

FRANK
LOYD
WRIGHT

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Frank Lloyd Wright: The Life-Work of the American Architect
Santpoort, Holland: C.A. Mees, 1926
Collected edition of *Wendingen* 7, nos. 3-9 (1925)

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

An Autobiography
First edition
New York: Longmans, Green, 1932
Binding design by the author

Town and Country, July 1937
Cover design by Frank Lloyd Wright

Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), the most renowned of American architects, was a prolific thinker and author, and has inspired an ever-growing literature. The Chapin Library is delighted to present a selection of the many books, articles, photographs, and ephemera by and about Frank Lloyd Wright, only a small part of the collection – one of the finest in private or institutional hands – formed and given to the Library by ROBERT P. FORDYCE, Williams Class of 1956.

Unless otherwise noted, all items are the gifts of Mr. Fordyce. Dates given for Wright's buildings are as indicated in the catalogue of the 1994 Museum of Modern Art, New York, Frank Lloyd Wright exhibition.

Annual of the Chicago Architectural Club: Being the Book of the Thirteenth Annual Exhibition 1900
Chicago: Chicago Architectural Club, 1900

The Chicago Architectural Annual
Chicago: Chicago Architectural Club, 1902

Frank Lloyd Wright, born in Wisconsin in 1867, had a boyhood passion for drawing and design. In 1886 he entered the Civil Engineering program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, but in 1887, determined to pursue a career in architecture, he moved to Chicago to work in the office of Joseph Lyman Silsbee. In 1888 he left Silsbee for the more progressive Chicago architects Adler and Sullivan. Chicago was then still in the midst of the building boom that followed the Great Fire of 1871, and

Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan were prominent among those transforming the city, and American architecture, with new technologies of steel and concrete and new thoughts about building design.

Sullivan educated Wright in details of architectural practice and served as a model of the universal, heroic artist, striving for original style and resisting orthodoxies of thought. Wright, on his part, made himself indispensable to Sullivan, eventually supervising a team of thirty draftsmen. He was himself highly skilled at drawing, both freehand and mechanical. Possessed also of boundless energy, in the evening he designed houses on his own, which Sullivan came to consider a breach of contract (though Wright's day work for Adler and Sullivan had not suffered). In 1893 Wright set up his own practice. By now he had also married, started a family, and begun work on his home in Oak Park, Illinois. His own house and work rooms were featured in the 1900 and 1902 Chicago Architectural Club exhibitions. The latter also honored "Glenlloyd", the B. Harley Bradley residence in Kankakee, Illinois.

John Keats, 1795-1821

Eve of St. Agnes
Decoration by Frank Lloyd Wright
River Forest, Illinois: Auvergne Press, 1896

William C. Gannett, 1840-1923

The House Beautiful
Decorations by Frank Lloyd Wright
River Forest, Illinois: Auvergne Press, 1896-7
No. 39 of 90 copies, signed by William Winslow and Frank Lloyd Wright

The Auvergne Press was established by two of Frank Lloyd Wright's clients, William H. Winslow and Chauncey L. Williams, in the stable designed for Winslow. It produced only the two works shown here, both with fine pen-and-ink drawings by Wright. His art for *The House Beautiful*, like some features of his early residential designs, show clearly the influence on Wright of the Arts and Crafts Movement then active in Europe and America.

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

“A Home in a Prairie Town”
Ladies’ Home Journal, February 1901
Library purchase

“Work of Frank Lloyd Wright: Its Influence”
Architectural Record, July 1905

Freed from the constraints of Adler and Sullivan, Wright now began to design even more prolifically. By the end of his life, he imagined and drew hundreds more projects than were ever constructed. He caused an early sensation with the William Winslow House (1893-4) in River Forest, Illinois, set on a stone base which connected it to the earth and sheltered by a broad roof which stretched notably beyond its walls. It was the first major statement of the residential architecture for which he became famous. Suburban middle-class housing remained a specialty for Wright through the designs he published in *Ladies’ Home Journal* in 1901 to his Usonian houses of the 1930s and later.

Wright’s residential designs were both original and popular. In quick succession a large number of Wright houses were built in the greater Chicago region. Scholars credit the Willitts House (1901) in Highland Park, Illinois, as the first true example of the Prairie Style (see a drawing and plan in a later case, from the Wasmuth portfolio). The *Architectural Record* article (which misspells “Willitts” as “Willet”) comments that Wright’s work had a strong influence on other architects: “Whenever it has been imitated it is Mr. Wright’s manner, rather than the substantial value of his work, which has been copied; and imitation of this kind generally turns out badly.”

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

“In the Cause of Architecture”
Architectural Record, March 1908

In this article Wright presented six propositions of the “organic architecture” he now espoused.

First, since “Simplicity and Repose . . . measure the true value of any work of art”, a building should

contain the minimum number of rooms to meet its purpose, and which the architect should design for comfort, utility, and beauty; “openings should occur as integral features of the structure and form, if possible”, the “natural ornamentation” of the building; ornament should be applied sparingly, and with understanding; “appliances and fixtures”, pictures, and furniture should be built into the design.

Second, a house should be as individual as its owner.

Third, “a building should appear to grow easily from its site”.

Fourth, natural colors should be used.

Fifth, materials for building should be allowed to express their nature: thus wood, brick, stone, etc. should not be covered, as with stain or plaster.

Finally, “a house that has character stands a good chance of growing more valuable as it grows older while a house in the prevailing mode . . . is soon out of fashion, stale and unprofitable”.

*Frank Lloyd Wright: The Life-Work
of the American Architect*

Santpoort, Holland: C.A. Mees, 1926

Collected edition of *Wendingen* 7, nos. 3-9 (1925)

Tied to the principles expressed in 1908 (but formulated earlier), many of Wright’s residential designs contain similar elements: a unity of the building to its site; low proportions with an extended line; interior spaces related to the exterior landscape; open living areas that flow one into another; fireplaces as focal points of family life; casement rather than double-hung windows; new ways of working with concrete, steel, sheet metal, and glass (often pushed to their limits); and a respect for stone, wood, and brick as exposed features. Some of Wright’s houses with these qualities are said to be in the “Prairie Style”, because they were designed to suit (at least in some respects) the Midwestern prairie, then more open than it is today.

The most famous example is certainly the Frederick G. Robie House (1908-10), shown here in a spread from collected numbers of *Wendingen*. Locally nicknamed “The Battleship”, it was a startling design,

achieved through the use of innovative technology and modern materials, such as cantilevering, steel beams, and integrated mechanical and electrical systems. It is not only the culmination of the Prairie Style, but a landmark in American architecture.

*Frank Lloyd Wright aus dem Lebenswerke
eines Architekten*

Herausgegeben von Architekt H. de Fries, Berlin
Berlin: Verlag Ernst Pollak, 1926

The Larkin Company Building (1903-5, demolished 1949-50) in Buffalo, New York, housed the administrative offices of a major mail-order merchant of soap and other household products, it was highly functional, harmonizing with the client's belief in the virtues of labor. Workers filled orders at desks in its central atrium, lit by clerestory windows, which also contained supervisors' offices. More specialized tasks were performed on the balcony spaces above. Highly innovative in its day, the Larkin Building contained air conditioning, plate glass, and metal furniture (the first "workstations").

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

Drawing of the Unity Church, 1905
Reproduced for *Selected Drawings Portfolio*, vol. 1
New York: Horizon Press, 1977

Unity Church (1905-7) in Oak Park, Illinois was the first significant statement in American architecture to be made in poured reinforced concrete. Concrete was used to keep the cost of the project as low as possible, but in Wright's hands this modern material was given artistic expression, marrying form with function. The building is divided into two parts, the square Unity Temple, used for Unitarian services, and Unity House, the adjoining parish house based on a Greek cross. A photograph of the interior of the Temple is shown in the case in the Chapin Library's foyer.

Art Institute of Chicago

*Catalogue of a Loan Exhibition of
Japanese Colour Prints*
Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1908
Gift of John Davis Hatch

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

The Japanese Print: An Interpretation
Chicago: Ralph Fletcher Seymour, 1912

Imperial Hotel

Privately produced album of photographs
taken around the time of construction

Wright first visited Japan in 1905, as a rest from building the Larkin Building. He was already interested in Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints, bought many examples, and in 1908 worked with others to mount an exhibition of them at the Art Institute of Chicago. By 1911 efforts were underway to gain Wright the commission to design the new Imperial Hotel (1913-23) in Tokyo; he sailed again to Japan in 1913 with this aim in mind, and was successful. The hotel, he wrote, was "not designed to be a Japanese building: it is an artist's tribute to Japan, modern and universal in character" ("The New Imperial Hotel", *Kagaku Chishiki*, April 1922).

The Imperial Hotel stood in sharp contrast to other modern buildings in Tokyo, which were in an international style appropriate, Wright felt, for lands far from Japan, but which had nothing to do with the Japanese and their culture – Wright based his design in part on Japanese temple layouts.

The building also stood, physically, on a "floating" foundation which has been popularly thought to have helped to save the hotel, except for minor damage, in the Kanto earthquake of 1923. It was demolished in 1968, except for its entrance lobby which was reconstructed near Nagoya.

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

*Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe
von Frank Lloyd Wright*

Berlin: Gedruckt und verlegt von
Ernst Wasmuth, 1910

Frank Lloyd Wright : Ausgeführte Bauten
Berlin: Verlegt von Ernst Wasmuth, 1911

In autumn 1909 Wright closed his studio in Oak Park and left for Berlin to work on a monograph of his architecture for the publisher Ernst Wasmuth. This was a convenient excuse to leave the country, as he had fallen in love with Mamah Borthwick Cheney, the wife of one of his clients, and she with him. Both abandoned spouse and children and fled to Germany before relocating to Italy.

During 1909-10 a team of draftsmen under Wright's supervision, including his son Lloyd, traced a selection of his architectural drawings in their original size and scale. These were transferred to 100 plates by Wasmuth, illustrating 70 buildings and projects from 1893 to 1909. Some of the plates are tissue overlays. Wright's introduction, in the first volume, is in German; an English version was prepared for sets to be distributed in the United States (the Fordyce copy includes both). Most of the latter copies were damaged or destroyed in the fire at Taliesin in 1914.

One of the completed designs shown in the exhibition, the Susan Lawrence Dana House (1902-4) in Springfield, Illinois, incorporates a brick structure built thirty years earlier, but is predominantly in the Prairie Style. It was the first of Wright's houses to feature a two-story living room. The abstract decorations were derived largely from prairie sumac. Another design, the amusement park (1895) at Wolf Lake, Indiana, commissioned by real-estate speculator Edward Carson Waller, was one of many projects designed by Wright that had to be abandoned, usually for financial reasons. It conveys the spirit and city-in-miniature organization of the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893, but not its pastiche Beaux-Arts style which dominated American architecture for the next forty years.

Wendingen 7, nos. 3-9 (1925)

Special numbers devoted to Frank Lloyd Wright

Wendingen was a journal published by the group Architectura et Amicitia of Amsterdam. In 1925 seven numbers were devoted to Wright's life and work, edited by H. Th. Wijdeveld, who also designed the typography and covers. These were later collected into a bound volume, three copies of which are on display in this exhibition. Contributors included Lewis Mumford, Louis Sullivan, and Wright himself.

*Frank Lloyd Wright: The Life-Work
of the American Architect*

Santpoort, Holland: C.A. Mees, 1926

Collected edition of *Wendingen* 7, nos. 3-9 (1925)

Gift of Jean Rosse, from the collection of Helena and Herman Rosse, in memory of J. Martin Rosse

Wright and Mamah Cheney returned to America in 1911, to find the people of Oak Park turned against him. He and his lover retreated to the Wisconsin valley where he was born, and there built a new home, set along the edge of a hill and named *Taliesin*, Welsh for "shining brow". In part it drew upon the Prairie Style, but also incorporated experiments in decoration and non-rectilinear forms.

In 1913, while Wright was in Chicago, a servant murdered Mamah Cheney and six others at Taliesin, and burned most of the house to the ground. Wright soon began to rebuild, completing the work in 1915, larger and better than before. In 1925 it burned down again, and once more was rebuilt.

The Taliesin Fellowship

Spring Green, Wisconsin: The Fellowship, 1933
2 copies: Gift of Robert P. Fordyce, Class of 1956;
Library purchase

Taliesin 1, no. 1 (1934)

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

*A Taliesin Square-Paper: A Nonpolitical Voice
from Our Democratic Minority*
No. 1 (1941)

Although demand for Wright's services slowed in the wake of his affair with Mrs. Cheney, he was not without work. His designs for the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo were internationally famous, and later in the 1920s large commissions came his way from California and Arizona. He was, however, frequently in debt: a free spender at any time, he was in turn divorced from his first wife, married to a second, Miriam Noel, who proved to be mentally disturbed and litigious, divorced from her, and married again to Olgivanna Milanoff, the mother of Wright's seventh child. Then, following the stock market crash of 1929, the Great Depression stopped almost all construction in the United States.

With the loss of Taliesin to foreclosure a possibility, Olgivanna suggested that Wright form a school of architecture. Its tuition fees would provide an income, and its students could also work the land. Thus was born the Taliesin Fellowship. Students enrolled eagerly. Some did not take to a system of communal living and labor, but others did, and became skilled architects themselves. In time, Wright also established winter quarters east of Phoenix: Taliesin West.

Shown here is the prospectus of 1933, illustrating Taliesin and its grounds, and two Taliesin publications: the first of three numbers ("nine times a year" was impossibly optimistic) of a magazine, *Taliesin*, and the first of sixteen numbers of *A Taliesin Square Paper* between 1941 and 1953, which folded into a square for mailing. The latter conveys Wright's thoughts on rebuilding London after the Blitz.

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

Modern Architecture: Being the Kahn Lectures for 1930
Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1931
2 copies shown

The 1930s began auspiciously, with the six Kahn Lectures delivered by Wright at Princeton. These were collected as *Modern Architecture*. The binding on one of the two copies shown here reproduces an abstract design by Wright drawn in 1927. In 1934-7 and 1936-9 respectively, he built two of his most famous works, the Edgar J. Kaufman House, "Fallingwater", in Mill Run, Pennsylvania, and the S.C. Johnson and Son administration building in Racine, Wisconsin. Also in this decade came the Usonian house, designed to be of moderate cost, and his Broadacre City proposal.

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

Architectural Forum, January 1938

By now Wright's reputation was so distinguished that the entire issue of *Architectural Forum* for January 1938 was devoted to his recent work – in fact, written and designed by Wright. In its foreword Wright took "this matter of an organic architecture a little deeper into the place where it belongs – the human heart". Here he put forward seven elements to be considered in architecture: the sense of the ground; the sense of shelter; the sense of materials; the sense of space; the sense of proportion; the sense of order; and ways and means, or technique.

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

Drawing of Library for Florida Southern College,
Lakeland, Florida, 1941
Reproduced for *Selected Drawings Portfolio*, vol. 3
Tokyo: A.D.A. Edita, 1982

Florida Southern College *Bulletin* 72, no. 1
(January 1956)

In 1936 Florida Southern College President Ludd Spivey was inspired to build a modern campus to match the beauty of Florida Southern's orange groves. Wright was commissioned to achieve this vision. Between 1938 and 1958 Wright designed eighteen structures, of which twelve were built. These include chapels, seminar halls, science, industrial arts, and administration buildings, a waterdome, and a library. With Spivey's death in 1959, the College moved away from Wright's master plan. The original E.T. Roux Library has since been turned to another purpose, and a new library of the same name constructed from a design by Nils Schweizer, Wright's former Taliesin apprentice and on-site supervisor for several Florida Southern College buildings.

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

The Usonian House: Souvenir of the Exhibition
60 Years of Living Architecture: The Work of
Frank Lloyd Wright
New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1953

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

The Natural House
New York: Horizon Press, 1954

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

Organic Architecture
Spring Green, Wisconsin: Taliesin, 1953

The Usonian house was a development of Wright's design philosophy since before the turn of the century, when he designed low-cost dwellings for the Midwest middle class. The economic troubles of the Depression, moreover, had led him to think deeply about social order, politics, and agriculture relative to the American landscape; *usonian* alluded to the United States of North America. He was also concerned to modernity in architecture, together with economy and flexibility. He published an early statement of his philosophy in this regard in the January 1938 *Architectural Forum*.

Later, in a souvenir pamphlet which accompanied the showing of a model Usonian house, he wrote:

To say the house planted by myself on the good earth of the Chicago prairie as early as 1900, or earlier, was the first truly democratic expression of our democracy in Architecture would start a controversy with professional addicts who believe Architecture has no political (therefore no social) significance. So, let's say that the spirit of democracy – freedom of the individual as an individual – took hold of the house as it then was, took off the attic and the porch, pulled out the basement, and made a single spacious, harmonious unit of living room, dining room and kitchen, with appropriate entry conveniences. The sleeping rooms were convenient to baths approached in a segregated, separate extended wing and the whole place was flooded with sunlight from floor to ceiling with glass.

More by Wright on this subject was published in *The Natural House*. *Organic Architecture* is a further iteration of Wright's philosophy, one of a number of pamphlets self-published from Taliesin.

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

The Disappearing City

New York: William Farquhar Payson, 1932

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

When Democracy Builds

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959

The Living City

New York: Horizon Press, 1958

The Disappearing City, written during the Depression, was the first book in which Wright proposed a decentralized, agrarian society. A revised edition, *When Democracy Builds* (in the adjoining case at left), published thirteen years later, conveyed his continuing dissatisfaction. To him, the modern city was the cause of society's ills, "a parasite of the spirit", which concentrated humanity on a limited amount of land and encouraged greedy bankers and landlords. Wright was not alone in such sentiments, which were especially strong in the nation's heartland. His solution was to eliminate cities and artificial boundaries in favor of ideal communities, centered only on home and family.

In 1935, Wright and his apprentices at Taliesin devised a model of four representative square miles of what Wright called Broadacre City. An associated plan was published in his 1958 book *The Living City*. Designed, like all of Wright's projects, on a grid, Broadacre City replaced urban congestion with suburban dispersal. Each home stood on an independent plot of land, one acre minimum; every resident had a car for mobility; telecommunications prevented isolation of the community; and industry produced modern goods. Although this particular scheme was never put into practice, it prefigured actual patterns of land use in America as the century progressed: expansion of suburbs and highways, and construction of shopping malls and entertainment centers.

Greek Orthodox Church for the Milwaukee Hellenic Community

Wauwatosa: The Church, ca. 1955

Marin County Civic Center

San Rafael?: Board of Supervisors, 1962

In his final years, Frank Lloyd Wright designed numerous buildings for worship, which were needed in the wake of suburban development. His Unitarian Church (1945-51) in Madison, Wisconsin influenced other buildings shaped like an A (or inverted V), a modern version of the steeple. One of his last commissions, the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church (1955-61) in Wauwatosa, a suburb of Milwaukee, was designed instead around the circle, incorporating a dome and a Greek cross, two elements historically associated with Greek Orthodox churches.

Wright used curvilinear forms also in his design for the Marin County Civic Center (1957-62) in California, together with structures with long lines recalling those of the Prairie Style. In this project Wright's intent was to bridge the Marin County hills and express the natural beauty of the landscape. He was ninety when he accepted the commission in 1957; as for the church in Wauwatosa, he did not live to see the groundbreaking, and his apprentices continued the work.

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation
and Horizon Press, 1960
Two copies shown, hardcover and paperback

Postcard photograph of Frank Lloyd Wright,
Hilla von Rebay, and Solomon R. Guggenheim,
at unveiling of a model of the Guggenheim Museum,
August, 1945
Lent by Mrs. Elaine Yanow

Postcard photograph of the Guggenheim Museum
from the air, by David Heald, 2005
Lent by Mrs. Elaine Yanow

Wright began the design of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (1943-59) years before construction began. Here again he utilized the circle, and proposed a sculptural building, incorporating a continuous spiral ramp cantilevered from the gallery walls,

the whole achieved with poured concrete. The building, he wrote, would *mark the first advance in the direction of organic architecture which the great city of New York has to show. . . . Here for the first time architecture appears plastic, one floor flowing into another (more like sculpture) instead of the usual superimposition of stratified layers cutting and butting into each other by way of post and beam construction.* Its design was considered so radical that building permits at first were withheld, and contractors declined to become involved.

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Also displayed in this exhibition is a selection of reference books about Frank Lloyd Wright, and additional plates from his *Selected Drawings Portfolios, 1977-1982.*

Text and exhibition design by Wayne G. Hammond,
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