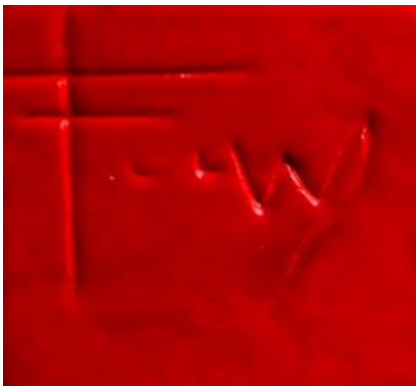


Frank Lloyd Wright's Buffalo



Martin House Complex – Frank Lloyd Wright's "Opus" 1903 - 1907



**A Smithsonian Associates Tour
August 21-24, 2025
Study Leader Bill Keene**

Wright's Early Life and Influences

Frank Lincoln Wright was born on June 8, 1867, at a pivotal time in American history, two years after the end of the Civil War and two years before the completion of the transcontinental railroad. For more than nine decades, Wright witnessed the unprecedented changes that reshaped America, as it evolved from a largely rural agrarian economy to a major industrial force and leading world power. At the time of his birth the major technological developments of the steam engine and the telegraph were already changing how business, industry, and government operated and impacting social interactions as well; railroads helped unite the nation by cutting travel times to the West by weeks or months, hastening the closing of the frontier. The telegraph began the move toward instantaneous communication, and both transformed how distances were perceived. Before Wright's life reached its halfway point, inventions like the telephone, electric light, and internal combustion engine were profoundly changing business, industry, and society. During the second half of his life, the pace of change accelerated impacted by the Great Depression, two World Wars, changing patterns of family life, women achieving the right to vote, radio, television, motion pictures, and the splitting of the atom. Wright died only a decade before the first landing on the moon took place.

Wright was born in Wisconsin, but the family moved frequently during his early years as his father unsuccessfully sought to enhance the family's financial security as a minister and teacher in Iowa, Massachusetts, and several other locations before moving back to Wisconsin in 1877. Uncle he spent several summers working on the farm of his

uncle James. He later wrote how he hated the hard work, but also that he developed a deep appreciation of the land and nature. Following his parents' divorce, he adopted his mother's family name of Lloyd for his middle name. A voracious reader, the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman contributed to his strong belief in freedom and democracy. This philosophical outlook was inseparable from his approach to architecture and his belief that architecture is critical to the development of true culture and democracy.

In 1887, Wright left an engineering program at the University of Wisconsin after less than three terms going to Chicago with the goal of pursuing a career in architecture. His talent was quickly recognized, enabling him to jump from firm to firm, each time securing more money. In 1888, he joined Adler and Sullivan, where within a short time he became the lead draftsman. There, he worked on many projects ranging from the Charnley House, to factories, commercial buildings, synagogues, the Auditorium Building and the Transportation Building at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. In addition, Wright, with Sullivan's blessing, worked on several projects considered too small for the partners. Wright was the architect and was paid by the firm for the projects which helped him hone his skills and earn added income for his growing family.

The three phases of Wright's career

Wright opened his own practice in 1893 following a protracted disagreement with Sullivan supposedly for working on commissions without the approval of the firm. During a career that spanned seven decades, he developed an architectural form unmistakably his own but also influenced by the cultural and architectural forces of the time.

Wright's buildings demonstrate a remarkable variety of forms but are nonetheless based on the underlying principles

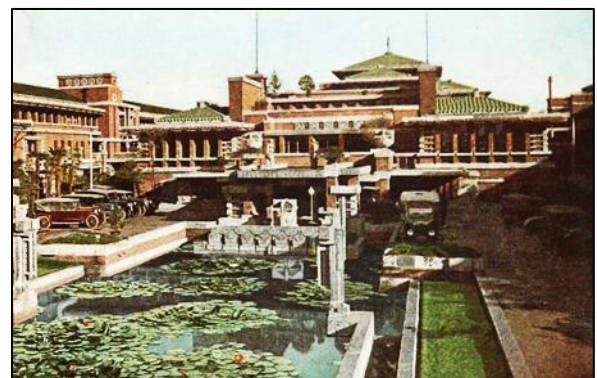


Willits House 1901

of what he termed *organic architecture*. While he used the term loosely over the years, organic encompassed architecture: rooted in the natural landscape, providing users with peace and serenity indispensable for daily living, and in so doing, creating a harmonious composition blending and blurring the boundaries between the building and the site, and between man and nature.

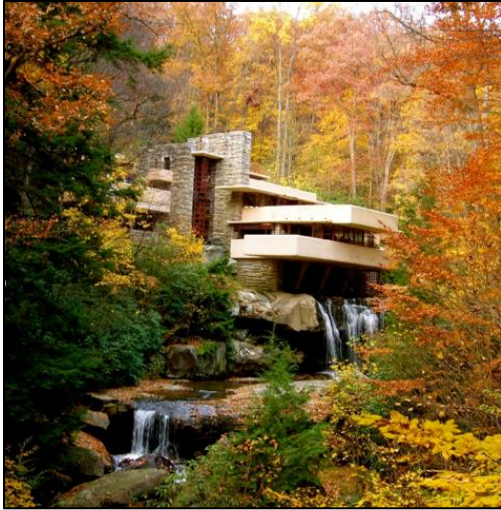
Wright's major accomplishment during this first phase of his career (roughly 1893 to World War I) was his contribution to the Prairie Style. While principally residential, both residential and commercial buildings shared common characteristics: they were long, low structures with a clear and strong emphasis on the horizontal, reflecting the flatness of the Midwestern landscape. Low-pitched roofs with broad eaves that deeply overhung extensive bands of windows further enhanced the horizontal appearance and helped tie the structures to the ground. While not devoid of ornamentation, the Prairie Style used ornamentation sparingly, often consisting of strips of trim so placed as to further emphasize the horizontal or acting to draw the eye around a corner. [see figure 1]

During the second phase of his career from roughly between World War I and the mid 1930's, Wright executed relatively few commissions - the most notable being Tokyo's Imperial Hotel and his series of textile block houses in California. Nonetheless, it was a time of experimentation with new and different building techniques and designs based on geometric forms other than the square or rectangle. Wright also enhanced his standing among a generation of young architects in America through lectures and especially the publication in 1932 of his autobiography. Also in 1932, he established what became the Taliesin Fellowship as a school of architecture. The combination of his lectures, the



Imperial Hotel 1917-1922

autobiography and the school both directly and indirectly contributed to a revival of his career as a new generation of architects and clients began reading Wright's life story.



Fallingwater 1937

By the late 1930's Wright had reemerged as a major force in modern architecture. This third phase of his career resulted in large measure from two of his most famous buildings: the Johnson Wax headquarters building and Fallingwater which made the cover of Time magazine. In 1938, Wright's work was also featured in Fortune, Life, a special issue of Architectural Forum, as well as other magazines and professional journals, the Hearst newspapers, and dozens of other publications. Over the course of the next two decades, Wright received some 40 percent of his commissions and completed more than 100 Usonian houses, the Price Tower, the Marin County Government complex, the Guggenheim Museum, twelve buildings for the campus of Florida Southern College, the Beth Shalom Synagogue, and several other religious buildings. Among the unexecuted projects were houses, hotels and commercial buildings, a new capitol for Arizona, a complex of structures for Bagdad and a mile-high skyscraper for Chicago.

Wright Developed Not One but Several Approaches to Architectural Style

Wright did not adhere to a single style instead his work reflects elements of Arts and Crafts, Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and even the International style, along with influences from the orient and Mesoamerica. Wright maintained that aside from Japanese art and architecture, that he was not influenced by other styles or architects. Despite the denials, Wright was aware of earlier and current developments in European architectural theory and practice. Just as he was widely read in philosophy, Wright closely followed the writings of Viollet-le-Duc, John Ruskin, William Morris, Andrew Jackson Downing, the Vienna Secessionists as well as the Arts and Crafts movement in England and Scotland, the Futurists, the Bauhaus, and others over the course of his career.

Arts and Crafts: Wright's use of wood, local materials, and highly skilled crafters ties his work closely to the arts and craft movement. He was not only familiar with the work of Macintosh but became friends with C.R. Ashbee (founder of the Guild of Handicraft, a leading Arts & Craft group in England). Ashbee not only visited Wright shortly after the turn of the 20th century but later wrote essays in publications featuring Wright's work. Advocates of the style, especially in England called for the rejection of industrialization, and a return to hand-crafted design with patterns based on natural forms. They embraced materials and practices of the medieval craftsmen in handcrafting in wood, stone, clay, and metal. Although Wright relied heavily on the use of wood, stone, and other natural materials, employed the best craftsmen, and demanded high standards in the execution of the designs he developed, he nonetheless differed from the arts and craft movement by embracing technology. He typically incorporated the latest in heating, cooling, lighting, and structural materials in both his domestic and public buildings. In 1901, he criticized the artisans in the movement for living in the past, failing to understand that society had changed, forever moving past the time of the completely handcrafted artisan. Wright also criticized much of the available machine products and fixtures, not because they were machine made but because they relied on imitating historical styles rather than reflecting contemporary conditions. He argued that not only were new materials available and that they must be embraced but that the machine could do some things better than handcrafting. He argued that this would free the artist to develop designs that reflected their time and place, incorporating the changes in society and the host of new materials such as steel and concrete.

Prairie Style: Wright's affinity for the quality workmanship and use of materials not only links him with the Arts and Crafts movement but also underlie the style most associated with his early career, the Prairie School or Prairie Style. Wright was a pioneer in the style characterized by horizontality, low pitched or flat roofs, broad or deep overhanging eaves, bands of horizontal windows, integration of the structure with the landscape, restrained use of ornamentation, sturdy construction, abundant use of wood, brick and stone, and quality craftsmanship.

Art Nouveau: Aligned with elements of arts and craft in his early work were suggestions of Art Nouveau particularly in work before 1910. Wright is credited with influencing Art Nouveau developments in Europe and among the Art Nouveau elements in Wright's work are such items as the lunettes in his home in Oak Park (1895), and decorative touches on the Winslow House of 1893 including a screen in living room and a freeze and arches on the exterior.

Art Deco: Wright's use of strong geometric shapes, employing squares, triangles, hexagons, and circles ties much of his work closely to Art Deco. His Hollyhock House of 1917 in Los Angeles followed by his textile block houses of the 1920's in California set the tone for California Art Deco based on Mesoamerican themes. Later, Wright returned to a less bold textile block approach several of his Usonian houses after World War II. While many of Wright's designs have an element of Art Deco, the S.C. Johnson headquarters stands out as one of the most important and most iconic among all of Wright's work.

International Style: Although he publicly shunned the International style, both his masterpiece Fallingwater and his project for the 'House on the Mesa,' demonstrate his deep understanding of the style he consistently deprecated. Fallingwater demonstrates his ability to take inspiration from an existing style or example and make it his own through a transformation that moves far beyond that which provided the initial impression.

Because he was using materials such as glass, steel, and concrete often in new ways, he often pushed the envelope. Consequently, at times roofs leaked, cantilevers sagged, and heating and cooling systems proved inadequate. But it can be argued that without such efforts by Wright and other forward-thinking architects that modern architecture in the 20th century might have been quite different and developed later than what did happen.

An American Style and Organic Architecture: Wright sought to create a uniquely American architecture. He shunned historicism and whatever stylistic approach he followed for any given project; his goal remained the same -- to develop a design that reflected the unique conditions and traditions he saw as central the life in the contemporary United States. He sought to develop an American style of architecture, reflecting contemporary American society, current and innovative technology that best fitted the needs of his clients. He turned the American house into an art form, expressive of the values he thought so important. In his public buildings Wright was often on the forefront employing the latest in technology and developing designs that provided workers with a light-filled, healthful, inspiring environment.

The term Organic Architecture is so intimately associated with Wright, it has often been confused with his unique style. However, by Organic Architecture he meant an architecture derived from organic principles not from imitating his style or anyone style. Rather he challenged his apprentices to think for themselves, develop their own style, and adapt it to the specifics of the task at hand. "Given similar conditions, similar tools, similar people, similar language, I believe architects will, with proper regard for the organic nature of the thing produced, arrive at greatly varied results; buildings sufficiently harmonious with each other and more so with great individuality." Finally, underlying his work was the objective "to make the landscape more beautiful than before that building was built."

Frank Lloyd Wright Comes to Buffalo

Frank Lloyd Wright first came to Buffalo in 1902 to discuss a potential commission to design a headquarters building for the Larkin Company Soap Company. He was invited to Buffalo by Darwin Martin, company secretary at the behest of John Larkin President of the company who wanted to evaluate Wright for his suitability for the project. At the time, although Martin had been to Wright's studio in Illinois, he had not met him but was familiar with his work and following the strong recommendation of his brother William had proposed him to Larkin for the commission. Wright secured the assignment, and Martin also engaged him to build a home for his sister and brother-in-law and soon thereafter to build a major home for him and his family on the same site. Thus, a relationship began, perhaps unique in Wright's life. Darwin Martin and Frank Lloyd Wright became good friends, but more than that, Martin was a patron, a staunch supporter when Wright was beset by financial problems, personal tragedy, or rocked by scandal. Concrete results included the Larkin building, the Martin House complex of six buildings, two houses for other Larkin

executives (the Heath and Davidson Houses) as well as a second summer home for the Martins on Lake Erie in the 1920's. On a personal level, results also included some \$70,000 in loans by Martin to Wright over the course of their friendship (not paid back by Wright) and several commissions for projects for Martin himself or associates, none of which were executed during Wright's life.

Buffalo History

In 1900, Buffalo was the eighth largest city in the United States, with the world's fourth busiest harbor, carrying five times the annual tonnage of the Suez Canal. Its position at the eastern end of Lake Erie meant that Buffalo was ideally positioned to become so prominent when in 1825, the Erie Canal arrived. Buffalo was the only port with access to the Atlantic from the Great Lakes providing outlets for both the grain from the Midwest and the high-grade iron ore from Minnesota's Mesabi Range. With major steamship lines and railroads, and dozens of massive grain elevators it was the preeminent point for trans-shipment and the largest grain exporting center in North America as well as the world's largest coal-distribution center. By the early twentieth century, Buffalo surpassed Pittsburgh as the leading steel producing center in the country, and its proximity to Niagara Falls gave it an import role in the development of hydroelectric power, adding diversity and strength to the rapidly expanding economy that included automobile manufacturing and auto parts, the grain processing facilities of Pillsbury and General Mills and such industrial corporations as Ford, General Motors, Union Carbide and the Aluminum Company of America.

Buffalo's population surged through the 1920's but stagnated with the advent of the Depression in the 1930's. Despite a brief surge in industrial production during World War II, the population increased by only about 15,000 between 1940 and 1950, topping out at 590,000. Since 1950 the population has plunged by more than 50% reaching 261 thousand in 2016. In the 1990's several groups and individuals representing a wide range of interests began discussions about utilizing Buffalo's rich architectural heritage to bring in tourists with the aim of stimulating economic growth. The work of Frank Lloyd Wright, particularly the Martin House complex, was considered critical to the success of any such efforts. Despite the challenges involved with the high cost of reacquiring some of the property, demolishing structures that had encroached on the site, and rebuilding what had been destroyed to original design specifications, efforts were successful with state and federal monies augmenting local, private, and corporate donations. The success of the Martin House campaign coupled with the growing preservation movement aided efforts to protect, preserve, and adapt other architectural treasures such as the Guarantee Building by Sullivan, the Buffalo State Hospital by H.H. Richardson, and Graycliff, also by Wright. The success of preservation efforts also began to show results in strengthening more a general community awareness and the desire to develop additional amenities in other districts of the city such as the harbor and the area surrounding the old Larkin complex.

Among more recent programs developed to stimulate the Buffalo economy is the Buffalo Billion program announced by Governor Cuomo in 2012 which committed \$1 billion to a develop proposals and incentives to stimulate the economy, develop jobs, promote tourism, and to find new uses for abandoned sites, develop new facilities, and upgrade aging facilities spread across the city and beyond. For example, responding to community concerns, the governor announced in 2017 that an expressway that disrupted neighborhoods in the 1960's will be removed helping to reestablish a portion of the Olmstead parkway system. The removal of the Sacajawaga Expressway is an example of the many community-based efforts to revitalize Buffalo neighborhoods.

Nowhere is the transformation more evident than in Larkinville, a collection of 19th-century buildings once clustered around the Larkin Soap Company that has become a work, entertainment and dining destination inspired by similar districts around the country. The area is centered on but extends well beyond Larkin Square where the public spaces are concentrated. Other previously overlooked and bypassed areas where new developments are appearing such as the Outer Harbor area and the cluster of massive, abandoned grain silos nearby. Some are just tentatively beginning where results have yet to appear but in others such as Canalside the results can be seen in newly vibrant neighborhoods, with repurposed buildings that now feature apartments, shops, and restaurants. Nonetheless, problems remain; there are major and troubling issues that must be addressed. More than half of students, and nearly one in three residents remain below the poverty line. While unemployment has dropped significantly, it

remains above the national and state levels¹. However, the Buffalo Billion programs and incentives are bringing in new business like the massive Solar City development of Elon Musk which will provide some 1400 new jobs. A degree of optimism about the future has begun to appear in news reports and articles about Buffalo citing a new spirit and that is making Buffalo an attractive place to live and is bringing young people back to the city.

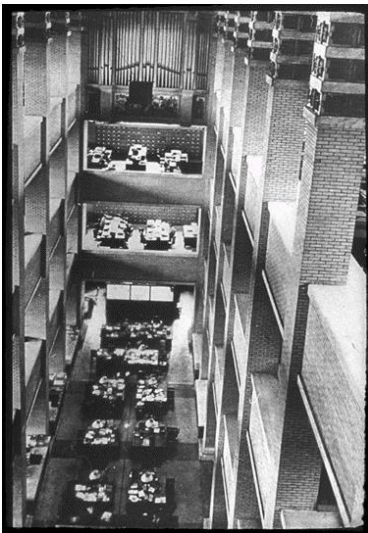
The Larkin Company Headquarters building 1903-1906:

By 1900, the Larkin Company was one of the nation's largest retailers, first selling soap, and eventually a range of items through its catalogs. Larkin was similar to and second only to Sears & Roebuck and the company needed a central location to manage the thousands of orders arriving daily from the 1.5 million customers receiving the Larkin catalogs.

Darwin Martin had designed a card index system for processing orders, which streamlined and systemized processes enabling the company to expand into a major force in retailing. The Larkin Company had three million square feet of manufacturing and warehousing in Buffalo but no central processing and recordkeeping facility. The location in the industrial complex surrounded by the grime and soot from



factories and railroad operations necessitated special requirements for air quality, record preservation and comfort that resulted in numerous innovative features not typical at the time.

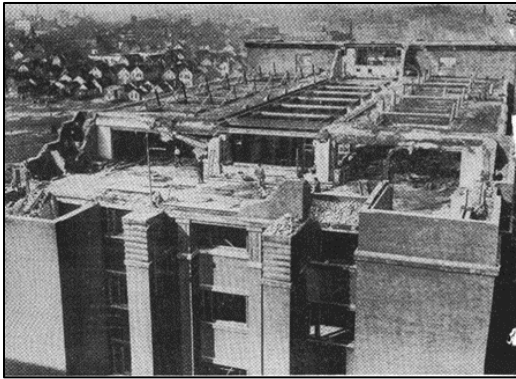


The Larkin building was Wright's first large commercial project. To meet the stringent requirements of the client, the building was air-conditioned to filter out the pollution of the surrounding area; the incoming air could be heated or chilled to meet seasonal conditions and was filtered, purified and circulated before being exhausted from the building. For light, the building had a central atrium court augmented by ample electric lights and the interior walls were made of cream-colored brick that allowed light to bounce off the walls further enhancing the overall light quality. Wright collaborated closely with the client to determine the interior layout to facilitate order managing the incoming orders. The orders were sent to the top of the building and flowed downward from there to the main floor as they were processed. Filing cabinets were built into walls and Wright designed steel desks with attached, foldable chairs designed to lessen the amount of time it took to pull out and pull in a chair and to facilitate after hours cleaning. Also, to speed cleaning, toilets were hung from the walls of the stalls in the restrooms to cut down time spent cleaning the floor.

Amenities for the workers included not only features considered standard and typically found now in office complexes such as a kitchen, dining room, restrooms, employee lounges and lockers but also other less common features were included such as: a branch of the public library, classrooms, roof garden, conservatory, restaurant, a bakery, waterfalls, and even a pipe organ. Built to last and costing \$4 million (about \$143,000,000 in inflation adjusted dollars of 2025), the floors were made of reinforced concrete slabs ten inches thick, seventeen feet wide and thirty-four feet long. The floor slabs were in turn supported by massive 24-inch steel girders.

On completion in 1906, the Larkin Building represented the latest in modern design. Lauded by architects and critics in Europe, it was often derided in the United States. Noted critic Russell Sturgis called it "an extremely ugly building...a monster of awkwardness." Only with time did the architectural profession and historians in America recognize it as a pioneering example of design innovation.

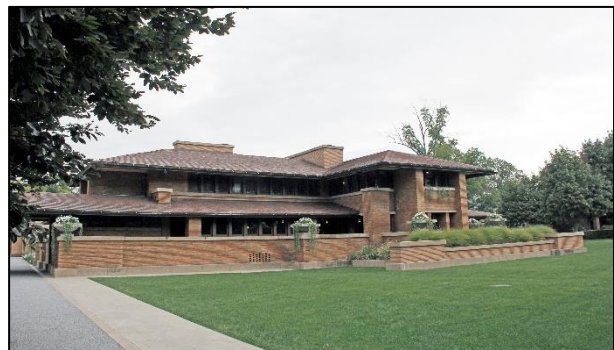
A combination of failure to adapt to changing marketing conditions, lack of innovation, and the economic collapse of the 1930's resulted in the decline of the Larkin Company. By 1939, the building was modernized to become a retail operation for Larkin following the demise of the mail order business. The "modernizing" of the interior meant the removal of much of the Wright custom designed elements. By 1940, the company owed \$38,000 in back taxes and sold the building in 1943 to an investor whose plans never materialized and eventually the city seized the building for back taxes.



Various plans for the reuse of the building were discussed including housing, Veterans Administration headquarters, a records storage facility and even a recreation center but nothing materialized and as a result, on Sept. 13, 1949, the Buffalo Common Council voted to sell the building for \$5,000 to the Western Trading Company to be demolished with plans for a truck terminal to be constructed on the site. Western Trading eventually built the terminal in another location and the site became a parking lot. Because of the robust nature of the building, demolition was both costly at about \$100,000 and time-consuming taking from February to July of 1950, an unusually lengthy demolition process.

The loss of the Larkin Building removed Wright's major achievement in Buffalo and the principal reason for his work in the area. Nonetheless, the Wright legacy in Buffalo remains vibrant and evolving. The presence of the houses designed for Martin and the other Larkin executives helped stimulate interest in historic preservation and more importantly the idea of drawing upon Buffalo's rich heritage of major works of architecture by some of America's greatest architects to attract tourists to the city and rekindle growth of a city that that experienced a significant decline in the period after the Second World War. Without the strong appeal of the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, there was little chance that an interest in architectural tourism would have developed and an even more remote possibility that any such effort could have succeeded.

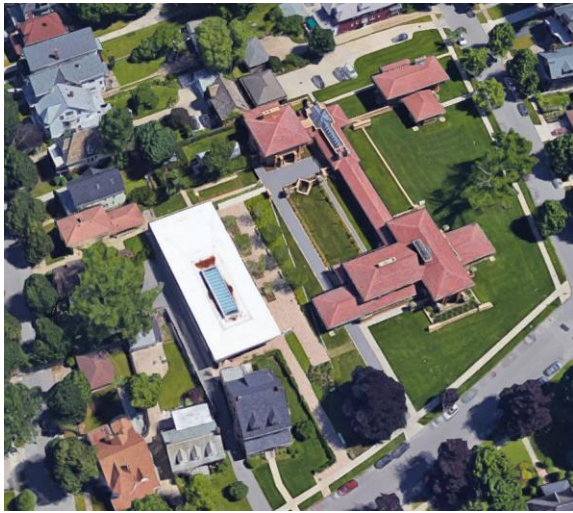
Martin House - Frank Lloyd Wright designed a unique residential complex for wealthy Buffalo businessperson Darwin D. Martin and his family between 1904-1907 in the Parkside community (a district planned by Frederick Law Olmstead). The Martin House is the most substantial and advanced of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie houses. It is a prime example of Wright's Prairie House ideal, with strong horizontal lines and planes, deeply overhanging eaves, a central hearth, prominent foundation, and a sheltering, cantilevered roof. The long low-pitched roof sections along with the strong geometric forms and intersecting planes of the five-building complex produce a unified composition unique in Wright's career.



Wright was a master of spatial planning; he maintained that the space within a building was the defining element for a composition; it was the space within that shaped the experience and set the stage for the reactions of residents and visitors as well as providing a sense of repose and a connection to nature. To achieve that end in the Martin House, Wright designed all the elements to blend into a harmonious whole. The extensive intricate wood trim (eight and a half miles of it), the furniture, the lighting fixtures, and the nearly four hundred art glass windows were all designed by him.

Wright was a pioneer in "breaking the box" reducing the clutter of several small special purpose rooms, typical in homes of the period, and in their place employing a free-flowing open plan. A major feature of the Martin House is the open interconnected living room, dining room and library spanning seventy feet with the spaces flowing one into another yet discrete. Wright scholars consider the house one of his finest achievements in the Prairie Style, and

Wright himself referred to it as his opus. It was the one commission where Wright had the greatest degree of freedom to experiment and carry out his artistic vision unhindered by restrictions of budget. The complex is one of Wright's largest Prairie style projects, the main house with 14-rooms and 15,000 square feet, was also one of his most costly overruns exceeding the initial budget of \$35,000 by a factor of five costing \$175,000 to construct².



The initial complex consisted of five interconnected buildings designed as a unified composition, including the main Martin House, a pergola that connected it to a conservatory and carriage house with chauffeur's quarters and stable, and finally, the Barton House, the smaller residence for Martin's sister and brother-in-law. Adding to the overall result was the floricycle landscape design by Wright and Walter Burley Griffin, an intricate design forming an essential element of the overall design. The reconstruction of the floricycle is one of the remaining projects in the restoration of the Martin House complex. In 1909 a sixth component, the gardener's cottage was added by Wright completing the development.

Prior to the death of Darwin Martin in 1935, the family began spending time at a second home designed by Wright as a summer retreat. Isabelle Martin had never been fond of the Buffalo house. Suffering from poor vision, she found the house too dark and in 1927, Darwin Martin instructed Wright to design a summer home specifically for his wife. The house, which came to be known as Graycliff, is located about twenty miles from the Martin House on the shore of Lake Erie. Mrs. Martin continued to live in the Buffalo House until 1937 when she was unable to pay the taxes. She continued to spend summers at Graycliff through the summer of 1942 and then moved permanently to Buffalo where she died in 1945.



Over the decades following the departure of the family, the Martin House complex deteriorated, passing through several owners including the State University of New York at Buffalo. At times, the property sat vacant, and one owner sold part of the property to a developer who demolished the pergola, conservatory, and garage to build three small apartment buildings.

restoration of the Barton House, the gardener's cottage, the removal of the apartment buildings and rebuilding the



structures demolished in their original locations and to original specifications. By 1994, the

MHRC acquired the Barton House, and by 1997, extensive reconstruction and restoration efforts began that included roof and gutter restoration for both the Martin and Barton houses were progressing. In 2002, title to



² About \$6,200,000 adjusted for inflation for 2025.



Reconstructing the Conservatory
View toward the pergola

the Martin House was transferred by SUNY Buffalo to the MHRC and the following year demolition and reconstruction work began. By 2004, restoration was well underway with the removal of the three small boxy apartment buildings that were crammed onto the site in 1962. Patching of the masonry and work on the electrical, plumbing, and structural issues were proceeding or in the planning stage for restoration and replacement as were the 394 art glass windows in sixteen designs. In September of 2006, the format dedication of the reconstructed pergola, conservatory and stable/garage took place.

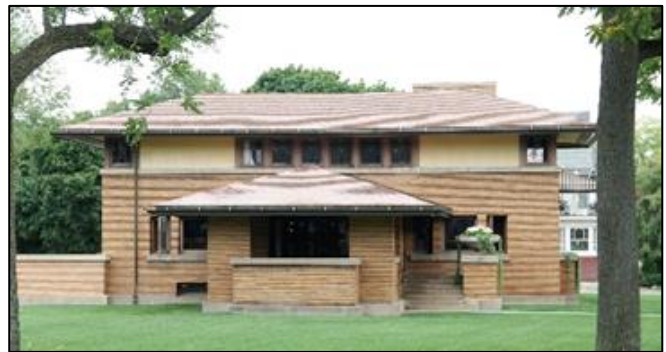
Since then, the rebuilding efforts have focused on restoration of both exterior and interior details in the Martin House to return the structure to the condition of 2007 (the "year of significance") when the Martin family first occupied the house.

Research both on site and from archives

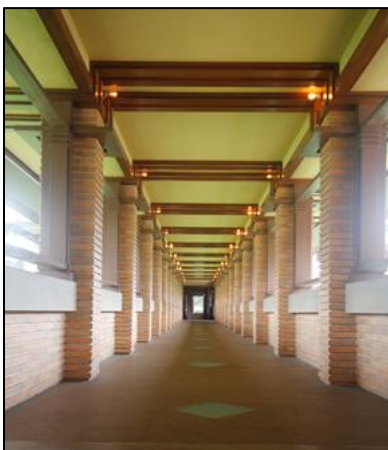
determined original finishes, and materials which have been refinished, restored, or replicated, as necessary. The work included the art-glass windows, the eight and a half miles of wood trim, the special plaster and paint finishes, cabinetry, light fixtures and plumbing and electrical items as well. Currently, the work remains ongoing with completion estimated for 2018.



Barton House - Wright's first residential commission in Buffalo was begun in 1903, designed for Darwin Martin's sister and brother-in-law. The design selected by Martin came directly from an earlier design by Wright for the J.J. Walser House in Chicago of 1902. Among the modifications Wright made to the plan was the selection of the golden yellow Roman bricks and the terra cotta roof tiles that anticipate elements of the eventual complex. Although far more modest than the Martin House, the Barton House retains the same wiring, plumbing and much of the heating system that was initially installed when constructed in 1903.



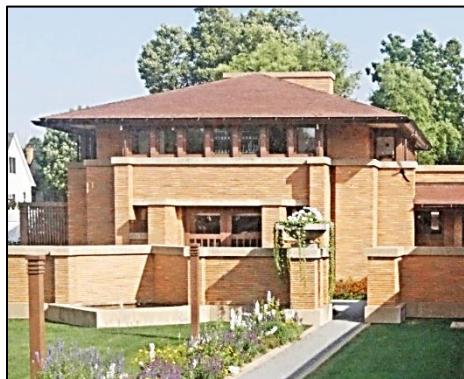
The two-story, eight-room house is executed in a cruciform plan that features a veranda extending southward toward the rim of the floricycle which fans out eastward from the main house. With its own art glass window designs, the Prairie style hip roof and horizontal features, the Barton House both harmonizes with the larger composition and provides an ideal model of a modest mid-sized residential design of Wright's early Prairie style. Wright biographer Brendon Gill describes the Barton House as "a small and nearly perfect jewel, a shelter cozy and yet filled with light, and most people who visit both houses are apt to prefer it to the Martin House."



Although the roof and gutters were replaced when restoration work on the complex began in the later 1990's, restoration of the Barton House and the recreation of the floricycle and other landscaping constitute most of the remaining restoration work on the overall complex scheduled for completion in 2018.

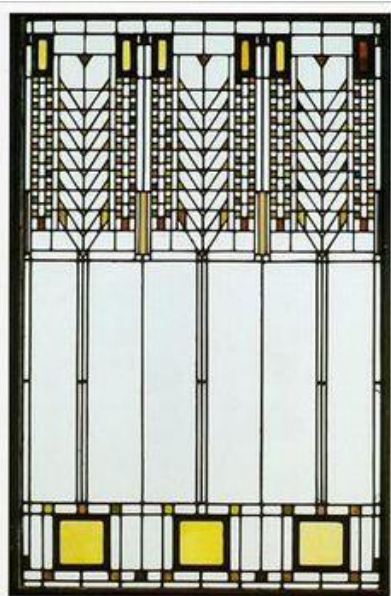
Pergola and Conservatory – the pergola serves as the central spine connecting the main house with the conservatory. The Martin's were avid gardeners and enjoyed both the extensive gardens and the conservatory that allowed year-round greenery during the frequently harsh Buffalo winters. The pergola frames the most dramatic vista as one enters the house. From the front door, the view extends through the hall, on through the back door and along the 100-foot-long pergola into the conservatory, terminating at a life-sized reproduction of the Nike

of Samothrace (one of Wright's favorite sculptural accents, used in smaller versions in both works for clients and at Taliesin as well).

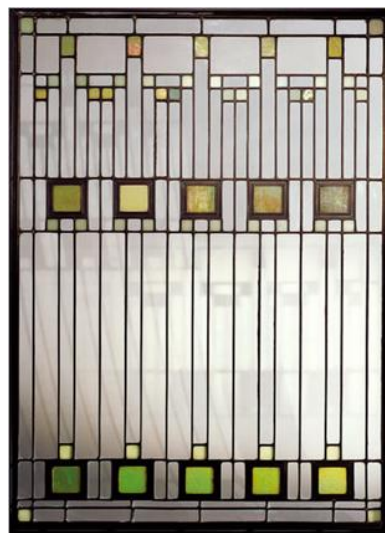


Carriage House - Wright's plan for the overall complex included a spacious carriage house with stables and an apartment for the coachman later chauffeur above. The building echoes features of the main house with low pitched roof, deep overhangs, and Roman brick. Wright also created art glass windows inspired by the "Tree of Life" windows from the main house. The lower floor of the carriage house serves as the gift shop for the complex.

Gardener's Cottage - In 1909 a gardener's cottage was added to the complex. Constructed with wood-frame, stucco and cedar trim, the compact two-story house served as the home for the gardener who oversaw the gardens, conservatory, and greenhouse, and supplied fresh flowers to the main house daily. This addition completed the overall Martin House complex. Renovated in 1991, the cottage was acquired in 2006 as part of the overall restoration efforts.



Art Glass – the intricate designs of Wright's art glass windows were a key component of his design philosophy bringing the outside in yet creating a sense of shelter. Wright referred to them as light screens inspired by the shoji screens of traditional Japanese houses. Of the 394 art glass windows, skylights, and laylights in the complex, about 250 are in the Martin House directly but the Barton House, conservatory, stable/garage, and gardener's cottage all contain specially designed windows. The best known of the designs include the "Tree of Life" (on the left) and Wisteria (on the right) designs for the main house. Designs for the other structures are simplified patterns echoing elements from the more complex designs for the Martin House.



Economic Impact – The following comes from a MHRC fund raising brochure published in 1999: "The Darwin D. Martin House complex has the power to make our region an architectural tourism destination to the world. Based on comparable Wright attractions, the complex is projected to draw up to 100,000 visitors per year. Their tourism dollars – estimated up to \$20 million annually – will be pumped into the region's economy, its restaurants, hotels, retail outlets and other attractions. The restoration will then serve as a springboard to draw tourists to other significant architectural and cultural attractions in the area. With more sites to see, they'll stay longer, spend more and significantly enhance the tourism industry of Western New York." The budget for the Martin House complex restoration is \$50 million which includes funds to reacquire, demolish, rebuild, and restore the complex to the condition as of the year it was occupied by the Martin family, 1907.



Eleanor and Wilson Greatbatch Pavilion: The final building in the Martin House complex is neither by Wright nor from early in the 20th century. In 2002, the MHRC held a competition for a design for a visitor's center. The winning entry was from the firm of Toshiko Mori Architect; the building was completed in 2009. The design with its inverted hip roof, and exposed structural elements deliberately contrasts with the Martin House through inversion rather than emulation. The open and transparent nature of the center with walls of glass on three sides provides uninterrupted views of the Wright complex and reflects the public nature of the building as opposed to the more inward-looking aspects of Wright's design.

Wright's Other Early Work in Buffalo

All of Wright's early work in Buffalo was related to the Larkin commission, while the Martin House complex is better known he also executed two additional houses for Larkin Company executives, the Heath and Davidson Houses both remain occupied in private hands.

Heath House 1904-05 William Heath became a vice president of the Larkin Company he was married to the sister of Elbert Hubbard, Darwin Martin's mentor and founder of the Roycroft community in East Aurora. The site, a long narrow corner lot, presented a challenge of situating a large Prairie style house to maximize privacy. Wright's solution was to place the house next to the sidewalk on the long side of the lot thus providing an open yet secluded yard on the south side of the lot. The elevated main living areas placed well above eye level from any passersby on the sidewalk or street, the art-glass windows and the massive chimney became screening elements aiding the sense of privacy. The elongated plan on such a narrow lot was a precursor when Wright worked on a similar narrow lot designing the Robie House in Chicago in 1909. However, the Heath House also executed in brick resembles the later house, it lacks the dramatic cantilevers of Robie.



Davidson House – 1908: The house for Walter Davidson shares several features with the Martin House however, the wood and stucco finish reflects a far more modest budget. Despite the modest nature of the building Wright developed a dramatic light-filled two-story living room with a massive bay window on the east and clerestory windows along the north and south walls. Spatial grandeur and intimacy interact, establishing links to nature through the bands of windows featured in even the smallest of rooms.

Wright's Other Martin House - Graycliff - 1927

Graycliff was designed for Mrs. Martin's pleasure, her failing vision led her to direct Wright to create a structure full of sunlight and air. In response, Wright created a light, airy design that takes full advantage of its location on a bluff overlooking Lake Erie, with sweeping views of the lake, and across to Canada and downtown Buffalo. Although the initial budget was set at \$16,000, for what was planned as a simple summer cottage, the plans expanded into three buildings: the residence, the garage and chauffeur's quarters and the boiler house, for a total cost of \$64,000.

Constructed in stucco and limestone, the house forms a long narrow rectangle with large windows allowing vistas through the main rooms, providing an abundance of light unprecedented in Wright's previous work and unusual in his

later work as well. Both the *Tichenor limestone* (pyrite in the limestone gives the building its rusted appearance) and the sand blended into the stucco come from the beach below.



The many windows not only provide ample light but also facilitate circulation of Lake Erie breezes throughout the living and sleeping spaces. And the panels of glass coming together at the corners of the house, separated by a metal rod, may presage later developments at Fallingwater. Unlike most of his buildings, which are built on a north/south-east/west axis, Wright designed the house to align with the sun. Each year, on the Summer Solstice, the sun sets over the lake, casting rays directly through the corner window of the Fern Room and through the building.

Extensive terraces provide access to and views of the lake, and the extensive gardens.

Graycliff's landscaping was designed by Wright (the only known landscaping plan known to be solely by him, restoration of the landscaping was completed in 2013). The master plan for the grounds incorporated the form and spatial relationships of the complex and added an irregular-shaped pond to the center of the front yard. Nonetheless, even though the plan was implemented, Isabelle Martin's later engaged Ellen Biddle Shipman, a prominent landscape architect, to expand Wright's plan, adding additional color and blooming plantings. The restored grounds represent the only example of the blending of designs by Wright and Shipman.

Following the death of Isabelle Martin in 1945, the children sold the estate to the Order of the Pious Schools³, or Piarist Fathers. Despite a plea from Wright who offered to build a chapel, the priests began a series of additions and modifications including a schoolhouse, chapel, and additional living spaces that largely obscured Wright's design. By the late 1990's the few remaining priests were ready to sell the property and in 1997 local preservationists, organized the Graycliff Conservancy which raised \$450,000 to secure the property and begin a long-term renovation program not estimated to be more than 80% complete.

Three "New" Buildings by Frank Lloyd Wright in Buffalo

In addition to the legacy of important buildings by Wright, Buffalo developed an ambitious plan to not only market the city's Wright heritage in combination with the other architectural gems not only from the late 19th and early 20th centuries but with more recent works by well-known architects including Eliel and Eero Saarinen, Marcel Breuer, Paul Rudolph, Minoru Yamasaki, and Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, but to add three "new" projects by Wright as well.

In 2004, in addition to the restoration efforts underway at both the Martin House and Graycliff, something quite apart from architectural preservation was also underway. Construction of the three "new" Wright projects to lure tourists to the area to view important architectural works, was under development.

- **Blue Sky Mausoleum** is another example of the working relationship between Wright and Darwin Martin. Wright designed the mausoleum for Martin in 1932, but it was never built. Completed in 2004 at Buffalo's Forest Lawn Cemetery, it has become a tourist attraction, and the twenty-four crypts are available for purchase at prices ranging up to \$500,000.



- **Wright's Fontana Boathouse** In 2000 the Frank Lloyd Wright Rowing Boathouse Corporation was formed and raised funds to acquire the rights to the plans for the boathouse originally designed for the University of Wisconsin crew team in 1905. The plans were acquired

³ The full name of the Order is: Order of Poor Clerks Regular of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools



for the West Side Rowing Club. The boathouse was erected on the Niagara River with major support from writer Tom Fontana. Completed in 2007, currently, the boathouse operates both as an architectural tourist site and as a working boathouse used by the West Side Rowing Club, one of the largest rowing clubs in the United States.

- **Frank Lloyd Wright Tydol Gasoline Station** Designed

in the 1920s, the filling station was planned for the Buffalo-based Tydol oil company but never built. In 2002, initial planning began led by Jim Sandoro, developer of the Buffalo Transportation Pierce Arrow Museum. Plans were obtained from the Frank Lloyd Foundation and adapted for construction inside a specially built addition to the Museum. The two-story filling station features a waiting room on the second floor with banquette seating and a fireplace, restrooms, copper roof, two 45-foot poles (which Wright referred to as “totems”) and an overhead gravity-fed fuel distribution system. In addition, there were quarters for an attendant, with a bunk and second fireplace.



Controversial Additions: Are They Wright?

The three projects are separate, but share a common purpose, promoting a tourist destination based on a rich and unique architectural tradition. They seek to create a critical mass of Wright structures in Buffalo by augmenting the remaining structures built during Wright’s lifetime with the three unrealized designs. The boosters citing Fallingwater as a major attraction argue that Buffalo could become the destination for 100,000 visitors a year drawn primarily or at least in part by the architecture.

Critics argue that major differences exist between buildings such as Fallingwater and the three additions. Wright’s designs for the three never went beyond sketches and preliminary plans. In addition, building codes, materials, and construction techniques have evolved and changed dramatically, influencing how the structures must now be built and thus, with results that may be strikingly different from Wright’s intentions that some regard as mediocre, at best. For example, William Allin Storrer, author of *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion* challenges the authenticity of any such additions. "To create an authentic Frank Lloyd Wright building, you have to have exact plans, not just sketches," Storrer argues. And further: "The building must also be on the original site situated exactly as Wright placed it. Otherwise, it is a replica at best. And if the interior details are modified to suit the new client, it doesn't even qualify as that." Similarly, Charles Gwathmey, architect of the major addition to Guggenheim Museum in Manhattan expressed his concerns, "I always worry about sketches that become buildings without the original author completing the process." However, Gwathmey also indicated a somewhat more favorable reaction to the Buffalo program, "three more Frank Lloyd Wright buildings, from that creative and original mind, could be much more exciting than three ordinary buildings."⁴

Wright’s View on Importance of the Gasoline Station to Society

In the gasoline service station may be seen the beginning of an important advance agent of decentralization by way of distribution and also the beginning of the establishment of the Broadacre City.

Wherever the service station happens to be naturally located, these now crude and seemingly insignificant units will grow and expand into various distributing centers for merchandise of all sorts. They are already doing so in the Southwest to a great extent.

Disappearing City - 1932

⁴ There are at least three additional Wright structures proposed to be rebuilt or constructed for the first time: an unbuilt 1895 Boathouse for Madison, Wisconsin, a waiting station to be rebuilt on its original site in Glencoe, Illinois, and the rebuilding of the pavilion for Banff Park in Canada.

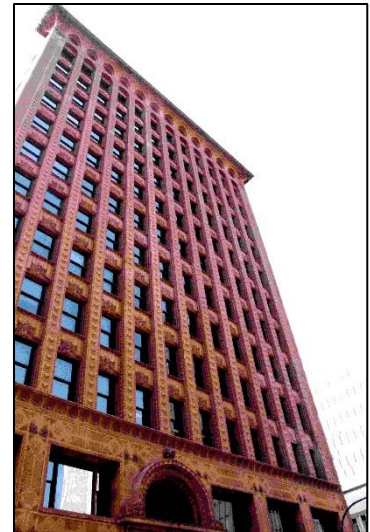
Other Highlights of Buffalo Architecture

Buffalo Arts and Crafts Movement

Around the turn of the twentieth century, the Arts and Crafts movement in Western New York was flourishing. Driven as it was in other areas by artists, designers and architects who favored craftsmanship and hand-hewn detail over the uniformity of the mass-produced products of industrialization. In Buffalo, many traces remain from the ornate gables of Victorian houses in the Elmwood Village neighborhood as well as the ongoing work of artisans still working at the historic Roycroft Campus in nearby East Aurora.

Guaranty Building -Louis Sullivan

The Guaranty or Prudential Building - 1894-95: threatened with demolition in the 1970s was extensively restored by the law firm Hodgson Russ for use as its principal office. Sullivan referred to the building as a sister to his earlier Wainwright Building in St. Louis, his first expression of the power of the modern vertical form. A 13-story, steel-frame structure is Sullivan's most mature skyscraper. Like most of Sullivan's work, the Guaranty Building is profusely ornamented in foliate and geometric designs of molded terra cotta that accentuate the overall design to emphasize the building's height from a distance. In the lobby, the bronze staircase and richly decorated elevator cages, the stained-glass ceiling, and mosaic walls form an opulent background for the small museum that highlights the building's history.



The Ellicott Square Building by Daniel Burnham was the largest commercial office building in the world when it opened in 1896 and contained offices, shops, restaurants, and a theater. The richly decorated French Renaissance style exterior in terra cotta (now painted white) essentially follows the lines of the Marshall Field Wholesale Store by H. H. Richardson in Chicago completed the previous year. And like Burnham and Root's Rookery Building in Chicago, Elliott Square has a large glass-covered concourse, and while in need of some care, it remains a majestic public space. The concourse floor mosaic by William Kent was installed in 1930-31.

Richardson's Buffalo State Asylum

Construction on the Buffalo State Asylum for the Insane began in 1870, the massive project was completed in 1895. Henry Hobson Richardson was chosen as the architect, and the result is the first major example of what has become known as Richardson

Romanesque and constitutes the largest project of his career. The twin-towered central administration building finished in red Medina sandstone, housed not only offices but the families of the officers as well. For fire safety reasons, the complex was segmented into a series of pavilions, five to the east and five on the west, all constructed of brick for reasons of economy rather than the stone Richardson favored. The design stressed functionality and native materials, light was thought to be therapeutic for patients, so windows were ample and large. At its busiest, the facility housed about 2,000 (both patients and live-in staff members). The complex was set in extensive grounds, thought to be of therapeutic value.



To plan the grounds, Richardson worked with Frederick Law Olmsted, to design the landscape plan.

Local preservationists acquired the derelict property from the state and with a local hotelier converted the administration block to an upscale hotel and history center. The Hotel Henry, named after Richardson, opened on May 26 of this year and occupies about a third of the complex. The hotel's restaurant is named *100 Acres* for the farm behind the asylum buildings that supplied much of the food for the residents as well as therapeutic labor for many of the patients. The new guest rooms result from combining two or more former patient rooms.

Buffalo Architecture Center

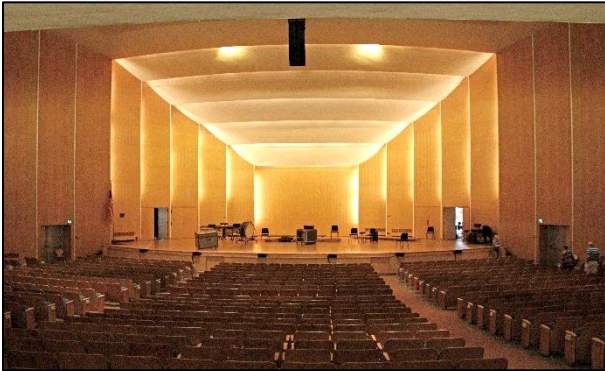
The Lipsey Buffalo Architecture Center (BAC) is a non-profit museum that explores the architecture and city planning heritage of Buffalo. Located in the Richardson Olmsted Complex, the Center's mission is to provide orientation, promote inspiration, and serve as a center to host exhibitions, events, and programs. The BAC actively collaborates with aligned groups in dialogue and shared programming.

Olmsted Park System

Much of the Buffalo city park system was developed by Olmsted, with Calvert Vaux, and later with his sons and later still the work was completed by the Olmsted sons on their own. It is a comprehensive parks system that fans out from what was, in 1868, a rural zone to the north of Buffalo's civic center. Olmsted developed a network of parkways, landscaped roads, and traffic circles and parks that later spurred the development of Buffalo's most picturesque neighborhoods, characterized by broad lawns and canopies of trees.

The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy is collaborating with various community groups to improve the East Side landscape infrastructure in hopes of improving neighborhood amenities, by restoring their original parks and parkway connections to the West Side. In addition to the parks system, Olmsted also developed the extensive landscaping plan for the State Hospital which emphasized a plan to promote a sense of security and promote a sense of well-being among the patients as well as the Parkside neighborhood where the Martin House is located.

Kleinhans Music Hall Eliel and Eero Saarinen – 1938-1940. One of the early major collaborations of father and son Saarinen, with its sweeping curves, the building both reflects the landscaped circle that is the termination of one of the parkways by Olmsted and Vaux's just outside the hall. At the same time, the building itself, a combination of the drum-like shape of the smaller chamber music hall and the larger curved volume of the main auditorium provides a



strong image to engage the viewer. The scale of the large bulky, windowless, brick building is reduced by breaking up the façade of the main hall with emergency stairs that cascade along the side of the hall. The exterior of the chamber music drum is enhanced by regularly spaced panels of limestone resembling pilasters. The softly modeled plaster ceiling and the subtly formed wooden walls of the fan-shaped interior of the concert hall focuses attention on the stage. The room has been described as intimate and serene by architectural critic Witold Rybczynski

Buffalo City Hall 1929-1931 – Reflecting a social atmosphere quite different from the 21st century, City Hall's architect and chief designer John Wade, believed the building “expresses primarily the masculinity, power, and purposeful energy of an industrial community.” The design, an outstanding example of Art Deco architecture, is an amalgam of influences: Hugh Ferriss a noted architectural illustrator, produced a study in 1920's illustrating the maximum feasible bulk a building could have under the new zoning laws in New York City. One of the drawings in particular anticipated City Hall's design to a remarkable degree showing an imposing structure rising from a massive base with a series of precipitous cliff-like setbacks centering on a soaring central tower flanked by two wings. His illustrations influenced numerous architects of the period. Other influences came from the design of the Nebraska State Capitol and others from elements of the Mayan revival style of the 1920's that also influenced Wright's Hollyhock House in Los Angeles. A travel writer described the Buffalo City Hall as a "slightly excited Mayan pyramid."



The building is one of the largest municipal buildings in the country, containing more than 550,000 square feet. Its central tower has an observatory on the 28th floor open for viewing of the city. Interior highlights include richly decorated marble floors, brightly colored tiled ceilings, murals, mosaics, and a brilliant sunburst-stained glass ceiling in the Common Council chamber. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1999.

Roycroft Campus - in 1893 Elbert Hubbard left the Larkin company to pursue other interests. After visiting England and Ireland he became interested in the Arts and Crafts movement and on returning to the United States, he founded the Roycroft Movement based in part on the Pre-Raphaelite movement Inspired by the theories of Jon Ruskin and the later Arts and Crafts Movement founded by William Morris, Burne-Jones, and others in England. By the early 20th century, the Roycrofters were producing their version of mission style furniture, works in copper and other metals as well as a wide range of books, pamphlets, and other publications. As a part of the Arts and Crafts movement, the Roycroft community represented ideals of high quality and craftsmanship as instruments of social reform in its organization as well as in its products. Roycroft was also a protest against the negative impacts of the industrial revolution, focusing on machine-made products. Over time, the Roycroft community became essentially a self-sufficient operation, based on pre-industrial agrarian ideals where artisans and their families lived and worked together in a guild-like setting.

Frank Lloyd Wright visited the campus and corresponded with Hubbard. The Roycroft Campus in East Aurora contains fourteen buildings and is the location of an Inn, working shops and stores hand-made arts and crafts. The campus is located in East Aurora about twenty-five miles southeast from Buffalo. The campus is another asset in the portfolio of important architectural heritage in the Buffalo area. It was granted National Landmark status in 1986.

Darwin D. Martin Timeline	
1865	Darwin D. Martin was born in Bouckville, NY.
1867	Frank Lloyd Wright was born in Richland Center, WI.
1871	Martin's mother dies; the children are split between relatives. Martin greatly misses family, sets stage for later construction of the Barton House
1875	Larkin Soap Company founded by John Larkin and brother-in-law Elbert Hubbard
1878	Darwin brought to New York City to join brother Frank selling soap for Larkin Company
1879	Martin invited to Buffalo by John Larkin
1882	Martin head bookkeeper – devises index volume system to replace ledgers
1885	Martin modifies system to card index file [cardex] -inspired by library card catalogue - revolutionizing business practices
1893	Martin becomes secretary of Larkin, replacing Hubbard

1901	Wright's Prairie House concept in "A Home in a Prairie Town," <i>Ladies' Home Journal</i> , February 1901.
1902	Wright visited Buffalo at the request of Martin to discuss commissions for the Barton, Martin and Heath houses, and the Larkin Administration Building. Martin acquired the Jewett Avenue property for the future Wright complex in December.
1903	The building of the complex began with the Barton House.
1904-05	Construction of the main Martin House, pergola, conservatory, and carriage house.
1904-06	The Larkin Administration Building, constructed in Buffalo (demolished in 1949-50).
1907	Martin House complete
1925	Martin retired from the Larkin Company after forty-seven years.
1926-29	<u>Graycliff</u> , the Martins' summer home designed by Wright, was constructed in Derby, NY, on Lake Erie.
1935	Darwin D. Martin died at the Martin House.in Buffalo

Martin House Timeline	
1901	Wright's Prairie House concept in "A Home in a Prairie Town," <i>Ladies' Home Journal</i> , February 1901.
1902	Wright visited Buffalo at the request of Martin to discuss commissions for the Barton, and potentially a house for the Martins. Martin acquired the Jewett Avenue property for the future Wright complex in December.
1903	The building of the complex began with the Barton House.
1904-05	Construction of the main Martin House, pergola, conservatory, and carriage house.
1907	The last craftsmen left the Martin House and Wright declared the project complete, making 1907 the "year of significance" for current restoration efforts.
1909	The gardener's cottage was built, adding a sixth and final structure to the Martin complex.
1925	Martin retired from the Larkin Company after forty-seven years.
1926-29	<u>Graycliff</u> , the Martins' summer home designed by Wright, was constructed in Derby, NY, on Lake Erie.
1935	Darwin D. Martin dies at the Martin House.
1937	Martin family (Isabelle, Dorothy, and Darwin R. Martin) abandoned the Jewett Parkway property.
1937-54	The Martin House Complex lay vacant; it had reverted to the City of Buffalo for back taxes in 1946.
1954	Architect Sebastian J. Tauriello purchased the Martin House. Converts to apartments with his office in basement
1959	Frank Lloyd Wright died in Scottsdale, AZ.
1960	Tauriello sells part of the lot to a developer who demolishes the pergola, conservatory, and carriage house to construct three two-story apartment buildings
1967	Martin House was purchased by the State University of New York at Buffalo, for use as its president's residence. Eric and Eleanor Larrabee purchased the Barton House
1975	Martin House placed on the National Register of Historic Places.
1986	Martin House listed as a National Historic Landmark.

1989	Late U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) championed the restoration of the Martin House and proclaimed it a national treasure.
1991	A unique three-way partnership between SUNY Buffalo, the State of New York and the Martin House Restoration Corporation formed to acquire all the components and restore and rebuild the entire complex to original specifications
1992	The Martin House Restoration Corporation (MHRC) was formed.
1994	The Barton House was purchased from Eleanor Larrabee for the MHRC by M&T Bank, Rich Products Corporation., and the Buffalo News.
1997	Hamilton Houston Lownie Architects was selected as restoration architects - Phase I of Martin House restoration (roof and gutter restoration) was implemented
2002	Title to the Martin House transferred by the State University of New York at Buffalo to the MHRC - An architectural competition for the Martin House visitor center was held. Toshiko Mori Architect was selected to design the new building adjacent to the historic site.
2003-04	Phase II of Martin House restoration (foundation waterproofing, water and sewer system upgrades and veranda slab reconstruction) took place.
2004-07	Phase III of Martin House restoration (reconstruction of the once-demolished pergola, conservatory, and carriage house) executed.
2006	The gardener's cottage (renovated and expanded in 1991) was acquired by the MHRC with funding from Stanford and Judith Lipsey.
2007-08	Phase IV of restoration (restoration of masonry on the exterior of the Martin House, including relocation of walls to their 1907 position) conducted.
2009	The Eleanor and Wilson Greatbatch Pavilion opens. (visitor center designed by Toshiko Mori.)
2010-18	Phase V of the Martin House interior restoration is under way.

Graycliff Chronology, 1926-1997

1926 April 5	Darwin Martin writes to Wright requesting 1910 Bay Beach Cottage design; Darwin Martin is considering building on shores of Lake Erie
April 18	Martin looks at site in Derby, New York
April 19	Martin purchases 250-foot frontage on Lake Erie, with 60-foot cliff.
April 21	Martin informs Wright that he is not interested in 1910 cottage design, but a two-story stone house designed by Frank Newman for E.W. Russell of Greenwich, Connecticut
May 3	Wright sends Martin preliminary drawings.
May 5	Martin informs Wright that Isabelle Martin is Wright's client.
August 19-20	Wright in Buffalo to see site.
August 27	Isabelle Martin sees the site for the first time.
September	Construction on garage begun - Due to marital problems, Wright asks his son John Lloyd Wright to take over the project; the Martins did not approve the change.
November	Wright resumes his service to the Martins; construction continues at the site.
1927 April 5-6	Wright visits site
June 4	Martin writes to Wright about the completion of the foundation of the main house.
June 15-16	Wright visits site
September	Chimney and masonry of main house completed - Wright finalizes designs for landscape, tennis court, circle, and guest house; the guest house was not executed - Furniture designs by Wright are executed.
1928 March	Furniture purchased for main house.
June 20	Martins hold open house.
September 20	Paul Harsh, a house guest suggests the name "Graycliff."
1929 April	Isabelle Martin asks Wright to design a screened walk to cross the esplanade behind the stone bench for servants.
June 15	Wright visits site
July	The Martins request Wright to design a "concrete tent house" for the Foster family (unexecuted)
July	The Martins request Wright to design a third floor to the main house (unexecuted)
July 29	Construction on evergreen garden, stone seat begun; Wright selects and ships furnishings for the main house from Marshall Fields in Chicago; Wright suggests wicker and overstuffed chairs for the main house.
1935	Darwin Martin dies - Isabelle Martin continues to summer at the site, and winters with the Foster family.
1938	Engineering report on site compiled in November by G.E. Seitzmiller for insurance purposes.
1941	Isabelle Martin continues to summer at the site but moves into a garage apartment.
1942	Isabelle Martin spends her last summer at the site; then moves permanently to Buffalo to live with the Foster family.
1945	Isabelle Martin dies - Stewardship of the site falls to a holding company belonging to Darwin R. Martin, son of Darwin D. Martin
1950	Piarist Fathers, a Hungarian order, purchases site from Darwin R. Martin
Mid-1950s	Chapel addition constructed over south terrace of main house - Garage addition and a storage building constructed.
Circa 1956	School building/dormitory constructed to house Hungarian refugees
1958	August - Wright visits the site for the last time.
1996	Piarist Father's place property for sale - Graycliff Conservancy is formed to acquire and restore the site.
1997	October - Graycliff Conservancy signs a contract to purchase the site.

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