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FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT
AND THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

QUARTERLY

FRANK
LLOYD
WRIGHT®

NEW EXHIBITION:

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT AND THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

During his seventy-year career, Frank Lloyd Wright was committed not only to the creation of a truly American architecture, but also to the creation of a house form that supported a uniquely American lifestyle that he envisioned.

A new traveling exhibition, "Frank Lloyd Wright and the House Beautiful," focuses on Wright's skill in creating harmony between the architectural structure and interior design while fulfilling the needs of a modern, American lifestyle. The exhibition presents approximately one hundred original objects including furniture, metal work, textiles, drawings, and accessories from the collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation and other public and private collections. There are also wall panels of period and recent photographs of Wright interiors and historic publications including magazines, books, and catalogs.

Organized by International Arts and Artists in conjunction with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, the exhibition opens February 14, 2006, at the Naples Museum of Art, in Florida. It remains there through June 25 and then moves to the Boise Art Museum (July 15-October 22, 2006) in Idaho and to several other cities through 2007.

"Frank Lloyd Wright and the House Beautiful" is divided into three themes that convey the methods through which

Wright implemented the philosophy of the "house beautiful."

The first section shows how Wright sought to develop a modern interior reflective of a uniquely American spirit of democracy and individual freedom. The next section illustrates Wright's development in integrating the space with furnishings and architectural elements. Finally, the exhibition examines how Wright tried to bring his ideas into the homes of average Americans.

A catalog, *Frank Lloyd Wright and the House Beautiful: Designing an American Way of Living* with text by exhibition curator Virginia T. Boyd, is also available (see "Books," page 27). The following essay provides an overview of the themes addressed in the catalog and exhibition.

Exhibition Schedule for

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT AND THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

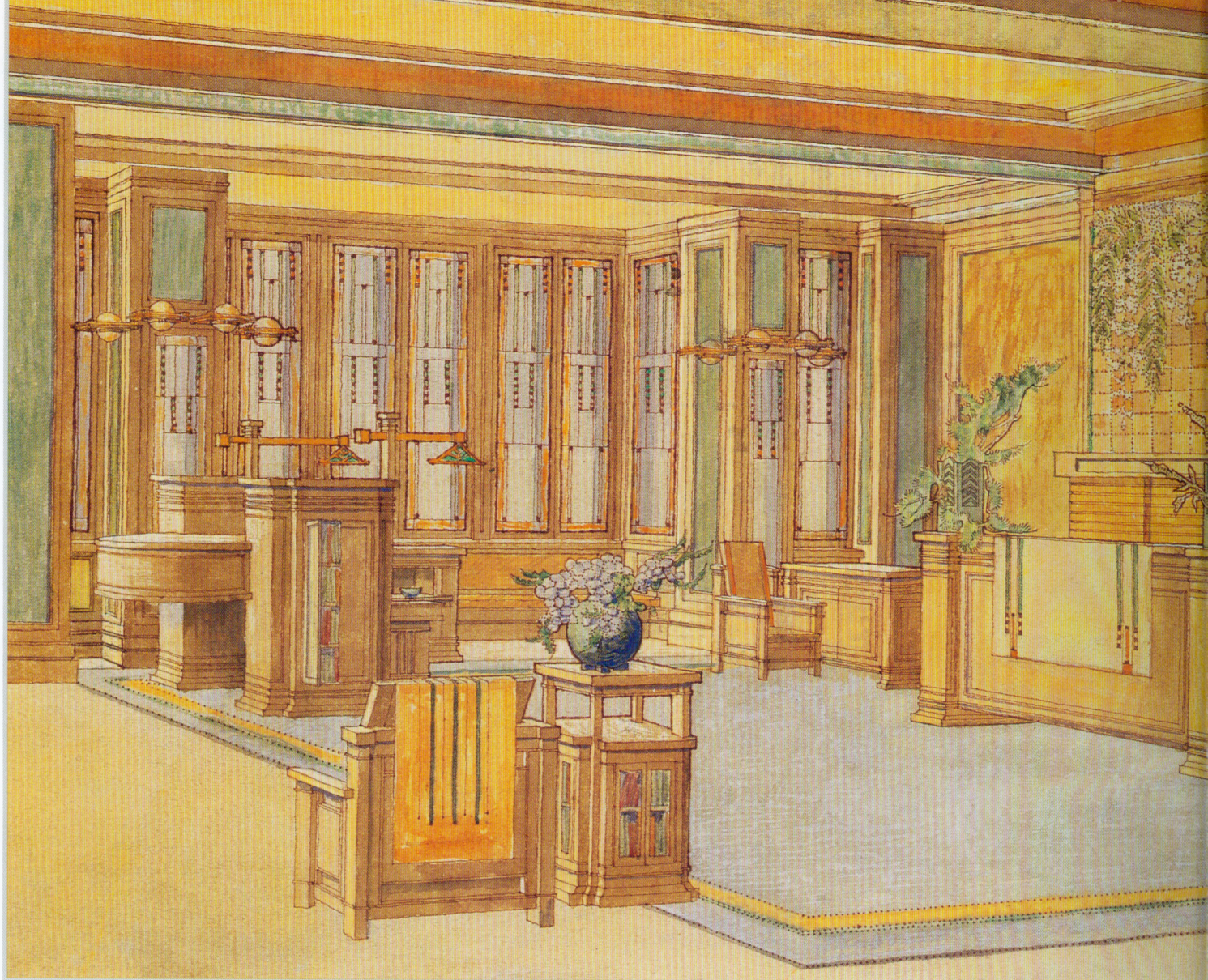
February 14-June 25, 2006—*Naples Museum of Art, Naples, Florida.*

July 15-October 22, 2006—*Boise Art Museum, Boise, Idaho.*

November 9, 2006-February 4, 2007—*Columbia Museum of Art, Columbia, South Carolina.*

March 3-May 27, 2007—*Alden B. Dow Museum of Science and Art, Midland Center for the Arts, Midland, Michigan.*

Plus two other venues to be confirmed, June-September 2007, and October 2007-January 2008.

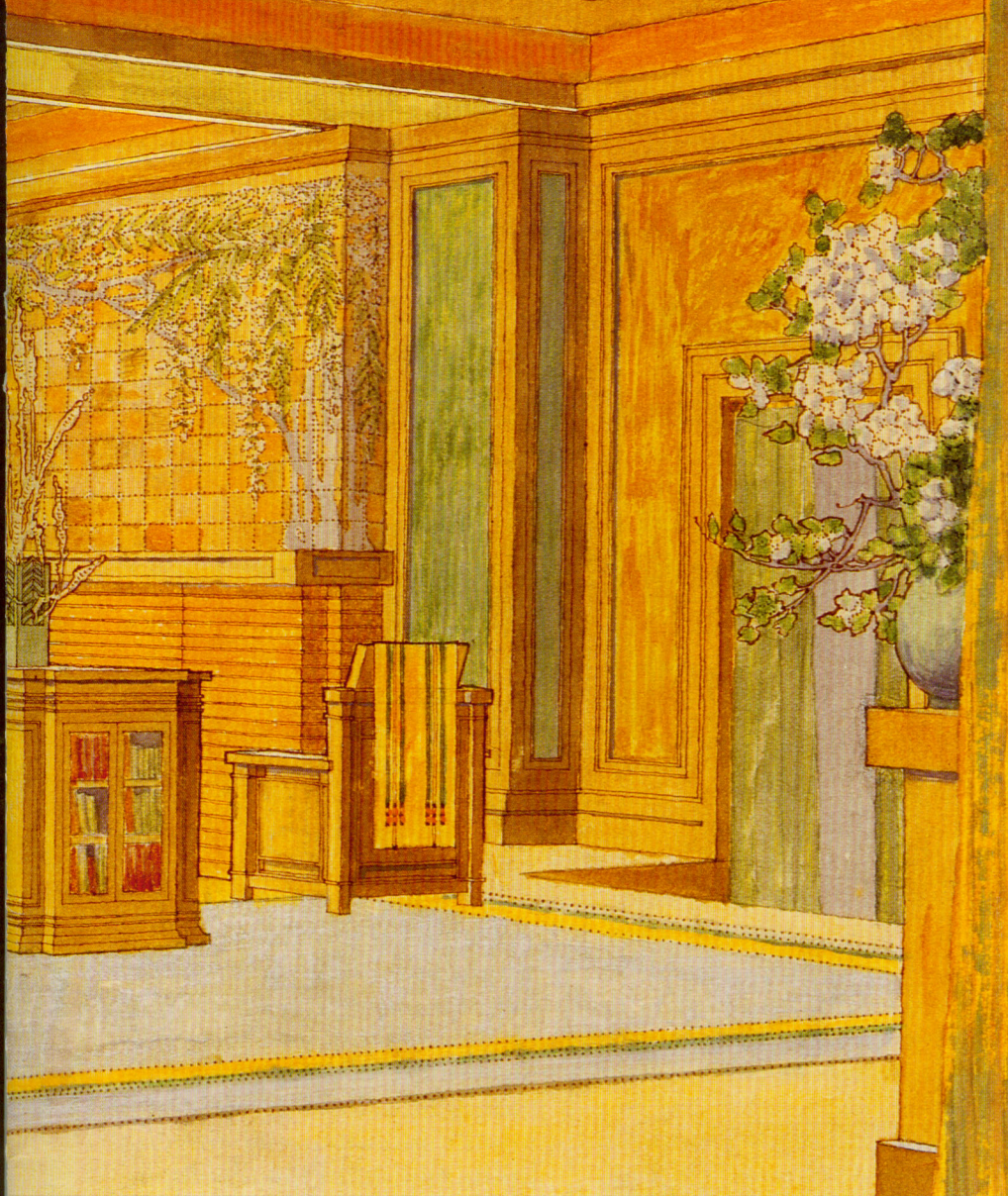


DESIGNING AN AMERICAN WAY OF LIVING

By Virginia Terry Boyd

The “house beautiful” was an ideal that Frank Lloyd Wright embraced throughout his career—it was about architecture, but more broadly, it was about how to live. It was his vision for a new, uniquely American way of living and how residential architecture should be designed to facilitate and nurture this new approach to living. Central to Wright’s vision was his belief that place matters—that the immediate physical environment powerfully influences its inhabitants.

The phrase “house beautiful” itself was not Wright’s. Terms such as the “city beautiful” and the “house beautiful” were adopted in the late nine-



Frank Lloyd Wright's interpretation of the concepts of "house beautiful" is being explored in a new traveling exhibition. Among the many drawings in the exhibition is this watercolor presentation drawing (1906) for the house remodeling for C. Thaxter Shaw of Montreal, Canada. Wright created an integrated environment, designing furniture, fabrics, beautifully detailed stained glass patterns, and included strategically placed bowls of cut flowers. The monogram on the drawing indicates that the watercolor was done in the office of Niedecken-Walbridge, an interior-decorating firm in Milwaukee that manufactured many of the furnishings from the designs of Wright from 1907 to 1917. FLLW FND #0610.008. All drawings © Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation.

role of nurturer of social values. Individuals as diverse as Catharine Beecher, Jane Addams, Gustave Stickley, and Elbert Hubbard all believed a "house beautiful" could be a refuge, an island of security in the tumult of a competitive, chaotic society. The house and furnishings became an issue of social, not just aesthetic, concern. Between 1875 and 1895, the phrase "house beautiful" was used frequently by writers and critics ranging from Oscar Wilde to Robert Louis Stevenson. By 1896 the term achieved such prominence that it was considered a suitable title for a magazine devoted to the American home.

Arriving in Chicago in 1887, Frank Lloyd Wright was present during this period of ferment and change, formulating his own ideas about house, home, and family. He was himself the product of the philosophy of the home as the instiller of spiritual, moral, and social values beginning with his mother, Anna Lloyd Wright, and the close-knit Lloyd-Jones extended family in rural south-central Wisconsin. Frank Lloyd Wright shaped his own interpretation of the phrase "the house beautiful," drawing on the definitions around him but distilling his own.

Wright's conception did not rest on specific visual or structural quali-

teenth and early twentieth centuries to refer to a principle in architectural and social reform to promote the idea that the quality of life could be improved by reshaping the material physical environment—from cities to houses to tablespoons. Its roots were in England where Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin responded to the debilitating effects on the English working class of the industrial revolution. For them the improvement of the aesthetic and cultural milieu was an essential part of broader social reform. Ruskin discussed the relation between architecture and moral good, even suggesting that particular architectural features such as hearths, overhanging roofs and steep gables represented Christian moral values, such as trust

and devotion. As leader of the Arts and Crafts Movement, William Morris emphasized a relationship between the aesthetic environment and individuals' quality of life; a supportive environment could inspire the initiative and educational activity necessary to achieve a better life. More broadly, the home was viewed as the source of cultural and ethical values, a place where children were taught to become successful and productive citizens contributing to the betterment of society. The house itself and carefully selected objects within it were the tools.

In the United States at this time, people took to heart Ruskin's and Morris's ideas on the appropriate relationship between the physical nature of the environment and its

THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL BY WILLIAM C. GANNET

THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL IN A SETTING DESIGNED BY
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT AND PRINTED BY HAND AT THE AUVERGNE
PRESS IN RIVER FOREST BY WILLIAM HERMAN WINSLOW AND
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT DURING THE WINTER MONTHS OF THE
YEAR EIGHTEEN HUNDRED NINETY SIX AND SEVEN

Early evidence of Wright's interest in the "house beautiful" is the project he undertook in the winter of 1896-97 with William H. Winslow—the printing in book form of a sermon by William C. Gannet, *The House Beautiful*. Limited to an edition of ninety copies it was printed by the Auvergne Press of River Forest, Illinois, a private press in Winslow's house on Auvergne Place. The text extols the home as the source of love, warmth, virtue, and goodness leading to "a higher beauty..." Wright's contribution was the book's design with distinctive elaborate linear patterns of geometric and conventionalized naturalistic motifs forming a deep frame around a relatively small area of text on each page. Photo courtesy Frank Lloyd Wright Archives.

ties but rather on qualities of the mind. There were two contributing ideas, one about "the house" and the other about "beautiful." The ideas would merge in the design of his distinctive organic house and in his conception of the particular way of life that it was intended to support. From the beginning Wright's conception of the house was an idea that rested within the individual, some-

thing that grew into form from within rather than being imposed from the outside culture, society, and prevailing styles. A house was the visible manifestation of every free individual. It was the individual's own domain, his own ground. Thus the house was the tangible form of an intangible idea about the individual's freedom and personal integrity, a place that uplifted and liberated the spirit of the inhabitants.

In his mind the houses around him, mostly imitating styles from other times and countries, could not reflect these American values because they were conceived in different times and for different circumstances. He wanted to create a house form that reflected the contemporary way Americans lived. At the heart of his definition of house was a desire to design a house in harmony with the human inhabitant, both being products of nature. Wright's "natural house" would evolve out of a reductive peeling away of artifices accumulated over time from out-

worn traditions to a design with an inherent simplicity derived from rediscovering the order of the relationship between the functions of the house and the structure that expressed them—an ordering that could be found in the structure of forms in nature.

Wright's conception of house was integrally related to his conception of beauty. Again, although in complete agreement with the necessity of beauty in life, Wright would define beauty in humanistic rather than aesthetic or stylistic terms. Beauty was the presence of integrity and simplicity within the design. It was a feeling of order felt in a place. Thus the house and the beautiful were in his mind components of the same underlying idea, a structure inspired with the principles of form found in nature and expressed with integrity and a natural simplicity.

Because Wright conceived these ideas over half a century ago, it is difficult for us to enter the *zeitgeist* of his time and thinking. An understanding of Wright's ideas about an

appropriate way of living for American families and how the ideas should be transformed into the design of a house may be helped by approaching his idea about an American house form from three components that were integral and constant to the idea but can be studied separately. First, central to the house beautiful was a new thoroughly modern house form that had an entirely new arrangement of interior space in response to new patterns of living uniquely American. Secondly, the new house form expressed the new era through a new modern aesthetic, breaking away from past styles. And lastly, the new house form had to be accessible to all, essential in a truly democratic society.

Early in his career Wright began rethinking how space was actually used and reshaping the interior space of the house in response. A guiding principle sought to reduce social and role distinctions—common in European house forms—to support less prescribed and looser more informal interactions befitting American life, less bound by rigid class, social, gender, and generational divisions. Wright eliminated spaces seldom used such as the attic and basement, and reduced the size of private spaces such as bedrooms. Other features were reduced: fewer rooms in general, fewer interior doors, and fewer holes punched in solid walls for windows—substitut-

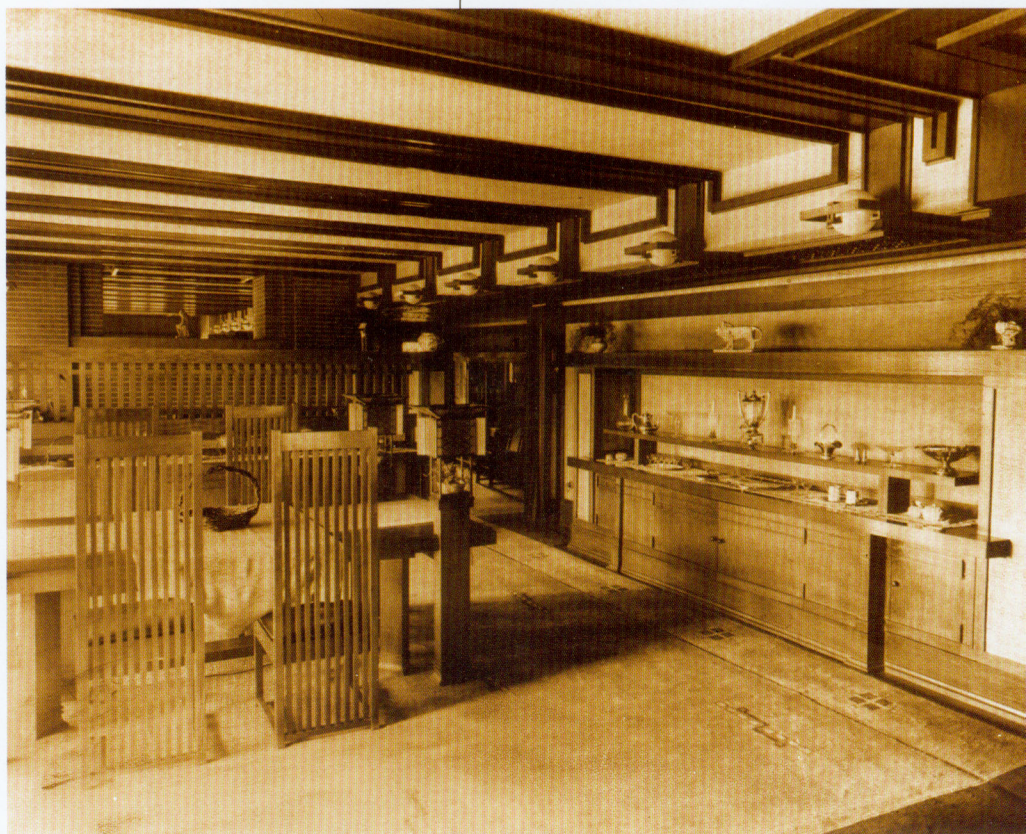
In Wright's early houses, furnishings were not as tightly interlocked with the structure as in many later houses, but early examples demonstrate the direction Wright would take. In the dining area of the Robie House, 1908, a large section of the interior wall is recessed to hold a very large storage unit that, if freestanding, would be described as a sideboard. It contains two vertical and six horizontal cabinets, the lower arranged in a traditional breakfront style. The upper area has three extended shelf and display areas. Placing so much case furniture and étagère-type pieces within the room would have consumed significant floor space. Photo courtesy FLLW Archives.

ing instead large wall panels of glass. Space for live-in help and elaborate food preparation and house management was reduced or eliminated, and labor-saving services were introduced. The height of the ceiling was lowered which broadened the base, increasing a sense of extension outward horizontally.

As Wright peeled away the lifeless and cumbersome parts of the house and furnishings he increased the spaciousness of the main living core of the house. A single expansive living space was conceived as the heart of the house, a symbolic hearth of the family. It served multiple and overlapping functions including living, dining, intimate reading and conversation, and festive public entertaining. It could be extended even further by, in a sense, “borrowing” additional areas beyond it such as an adjacent open kitchen area and exterior terraces. Within the large open living area more intimate temporary spaces with a sheltered feel could be created. Glass was critical to the new approach to



(Above) The traveling exhibition includes furniture designed by Wright including the Japanese Print Table designed in 1898 for Wright's Oak Park Home and Studio. The table was recently restored (see page 28).



space. The material permitted Wright to infuse the house with, to him, one of the most potent forces of nature—light. Glass simultaneously visually connected space of the outside world with that of the interior. With glass as the material for the wall itself, the concepts of enclosure and space were entirely rethought.

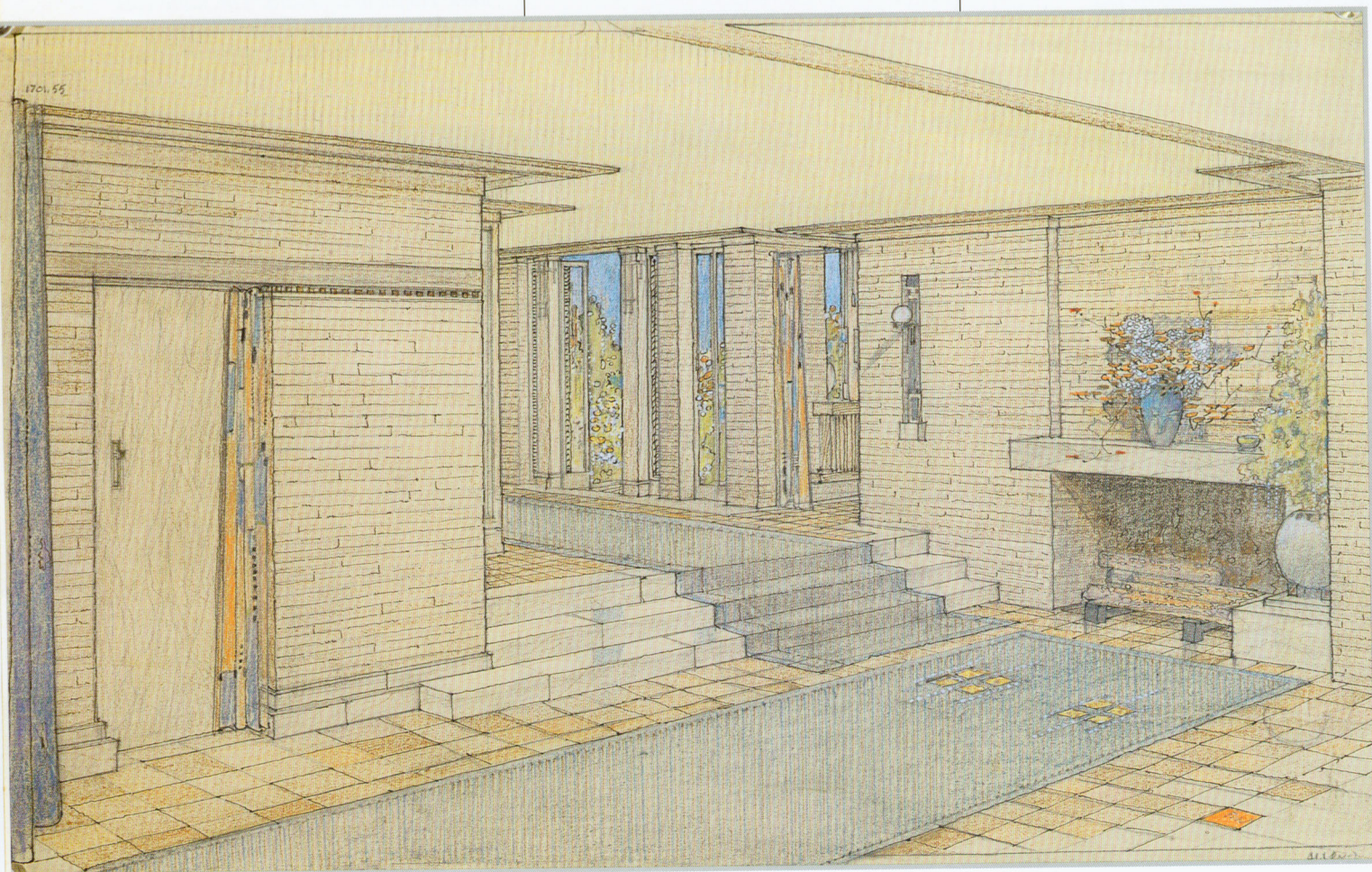
As everyone experiences who builds a house, there are seemingly infinite choices to be made about how walls, floors, objects, surfaces, and many other details should look. Wright's intellectual concepts about the house beautiful, about how certain qualities of space and form might facilitate ways for people to live most felicitously, had to be translated into decisions about how the house should look. How does one go from a desire for a sense of beauty to a color for the wall? How is beauty constructed? In his 1954 book, *The Natural House*,

Wright describes this as application of the grammar of the house, a constant character for all of the elements, including shapes, colors, textures, and patterns, that articulates the overarching architectural idea. These are the words, that when combined according to principles of grammar—the architect's concept—permit the house to speak in a language understandable and appealing to the viewer and user. If well conceived, the language has the power to engage the emotions of inhabitants and a flexibility to adapt to different kinds of houses and owners, those with large or small budgets, different lifestyles and tastes, changing needs as families evolve over time, and different climates and site characteristics.

For Wright an unwavering requirement of his language was that it be composed of a limited set of elements that were used throughout all parts

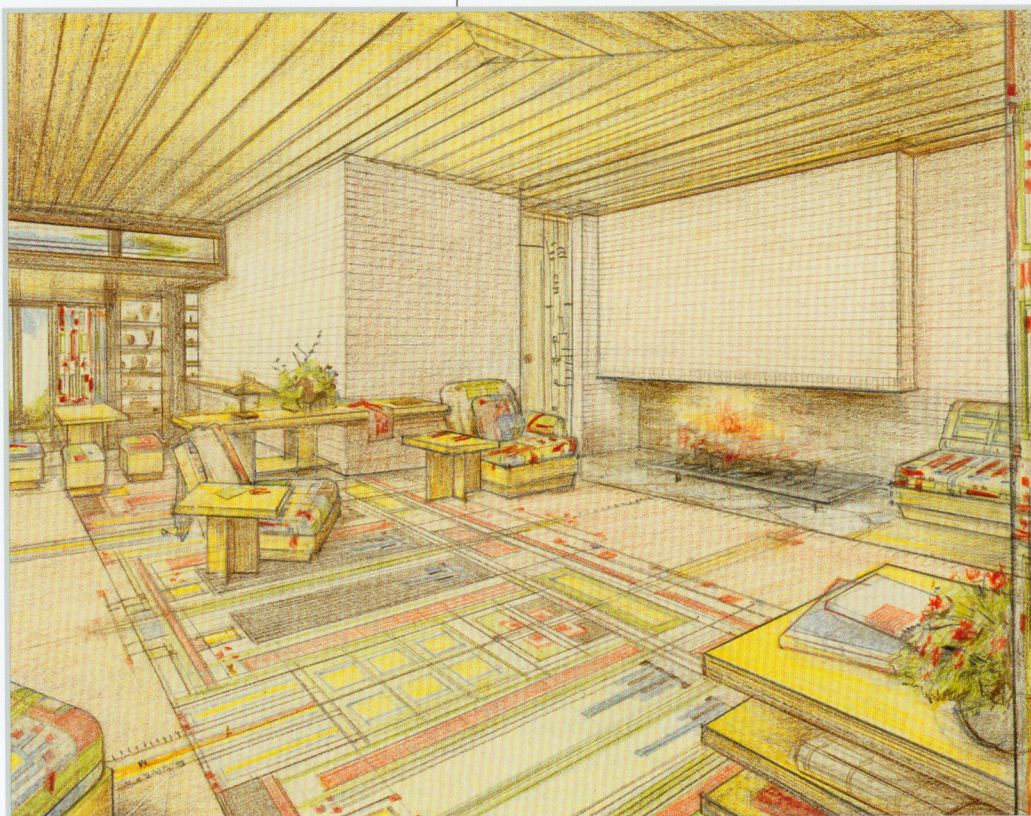
of the project from the shaping of the landscape, through the organization of the space of the house, and patterns for glass and fabrics. In his mind, words and grammar are used either to create poetry, “the sound of the heart,” or the utilitarian prose of an appliance manual. In both, the language is the same, but the former touches the soul or spirit of the reader, the latter leaves little trace. The visual aesthetic language of the house beautiful was intended to inspire the residents as poetry and music touches an ineffable place in one's soul, in contrast to a house that functions adequately and efficiently but is as emotionally engaging as a generic hotel room.

Wright avoided using the terms “ornament” or “decoration” to describe his language of form preferring “integral pattern” or “organic ornament” to emphasize that the visual character was the pattern of the struc-



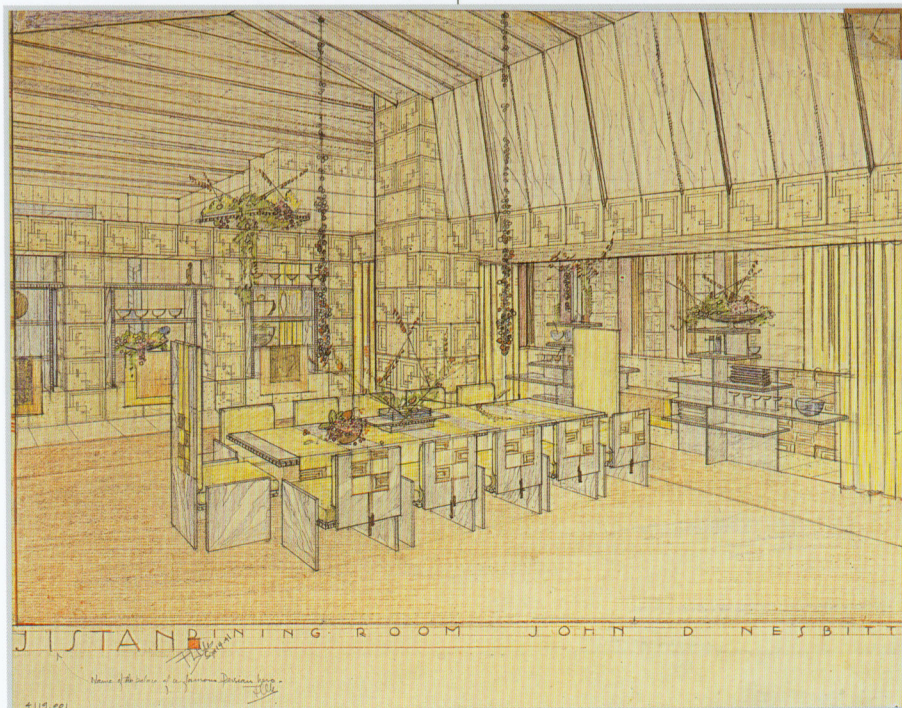
The style of Frank Lloyd Wright is abstract, largely devoid of pictorial representation, subject matter, or motifs, a vocabulary of pure linear geometric forms. The intense vibrancy of Wright's formal vocabulary and grammar was rich and nuanced. This is evident in examples of work throughout his career such as the rich ornamentation of many surfaces in the detail in the (left) drawing of the Henry Allen House, 1917, for Wichita, Kansas, and later examples such as the (right) drawing for the Lloyd Lewis House, 1939, Libertyville, Illinois, and (below) the proposed 1940 alteration plans for John D. Nesbitt for the Mabel and Charles Ennis House in Los Angeles, California. His concept of integral ornament is consistent throughout. Patterning of ceilings, trim, positioning of clerestory windows, wall surfaces of ornamented glass, built-in furnishings, and patterning of carpets all have the same abstract geometric formal vocabulary. Yet each is not a minor variation of others. Each is a new exploration of the same language resulting in a fresh new expression. Drawings: (left) FLLW FND #1701.055, (right) FLLW FND #4008.004, and (below) FLLW FND #4119.001.

ture manifested in all of its parts. The model for his visual language for form came from nature, the way a living form such as a plant combines



numerous complex biological processes into component visible structures of root, stem, and flower such that a

single whole is created with indistinguishable parts. Certain materials and objects brought forth Frank Lloyd Wright's innate sense of enrichment and ornamentation, much as a luxuriant flower makes the most dramatic visual ornament on a plant. Examples include: 1) the patterning of light, both natural and artificial in light screens and light fixtures, 2) decorative accessories of various metals, glass, and wood, 3) furniture, and 4) textiles, particularly carpets. Whether the house was large or small each element was designed to create a feeling of welcoming, a conscious celebration of the beauty of the space and a sense of being in a special place. Wright described this process of distillation to the essence as seeking an inherent simplicity, a livable interior space with all parts—furniture, structure, and landscape—integral and organically connected as a single entity.



The Jacobs I House, 1936-37, in Madison, Wisconsin, was the first built Usonian and became a prototype for dozens of designs that followed. Carports, sandwich walls, grouped utilities, and flat roofs were the hallmarks of the design. The back of the house featured an entire wall of floor-to-ceiling glass doors opening to a large backyard garden. Photo courtesy Frank Lloyd Wright Archives.



All of Wright's decades of thinking and experimenting on the design for an appropriate house form for a modern American society prepared him well for a rapidly changing American society in the aftermath of World War II. Americans were coming together in thinking about how they wanted to live, ideas that often mirrored Wright's own. The popularity of the new term "lifestyle" aptly conveyed the post-war yearning for an increasingly informal, simpler way of living. This was reflected in a relaxing of the formal structure of activities such as family meals, a desire for more and unstructured leisure time,

less prescribed patterns of interaction between parents and children and between spouses, more focus on family-centered activities and positioning children's activities in the center of family life in general. There was a hunger for a relaxed, informal, comfortable lifestyle centered in the home.

The new lifestyle required a new kind of house, one that was functionally efficient; low in maintenance; flexible spatially, and functionally able to accommodate a spontaneous

approach to activities; equipped with labor-saving appliances and equipment; and stocked with easy-to-use products including ready-to-eat food. It had to be a place the family enjoyed. And most of all, with the pressure for such changes coming from the burgeoning middle class, the new house that accommodated the new lifestyle had to be eminently affordable.

These fundamental changes in the way the American family wanted to live were facilitated not just by new





Wright's ability to combine multiple functions such as seating, eating, and storage all within one integrated area is demonstrated in the Usonian houses. (Below left & above) In the Lloyd Lewis House, 1939, for Libertyville, Illinois, wood structures built into the masonry core provide multiple levels of shelves, closed storage, desk areas, and surfaces for task lighting, bench seating, and a dining table. Though technically separate from the structure, a freestanding unit provides sofa, table, and shelving and seems to evolve from the structure. The house expresses the new informality of the post-war period. Photos by Hedrich Blessing, courtesy Chicago Historical Society.

house forms, but also by reasonably priced, mass-produced products that conveyed a new "modern" attitude and made possible the new informality. One such example was the appearance of the television which restructured family life around informal entertainment while eating, and required rethinking what was entertainment space, space reserved for eating, or whether both would occur in the same space.

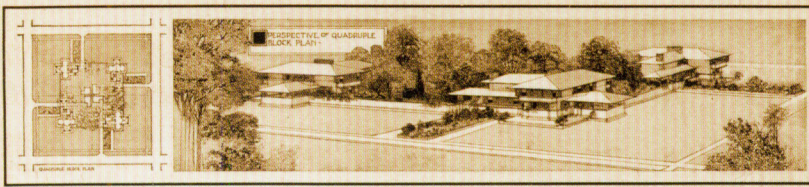
Wright was ready to give an authoritative voice promoting his

now decades-old ideas for a new house form that not only accommodated the social changes that were bubbling up, but also had a solidly American lineage, a major selling point after the trauma of the war and its European roots. Europe was exporting the *avant-garde* Modernism of Le Corbusier and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, but for the average, middle-class American looking for a new house in rapidly expanding suburbia, the European vision of modern was perceived as too foreign, bare, and cold. Wright also was stubbornly opposed to the incoming European Modernism, which enhanced his credibility at home and gave weight to his alternative, organic architecture and his distinctly American house.

Over the years Wright had continued to clarify his vision for an ideal American house form. The fundamental ideas about interior space remained intact but were refined to an essence. This evolution resulted in Wright's Usonian House, referencing Usonia, his name for the United

States. By the mid-1930s the Herbert Jacobs House, Usonia I, was constructed in Madison, Wisconsin. Many others soon followed. Wright described the Usonian house in his autobiography, "That house must be a pattern for more simplified and, at the same time, more gracious living; Necessarily new, but suitable to living conditions as they might so well be in the country we live in today."

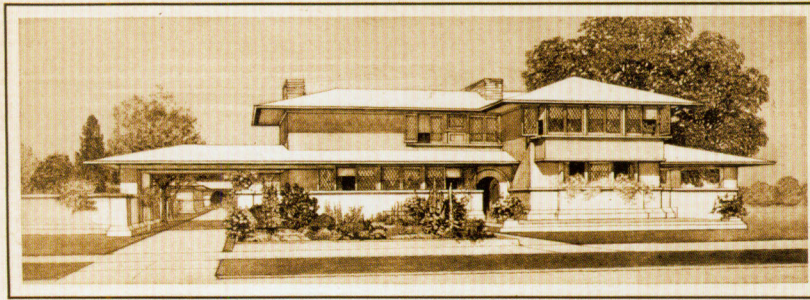
Overall, the Usonian houses emphasized further a central space for living. The masonry core containing the fireplace was expanded to include all mechanical systems for the house and plumbing for kitchen, bath and heating, thus clustering those rooms in the center of the house, reducing construction costs and leaving livable space facing outside walls. Outside walls of floor-to-ceiling glass vastly extended the interior space of the house onto terraces and into the landscape. Flat roofs replaced expensive gabled roofs, open carports substituted for garages. As much of the structure as possible was constructed



A Home in a Prairie Town

By FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

This is the Fifth Design in the Journal's New Series of Model Suburban Houses Which Can Be Built at Moderate Cost



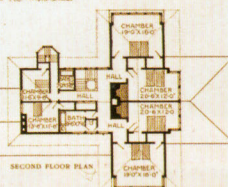
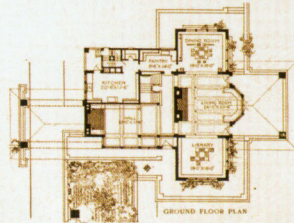
CITY man going to the country puts too much in his house and too little in his ground. He drags after him the fifty-foot lot, soon the twenty-five-foot lot, finally the party wall; and the home-maker who fully appreciates the advantages which he came to the country to secure feels himself impelled to move on. It seems a waste of energy to plan a house haphazard, to hit or miss an already distorted condition, so this partial solution of a city man's country home on the prairie begins at the beginning and assumes four houses to the block of four hundred feet square as the minimum of ground for the basis of his prairie community.

The block plan to the left, at the top of the page, shows an arrangement of the four houses that secures breadth and prospect to the community as a whole, and absolute privacy both as regards each to the community, and each to each of the four.

The perspective view shows the handling of the group at the centre of the block, with its foil of simple lawn, omitting the foliage of curb parkways to better show the scheme, retaining the same house in the four locations merely to afford an idea of the unity of the various elevations. In practice the houses would differ distinctly, though based upon a similar plan.

The ground plan, which is intended to explain itself, is arranged to offer the least resistance to a simple mode of living, in keeping with a high ideal of the family life together. It is arranged, too, with a certain well-established order that enables free use without the sense of confusion felt in five out of seven houses which people really use.

The exterior recognizes the influence of the prairie, is firmly and bravely associated with the site, and makes a feature of its quiet level. The low terraces



and broad eaves are designed to accentuate that quiet level and complete the harmonious relationship. The curbs of the terraces and formal inclosures for extremely informal masses of foliage and bloom should be worked in cement with the walks and drives.

Cement on metal lath is suggested for the exterior covering throughout, because it is simple, and, as now understood, durable and cheap.

The cost of this house with interior as specified and cement construction would be seven thousand dollars:

Masonry, Cement and Plaster	\$4000.00
Carpentry	1500.00
Plumbing	400.00
Painting and Glass	350.00
Heating—combination (hot water)	345.00
Total	\$7595.00

IN A HOUSE of this character the upper reach and gallery of the central living-room is decidedly a luxury. Two bedrooms may take its place, as suggested by the second-floor plan. The gallery feature is, nevertheless, a temptation because of the happy sense of variety and depth it lends to the composition of the interior, and the sunlight it gains from above to pierce the shadow of the porch. The details are better grasped by a study of the drawings. The interior section in perspective shows the gallery as indicated by dotted lines on the floor plan of the living-room.

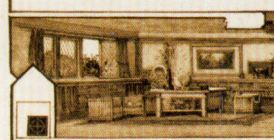
The second-floor plan disregards this feature, and is arranged for a larger family. Where three bedrooms would suffice the gallery would be practicable, and two large and two small bedrooms with the gallery might be had by rearranging servants' rooms and bath.

The interior is plastered throughout with sand finish and trimmed all through with flat bands of Georgia pine, smaller buck bands following the base and casings. This Georgia pine should be selected from straight grain for stiles, rails and running members, and from figured grain for panels and wide surfaces. All the wood should be shellacked once and waxed, and the plaster should be stained with thin, pure color in water and glue.

EDITOR'S NOTE—As a guarantee that the plan of this house is practicable, and that the estimates for cost are conservative, the architect is ready to accept the commission of preparing the working plans and specifications for the building site selected is within reasonable distance of a base of supplies where material and labor may be had at the standard market rates.



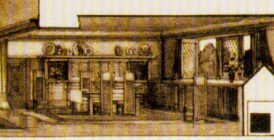
HALL, LOOKING TOWARD ENTRANCE



THE LIBRARY



LIVING-ROOM AND GALLERY



THE DINING-ROOM

INTERIOR VIEW OF THE FIRST FLOOR OF THIS HOUSE

17

Wright adopted several strategies to promote his ideas and work to large audiences. One strategy was to present both his designs and ideas through frequent articles in popular home magazines. Two early efforts for Ladies' Home Journal were (left) the January 1901 issue where Wright designed a model home titled "A Home in a Prairie Town," that was the harbinger of what became known as the Prairie style, and (below/right) a second design—"A Small House with 'Lots of Room in It'"—was featured in July 1901.

uplifts the heart and refreshes the spirit. Most houses confine their occupants. Now I understand...that such a house as this can liberate the person who lives in it."

Like all successful architects Frank Lloyd Wright knew that success was as much dependent upon vigorous promotion of his work as it was on the work itself. He recognized that to firmly plant his approach to residential architecture he needed to address directly those who might select his work and through the avenues of communication they used. To realize his goal to create a modern, natural, organic house beautiful, he adopted several strategies: frequent articles on his work and ideas in popular magazines, illustration of his ideas in temporary "exhibition houses" accessible to lay audiences, and, late in his career, the design of manufactured home-furnishing products.

Throughout his career the medium of the popular press enabled Wright to take his work and words on his new approach to American housing and living directly to people who would never see his custom-designed homes, nor read architectural journals or his books, and to speak to them in the comfort of their own home. At the turn of the twentieth century, women's home magazines were influential voices in the discussion of social and political issues of the day, discussing housing reform, women's rights and domestic reform, health and nutrition, and effects of

of wood, including an ingenious sandwich wall system composed of two surfaces of horizontal board and batten with a layer of paper insulation between and screwed together. The building material thus became the interior and exterior wall surfaces. As much as possible was constructed "of" the building or wall, further enlarging livable space, encouraging the reduction or elimination of clutter. Wright's reductionist approach is clear as he lists features to be eliminated: no interior trim, no radiators or light fixtures, no painting of the wood, no plastering, gutters, no downspouts. Only five materials were to be used: wood,

brick, cement, paper, and glass.

Wright poetically describes the essential democracy of the house, "A modest house, this Usonian house, a dwelling place that has no feeling at all for the 'grand' except as the house extends itself in the flat parallel to the horizon." Others were also aware of the profound emotional effect such a space could have. Having visited the recently constructed Lloyd Lewis House, his friend Alec Woolcott wrote to Wright, "I see now more fully than ever before what effect the right house can have upon the person inside it.... Just to be in that house

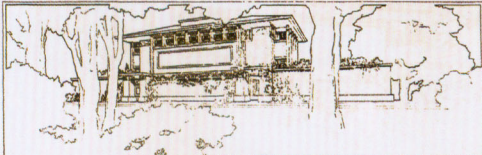
urbanism and industrialization, particularly as those issues affected the middle class. As they evolved, the focus shifted to the more intimate domestic scene, the area of interest to Wright. Over the course of his career, Wright worked with *Ladies' Home Journal* and *House Beautiful* in particular. (See *Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 4 or the exhibition catalog for an in-depth history of Wright's relationship with magazines.) Wright's collaboration with *House Beautiful* editor Elizabeth Gordon (editor from 1941-64) is of particular interest. Gordon was as passionately committed to making available to her readers the best and

most current ideas in housing and architecture as Wright was committed to creating such designs. Wright could express in architecture Gordon's editorial position that the American house was a place of simplicity, beauty, efficiency, and opportunity for personal expression and growth. The magazine supported the ideas and architect, even when competitors began to promote the new International Style. Like Wright, Gordon believed that the appropriate goal was creation of a uniquely American house form for a unique American way of life, not the adoption or development of a particular style. Their point of

THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

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PRICE, 10 CENTS A COPY. SENT A YEAR

VOLUME TWENTY CHICAGO, JUNE, 1906 NUMBER ONE



A HOUSE ON A BLUFF

By C. E. PERCIVAL

One of the principal residences of the future, Wisconsin, Mr. Thomas Paul Hardy has built him a house, with Mr. Frank Lloyd Wright for architect. And the result attracts much attention from the casual passer in which it is suited to its locality. A city that is set on a hill shall not be laid, and a castle in its exultation, gives the light to the house, if one may say one's feelings. So this house, standing firmly on its bluff, like an object of art upon its pedestal, is observed and discussed, praised by some and criticized by others, as things and persons of strong individuality are apt to be.

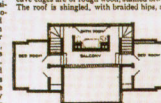
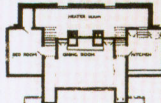
Mr. Hardy secured a large strip of ground at the top of a high bluff overlooking the lake. Although, located on one of the principal residence streets, this lot was thought of little value for building purposes as it averaged but twenty-four feet deep on the street level and then fell fifty feet at a sharp inclination to the waters of Lake Michigan. Yet these very peculiarities have been turned into advantages and a house put up, adapted as admirably to them, that, although not large, it has room enough for all the comforts of life and for many delightful features that we commonly expect only in palatial residences.

For one thing, the owner or the architect, instead of covering his entire lot with an ambitious pile as he could contrive, left ground enough to make a proper setting to his house. The hill placed at the center of the lot, close to the street line, with space for a considerable garden in the rear and then flanked it on either side with small walled gardens. In one of these cozy retreats, sheltered from the prevailing lake winds, vegetables are grown and in the other, so abundant of young fruit trees, makes the blossoming of peach or cherry a floral festival for the bedroom windows above.

As seen from the street the house's characteristic features are the high walls that shield its privacy and the unusual disposition of the windows. They are set close together in a band, say on under the broad eaves, while below them the unbroken front is relieved only by a large plaster panel, till about six feet from the ground, there a second row of windows lights the hall. Just outside of these a wide continuous row of windows adorns the exterior and also protects even these hall windows from the casual passing glance. These growing plants moreover, with the sunny grouping of the windows and the terrace or vine that softens the exterior of wall surface, mitigate the reserve of its aspect towards the street.

On the side towards the lake the land descends so sharply to the shore that the building obtains an additional lower story, dry soil well lighted. Here it has a garden front, at once picturesque and imposing. The necessary retaining walls either of a flat terrace, on a lower level than the walled garden. Two substantial porches arise from it, filling up of flowers into view of the seven great living-room windows, and steps lead down from it to the sloping bank, where a symmetrical arrangement of diagonal paths signs down to the beach. A swimming pool, bordered with shrubs and fed from the lake is fashioned in a stretch of green-ward on the lowest level.

The sky line of the mass of the house is perfectly quiet, but crisp and clean, characterizing the style of building perhaps as much as anything else. The walls are of gray plaster, with cement underlaid at the ground. The window mullions, coping, and eave edges are of rough wood, stained brown. The roof is shingled, with braided hips, and



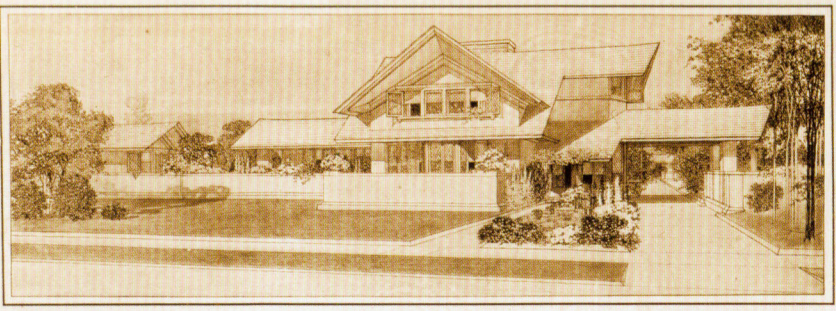
Second Floor Plan

Third Floor

A Small House with "Lots of Room in It"

By Frank Lloyd Wright

NINTH DESIGN IN THE JOURNAL'S NEW SERIES OF MODEL SUBURBAN HOUSES AT MODERATE COST



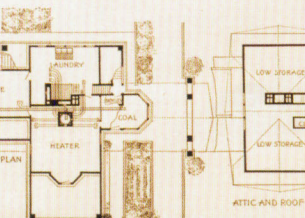
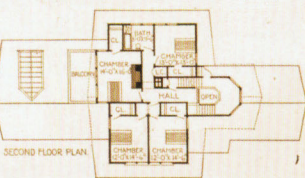
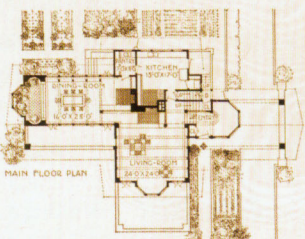
THE average home-maker is partial to the gable roof. This house has been designed with a thorough, somewhat new treatment of the gable with gently flaring eaves and pediments, slightly lined at the peaks, accentuating the perspective, slightly modeling the roof surfaces and making the outlines "crisp."

The plan disregards somewhat the economical limit in compact planning to take advantage of light, air and prospect, the enjoyable things one goes to the suburbs to secure. With modern systems of heating a distinct freedom in arrangement, denied to earlier builders, is made not only possible, but may be made comfortable with modest outlay. Two large rooms, with an entry performing the function of a little, formal social office, or a waiting-room, to relieve the living-room of undesirable pressure, together with a simple arrangement of stairs and a working department, make up the scheme of the main floor.

IN THIS case the dining-room is made the "feature," with a little indoor garden closing the perspective at its farther end. The dining-table commands the outdoor garden at the rear, and the low windows on the gallery to the street front, the whole counteracting upon a simple fireplace of brick which combines with the comfortable breadth of fireplace in the living-room. The dining-room is so coupled with the living-room that one leads naturally into the other without destroying the privacy of either.

The living-room is still the heart of the house, and has access to both gallery and terrace, and gives an interesting glimpse of entry and stair landing.

The working-department is roomy and convenient. The range is set within a brick-lined, brick-floored alcove, formed by the two fireplaces, the space overhead ventilated into a chimney flue. The servants' stairway reaches the landing of the main stairway, and the servants' room and bath are



situated over this landing, midway between the second and attic floors. The kitchen entry is from the side, and combines with the cellarway to avoid unsightly excessiveness.

As the house is free in arrangement, and the main rooms large, a simplicity of material and treatment is necessary. The exterior is plastered with cement plaster. The interior, trimmed with Georgia pine, without moldings, put on over rough plaster, together with the Georgia pine floors, is to be stained one-coat. The outside woodwork, except shingles, is also to be stained. Paint and varnish are not used.

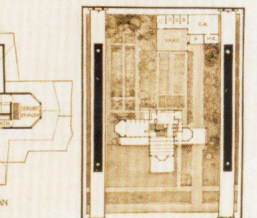
A COMBINATION hot-water apparatus would serve to heat the house perfectly, hot air in the main body of the house, and radiation in the dining-room and entry.

The cost of the house proper, exclusive of grading and walls, would approximate:

Masonry and Stone Water Table	\$100.00
Plastering	600.00
Carpentry and Hardware	250.00
Heating	125.00
Plumbing, Sewer and Gas Fitting	450.00
Shingling and Glass	250.00
Electric Wiring	50.00
Total	\$875.00

The block plans at the lower corners of the page show two schemes for placing the house upon an inside, one hundred-foot lot. One, as shown in perspective view, broad side to the street; the other alongside the depth of the lot.

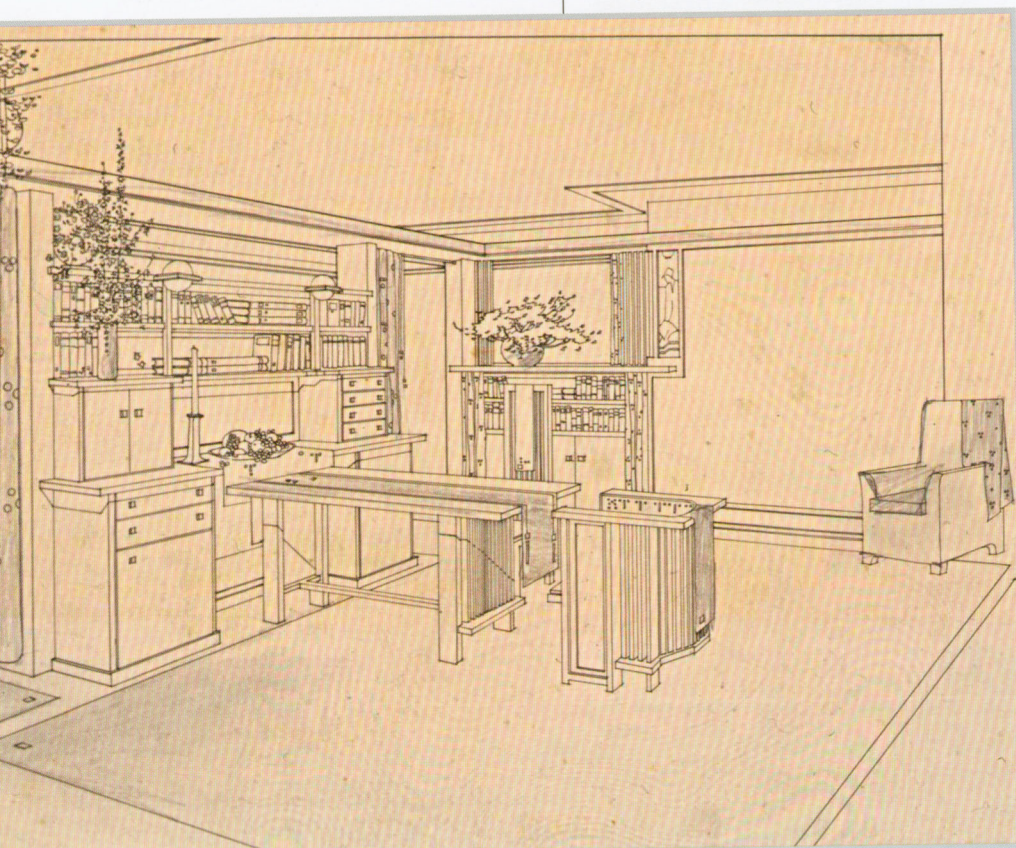
EDITOR'S NOTE - As a guarantee that the plan of this house is practicable and that the estimates for cost are conservative, the editors intend to accept the construction of preparing the working plans and specifications for this house, to cost \$2,500.00, on condition that the owner will be willing to accept the estimate of a house of supplies where material and labor may be had at the standard market rates.



(Above) Wright's work was featured often in *House Beautiful* magazine beginning in 1899 when his new studio in Oak Park was mentioned. In 1906, three major articles on his work appeared. In later years, after Elizabeth Gordon was named editor of *House Beautiful* in 1941, the magazine had a direct relationship with Wright, an association that continued for over a decade. Several of Wright's apprentices were hired as staff members, becoming deeply involved in the magazine's editorial development. *House Beautiful* reprinted with permission from *House Beautiful*, © 1906-1959, The Hearst Corporation. All rights reserved.

view was also influenced by underlying political issues coalescing around World War II, expressed in a mutual deeply felt aversion to the European source of the International Style.

House Beautiful carried its mission beyond its pages. In 1954 it co-sponsored an exhibition of individually designed rooms, titled "The Art of



Wright's American System-Built Houses were designed for prefabrication. Six demonstration structures were built in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, between 1915 and 1916. This drawing illustrates a design for the interior of one of the models, condensing into compact forms the open plan of living, dining, built-in storage, and display. His integral ornament is expressed in the geometric angularity of shapes, patterns, and spatial arrangements and serves to provide an ordered simplicity for what could have been a very full if not cluttered space. FLLW FND #1506.159.

Daily Living" with the Los Angeles County Fair Association and dedicated to Frank Lloyd Wright. It was organized by John DeKoven Hill, an assistant of Wright, who was on the staff of *House Beautiful* at the time. The October issue was devoted to the exhibition with a feature article entitled "The Meaning of America is the High Quality of Our Daily Life," and a home study course helped

readers adapt the ideas presented in the exhibition to their own houses. The most extensive collaboration between Gordon and Wright occurred in November 1955 with the entire issue dedicated to Wright. The special relationship with *House Beautiful* was reaffirmed after Wright's death in April 1959. The October issue was dedicated to him, beginning with a photograph of Wright seated at his desk at Taliesin above the heading, "Your Legacy from Frank Lloyd Wright: A Richer Way of Living."

Every house that Wright built was also a means of publicizing his work. However, the private houses were only accessible to a limited number of people. Wright needed other ways to make it possible for larger numbers of people to be able to experience his principles of organic architecture firsthand. Early in his career one attempt was the American System-

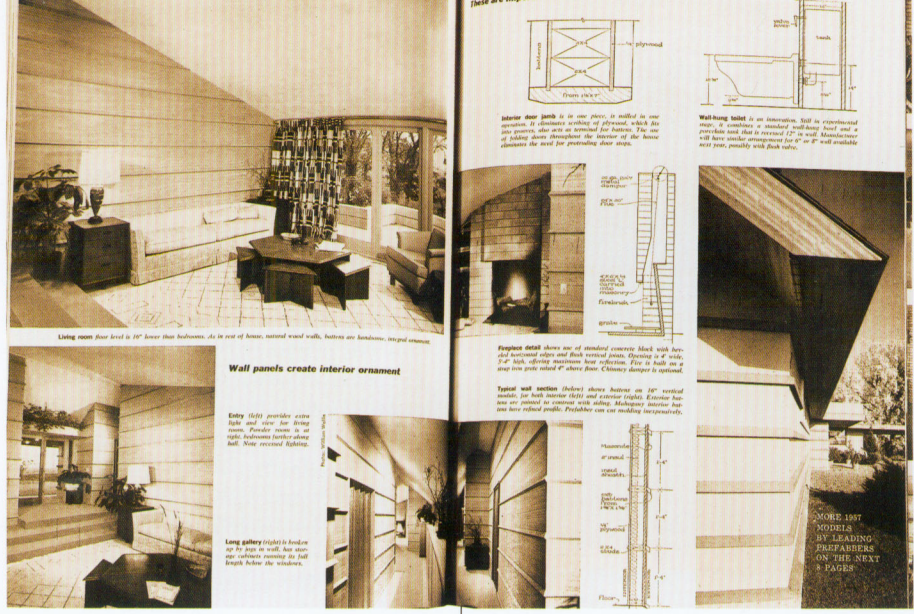
Built Houses, developed by Wright and the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Arthur L. Richards Company. The company was to manufacture, serve as contractor, and distributor of the houses. The intent of the project was for Wright to design twenty-eight houses for modest to more affluent budgets. They were to be built as a system of prefabricated houses, some parts preassembled at the factory and some precut and assembled on site. The intention was to reduce as much as possible the cost of expensive skilled labor and to control the quality of the design without requiring Wright's presence at the construction site. Eventually the system was to be franchised for national distribution. Six demonstration structures were built between 1915 and 1916 in a Milwaukee working class residential neighborhood. Four buildings were two-family flats and two were separate modest single-family houses. However after years of preparatory work on both the design and business sides, the project never gained the necessary momentum.

Another way Wright got his ideas about an American house out to average Americans was the temporary exhibition house, each of which permitted even more people to experience firsthand such a space. The purpose of the exhibition house was to educate viewers on the principles of the organic house through actually experiencing and vicariously living in one, with the message that it was something to which they could aspire.

Two exhibitions of Usonian houses illustrate his use of this means of introducing his ideas to the public at large. The most widely known was included in the exhibition *Sixty Years of Living Architecture: The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright* that opened in New York City in November 1953. It was constructed on the property soon to occupy the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, which Wright was in the process of designing. The exhibition

In the late 1950s, Wright made another attempt at prefabricated housing. A model home for the project in Madison, Wisconsin, was completely furnished to convey accurately the concept of the organic Usonian house and thus fulfill its tutorial role for the public. The furnishings for the house included dining room chairs in the same design as those used in the Guggenheim house and pieces of the new "Taliesin Line" of furniture manufactured by Heritage-Henredon and fabrics by F. Schumacher. The home was featured in the December 1956 issue of House and Home magazine.

Rudin House. These houses were based on the concrete textile block construction developed earlier. Again the goal was to reduce the costs of construction through less expensive and more standardized construction processes in order to expand the market. In some respects the Parade of Homes house was closest to realizing Wright's dream of a better way of living for masses of people. This was because virtually everything used in its construction, from the building to the furnishings, was on the market and available for purchase. The democracy of the marketplace made it possible for anyone with the neces-



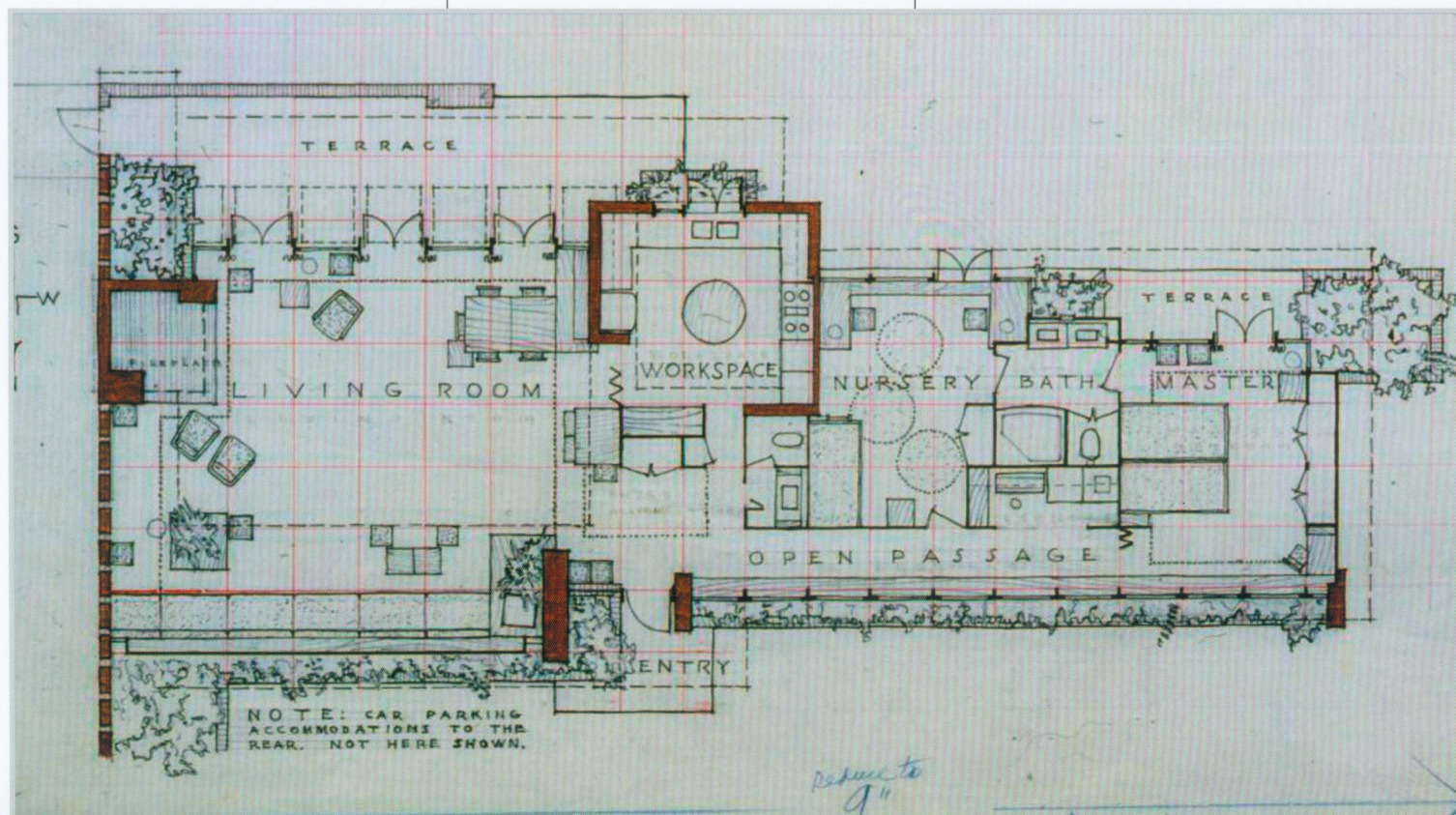
consisted of two temporary structures, a pavilion displaying drawings, photographs, and models of Wright's major commissions of his career, and a full-scale furnished Usonian house. All furniture for the Usonian house was designed by Wright. The house was featured later in the November 1955 issue of *House Beautiful*.

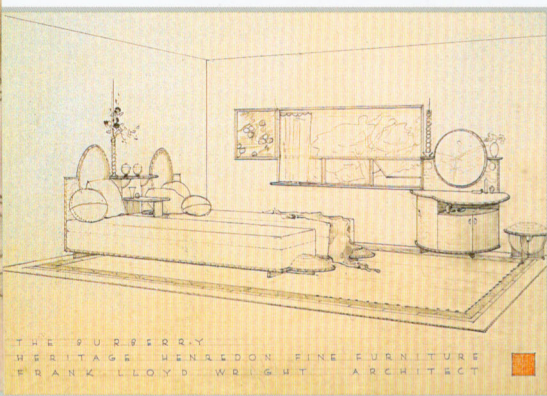
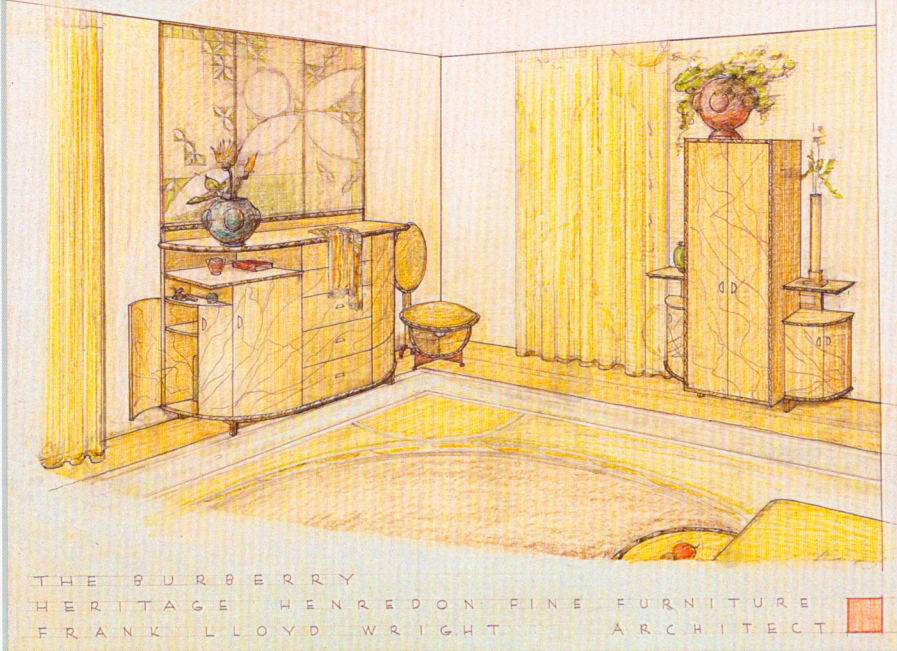
A second exhibition house was built in the spring of 1959 and

The traveling exhibition includes this drawing for the Usonian house constructed as part of an exhibition in New York City in 1953. Drawing: FLLW FND #5314.021.

opened to the public for the Parade of Homes in Madison, Wisconsin, in June, after which it was sold. It was a model for another attempt at prefabricated housing. In this case the initiative came from Marshall Erdman, a Madison, Wisconsin, businessman who as a young man was convinced by Wright to serve as the builder for the Unitarian Meeting House in Madison.

Wright designed three models for Erdman, two one-story and a two-story house with a square floor plan. The latter, the Prefab #2, was sold and since identified as the Walter





sary resources to create for themselves, without Wright's assistance, a completely furnished organic house designed by Wright and which expressed their own tastes and met their needs. However, it was not a complete solution to the need for high-quality, moderately priced houses. Wright's goal was to build

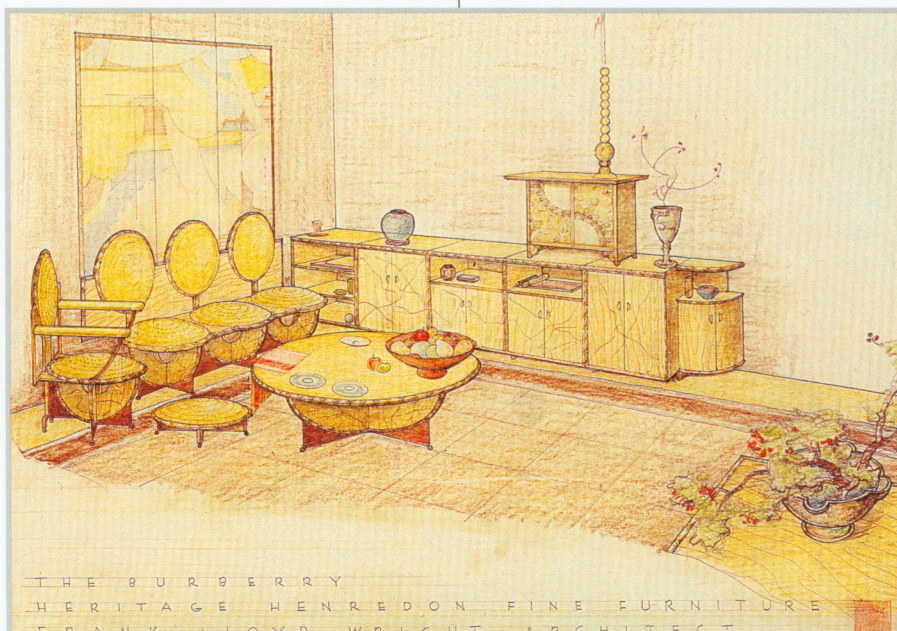
such a house for \$20,000. Erdman advertised the prefabricated house for \$38,000-\$45,000 which was almost beyond the reach of upper-middle-class families at the time. The relatively high cost was one of the major reasons that sales were not strong.

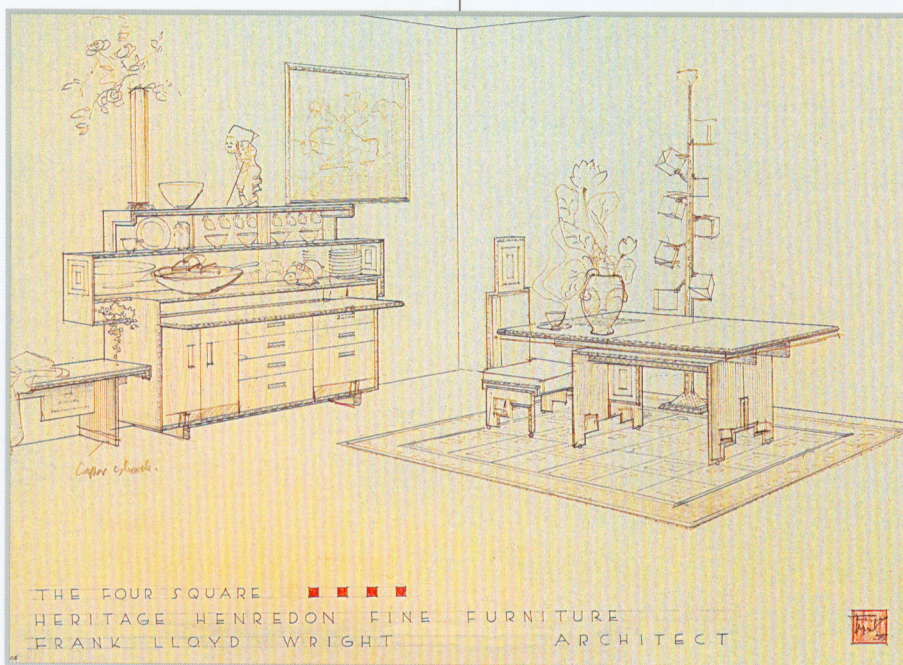
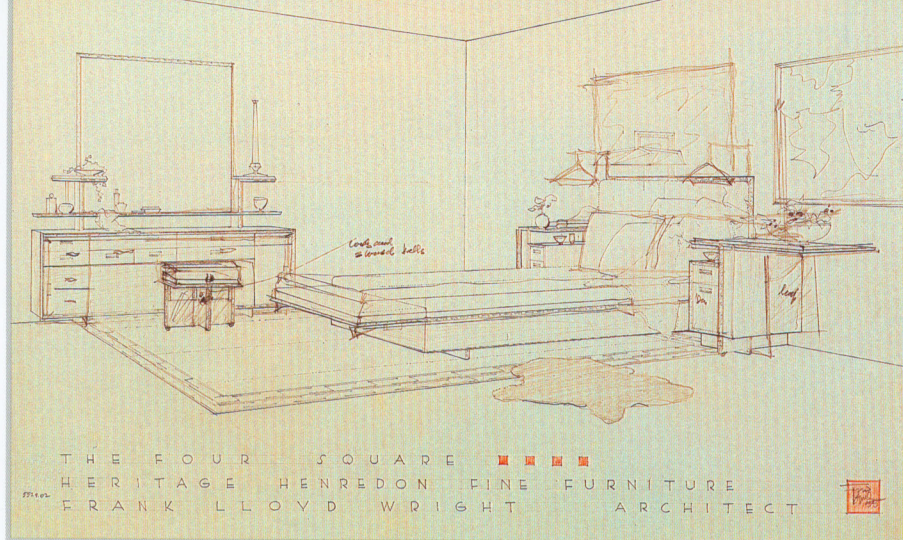
In the mid-1950s, when Wright was in his 80s, he began an entirely new approach to forwarding his ideas about American living to the public—mass manufacturing and merchandising of home furnishing products. The project was viewed by some as an aberration unrelated to his architectural work, and his motivation interpreted as either economic or a consuming need for recognition even at the cost of compromising deeply held principles—in this case a sudden embrace of commercialism.

Wright's approach to mass manufacturing and merchandising of home furnishings was radically different from that of traditional furniture manufacturers. His view of furnishings as integral parts of the architectural design—conceived as the building took shape and built into the structure whenever possible—required him to fundamentally rethink the design of an organic whole created from furniture pieces with no connection to a particular space. He submitted designs for three lines of furniture to Heritage-Henredon, each of which comprised a full range of pieces including chairs, tables, case pieces, and accessories. The designs were named (above/right) "The Four Square," FLLW FND #5529.002 and #5529.005, (below right and far right) "The Honeycomb," FLLW FND #5529.043 and #5529.041, and (left) "The Burberry" FLLW FND #5529.066, #5559.062, and #5529.065.

The drawings for Heritage-Henredon show furniture in neutral-walled boxes of space devoid of architectural features, the constricted space which Wright denounced so vehemently. But recognizing that most individuals were likely to continue living in such boxes, he designed furnishings in such a way that the furniture would become, in a sense, the structural architectural elements with which to "build" an organic space and organize it into functional areas. In this project Wright explored the idea that manufactured home furnishing products could be personalized even with standardized pieces. This was done by designing interchangeable modules, particularly in case pieces.

On closer examination it can be argued that, just as early in his career Wright ignored the opinion of the architectural community when he submitted house plans to *Ladies' Home Journal*, late in his career his drive to instill his ideas more deeply and broadly within the American psyche fueled this merchandising project. Though Wright surely knew that his critics would charge him with hypocrisy for entering the mass market, the new strategy was motivated by a desire to enable individuals to transform their existing living space into an organic space. Wright's move into the home furnishings industry was in character for another reason.

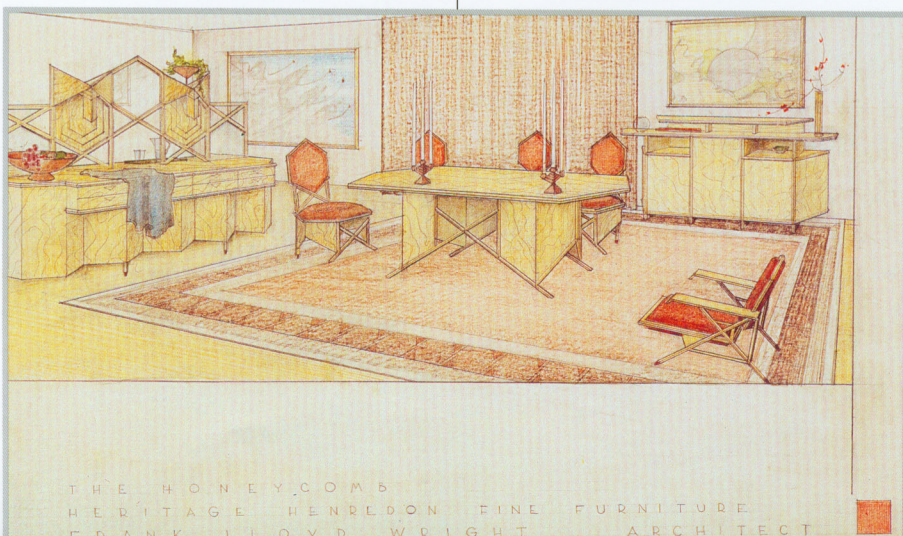




Unlike many of his peers he had no natural antipathy to production by machine and to mass production. For him there was no inherent reason to turn away from the machine, but rather a desire to harness its power to make an enlightened tool, a means

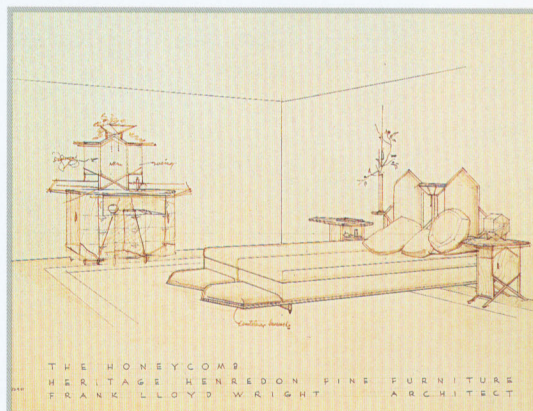
to an end. In 1954 in *The Natural House* he said, "The proper use of these new resources demands that we use them all together with integrity for mankind if we are to realize the finer significance of life."

What he did abhor was the stan-



dardization which the machine so easily could impose on both artist and consumer. Quantity production could impose a restricted range of expression or dilution in order to appeal to a wide range of tastes. However, according to Wright, depending on the skill with which it was applied, standardization could be "either enemy or friend." To be master of it required using machines, processes, and materials which were amenable to mass production so that the product would be better than the same object made by hand.

In his mind, a successful standardized product was not an "average" form acceptable to everyone, but rather one high in quality and with inherent flexibility of use so that the individual could adjust it to express his or her individuality and needs. The principle which could guide the designer toward successful standardized forms was a principle of simplicity, focusing on features that were organic and integral. Wright believed that if the products were designed



well, they might compensate and perhaps ameliorate inadequacies of the existing spaces of the rooms in which they would be used.

In 1955 Wright worked with three manufacturers to design products for the home. The project had begun a year earlier, initiated not by Wright but by Elizabeth Gordon of *House Beautiful*. To Gordon it was a natural extension of her magazine's mis-

sion, and Wright was challenged by its possibilities. Gordon approached Rene Carrillo, director of merchandising at F. Schumacher and Company, with the idea of adapting several existing designs for fabrics and wallpapers. Instead, Wright decided to develop new designs specific to the product.

Encouraged, Gordon expanded her idea, approaching manufacturers of furniture, rugs, and paints with the proposal that they too develop a product line with Wright. The various products were coordinated so that the products would have the integrated and unified effect that was

characteristic of Wright's organic architecture. The additional firms were Heritage-Henredon, Karastan, and Martin-Senour Company.

The Heritage and Henredon firms manufactured approximately one million dollars worth of the "Taliesin Line" furniture which was distributed in the early fall of 1955 to their franchises and introduced in October at the Chicago Furniture Mart where new home furnishing products are often introduced to the trade. But the response was not strong. The furniture could only be purchased from the franchise stores of the company

and in the end, repeat orders from the stores were insufficient to warrant continued production. Perhaps in response to this information, Wright did not continue the contract. As with his architecture, Wright's Heritage-Henredon furniture was ahead of its time and it would take the general public several decades to understand and incorporate the innovative ideas he introduced. Coffee tables, TV tables, modular furniture, and entertainment centers were yet to come.

The "Taliesin Line" collection of textiles and wallpapers designed for F. Schumacher and Company was





With his mass-produced furniture, Wright's goal was to deemphasize the walls and let the furniture assume the role that the structure played in his architecture. His challenge was to give the buyer the means—the tools, in the form of Wright-designed furniture, fabrics, wallpaper, and paint palette—with which to create an organic space within the confines of an existing non-organic space. Floor-to-ceiling drapery, literally walls of drapery, became a means to “open” enclosing walls through pattern and color which evoked the stained glass light screens early in his career. The drapery walls approximated the sense of open, permeable screens creating an illusion of interior space expanding beyond the wall.

Wright had always paid particular attention to dining room furnishings perhaps because of the importance he attached to dining as a shared family experience. The Heritage-Henredon dining room set (left) had the formality and dignity of his early dining room furniture but with more modern comfort. The tall back chairs continued narrow vertical proportions but the straight spindle back was replaced with a slightly curved, continuous panel upholstered front and back. The seat is wider, deeper and upholstered. The panel of the back of the chairs is repeated in the large panel supports of the table rather than more standard post legs. Overall, the formal elements of the set have been simplified

to intersecting planes rather than the more complex vocabulary of spindles, posts, panels, and multiple legs. This reduced and simplified formal vocabulary is used throughout the “Taliesin Line” furniture. Photos courtesy Frank Lloyd Wright Archives.

more successful. The firm was well established, with the distinction of being the first American textile manufacturer to compete successfully with European manufacturers, producing premium quality, custom and manufactured woven and printed fabrics for the American market, and later wallpaper.

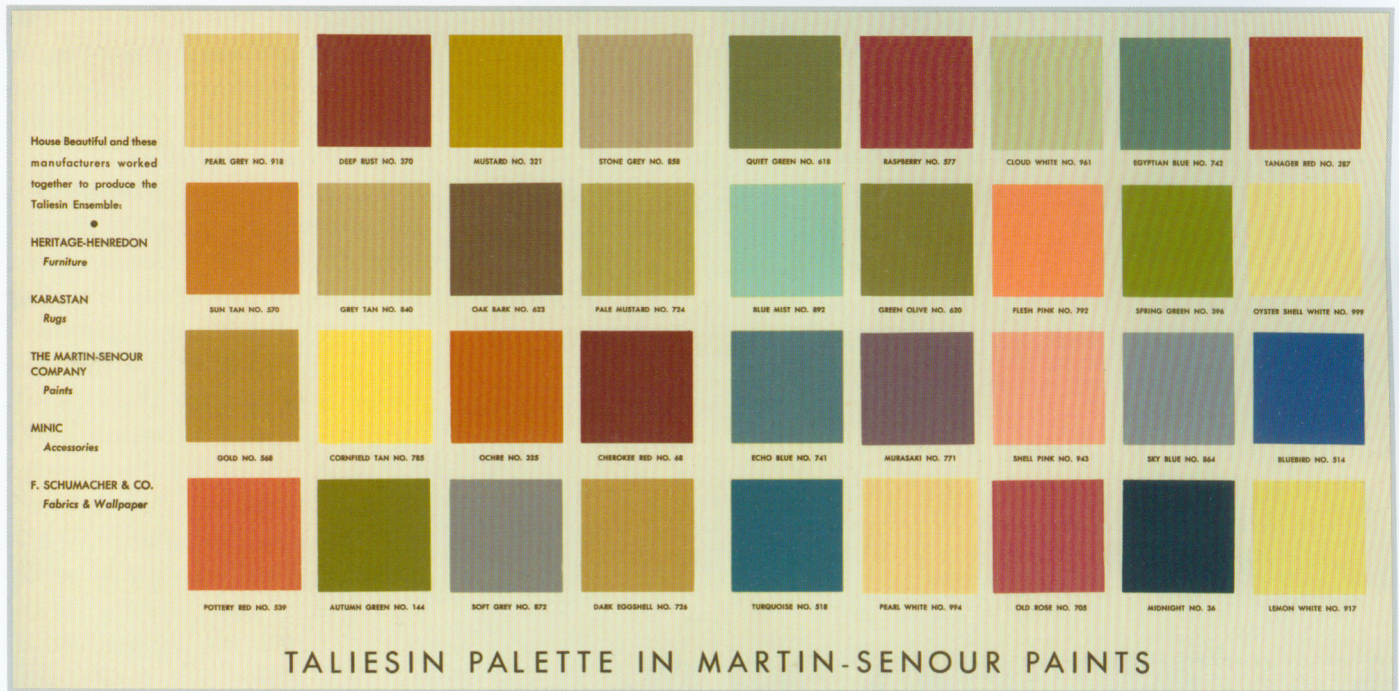
The initial Schumacher “Taliesin Line” in 1955 included thirteen fabrics and three wallpapers. The textiles (seven woven and six printed) were made of natural fibers including cotton, silk, linen, and wool, several blended with rayon, Fortisan, and Lurex. The range of fabrics included airy translucent casement fabrics, medium-weight duck cloths and cottons, and sturdy tightly woven upholstery fabrics. There were both woven textiles in which the pattern emerged from the structure and texture of the weaves—damasks, twills, satin weaves, and chenilles; and fabrics

in which the pattern was machine screen-printed on the surface. Patterns were all non-perspective, non-pictorial geometric designs consistent with Wright's visual vocabulary.

In contrast to the furniture, the Schumacher products could be obtained from a wider range of sources giving the public greater access, including designers and architects, department and furniture stores, in addition to Schumacher's own showrooms. Wright's designs were made available to designers and distributors through a large sample book, *Schumacher's Taliesin Line of Decorative Fabrics and Wallpaper*. The original portfolio contained large swatches of the thirteen fabrics with smaller swatches of the choices of color for each fabric, and three samples of wallpaper. As additional fabrics and wallpaper were added and removed over the next six years the contents of the sample book changed accordingly. The last fabrics were added in the fall of 1960. From then until fall of 1972 designs were gradually phased out as they lost their appeal.

It was intended that carpets be produced as part of the coordinated “Taliesin Line” of home furnishing products. In addition to designs submitted to Karastan, eight designs exist that were submitted to F.





Schumacher and Company, the large scale of which suggesting that they were intended as carpets. Carpets were not shown in the fall of 1955 with the textiles, furniture, and paints.

An advertisement in the November 1955 issue of *House Beautiful* claimed that the rugs would be available the following spring, however none were produced.

Working with the Martin-Senour Company and its president, William Stuart, Frank Lloyd Wright and his wife, Olgivanna, selected and named thirty-six custom colors that coordinated with colors in the Schumacher textiles and wallpaper. Hues included earth colors familiar in Wright's work such as warm brown, dark red, and gold, along with unexpected hues like sky blue, pale yellow, coral, and aqua. The colors were marketed as the "Taliesin Palette."

Another product in Wright's "Taliesin Line" home furnishings was a selection of interior paint colors. Through most of his career Wright believed that walls should be avoided when possible and when present left in a natural state, not disguised with paint. However, when reconciled with the fact that most Americans had to live in barren boxes with full

Throughout his career Wright created rug designs for individual clients and in the 1950s planned to mass produce several new rug designs. The traveling exhibition includes drawings of rug designs including (right/below) the David Wright House, 1951, carpet design, FLLW FND #5121.001; (left) the 1955 design proposed for mass production by Karastan, FLLW FND #5540.001; and (far right/top) the Max Hoffman House, 1957, living area carpet design, FLLW FND #5707.002.



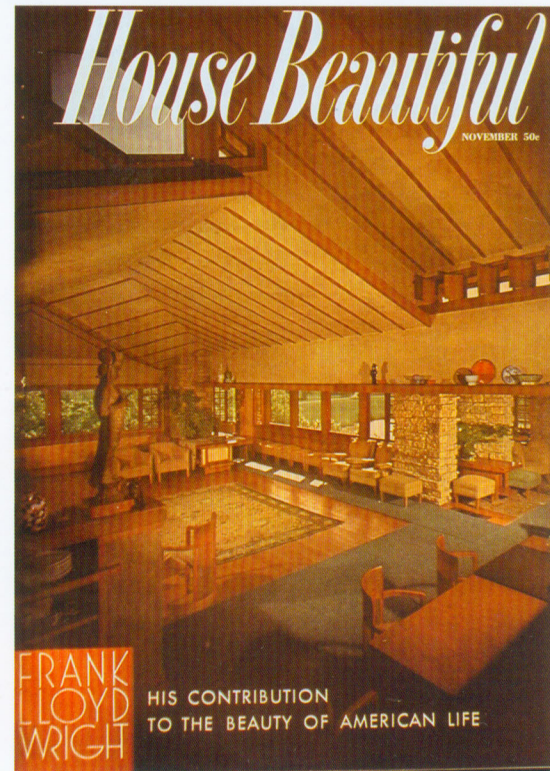
walls of drywall construction, he made the best of the situation, adapting his conception of the house beautiful with the Martin-Senour paints and Schumacher textiles and wallpaper. Together they provided means to transform enclosing walls into elements contributing to an organic space constructed with Heritage-Henredon furniture.

In the November 1955 issue of *House Beautiful* Elizabeth Gordon introduced Americans to Frank Lloyd Wright's new way of living in an organic house, and to all of the new products which would help them design their own. The issue was dedicated to Wright: beginning with a cover photograph of Wright's house "Taliesin" in Spring Green, Wisconsin. The cover legend reads: "Frank Lloyd Wright: His Contribution to the Beauty of American Life," and the issue emphasized living, not architectural style, with Wright sharing his own way of living with readers. The nineteen feature articles were virtually a textbook of the organic house idea.

The main article in this issue of *House Beautiful* ended with a quote

from Wright that reflected his life-long commitment to the broader concept of the house beautiful: "To make of a dwelling place a complete work of art, in itself as expressive and beautiful and more intimately related to life than anything of detached sculpture or painting, lending itself freely and suitably to the individual needs of the dwellers, an harmonious entity, fitting in color, pattern and nature, and in itself really an expression of them in character—this is the American opportunity."

Virginia T. Boyd received her Ph.D. in Human Environment and Design after obtaining an M.A. in Art History. Boyd is currently a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the Textiles and Design program, where she was the department chair. She is also involved in developing a program in material culture studies.



(Above) The November 1955 issue of *House Beautiful* magazine was dedicated to Wright and introduced his just manufactured "Taliesin Line" of home furnishings. One article, "Frank Lloyd Wright Designs Home Furnishings You Can Buy," included many photographs displaying the products in fully furnished rooms so that readers could see how these products could be combined to create the integrated organic space Wright had in mind.

