

MOST ASKED QUESTIONS

The following are the questions most frequently asked about the Frank Lloyd Wright sites in Wisconsin. The questions and answers were provided by the sites.

TALIESIN AND HILLSIDE SCHOOL

1. How tall was Frank Lloyd Wright?

Wright was five foot eight inches tall.

2. What does Taliesin mean and how do you pronounce it?

Taliesin means "shining brow" in Welsh and was used to name his home because he built Taliesin on the "brow" of a hill. It is also the name of a character in Welsh mythology that was a favorite of Frank Lloyd Wright. The character was a poet and had a close association with nature. It is pronounced TALLY EH SEN.

3. Do people live and work at Taliesin?

Yes. The Taliesin Fellowship (the apprentices and faculty of the school) live at *Taliesin* for approximately six months a year. The rest of the time they live at *Taliesin West*, Wright's home in Scottsdale, Arizona. There are 70 Fellowship members, 60 of whom live at *Taliesin* over the summer. *Taliesin* is the summer headquarters of Taliesin Architects and the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture. *Taliesin* is not a museum, but rather it is a home, school and workplace.

4. Did Frank Lloyd Wright design House on the Rock or have anything to do with it? Was Alex Jordon, the creator of House on the Rock, a student of Wright's?

No. The two are not connected in any way. Wright did not design the House on the Rock and Alex Jordon was never a student of Wright's, although they did meet. Alex Jordon, as well as many other architects, was influenced by Wright and so you may be able to see some of those influences in his work.

SC JOHNSON WAX ADMINISTRATION BUILDING AND RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TOWER

1. What is the research and development tower used for now?

Because the Johnson Wax research and development division has outgrown its space the tower is not utilized and is empty. Future possible use is being studied.

2. When was the Administration Building built?

It was designed in 1936 and completed in 1939.

3. Was the furniture designed by Frank Lloyd Wright?

Yes. Furniture was an integral part of Wright's design. He designed over 40 pieces for the *SC Johnson Wax Administration Building* and each piece reflects aspects of the building's overall design.

4. How many people tour the Johnson Wax building each year?

Approximately 10,000 people a year visit the administration building.

5. Why did Frank Lloyd Wright use the glass tubing?

He wanted to flood the room with natural sunlight while eliminating the distracting views of the surrounding industrial neighborhood. The pyrex tubes also defracted the light and cut the glare. If you laid all the glass tubing from end to end the original Pyrex tubes would extend over 43 miles.

THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

1. How many people does the church seat?

1,000

2. How many members does the church have?

400 families

3. Can priests marry?

They can marry before they are ordained, but not afterward.

4. How did the church select Frank Lloyd Wright to design the building?

The building committee decided to "go for the best" and approached Frank Lloyd Wright. Also, Wright's wife, Olgivanna, was Russian or Eastern Orthodox and he may have designed it as a tribute to her.

5. Was the church design accepted at first?

It was a radical departure from tradition but it is accepted now.

UNITARIAN MEETING HOUSE

1. How is the curved ceiling of the auditorium supported and the roof constructed?

(Guides at the Unitarian Meeting House hand out a schematic diagram of the trusses with an explanation of the engineering involved. See attached sheet.)

2. Does the roof leak?

Yes, on occasion. It has required some major maintenance because Wright's ideas were ahead of the technology of his time. Some of these problems are gradually being remedied when repairs are performed with new materials that are now available.

3. How is the building heated or air conditioned and is it expensive?

Heat is provided by hot water circulating in wrought iron pipes laid just below the concrete floor slab. Heating is somewhat expensive, but not unusually so for a church with large open spaces. The large areas of single-paned glass are gradually being replaced with double panes, and the original inadequate insulation has been updated in many places. There is no air conditioning.

4. What about Frank Lloyd Wright's personal life?

Frank Lloyd Wright's personal life as well as his professional life were ahead of the times he lived. Many aspects of his life are controversial and the information is often contradictory.

5. What do Unitarians believe and was Frank Lloyd Wright a Unitarian?

Frank Lloyd Wright's father was secretary of the Madison Unitarian Society when it was organized in 1879. Wright himself signed the membership register in 1938. Unitarianism is a liberal religion with a Judeo-Christian heritage and no written creed. Individuals are responsible for developing their own philosophy of religion and ethics.

SETH PETERSON COTTAGE

1. From where did the stone to build the cottage come?

The stone is local sandstone from Rock Springs quarry about 10 miles from the cottage.

2. Did Frank Lloyd Wright supervise construction of the cottage?

No. Wright was very busy at the time with the Guggenheim Museum and the Greek Orthodox Church. He was also asked to design a house for Marilyn Monroe and Arthur Miller during that period.

3. How large is the cottage?

The cottage is 880 square feet but it appears much larger because of the soaring living room ceiling, the window walls which provides minimum boundaries between the interior and the exterior and the extension of the interior walls to the terrace.

4. Who was Seth Peterson and how did he die?

Seth Peterson grew up in Black Earth. He wanted to be an architect and asked to study with Wright at Taliesin but there was no room at the time. He worked as a computer specialist at what is now the Department of Transportation in Madison. He was interested in music and worked on the building as it started. Seth Peterson committed suicide at his parent's home in 1960 at the age of 24.

5. How were the plywood cutouts for the clerestory windows made?

They were made by sandwiching single glaze glass between two pieces of Douglas fir plywood.

6. How much did it cost to restore and furnish the cottage?

More than \$300,000.

7. How much does it cost to stay in the cottage?

\$175 a night with a two night minimum and \$995 a week. There is a 10 percent discount for weeknights and stays from November to mid-December, March to mid-April.

A.D. GERMAN WAREHOUSE

1. How did Mr. German and Mr. Wright get together on this building?

Both were creative Welshmen that marched to their own music. There is no specific answer known, although historic timing -- 1913-1915 -- indicates that after the 1913 Taliesin fire, Frank Lloyd Wright may have been paying off some substantial food debts by designing a warehouse for Mr. German. Also the fact that Richland Center was Wright's birthplace may have been significant.

2. What was Mr. German's motive for expanding his original warehouse?

Today, Mr. German would be called a commodity speculator. He had ambitions to corner the area's sugar market and needed more storage capacity. He nearly succeeded in accomplishing this when the sugar market collapsed. He almost lost the building as a result.

3. Why did Mr. Wright incorporate the "Mayan" frieze into the warehouse exterior design?

Actually it was part of Louis Sullivan's famous dictum, "Form Follows Function." Mr. Wright had to design a cold storage building without refrigeration equipment. The "Mayan" frieze design created a fourth floor storage area that was 10 percent colder than the rest of the building because the heat-loss characteristics were greater due to the frieze design. The column construction, the choice of materials (concrete and brick), and other design features made the warehouse an efficient cold storage building.

4. What are the future plans for the warehouse?

Original approved plans include completing the third, fourth and roof top areas of the building to include an office area, restaurant and rooftop garden. The plan is subject to time, financing, and code requirements.