Frank Lloyd Wright:
Masterworks in the Midwest

Frank Lloyd Wright Home & Studio | Oak Park, IL

In 1889 Wright completed the construction of a small two-story residence in Oak Park on the Western edges of Chicago. The building was the first over which Wright exerted complete artistic control. Designed as a home for his family, the Oak Park residence was a site of experimentation for the young architect during the twenty-year period he lived there. Wright revised the design of the building multiple times, continually refining ideas that would shape his work for decades to come.

The semi-rural village of Oak Park, where Wright built his home, offered a retreat from the hurried pace of city life. Named "Saint's Rest" for its abundance of churches, Oak Park was originally settled in the 1830s by pioneering East Coast families. In its early years farming was the principal business of the village, however its proximity to Chicago soon attracted professional men and their families. Along its unpaved dirt streets sheltered by mature oaks and elms, prosperous families erected elaborate homes. Beyond the borders of the village farmland and open prairie stretched as far as the eye could see.

The Oak Park Home was the product of the nineteenth century culture from which Wright emerged. For its design, Wright drew upon many inspirational sources prevalent in the waning years of the nineteenth century. From his family background in Unitarianism Wright absorbed the ideas of the Transcendentalists, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, who encouraged an honest life inspired by nature. The English Arts and Crafts movement, which promoted craftsmanship, simplicity and integrity in art, architecture and design, provided a powerful impetus to Wright's principles. The household art movement, a distinct movement in middle-class home decoration, informed Wright's earliest interiors. It aimed, as the name implies, to bring art into the home, and was primarily disseminated through books and articles written by tastemakers who believed that the home interior could exert moral influences upon its inhabitants. These various sources were tempered by the lessons and practices Wright learned under his mentors, Joseph Lyman Silsbee and Louis Sullivan.

For the exterior of his home, Wright adapted the picturesque Shingle style, fashionable for the vacation homes of wealthy East Coast families and favored by his previous employer, Silsbee. The stamp of Sullivan's influence is apparent in the simplification and abstraction of the building and its plan. In contrast to what Wright described as "candle-snuffer roofs, turnip domes [and] corkscrew spires" of the surrounding houses, his home's façade is defined by bold geometric shapes—a substantial triangular gable set upon a rectangular base, polygonal window bays, and the circular wall of the veranda.

Despite its modest scale, the interior of the home is an early indication of Wright's desire to liberate space. On the ground floor Wright created a suite of rooms arranged around a central hearth and inglenook, a common feature of the Shingle style. The rooms flow together, connected by wide, open doorways hung with portieres that can be drawn for privacy. To compensate for the modest scale of the house, and to create an inspiring environment for his family, Wright incorporated artwork and objects that brought warmth and richness to the interiors. Unique furniture, Oriental rugs, potted palms, statues, paintings and Japanese prints filled the rooms, infusing them with a sense of the foreign, exotic and antique.

In 1895, to accommodate his growing family, Wright undertook his first major renovation of the Home. A new dining room and children's playroom doubled the floor space. The design innovations pioneered by Wright at this time marked a significant development in the evolution of his style, bringing him closer to his ideal for the new American home.
The original dining room was converted into a study, and a new dining room replaced the former kitchen. The dining room is unified around a central oak table lit through a decorative panel above and with an alcove of leaded glass windows in

patterns of conventionalized lotus flowers. The walls and ceiling are covered with honey-toned burlap; the floor and fireplace are lined with red terracotta tile.

The new dining room is a warm and intimate space to gather with family and friends. The Wrights entertained frequently, and were joined at their table by clients, artists, authors and international visitors. Such festive occasions, according to Wright's son, John, gave the house the air of a "jolly carnival."

The 1895 playroom on the second floor of the Home is one of the great spaces of Wright's early career. Designed to inspire and nurture his six children, the room is a physical expression of Wright's belief that, "For the same reason that we teach our children to speak the truth, or better still live the truth, their environment ought to be as truly beautiful as we are capable of making it." Architectural details pioneered by Wright in this room would be developed and enhanced in numerous commissions throughout his career.

The high, barrel-vaulted ceiling rests on walls of Roman brick. At the center of the vault's arc a skylight, shielded by wood grilles displaying stylized blossoms and seedpods, provides illumination. Striking cantilevered light fixtures of oak and glass, added after Wright's 1905 trip to Japan, bathe the room in a warm ambient glow. On either side of the room, window bays of leaded glass with built-in window seats are at the height of the mature trees that surround the lot, placing Wright's children in the leafy canopy of the trees outside.

Above the fireplace of Roman brick, a mural depicting the story of the *Fisherman and the Genie* from *The Arabian Nights* is painted on the plastered wall. An integral architectural feature within the room, the mural was designed by Wright and executed by his colleague, the artist Charles Corwin. It is a fascinating blend of decorative motifs; forms from exotic cultures—such as Egyptian winged scarabs—are combined with flat, geometric designs that echo the work of Wright's international contemporaries, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Vienna Secessionists.

In 1898 Wright built a new Studio wing with funds secured through a commission with the Luxfer Prism Company. The Studio faced Chicago Avenue and was connected to his residence by a corridor. Clad in wood shingles and brick, the Studio exterior is consistent with the earlier home. However, the long, horizontal profile, a key feature of Wright's mature Prairie buildings, sets it apart. Adjacent to the entrance, a stone plaque announces to the world, "Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect." Decorative embellishments and figural sculptures set off the building's artistic character and impressed arriving clients.

The reception hall serves as the entrance to the Studio. A waiting room for clients and a place for Wright to review architectural plans with contractors, this low-ceilinged space connects the main areas of the Studio—a library, a small office, and the dramatic two-story drafting room, the creative heart of the building.

The studio staff worked on drafting tables and stools designed by Wright in rooms decorated with eclectic displays of artwork and objects. Japanese prints, casts of classical sculptures, as well as models and drawings executed in the drafting room, filled the interiors of the Studio. In Wright's home the integration of art and architecture served to nurture and intellectually sustain his family. In the Studio, these same elements served a further purpose, the marketing of Wright's artistic identity to his clients and the public at large.

In September of 1909, Wright left America for Europe to work on the publication of a substantial monograph of his buildings and projects, the majority of which had been designed in his Oak Park Studio. The result was the Wasmuth Portfolio (Berlin, 1910), which introduced Wright's work to Europe and influenced a generation of international architects. Wright remained abroad for a year, returning to Oak Park in the fall of 1910. He immediately began plans for a new home and studio, Taliesin, which he would build in the verdant hills of Spring Green, Wisconsin. Wright's Oak Park Studio closed in 1910, though Wright himself returned occasionally to meet with his wife Catherine who remained with the couple's youngest children at the Oak Park Home and Studio until 1918. The Home and Studio was the birthplace of Wright's vision for a new American architecture. Wright designed over 150 projects in his Oak Park Studio, establishing his legacy as a great and visionary architect.
https://www.flwright.org/researchexplore/homeandstudio

Unity Temple | Oak Park, IL

Commissioned by the congregation of Oak Park Unity Church in 1905, Wright's Unity Temple is the greatest public building of the architect's Chicago years. Wright's family on his mother's side were Welsh Unitarians, and his uncle Jenkin Lloyd Jones was a distinguished Unitarian preacher with a parish on Chicago's south side where Wright and his wife Catherine were married. Wright identified with the rational humanism of Unitarianism, particularly as influenced by Ralph Waldo Emerson's transcendentalism, uniting all beings as one with the divine presence.

Wright's father had been a Universalist preacher. With their emphasis on a loving God, Universalists were early advocates of abolitionism and were the first church to ordain women. In 1886 Universalist Augusta Chapin became minister of the Oak Park Unity Church, attracting new members to the congregation including Frank Lloyd Wright's mother Anna.

When Unity Church burned to the ground in June 1905, Wright was awarded the commission for a modern building that would embody the principles of "unity, truth, beauty, simplicity, freedom and reason." Wright was a perfect match to these requirements. The design he submitted to the congregation broke with almost every existing convention for traditional Western ecclesiastic architecture. On the novel choice of construction material Wright states, "There was only one material to choose—as church funds were $45,000. Concrete was cheap." Wright's bold concept for the building enabled a series of concrete forms to be repeated multiple times.

In harmony with Wright's philosophy of organic architecture, the concrete was left uncovered by plaster, brick, or stone. Wright's sensitive handling of materials was a defining feature of his architecture from early in his career. "Bring out the nature of the materials," Wright insisted in his seminal essay *In the Cause of Architecture*, "let their nature intimately into your scheme. Reveal the nature of wood, plaster, brick, or stone in your designs, they are all by nature friendly and beautiful. No treatment can be really a matter of fine art when those natural characteristics are, or their nature is, outraged or neglected."

Approached from Lake Street, Unity Temple is a massive and monolithic cube of concrete, sheltered beneath an expansive flat roof. The introspective nature of the building is in part a response to its corner site situated along a busy thoroughfare. No entrance is apparent, and the building appears impenetrable, save for a band of high clerestory windows recessed behind decorative piers and shadowed by overhanging eaves.

Entry to the building is via a low hall that connects Unity Temple and Unity House. Above the bank of doors leading into the hall, an inscription in bronze declares, "For the worship of God and the service of man." The low, dimly lit hall that unites the buildings is a transitional space. To the south it opens directly onto Unity House. Designed for "the service of man," this secular space includes a central meeting hall, flanking balconies for use as open classrooms, and other special purpose rooms for daily operation. Like Wright's residential architecture, this congregational parish house is centered on a fireplace hearth.

Situated across the hall from Unity House is the temple. In contrast to the open entrance into Unity House, access to the sanctuary is complex. Wright masterfully manipulates the sequence of entrance; guiding the visitor through low dark passages he termed "cloisters," before they ascend into the open, brightly lit sanctuary.

The sanctuary is the heart and anchor of the building. At once grand yet intimate, the sanctuary is a masterful composition in light and space. Its elegant articulation and warm colors stand in bold contrast to the grey concrete exterior. Devoid of overt religious iconography, its precise geometric proportions declare a harmonious whole.

The uppermost portion of the sanctuary appears light and transparent. A continuous band of clerestory windows of Wright's signature leaded glass encircle the flat, coffered ceiling. Set in a concrete grid are twenty-five square skylights of amber tinted leaded glass The effect, Wright states, was intended "to get a sense of a happy cloudless day into the room…

daylight sifting through between the intersecting concrete beams, filtering through amber glass ceiling lights. Thus managed, the light would, rain or shine, have the warmth of sunlight."

While Wright's innovative use of concrete was chosen for its economy, the completed building ultimately cost nearly twice the contracted price due to complications encountered during construction. In September of 1909, the new building was dedicated. Because its unique design bore little resemblance to the other churches along Lake Street, it was decided to rename it Unity Temple.
https://www.flwright.org/researchexplore/unitytemple

SC Johnson Building | Racine, WI

In 1936, third-generation SC Johnson leader H.F. Johnson, Jr. sought out the architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Even though ground had been broken for a new administrative office, H.F. wanted to explore a more modern approach. And he wanted it enough to scrap the old plans and take a risk on the innovative Wright. He later explained, "Anybody can build a typical building. I wanted to build the best office building in the world, and the only way to do that was to get the greatest architect in the world." So began a relationship between H.F. and Wright that would endure for decades.

From the 43 miles of glass Pyrex tubing that forms its windows, to the soaring columns in its Great Workroom, our Administration Building is a truly unique place to work. It's also the only corporate headquarters that Frank Lloyd Wright designed that remains operational. Decades ahead of his time, Wright employed innovative modular furniture and an open office plan to make the workspace more productive. The Administration Building also was one of the first in the United States to be completely air-conditioned.

Perhaps the most recognized feature of the Administration Building's Great Workroom is its columns. Wright called them "dendriform," meaning tree-shaped, but many also refer to them as lily pads because of the unique shape of their top supporting pads. The columns are just 9 inches in diameter at their base, but blossom to 18.5 feet in diameter at the top.

Despite their beauty, not everyone shared Wright's optimism that the columns were a good idea. Initially, the Wisconsin Industrial Commission refused to approve the building plans, saying that they believed the design of the columns to be unrealistic. Wright, however, was not deterred. In 1937, he oversaw a structural integrity experiment. Hundreds of onlookers and H.F. himself gathered to watch the dramatic field test. In the end, the columns proved their worth. They withstood a load of sixty tons – ten times the required amount. The construction was approved.

Wright's focus was not just the structure itself. He planned more than 40 different pieces of furniture for the Administration Building. Each was created to reflect aspects of the building's unique design and to help get work done – for example, rolling file carts that could be moved easily around the Great Workroom. Open "bird cage" circular elevators run from the basement to the Penthouse level, giving a panoramic view of the building.

The opening weekend, 26,000 people toured the new Administration Building. Frank Lloyd Wright called the completed Administration Building an architectural interpretation of modern business at its best. He said he designed it to be "as inspiring a place to work in as any cathedral ever was to worship in."
https://www.scjohnson.com/en/interacting-with-sc-johnson/tours-and-architecture/our-architecture/frank-lloyd-wright-designed-administration-building

Taliesin | Spring Green, WI

Taliesin is the home, studio, and 800-acre agricultural estate of Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright built Taliesin on his favorite boyhood hill, in the Wisconsin River valley homesteaded by his Welsh grandparents. He named it Taliesin in honor of the

Welsh bard whose name means “Shining Brow,” reflecting his belief that the crown of the hill was reserved for nature, and that buildings should be constructed at the brow of the hill.

The Taliesin estate was his laboratory of organic architecture, with designs from nearly every decade of Wright’s life. The Taliesin residence, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is the heart of these buildings that Wright designed and modified from 1897 to 1959, including the Romeo & Juliet Windmill, Hillside School, Tan-y-Deri, Midway Barn, and the Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center. These are among the reasons Taliesin is often described as Frank Lloyd Wright’s autobiography in wood and stone.

1886 UNITY CHAPEL: Unity Chapel is a shingle-style chapel commissioned by Wright’s uncle and Unitarian minister, Jenkin Lloyd Jones. Although attributed to architect Joseph Lyman Silsbee of Chicago, IL, eighteen-year-old Frank Lloyd Wright designed the interior of the chapel, making Unity Chapel Wright’s earliest work. A family cemetery outside includes the grave sites of the Lloyd Jones family, including Wright’s original plot. Unity Chapel today remains operated by the Lloyd Jones family. The exterior is open to the public, and tours of the interiors are available by request.

1897 ROMEO AND JULIET WINDMILL: Romeo and Juliet Windmill was commissioned by Wright’s aunts to pump water for their co-educational boarding school, and Wright offered them a striking observatory tower of wood. The design features two intersecting towers, with Romeo as a triangular storm prow, supported by the octagonal Juliet. The aerodynamic structure allows storm winds to pass around the structure without causing harm. In 1992 Taliesin Preservation, in partnership with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, fully restored the windmill.

1907 TAN-Y-DERI: Wright designed Tan-y-Deri as a residence for his sister, Jane Porter, and her family. The Porters worked for the Hillside Home School, just downhill. Welsh for “under the oaks,” Tan-y-Deri sits on a hill adjacent to Taliesin and next to the Romeo and Juliet Windmill. The design was based on “A Fireproof House for $5000” by Wright featured in the Ladies Home Journal article. Tan-y-Deri underwent a comprehensive interior and exterior restoration completed in 2017.

TALIESIN: Wright’s home, studio, and garden sanctuary was a laboratory for architecture and design. In its three iterations, Taliesin embodies Wright’s ideas of organic architecture, expanded and refined from his earlier Prairie School works. From the courtyards and gardens to the Living Room, Loggia, and Birdwalk, Taliesin offers a commanding view of the valley, settled by Wright’s Welsh ancestors. Using natural local limestone and Wisconsin River sand, Taliesin stands as “shining brow” on Wright’s favorite boyhood hill.

1911 TALIESIN I: Wright moved to this valley two years after leaving his 20-year-architect practice in Oak Park, IL. He wanted to live, work, and farm in the valley with his companion, Mamah Borthwick. He later wrote, “This hill on which Taliesin now stands as “brow” was one of my favorite places when I was a boy, for pasque flowers grew there in March sun while snow still streaked the hillsides….” In 1914, arson destroyed the living quarters of Taliesin – one-third of the house – and seven were murdered.

1914 TALIESIN II: Wright immediately declared that he would rebuild the destroyed portion of Taliesin. In his autobiography, Wright later wrote: “Taliesin should live to show something more for its mortal sacrifice than a charred and terrible ruin on a lonely hillside in the beloved Valley.” In Taliesin II, he added a stone-floored room called The Loggia from which he could see the family chapel.

1925 TALIESIN III: In April 1925, an electrical fire in Wright's bedroom destroyed Taliesin's living quarters again. Wright, by then with the future Mrs. Wright (Olgivanna), wrote, "Taliesin lived wherever I stood! A figure crept forward from out the shadows to say this to me. And I believed what Olgivanna said." As he wrote, "[T]aught by the building of Taliesin I and II, I made forty sheets of pencil studies for the building of Taliesin III…. Taliesin's radiant brow … should come forth and shine again with a serenity unknown before."

1932 TALIESIN FELLOWSHIP: The Great Depression saw few commissions come Wright's way. Never idle, however, Wright turned to writing, producing An Autobiography and The Disappearing City, both of which continue to influence generations of architects. During this time, Wright received numerous letters from individuals interested in studying with him.

In 1932, Frank and Olgivanna Lloyd Wright founded the Taliesin Fellowship, a community that provided architectural training with a holistic, "learn by doing" approach that stressed appreciation of all the arts, and which often allowed students to design and work on structures on the Taliesin property.
Broadacre City in the Hillside Drafting Studio, [Image property of The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York).]

Hillside Home School, the building Wright designed in 1902 for his aunts' boarding school in the valley, became the Fellowship's central campus. With the inspiration and help of a young and eager group of apprentices, Wright remodeled and expanded the school, adding a 5,000-square-foot drafting studio, converting the gymnasium into a theater, and adding housing for the new apprentices.

1952 MIDWAY BARN: Midway Barn is located between Taliesin and Hillside School. Stepping down the hill, it served as the center of agriculture for the estate beginning in the 1940s. Midway grew as operations expanded through the decades with the spired Milking Tower is Wright's "ode to the Guernsey teat."

1955 HILLSIDE STUDIO & THEATER: The complex of buildings at Hillside includes spaces from across Wright's career as a designer: the "abstract forest" drafting studio (1939), the Hillside Assembly Hall (1903), the Hillside Theater (1955), and the Fellowship dining hall (1955). The Assembly Hall is an example of Wright's strides to "destroy the box" of traditional architectural design. The Hillside Theater includes a curtain adapted from a Wright-designed geometric abstraction of the Taliesin landscape.

1967 THE FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT VISITOR CENTER: Wright designed the Riverview Terrace as a "gateway to Taliesin" that would house a restaurant, as well as offices and meeting space for the architects at Taliesin. Construction began under Wright's supervision and stalled upon Wright's death in 1959. In 1967 the Riverview Terrace opened as The Spring Green restaurant as part of an investment in developing an arts community in Spring Green along the Wisconsin River. Taliesin Preservation purchased the building in 1993 and adapted it to serve as the Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center.
https://www.taliesinpreservation.org/taliesin-history/

Jacobs House | Madison, WI

Designed and constructed in 1936-1937, the First Herbert and Katherine Jacobs House is located in Westmorland, on the edge of what was at the time the western border of Madison, Wisconsin, approximately one mile south of the famous Unitarian Meeting House. The First Jacobs is the purest and most famous application of Wright's Usonian concepts.

During the Depression-stricken 1930s Frank Lloyd Wright enjoyed a recovery from a major pause in his career. Three world-famous projects emerged from this new beginning: the Fallingwater house over Bear Run in western Pennsylvania, the celebrated administration building and laboratory for the Johnson Wax Company in Racine, Wisconsin, and Broadacre City, a visionary four-by-four mile community whose spaciousness would contrast to the cramped industrial city.

As a significant aspect of Broadacre City, Wright suggested that the name of the country be changed from the United States of America to Usonia and that Usonians should be provided Usonian houses conceived, designed, and carried out in accordance with his principles of organic architecture.

The Usonian houses would relate directly to nature, emerging from the earth, as it were, unimpeded by a foundation, front porch, downspouts, protruding chimney, or distracting shrubbery. Surrounded by ample space, they should open up to the elements in contrast to traditional, white colonial boxes arbitrarily punctured with a scatter of windows and doors. The materials of the Usonian house were to be recognized as nature's own: wood, stone, or baked clay in the form of bricks, and glass curtain walls, clerestories, and casement windows sheltered under overhanging soffits. Aesthetically as well as structurally, the Usonian House was meant to introduce a new, modern standard of form following function in home building.

Challenged by Herbert Jacobs to create a decent home for $5,000, Wright's design for "Jacobs I" (as it came to be known) is widely considered to be Wright's first Usonian structure. The Herbert Jacobs House became the prototype home for Wright's dream vision for a utopian urban development, Broadacre City. The house's open arrangement of living room, dining room and kitchen was also later adopted in the ranch style houses that populated post-war American suburbs, underscoring the building's historical significance.
https://usonia1.com/ | https://franklloydwright.org/site/herbert-jacobs-house/

Unitarian Meeting House| Madison, WI

The First Unitarian Society of Madison (FUS) is a Unitarian Universalist congregation in Shorewood Hills, Wisconsin. Its meeting house was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and built by Marshall Erdman in 1949–1951 and has been designated a U.S. National Historic Landmark for its architecture. With over 1,000 members, it is one of the ten largest Unitarian Universalist congregations in the United States.

The First Unitarian Society of Madison was established in 1879 shortly after the 1878 Session of the Wisconsin Conference of Unitarian & Independent Churches led to a resurgence of the Unitarians in Madison. Influenced greatly by the Reverend Jenkin Lloyd Jones, a prominent Unitarian minister (and Frank Lloyd Wright's uncle), the early members held that an ethical rather than theological agreement was the hallmark of Unitarianism.

In 1945, the Society elected to sell their original buildings after receiving a substantial offer for the property originally located in downtown Madison. The following year, after much debate, the Society commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to design the new Meeting House. Four acres of land in Shorewood Hills, surrounded by few structures and overlooking the University of Wisconsin agricultural fields, was purchased as the new site. Construction began in 1949 and was completed in 1951. Wright initially estimated $60,000 to build the church, but it cost three times that. To cut the cost, members of the congregation hauled limestone blocks for the walls.

In stark contrast to its more rural 1950s surroundings, the Meeting House is surrounded by University of Wisconsin hospital and a busy University Avenue/

The Reverend Max D. Gaebler served as the settled minister for 35 years. In 1988, the Reverend Michael A. Schuler was called as the settled minister and retired in 2018 after 30 years of dedicated service. Under the leadership and tenures of

both the Reverend Gaebler and Schuler, the Society experienced significant growth and presently registers over 1,500 Members and Affiliates. In 2008, a gold-level LEED Certified Atrium addition was built on the campus to accommodate the increase in membership. Since 2008, the Shaarei Shamayim congregation, which adheres to Reconstructionist Judaism, has shared the building with the 1952 First Unitarian Society.

The Unitarian Meeting House shares many hallmarks of Wright's other Usonian structures. It is a single-story building featuring wide overhanging eaves, a low and unobtrusive entryway, large fireplaces, and a concrete floor. Its most distinctive feature is the soaring glass and wood "prow" on its southern exposure, which Wright said symbolized aspiration. Wright was a long-time member of the First Unitarian Society housed in the Meeting House, and his parents were founding members of the congregation. His design thus reflects both his unique design aesthetic and his spiritual beliefs.

https://franklloydwright.org/site/unitarian-meeting-house/

Laurent House| Rockford, IL

When Phyllis Laurent read an article about Loren Pope's love for his Frank Lloyd Wright house in House Beautiful magazine, she knew she had found her architect. Her husband Kenneth, rendered a paraplegic in World War II, had gone through several years of rehabilitation and was finally preparing for life outside of the hospital. In his letter to the architect, Kenneth explained: "I am paralyzed from the waist down and by virtue of my condition, I am confined to a wheelchair. This explains my need for a home as practical and sensible as your style of architecture denotes." Wright's only building designed for a disability did not disappoint. Oriented and shaped to maximize the building's exposure to the sun, the single-story Usonian home, is both beautiful and functional. Wright was so pleased with his "little gem" that he later included it in a book showcasing 35 of his most significant buildings. The Laurents would live in his house for the rest of their lives, maintaining a close friendship with Wright.

https://franklloydwright.org/site/laurent-house/

Edith Farnsworth House | Plano, IL

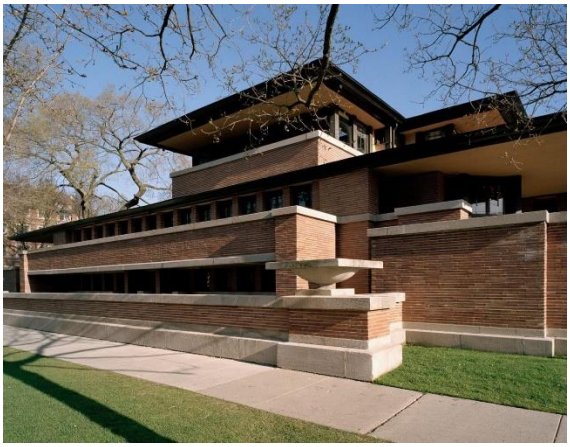
The Edith Farnsworth House, formerly the Farnsworth House, is a historical house designed and constructed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe between 1945 and 1951. The house was constructed as a one-room weekend retreat in a rural setting in Plano, Illinois, about 60 miles southwest of Chicago's downtown.

In 2022-23, the Edith Farnsworth House, a site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation celebrated "Every Line is a Decision: The Life and Legacies of Peter Palumbo." The British lord, Peter Palumbo purchased the Farnsworth property in 1971 and restored it twice: in 1971-72, and again in 1996-97, following a devastating flood. Lord Palumbo sold the property at auction in 2003, and it was acquired by The Friends of Farnsworth House for the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the U.S., with a preservation and conservation easement held by Landmarks Illinois.

Opened to the public in 2004, well over 100,000 visitors from around the world have toured the house and nearly 60-acre property, but very few have heard of Lord Palumbo's history with the property, and very few outside the U.K. are familiar with his lifelong career in public service of the arts, architecture, and historic preservation. His interests in global investment and philanthropy and in world heritage and culture have guided his personal travels and acquisitions, which he has shared with his wife, Lady Hayat Palumbo, since 1986.

During the three decades the Palumbos owned and improved Farnsworth, they purchased additional farm acreage, kept horses and vintage aircraft and automobiles, and entertained many notable figures, including some of the 20th century's best-known artists and architects. The Edith Farnsworth House Historic Site is a National Historic Landmark, owned and operated by the nonprofit National Trust for Historic Preservation in the U.S. All visitors must check in at the Visitor Center. Access to the property is only available with a ticket. Masks are required when indoors and when you cannot socially distance outdoors.
https://edithfarnsworthhouse.org/

Robie House | Chicago, IL



Completed in 1910, the house Wright designed for Frederick C. Robie is the consummate expression of his Prairie style. The house is conceived as an integral whole—site and structure, interior and exterior, furniture, ornament and architecture, each element is connected. Unrelentingly horizontal in its elevation and a dynamic configuration of sliding planes in its plan, the Robie House is the most innovative and forward thinking of all Wright's Prairie houses.

On the exterior, bands of brick and limestone anchor the building to the earth, while overhanging eaves and dramatic cantilevered roofs shelter the residence. The horizontality of the house is reinforced at every level of the design—from the iconic roofline to the very bricks and mortar of the building itself. Through his use of materials, Wright achieves a remarkable balance of tone and color, as iron-flecked brick harmonizes with the iridescent leaded glass of the windows that encircle the building. Broad balconies and terraces cause interior and exterior space to flow together, while urns and planters at every level were intended to bloom with the seasons.

The expansive living space at the heart of the home is one of the great masterpieces of 20th century architecture and interior design. The light-filled open plan is breathtaking in its simplicity—a single room, comprising a living and dining space, divided only by a central chimney. Doors and windows of leaded glass line the room, flooding the interior with light. Iridescent, colored and clear glass composed in patterns of flattened diamond shapes and diagonal geometries evoke floral forms, while subtly echoing the plan and form of the building. In his design of the Robie House, Wright achieves a dynamic balance between transparency and enclosure, blurring the boundaries between interior space and the world of nature beyond.

In October of 1909, with construction underway at the Robie House, Wright left America for Europe to work on the publication of a substantial monograph of his buildings and projects. The result was the Wasmuth Portfolio of 1910, which introduced Wright's work to Europe and influenced a generation of international architects. The Robie House would be the last of Wright's true Prairie houses. On his return from Europe in 1910 Wright would continue to explore the concept of organic architecture but would seek new influences beyond that of the Midwest prairie.

Over the course of the twentieth century, the Robie House experienced a turbulent history of ownership. On his father's death in 1909, Robie promised to settle his debts and was ultimately forced to sell the house. Two additional families lived at the residence, the Taylors from 1911 to 1912 and the Wilburs from 1912 to 1926. The Wilburs were the last family to live at the Robie House.

For the next seventy years the house would have a checkered existence, serving at times as a classroom building, a refectory, a dormitory, and office space for several organizations. The house was twice threatened with demolition, once

in 1941 and then again in 1957. Wright himself campaigned each time to save the building. The Robie House was the only one of Wright's many creations to inspire this reaction in him.

Wright would go on to create such masterpieces of modern architecture as Fallingwater, in 1939, and the Guggenheim Museum, completed in 1959. The Robie House, however, remains as one of the defining moments of the architect's career. In 1991, the house was recognized by the American Institute of Architects as one of the ten most significant structures of the twentieth century. Today the Robie House stands as an important part of America's cultural heritage, a powerful declaration of Wright's uncompromising vision for a new American architecture.
https://flwright.org/researchexplore/robiehouse

For further reading, consider the following texts:

- *Frank Lloyd Wright's Wisconsin: How America's Most Famous Architect Found Inspiration in His Home State, Kristine Hansen, 2023*
- *Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple: A Good Time Place Reborn, Pat Cannon, 2022*
- *50 Lessons to Learn from Frank Lloyd Wright, Aaron Betsky and Gideon Fink Shapiro, 2021*
- *Frank Lloyd Wright: American Master, Kathryn Smith, 2009*
- *The Fellowship: The Untold Story of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Taliesin Fellowship, Harold Zellman and Roger Friedland, 2007*
- *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Life, Ada Louise Huxtable, 2004*
- *Understanding Frank Lloyd Wright's Architecture, Donald Hoffman, 1995*