyd Wright. The architect worked on Monona Terrace 21 years, designed it 8 different times, built a model, attended countless city council meetings, and was paid ... \$250. Obviously, this project wasn't lucrative, why did he do it?



Truly, Monona Terrace was Wright's labor of love for his hometown of Madison, and his affection extended to the state of Wisconsin. Most of his 91 years were spent here. He was born only an hour west in Richland Center, raised here in Madison, and lived most of his adulthood in Spring Green, some 45 miles west.

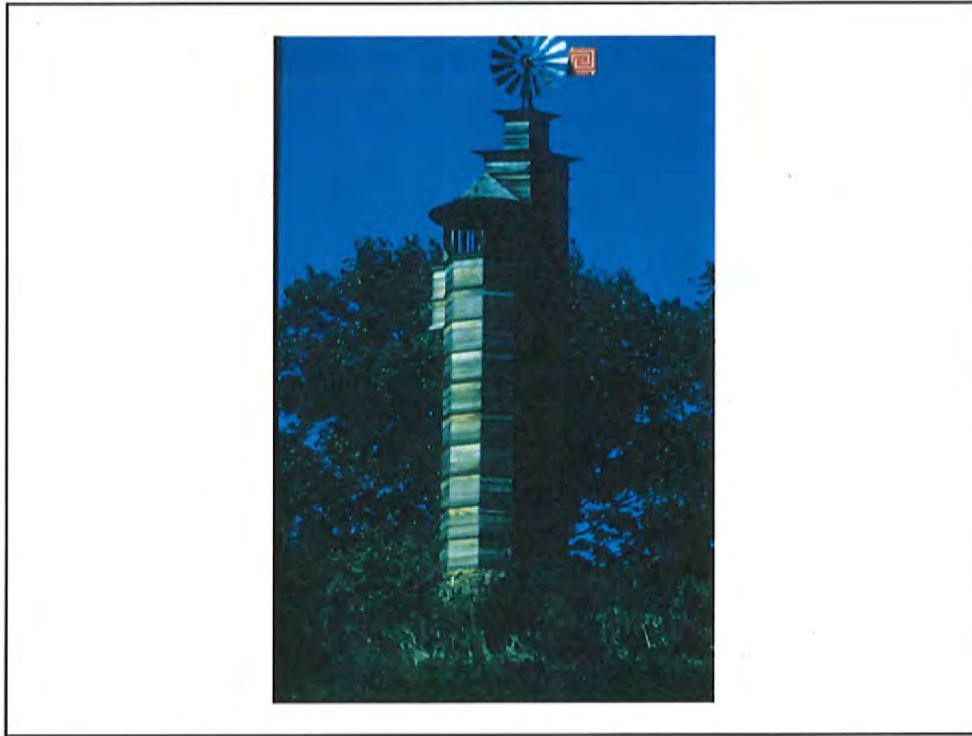
Wisconsin boasts over 40 buildings designed by Wright, including residences and cottages (Gilmore House in Madison)



Churches (Unitarian Meeting House in Madison)



An office building (Johnson Wax Administration Headquarters in Racine)

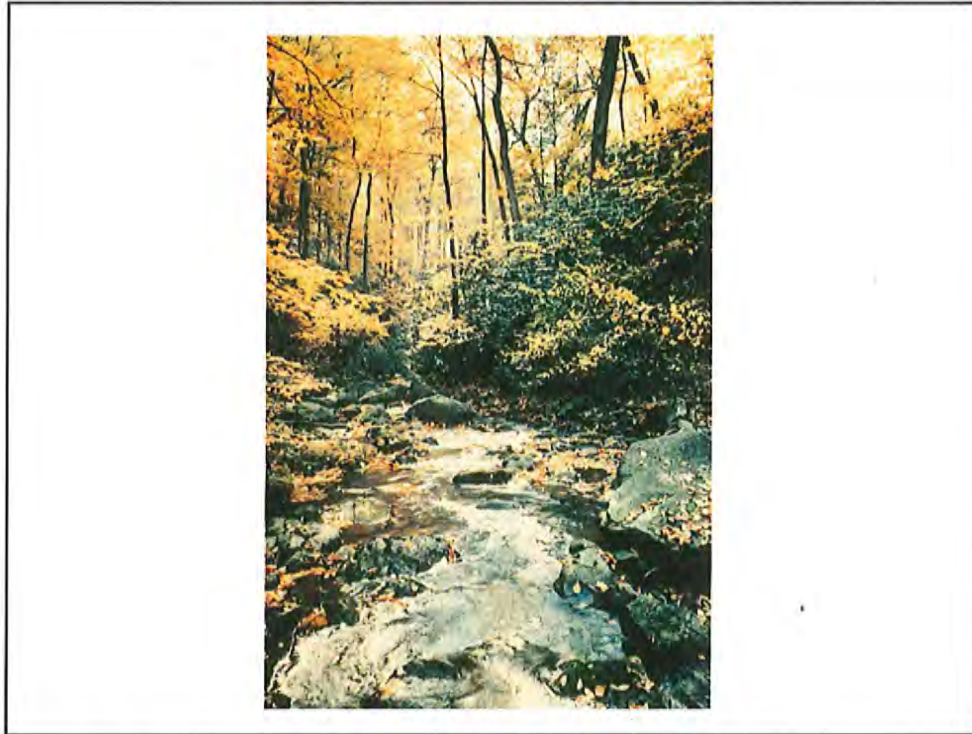


And even a windmill (Romeo & Juliet Windmill at Taliesin, Spring Green)



And the architect made an attempt to influence the state's architecture on a larger scale when he suggested that we "pass a law compelling every farmer to paint his barn red." (Here, farm buildings designed by Wright for his estate.) One can find him waxing romantically about the beauty hills, streams, and even Guernsey cows in a 1932 article Wright penned, entitled "Why I Love Wisconsin".

The love affair began over 100 years ago when Frank was a young boy. He spent his school year in Madison, his diversions included iceboating and running a small printing press with friends. During summers, he stayed with his maternal ancestors, the Lloyd-Joneses, Welsh settlers in a valley near a small town called Spring Green. Teachers and farmers, Wright's aunts and uncles were well-educated, liberal Unitarians. When one hears the Lloyd-Jones family motto "Truth Against the World," one is not surprised to hear that their neighbors called them the "God Almighty Joneses!

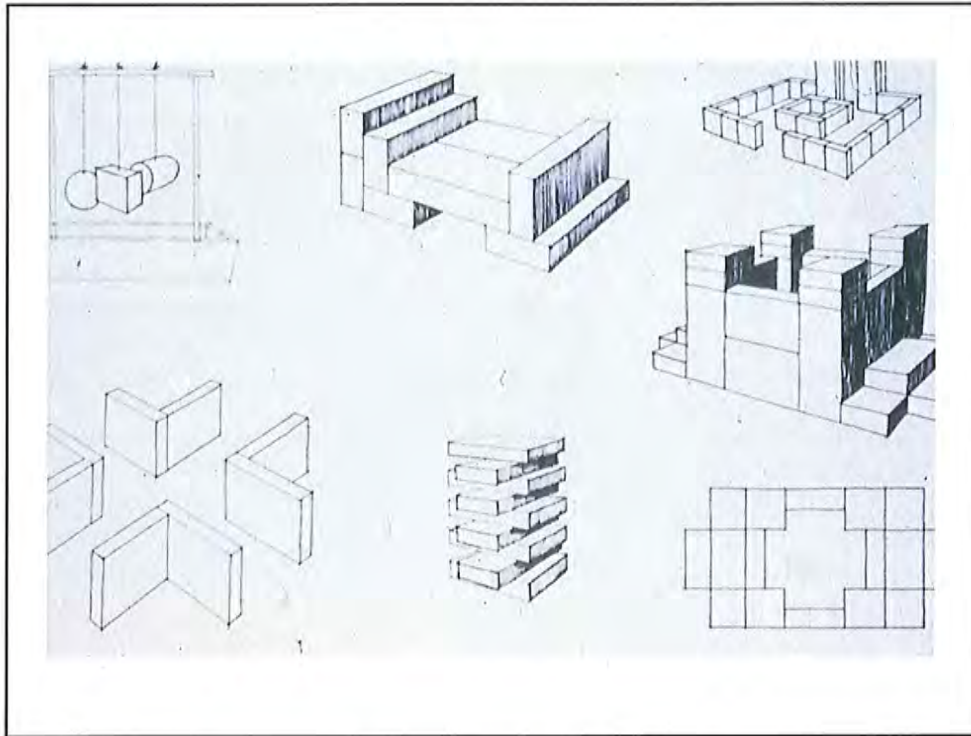


As most kids do, young Frank spent his summers outdoors. He did farm chores and took walks. His time in the beautiful countryside of southwestern Wisconsin made a great impression on him. He would say later **“More dramatic elsewhere, perhaps more strange, more thrilling, more grand, but nothing that picks you up in its arms and so gently, almost lovingly, cradles you as do these southwestern Wisconsin hills.”**

Wright’s parents were influential in their own ways. William Cary Wright was a charismatic preacher and music teacher and from him, Wright inherited a love of music and speaking abilities.



His mother, Anna Lloyd Jones Wright, had an especially profound influence on him. Claiming that her son would be a great architect when he was merely 5, she hung pictures of great buildings around the nursery and at age 9, she gave him a German toy called Froebel blocks.

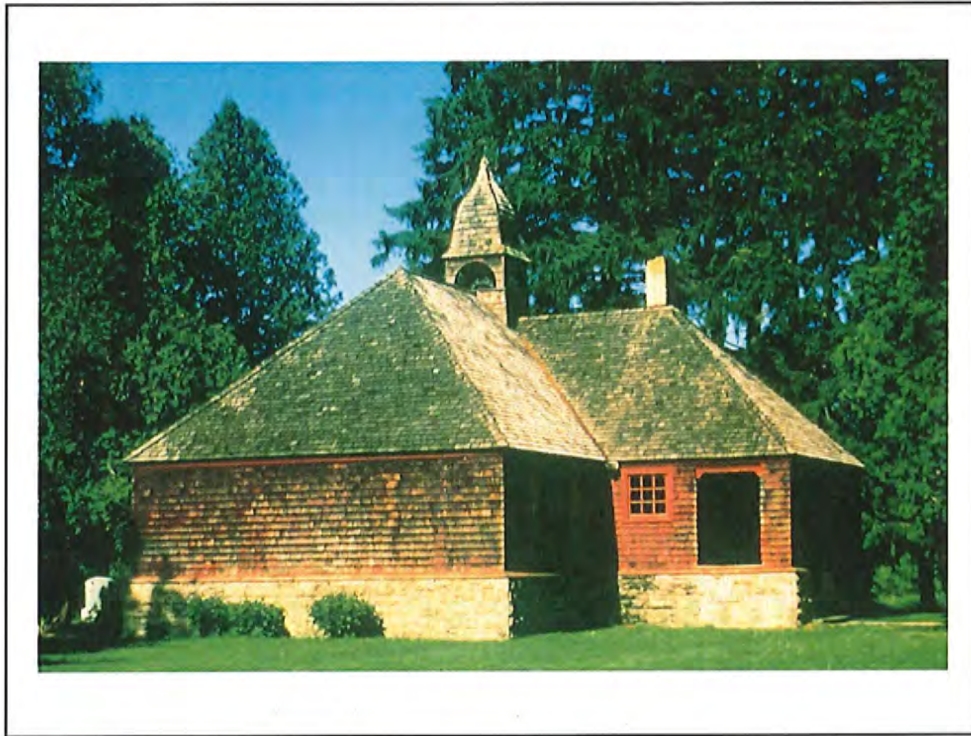


Instructions called for the child to recreate a series of designs emphasizing 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional spatial learning. From the exercises, Wright began to see objects as arrangements of simple geometric forms.

This thinking of organized form was at the heart of his philosophy of organic architecture.

One architect has said, “we can spare nothing from a flower, because, in its organization, every part has its function and is formed to carry out that function in the most beautiful manner.” Frank Lloyd Wright used this idea of reducing natural forms to simple geometric shapes. Pattern could then be manipulated in various combinations into a new composition- the source for floor plans, elevations, and decorative arts.

Frank Lloyd Wright attended the University of Wisconsin for six months (though later he would claim he received a degree from the institution), and got a job working with Allan Conover, professor of civil engineering on the new Science Hall building on campus.



During this time, he also is credited with designing interiors for the Lloyd-Jones family's place of worship, the **Unity Chapel**.



But Chicago, a city rebuilding after the Great Fire of 1871, was the place to be for an aspiring young architect. In 1887, Wright boarded a train for Chicago.

After working as a draftsman in several offices in Chicago, he landed a job in at the office of Adler and Sullivan, one of Chicago's pre-eminent firms.. Louis Sullivan became a mentor to Frank Lloyd Wright. Here, the Carson Pirie Scott building (1899). Sullivan himself advocated for what he called organic architecture. For him, this was a true, American architecture free of European influence. Form reflecting structure, characterized by

- steel frame construction
- curtain wall- walls of windows
- dignified simplicity



In 1889, he married Catherine Tobin, a young woman he met through a church function. He built a home in Oak Park for his growing family, eventually six children. The young architect began accepting jobs on the side and when Sullivan found out, he was furious. By 1893, Wright left Sullivan's office and started his own practice. He added a studio to his home and ran his practice from there.

Frank Lloyd Wright began to make his mark designing residences for his affluent neighbors in Oak Park and in nearby River Forest. He was strongly opposed to the neoclassicism and Victorian architecture...

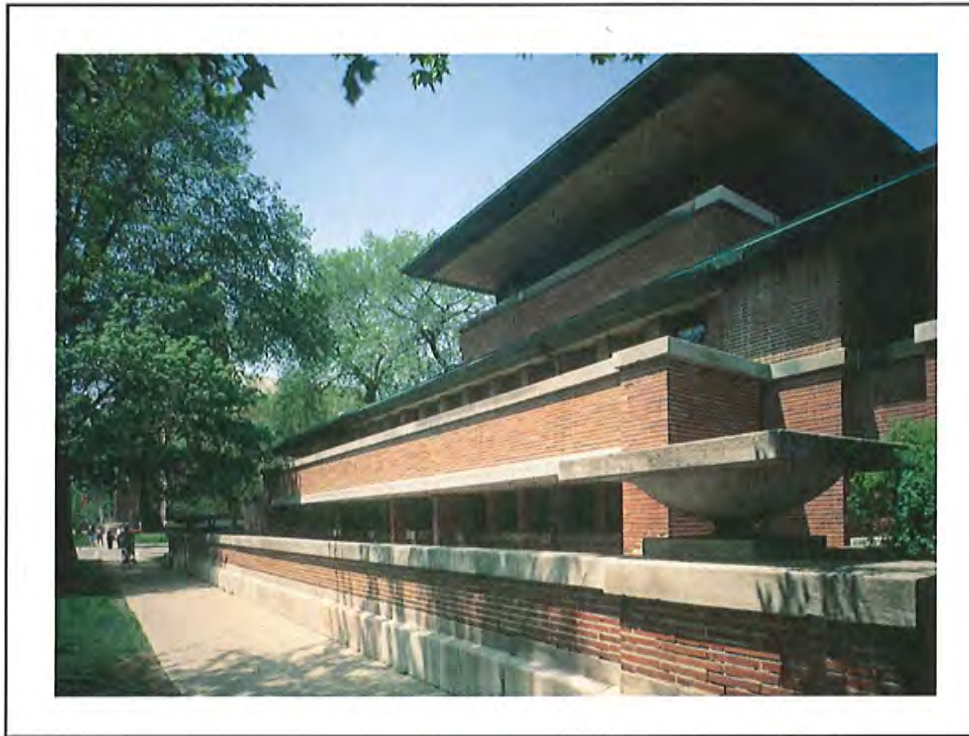


that was standard for the time. "What was the matter with the house? Well, just for a beginning, it lied about everything. It had no sense of unity at all nor any such sense of space as should belong to a free people. It was stuck up in any fashion... To take any one of those so-called homes away would have improved the landscape and cleared the atmosphere."

"The average desire seems to be to build something which will rear on its hind legs and paw the air in order that you may seem more important than your neighbor."



Wright responded with the "Prairie House" style. He proposed a new architecture for America- one that looks forward, not back. The residences that he built in the suburbs of Chicago respond to their midwestern landscape with an emphasis on the horizontal, low to the ground and capturing the free spirit of the prairie and America. Here, the **Robie House** in Chicago, designed in 1906 in Hyde Park, IL for the Frederick Robie family.



Notice the horizontal lines reflecting prairie:

broad eaves

wood trim, colored brick joints

patterned (for privacy) bands of casement windows

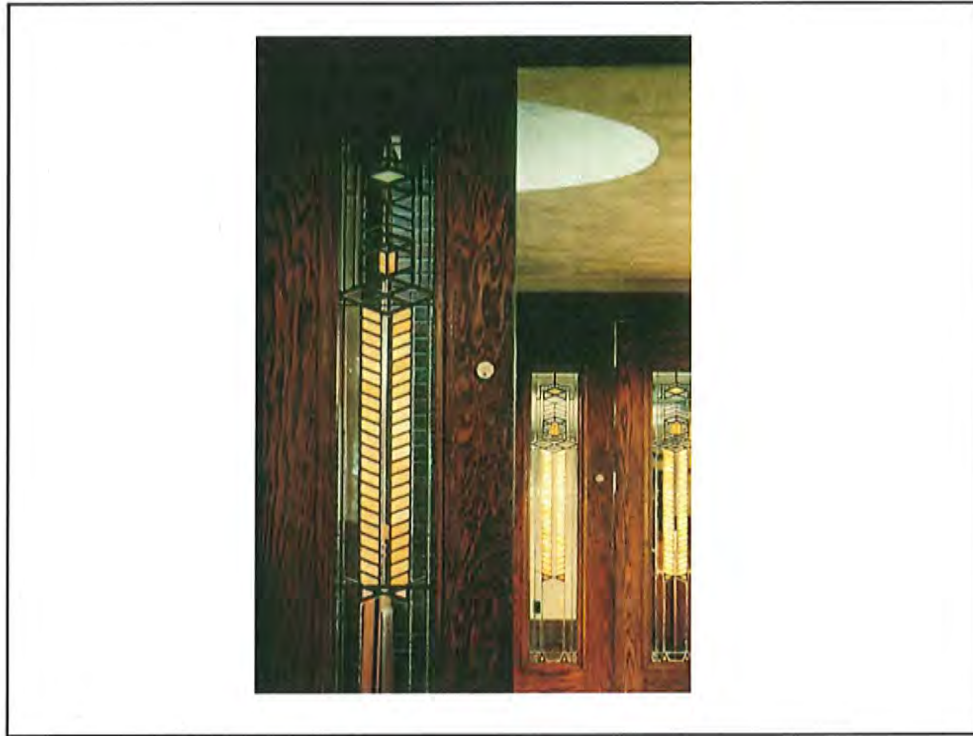
gently sloping hipped roofs

terraces and walls extending lines

hugging the earth in unity with nature

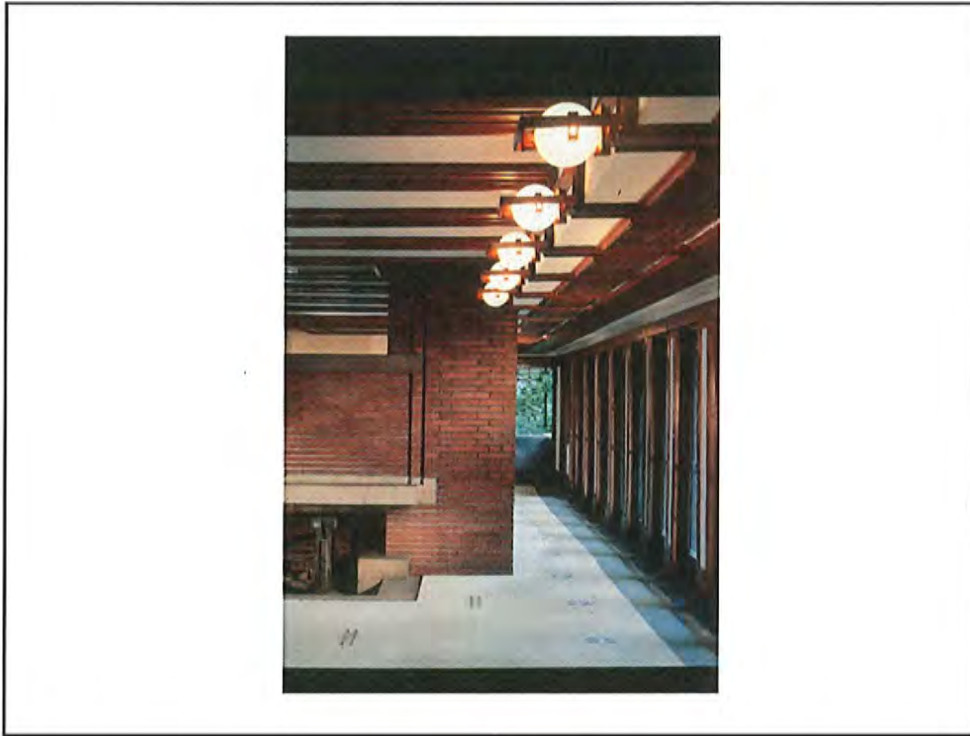
Wright wanted the roof to look light, to “float”, and he often put hollow space between two piers that supported the roof, recessed the supporting wall and put lots of windows in it.

In this slide, note the piers that do not rise all the way to the roof to support it, but support urns instead. Wright is playing with our conventional notion of walls supporting the roof.



The windows are not only notable for their banding, but for the beautiful stained glass that he designed. Note the Froebel block influence on the pattern: an abstraction of a flower.

He saw the “art glass,” as he called it, not only as a decorative element but a clever means of creating privacy from neighbors and passersby.



Interiors are open and free-flowing, with living room and dining room often connected but with a “screen” or definition to the space provided by a fireplace. This was What Wright called breaking the box of Victorian architecture.



Here is another Prairie design, the Dana Thomas House in Springfield, IL. Spaces flow from one room to the next without wall enclosures.



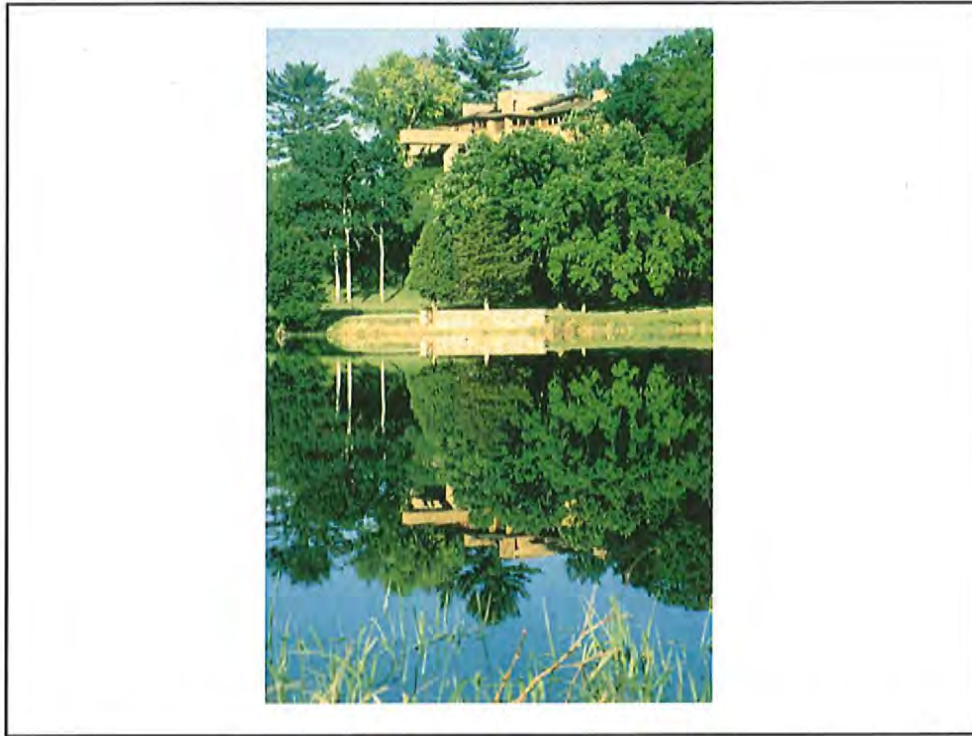
Wright also designed the furniture for Prairie houses as a means of creating an environment with all parts relating to the whole.



These pieces reflect the rectilinear nature of the Prairie house geometry, but the slatted backs allow one to see through them, for space to pass through.



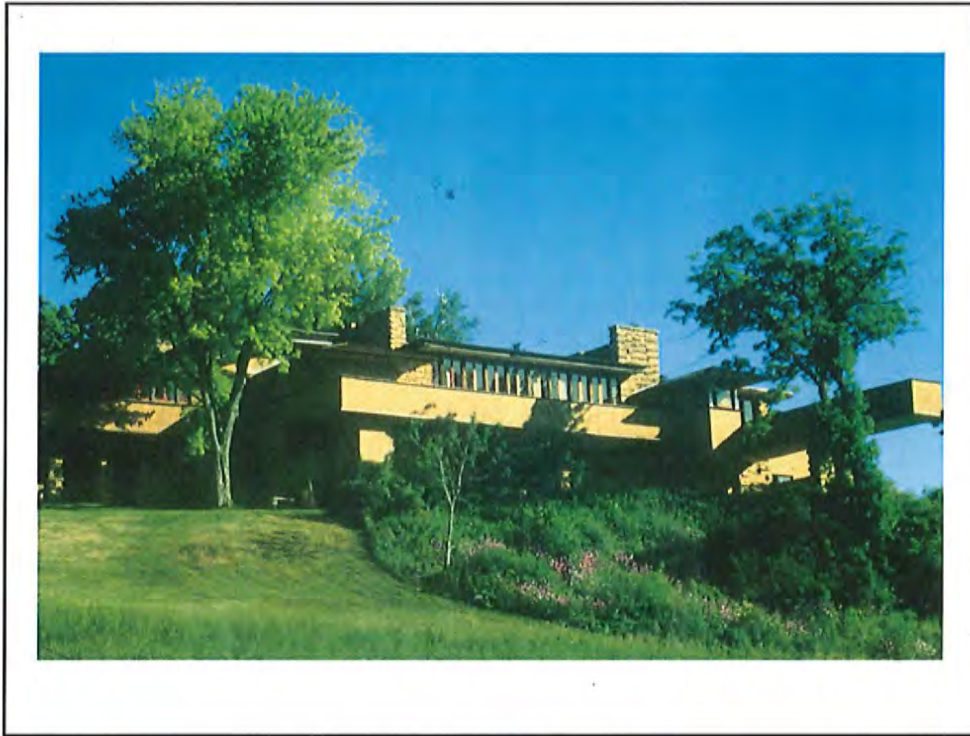
They were, though, unbearably uncomfortable and Wright recognized that. He said that he was black and blue from his own furniture.



A successful architecture practice was marred by personal scandal. In 1911, Wright returned to the valley of his ancestors, the Lloyd-Joneses, to build a new home. It was a volatile period in Wright's personal life- he had left his family and practice behind in Oak Park, Illinois and taken up residence with a client named Mamah Cheney.



Wright called his home "Taliesin," a Welsh word translated to mean "shining brow." The house sits on the brow of a hill and wraps around it, forming a unique and harmonious relationship between site and architecture. Chicago and local newspapers had another name for the house- "love bungalow".



You might say that Taliesin is Wright's most honest work since he was designing for himself and not forced to compromise for a client. His organic philosophy is expressed in many ways, as in the use of native materials at play here in the living room. Local limestone was quarried just a few miles away, and stucco was mixed with sand from the nearby Wisconsin River for texture and color.



Bands of wood in the ceiling are inspired by tree branches and implicitly offer a sense of shelter. At the same time, windows open up to the outdoors like screens for panoramic views of the valley.



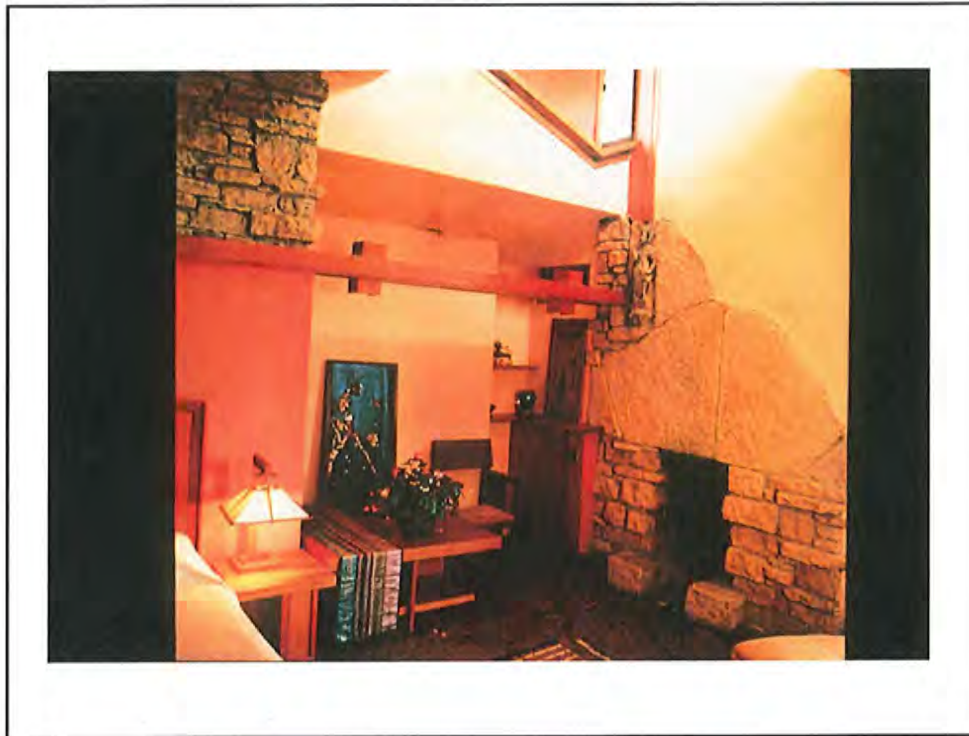
Notice there is no art glass here to cover the beautiful landscape and corner windows are mitered for uninterrupted views.

"I was working away at the wall as a wall and bringing it towards the function of a screen."

Corners provide mystery and make the space more interesting.

A client recalled, "the roof seemed to float above the walls."

The coupling of compressed indoor spaces and long views outdoors is also vintage Wright. This variation of space and heights was a means of manipulating your experience, but many speculate the architect's height had something to do with it. The man was 5 feet 8 inches tall and said "Any body over six feet was a waste of material."



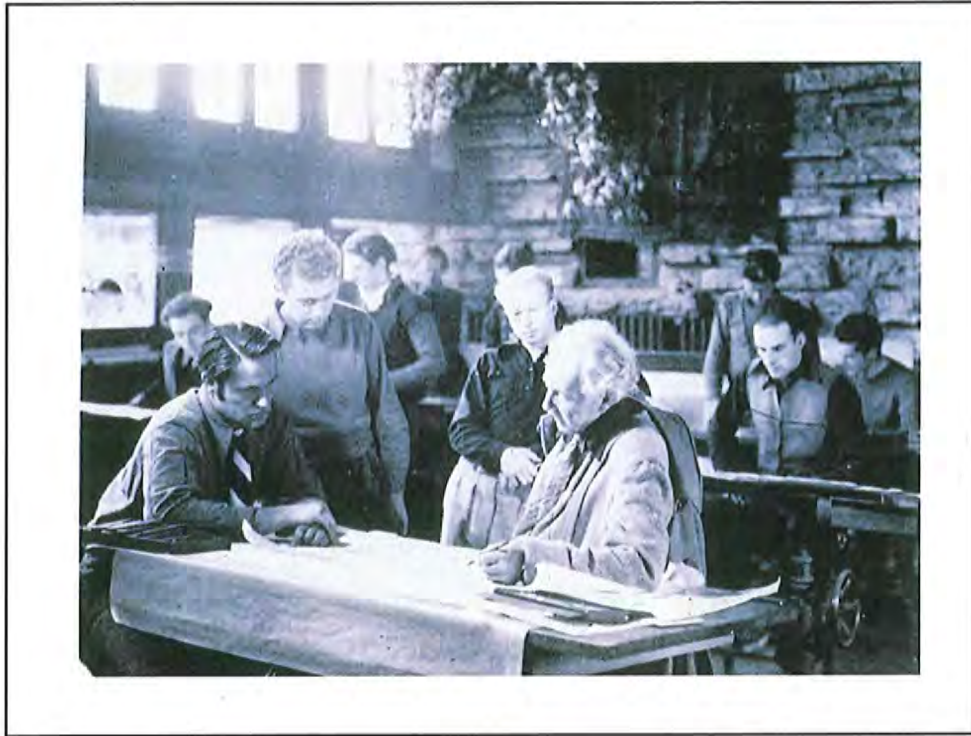
Scandal continued to haunt Wright after his move to Wisconsin. Taliesin was destroyed on two different occasions by devastating fires, in 1914 and 1925. The 1914 fire was an unbelievable case of arson- for unknown reasons, one of his servants set fire to the house and murdered seven people onsite, including Mamah Cheney, her two children and several workmen. Frank Lloyd Wright was in Chicago at the time. These traumatic events are recounted in the recent historical fiction novel *Loving Frank*.

When forced to rebuild in 1925 after an electrical fire, the architect rebuilt the home weaving his past into present construction- he salvaged pieces from his Asian art collections and incorporated them into the wall fabric. When one looks closely at walls in the living room, one can find broken sculpture that the architect has rebuilt.



Remarkably, the fires never crossed a loggia into his drafting studio. Wright remarked, "it was as though God had questioned my lifestyle and never my work."

Wright lived at Taliesin from 1911 through the rest of his life, until he died in 1959.



The two decades following the loss of Mamah were turbulent and troubled years, both personally and professionally. He had a brief and dysfunctional marriage to an artist named Miriam Noel. It was in the late 1920's, however, that he met and married the Yugoslavian Olgivanna Lazovich who would be with him for the rest of his life. Together, they would have a child named Iovanna.

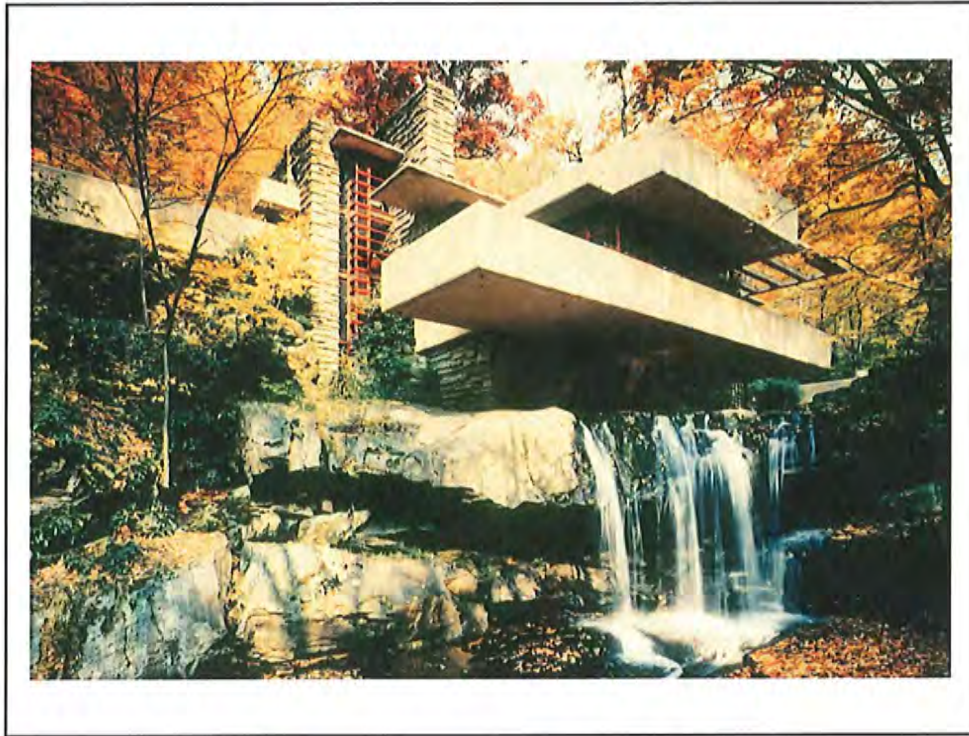
These were lean years for his work, and the Depression had its impact on the office. Much of his time was spent writing his autobiography, which inadvertently became a marketing tool when Mr. and Mrs. Wright began a school of architecture in 1932. Young men and women came to Taliesin, copy of the Autobiography in hand, hoping to study with Wright. These new students, "the Fellowship," learned by doing in the studio as draftsmen.



They also contributed to the daily functioning of the school and cooked meals, cleaned, and made repairs to the house. Here, the Fellowship Dining Room where apprentices received weekly assignments to rearrange the furniture- a good lesson in space flow and usage.



Here, Hillside Theater where the Fellowship held cultural evenings of music, dance and drama. Regular Saturday formals required black tie dress.



It was 1934 when Frank Lloyd Wright accepted a commission that would change his life forever. Edgar Kaufmann was a successful department store magnate in Pittsburgh whose son was an apprentice at Taliesin. They owned a lovely piece of wooded property near Mill Run and its centerpiece was a magnificent waterfall.

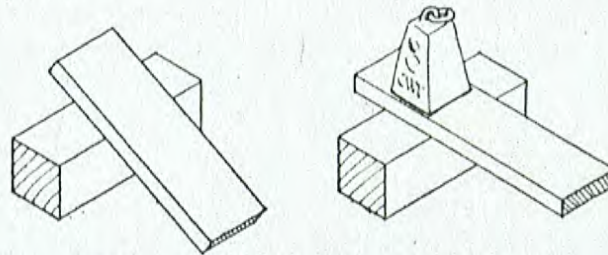
Wright surprised him by designing a home on top of, instead of in view of, the waterfall. He said, "No, not simply to look at the waterfalls, but to live with them."



In order to see the water, the Kaufmanns must move onto the cantilevered terraces outdoors.

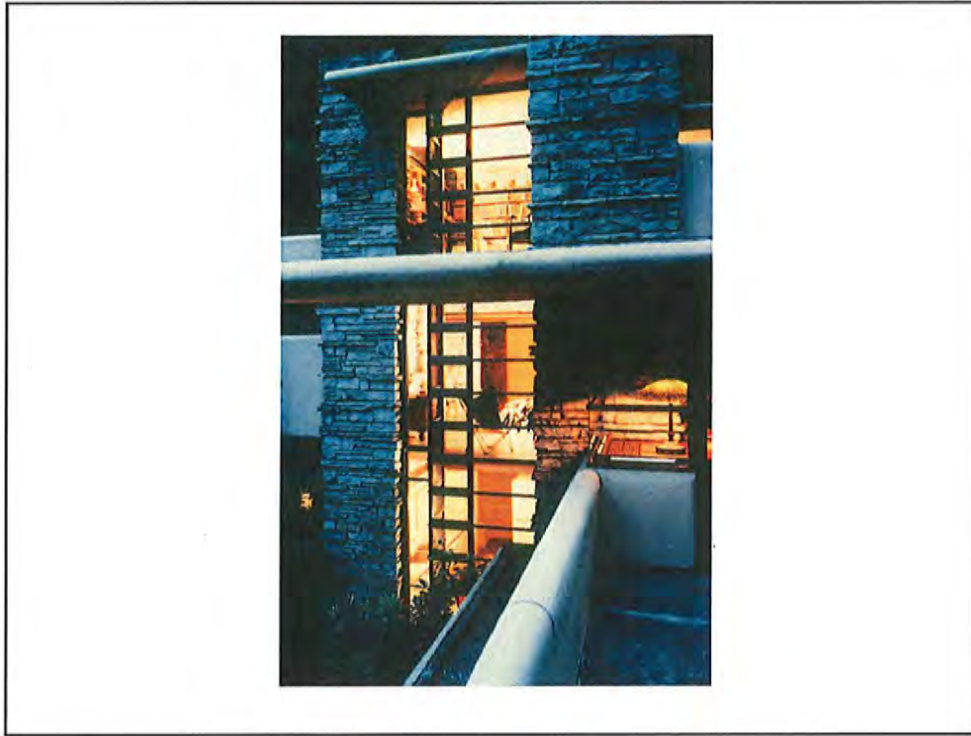
Cantilever

A beam or slab supported at one end only, and counterbalanced. To cantilever is to employ the principle of a lever to carry a load. (See illustration.)



THE CANTILEVER PRINCIPLE

Frank Lloyd Wright uses the cantilever dramatically in the terraces for Fallingwater. The concrete was reinforced with steel rebar, but not enough to sustain the projections throughout the years. The terraces have been shored up in the last few years.



Of course, the sound can be heard throughout the house.

Like Taliesin, Wright integrates the building with the site. Staggered limestone echoes the stone cliffs to which the house is anchored, (fashioned similarly to Taliesin), as though found in a quarry.



Materials used on the interiors of Fallingwater are the same to create a seamless experience from outdoors to in. Limestone walls and low ceilings provide a cave-like feel, while bands of large glass windows illuminate the spaces and allow the outdoors to come into the space. Like Taliesin, mitered glass corners are at work breaking the box.

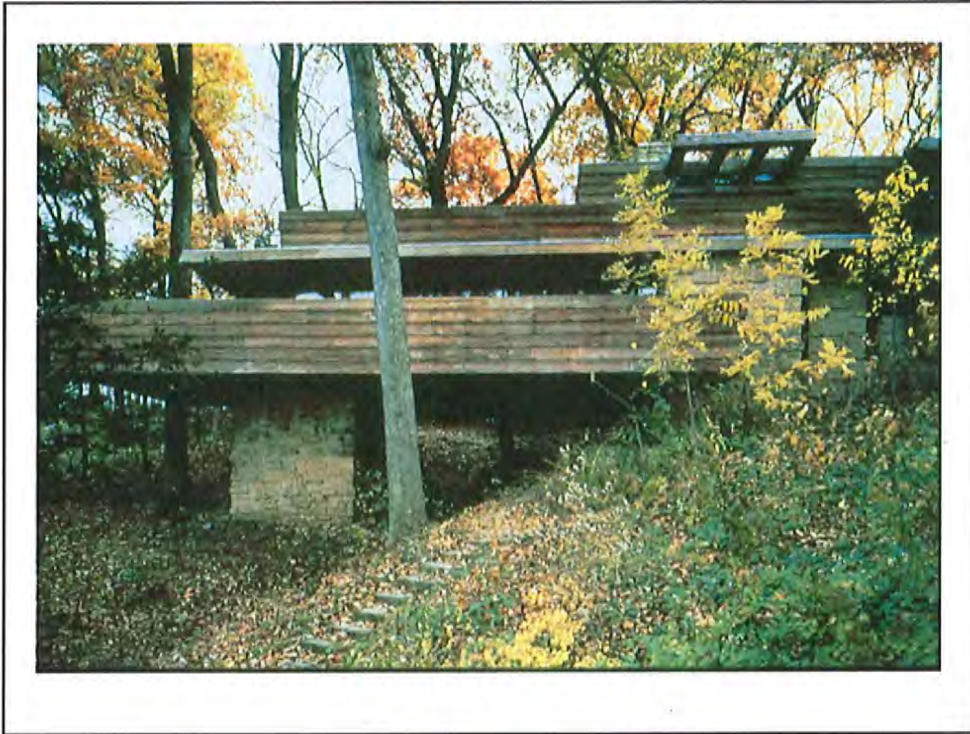


Fallingwater is considered Wright's masterpiece and included in the American Institute of Architect's list of most important buildings in America.

This commission and several other major triumphs (which we'll see in a minute) returned Wright to the limelight. In 1938, he is on the cover of Time magazine. In addition to his busy work schedule, he takes on another endeavor...



He builds a new home for himself and a new campus for the school in Scottsdale, AZ.
Taliesin West.



While Wright gained commissions with important, affluent clients, he remained interested, as he had throughout his whole career, in smaller-scale homes for the middle class. He strongly believed that beautiful and thoughtful architecture should be accessible to everyone.

This home, known as the Pew House here in Madison, was built several years after Fallingwater, and was called the poor man's Fallingwater. Wright responded by saying that Fallingwater was the rich man's Pew House.



In the mid-30's, Herbert and Katherine Jacobs in Madison presented Wright with the challenge of designing a home for them for \$5000. They were a young family on a modest budget and committed to the idea of having a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed home. The result is Wright's first built Usonian residence. The name, borrowed from author Samuel butler, signified United States of North America- an economy of space and materials, but no less beautiful.

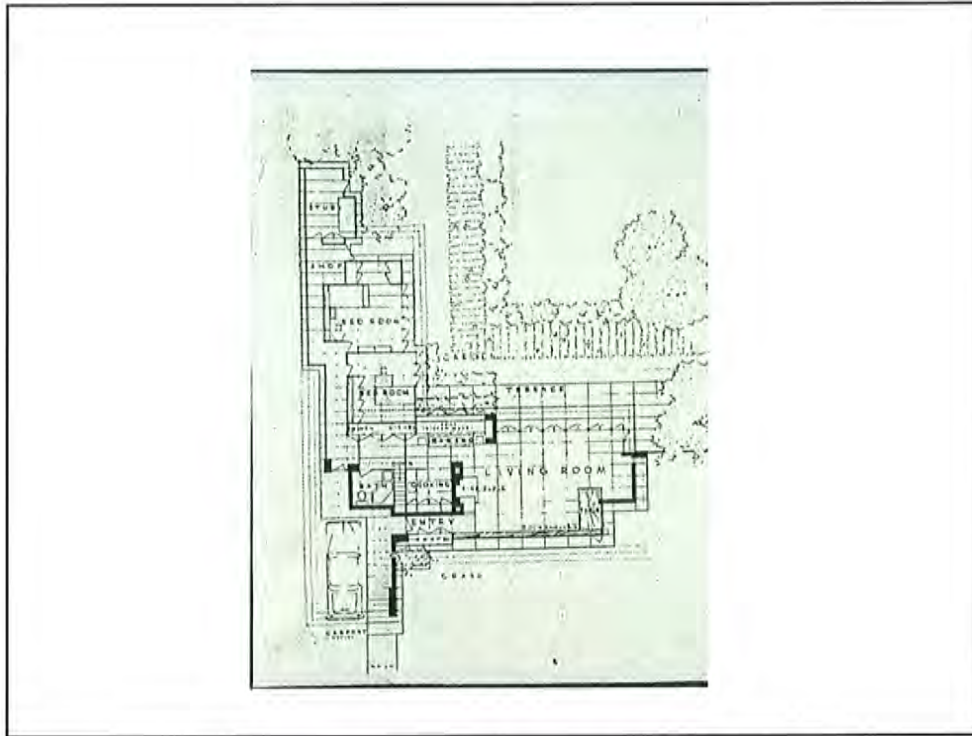
The house offers privacy by turning its back on the street...



but opens up to nice views to the garden and lawn at the back of the lot. To save costs, Wright used plywood extensively as a core layer sandwiched between board and batten walls and in the...



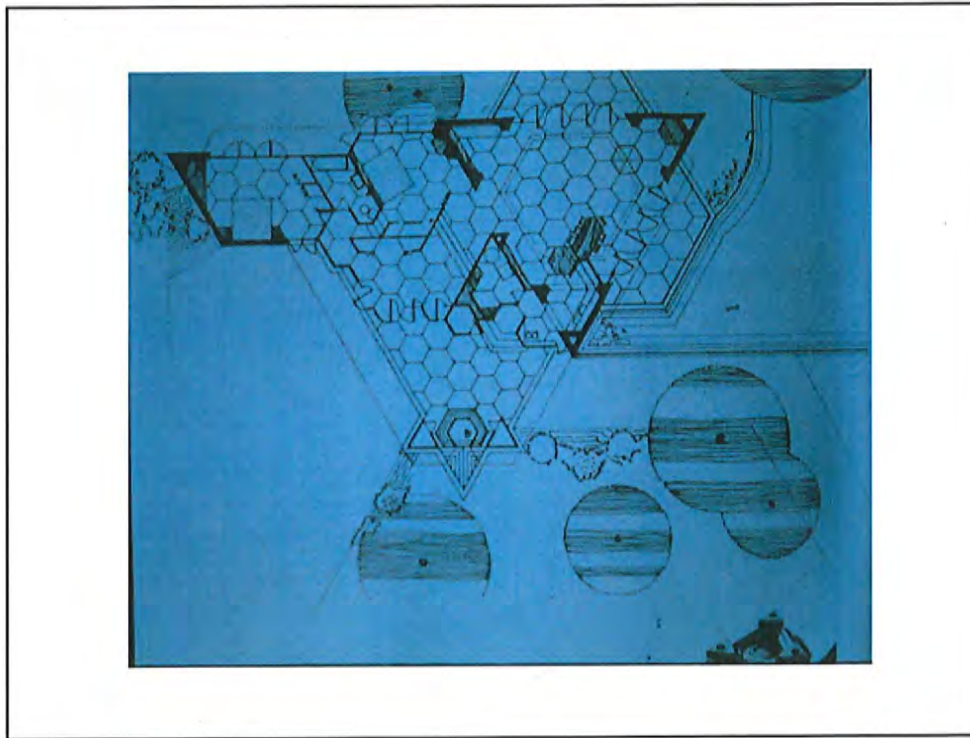
built-in furniture, designed by Wright of course. Radiant heating (hot water pipes in a cement slab floor) and a carport were other cost-saving measures.



The floor plan was open and informal. Its L-shape puts living room in one wing, master bedroom in another, meeting at the dining area and “workspace.” The workspace concept, where plumbing and other utilities can be found, is a reflection of the changing times. When Wright designed Prairie homes, he created a separate dining room space, often placed next to a servant’s kitchen. These homes, obviously built for families without household staff, incorporate a workspace open to the dining room, so that the family chef can prepare meals while talking to her guests, or keeping an eye on the kids.

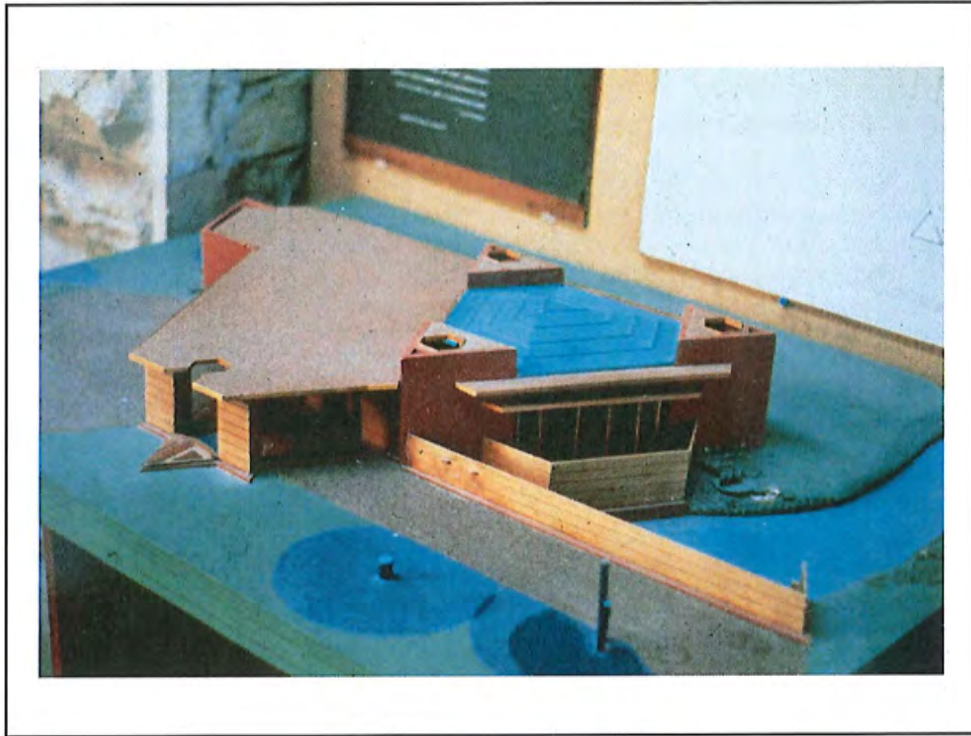
The plan was also flexible; referred to as a polliwog, if the family grew, additions could easily be made to the bedroom wing.

Note that Wright liked to lay out the plan on a geometric planning grid that ordered all the spaces and parts to the whole. The Jacobs module was a 2 x 4 rectangle- this pattern was scored in the concrete floor mat and would help lay out the walls. The vertical module was 1ft 1in, the distance between batten centers- regulating the height of every element inside, also supporting a harmonious environment.



In Wright's 1941 design for the Sundt residence, never built here in Madison, the plan is a series of interlocking hexagons. Given the angles are 60 and 120 degrees, they were challenging to construct.

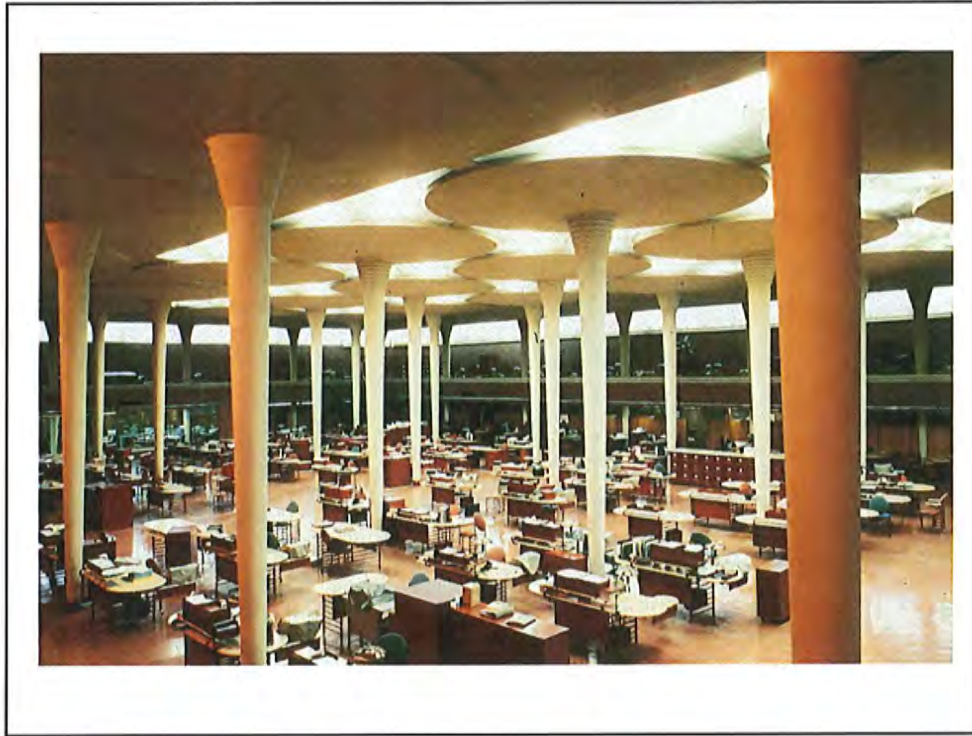
One can easily see the profound influence of the Froebel blocks on these Usonian designs.



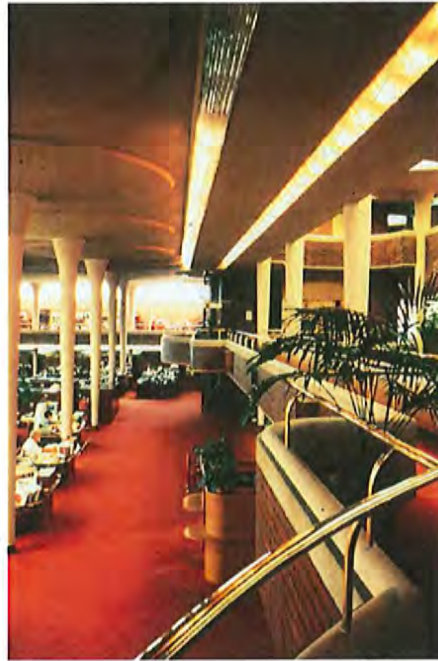
Model of Sundt residence (1941), unbuilt.



The Jacobses so loved their home, that when they decided to move to a country lot outside Madison, they commissioned Wright once again. This time, Wright gave them another "first"- his first solar hemicycle, a prototype of passive-solar design.



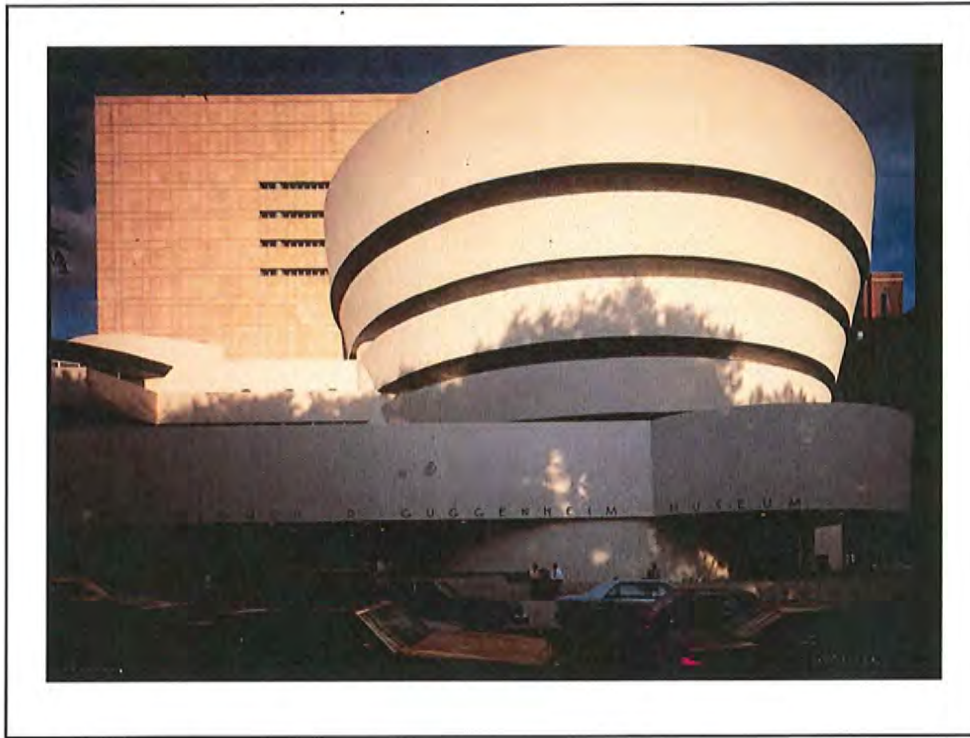
One of the best-known Wright structures in Wisconsin is the Johnson Wax Administration Building in downtown Racine. Unable to persuade the company president, Herbert Johnson, to build on a rural lot, Wright wanted Herbert Johnson to feel as though he were among pine trees breathing fresh air and sunlight. He simulates a natural environment with these tall concrete columns that people liken to mushrooms, lily pads, and of course, golf tees.



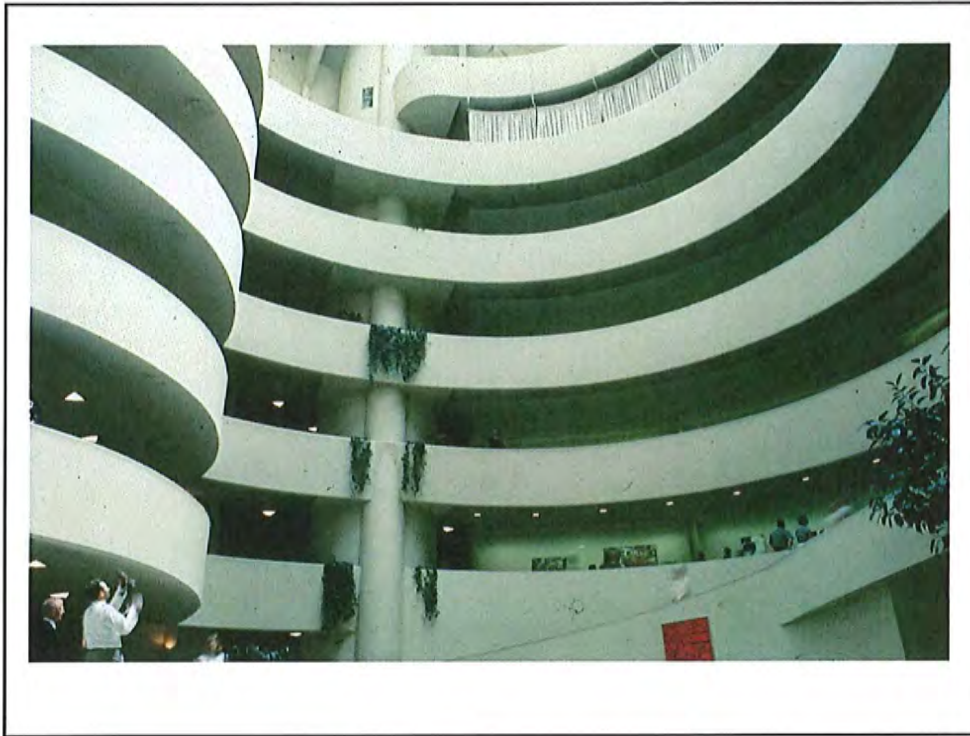
The steel mesh inside bonds with the concrete in a way that bars can't, with tensile strength like muscle or sinew. Thus the columns are able to support the structure as they taper to only a 9-in base. Each of these columns are able to support nearly 60 tons of weight.



Wright's inventive use of materials is exemplified in the glass tubing that Corning glass developed for him. The tubing brought light into the space brilliantly, and carried through the horizontal, streamlined aesthetic. But it did not withstand the freeze and thaw of Wisconsin's climate and consequently, the roof leaked. (Frank Lloyd Wright had a reputation for this.) The tubes were replaced by corrugated sheets. Ah well, some experiments didn't work.



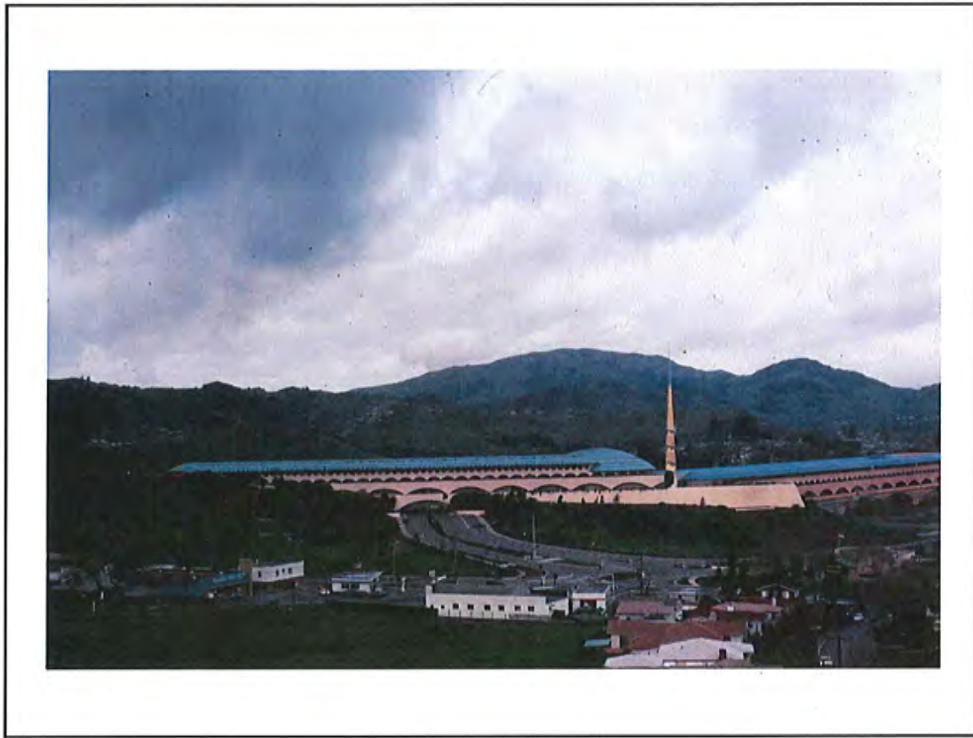
The last 20 years of Wright's life were extremely productive. This last phase of his career saw many circular designs as Wright reached the ultimate expression of breaking the box. Among them, the Guggenheim Museum, bearing a resemblance to Monona Terrace with its concrete, curvilinear forms, and rivaling the Terrace in terms of the struggle to get it built. Donor Solomon Guggenheim was persuaded by Curator Hilla Rebay to commission Wright. Guggenheim's passing, Rebay's retirement, and an unconvinced board stalled the progress of the project.



Curvilinear “plastic” lines create, in one scholar’s words, “the atmosphere of the quiet unbroken wave: no meeting of the eye with abrupt changes of form.”



Guggenheim Museum- the skylight capping the atrium allows natural light to stream into the building.



Marin County Civic Center in San Raphael, CA,

On April 9, 1959, at the age of 91, Frank Lloyd Wright died of an intestinal blockage in Phoenix. His services were in Spring Green and he is buried in the Lloyd Jones family cemetery near Unity Chapel. Of more than 1100 projects Wright designed during his lifetime, nearly one-third were created during the last decade of his life.



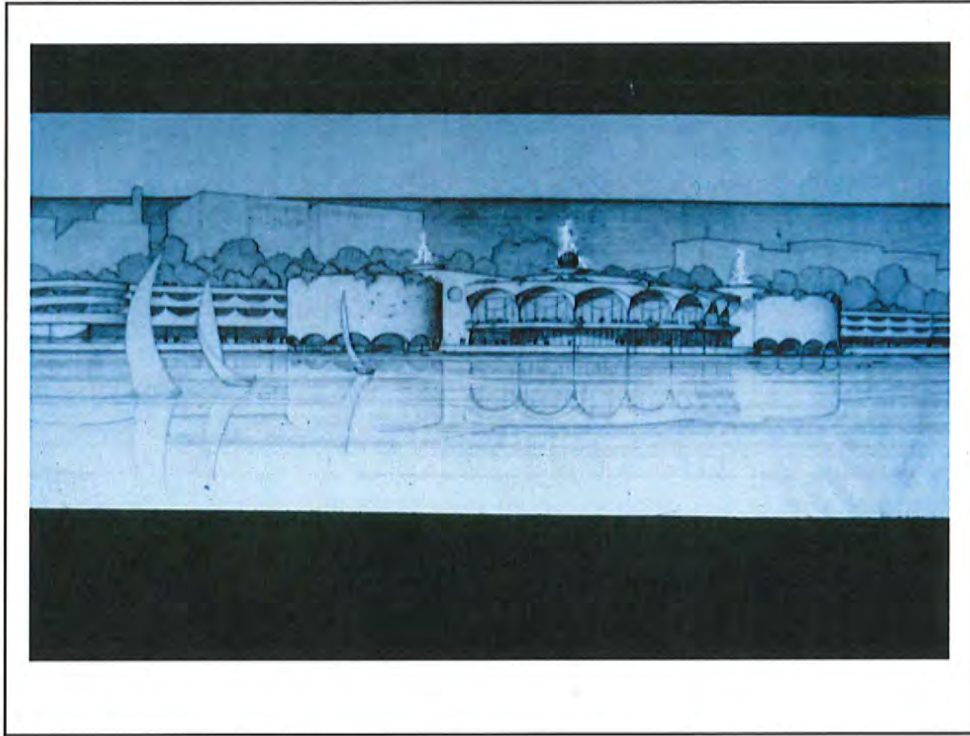
Unfortunately, Monona Terrace was not one of them. The project was wrought with controversy compounded by Frank Lloyd Wright's love-hate relationship with his hometown. He often spared no criticism. In his autobiography, he made these two statements:

"Madison is a beautiful city. From near or far away the white dome of the State Capitol on a low, spreading hill shone white in the sun between two blue lakes- Mendota and Monona."

and

"Madison was a self-conscious town. A city, but a city provincial beyond most villages. And the University gave it a highbrow air, the air, that is, of having been educated far beyond its capacity."

In 1938, this self-conscious town asked the self-centered architect to draw up plans for a city-county office structure on Lake Monona. World War II and political issues throughout the 50's stalled this project and Wright died in 1959, at the age of 91, never having seen it realized.



In the 1980's, Madison's mayor pursued the idea of a Wright designed convention center; after all, the site on the lake was still available. A member of the successor firm Taliesin architects was called to look into the feasibility of this proposal. Tony Puttnam became the lead architect on the project.



Today this meeting place, community center and tourist destination welcomes half a million people a year.



Wright's rooftop rendering of the Terrace, 1955.



After we opened in 1997, we called ourselves “Wright’s final masterpiece”... That is not the case any longer as a new resort has recently opened in the Lake Tahoe area based on Wright’s plans for a country club in Madison. And Buffalo, NY is currently working on the construction of a boat house design. These buildings and Monona Terrace stand testament to the enduring appeal of Frank Lloyd Wright’s architecture. It speaks to people unlike any other architecture.