THE HOME AND STUDIO CORE TOUR

Introduction

The Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Tour as described in this section of the Volunteer Manual is considered the CORE TOUR in terms of tour mechanics and content.

Overview of Mechanics

· Under normal circumstances, follow the tour route/sequence of 11 Stops and 2 pauses

· For each of these 11 designated Stops, the manual includes all of the rooms that should be presented at that stop. This means that often you will talk about rooms before the group walks through them. Therefore, it is important to prepare the group and to keep them moving to the next stop.

· Guests expect a 45-55 minute tour, and by following the mechanics of this tour will allow you to move your groups efficiently through the museum to ensure satisfaction, museum safety and security and efficient logistics.

· Interpreters must stop only at those locations indicated in this manual.

· Pauses are used to gather your groups and provide way-finding only. They are not intended for delivering tour content

· Keep the tour group together. Give firm, but appropriate, verbal directions as necessary to achieve this important objective. Remind visitors of the rules.

· Close all exterior doors YOURSELF! If you touch an exterior door, you own the responsibility to make sure it is secure before you let go of the knob.

· Be guided by specific directions from Guest Relations staff regarding exceptions to this standard tour to meet immediate needs.

· Under usual circumstances, a single interpreter will conduct the entire tour for a given group of no more than 16 visitors. Station tours will be implemented as necessary.

· Make sure you are familiar with “Home and Studio Museum Security” and “Home and Studio Emergency Response Plan” in this section.

· If a visitor will not cooperate with our regulations, or a guest requires special assistance while on your tour, use your walkie-talkie to request assistance.

· Do not leave your tour and do not allow the guest to leave unassisted. Ask the guest to wait and a staff person will escort them out of the building.

· As a general rule, do not describe what the visitor cannot see. This includes spaces as they appeared before restoration; although sometimes this may be appropriate for the specific interests of certain visitors. The objective is to present the building, both physically and descriptively, as it appeared from 1904 through 1909.

· Please become familiar with the following basic terms and use them correctly:
- **Preservation**: protecting and maintaining something by not allowing it to be changed or destroyed.

- **Restoration**: making something look exactly as it did when it was first created. The original is left in place, modern changes are removed, and details may be repaired or replaced.

- **Reconstruction/Re-creation**: rebuilding something that has been lost or destroyed and making it like the original.

- **Reproduction**: an exact or close imitation of something.

- **Adaptive use**: fitting the space for a new use. Examples at the Home and Studio are the basement under the studio (used for the research center), the catering kitchen where the maid’s room was located, and the Museum Shop in the garage.

- Often a restoration project like the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio is a combination of preservation, restoration, and reconstruction.

- **Home and Studio** core public tour theme for new interpreters is the idea that Wright used his home as a laboratory as he worked out his ideas for the innovative use of space. It is like a three-act play, all leading up to the magnificent spaces that provide the emotional highlight of that act (or space).

  - Act 1 - Wright’s progression from Victorian to modern as you reach the Dining Room
  - Act 2 - Family life and the ongoing challenge of domestic architecture as you reach the Playroom.
  - Act 3 - The concept of studio and Wright’s incredible 72-year career of near-constant innovation, centering on his early career from the drafting room. Everything he learned in this period of his life was synthesized and re-imagined in his career post 1909.
– GATHER WITH THE TOUR GROUP AS DIRECTED BY THE DAY LEADER OR GUEST RELATIONS STAFF MEMBER. NORMALLY THEY WILL GIVE THE FOLLOWING RULES TO GUESTS, IN THE EVENT THEY ARE UNABLE TO DO SO, PLEASE HAVE THESE RULES IN YOUR CARDS AND BE ABLE TO GIVE THEM IF THE NEED ARISES.

**NOTE:** Rules are to be given to all visitors by the dayleader or tour staff member in the assembly area prior to the beginning of the tour.

- Backpacks, bags, parcels, and cameras must be checked before entering the museum.
- For security reasons, there is no interior photography, so we do require that cameras be among the items checked at this time.
- Food and beverages are not permitted inside the museum: please consume, discard, or check these items. Please also discard chewing gum before entering the building.
- There is no smoking inside the museum or on our campus.
- Do not touch or lean on walls, furnishings, or artifacts.
- Turn off cell phones and other non-Wright-era communication devices.
- Please stay with your group throughout your tour. Do not open closed doors or enter restricted areas.

– INTRODUCE THE INTERPRETER [OR YOURSELF, IF YOU ARE GIVING THESE RULES].

- Please check your ticket to make sure you are on the (GIVE TIME) tour. (INTERPRETER’S FIRST NAME) will collect your tickets as you enter the museum.

– PROCEED WEST ON CHICAGO AVENUE TO SIDEWALK ON FOREST AVENUE AND STAND NEAR THE CENTER OF THE LOT.

**STOP 1: FOREST AVENUE SIDEWALK**
STAND FACING THE GROUP TO ONE SIDE OR IN THE PARKWAY AND TALK FROM BEHIND THEM, FACING THE HOUSE. REMEMBER TO PROJECT YOUR VOICE DUE TO TRAFFIC NOISE AND OTHER DISTRACTIONS. AND THE HOUSE KNOWS THE CONTENT; PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU ARE ALWAYS SPEAKING TOWARDS THE GUESTS’ EARS.

INTRODUCTION: PRESENT ALL OF THE FOLLOWING MATERIAL AT APPROPRIATE TIMES DURING YOUR TOUR.

• Welcome to the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio.

• My name is _____________, and I am a (VOLUNTEER OR STAFF MEMBER) with the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, which is responsible for preserving and presenting this museum and Wright’s Robie House in Chicago.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

• Frank Lloyd Wright, the great American architect, designed this building as his first home and studio. He lived and worked here from 1889 to 1909 during the first twenty years of his career.

• Wright and Catherine Tobin Wright, his first wife, raised six children in this house.

• Wright and several associated architects and designers developed the Prairie style of architecture here, a uniquely American style.

• Wright practiced architecture for 72 of his 91 years (lifespan 1867–1959).

• Between 1911 and 1974, the property underwent several changes in ownership and considerable alterations; the building had as many as seven apartments at one time.

• After the Trust became responsible for the property in 1974, a massive restoration project was launched to return the building to its appearance in 1909, the last year Wright lived and worked here. The furnishings and family life you will see represent the period of 1904–1909.

FOR THE REMAINDER OF THIS TOUR - MATERIAL THAT IS PRECEDED BY A SOLID BULLET (•) SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN YOUR TOUR AT SOME POINT. EXPERIENCE AND CONTEXT SUGGEST THAT IT MAKES THE MOST SENSE TO INCLUDED IT WHERE WE HAVE PLACED IT IN THIS MANUAL. WITH YOUR PARTICULAR THEME OR THREAD, IT MIGHT MAKE MORE SENSE TO INCLUDE IT ELSEWHERE.

MATERIAL THAT IS PRECEDED BY A HOLLOW BULLET (°) IS OPTIONAL AND INFORMATION THAT HAS BEEN USED BY MANY OTHER VOLUNTEERS FOR THEIR OWN TOURS. YOU CAN TRUST THAT THE INFORMATION HAS BEEN VETTED AND IS CORRECT. WE HAVE INCLUDED IT AT THE POINT IT MAKES THE MOST SENSE FOR MOST TOURS. YOU MAY OR MAY NOT INCLUDE THIS INFORMATION, AND IF YOU PREFER TO INCLUDE THIS INFORMATION, IT'S YOUR CHOICE. PLEASE USE THE INITIAL THEME GIVEN TO YOU DURING TRAINING, BUT YOU MAY USE THIS ADDITIONAL INFO AS YOU DEVELOP ADDITIONAL VERSIONS OF YOUR TOUR OVER TIME TO ACCOMMODATE THE INTERESTS OF YOUR GUESTS.
HOME EXTERIOR

Site
- When built in 1889, the house blended into its woodsy site of natural plantings rather than being a prominent structure/focal point like the other houses on the street.

- Forest Avenue was one of the first residential streets in Oak Park and had a number of houses. The street was paved in 1889.

- Chicago Avenue was not a major street in 1889; it had a gravel surface. There was open prairie across Chicago Avenue with a few houses, farms, and fields where Wright went horseback riding.

Architecture/Design

- This is not a Prairie-style house, although there are clearly Prairie elements that illustrate the development of this style in Wright’s work.

- The design is influenced by East Coast homes Wright had seen in architecture magazines and by Wright’s contact with Joseph Lyman Silsbee, the first Chicago architect to employ Wright (in 1887). Silsbee had migrated to Chicago from the East Coast. Originally, the style was referred to as "Seaside" because similar frame buildings were beach cottages. The more recent term is "Shingle style" characterizing homes popular in seaside and inland communities; for example, Newport, Rhode Island and Tuxedo Park, New York.

- Wright modified the houses he had seen by simplifying the forms and making them more geometric. Looking at the front of the home, you can see that it is composed of strong primary geometric shapes, such as a triangle, rectangle, octagon and circle, or parts of them.

- As seen from this perspective (the west elevation), the home is composed of three distinct parts:
  - The dominant triangular, gable roof and deep eaves symbolize shelter and security.
  - The diamond-paned windows and doors have a visual texture similar to the shingled walls so they do not appear as holes (or voids) but become part of the wall surface. He called them light screens.
  - The high brick base welds the house to the ground and symbolizes the relationship of house to earth and nature.
  - The second floor windows are banded together; with the lunette window removed, this light screen was to become one of the distinguishing features of the Prairie style.
  - The rich textures of the leaded glass, shingles, and brick, and the uniform brownish stain, reflect the naturalistic setting of the home and unify the exterior of the building.

Family/Lifestyle

- Wright came to Chicago in 1887 from Madison, Wisconsin as a young man of 19 years.

- Wright, his mother (Anna) and two sisters (Maginel, also called Nell, and Jane) came to live in Oak Park in 1888.

- Wright married Catherine Tobin in June 1889. Wright was 21 and Catherine was 18. He and his
new bride needed a house, so he borrowed $5,000 from his employer Louis Sullivan (of the firm Adler & Sullivan) to buy the lot and build the house.

º Two major additions, the dining room and the playroom wing, were added to the house in 1895 as the family grew. Eventually, the Wrights had six children.

º The architectural studio was added in 1898 to integrate Wright’s work with his family life.

º Wright left here in 1909, first traveling to Europe to publish a lavish portfolio of his work. In 1911, he established a new home and studio, Taliesin (in Spring Green, Wisconsin), after altering this building into two units, half of which produced rental income for the family. Wright sold the property in 1925.

WALK UP THE INTERIOR SIDEWALK ALONG THE CHICAGO AVENUE WALL AND ENTER THE HOME THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR. COLLECT TICKETS HERE, DIRECTING VISITORS TO GATHER IN THE LIVING ROOM FACING THE FIREPLACE. SECURE THE DOOR AFTER THE GROUP IS IN THE BUILDING.

STOP 2: THE LIVING ROOM

STAND TO THE LEFT OF THE FIREPLACE.

ENTRY OR ENTRANCE HALL

Architecture/Design

º The entry stair to the second floor was built in the late 1890s and is smaller in scale than the original 1889 stair. These changes were most likely made to accommodate a growing family. (Wright had four children by 1895.)

º The original plaster frieze was a common design element of the time, and it was purchased from a catalog from a firm in either Boston or Chicago. It is an example of Wright’s interest in classical art. It is a period reproduction of the Altar of Zeus (ca. 180 B.C.) from Pergamon (in modern day
Turkey). It is composed of five modular panels, repeated.

º There is a gradual transition from outside to inside and a sense of openness created by many windows and the wide door.

**Family/Lifestyle**

º The children sat on the bench along the south wall to remove their boots, which were put on the floor register to dry.

**LIVING ROOM**

**Architecture/Design**

• The entry, living room, and study are treated as one large room, one flowing space with only minor divisions. The unity of these spaces is achieved by using the same colors, the same banded wood trim, and oriental runners laid as a chain of carpets from room to room.

º One can’t get a sense of the whole space (entry, living room, and study) from any one point, but must move throughout the spaces to see everything. Spaces seem larger and more interesting, inviting a sense of discovery.

º Walls resemble movable panels that could slide back and forth like Japanese “fusuma” screens, giving a feeling of flexibility. The windows in the two bays give a feeling of lightness and transparency, offering a clear view of the outside and, at the same time, bringing the outside in.

º The inglenook (Scottish word meaning “flame corner”) is the center of the first floor plan and the symbolic heart of the home, an idea Wright used in many of his early houses.

º Changing vistas were very important to Wright. Examples are his use of windows wrapping around corners, wide openings between rooms, “window” openings over the inglenook seats, and the mirror over the fireplace.

º Wright used some historical elements for continuity with the past (e.g., dentil moldings at the wall-ceiling juncture, diamond-paned glass, the inglenook, and bay windows), but they were modified to become an integral part of the whole scheme and not simply historical copies.

º The inglenook was not invented by Wright—it is of English Tudor origin in the late 15th century. However, it was used by him to make an intimate smaller space off of a larger space. The popularity of inglenooks at the turn of the century originated with English country houses in the 1860s, and they were often used in Arts and Crafts homes in England and America.

º Wright’s Robie House, the quintessential example of a Prairie-style building, exemplifies the use of a central hearth with an inglenook.

º Built-in furniture (bay window seats, inglenook seats, and china and other cabinets) provides seating and storage without taking up space within the room. Wright continued to use built-ins in many of his buildings.

º Cabinets on each side of the fireplace held art objects and could be closed up periodically when one became too accustomed to seeing them.
The size of the original house (cottage) was modest—four rooms downstairs, including the entry.

**Family/Lifestyle**

The living room was primarily used for company. Wright and visitors would sit in the inglenook and talk into the wee hours of the morning.

The “Truth is Life” motto above the fireplace is a rewording of Wright’s mother’s family motto of “Truth Against the World.” The lower motto was added later. (The original family motto might have been more appropriate for Wright, who endured much adverse criticism from the press and public throughout his life.)

Wright designed furniture for his home: the two arm chairs, the small chair, and the print table are original pieces designed for this home.

**STUDY**

**Architecture/Design**

This was the Home’s original dining room in 1889, but it was changed to a study in 1895. The slant-back chairs were designed by Wright around 1903.

Notice the register in the floor. The home was originally heated by a coal-fired hot air furnace in the basement. Later, Wright added hot water radiators to some of the rooms in the home.

The built-in china cabinet (with a pass-through door to the pantry beyond) and a built-in buffet show Wright’s skill in using built-in furniture as architectural elements to enrich a room.

**Family/Lifestyle**

The family ate meals here until 1895. The kitchen was south of the pantry.

The children studied and did homework here after 1895. The cabinets were then used as bookcases rather than for china.

**PASSAGEWAY**

*IF YOU HAVE TIME, BRIEFLY INTERPRET THIS ROOM WHILE STILL STANDING IN THE LIVING ROOM.*

**Architecture/Design**

- The passageway is the connecting link between his home and his studio—a link that only Wright used with any frequency. He called it the "connecting corridor".

- The studio was added in 1898 to cut down on Wright’s commuting time and to integrate his family life and work life.
• When the passageway was planned, a triple-trunk willow tree grew in the way. Rather than cut it down, Wright built around two of the trunks.

• During the restoration, a honey locust tree was planted to replace the long-missing willow, and two of its trunks were placed through the building to simulate the original.

• The trunks you see today remain from this honey locust tree. The exterior branches of the honey locust tree were removed because of damage caused to the building by the branches shifting with the wind.

• The wood trim on the ceiling and walls (Japanese in character) adds interest to what otherwise would have been a dull, dark hall.

Family/Lifestyle

• The children were told never to cross the line from the study into the passageway, but they did anyway, going up the stairs to the balcony or even onto the roof!

FROM THE LIVING ROOM, WALK THROUGH THE STUDY, PAUSING TO LEFT OF THE PASSAGEWAY AND ALLOW YOUR VISITORS TO PEER INTO THE PASSAGEWAY. ASK VISITORS TO LEAD THE WAY THROUGH THE PANTRY INTO THE DINING ROOM AND GATHER AROUND THE TABLE.
STOP 3: 1895 DINING ROOM

STAND IN THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF THE DINING ROOM BETWEEN THE FIREPLACE AND THE DOOR TO THE ENTRANCE HALL.

Architecture/Design

• This room was originally the kitchen. In 1895, Wright remodeled it into a dining room for his growing family. It was enlarged by adding a south bay, and the ceiling was lowered.

• This is the first room for which Wright created a total environment—where architecture, interior design, furniture, lighting, heating, and decorative arts were integral parts of the whole.

• The ceiling is lower than in the rest of the house to make the room more intimate and to allow for the recessed lighting, one of Wright’s first uses of indirect electric lighting. Electricity had been used in Oak Park homes for only about four years before this room was built in 1895. The wooden grille (cut in an oak leaf design) and rice paper (now fiberglass for fire safety) soften the harsh electric bulbs and integrate the lighting into the architecture. Wright was experimenting with the use of this new technology.

• A room-within-a-room feeling is created by the high-backed chairs arranged around the table and by the rectangular shape of the table mirrored by the shape of the light fixture.

• The dining chairs are some of Wright’s first furniture designs. The table, chairs, and high chair are original and were designed for this room.

° Notice the use of common materials in unusual ways; e.g., hearth tiles, used for the entire floor and the fireplace front, are laid with minimal tile joints, and painter’s linen is used in its natural state to cover walls and ceiling.

° The use of natural materials, such as quarter-sawn red oak, clay tile, and painter’s linen gives a warmth and richness without the need for any “decoration.” The tile floor was very practical for a
family with active children.

° RESTORATION PROCESS NOTE: The color variation of the terra cotta tiles on the floor results from “interweaving” original and new tiles. Before our acquisition of the building, some of the original tiles were lost when a concrete slab was placed in the center of the room. The restoration process included replacing the slab with tile similar to the original. (The orange color tiles are original; the new terra cotta tiles are red, cut to the same size as the original.)

° Hot water radiators are concealed behind the built-in buffet in the bay end. Slots at the floor and cabinet top allow the hot air to circulate. Wright didn’t like exposed radiators.

° The art glass is one of Wright’s first glass designs. The theme is a lotus-blossom motif adapted from a German pattern book of the time. This shows Wright’s knowledge of architectural designs from abroad.

° When the house next door was built in 1897, Wright filled in the lower windows to increase privacy and to reduce the view of the neighboring house.

Family/Lifestyle

° Wright’s family ate all their meals here after 1895. Menus were based on plain Midwestern dishes. Their special china was French Limoges, while their everyday dishes were Blue Willow.

° The mantel and window ledges held plates, statues, urns, and other decorative objects.

• ASK SOMEONE TO BE THE LAST PERSON AS YOU LEAD THE GROUP UP THE FRONT STAIRS. REMIND VISITORS TO HOLD THE HAND RAIL ON THE WAY UPSTAIRS. STAND IN HALL FACING DOORS TO THE CHILDREN’S BEDROOM WHILE DIRECTING THE GROUP INTO THE BOYS’ BEDROOM.

Upperlevel Tour Stops
STOP 4: CHILDREN’S DORMITORY (WEST BEDROOM)

- STAND BETWEEN THE DOORS TO THE HALL AND THE CLOSET

Architecture/Design

• In 1889 this was Wright’s studio where he did extra architectural work for Adler and Sullivan, his employers, and for himself—his “bootlegged” houses. The room was converted to bedrooms for the children around 1895.

 RESTORATION PROCESS NOTE: Wright’s children remembered pillow fights over the partition wall, which was missing when the Preservation Trust became responsible for the building. The wall was restored based on this oral history and the evidence of nail holes in the floor.

• The ceiling goes up into what would have been attic space, giving a sense of increased dimension to the room. The wood trim carries the eye up to the vaulted ceiling.

• The rectangular opening high in the east wall is a vent to the attic, which is open in summer to let hot room air escape and is covered with fabric in winter to reduce drafts.

• The two-color paint scheme keeps the room from being excessively vertical, and it unites the partition with the end walls.

Family/Lifestyle

• The two daughters, Catherine and Frances, slept on the south side of the wall, and the youngest boys, David and Llewellyn, slept on the north side. The two older boys, Lloyd and John, were in Wisconsin at the aunts’ Hillside Home School or on their uncles’ farms most of the time.
STOP 5: MASTER BEDROOM (NORTH)

– STAND IN FRONT OF DOOR TO THE HALL

Architecture/Design

• This is another example of Wright’s skills at integrating architecture, furniture, lighting, window openings, and decorative arts to make a harmonious design.

• Murals painted by Orlando Giannini around 1900 depict stylized American Plains Indians in exotic costumes. The murals were painted over with eight coats of paint; all were laboriously removed by a team of conservators during the restoration.

• Hanging pendant lights were designed by Wright to be a part of the mural design as well as examples of decorative art themselves. The lights and the Indians’ robes are Egyptian in feeling; Egyptology was popular at the turn of the century.

• This is another example of utilizing wasted attic space under the roof to make a small room seem more spacious than would otherwise be the case.

9 RESTORATION PROCESS NOTE: The ceiling medallions for the light fixtures appeared in historic photographs, but the pattern could not be determined. A ceiling medallion found inside the wall of the room during the restoration provided the original design for there-created medallions as seen here.

9 The two closets, one with a window, have built-in drawers and shelves, unusual for the time.

9 Wright used the stairwell, the west closet in this room, and the bathroom as sound buffers for the three bedrooms.
**BATHROOM**

**Architecture/Design**

º There was one bathroom for all eight members of the family. In the 1890s, only a small percentage of homes had indoor bathrooms; however, grander houses often had more than one.

º The horizontal board-and-batten walls are all made of quarter-sawn oak, the prevalent wood of the home; it is here used in extravagant quantity and is Japanese in character.

º The projecting right-angle window affords privacy and ventilation.

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– DIRECT VISITORS INTO CATHERINE’S DAYROOM WHILE STANDING IN THE HALL FACING THE BATHROOM.

**STOP 6: CATHERINE’S DAYROOM (SOUTH BEDROOM)**

– STAND IN DOORWAY

**Architecture/Design**

• In 1889, this room was the nursery, and it later became Catherine’s dayroom for sewing, reading, and caring for sick children.

• This is an example of how Wright made each room special—even the nursery was not just a box. He used high and low ceilings and wood trim on the walls and ceiling to give special character to this room.

º The low ceiling in the bay end (added in 1895 when the dining bay below was built) makes an intimate space for reading and sewing (another room within a room). The original bay had three windows; the center window was filled in when the house on the south was built. The clerestory window was added after that time.

º Natural illumination from the bay and clerestory window makes this room uniformly luminous even on cloudy days.
Note the flat ceiling seen here.

The stencil and wall color behind the door are from the original nursery decoration. Contrast this 1889 decorative feature with the distinctly Prairie-like character of the wood trim and linen fabric wall covering put in just six years later.

Note the built-in furniture (wardrobe units & radiator cabinets under the windows).

Family/Lifestyle

The spool crib is original to the Tobin family, ca. 1850. It was Mrs. Wright’s as a baby, and it was used for all the Wright children. Point out the photograph on the wall.

The family in 1909 is shown in the photo collage.

The framed passports on the wall are copies of those used by Frank and Catherine on their first trip to Japan in 1905.

• CAUTION: VISITORS TEND TO LINGER IN THIS ROOM, SO MOVE THEM ALONG. DIRECT THE GROUP DOWN THE HALL TO THE CHILDREN’S PLAYROOM. FOLLOW THE GROUP INTO THE PLAYROOM.

STOP 7: THE CHILDREN’S PLAYROOM

– STAND IN THE AREA IN FRONT OF THE DOORWAY

Architecture/Design

• The vaulted ceiling in the hallway to the playroom is intentionally narrow, low, and dark, to make the playroom seem wider, taller, and lighter. Wright used contrasts of high-low, dark-light, narrow-wide to make his spaces more interesting.

• The room expands visually in five directions: a mural on one end, gallery on the other end, windows along two sides, and the skylight above.

• The upper gallery expands the room into the former attic of the home (above Catherine’s
dayroom), making the playroom appear much longer than it actually is. Rhythmic wood bands on
the ceiling also carry the eye up and along the length of the room, visually increasing the space.

º The playroom is scaled for children. The bay windows are child-sized and the barrel-vaulted
ceiling starts just above a child’s height. The upper part of the gallery is also too low for an adult to
stand up in.

º Roman brick is used as an interior wall treatment, unusual for that time. It was designed to
withstand the wear and tear of rambunctious children.

º The grand piano was put under the stair to the gallery to avoid taking up too much space. One leg
was removed, and the end of the piano is held up by an iron strap hook. Stair risers are hinged and
a trap-door on the landing can be raised to conduct music out into the room.

º RESTORATION PROCESS NOTE: Upon acquisition of the building, we found the hook and cavity
under the landing and re-installed a baby grand piano.

º The ceiling grilles are oak veneer (plywood), and were designed by Wright to soften the skylight
illumination. The design is based on the leaves of the prickly ash tree. These grilles are similar to
the recessed light in the dining room, except in this case there is an actual skylight above them.

º This room provides an opportunity to point out the five factors Wright identified as influences on
this architecture:

º Nature (e.g., window vistas, skylight grille)

º Music (e.g., piano, concerts)

º Froebel Blocks (e.g., balusters, Catherine’s kindergarten)

º Japanese Prints (e.g., as displayed for children, side lights)

º Louis Sullivan (e.g., barrel-vaulted ceiling, specifically the Auditorium Theater and other designs)

Family/Lifestyle

- This beautiful and elaborate playroom shows the importance the Wrights placed on having the
proper play environment for their children. It was added to the house in 1895 with the new kitchen
and maid’s room below it.

º Catherine Wright used the playroom to conduct a neighborhood kindergarten based on the
educational principles of Friedrich Froebel, commonly known as the father of kindergarten.

º The children used the gallery as a stage with the audience on the playroom floor or the reverse,
when plays were staged in front of the fireplace.

º The Wrights used the playroom at night for parties and musicals. The room was really used as a
“family room”.

º The Cecilian piano player is similar to Wright’s. He would play (pump) Beethoven to relax after
working late in the studio, lulling the children to sleep.
The Winged Victory sculpture above the door and Japanese prints on the walls provided artistic inspiration for the children, as did the architecture itself. The Winged Victory statue above the door is a plaster reproduction of a Greek sculpture. It was a favorite of Wright’s and was used in many of his Prairie houses.

Built-in seats in the bays had storage for toys below. The shelf around the room held more toys while bookcases were full of the children’s books.

The mural, originally thought to have been painted by Orlando Giannini, depicts “The Fisherman and the Genie”, from The Arabian Nights. Later research shows that the mural was painted by Charles Corwin. Corwin and Wright are thought to have collaborated on the design of the mural.

1895 KITCHEN

This room is based on a 1985 interview with David Wright. The stove, table, and appliances follow his recollections. The kitchen is furnished with dishes, utensils, and equipment typical of the turn of the century. None is original to the house.

BEFORE LEADING THE VISITORS DOWN THE BACK STAIRS, ASK THE SAME PERSON TO BE LAST AND CAREFULLY EXPLAIN HOW GUESTS WILL EXIT TO THE COURTYARD. AT THE FOOT OF THE STAIRS, TURN TO THE RIGHT FOR A QUICK LOOK AT THE 1895 KITCHEN. HOLD THE BACK DOOR OPEN AND DIRECT THE VISITORS TO GATHER IN THE COURTYARD. MAKE CERTAIN THE BACK DOOR IS SECURE. PROCEED TO THE FRONT ENTRANCE OF THE STUDIO.

STOP 8: STUDIO EXTERIOR

- STAND IN FRONT OF THE STORK CAPITALS

Architecture/Design

• The exterior shapes are a direct expression of spaces within—one of Wright’s design goals.

• The square base and the upper octagonal drum of the drafting room (to the east) is balanced by the smaller octagonal form of the library (to the west).

• The bold geometric forms and unconventional shapes of the studio produced a human-scaled monumentality which attracted considerable attention. This radical architecture told one not to
come here for a traditional building design, just the impression Wright intended.

The studio uses the same materials (shingles and Chicago common brick) as the home, so the two would be visually integrated even though they have different functions. When viewed from Forest Avenue, one sees the integration achieved by the brick base wainscot that acts as a ribbon tying the studio and home together.

The plaster stork capitals were designed by Wright and sculpted by Richard Bock, who worked with Wright from 1896 to 1913. The tree at the top is the tree of life; the book is both the book of knowledge and a book of architectural specifications. A pendant scroll is embossed with a plan (the architect's "work"), while on each side storks stand guard, symbolizing fertility and wisdom. These capitals are Wright's attempt to create a personal symbolism and not just use motifs from the past (like the frieze in the home entry hall).

The crouching figures atop piers at each end of the entrance were created by sculptor Richard Bock, who named them The Boulders. They symbolize age (wisdom) and strength struggling to rise up from the bonds of living on the earth.

Entry to the studio requires the visitor to change direction several times, moving from the Chicago Avenue sidewalk to the studio reception room. There is a transition from outside to inside through spaces which provide increasing privacy as one moves into the building.

The logo on the plaque is the one associated with this studio—a cross within a circle within a square. The planter urns reflect the same design in three dimensions. Ultimately, Wright simplified this design to a plain red square, his personal symbol.

STOP 9: THE DRAFTING ROOM

– FOLLOW YOUR GROUP INSIDE AND DIRECT THEM TO THE CENTER OF THE ROOM

– DIRECT THE GROUP TO THE CENTER OF THE DRAFTING ROOM. MAKE SURE THE DOOR TO THE STUDIO IS SECURELY CLOSED.
Architecture/Design

• This is the drafting room where Wright and his associates worked to produce the designs for the buildings—most of which became famous as examples of Wright’s Prairie style.

• Among the buildings created here were: Unity Temple (1905–1908, Oak Park); the Frank Wright Thomas Residence (1901); the Arthur and Grace Heurtley Residence (1902); the Peter A. Beachy Remodeling (1906); the William E. Martin Residence (1901); the Laura Gale Residence (1904); and the Mamah Borthwick and Edwin H. Cheney Residence (1903); the Darwin D. Martin Residence (1904); the Larkin Company Administration Building (1903); and Robie House (1908) in Chicago. (MENTION ONLY TWO OR THREE OF THESE IN ADDITION TO ROBIE - WHICH SHOULD BE MENTIONED LAST.)

• Robie House (completed in 1910) was designated by the American Institute of Architects as one of the most significant structures of the 20th century.

• Among Wright's associates who worked here were Marion Mahony ("Mah' - hown - eee"), William Drummond, Walter Burley Griffin, John S. Van Bergen and Barry Byrne. (MENTION ONLY TWO OR THREE NAMES.)

• The ground floor was used for architectural drafting and the balcony for allied arts such as sculpture, photography, drawing, and art glass. For example, the sculptor Richard Bock sometimes would work on the balcony.

• This room is a prime example of how Wright fused engineering and architecture.

• The octagonal chain ring holds the top of the building together—without the ring, the roof beams would fall inward, pushing the walls out. The ring, in tension, resists this thrust of the roof beams, keeping them in place. The chain harness is an adaptation by Wright of the technique of wrapping chains around the domes of churches. The vertical chains suspend the inner edge of the balcony from the roof beams—eliminating the need for support pillars. These exposed chains exemplify Wright's interest in “honesty” in architecture. During the restoration process, the original horizontal chain harness was found in the second floor ceiling.
• The height of the room is brought down to human scale by the decks (non-structural suspended beams) for the display of models and plants.

• The original floor was made of magnesite. Magnesite is a durable cement-like flooring material typically containing a compound of magnesium, carbon, and oxygen. When mixed with sawdust or wood-flour and a coloring pigment, it hardens within a few hours to produce a dense, stone-like material. [Please see APPENDIX A — “Magnesite” in Section VII — Additional Resources for detailed information on this material.]

• This is one of the great spaces of modern American architecture. It is the first of Wright’s great vertical spaces open for two or more stories, surrounded by balconies, and with abundant light coming in from above. Subsequent Wright buildings using this spatial atrium concept included the Larkin Building (1903), Unity Temple (1908), the Johnson Wax Building (1936) in Racine, Wisconsin, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (1943–1959), New York, New York.

º The great round-arched fireplace (where a fire was usually burning) was a focus of the room. The frieze above the fireplace was designed by Wright for the Isidore Heller Residence (1896) in Hyde Park. Richard Bock was the sculptor.

º The vault on the south wall held Wright’s architectural drawings and, later, his collection of Japanese prints, protecting them from fire.

º Radiators are concealed in cabinets below the high windows.

º Prismatic glass globes give general illumination; the green glass shades are hung over work areas for specific task lighting. Low wattage light bulbs at the turn of the century necessitated many light fixtures.

º RESTORATION PROCESS NOTE: This room was made into a living room by Wright for Catherine Wright and the children in 1911 when he left them and moved to Wisconsin. The balcony opening was floored over, the octagonal upper drum squared off, and four bedrooms for the children were built on the second floor. Using historic photographs, probes, original floor plans, and oral history, the room has been restored to its original configuration. [Incorporating this fact into your tour may lead to questions that could delay your tour or delve into areas outside of its scope and purpose. Please manage your group so that any sensitive questions can be answered at the end of your tour.]

• LEAD VISITORS THROUGH WRIGHT’S OFFICE AND THE RECEPTION ROOM. PAUSE IN THE RECEPTION AREA AND DIRECT GROUP INTO OCTAGONAL LIBRARY AND FOLLOW THEM IN.
WRIGHT’S OFFICE

• This was the business office, which had the only telephone in the studio Isabel Roberts, Wright’s secretary, worked here in later years.

Wood trim on the walls and ceiling shows how Wright used the linear quality of wood to enliven a space. The shelf at door-top height held photographs, fresh and dried foliage, and art pottery.

The stairs behind the desk lead to the basement and washroom.

Note the lay light art glass and the art glass windows.

RECEPTION ROOM

• This is where clients, draftsmen, artists, and contractors entered (and waited).

• The plan desk under the windows was a place where contractors could check blueprints with the draftsmen and not disturb the quiet of the drafting room.

• This low-ceiling space prepared one for the larger, higher spaces of the library and the drafting room.

We have traveled only a short distance from busy, noisy Chicago Avenue into a quiet, serene reception area.

The lay light (added 1904–1905) is one of the most intricate Wright ever designed. The glass is original.

One was likely to be greeted in this room by Isabel Roberts, Wright’s secretary, who worked here for several years.

STOP 10: OCTAGONAL LIBRARY
• The “library” name came from Wright’s original intent to offer a “free, circulating fine arts library” to the neighborhood, never actually realized. He kept art and architecture books in the two bookcases, current drawings on swinging racks, and other drawings in lower cases below the books.

• The design of the room perfectly fitted its function—a private reading room and client consultation/presentation space. High windows on seven sides permitted cabinets to be continuous below and provided vistas of tree tops. The skylight (of frosted glass) and high windows flood the room with natural light from above—the best kind of light for study and reading.

A short hall separated the library from the rest of the studio to make the library a distinctly separate area within the building. High cabinets on each side held building samples (bricks, stone, wood trim, etc.).

The octagonal form rotates position several times as one looks from the floor up to the skylight, revealing a continually changing pattern.

• LEAD THE GROUP OUT OF THE WEST DOOR OF THE STUDIO. HOLD DOOR OPEN. CLOSE THE DOOR BEHIND YOU AND BE SURE IT IS LOCKED. PROCEED TO THE LAST STOP.

STOP 11: UNDER THE GINKGO TREE

- STAND UNDER THE GINKGO TREE NEAR THE MUSEUM SHOP CARRIAGE DOORS WHERE YOU WILL NOT BLOCK OTHER TOURS AND GUESTS

• Point out that the clapboard house next door, dating from the 1860s, was purchased in 1889 by Wright’s mother, Anna, at the same time Wright bought the corner lot and built his first home.

It is currently used as the administrative offices of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust.

The ginkgo tree (maidenhair tree) is a living fossil, one of the oldest types of trees on earth. Note the unusual way the leaves are attached to the branches. They grow out of the bud. The leaves are
fan shaped, and they turn to bright gold in autumn.

It is the oldest cultivated nut tree in the world. Fruit from the female tree resembles a small yellow-orange plum and has a tenacious, foul odor. This tree is female.

Roasted nuts are considered a delicacy in Japan and China.

The tree was about four inches in diameter when Wright purchased the property from John Blair, a landscape architect, in 1889. The ginkgo is not native to North America. It came from China and was probably planted by Blair.

- ASK IF THERE ARE ANY QUESTIONS. THANK THE GROUP AGAIN FOR THEIR SUPPORT. ENCOURAGE THEM TO VISIT THE MUSEUM SHOP. OFFER TO ANSWER INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE HOME AND STUDIO, ROBIE HOUSE, MEMBERSHIP IN THE PRESERVATION TRUST, DONATIONS, OR VOLUNTEERING WITH THE PRESERVATION TRUST.

- END YOUR TOUR WITH SOME WAY FOR GUESTS TO CONTINUE THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRESERVATION TRUST.

The cost of restoration of the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio has exceeded $3.5 million. The continued acquisition of historically significant furnishings will increase this amount.

The Trust is currently engaged in the $10+ million restoration of Wright’s Robie House. Located seven miles south of downtown Chicago in the Hyde Park neighborhood (on the campus of the University of Chicago), Robie House is one of the most significant structures designed in the Oak Park Studio. Check the Preservation Trust’s website (GoWright.org) for the latest offerings and times or ask a representative in the Museum Shop.

Support for the Robie House restoration and preservation of the Home and Studio is derived from memberships to the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, donations, tour revenues, and purchases made in the Museum Shops. By joining today, visitors will help save these two American treasures. Members also save 10 percent on purchases made in the Museum Shops and through our catalog and website (ShopWright.org).

Invite visitors to become Trust members, donors, or volunteers. Encourage them to take membership and volunteer opportunities brochures. They can help to continue Preservation Trust programs through their support. Thank them.

Engage visitors with any special promotions communicated via Guest Relations or Volunteer Resources, as requested.

INCLEMENT WEATHER ROUTES:

- WHEN INSTRUCTED BY GUEST RELATIONS OR YOUR DAYLEADER, YOU MAY BE ASKED TO USE THE INCLEMENT WEATHER ROUTE. THE INCLEMENT WEATHER ROUTE IS USED WHEN:

  - It is raining or snowing and we wish to minimize guest discomfort

  - Ice or snow conditions could jeopardize guest safety
• Minimize the tracking of ice melt onto the magnesite which is less forgiving than hardwood

• During inclement weather in warm weather, the tour is called under the tent and you will walk guests around the studio and go in directly to the front door of the home and proceed to Stop 2.

• In cold weather, the tour will be called on the south driveway out the west Museum Shop carriage doors and you will take your guests down the driveway and immediately inside the house to Stop 2.

• You will need to minimally cover some of your Stop 1 exterior tour content in the living room at Stop 2, with some abbreviation considering that another tour could be only 10 minutes behind you.

• The other major inclement tour route alteration is that you proceed directly from Stop 7 (children’s playroom) and proceed directly through the passageway and Stop 9 (drafting room). You need to incorporate a brief portion of Stop 8 (studio) material into your Stop 9 tour content.

• A stanchion and rope will be moved by Guest Relations, blocking your exit out the slot door by the historic kitchen, signaling that you need to use the passageway. If a stanchion blocks your way, please do not move it and proceed to Stop 8. If you are unsure, please call Guest Relations.

• You might want to have a set of cards at the end of your book to cover any alterations to Stop 1-2 and 8-9 so that you’ll be ready to accommodate inclement weather at a moment’s notice.

• When combining the missing Stop 1 & 8 content, try to not describe anything guests can’t see.

• Please do not announce to your guests that they are using an unusual tour route, or that you have abbreviated your tour content. They will not know that this is unusual and won’t miss what you don’t have time to give.