

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S PRAIRIE VISION

Frederick C. Robie House Conservation Management Plan



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Introduction

The Vision for the Frederick C. Robie House is to value and respect Frank Lloyd Wright's signature achievement in Prairie Style architecture by preserving the site as an original work of art, retaining its unique quality and completeness through judicious restoration, and providing access to the public for the purpose of education and appreciation of modern American design and historical heritage.

The Frederick C. Robie House Conservation Management Plan begins with a vision that guides policy, procedures, and decisions in the present and future management and conservation of the site. Located within the campus of the University of Chicago, owner of the property, Robie House is a valued heritage site to its surrounding academic community, the city of Chicago, the nation, and the world, due to its distinguished place in the history of architecture and design of the modern era.

Designed in 1908 and completed in 1910, the site is over 100 years old. Since 1997 the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust has served as its proprietor for preservation and operations. During the Trust's 20-year administration, Robie House has been transformed into a house museum for private and public access and edification. Maximum access is balanced with safety and preservation guidelines to ensure that operations do not diminish the physical condition of the house.

Physical studies and scientific analyses of the site form the basis of this plan and are included in the final Research and Documentation chapter. These reports serve as vital scientific resources that are combined with aesthetic factors to inform all decisions on maintenance, restoration, and uses of the site.

The Robie House Conservation Management Plan documents the past, present, and future of Robie House research and conservation management. It includes chapters on the history and significance of the building, its physical description, restoration and management plan, programming and usage guidelines, and concludes with a bibliography and research and technical documentation of Robie House.

The overarching goals of this plan are:

- To operate Robie House as an historic house museum open to the public into the next century and perpetuity
- To continue to research and understand the history of the house, its place in the history of world architecture and design as those fields are explored and reconsidered, and its impact on contemporary culture
- To maintain the quality of the site and protect its physical integrity through sensitive and astute management
- To conserve and restore the site according to a multi-year maintenance rotation that addresses all physical aspects of the site within the guidelines of the Conservation Management Plan
- To manage use of the site to maximize access and educational impact for all audiences while protecting the site from damage and wear due to overuse
- To respect the heritage value of the site and perpetuate public information about its significance and meaning that is professionally responsible and truthful

Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

The mission of the Trust is to engage, educate and inspire the public through interpretation of Frank Lloyd Wright's design legacy and preservation of his original sites for future generations.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Trust is an independent non-profit organization based in Chicago. An advocate of preservation, cultural history, architecture and arts education, the Trust was founded in 1974 and has grown to a staff of fifty that support national and international tourism at five historic Wright sites working with community volunteers. The Trust owns Wright's Home and Studio, where his Prairie Style was created and the Robie House was designed.

Cultural enrichment programs, international travel itineraries, and publications deepen understanding of Wright's philosophy and its contemporary relevance. Student art and design classes, internships, teacher conferences, and online educator resources serve a local and national audience. The Trust maintains a library and archive. Its website provides scholarly research and educational videos to a half million users.

The Trust is supported by strong community relationships and philanthropic foundations that include MacArthur Foundation, Terra Foundation for American Art, Tawani Foundation, and Alphawood Foundation Chicago.



1.1 Robie House, View from South Corridor into Dining Room

The Frederick C. Robie House

The Frederick C. Robie House is located in the historic Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago. Built on a lot 60 feet wide by 180 feet long at the corner of Woodlawn Avenue and 58th Street, the home is a 9,063 square foot building consisting of ground floor entry hall, billiard room, children's playroom, and attached three-car garage; main floor upper hall, living room, dining room, guest bedroom, bathroom, and servants' quarters including kitchen, sitting room, two bedrooms and a bath. A third floor consists of three bedrooms and two bathrooms.

Built of Roman brick and with horizontal bands of limestone, the residence is sheltered by overhanging eaves and dramatic cantilevered tile roofs with wide copper gutters. Steel frame construction allows for dissolution of masonry-bearing walls, open interior space, and extensive use of glass expressed in long bands of leaded-glass windows and doors on all levels of the house.

Completed in 1910, the Robie House was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1963, the first City of Chicago Landmark in 1971, and Illinois State Landmark in 1980. The Robie House is universally recognized as a seminal building in the history of Modern Architecture.



1.2 Robie House Living Room

Conservation Plan for the Robie House

This Conservation Management Plan establishes a comprehensive and accurate resource of information and overarching policies for maintenance, preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, and operation of the site. All other policies, manuals, proposals and plans relate back to this anchor document, which will be routinely referenced and updated as environmental, social, and site conditions evolve.

Frederick C. Robie House Conservation Management Plan

- Robie House Maintenance Plan
- Robie House Emergency Response Plan
- Robie House Tours and Operations Manual
- Robie House Education and Program Guidelines
- Robie House Events Policies
- Robie House Condition Assessments
- Robie House Proposals for Treatments
- Robie House Restoration Proposals and Plans
- University of Chicago Woodlawn Avenue Plan
- Frank Lloyd Wright Trust Strategic Plan

Listed documents are not included in this plan.



1.3 Robie House Entry Hall



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CHAPTER 02: HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

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2.1 Historic Architectural Context

2.1.1. Local Context: Hyde Park, Chicago, Illinois

The Robie House is located in the culturally diverse and intellectually distinguished neighborhood of Chicago's Hyde Park, approximately seven miles from downtown Chicago. In 1853, Paul Cornell, a lawyer and real estate speculator, purchased a 300-acre tract of lakefront property (Fig. 2.1). Recognizing the importance of transportation to the success of his development, in 1856 Cornell struck a deal with the Illinois Central Railroad, deeding 60 acres of land in exchange for a station in Hyde Park at 53rd Street with daily service to Chicago.¹

Like other developing Chicago suburbs, such as Oak Park to the west and Evanston to the north, Cornell's Hyde Park offered a reprieve from the busy pace of city life. By 1869, Hyde Park's excellent transportation, spacious parks, and success with public improvements made it a desirable suburb for city-weary businessmen. Many upper-middle class families moved into the area. In June 1889, the village of Hyde Park was annexed by the city of Chicago. Although now an urban neighborhood, Hyde Park residents worked to preserve its suburban character by maintaining its wide lots, public parks, and large estates.

The domestic architecture of Hyde Park echoed that of Chicago and other urban centers in America. In its early years, its citizens erected simple wood frame houses built in the popular revival styles of the day. Residences of Italianate, Gothic, Greek Revival, and Second Empire styles began to fill the empty lots of Cornell's Hyde Park (Fig. 2.2).² As Hyde Park prospered, its wealthy denizens commissioned increasingly opulent houses from the leading architects of the day. By the 1880s and 1890s, the era of architectural eclecticism was in full swing across the nation. Rather than using one style, architects and designers blended the traditional and the exotic in luxurious buildings comprising materials and decorative motifs from the Near and Far East, the Classical past, and the contemporary moment (Fig. 2.3).

The transformation of the built environment of Hyde Park remained relatively modest until two major events occurred in early 1890s—the opening of the University of Chicago in the fall of 1892 and the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 (Fig. 2.4).



2.1 Paul Cornell, Founder of Hyde Park



2.2 Italianate Residence of Paul Cornell, 1857, Architect Unknown



2.3 The Romanesque Charles Hosmer Morse House, Hyde Park, 1893. Mifflin Emlin Bell.



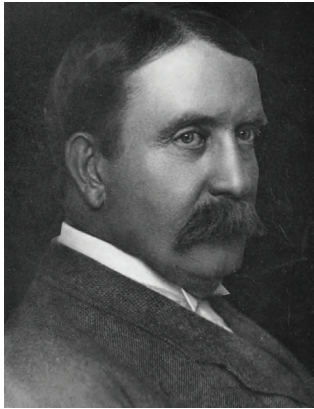
2.4 Administration Building and Machinery Hall, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893. Richard Morris Hunt.



2.5 Midway Plaisance, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893



2.6 Panoramic view of the University of Chicago, ca. 1907. Geo. R. Lawrence Co.



2.7 Daniel Burnham



2.8 Frederick Law Olmsted



2.9 Henry Ives Cobb

Daniel Burnham, chief architect and planner of the Columbian Exposition, chose to locate the Fair in Hyde Park because of the neighborhood's open park areas and its proximity to the lake and city (Fig. 2.7). Frederick Law Olmsted (Fig. 2.8), a prominent landscape architect who had designed New York City's Central Park in the 1850s and 1860s, was brought in to refurbish Jackson Park and the Midway Plaisance for the Fair (Fig. 2.5).

Architects, sculptors, and workers moved to Hyde Park in the spring of 1891 for the Exposition's construction. Burnham's partner, John Root, as well as sculptor August Saint-Gaudens, lived in cabins in Jackson Park. Lorado Taft, whose sculptures can be seen throughout the neighborhood, moved to Hyde Park to supervise his workshop and remained in the area until his death. Architects like Louis Sullivan, Charles B. Atwood, and the firm of McKim, Meade & White also contributed to the Fair's design. Frank Lloyd Wright was employed in Sullivan's office at this time as a draftsman and may have worked on designs for Sullivan's Transportation Building for the Exposition.

The University of Chicago, which had opened its doors in 1892, was well on its way to making the social, moral, and economic well being of Hyde Park part of its zealous mission (Fig. 2.6). Lora Hieronymus, who would marry Frederick Robie in 1902, was one of the women to benefit from the University's liberal admission policies, graduating in 1900. It was Lora Robie's strong ties to the University that inspired the young couple to choose Hyde Park as the neighborhood for their new home.³

Comprising a series of enclosed quadrangles, the University of Chicago campus was designed by the architect Henry Ives Cobb. Defined by towers, crenelated walls, and cloisters, Cobb's campus was inspired by the traditional English Gothic architecture of Oxford and Cambridge universities. Through his evocation of these illustrious institutions, Cobb sought to create an educational oasis, sheltered from city life.

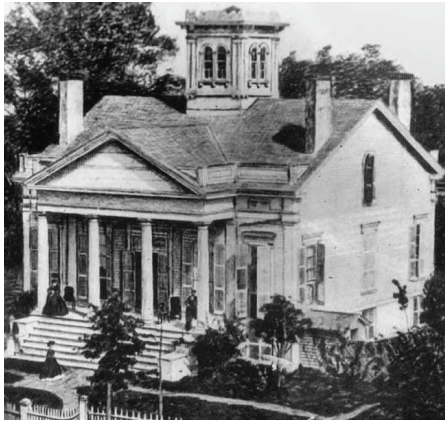
Although the exposition had attracted many new residents of diverse economic classes and ethnic groups to Hyde Park, the area immediately around the University remained inhabited by prosperous middle-class families and university faculty. Their architectural tastes varied, contributing to the area's eclectic appearance. Cobb, who designed most of the university's Gothic structures, also designed three private homes in Hyde Park (Fig. 2.9). Howard van Doren Shaw designed fifteen Tudor Revival homes for university faculty who favored more traditional designs over the innovative creations of Shaw's contemporary, Frank Lloyd Wright.

From its beginnings as a commuter suburb to its current status as a vibrant urban center, residents of Hyde Park have had a history of actively involving themselves with aesthetic, social, and economic improvements of the neighborhood. Today, Hyde Park and the University of Chicago community continue to set the pace in contemporary scientific and humanitarian developments. Not only does Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House maintain its status as "a cornerstone of modern architecture," as Wright himself called it, but the house also stands as architectural evidence of the progressive spirit of the neighborhood of Hyde Park.

2.1.2. National Context

The late 19th and early 20th century was a period of transition in American architecture. The era was marked by the emergence of original architectural design styles that were not derived from historical precedents.

In the years preceding the Civil War, American architectural styles reflected the country's ties to the culture and architecture of Europe (Fig. 2.10). As the nation emerged from the War, American architects, like their contemporaries in art, literature, and music, sought new forms to express the country's developing national identity. Given an expanding technology, prosperity, and a climate that supported progress and originality, architects began to see possibilities for experimentation and expansion beyond traditional European architectural styles. The inventive, eclectic, and richly



2.10 The Greek Revival Henry B. Clarke House, Chicago, 1836. Architect Unknown



2.11 William K. Vanderbilt Mansion, New York, 1882. Richard Morris Hunt

ornamented buildings that resulted were considered by many to be the embodiment of the nation's cultural maturation (Fig. 2.11):

[A] private home... better than any other possible selection, may stand as a representative of the new impulse now felt in national life... The country, at this moment, is just beginning to be astonishing. Re-cemented by the fortunate result of a civil war, endowed as with a diploma of rank by the promulgation of its centenary, it has begun to re-invent everything, and especially the house.”⁴

In the 1870s and 1880s, the American architect Henry Hobson Richardson was one of the leading figures in the search for an indigenous architecture.⁵ During these years Richardson designed residences, community libraries, suburban railroad stations, and commercial and civic structures that marked a turning point in American architecture. In contrast to the narrow, vertical proportions, and disparate historical features used by his contemporaries, Richardson favored horizontal lines and masses, and uniform large-scale details of Medieval and Romanesque inspiration.

While drawing on English Revival architecture, Richardson's Watts Sherman House at Newport, Rhode Island (1875) features Americanized elements including overhanging eaves that shelter the residence, and horizontal bands of windows that begin to dissolve barriers between interior and exterior (Fig. 2.12). These design features would become hallmarks of Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture decades later. In Richardson's Glessner House in Chicago (1885-87), the architect emphasizes the distinction between public and private spaces (Fig. 2.13). The guarded, monumental exterior of rusticated granite walls gives way to an inviting courtyard garden at the heart of the U-shaped plan. The house represents a radical departure from the eclecticism that characterized domestic architecture of the day.

In the shingled Stoughton House in Cambridge, Massachusetts (1882-83), Richardson transformed the typically dark, box-like interiors of the traditional Victorian home with a more open floor plan of rooms arranged around a central “living hall” (Fig. 2.14). By the 1880s, Richardson's architecture exhibits a greater harmony with the natural landscape. The boulder-studded walls and terraces of the Robert Treat Paine House in Waltham, Massachusetts, (1880-81) forge a strong connection between the house and the surrounding landscape designed by Frederick Law Olmstead (Fig. 2.15). Similarly, Richardson's E. W. Gurney House, Pride's Crossing, Massachusetts (1884-86) with walls of locally quarried granite slabs, demonstrates a sensitive integration of structure and site that anticipates the fundamental importance of landscape in Wright's Prairie buildings of the early 20th century.

The revolution in design that Richardson ignited was continued by the Chicago architect Louis Sullivan (Fig. 2.16).⁶ As the 19th century came to a close, Sullivan sought a “functional” approach to modern tall office building design. For Sullivan, the great architectural styles of the past had been created by architects and craftsmen in tune with the world around them. Their buildings were a product of their specific time and place. Sullivan in turn believed that a building should respond to its own environment, and “grow naturally, logically, and poetically out of its conditions,” and that its function should be clearly expressed in its form and structure.⁷ His declaration that “form ever follows function” became a defining statement in modern American architecture.

Sullivan advocated for an honest architecture reflecting the American landscape and suited to a modern America. He applied these ideals to tall office buildings and large commercial structures such as the Auditorium Building in Chicago (1886-90) (Fig. 2.17); the Wainwright Building in Saint Louis, Missouri (1886-90) (Fig. 2.18); and the Guaranty Building in



2.12 Watts-Sherman House, Newport, Rhode Island, 1875. H. H. Richardson



2.14 Mary Fiske Stoughton House, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1883. H. H. Richardson



2.13 John J. Glessner House, Chicago, 1885. . H. H. Richardson



2.15 Richard Treat Paine Estate, Waltham, Massachusetts, 1882. H. H. Richardson



2.17 Auditorium Building, Chicago, 1890. Adler and Sullivan



2.16 Louis Sullivan, ca. 1895



2.18 Wainwright Building, St. Louis, Missouri, 1890. Adler and Sullivan



2.19 Frank Lloyd Wright, ca. 1887

Buffalo, New York (1894-95). Sullivan and his partner, Dankmar Adler, designed nearly 200 residential, commercial, and religious buildings, primarily in the Midwest.

While Sullivan's architecture marks a significant development on the path to a modern American architecture, his role as a writer and mentor is equally important. Sullivan's philosophy of architecture was passed to the next generation through the work of the young architects employed in his office. Most important and well known of these individuals was Frank Lloyd Wright, who joined Sullivan's firm as a draftsman in 1888 (Fig. 2.19).

During his early years in Chicago, Wright did not operate in a vacuum. His work was supported and often enhanced by a group of pioneering Midwestern architects working in and around Chicago, who became known as the Prairie School. This group, which Wright would later refer to as "The New School of the Middle West," included George Elmslie, Myron Hunt, George Washington Maher, Dwight Perkins, William Gray Purcell, Thomas Talmadge, and Vernon Watson, as well as Wright's later associates Marion Mahony, Walter Burley Griffin, William Drummond and Francis Byrne. These talented individuals honed their skills while working under the leading architects of 19th century Chicago. Inspired by the teachings of Louis Sullivan, the architects of the Prairie School sought to create a new, democratic architecture, free from the shackles of historical European styles, and suited to a modern American way of living.⁸

2.1.3. International Context

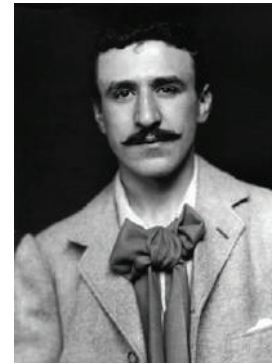
Frank Lloyd Wright was part of a generation of visionary architects that absorbed the lessons of the British Arts and Crafts movement as they worked to create a modern architecture for their respective countries. These designers held common beliefs that a building should be considered as a total work of art, that design should be dictated by function, that local materials should be respected, that new buildings should integrate with the surrounding landscape, and that freedom from historical styles was essential.

The Arts and Crafts movement in America was part of a much larger turn-of-the-century international concern for reform in the arts. However, as the historian H. Allen Brooks succinctly states:

Arts and crafts was a movement and not a style. It was an attitude, an approach to a problem that advocated no specific vocabulary of forms. It pleaded for simplicity, elimination, and respect for materials. Its most salutary effect, in retrospect, was the purification of public taste.⁹



2.22 Hill House, Helensburgh, Scotland, 1904. Charles Rennie Mackintosh



2.21 Charles Rennie Mackintosh, 1893



2.24 Palais Stoclet, Brussels, Belgium, 1905-1911. Josef Hoffmann



2.23 Josef Hoffmann, 1903.

Thus American architects and designers were able to establish an aesthetic different in form, content and ideals from that of Europe, adapting their work to regional circumstances, with variations dependent on local climate, landscape and building methods and materials.

In the small town of Pasadena, California, the brothers Charles and Henry Greene developed a new architecture in harmony with the landscape, climate, and lifestyle of Southern California. Drawing on many of the same influences as Frank Lloyd Wright, the Greene's 1908 Gamble House stands as their seminal work (Fig. 2.20). Contemporary with Wright's Robie House, the Gamble House was designed as a *gesamtkunstwerk*, where all elements of the building from its form and structure, to its furniture and fixtures, were conceived in unity.

Like Wright's Prairie architecture, the design masterfully blends Arts and Crafts aesthetics with Japanese influences. With its horizontal form, sheltering roof, and use of simple, natural materials, the building exhibits a strong connection with the natural landscape. These are all defining features of Wright's Robie House, and yet, the Gamble House remains wholly different in spirit.

Other countries also adapted Arts and Crafts philosophies on a national and regional basis, shaping these principles to their own needs. In Scotland, Charles Rennie Mackintosh created an architecture that drew from diverse sources, including British Arts and Crafts, Continental Art Nouveau, and the traditional baronial architecture of his homeland (Figs. 2.21 and 2.22). In 1903, the Viennese designers Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser founded the *Wiener Werkstätte*, an organization devoted to the design and sale of high quality craft products (Figs. 2.23 and 2.24). Modeled on C.R. Ashbee's London-based Guild of Handicraft, the *Wiener Werkstätte* sought to raise the standards of Viennese craftsmanship, integrating craft and the modern interior, and promoting the ideal of decorative art.



2.20 David Gamble House, Pasadena, California, 1908. Greene and Greene

Wright himself recognized the parallels between the Vienna Secession and his own work, stating in his 1930 Kahn lectures,

*I came upon the Secession during the winter of 1910. At that time Herr Professor Wagner of Vienna, a great architect, the architect Olbrich, of Darmstadt, the remarkable painter Klimt of Austria and the sculptor Metzner of Berlin—great artists all—were the soul of that movement. And there was the work of Louis Sullivan and myself in America.*¹⁰

Wright's exposure to the international scene came through multiple sources. International Expositions, held in Chicago in 1893, and St. Louis in 1904, provided Wright with two important points of contact with contemporary design movements in Europe. International design ideals were disseminated in America through journals such as *The Craftsman*, *House Beautiful*, and *Ladies Home Journal*, as well as through clubs and societies that sponsored lectures and programs. Wright's personal acquaintance with leading designers and theorists, such as C. R. Ashbee, were also important factors that shaped his early career (Fig. 2.25).



2.25 Charles Robert Ashbee, 1900

2.2 Frank Lloyd Wright

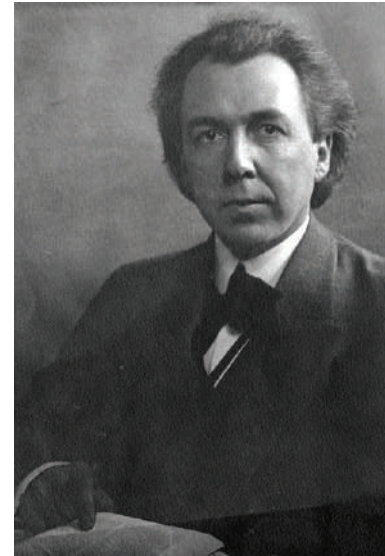
2.2.1. Frank Lloyd Wright's Chicago Years, 1887-1917

Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural principles were forged in the pioneering environment of late-nineteenth-century Chicago (Fig. 2.26). Born in Richland Center, Wisconsin in 1867, Wright came to Chicago at the age of 19. Arriving in 1887, Wright would spend the first thirty years of his career working in the city and its suburbs. In Chicago, Wright was exposed to the work of the nation's most progressive architects and designers. The year he arrived saw the completion of H. H. Richardson's seminal Marshall Field Wholesale store, construction was underway on Burnham and Root's Rookery Building, and work would soon begin on Adler and Sullivan's Auditorium Building (Fig. 2.27). Soon thereafter, the city would petition Congress to host the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Daniel Burnham's White City, which emerged from the marshland of Chicago's lakefront, offered Chicagoans an unparalleled vision of the transformative power of the built environment.

Amidst this climate of ferment and rapid change, Wright began his career as an architect. He was first hired by the architect Joseph Lyman Silsbee, whose "superior talent in design," Wright stated, "had made him respected in Chicago."¹¹ Several of Wright's Prairie School contemporaries, including George Washington Maher and George Elmslie, passed through Silsbee's office, and the architect's work informed Wright's earliest theories on residential design.

In early 1888, Wright secured a position with the prestigious architectural firm of Adler and Sullivan. The partnership produced many of Chicago's earliest tall buildings and large commercial projects, including the Auditorium Building, which Wright would work on as a draftsman. Sullivan soon recognized Wright's emerging talents, making the draftsman his personal assistant and spending hours mentoring him and shaping his philosophies. Wright was profoundly influenced by Sullivan's idea of an indigenous American architecture reflecting the Midwestern landscape and suited to a modern American way of life.

In 1893, Wright left his position as head draftsman at Adler and Sullivan, establishing his own independent practice with an office in downtown Chicago and, by 1898, a studio in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park (Fig. 2.28). At the time Wright founded his practice American domestic architecture remained mired in the past. House styles were derived



2.26 Frank Lloyd Wright, ca. 1906



2.27 The Rookery Building, Chicago, 1888
Burnham and Root



2.28 Exterior of the Frank Lloyd Wright Studio, Oak Park, Illinois, ca. 1898. Frank Lloyd Wright

from the architecture of old Europe. Buildings of Gothic Revival, French Empire, and Italianate form lined the streets of America's cities. For Wright, the houses he witnessed around him, derived as they were from the styles of other countries and other cultures, were unsuited to the American landscape. "What was the matter with the kind of house I found on the prairie?" he asked. "Just for a beginning, let's say that house *lied* about everything. It had no sense of Unity ... To take any one of those so-called 'homes' away would have improved the landscape and cleared the atmosphere... My first feeling therefore had been a yearning for simplicity."¹²

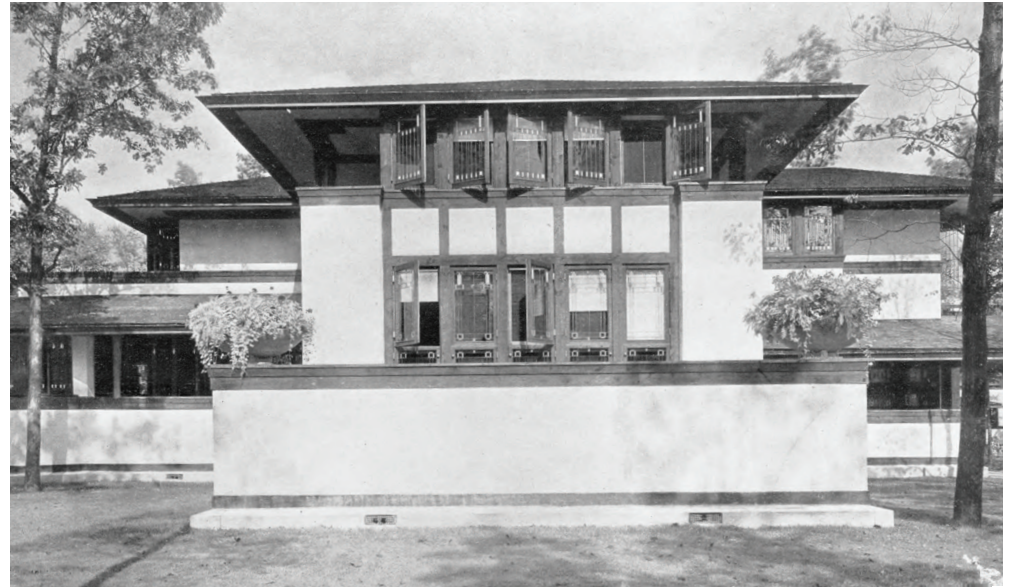
Over the course of the 1890s Wright worked to define a vocabulary of design appropriate for the modern age. In his architecture, Wright drew upon a vast range of influences prevalent in the waning years of the 19th century. The British Arts and Crafts movement, which promoted craftsmanship, simplicity and integrity in art, architecture and design, provided a powerful impetus to Wright's principles. Through his family background in Unitarianism Wright absorbed the ideas of the Transcendentalists, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, who encouraged an honest life inspired by nature. From his unique concept of architectural space, to the harmonious relationships he created between his buildings and their natural surroundings, the influence of Japanese art and culture on Wright's design vision was profound. The household art movement, a distinct movement in middle-class home decoration in the late nineteenth century, informed Wright's earliest interiors. It aimed, as the name implies, to bring art into the home, and was primarily disseminated through books and articles written by tastemakers who believed that the home interior could exert moral influences upon its inhabitants. These, and many other influences were tempered by the lessons and practices Wright learned under his employers Silsbee and Sullivan.

Building upon his experiments at his own Oak Park Home of 1889, and early residential commissions, such as the George Blossom House in Chicago, Illinois (1892), and the Thomas Gale House in Oak Park, Illinois (1892), Wright experimented with different forms, styles and materials (Fig. 2.29). A masterful architectural designer, Wright began to develop a unique vocabulary of space, form, and pattern that represented a dramatic shift in design from the traditional houses of the day. Defined by powerful horizontal lines and masses, Wright's Prairie buildings that emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century evoke the expansive Midwestern landscape. Primarily residential, the buildings feature open floor plans with flexible living spaces arranged around a central core. They exhibit a harmonious integration of structure and site, and a sensitive handling of simple materials, including brick, wood, stone, and stucco. These elements are complimented by the inclusion of site-specific furniture, leaded glass windows, and other decorative elements inspired by nature.

Wright hinted at his Prairie idiom in his first major independent commission, the William Winslow House of River Forest, Illinois (1893) (Fig. 2.30). It was not until the start of the new century that the combination of forms we now recognize as Wright's Prairie style emerged in a group of houses including the Bradley and Hickox Houses in Kankakee, Illinois (1900); the Frank Thomas House in Oak Park, Illinois (1901); and the Ward Willits House in Highland Park, Illinois (1902) (Fig. 2.31). He continued to refine his aesthetic in significant commissions including the Dana House in Springfield, Illinois (1903); the Martin House in Buffalo, New York (1904); and Unity Temple in Oak Park, Illinois (1908). Wright's Prairie vision was fully realized in 1909 in the flowing volumes of space defined by sculptural masses and horizontal planes of the Robie House in Chicago. Completed in 1910, the house is the consummate expression of Wright's Prairie style (Fig. 2.32).



2.29 Frank Lloyd Wright Home, Oak Park, Illinois, 1889. Frank Lloyd Wright



2.31 Ward Willits House, Highland Park, Illinois, 1902. Frank Lloyd Wright



2.30 William Winslow House, River Forest, Illinois, 1893. Frank Lloyd Wright



2.32 Frederick C. Robie House, Chicago, 1910. Frank Lloyd Wright

In September of 1909, with construction of the Robie House well underway, Wright left America for Europe to work on the publication of the Wasmuth Portfolio, a substantial monograph of his buildings and projects to date. The architect remained away for a year. On his return to Oak Park in October of 1910, Wright made plans for a new home and studio, Taliesin in Spring Green, Wisconsin. Built in 1911, the concept of the building was an expansion of the live/work space of Wright's Oak Park Home and Studio. The design is exemplary of Wright's Prairie style. Recognizing the importance of the progressive client base found in a major metropolitan area like Chicago, Wright maintained an office in the city through 1917. Wright still undertook residential commissions, but his time during this period was focused primarily on two major projects, Midway Gardens (1914) on Chicago's South Side near the Robie House, and the Imperial Hotel, in Tokyo, Japan (1917-1923) (Fig. 2.33).

Wright's work on the Imperial Hotel would take him far from Chicago, and the architect would not establish an office in the city again. While Wright continued to explore new avenues of design for American architecture, the Robie House would remain a defining moment in his long career. Wright returned to Chicago twice to defend the building from demolition, in 1941 and again in 1957, declaring it to be "a source of world-wide architectural inspiration,"¹³ and "a cornerstone of modern architecture."¹⁴

2.2.2. The Oak Park Studio

In 1898, with funds secured through a contract with the Luxfer Prism Company, Wright built a studio addition to his Oak Park residence (Fig. 2.34). It was here that Wright pioneered a unique new vision for American architecture, the Prairie style. The Oak Park Studio years were an incredibly prolific period in Wright's career, with almost a quarter of his life's work produced at the site between 1898 and 1909. Major buildings of the Prairie style, including the Larkin Building, Buffalo, New York (1904); Unity Temple, Oak Park, Illinois (1908); and Wright's Prairie style masterpiece, the Frederick C. Robie House, Chicago, Illinois (1910), were all designed at the Studio.

Contributing to the legacy of Wright's Prairie years were a group of talented young draftsmen, architects and artists drawn to the Studio by Wright's vision. These included Marion Mahony, the first practicing woman architect in Illinois, Walter Burley Griffin, William Drummond, Charles E. White, Francis Byrne, George Grant Elmslie, Frances



2.33 Imperial Hotel, Tokyo, Japan, 1923. Frank Lloyd Wright



2.34 Drafting Room, Frank Lloyd Wright Studio, Oak Park, Illinois, ca. 1906 - 1909



2.35 Marion Mahony Griffin, ca. 1915



2.36 Walter Burley Griffin, 1912



2.37 Richard Bock (center left) and William Drummond (center right)

Sullivan, John S. Van Bergen, Andrew Willatzen, George Willis, Harry Robinson, Richard Bock, George Mann Nied-ecken, Orlando Giannini and Isabel Roberts (Figs. 2.35, 2.36, and 2.37).

The individuals who worked for Wright came to the Studio with varying degrees of experience. During the early years of business, the principal staff members, Mahony, Drummond and Griffin, were academically trained and professionally licensed architects. These skilled practitioners were instrumental to Wright as he worked to master his vision for a new American architecture. Francis “Barry” Byrne, who entered the Studio as an inexperienced novice in 1902, recalled an “almost constant dialogue,” between Wright and Griffin, “which... profited both in clarifying architectural issues as the work in the office presented.” The sculptor Richard Bock, who worked on numerous commissions for Wright, including the sculptural additions to the Studio façade, remembered Marion Mahony as, “a brilliant intellectual and a match for Wright in debate.”¹⁵ She served as a source of practice and training for his lecturing.”¹⁶ In later years, with his vocabulary of design for the Prairie house fully realized, Wright would rely on less experienced staff, with less imposing personalities.

Despite their varied backgrounds, Wright’s staff was united ideologically. They were strongly influenced by the principles of the Arts and Crafts movement. They shared a reverence for the natural world, derived in part from the transcendentalist writings of Whitman, Thoreau and Emerson. They were inspired by the teachings of Wright’s mentor, Louis Sullivan, but above all they shared Wright’s desire to create a new, democratic architecture, free from the shackles of Old Europe, and suited to a modern American way of living.

Surviving documentation from the Studio years depicts an inspiring environment, brought to life by the vibrant personalities of those who worked there. Against the backdrop of one of Wright’s most significant early buildings, the Studio staff engaged in lively critiques of each other’s work, interacted with artists and craftsmen, and debated art, architecture and politics. Charles E. White, who worked as a draftsman at the Studio between 1903 and 1906, wrote of his experiences, “my environment is changing my character from day-to-day, architecturally as well as in other ways.”¹⁷

Working in Wright’s Studio was a life-changing experience for many of his staff. The years spent with Wright would have a lasting impact upon their careers. After leaving his employ, many of the individuals who worked at the Studio would play a critical role in the development and dissemination of the Prairie style of architecture.

2.3 Significant Contributors

Over the course of the 1890s and first decade of the 20th century, Frank Lloyd Wright had worked to build a successful practice, with a studio in Oak Park, and an office in Chicago. At the time of the Robie House commission, Wright's Studio was thriving with nearly 30 projects in development or under construction.¹⁸ Despite his success, Wright had grown dissatisfied both personally and professionally. In a December 1908 letter to his friend and patron, Darwin D. Martin, Wright expressed his frustration:

*This year has been a great disappointment so far as opportunity to work is concerned and the future is not especially encouraging from any present outlook... In my own life there is much that is complex, at least. Life is not the simple thing it should have been if within myself I could find the harmony that you have found.*¹⁹

Wright's growing dissatisfaction came to a head in the fall of 1909. That year, Wright was offered the opportunity by the Ernst Wasmuth Company to publish a monograph of his work in Germany (Fig. 2.38). The architect began making plans to close his office and depart for Europe. Wright outlined his rationale for leaving in his autobiography:

*This absorbing, consuming phase of my experience as an architect ended about 1909. I had almost reached my fortieth [sic] year: weary, I was losing my grip on my work and even interest in it. Why not go to Germany and prepare the material for the Wasmuth Monograph?... I looked longingly in the direction.*²⁰

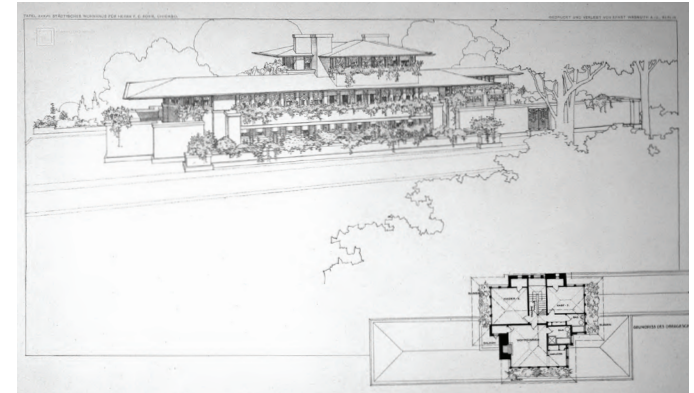
The Robie House commission had entered Wright's office in the summer of 1908. By the time of Wright's departure in September of 1909, the house was under construction. Working drawings for the house were signed and dated by Frederick C. Robie by March of 1909, several months prior to Wright's

departure for Europe. According to the records of the contractor, Harrison B. Barnard, construction of the Robie House began in April, 1909.²¹ Basic construction took approximately one year, with some finishes and furnishings still in process in the fall of 1910. By late fall of 1909, the house was under roof and interior work had begun. Barnard's records indicate that the rough construction was done by August 21, 1909, and the house was ready for lathing on September 22. Electrical work began on October 5 and trimming began on October 26. By that time, Wright had left Chicago for Europe, and did not return until late in 1910.

The sophistication of the Robie House and its conformity to the architectural principles that Wright had been developing up until this point indicate Wright as the primary force behind the design of the house. As was common with Wright's practice, there were, however, several other individuals who contributed to the finished building.

2.3.1. The Oak Park Studio, 1908-1910

Established in 1898, Wright's Oak Park Studio flourished in the first decade of the 20th century (Fig. 2.39). The makeup of the Studio at the time of the Robie House commission, sometime during the summer of 1908, consisted of Isabel Roberts; Marion Mahony, whose presence at the Studio was sporadic; William Drummond, the most senior member of staff at the time; Barry Byrne, who was to leave in August 1908 to establish his own practice in Seattle; and Taylor Woolley and John Van Bergen, the most recent additions to the staff. By March of 1910, Woolley had joined Wright in Florence, Italy, to assist in



2.38 Frederick C. Robie Residence, plate xxxvii, (Chicago), 1910



2.39 Drafting Room, Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio, Oak Park, Illinois, ca. 1906 – 1909. Frank Lloyd Wright

the preparation of drawings for the Wasmuth project. Drummond and Van Bergen remained to close the Oak Park Studio and the Fine Arts Building office after Wright left for Europe.

In his seminal 1908 essay, “In the Cause of Architecture,” Wright outlined how his Studio operated:

I assign to each a project that has been carefully conceived in my own mind, which he accepts as a specific work. He follows its subsequent development through all its phases in drawing room and field meeting with the client himself on occasion, gaining an all-round development impossible otherwise, and insuring an enthusiasm and a grasp of detail decidedly to the best interest of the client. These privileges in the hands of selfishly ambitious or overconfident assistants would soon wreck such a system; but I can say that among my own boys it has already proved a moderate success, with every prospect of being continued as a settled policy in future.

Nevertheless, I believe that only when one individual forms the concept of the various projects and also determines the character of every detail in the sum total, even to the size and shape of the pieces of glass in the windows, the arrangement and profile of the most insignificant of the architectural members, will that unity be secured which is the soul of the individual work of art.²²

Barry Byrne, reflecting on his time in Wright’s Studio, elaborated on this process:

In the later years of my tutelage, and when projects were turned over to me to develop into working drawings, the original Wright-made studies would come into my hands with the plan established and the main theme of the exterior design clearly defined in elevation. The development of all implied but not delineated portions of the project then became the problem of the student draftsman, subject to the master’s approval and often to his correction.²³

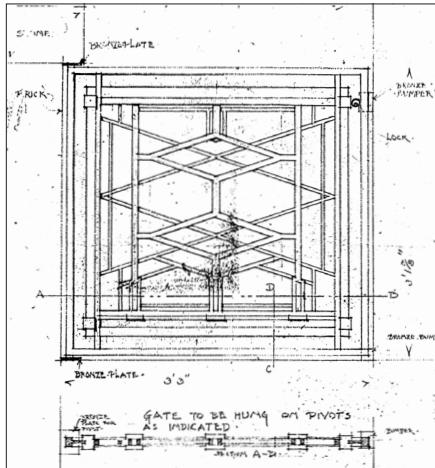
It was in this manner that the Robie House was designed. Due to the nature of how the Studio operated, it remains extremely difficult to determine the extent to which Wright’s employees and collaborators contributed to the design of the Robie House. This issue of attribution is not specific to the Robie house. It applies to almost all the projects that came out of the Oak Park Studio. The fundamental complicating factor in attribution is that all the work from the Studio years is designated as the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. This was, and remains today, common practice for architectural firms.

2.3.2. Hermann Von Holst and Marion Mahony, 1909-1910

In preparation for his departure to Europe, Wright approached several employees and colleagues to take control of his business. He initially asked Studio employees Barry Byrne and Marion Mahony, but both declined. He also contacted the firm of Purcell and Elmslie. George Elmslie had previously worked alongside Wright in the offices of Joseph Lyman Silsbee and Louis Sullivan. Wright ultimately turned his “work, plans, draughtsmen, and clients” over to the architect Hermann Von Holst, who held office space at Steinway Hall.²⁴

Von Holst was a graduate of the University of Chicago, and studied architecture at MIT. After completing his studies in 1896, he worked in the Chicago office of Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge. He traveled in Europe in 1901, and taught at the Armor Institute in Chicago from 1904 to 1906. Von Holst established his own architectural practice in 1905, with office space initially at the Rookery Building in downtown Chicago.²⁵

On September 22, 1909, Von Holst signed a contract with Wright outlining the terms of their arrangement. Von Holst would assume responsibility for “work under construction,” “work in hand,” and “probable and prospective” projects. The Robie House was listed as “work under construction” and per



2.40 Design for Robie House Front Terrace Gate



2.41 George Mann Niedecken, Self-Portrait, ca. 1900

the contract, Von Holst was responsible for “Finish superintendence.” Von Holst retained Marion Mahony from Wright’s staff to oversee work from the Studio. Of her involvement in this arrangement, Mahony wrote:

...after [Wright] had gone Mr. von Holz [sic], who had taken over, asked me to join him on a definite arrangement that I should have control of the designing. That suited him.²⁶

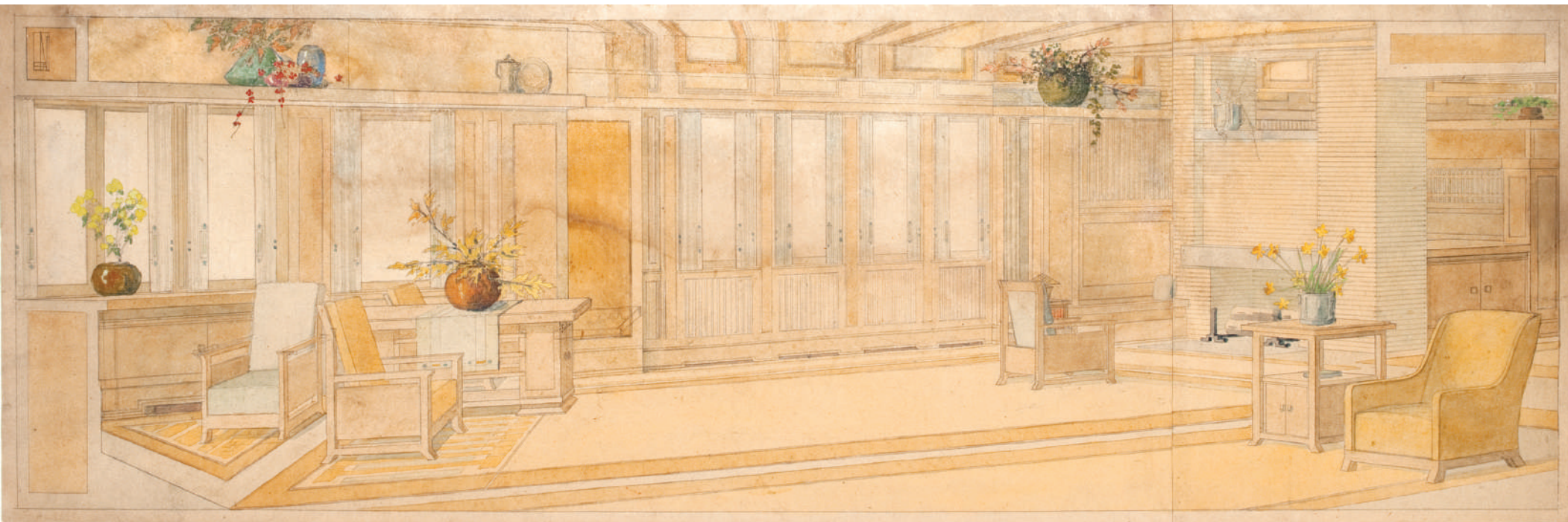
Von Holst’s contribution was most likely limited to management and financial matters, while Mahony had control over design work. Surviving drawings for the Robie house, other than the primary plans, include several with the title block, *Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect, 907 Steinway Hall, Chicago, Illinois*. The address was von Holst’s office. Approximately 25 drawings are dated in the period October, 1909 until late 1910, and include details of decorative elements, including window designs, light fixtures, and two designs for exterior gates (Fig. 2.40).

2.3.3. George Mann Niedecken, 1909-1911

Despite the complex and complicated nature of the roles of Wright’s employees in the design of the Robie House, one of the more integral contributions to the project came from outside of the Studio. George Mann Niedecken, founder of the Niedecken-Walbridge Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was one of the most important of Wright’s collaborators during the first decade of the twentieth century (Fig. 2.41).

Founded in 1907, the Niedecken-Walbridge Company produced murals, furniture, rugs, embroidered textiles and sophisticated paint and finish treatments for many of Wright’s most significant Prairie buildings (Fig. 2.42). Niedecken described himself as both an architect and an interior designer—an interior architect—“someone with knowledge of all building or decorative materials which come into the scope of the interior development of buildings.”²⁷ His earliest documented association with Wright occurred in 1902, when he worked intermittently at Wright’s Oak Park Studio. Prior to joining Wright’s Studio, Niedecken traveled extensively in Europe, sketching his way through Germany, Austria, England, France, Switzerland and Italy. He studied art in Berlin and Paris with the graphic designer Alphonse Mucha, and he visited with Otto Wagner, co-founder of the Secession, in Vienna. He became familiar with the British Arts and Crafts movement, French Art Nouveau, Viennese Secession and German *Jugendstil*, all of which made him an ideal collaborator for Wright.²⁸

In the fall of 1909, Niedecken was working on furnishings and finishes for Wright’s Tomek and Coonley Houses in Riverside, Illinois, and the Meyer May House in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He first visited the Robie House on September 17, just prior to Wright’s departure to Europe. Entries in the ledgers for the Niedecken-Walbridge Company reveal multiple trips to Chicago to supervise work on the Robie interiors.²⁹ On October 30, Niedecken visited the house “to show Robie drawings” and returned on November 3 to measure the house for rugs. An entry dated December 10, 1909 indicates that “Goats Hair Satin” was ordered from F. Schumacher & Co. in New York. A December 16 travel expense was recorded for Niedecken to go to Chicago “to superintend color work in Robie house.”



2.42 Presentation Drawing of Living Room for Mr. Robie, ca. 1909, George Mann Niedeen

Another entry dated February 28, 1910 states, “Designed and made red oak furniture as per specifications of drawings developed by F. L. Wright and G.M.N.” The same entry shows \$936.65 paid to F. H. Bresler Co. for making furniture and to other sources for materials.

As with the roles of Wright’s employees in the design of the Robie House, Niedecken’s work on the interior of the house must be understood in terms of its relation to Wright. Niedecken’s work was informed by almost five years of collaboration with the architect.

2.4 History of Ownership

2.4.1. The Robie Family 1909–1911

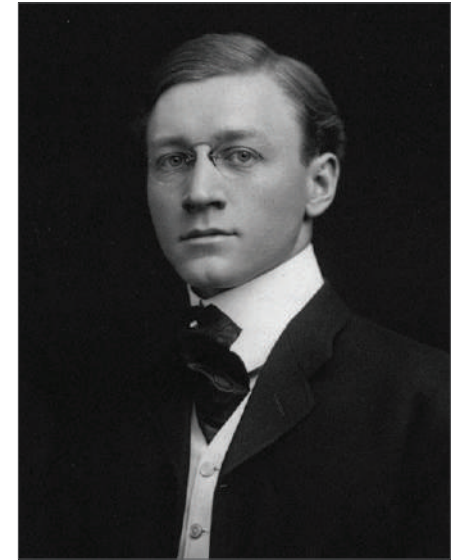
Wright’s clients of 1893–1917, were typically middle-class “men of business with unspoiled instincts and untainted ideals.”³⁰ In contrast to the “cultured” who were “content with their small châteaux, Colonial wedding cakes, English affectations or French millinery,” they were practical, self-made men.³¹ They were bankers, lawyers, manufacturers and merchants, who despite being outwardly conventional, were willing to take a risk on Wright’s new and radical architecture.

Frederick C. Robie is exemplary of Wright’s typical client base (Fig. 2.43). Born in Chicago in 1879, Robie was the grandson of German immigrants. His father George T. Robie came to Chicago shortly after the Great Fire of 1871. In 1876, George Robie founded the Excelsior Supply Company, a successful distributor of sewing machine, bicycle, and later, automotive parts. The following year he married Anna Snook.

Frederick Robie studied mechanical engineering at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, from 1895 to 1899. He abandoned his studies before earning a degree and returned to Chicago. From 1901 to 1909, he worked for his father’s Excelsior Supply Company. The Excelsior Motor and Manufacturing Co. was formed in 1906 as a subsidiary of the Supply Company, with Frederick Robie as president.

On June 30, 1902, Robie married Lora Hieronymous (Fig. 2.44). Originally from Pekin, Illinois, Hieronymous was born in 1878. She was raised in Springfield, Illinois. In 1896 she enrolled in the recently founded University of Chicago, graduating in June 1900. Shortly thereafter she met Robie at a dance at the University. By 1904, the couple had moved into the Colonial Court, an apartment building in Hyde Park which still stands today at 5310-5312 Cornell Avenue. Their first child Fred Robie Jr. was born on February 19, 1907. A second child, Lorraine, was born on December 2, 1909. “My mother was a graduate of the University of Chicago, and was still interested in the campus life and social life of the university,” Fred Robie Jr. recollected “Father thought it would be a good idea to have a house within easy access of that atmosphere.”

The exact origin of the Robie House commission remains unclear. By 1908, Wright’s reputation in Chicago was well established, with over 100 built works in Chicago and its suburbs. His status as a progressive architect and an active member of Chicago-area reform circles drew clients to his Oak Park practice. In addition, the architect had previously completed several residences in-and-around the Hyde Park area. Early houses including the Georgian Revival George Blossom and Queen Anne Warren MacArthur houses were built in neighboring Kenwood in 1892, while the Isadore Heller House of 1896, is located less than a mile north of the Robie House on Woodlawn Avenue (Fig. 2.45).



2.43 Frederick C. Robie, ca 1902



2.44 Lora Robie, ca 1902



2.45 The Isadore Heller House, Chicago, 1906
Frank Lloyd Wright



2.46 The Taylor Family with Robie House table lamp,
ca 1915

In an interview with his son recorded in 1958 for the *Architectural Record*, Robie claimed to have sketched out the house and shown his sketches to some acquaintances in the building trade. “Oh, I know what you want,” he remembered being told, “One of those damn... Wright houses.” Robie’s recollection of how the commission came about is confused. It is clear from the interview transcript that Robie had absorbed Wright’s architectural convictions over the years (his descriptions frequently suggest familiarity with Wright’s autobiography):

*The idea of most of [the homes of that period] was a kind of conglomeration of architecture, on the outside, and they were absolutely cut up inside ... I wanted no part of that. I wanted rooms without interruptions.... I wanted all the daylight I could get in a house, but shaded enough by overhanging eaves to protect from the weather... I certainly didn’t want a lot of junk.*³²

Lora Robie’s connection to Springfield may well have played a role in the decision to hire Wright. Lora Robie was already familiar with Wright’s Susan Lawrence Dana House, built in her hometown of Springfield, Illinois. The house, built from 1902 to 1904, was one of the most opulent expressions of Wright’s design philosophy. In 1958, Fred Robie Jr. recalled his mother’s interest in the house,

*In Springfield there is a beautiful Wright house, which was built for Susan Lawrence Dana, and mother used this house to teach me the outstanding features of Mr. Wright’s homes of that time.*³³

Regardless of the initial reason to hire Wright, the architect’s Studio began designing the house in the summer of 1908. Working drawings for the house were signed and dated by Frederick C. Robie by March, 1909, and construction of the Robie house began in April, 1909. The house was completed in spring, 1910, at a cost of almost \$60,000, and by May of that year the Robies moved in.³⁴

The Robie family’s occupancy of the house was ultimately short-lived. A failed marriage and financial difficulties brought their time in the house to an end. Lora Robie moved out of the home in April 1911, and took both children with her. She headed back home to Springfield Illinois and took up teaching to support her children. She filed for divorce in January 1912, and it was granted shortly thereafter in March. Following the dissolution of his marriage, Frederick Robie sold the house, along with all its custom furnishings, for just \$50,000.

2.4.2. The Taylor Family, 1911–1912

The house was acquired by David Lee Taylor of Wilmette, IL, president of the advertising agency Taylor Critchfield Co. Taylor bought the house in December of 1911 for his wife, Ellen, and their six sons. (Fig. 2.46) That year he signed a Christmas card:

*To Momma
Our \$50,000 house
Pop.*³⁵

The Taylors ordered several new furnishings from George Niedecken. A price quote in the Niedecken-Walbridge ledgers dated January 6, 1912 identifies several items requested by the Taylor family including a set of andirons for the Billiard Room, a telephone stool, a hall chair, a rocker, a tabourette, a bedroom chair, and a desk for the guest bedroom. There is no confirmation that these items were ever fabricated or installed at the Robie House.

The Taylors’ residence at the Robie House was even briefer than that of the Robie family. In October of 1912, David Lee Taylor passed away. Ellen Taylor sold the house the next month, taking her family—as well as a chair, a humidor, and a large table lamp, all designed for the Robie House—back to Wilmette.

2.4.3. The Wilber Family, 1912–1926

In November of 1912, two and a half years after construction was completed, the Robie House was sold for the third time to Marshall and Isadora Wilber and their children Jeanette and Marcia (Fig. 2.47). Isadora recorded the purchase in her diary:

*Mar'l bought Fred Robie's house on Woodlawn & 58th St.
3:30 P.M.
6 others wanted it.*

Marshall Wilber was treasurer of the Wilber Mercantile Agency, a commercial reports and collections company owned by his uncle. Residents of Hyde Park, the Wilbers lived just five blocks from the Robie House, at 5708 Madison (now Dorchester) Avenue. Marcia Wilber graduated from Hyde Park High School in 1909 and was enrolled at the University of the Chicago when the Wilbers bought their new house.

In November of 1916, Marcia died at the age of twenty-five, after a long illness. The Wilbers commissioned a series of photographs of the Robie House to commemorate their daughter's passing. The photographs remain one of the most significant documents of the house during its early years of occupancy. The year of Marcia's death also witnessed the early encroachment upon the Robie House's location. That year the University of Chicago finished construction of Ida Noyes Hall, a new center for women students, significantly reducing the view from the Robie House to the Midway. During the fourteen years that the Wilbers lived in the Robie House, the University of Chicago built six new buildings, including the Joseph Bond Chapel and the new Quadrangle Club by Howard Van Doren Shaw. The site of these two buildings, along with that of Ida Noyes Hall, indicated an eastward development to the area surrounding the Robie House. Most significantly, the Chicago Theological Seminary moved in across Woodlawn Avenue in 1923. The Seminary's new building was designed by

Herbert Riddle in a neo-Gothic style and built from 1923 to 1926. Harrison B. Barnard, the contractor that built the Robie house fourteen years earlier, built the Seminary's new building.

As the surrounding institutions grew, Marshall and Isadora Wilber were entering their sixties and their daughter Jeanette was nearing adulthood. On June 9, 1926, the Wilbers sold the Robie house and its furnishings to the Chicago Theological Seminary for \$90,000.

2.4.4. Chicago Theological Seminary 1926–1958

When the Wilbers sold the building in 1926, the Robie House's tenure as a private residence came to an end. The Chicago Theological Seminary purchased the house and the neighboring Goodman House at 5753 Woodlawn Avenue as a site of future expansion (Fig. 2.48). For the next 30 years the Robie House served as a residence hall, classroom, and refectory for the Seminary. Although the Seminary was more interested in the site of the Robie House, the building's furniture, according to Henry-Russell Hitchcock, was preserved in something close to its original condition and arrangement as late as 1941.³⁶

The Robie House was initially threatened in 1941 when the Chicago Theological Seminary elected to demolish it in favor of a new building that would better suit their needs. In March of 1941, Frank Lloyd Wright wrote to several wealthy individuals he felt could exert influence to stay the building's demolition. In his correspondence the architect stated, "The Chicago Theological Seminary intends to destroy the Robie House... if you are so disposed, will you kindly address a protest letter to Albert W. Palmer, President of CTS." In a letter dated March 20, 1941, addressed to Sara Adler, daughter of Dankmar Adler and wife of clothier Julius Weil, Wright declared the Robie House to be "a source of world-wide architectural inspiration."³⁷



2.47 The Wilber Family in the Living Room of the Robie House, ca 1916



2.48 The Robie House with the Goodman House seen to the north, ca. 1910



2.49 Frank Lloyd Wright at the Robie House, March, 1957

In addition to Wright's letters, a "Committee for the Preservation of Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House" was established by architect William Deknatel, a former Taliesin apprentice, with a goal to negotiate for alternatives for the Seminary's building needs. The first committee meeting was held on April 25, 1941 at the Chicago Arts Club. Among those in attendance were Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig Hilberseimer, and Walter Peterhans, of the Illinois Institute of Technology, and all formerly of the Bauhaus in Dessau and Berlin.

Ultimately, America's entrance into the Second World War, and the Seminary's lack of funds to build a new dormitory played a greater role in the temporary reprieve granted to the Robie House than any preservation efforts. The outcry over the potential demolition of the house did, however, contribute to the public's awareness of the significance of the building.

In February 1957, the Seminary once more announced plans to raze the Robie House to build a student dormitory. The decision again sparked a wave of activity to save the house.

The 1957 campaign to save the Robie House went hand-in-hand with Chicago's nascent architectural preservation movement. The City of Chicago had embarked on a plan to establish the Chicago Landmarks Ordinance. The Robie House was included in the original list of structures deserving protection. The publicity concerning Robie House was extensive and almost universally supportive of preserving the building. Thomas Stauffer, a writer and teacher in the city college system, and Hyde Park Alderman Leon Despres played important roles in saving the house.

"One day the president of CTS, Arthur McGiffert, asked me to come to his office," Despres recalled. "We think CTS owes it to the alderman of the ward to tell you we are planning to demolish Robie House. We need the land to build our new dormitory."³⁸ "I had to mobilize opposition immediately. To this end I called Tom Stauffer. He began organizing a brilliant defense of Robie House. Soon there came a barrage of articles, publicity releases, letters, statements, and demonstrators."³⁹

Stauffer rallied support by asking "architects in western Europe to telephone and cable and write about what a terrible thing this was that Chicago was destroying the Robie House." American architectural writer and photographer George Everard Kidder Smith contacted "politicians, historians, college presidents, and architects" to extol the virtues of the house. Again William Deknatel became involved in committee work to save the Robie House, in addition to the architectural historian William S. McDonald, who chaired the newly formed Committee to Preserve the Robie House. An "alert committee" was also formed as a joint effort between the American Institute of Architects and the Society of Architectural Historians with Earl H. Reed, chairman of the AIA Committee for the Preservation of Historic Buildings, as head.

In March 1957, Wright visited the Robie House and denounced plans to demolish the building to the local press (Fig. 2.49). He declared the house to be "a cornerstone of American architecture" and that "to wreck it would be like destroying a fine piece of sculpture or a beautiful painting."⁴⁰

2.4.5. Webb & Knapp 1958–1963

On Christmas day, 1957, William Zeckendorf, President of the New York development firm of Webb & Knapp, announced that the firm would buy the Robie House to use as their field headquarters. The firm was responsible for the Hyde Park Renewal Project, redeveloping a large part of the Hyde Park community adjacent to the University of Chicago. Webb & Knapp's newspaper advertisement of the purchase of Robie House stated:

*Our Christmas Gift to Hyde Park, to Posterity: Robie House, Hyde Park's World Famous Monument. Acting as Guardian of Great Architecture Webb & Knapp is purchasing Robie House to be used for their headquarters during the development of Hyde Park.*⁴¹

Zeckendorf ultimately purchased the Robie House in August, 1958 from the Chicago Theological Seminary for \$125,000. The Seminary tore down the Goodman House, immediately north of Robie House, and built its long-awaited dormitory, named McGiffert Hall for the Seminary's then President.

2.4.6. The University of Chicago and the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, 1963–Present Day

On February 4, 1963, six years after acquiring the Robie House, William Zeckendorf donated the building to the University of Chicago at a public ceremony (Fig. 2.50).

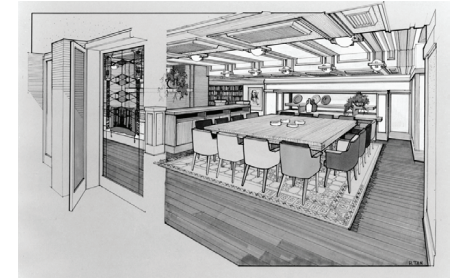
The University remodeled the house to accommodate the Adlai Stevenson Institute for International Affairs in 1966 (Fig. 2.51). In 1975, the Institute moved out of the house, and was replaced by the University of Chicago Development Office. The Office of Alumni Affairs was the last University department to maintain its office in the Robie House from 1980 until 1997.

In 1993, The University of Chicago approached the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust (then the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation), to become steward and proprietor of the Robie House. On February 1, 1997, the University of Chicago and the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust entered into a perpetual lease agreement designating the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust as the sole proprietor and preservation steward of Robie House. The Trust created a masterplan for the restoration of the house and policies for its ongoing maintenance and operation as a museum open to the public.

Public tours of the house began in February 1997 and by summer of that year a bookshop opened in the garage and adjacent public washrooms were installed. The Trust assembled a restoration committee and commenced a capital campaign. From 2001 to 2009 a \$6.5 million restoration of the house exterior was conducted. It included comprehensive stabilization of the foundation and steel frame structure, exterior brick and masonry, a new tile roof and copper gutters, new electrical, fire, and security systems, a climate control system including temperature and humidity, and restoration of the original courtyard. From 2010 to 2017, restoration of windows continued, along with selected restoration projects including a new computerized control system for management of interior climate. A \$3.5 million capital campaign for interior restoration commenced in 2013. From late 2017 to early 2019, work on the ground floor and main floor of the house included plaster restoration and coloration of walls and ceilings, restoration of floors and woodwork, recreation of missing light fixtures and conservation of selected leaded glass windows and doors (Figs. 2.52-2.61).



2.50 Ceremony conveying transfer of ownership of Robie House to the University of Chicago, 1963



2.51 Architectural drawing of the Robie House Dining Room remodeled for the Adlai Stevenson Institute



2.54 Robie House restoration, restoration of south elevation soffits, 2002



2.52 Robie House restoration, installation of new roof, 2002



2.53 Robie House restoration, deconstruction of south balcony wall, 2002



2.55 Robie House restoration, installation of west cantilever soffit lath, 2002



2.57 Robie House restoration, recreation of missing inglenook bench, 2018



2.56 Robie House restoration, north elevation foundation trench, 2002



2.58 Robie House restoration, restoration of guest bedroom plaster, 2018



2.59 Robie House restoration, installation of Billiard Room magnesite floor, 2018



2.60 Robie House restoration, oiling of original magnesite stair, 2018



2.61 Robie House restoration, reinstallation of original molding in Living Room, 2018



2.62 Robie House restoration, guest bedroom plaster, 2018

2.5 Robie House Construction Chronology

1908-1911: Robie Occupancy

Frederick C. Robie acquired the property in two separate transactions on April 8, 1908 and May 19, 1908.

The earliest entry in the ledger of H. B. Barnard, the contractor, is April 15, 1909. Marginal notes in the Barnard ledger indicate the progress of work:

August 21, 1909, roughing finished

September 22, ready for lathers

October 5, electricians still working

October 26, begun trimming

Work must have been substantially complete by the end of May 1910 when regular entries in the ledger cease, the final entry being January 21, 1911.

1916-1926: Wilber Occupancy

Brick shed added to east side of garage

Laundry room window converted to door

1926-1958 : Chicago Theological Seminary Occupancy

Entry to coal room space modified

Main stair wall screens and piers truncated

Living room inglenook pier and cabinet removed

Kitchen cabinets modified, stove, sink and ice box removed

1963-1997: University of Chicago Occupancy

1963-1967	Door added to north wall of playroom/access to servants' staircase Playroom fireplace bench truncated
Adlai Stevenson Institute, 1967-1975	Front entry door removed and vestibule installed Second floor leaded glass bookcase removed Billiard room and playroom gallery ceiling, frame and lighting removed Master bedroom dressing area cabinets at west end removed and taller cabinets installed Unit heater installed in north wall of playroom 1967 – Vinyl asbestos tile installed in playroom, billiard room and entry hall to replace asphalt tile 1967 – Paint removed from magnesite stairs 1969 – Garage doors and leaded glass removed, infill window walls and concrete bases installed in three bays, garage bathroom fixtures changed 1971 – Wilber period brick “tool shed” removed
University of Chicago Development Office and Office of Alumni Affairs, 1975-1997	1975 – Opening cut from garage to laundry room, door and side light added to provide vestibule on east end of playroom 1977 – Doors replaced on ground floor south elevation, swings changed to out-swinging. Restoration work undertaken on west balcony, south balcony, and the underside of the east cantilever. 1985 – Guest bathroom floor framing replaced, bathtub and wall-hung lavatory removed

1997-Present: Frank Lloyd Wright Trust Stewardship

1997-2000	Unit heater removed from north wall of playroom and wall patched Coal room floor raised sixteen inches, door added between laundry and coal room Wall between coal room and boiler room rebuilt due to termite damage Cabinets added after 1960 removed from billiard room Non-original shelving removed on north wall of master bedroom Office partitions, carpeting, and associated lighting removed in garage Termite-eaten flooring on north side of guest bedroom and stair hall removed and replaced Public restrooms installed in former laundry room Museum shop installed in garage Non-original window, wall and base removed in garage center bay and historically accurate reproduction doors installed
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2000-2010

Exterior Restoration & Mechanical Infrastructure:

Existing structural system was analyzed and stabilized, bolted connections were reinforced, steel framing in entry hall was replaced, counterbalance was added to south façade cantilever, and tie down rods were added to the west porch cantilever.

Repairs to deteriorated roof framing and decking.

Conservation of metal cornice (lower side of soffit), installation of soffit venting between cornice and plaster soffit.

Exterior limestone and bricks cleaned. Repointing of entire building, including removal of non-historic mortar and installation of natural colored lime putty on horizontal joints and red mortar on vertical.

Failing garden walls and entry way retaining wall rebuilt to the original configuration, installation of adequate foundation systems. Custom reproduction bricks were used on inside of garden walls.

Replacement of spalled or severely cracked bricks on building with original salvaged bricks.

Installation of water-proofing below grade on north side of building, installation of foundation drain tiles.

Conservation of leaded glass windows and doors.

Stabilization of the exterior of the building and improvements to building shell to prevent additional water penetration.

Abatement of asbestos, chlordane and fuel tank.

Installation of restoration clay tile roof (clay tiles over building felts over ice and water shield).

New HVAC and computer climate controls installed including new piping, two new boilers, and a new chiller.

New 12" water service installed.

New total pack sprinkler control system installed, integrated with dry sprinkler and VESDA system.

New electrical entry service installed, and all not previously updated electrical systems upgraded.

Installation of period-appropriate push button light switches.

New concrete floor poured on entire ground floor.

Critical leaded glass windows conserved including sash, hardware and leaded glass.

Conservation of plaster in servant's wing and kitchen, painted to original color scheme.

Bathrooms returned to their original configuration, installation of period-appropriate bathroom fixtures.

Restoration cabinetry installed on north wall of dining room and screen wall installed at top of main stair – truncated partitions extended to their original height.

Restoration cabinetry installed in pantry.

Existing kitchen cabinetry conserved and returned to original configuration and restoration cabinetry installed where missing.

Documentation of all work performed, plan and visual format.

Installation of yard irrigation system and preliminary landscape plan implemented.

2010-2017	<p>Developed maintenance plan for building and emergency preparedness plan for building.</p> <p>Restoration of 3 sets of leaded glass French doors on south balcony.</p> <p>Replacement of outdated computer climate management system.</p> <p>As part of ongoing facility maintenance 3 water circulating pumps and 9 mixing valves were replaced. Dismantled 5 air handlers and cleaned and rebuilt them, to deal with heavy use.</p> <p>Conservation of garage doors damaged due to excessive weather exposure on south façade.</p>
2018	<p>Interior restoration of the following rooms to their original 1910 appearance: Entrance Hall, Billiard Room, Playroom, Main Entry Stair, Living Room, Upper Hall, Dining Room, Guest Bedroom and Hall.</p> <p>Outlined below is the scope of work in these areas:</p> <p>All non-original plaster removed and new custom mixed reproduction lime putty plaster installed (three separate textures and custom mixes were used).</p> <p>All paint stripped from original plaster walls and ceilings, and paint matching original paints was installed.</p> <p>Due to lack of original finish, all wood was removed and stripped and returned to its original finish; missing trim was reproduced and installed.</p> <p>All missing cabinetry was reproduced and installed; billiard room book shelves, upper entry cabinetry, truncated playroom bench, inglenook cabinetry.</p> <p>Missing lead glass was returned from Smart Museum of Art to front entry hall, billiard room and guest bedroom. Missing leaded glass was reproduced in front entry door, and upper entry south wall cabinets, and servants' wing.</p> <p>Leaded glass on north wall of living room and cabinet doors on north wall of upper entry and west wall of upper entry door was conserved.</p> <p>All wood doors and hardware were conserved.</p> <p>Existing light fixtures were conserved, and missing light fixtures were custom fabricated and installed.</p> <p>Missing frosted glass globes were installed after the lay lights were conserved and refinished.</p> <p>Wood floors were stripped and refinished.</p> <p>Reproduction magnesite was installed to match the missing magnesite on the ground floor.</p>

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6. O'Gorman, 69-112.
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22. Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture," *Architectural Record* 23 (March, 1908), reprinted in, Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings* (Rizzoli International Publications, 1992), 98-99.
23. Barry Byrne, "On Frank Lloyd Wright and His Atelier."
24. Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*, 164.
25. H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and his Midwestern Contemporaries*, (University of Toronto Press, 1972), 86.
26. Marion Mahony Griffin, "The Magic of America," (unpublished manuscript, 1939-49), Art Institute of Chicago, 170.
27. George Mann Niedecken, "Relationship of Decorator, Architect, and Client," *The Western Architect*, Volume 19, 1913, 44.
28. For a detailed account of Niedecken's work and his collaborations with Frank Lloyd Wright, see Cheryl Robertson et al. *The Domestic Scene (1897 – 1927): George M. Niedecken, Interior Architect*, Second Edition (Milwaukee Museum of Art, 2008).
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34. Frederick C. Robie, interview transcript, 1958. Robie lists the cost of the lot at \$13,000, the construction at \$35,000, and the furniture at \$10,000.
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"To thus make of a dwelling place a complete work of art — this is the modern American opportunity."

Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright, 1911



03

CHAPTER 03: ASSESSMENT AND SUMMARY OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

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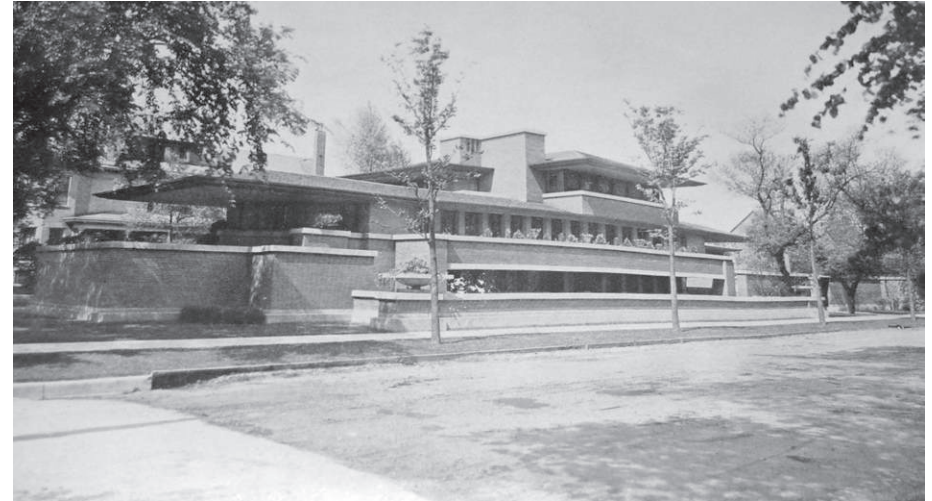
3.1 Masterpiece of International 20th Century Architecture

3.1.1 Understanding the Place

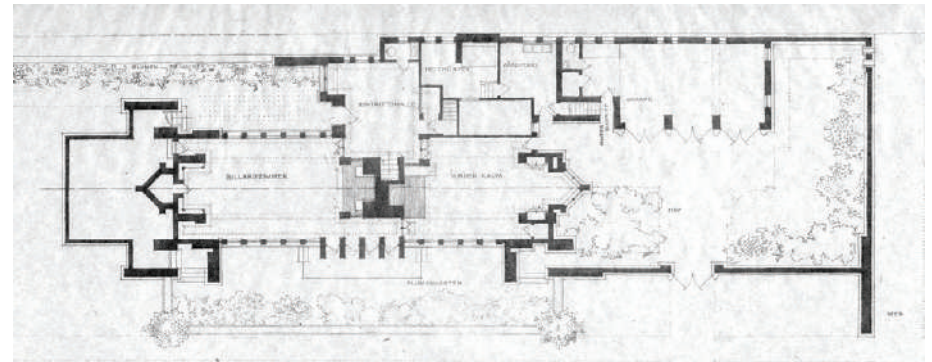
An iconic American building, the Robie House is a masterpiece of international 20th century architecture (Fig.3.1). Built from 1908 to 1910, the house stands on a corner lot at the intersection of Woodlawn Avenue and East 58th Street in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood, on the campus of the University of Chicago.

The plan of the Robie House is determined in part by the proportions of the lot upon which it is built—approximately 60 feet wide by 180 feet long (Fig.3.2). A dynamic configuration of sliding planes, the plan comprises two rectangular forms: a primary, southern-facing wing that houses the family living quarters and advances towards Woodlawn Avenue; and a secondary wing to the north, containing the service functions of the house and a three-car garage, that extends in the opposite direction. At the heart of the plan is the chimney stack: a monumental brick structure from which the elements of the building radiate like branches from the trunk of a tree.

The ground level of the main wing houses private spaces for the family, including a Billiard Room and Children's Playroom, with leaded glass doors that open onto a small children's play yard behind the low garden wall of the south façade. The playroom also opens to the east into a courtyard framed by the service wing of the house to the north and high walls to the south and east. The Main Floor features an expansive open floor plan divided by the brick mass of the central chimney into a living area to the west and a dining room to the east. A narrow balcony extends across the entire south façade, while the Living Room opens to the west onto an elevated porch sheltered beneath a cantilevered roof. The family bedrooms are in the belvedere, on a third floor that wraps around the chimney stack and opens onto a small balcony. The service wing, with guest bedroom, features a kitchen and servants' quarters built above the garage.



3.1. Exterior view of the Frederick C. Robie House, 1910



3.2. Ground Floor Plan, Frederick C. Robie Residence (Chicago, Illinois), 1910.
From *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright*



3.3. South Façade, Frederick C. Robie House



3.4. Roman Brick, detail, Frederick C. Robie House

On the exterior, the Robie house is a complex three-dimensional composition of interlocking rectangular masses (Fig.3.3). The massive brick piers, chimney, and garden wall of the south façade visually reinforce the building's connection with the ground, while the expansive roofs with generous eaves project a sense of shelter. Broad balconies and terraces on the upper levels are lined with leaded glass doors and window sequences that allow interior and exterior space to flow together, while urns and planters at the various levels are intended to bloom with the seasons.

The three-story residence is defined by an overriding sense of horizontality. Wright masterfully controls the form of the building down to the smallest details. The long Roman brick that clads the exterior further emphasizes the horizontality of the building, as does Wright's handling of the mortar: the narrow vertical joints are tinted red and brought flush with the surface of the brick, while the wide horizontal joints remain a natural buff color and are deeply raked (Fig.3.4). This device creates the illusion of continuous horizontal bands that extend across the exterior of the building.

The autumnal colors of brick, limestone, plaster, clay roof tiles, and copper gutters all evoke the palette of the prairie. These simple, natural materials are left unadorned to reveal their inherent textures. The subtle balance between materials and space echoes the interplay of texture, light and shadow that occurs in nature. Even the gradations of elements within the design from the monumental chimney to the delicate form of the leaded glass windows suggest the tonal transitions of the natural world.

The approach and sequence of entry is critical to Wright's Prairie buildings. The entrance to the Robie House is positioned behind the dominant south façade, at the end of a long walkway lined with a planting border. The asymmetrical approach marks the beginning of a carefully controlled

sequence of spaces, alternatively dark and light, toward the central living area on the Main Floor of the house. Marked by a sense of progressive discovery, the sequence leads from the entry hall to a central staircase set tightly within the brick core at the heart of the plan. The ascent to the main level affords glimpses of the rooms through pierced wood screens. An upper hall, lined with leaded glass bookcases and illuminated by elaborate recessed ceiling lights that cast dramatic shadows, serves as another transitional space.

In contrast to the weight of brick and limestone on the exterior, the central living area of the Robie House is defined by light and space. The great living space, which terminates at each end in an angled, prow-like window bay, is lined on all sides with leaded glass doors and windows which flood the interior with light (Fig.3.5). The expanse of glass is made possible by Wright's use of structural steel. Concealed steel beams in the ceilings and floors carry most of the building's weight to brick piers to the east and west, allowing the main level to remain open and uninterrupted by masonry-bearing walls.

Anchoring the central living spaces of the main floor is the substantial fireplace—the symbolic and literal heart of the house. The chimney is the primary organizing element of the plan, dividing the main level into three separate but connected spaces (upper hall, living room, dining room). The chimney is pierced by a rectangular opening above the mantel and between the two flues, so that the ceiling appears as a continuous plane from room to room.

Oak molding trims the window walls, articulates the ceiling profile and skillfully shields recessed lay lights and radiators. At its center, the height of the ceiling creates a sense of openness. At the periphery the ceiling is lowered, giving human scale to the space and connecting directly to the sheltering eaves of the south balcony. This allows for a seamless transition from interior to exterior.



3.5. Leaded Glass Doors, Frederick C. Robie House Living Room

Natural light is supplemented with artificial lighting. Integrated at the perimeter of the ceiling are patterned oak screens with frosted glass that shield recessed lighting. These laylights emit soft light and silhouette varied geometric patterns. Along the dropped edge of the ceiling electrified globe fixtures project into the room, while brass wall sconces with decorative top plates cast geometric shadows onto the walls.

The plastered walls are painted in warm autumnal colors; subtle yellows, ochers and pinks. Applied in layers to the highly textured plaster, these colors set the tonal key for furnishings and finishes. Wright and his associates designed furniture, light fixtures, and decorative objects to complement the house. Harmony and balance are achieved through a consistency in the character of materials, colors and patterns, and with an integrated grammar of simple precise geometry. Oak furniture and wood trim create visual unity, while patterns for carpets, lamps, and embroidered textiles are designed in harmony with those that appear elsewhere in the building. The simple beauty of the space results from this integrity of design where all elements are part of the extended whole.

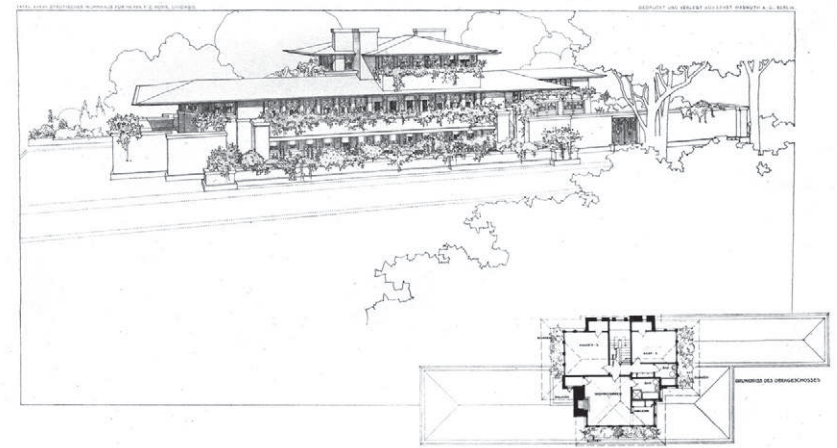
3.1.2 The Robie House: Evolution of an Icon

The value of the Robie House in the context of American and international architecture was established over the course of several decades following its completion.

International Recognition

It was in Europe that the early reputation of the Robie House was first secured. In the decade following the completion of the house several international publications were critical to the distribution of Wright's design philosophy and establishing the significance of the Robie House in Europe.

In the fall of 1909, with construction well underway on the Robie House, Wright left America for Europe to work on the publication of a substantial monograph of the buildings and projects designed during his Chicago years. Titled *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright* (Completed Buildings and Designs by Frank Lloyd Wright), it was published in Germany in 1911 by the Berlin publisher Ernst Wasmuth (Fig.3.6). The project was a significant undertaking, comprising 100 loose plates printed by direct lithography on various paper types of several colors and



3.6. Frederick C. Robie Residence, plate xxxvii, (Chicago, Illinois), 1910. From *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright*.

presented in two oversized portfolios. Robie House was featured in the portfolio in both plan and perspective and was described as:

*A highly developed working out of organic relationship between interior and exterior—clean sweeping lines and low proportions preserving openness and airiness of feature and arrangement throughout.*¹

The folio monograph had a print run of 1,275 copies.² Per Wright's agreement with Wasmuth, the publishing house retained 200 copies for distribution in Europe, while Wright kept the rest for sale in America. Most of these copies were destroyed in a fire at Wright's Wisconsin home Taliesin in 1914. Of greater impact than the folio monograph was a second publication developed by Wright concurrently with the larger project. The *Sonderheft* (Special Edition), as Wright referred to it, was a small volume of text, half-tone photographs, and floor plans. Cheaper and far more available than the folio, the *Sonderheft* was printed in two editions, with 3,900 European copies, and a slightly expanded American edition of 5,000. The publication of the Wasmuth volumes would have a profound impact on a generation of European Modernists. Mies van der Rohe recalled seeing Wright's work for the first time in 1911:

*The work of [Frank Lloyd Wright] presented an architectural world of unexpected force, clarity of language, and disconcerting richness of form... Here again, at long last, genuine organic architecture flowered... So after this first encounter we followed the development of this rare man with wakeful hearts.*³

Of his encounter with the Wasmuth publication, Richard Neutra later wrote, “Whoever he was, Frank Lloyd Wright, the man far away, had done something momentous and rich in meaning. The miracle man instilled in me the conviction that no matter what, I would have to go to the places he walked and worked.” Rudolph Schindler, who would work for Wright from 1918-21, told friends that he came to America for two things, “Frank Lloyd Wright and ground-gripper shoes.”⁵

Writing in the exhibition catalogue to the Museum of Modern Art’s **Modern Architecture: International Exhibition** of 1932 Henry-Russell Hitchcock succinctly outlined the significance of the Wasmuth venture in Europe:

*The Wasmuth publications... made Wright’s work more familiar to Europeans than to his own compatriots. In the next decade his international influence was at its height and those young architects of Europe who were destined to become leaders in creating a new style after the War then learned directly or indirectly the open planning, the free plastic composition, the grouped fenestration, and the horizontality of Wright’s ‘Prairie Architecture.’*⁶

In the Netherlands Wright had more immediate impact on architecture than in any other European country. With its first issue in 1918, the Dutch art journal, *Wendingen*, set a new standard in arts publishing. Edited and designed by the architect Hendrik Theodorus Wijdeveld, the journal sought out the newest ideas and most creative practitioners in art, architecture, and design. Between 1921 and 1926, eight issues of the magazine were devoted to Wright’s work. The first volume, with a cover designed by Russian Constructivist artist El Lissitzky, featured 22 photographs and renderings of

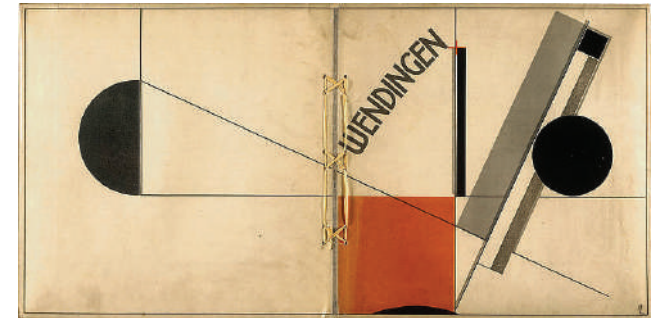
Wright’s architecture, including the Robie House, Midway Gardens, and the Imperial Hotel (Fig.3.7).

During 1925 Wright’s work was published in seven consecutive 24-page issues of *Wendingen*. These seven issues included nearly 200 photographs and drawings of 31 projects, seven of which had been previously published in the Wasmuth Portfolio. Each issue included an introductory essay by a significant author familiar with Wright’s work. Included were essays by Erich Mendelsohn and H. P. Berlage, two leading European architects who had personally visited America to experience Wright’s work. Later the same year, the seven issues were published in a bound volume titled “The Life and Work of the American: Frank Lloyd Wright.”

In his *Wendingen* essay, “The Influence of Frank Lloyd Wright on the Architecture of Europe,” J. J. P. Oud, one of the leading Dutch architects of his day, praised Wright’s “flawless work.”⁷ In 1917, writing in the inaugural edition of *De Stijl*, Oud focused specifically on the Robie House, praising its functional planning, the plan-generated, three-dimensional form, and the way in which Wright exploited modern materials and technology in the spirit of the age. He pronounced the design a “source of esthetic pleasure for the practiced critic.”⁸

National Recognition

Wright’s reputation and that of the Robie House was bolstered in the U.S. through several important exhibitions in the 1930s and 40s at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), New York. Founded in 1929, MOMA featured Wright’s work in its inaugural architecture exhibition, **Modern Architecture: International Exhibition**, which ran from February 9–March 23, 1932, before touring the country.



3.7. *Wendingen*, vol. 4, no. 11, 1921

Curated by Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock, the exhibition sought to promote and consolidate a canon of modern architecture. The focus of the exhibition was on key European Modernists including Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Johnson and Hitchcock included Wright in the exhibition, acknowledging the importance of his early work.

The Robie House was one of two Wright buildings built prior to the 1920s included in the exhibition (Fig.3.8). Writing in the accompanying catalogue, Henry-Russell Hitchcock declared, “Wright’s greatest achievement thus far was his ‘Prairie Architecture’ which had come into existence by 1900 and which reached its climax in the Robie House.” Hitchcock praised Wright’s “new analysis of the house.” Outlining the major innovations of Wright’s Prairie architecture, Hitchcock continued:

Room flowed into room, in the plan, and the supports were increasingly isolated as the windows ceased to be mere holes in the wall and were grouped together in long rows. The strong horizontals of the project eaves and of the second floor window sill were emphasized; but through the weft of lines parallel to the earth, verticals indicated the main lines of support. Interior and exterior flowed into one another to create an abstract design in space relationships. The integrity with which various materials were used and the functional plasticity of the parts provided the chief decoration. There was still some ornament but it was inconspicuous and subordinated to the scale of the whole.⁹

Three Centuries of American Art, 1609–1938 prepared by MOMA in 1938 for the Jeu de Paume, Paris, featured a model of the Robie House to represent Wright’s work in the architecture section (Fig.3.9). The exhibition catalogue described the house as such:

A sympathetic understanding of the physical and psychological needs of the inhabitants shapes the plan of the Robie House... Instead of being cut up into many box-like rooms, the living-space flows freely from hall to living-room to dining-room, reaching out for abundant air light and air. Windows are no longer holes piercing the wall, but join each other to form long horizontal bands. In his best work, the long low lines, the sensitive respect for the qualities inherent in their natural surroundings—all proclaim the lyrical genius of the only great romantic of our century.¹⁰

In 1940, MOMA mounted **Frank Lloyd Wright: American Architect**, a major retrospective of his work to date. Wright himself curated the exhibition, placing a major focus on his work of the 1930s. The Robie House was again one of two works prior to 1925 that Wright included in the exhibition.

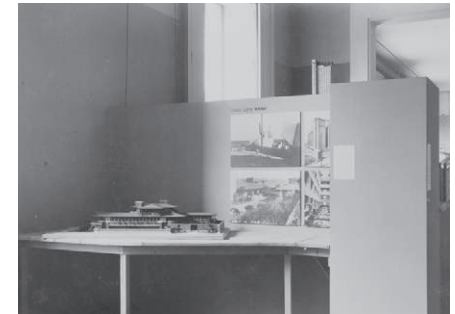
Beyond MOMA, the most critical years in the U.S. in establishing the importance of the Robie House in the mind of the American public came as a direct result of the Chicago Theological Seminary’s attempts to raze the building in the 1940s and 1950s.

In May 1957, to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the American Institute of Architects, *House & Home* magazine declared Robie House the “House of the Century,” stating:

No House in America during the past hundred years matches the importance of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Robie House. Above all else, the Robie house is a magnificent work of art. But, in addition, the house introduced so many concepts in planning construction that its full influence cannot be measured accurately for years to come. Without this house, much of modern architecture as we know it today might not exist.



3.8. Robie House (far left), Installation view of the exhibition, “Modern Architecture: International Exhibit,” 1932



3.9. Robie House model, Installation view of the exhibition, “Three Centuries of American Art,” 1938.

Here, in one house designed 50 years ago, Wright demonstrated such diverse ideas as to open plan; the combination of windows in continuous strips; the projection of the roof soffit in deep cantilevers far out beyond the glass, the use of continuous inside-to-outside walls to join the house to its garden; the effectiveness of a low slung roof to make the house seem more in repose; and the importance, for the same reasons, of horizontality throughout.¹¹

Similarly, the *Architectural Record*, during 1956 and 1957, ran a special feature “One Hundred Years of Significant Buildings.” Again, the Robie House won highest honors in rating by the *Record*’s professional panel on the most significant buildings built in America during the past fifty years. A critical commentary by Alan Burnham, AIA, merits quoting:

The Robie House created at a domestic level something new to the eyes of 1909 Chicago, supplementing the symmetrical classicism of the day by an asymmetrical monumentality. In the structurally expressive use of piers, wall planes, and strips of windows all clustered about a central chimney, one senses an unusual coherence of planning. Visually this produced a bold interplay of forms with strong horizontals at different levels, originating in but leading away from the dominant vertical. The fenestration represented a radically new concept, with its almost continuous light source interrupted only by structural piers and amply shaded by wide eaves; the logical outgrowth of a harsher climate to which the conventional New England window had never been properly suited. One senses Wright’s complete mastery of the house of that low-lying type of dwelling which he had originated and named the ‘Prairie House.’¹²

Local, State, and National Landmark Awards

Following its acquisition by development firm Webb and Knapp in 1957, and its subsequent donation to the University of Chicago in 1963, the Robie House was awarded National Historic Landmark status on November 27, 1963. The National Historic Landmark listing identifies the building as “One of the finest representative examples of the mature work of [Frank Lloyd Wright].” It goes on to state that the house, “which Wright developed in his inimitable ‘prairie style’ to fit the confines of a city lot, has won international acclaim as a recognized turning point in modern domestic architecture.”¹³

The building became the first City of Chicago Landmark on September 15, 1971. The listing states that “Of the more than 75 buildings that Frank Lloyd Wright designed in the Chicago area, none is more famous or influential than this residence... The building’s low overhanging roof and the long wall around its base give a sense of privacy to the occupants, while the roof’s sweeping horizontality makes the house seem longer and lower than it actually is. The design, which was a marked contrast to traditional houses of the period, signaled a turning point in modern residential architecture.”¹⁴

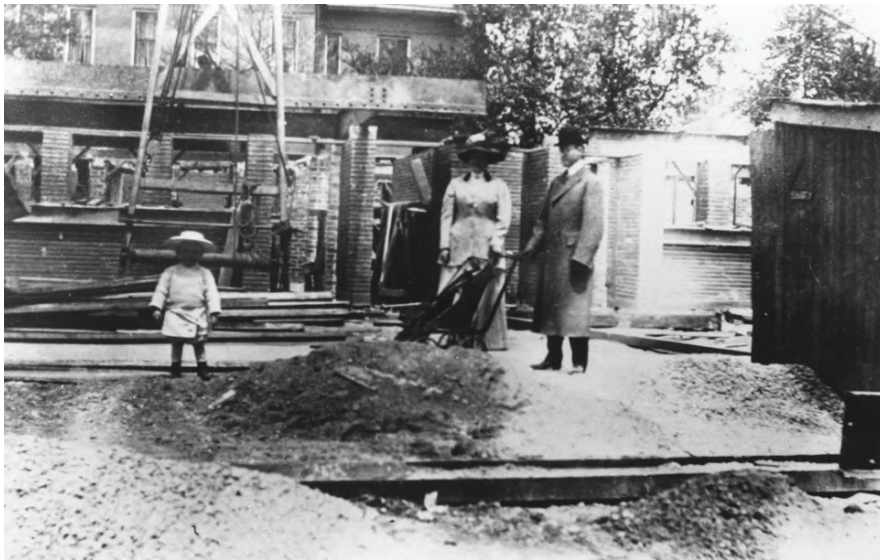
On April 4, 1980, the Robie House was awarded State Landmark Status at which point both the exterior and significant interior features were landmarked. The designation was awarded on the grounds that the house represented “An unchallenged landmark in the evolution of American domestic architecture.”¹⁵

3.2 Robie House Technical and Design Innovation

3.2.1 Technical Innovation

Robie House Structural System

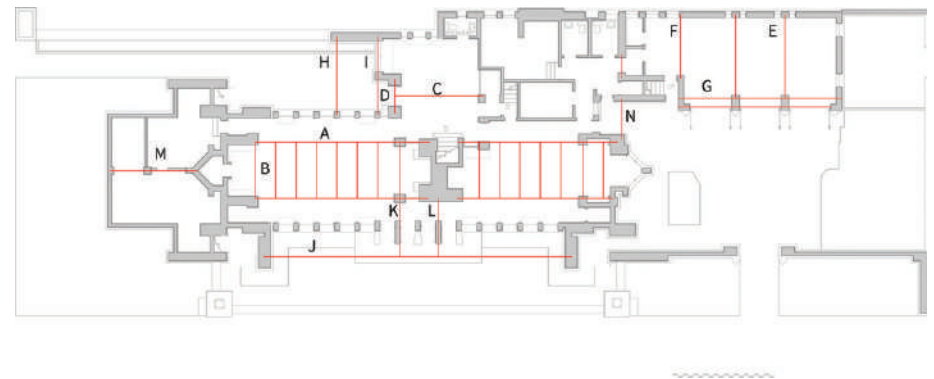
The structural system of the Robie House is a hybrid of wood frame construction, masonry bearing walls, and extensive steel—a combination not commonly found in residential design. Wright's iconoclastic design of the Robie House depends on steel's inherent structural capabilities. Concealed steel amplifies interior spaces, extends exterior soffits, and allows masonry to seemingly float above open space. The 86-foot, 9-inch unified span from the living room window prow to the dining room prow is exceptional. The exterior prow soffits cantilever nine feet and eight inches from the nearest vertical masonry supports. The projecting brick balconies and planters with limestone sills produce massive weight, yet broad weight-bearing masonry walls are rare; instead, masonry structural units are limited mainly to piers. These hallmark features require a rigid structural system that can cover expansive widths and reach over considerable space (Fig.3.10).



3.10. The Robie Family on the construction site of the house, steel beams shown in background, 1909

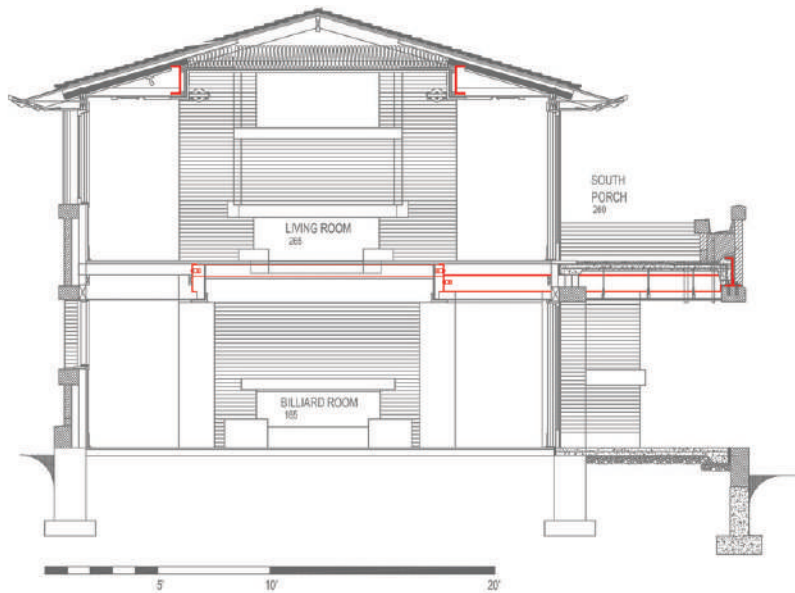
Ground Floor:

In the ceiling above the ground level, steel supports the floors of the main level and bearing walls (Fig.3.11 subsequent letter references are for this illustration). Four fifteen-inch steel C-channel beams run east-west above the Billiard and Playroom (A). Located just inside the lowered soffits, one end of each beam stretches out from the four corners of the chimney mass, and rests on plates situated on the masonry piers located in the prows at each end. These beams support the thirteen six-inch steel C-channel beams used as floor joists for the main level Living and Dining rooms (B). Oriented north-south, the joists are perpendicular to the four main beams. There are eight joists above the Billiard room and seven above the Playroom.



3.11. Framing above the Ground Level, Frederick C. Robie House

In these spaces, the use of steel (rather than wood) floor joists permits the wide span of joists (four feet apart on center). Had wood joists been used, a more typical span of sixteen inches on center would have been necessary. The Billiard Room and Playroom ceilings (composed of lath and plaster) tightly follow the wide-set joists, expressing the location of each joist and capturing the space in-between. This space is left uncovered rather than being hidden inside the ceiling structure, and therefore contributes to the overall room height. Capturing this typically lost space is one of the ways that Wright limits the overall height of the Robie House and further amplifies the horizontality (Fig.3.12).



3.12. Living Room Cross Section, Frederick. C. Robie House

Supporting an interior space and bearing wall above, the entry hall's ten foot I-beam (C) runs east from a three by four inch steel angle lintel above the front door (D), towards the entry hall closet, where it rests on a brick masonry pier. This beam is necessary to shorten the depth of the wood floor joists above. It lies beneath the main level's wood-framed wall between the landing (at the top of the main stairway) and the guest bedroom and helps carry the floor load. Additionally, it supports the bedroom level's wood-framed wall between the master bedroom and northwest bedroom.

The garage, at the northeast side of the property has three north-south I-beams that support the servants' quarters above. Two 10-inch I-beams rest on the two piers between the three garage doors on the south wall of the garage (E). They span the garage interior and rest on the brick piers of the north wall that are in between the two sets of small windows. Additionally, one eight-inch I-beam runs north-south, straddling the workshop area towards the west end of the garage (F). An additional ten-inch steel I-beam extends east-west over the garage doors (G).

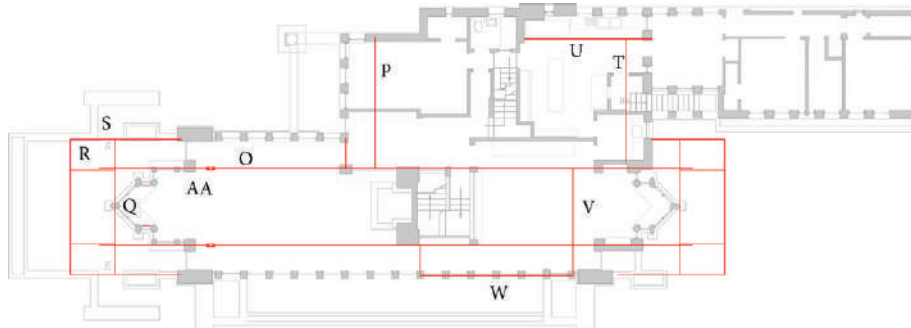
Steel makes possible this level's exterior features, too. The guest room balcony (over the main entrance to the house) is supported by a series of parallel channels and beams. A twelve-inch channel lines the west edge of the porch (H) while the east side (above the two leaded glass windows and front entryway) is supported with two six-inch I-beams (I). These doubled-up beams support the guest room's west wall, as well as the northwest bedroom planter's west wall (both masonry walls).

The south balcony is supported with two fifteen-inch channels and an attached three-by-three-inch angle, both of which are spliced together in the middle of the east-west span (J). The beam is located behind the lower limestone sill. The ends of the unit lie on plates on the large brick piers that define the empty spaces at the balcony's two ends. In addition, the beam is supported in the center of its length by two perpendicular fifteen-inch I-beams. One of these beams is bolted to the Billiard Room's southern beam that runs east-west (K). The other balcony support beam extends out from the masonry wall of the chimney (L). These two supports cross the interior southern hallway and are carried on the two full-height exterior piers beneath the balcony, where they are bolted to the steel beam at the balcony's edge.

To support the expansive concrete west porch, a pair of seven-inch channels form a beam (M). Running east-west, the steel extends west from the masonry pier at the prow's western-most point, extends over a central brick pier in the wine cellar, and terminates in the brick wall of the west porch planter. The final exterior steel feature on the ground level of the house is a pair of six-inch I-beams that support the east edge of the soffit over the door east of the playroom (N). This unit supports the east wall of the pantry, which in turn helps support the east wall of the planter outside the northeast bedroom (both masonry walls).

Main Floor:

As on the ground floor, the main floor plan uses steel to create dramatic unsupported spans (thirty-two feet between piers in the living room) and to limit overall building height (Fig.3.13). The living room steel is hidden within the dropped soffits at each side of the space. The living room steel above the main floor is the same fifteen-inch steel C-channels used as beams (O), (subsequent letter references are to Fig. 3.13) that run east-west and support the roof and bedroom levels above, allowing for the large open space of the living and dining rooms.. The C-channel beams are bolted together



3.13. Framing above the Main Level, Frederick C. Robie House

to create the continuous sixty-four-foot span of the central living space. They rest on masonry piers at the east and west ends and extend past the large masonry chimney pier into the center of the home.

Within the east and west cantilevers, additional steel extends down at an angle from the fifteen-inch steel beams within the soffits (R), allowing the roof line to fit as tightly as possible. The area across the prow is stabilized with a continuous steel beam that is supported at its center by a steel pipe column inside the framing at point of the prow (Q). Additional six-inch steel angles are in place near the edge of the overhangs, stabilizing the cantilevered soffit edges and preventing the potential future sagging of the soffits (R).

Steel is also present behind the ceiling of the main level (P, W, T, U) providing support for the exterior walls of the bedroom level and the masonry planter walls that appear to grow from the roof line.

Third Floor:

On the Third Floor steel is present at the top of each window wall with pipe columns buried within the mullions between windows. This allows for long spans of leaded glass windows with very light framing at the corners (Fig.3.14). Steel angles are also used on the edge of the long cantilevers to stabilize the roof edge.



3.14. Master Bedroom, Frederick C. Robie House

Heating and Cooling

In his design of the modern Prairie house Frank Lloyd Wright departed from many conventional standards in heating and cooling.¹⁶ Late 19th century Chicago residences typically used basements for functional purposes, such as kitchens and their supporting services, in part because these were heat-generating functions. Attics with dormers, typically the hottest and least convenient rooms of the house, served as servants' quarters. Ground levels contained several large rooms—sitting rooms, living rooms, dining rooms, and parlors—with large foyers leading from a central entry, which in turn led to a central stair. Bedrooms were arranged in a similar manner above.

This organization of spaces around a centralized circulation plan and their vertical arrangement was especially suited for the heating systems of the times: basement furnaces from which hot air rose through floor grilles, or steam systems where condensate returned to the boiler by gravity. Natural ventilation was relatively difficult since most rooms only had windows on one wall, although some air movement was induced from floor to floor by opening dormer windows in the attic and admitting fresh air at the ground level. Wright's introduction to his Wasmuth Portfolio outlines how improved means of heating and cooling were made possible by his reconfiguration of the traditional house:

*The gently-sloping roofs, grateful to the Prairie, do not leave large air-spaces above the rooms, and so the chimney has grown in dimensions and importance, and in hot weather ventilates at the high part of the circulating air-space beneath the roofs, the fresh air entering beneath the eaves through openings easily closed in winter.*¹⁷

He continues:

*Another modern opportunity is afforded by our effective system of hot-water heating. By this means the forms of the buildings may be more completely articulated, with light and air on several sides. By keeping the ceilings low the walls may be opened with a series of windows to the outer air, the flowers and trees, the prospects, and one may live as comfortably as formerly, less shut in... it is also possible to spread the buildings, which once in our climate of extremes were a compact box cut into compartments, into a more organic expression, making a house in a garden or the country the delightful thing in relation to either or both, that imagination would have it.*¹⁸

The Robie House features environmental amenities not found in its more traditional neighbors. These are summarized as follows:

Extent of operable doors and windows:

On the main floor of the house, the extensive use of glass represents a significant departure from traditional residential design. In the living and dining rooms, approximately 75% of the exterior wall can be opened to the outside compared with the more typical 20%. Furthermore, Wright insisted on out-swinging casement windows versus the more traditional double-hung windows. The casement window allows for the whole window area to be opened and induces greater air circulation near the window. Unlike other homes of the time, sleeping porches were not needed at Robie House, since the large expanses of windows with sheltering overhangs allowed them to be kept open even in inclement weather, providing access to the cooling nighttime air.

Open floor plan allowing free movement of air:

Typical residential design of Wright's time produced box-like, compact homes where contained living spaces were organized around stairs and corridors. The free-flowing interior circulation and punctured fireplace of the Robie House maximizes the circulation of fresh air, while its spread-out, expansive floor plan permits extensive exterior window area. Air flow is further facilitated by opening the attic hatch to the masonry mass above the master bedroom closet which features slots in the masonry mass that act as vents, allowing hot summer air to naturally vent at the bedroom level and other levels of the house through the staircase.

Sheltering overhangs:

Wright frequently mentions the horizontal line as the line of domesticity, evocative of the prairie. The horizontal roofline with its long east and west overhangs and relatively shallow south overhang illustrates this ideal, but it is also correct for proper shading. The east and west building faces are protected from low morning and afternoon sun angles, and on the south, the overhang that is reduced in depth is sufficient to shade the glass from the high noon sun.

East-west building orientation:

As dictated by conventional solar design, the main axis of the Robie House runs east-west, allowing for maximum solar exposure in winter while reducing east and west exposure to low sun angles during summer mornings and afternoons. While the lot favors an east-west orientation, Wright ingeniously adapts the site to maximize the effect.

Wright takes full advantage of the siting through his placement of balconies and porches. The porches of the Robie House are designed to accommodate any weather condition. The small dining porch to the east is perfectly positioned to step out and take in the morning weather while being shielded from

the street. The south-facing porch, with its exposed southern sunlight, is ideal for early spring days or for fresh air on a sunny fall day. During the long days of summer, the west porch is ideal for watching the sunset and allows for use on rainy summer evenings under the sheltering cantilevered roof. The cantilever also provides shade on a hot and sunny afternoon.

During fall afternoons, the sunset can be viewed from the guest bedroom balcony off the upper hall, where the lack of an overhang allows the sun to warm the porch. On the bedroom level the master bedroom balcony provides fresh air and privacy with a location shielded from the street and sidewalk by the roof mass. On the ground floor, the billiard and playroom flow into the south play yard, which is raised slightly above grade and sheltered by the balcony above.

Additional Technical Features

In addition to the major innovations described above, the Robie House incorporates technical developments that are reflective of the era in which Wright designed the house.

Wright and his client Frederick C. Robie both shared a passion for automobiles. The attached three-car garage at the Robie House demonstrates how both men considered the car as an essential element of modern life (Fig.3.15). The integration of the garage and the house foreshadows Wright's later use of integrated carports in his Usonian Houses of the 1930s and 40s. The ceiling of the garage is concrete with a wood floor on sleepers above, providing a fireproof division between the garage and the servants' bedrooms above. The garage itself included many modern conveniences including: heat, a toilet, a mechanic's pit, and plumbing for car washing.

The variety and complexity of lighting at the Robie House is also a modern convenience for 1909. The living room and dining room feature soffit-mounted sconces integrated into the trim, decorative brass wall sconces along with decorative



3.15. Fred Robie Jr. in front of the Robie House Garage, 1910

wood and glass laylights, and custom designed table lamps, all of which contribute to the aesthetic experience of the Robie House.

In addition to its creatively designed electrical lighting, the Robie House boasted a plug-in central vacuum system, an intercom and telephone system, and an integrated irrigation system that watered balcony planters at the turn of a knob—modern amenities for a forward-looking client.

3.2.2 Design Innovation

Form of the House

Writing in the introduction to the German edition of the Wasmuth portfolio, Wright's friend, the English design theorist C. R. Ashbee declared, "Wright has understood how to apply the new ideas (i.e., of Louis Sullivan) to the private house, and has created a new type which is without any precedent..."

In his Prairie houses, Wright developed a unique vocabulary of space, form, and pattern that represented a groundbreaking shift in design from the traditional houses of the day. Characterized by dramatic horizontal lines and masses, the Prairie buildings that emerged in the first decade of the 20th century evoke the expansive Midwestern landscape. While the sweeping spans of the Robie House are made possible by Wright's use of structural steel, the horizontal form of the building is achieved through Wright's reconfiguration of the traditional form of the house (Fig.3.16). "I saw that a little height on the prairie was enough to look like much more," Wright stated, "every detail as to height becoming intensely significant, breadths all falling short... I had an idea that the horizontal planes in buildings, those planes parallel to earth, identify themselves with the ground—make the building belong to the ground."¹⁹



3.16. Panoramic exterior view of the Frederick C. Robie House

At the Robie House, Wright removes the traditional subterranean basement, creating a first floor above ground. This elevates the main floor, featuring the primary living spaces, a dining room and living room, along with a guest bedroom and servants' wing, above street level. The family bedrooms are on a third floor that wraps around the chimney stack. All levels embrace the environment through balconies and terraces. The result of removing the basement and attic is a greater extension of living spaces over the lot, which permits more exterior window area. It also allows for more open, free-flowing living spaces with increased light, air, view, and privacy. Wright described these changes as such:

Freedom of floor space and elimination of useless heights worked a miracle in the new dwelling place. A sense of appropriate freedom had changed its whole aspect. The dwelling became more fit for human habitation... and more natural to its site. An entirely new sense of space value in architecture began to come home.²⁰

Open floor plan

In traditional American homes of the 19th century, interior space was divided into a series of compartmentalized areas dedicated to highly specialized functions. Wright responded by rethinking the interior form of the house. In his autobiography Wright asserted, “Eliminate the rooms as boxes and the house itself as another boxing of boxes.” The architect set out to “break the box” and simplify residential buildings, opening interior spaces and creating a flexible, modern living environment. The open plan represented a new modern way of living, the gradual breakdown of traditional social hierarchies, and a reduced dependence on servants.

The expansive living space at the heart of the Robie House is one of the great innovations of early 20th century architecture and design (Fig.3.17). The light-filled open plan is ingenious in its simplicity—a single room, comprising a living and dining space, divided only by a central chimney. Doors and windows of leaded glass line the room, flooding the interior with light and blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior.

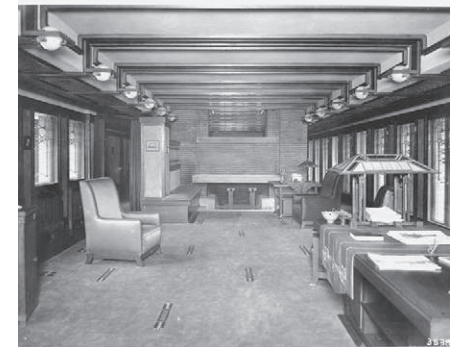
In the central living spaces of the Robie House, exterior walls are treated as screens, with continuous bands of leaded glass windows dissolving the boundaries between interior space and the world of nature outside. “My sense of ‘wall’ was no longer the side of a box,” Wright stated, “It was an enclosure of space affording protection against storm or heat only when needed. But it was also to bring the outside world into the house and let the inside of the house go outside. In this sense I was working away at the wall as a wall and bringing it towards the function of a screen, a means of opening up space which, as control of building-materials improved would finally permit the free use of the whole space without affecting the soundness of the structure.” “Thus,” Wright declared, “came the end to the cluttered house.”²¹

Glass

The central living space at the heart of the Robie House represents one of Wright’s finest achievements in decorative glass. Wright designed 175 doors and windows for Robie House of which 163 original remain in the house today (Fig.3.18). Doors and windows of leaded glass composed in patterns of flattened diamond shapes and diagonal geometries line the interiors. The living room and dining room of Robie House are visually united into one continuous space by a 47-foot span of 24 leaded-glass casement doors opening to a narrow balcony that extends across the length of the south façade.

Creating ribbons of uninterrupted glass in his Prairie style buildings, Wright conceived his windows as an integral part of his organic design. Known for their extensive use of clear glass with touches of color, the glass designs are all geometric abstractions unique to each building for which they were created. Wright called them “light screens,” and the concept drew inspiration in part from Japanese *fusuma* sliding doors that connect interior and exterior space. Wright’s light screens illuminated his interiors with natural light, touched by the autumnal dashes of his color palette and animated by his exquisite visual geometries. Wright’s buildings follow the geometric principles he imposed on each project, and his glass designs also express the geometry that unites the building. Writing of his work in glass, the architect stated:

*The windows are usually provided with characteristic straight line patterns, absolutely in the flat and usually severe. The nature of the glass is taken into account in these designs as is also the metal bar used in their construction, and most of them are treated as metal ‘grilles’ with glass inserted forming a simple rhythmic arrangement of straight lines and squares made as cunning as possible so long as the result is quiet. The aim is that the designs shall make the best use of the technical contrivances that produce them.*²²



3.17. Living Room, Frederick C. Robie, 1910



3.18. Leaded glass windows, Dining Room, Frederick C. Robie House

Wright's window designs were a primary feature of his Prairie style, an expression of his creative intelligence, prolific imagination and passion for beauty.

Integral furnishings

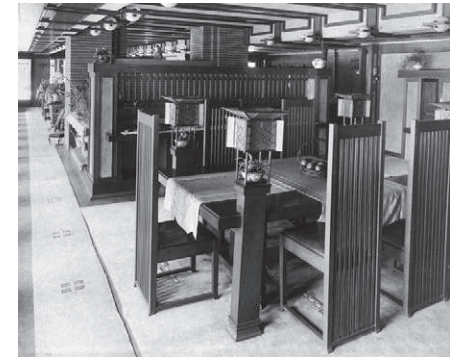
Wright and his associates designed furniture and built-ins for all the public spaces of the Robie House: the entrance hall, living room, dining room, and guest bedroom. Built from red oak, and characterized by straight lines and rectilinear forms, the furniture is designed with the traditional Arts and Crafts preference for solidity and simplicity (Fig.3.19).

As Wright worked to define his vision for American architecture and design, the currents of Modernism coursed at home and abroad. Architects and designers in Europe, Great Britain and America integrated exterior and interior design principles to achieve a level of visual unity never before seen. From paintings and prints, to light fixtures and furniture, the Modern style was pervasive, synthesizing every aspect of design as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a “total work of art.”

Wright's ideology, like that of his international contemporaries, focused on the complete integration of the house. Writing of his aesthetic theories in the introduction to the Wasmuth Portfolio, Wright described his organic, unified interiors, declaring:

They are all mere structural details in its character and completeness, heating apparatus, light fixtures, the very chairs, tables, cabinets and musical instruments, where practicable, are of the building itself. Nothing of appliances or fixtures is admitted purely as such where circumstances permit the full development of the building scheme. Floor coverings and hangings are a part of the house as the plaster on the walls or the tiles on the roof.

Bold, innovative and architectural, the furnishings and decorative arts of Wright's Chicago years were conceived as integral elements of his Prairie interiors, designed in harmony with each specific commission. Incorporating furniture, lighting, and decorative arts into the structure of his buildings enabled Wright to achieve a harmonious and unified interior.²³



3.19. Dining Room with custom furniture, Frederick C. Robie House, 1910

3.3 Statement and Assessment of Cultural Significance

3.3.1 Statement of Significance

The Robie House is culturally significant as:

- The culmination of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie Style, a new American architecture.
- A cornerstone of modern architecture by one of the most important architects of the early twentieth century.
- A quintessential example of Frank Lloyd Wright's Organic Architecture.
- A museum open to the public and singularly dedicated to educating an international audience on Frank Lloyd Wright's design philosophy.

3.3.2 Assessment of Cultural Significance

The Robie House represents the culmination of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie Style, a new American architecture.

Completed in 1910, the Frederick C. Robie House represents the culmination of a series of residential designs by Wright that began with the Winslow House in River Forest, Illinois (1893-94) and includes the Bradley House, Kankakee (1900), the Dana House, Springfield, Illinois (1902), the Willits House, Highland Park, Illinois (1902), the Martin House, Buffalo, New York (1903), and the Coonley House, Riverside, Illinois (1906-09). None of these earlier buildings, however, achieves the same degree of formal integrity or expressive power as the Robie House, which for more than a century has been recognized as the consummate expression of Wright's Prairie style. The Prairie style marked a decisive break from the derivative residential architecture of 19th Century America. Freed from the confines of historical European styles, Wright's Prairie houses presented a new vision for a modern American architecture.

Unrelentingly horizontal in its elevation and a dynamic configuration of sliding planes in its plan, the Robie House is the most innovative and forward thinking of all Wright's Prairie houses. In its dramatic horizontality, the design masterfully

evokes the flat, expansive landscape of the Midwest prairie. The horizontality of the house is reinforced at every level of the design, from the projecting roofline, to the very bricks and mortar of the building itself. Through his use of materials, Wright achieves a remarkable balance of texture and color that further emphasizes the palette of the prairie. Broad balconies and terraces cause interior and exterior space to flow together, while urns and planters at each level were intended to bloom with the seasons.

The expansive open plan living space at the heart of the home is one of the great innovations of 20th century architecture and design. The light-filled space is breathtaking in its simplicity—a single room, comprising a living and dining space, divided only by a central chimney and connected by a continuous span of leaded glass doors. Glass is used extensively, flooding the interior with light. In his design of the Robie House, Wright achieves a dynamic balance between transparency and enclosure, blurring the boundaries between interior space and the world of nature beyond.

Wright's vision for modern living as presented in the Robie House offered a path forward for modern architecture in the 20th century. Today the Robie House maintains its importance as part of America's cultural heritage, a powerful declaration of Wright's uncompromising vision for a new American architecture.

The Robie House is a cornerstone of modern architecture by one of the most important architects of the early twentieth century.

Over the course of his long career Frank Lloyd Wright designed many different building types, from churches to office buildings, but it is Wright's residential work that was the core of his architecture practice. The Prairie houses of 1900-1910 were created for the middle class and designed in harmony with the Midwest landscape. Featuring innovative open plans, integral furniture, and simple construction techniques and materials, they define the first major phase of Wright's career. The Prairie period included significant works of architecture such as the Ward Willits House, Highland Park, Illinois (1902), the Arthur Heurtley House, Oak Park, Illinois (1902), Unity Temple, Oak Park, Illinois (1905), and culminating in the iconic Frederick C. Robie House, Chicago, Illinois (1910). The core principles of Wright's design philosophy outlined in the Robie House would shape Wright's architecture throughout his long career.

Following a year abroad in Europe from 1909 through 1910, Wright returned to the US and restarted his architecture practice with a Studio in Spring Green, Wisconsin, and offices in Chicago, Illinois. Building on the work of his Prairie period, and inspired by his time in Europe, Wright's architecture entered a new phase defined by a pronounced interest in Primitivism and the use of complex patterns of ornament. Major works during this period include Midway Gardens in Chicago, Illinois (1914) and the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, Japan (1917-23). Wright's interest in pattern and ornament was further explored in the houses he designed for California in the 1920s. Using a unique construction process, which Wright called his "textile block system" the California residences were built with precast concrete blocks, featuring elaborate organic decoration. Intended as an economical means of construction for middle-class housing, examples include the Storer and Ennis houses in Los Angeles, California (1923 and 1924).

The mid-20s and the early 30s were lean years for Wright, as the architect struggled to regain the success of his early career. His Usonian houses, which emerged in the 1930s, grew out of the principles defined during his Prairie period, and provided a model for affordable American homes. Built examples range from the modest Pope-Leighey House, Falls Church, Virginia (1939), to large and elaborate versions such as the Glare House in Lake Forest, Illinois (1951). In the late 1930s a series of major buildings including the Johnson Wax Administration Building (1936) Racine, Wisconsin, and Fallingwater in Bear Run, Pennsylvania (1938), reinvigorated Wright's career and brought renewed national and international recognition.

Until his death in 1959, Wright remained prolific. His continuing ambition to improve American society through architecture can be seen in large-scale conceptual projects such as Broadacre City (1930s), a utopian city inspired by America's agrarian past, and visionary designs for the Mile High Illinois skyscraper (1956) and his master plan for Baghdad, Iraq (1957-58).

In 1943, in his late 70s, Wright began one of his most important commissions, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. The inverted ziggurat of reinforced concrete was one of Wright's most public and celebrated commissions. The Museum was dedicated in the fall of 1959, six months after Wright's death at the age of 91.

Despite the successes of his late career, the Robie House stands as one of Wright's most iconic buildings. It represents a defining moment in the architect's career. Over the course of the 20th century, the house has been singled out repeatedly in exhibitions and publications as one of Wright's most important buildings, and one of the most significant structures of the 20th Century. Wright's open architectural plan and design innovation had a pervasive influence on leading architects and architecture of the 20th century, including Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra who worked for Wright, but also Eero Saarinen, Louis Kahn, Philip Johnson and others of the next generation. Recognizing the Robie House as a critical development in his career, Wright himself declared the building to be "a source of world-wide architectural inspiration," and "a cornerstone of modern architecture."²⁴

The Robie House is a quintessential example of Frank Lloyd Wright's Organic Architecture.

In 1908, the year that the Robie House commission entered his Studio, Frank Lloyd Wright published his seminal essay, "In the Cause of Architecture." In the essay, Wright defines a set of principles that would become the basis of his Organic Architecture. Throughout his 70-year career, this philosophy of design was present consistently in Wright's oeuvre and the scope of its meaning mirrored the development his architecture.

A building, according to Wright, should possess simplicity and repose. These qualities could be achieved in the following ways. Wright believed that the plan of a house should be simplified to contain the minimal number of rooms. He identified the living room as the most important of all spaces in the house. In addition, "openings should occur as integral features of the structure and form, if possible, its natural ornamentation. An excessive use of ornament should be avoided. Furniture and fixtures should be designed as integral features of the building. A building should "appear to grow easily from its site" and harmonize with its surroundings, which in the case of the Midwest prairie implied, "gently sloping roofs, low proportions, quiet skylines, suppressed, heavyset chimneys and sheltering overhangs, low terraces and outreaching walls sequestering private gardens." In Wright's vision for the modern house, colors should harmonize with nature, and draw influence "from the woods and fields." In accordance with these principles, the natural qualities of materials, "of wood, plaster, brick, or stone" should be respected.²⁵

The Frederick C. Robie House exemplifies the principles laid out by Wright in his essay. Conceived as a total work of art in which all the elements combine in one unified vision, the Robie House represents an original, complete reinterpretation of American domestic architecture. In its sensitive handling of materials, remarkable attention to interior detailing, and integrated treatment of ornament, the building exhibits a fundamental respect for nature as the source of all architectural form. Wright's innovative treatment of open-plan living spaces in the Robie House established a new direction for 20th century architecture. The expansive living space at the heart of the Robie House presents a new sense of freedom and openness designed for the American family, and is reflective of a modern, democratic American society. Wright's enduring legacy of Organic Architecture, as presented in the Robie House, is a highly innovative approach to architecture that abandoned European influences to create a purely American form in harmony with man and nature, fully integrated with all its constituent parts, and embodying American society from the inside out.

The Robie House is culturally significant as a museum open to the public and singularly dedicated to educating an international audience on Frank Lloyd Wright's design philosophy.

Opened as a public museum in 1997, the Robie House today is an international destination for approximately 40,000 visitors annually. The building provides an authentic experience of Frank Lloyd Wright's design vision for a new American architecture.

As a public museum, the Robie House serves four broad constituencies:

- Local, national, and international cultural tourists
- Preservationists and professionals in the fields of architecture and design
- Community and regional members interested in community heritage and a wide range of cultural programs
- Scholarly and academic constituents, including cultural historians and others interested in Wright's vision for architecture and design.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Trust offers a wide range of activities at the Robie House designed to meet the needs, desires, and expectations of each of the four audience groups. These include:

- Public and special interest tours
- Public Programs
- Teacher Professional Development
- In-school and onsite programming serving K–12 students
- Preservation mentoring programs for young adults
- Social programs and events
- National and international institutional collaborations
- Web and multi-media programs including online exhibits, and educational apps and web resources.



3.20 Robie House Living Room, recreated inglenook

3.4 Value-based Significance

With each new generation, society can change or shift emphasis concerning the value it places on great historical works of art and architecture. In order to assess the value contemporary society places on Robie House, the Trust conducted a survey consisting of four questions. This survey represents the opinions of 870 respondents with answers scored by weight from 1 to 7 – a weight of 1 being the lowest ranked choice. All weight values were multiplied by the number of times an answer was chosen and divided by the number of respondents to that choice. This formula corrects for participants who did not respond to every choice.

Question #1 asked respondents to identify themselves in one of four categories: Hyde Park Resident, Chicago Resident, National/International, or Preservationist.

The largest group identified in the survey are National/International, with Chicago Residents and Preservationists equally represented, and Hyde Park Residents as the smallest group. It should be noted that because Hyde Park is an historic neighborhood, some Hyde Park Residents may have chosen to identify themselves as Preservationists.

Question #2 requested respondents to rank a listing of Robie House characteristics in order of the value.

The survey score indicates the sequence of preference. The **cumulative result** of the entire group selected *Reflection of the Midwest Prairie – Prairie Style* as highest value and as second *Frank Lloyd Wright Building Open to the Public*. Among the various groups, these two choices emerge as highest in rank with slight variations. Because Prairie Style applies only to a select group of Wright sites designed during approximately ten years of his early career, this ranking suggests that the public has an informed understanding of Robie House and awareness of it as a unique style of architecture created by Wright. The second rank value was so closely scored as to nearly tie. The importance of public access and opportunity to experience the site is of nearly equal value to contemporary audiences.

870 Total Responses



Survey Cumulative Result	Score
Reflection of the Midwest Prairie – Prairie Style	4.77
Frank Lloyd Wright Building Open to the Public	4.70
Design Innovation and Technical Ingenuity	4.25
Revolutionary Break with Prior Architectural Styles	3.94
Modernism and Beauty of Design	3.94
Americanism and Landmark Status	3.66
International Fame as an Architectural Icon	3.05

Design Innovation and Technical Ingenuity ranked third. This value is most closely tied to Wright himself. It ranked high among all groups indicating recognition of Wright as an innovative genius without calling out specific characteristics of the house, such as its open plan and its steel frame construction, that represent these values.

The tie of the next two rankings – *Revolutionary Break with Prior Architectural Styles and Modernism and Beauty of Design* – suggest that these two values are perceived as a blended value that defines modernism as a new definition of beauty.

The final two rankings were consistent among all responding groups, placing *Americanism* ahead of Robie House’s international stature. An overwhelming majority consider Robie House first as American. Results are shown, by category, in sequence from national/international to city to neighborhood, with preservation-ists as a final specialist group.

National/International Residents	Score
Frank Lloyd Wright Building Open to the Public	4.81
Reflection of the Midwest Prairie – Prairie Style	4.76
Design Innovation and Technical Ingenuity	4.21
Modernism and Beauty of Design	4.00
Revolutionary Break with Prior Architectural Styles	3.85
Americanism and Landmark Status	3.72
International Fame as an Architectural Icon	2.99

Representing the widest spectrum of the population, **national/international** are the largest group of respondents. For population at a distance from the site, its public access is the primary value with its unique Prairie style as the second value. *Design Innovation*, consistent with other groups, ranks third with *Modernism and Beauty of Design* again as a central value among all choices. *Americanism and Landmark Status* again ranks above *International Fame as an Architectural Icon*.

Chicago Residents	Score
Reflection of the Midwest Prairie – Prairie Style	5.05
Frank Lloyd Wright Building Open to the Public	4.47
Design Innovation and Technical Ingenuity	4.11
Revolutionary Break with Prior Architectural Styles	3.94
Modernism and Beauty of Design	3.77
Americanism and Landmark Status	3.74
International Fame as an Architectural Icon	3.07

Among **Chicago residents**, choices were distinct with *Reflection of the Midwest Prairie – Prairie Style* as clear first choice. Situated in the heart of the American Prairie, Chicagoans are fully aware that it inspired a new style of architecture. The second choice of *Frank Lloyd Wright Building Open to the Public* is likewise confirmation of the regional value of Robie House as a museum open to the public. *Design Innovation* placed ahead of *Revolutionary Break*, favoring Wright as an innovator over Wright as a revolutionary. *Modernism and Beauty of Design* scored close to *Americanism and Landmark Status*, with the same priority as other groups, but with closer scores that tie *American Modernism*, *Beauty of Design*, and *Landmark Status* more closely together.

Hyde Park Residents	Score
Reflection of the Midwest Prairie – Prairie Style	4.65
Revolutionary Break with Prior Architectural Styles	4.65
Design Innovation and Technical Ingenuity	4.24
Frank Lloyd Wright Building Open to the Public	4.23
Modernism and Beauty of Design	3.62
Americanism and Landmark Status	3.46
International Fame as an Architectural Icon	3.46

For **Hyde Park residents**, of the neighborhood surrounding Robie House, its immediate physical presence clearly influenced responses. Robie House's unrelenting horizontality and revolutionary appearance distinctly affects the character of the neighborhood. The tie for first rank between *Reflection of the Midwest Prairie – Prairie Style* and *Revolutionary Break with Prior Architectural Styles* focused on the striking visual impact of the house on Woodlawn Avenue, a street of more traditional houses of its era. As with other groups, the final two choices were *Americanism* and *Internationalism*, but in this group, these values tied. In general, those closer to the physical site had more difficulty in making clear and distinct choices among values. Distance seemed to allow for objectivity and score separation among the choices.

Among all groups, **preservationists** have the most consistent professional orientation and their choices are ranked in clearly spaced distinctions indicating a certainty about their selections. As preservationists, their primary consideration was the historical importance of the building and their ranking of *Design Innovation and Technical Ingenuity* as first choice reflects their conviction that Wright's place in architectural history is as an innovative genius strongly expressed in Robie House. The second choice of *Prairie Style* reflects their understanding of the unique and exceptional value of this house in Wright's body of work. The third choice of a *Wright Building Open to the Public* underlines the ongoing accessibility of the house as well as assurance of its ongoing preservation as a managed house museum. As with residents of Hyde Park, Preservationists ranked *Americanism* ahead of *Internationalism*, but with a narrow margin.

Survey Summary:

Question #2 respondents concluded that *Reflection of the Midwest Prairie – Prairie Style* is the highest value that the contemporary audience places on Robie House, with its accessible status as a museum open to the public closely ranked second in value. It also demonstrates that the contemporary audience more highly values Frank Lloyd Wright as an innovator rather than a revolutionary, and Robie House as an expression of modernism identified first as American and second as an international icon.

Preservationists	Score
Design Innovation and Technical Ingenuity	4.61
Reflection of the Midwest Prairie – Prairie Style	4.59
Frank Lloyd Wright Building Open to the Public	4.40
Revolutionary Break with Prior Architectural Styles	4.23
Modernism and Beauty of Design	3.85
Americanism and Landmark Status	3.35
International Fame as an Architectural Icon	3.27

Question #3 asked respondents to describe the value Robie House adds to the history of American culture and to the history of international architecture.

There were 614 responses to the first part of the question.

Sample responses to what Robie House adds to American culture:

“Landmark innovation in American design”

“American architecture at its finest”

“A testament to the beauty and importance of American design”

“Stands as a premier example of great American architecture”

“A modern example of an authentically American style of architecture”

“Put America on stage with the best in the world”

“Total reimagining of the ideal home”

“Revolutionized the way people thought about living space”

“Shows changing life styles toward social equality with servants on the same floor as owners”

“Moves toward intimate family interaction, away from formality”

“Offered a new way of thinking and living in a new century”

“Illustrates how American out-of-the-box thinking can lead to cultural shifts”

“Break with tradition while remaining sensitive to its setting, uniting inside with outside”

“A beautiful example of a new American architecture, moving away from the Old World”

“A dynamic country articulates its culture in architectural form”

“Wright was the first truly American architect, developing a style reflecting new ideas”

“Reminds the public that Americans have been and still are innovators in many fields”

“Bolsters the story of American individualism and ingenuity”

“Wright’s Prairie style in America exemplifies new modernism”

“Stands out in the neighborhood because it is iconic American architecture”

“Is the embodiment of place, integrating the local landscape into architecture”

“Design pays homage to its natural setting without pretension”

“Influenced generations of American architects”

There were 584 responses to the 2nd part of the question.
Sample responses to what value Robie House adds to the history of international architecture:

- “A new idea in the history of architecture”
- “The first time American architecture surpassed Europe in foreseeing the future of design”
- “Put America on the stage with the best in the world”
- “It’s a great work of a great master – a masterpiece in every sense”
- “One of the top ten buildings of the 20th century”
- “An important building in the study of architecture worldwide”
- “Part of an international conversation about design”
- “A destination for international architects today”
- “Innovative and revolutionary change in architecture”
- “Breaks the mold in architectural style worldwide”
- “An American original, a rich source for international cultures”
- “Open plan, window walls, central hearth are all forward-thinking ideas the world embraced”
- “A bridge between early modern architecture and international modernism”
- “American architecture recognized on an international level”
- “An important American contribution to the future of international architecture”
- “Changed the language of international architecture”
- “Created a place for American architecture in the timeline of world architecture”
- “A living monument whose influence on architecture will endure”
- “Drew worldwide attention to an architectural breakthrough”
- “Has stood the test of time in architectural history”
- “Belongs to all world citizens”
- “I am British. Robie House is one of the reasons I chose a design career – a space can change the way people live and experience the world”

Question #4 asked respondents how Robie House enhances the quality of life in Hyde Park, Chicago, and the Midwest by ranking three characteristics.

There were 822 responses to this question.

Cumulative Result	Score
Presence of an internationally Recognized Architectural Masterpiece	2.27
Educational and Social Opportunities Offered by a Frank Lloyd Wright Historic House Museum	1.98
Deeper Meaning of the History and Character of Place	1.82

While the value-based ranking placed International Fame as an Architectural Icon last, when considering it as contributing to the **quality of life** in Hyde Park, Chicago, and the Midwest, *Presence of an Internationally Recognized Architectural Icon*, ranked first. *Educational Opportunities of a Museum* ranked second, and *Deeper Meaning of Place* ranked third. This sequence of responses was virtually unanimous among all respondents.

Additional comments to this question include:

“Robie House inspires us to think, dream, and discuss – which enhances the quality of life”

“There is great pride in having a place of international recognition here”

“It demonstrates how people work together to preserve beauty”

“It combines beauty, simplicity and usefulness – hallmarks of the Midwest”

“A heightened sense of national, state, and community pride”

“A cornerstone in the history and future of our community”

“A benchmark of architectural excellence”

“Draws people from around the world to our community. It is an anchor for tourism”

“A valuable educational tool for us and all who visit”

“Contributes the beauty of its presence to our neighborhood”

“Adds to Chicago’s reputation as a city with a rich and innovative architectural history”

“Prairie Style shares Midwest culture with the world”

“It makes me proud to live in Chicago”

“The Midwest is synonymous with wide-open spaces, and Robie House emphasizes the horizontal, the glorious never-ending horizon of the Midwest”

“Robie House is a key focus and reason to visit Hyde Park”

“It elevates the artistic expression of the area”

“Still mind-blowing after all these years”

3.5 Levels of Significance in Robie House

An internationally significant work of 20th century architecture, the Frederick C. Robie House is maintained and interpreted as an iconic example of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie style. In restoring a building and preserving it for future generations, the significance of spaces must be determined to inform both current and future preservation and restoration decisions. The Frank Lloyd Wright Trust has defined levels of significance at the Robie House according to several criteria:

- Evaluation of the material integrity of the building fabric
- Significance of the space and elements to the interpretation of the building
- Contribution of the space and elements to the overall understanding of the house

Based on these criteria, spaces within the building have been separated into four levels of significance.

Zone 4 (Primary Significance)

Spaces in Zone 4 includes the formal public spaces in the house. These spaces have a significant level of original building fabric and are essential to the interpretation of the building.

Spaces in Zone 4 include:

- Entry Hall
- Billiard Room
- Main Stair
- Upper Hall
- South Hall
- Living Room
- Dining Room
- Exterior Façade (South, West, North at Entry) including yards of these elevations.

Zone 3 (Secondary Significance)

Spaces in Zone 3 include the private spaces that have a significant level of original building fabric and are important to the interpretation of the building but are overall not as critical as Zone 4 spaces.

Spaces in Zone 3 include:

- Playroom
- Entry Coat Closet
- Guest Bedroom Hall
- Guest Bedroom
- Guest Bath
- Stair to Bedroom Level & Hall
- Master Bedroom
- Dressing Room
- Master Bedroom Closet
- West Bedroom
- East Bedroom
- Garage
- North Elevation of Service Wing
- Alley Elevation
- Woodlawn Elevation
- 58th St Elevation
- Billiard Room Balcony
- Guest Bedroom Balcony
- West Balcony
- South Balcony
- East Dining Room Balcony
- Kitchen Exterior Stair
- Master Bedroom Balcony

Zone 2 – Contributing Spaces

Zone 2 includes rooms that contribute to the significance of the structure, but are not critical to the interpretation of the structure.

Spaces in Zone 2 include:

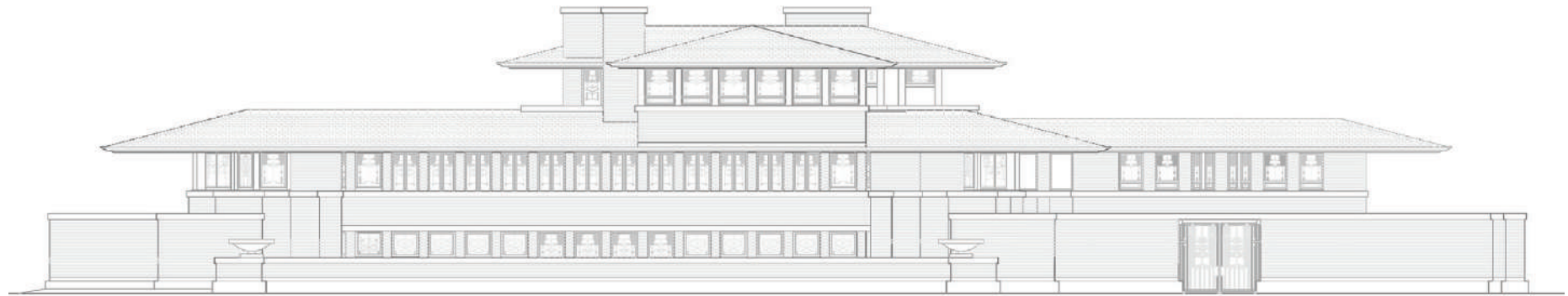
- Ground Floor Toilet
- Servant's Hall
- Kitchen
- Pantry
- Servant's Bedroom 1
- Servant's Bedroom 2
- Servant's Bathroom
- Hall to Bathroom 2
- Garage courtyard

Zone 1 – Non-Contributing Spaces

Zone 1 includes spaces that do not contribute to the interpretation of the structure or have minimal original building fabric in place.

Spaces in Zone 1 include:

- Wine Cellar
- Vault
- Laundry/Bathrooms
- Bathroom Vestibule
- Boiler Room
- Historic Garage Bathroom
- Garage Storage Room
- Eastside of Garage
- Servant Closets
- Bedroom Closets



SOUTH ELEVATION - RESTORATION



Exterior Spaces	Rank	"Percentage Intact"
Front Yard - Woodlawn	4	60%
Woodlawn Entry Walkway	4	60%
Playroom Yard	3	50%
58th Street Yard	4	60%
Garage Courtyard	2	35%
East Side of Garage	1	20%

Exterior Balconies/Porches	Rank	"Percentage Intact"
Billiard Room Balcony	3	70%
Guest Bedroom Balcony	3	70%
West Balcony	3	70%
South Balcony	3	70%
East Dining Room Balcony	3	60%
Kitchen Exterior Stairway	3	75%
M.B. Balcony	3	65%

Exterior Elevations	Rank	"Percentage Intact"
West Elevation from Woodlawn	4	80%
South Elevation from 58th	4	80%
North Elevation at Entry	4	80%
Remaining North Elevation	3	70%
East /Alley Elevation	3	50%

KEY

- 4 Primary Significance
- 3 Secondary Significance
- 2 Contributing
- 1 Non-contributing

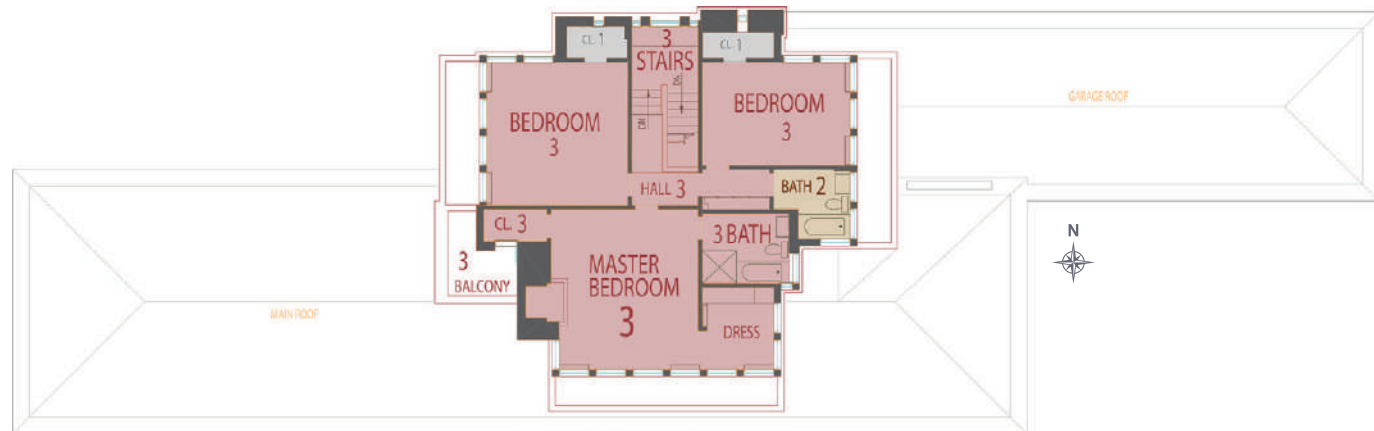


Ground Floor	Rank	"Percentage Intact"
Entry Hall	4	65%
Coat Closet	3	70%
Toilet	2	30%
Main Stairway	4	95%
Servant's Stairway	2	50%
Billiard Room	4	75%
Wine Cellar	1	30%
Playroom	3	70%
Coal/Storage Room	1	20%
Laundry/ Bathrooms	1	25%
Boiler Room	1	25%
Historic Garage Bathroom	1	25%
Garage Storage Room	1	25%
Garage	3	70%

Main Floor	Rank	"Percentage Intact"
Upper Hall	4	85%
Living Room	4	75%
Dining Room	4	75%
South Hall	4	90%
Bedroom Hall	3	90%
Guest Bedroom	3	85%
Guest Bath	3	80%
Kitchen	2	60%
Pantry	2	50%
Servant's Hall	2	60%
West Servant's Bedroom	2	60%
Servant's Bathroom	2	60%
East Servant's Bedroom	2	60%
Closet	1	50%



Bedroom Level	Rank	"Percentage Intact"
Stair to second floor and landing	3	75%
Master Bedroom	3	75%
Master Bathroom	3	60%
Dressing Room	3	65%
M. B. Closet	3	75%
West Bedroom	3	75%
West Bedroom Closet	1	50%
East Bedroom	3	75%
East Bedroom Closet	1	50%
Bathroom	2	60%
Hall to Bathroom	2	60%



Preservation Treatment Strategies

In order to guide preservation and restoration decisions, the following preservation treatment strategies should be followed for each zone of significance:

Zone 4 (Primary Significance)

Preserve and restore all building elements and spaces which contribute to the period of significance to enhance the understanding and interpretation of the house. Any intervention is to be undertaken with extreme care so as not to negatively impact the house.

Zone 3 (Secondary Significance)

Preserve the contributing materials and elements of spaces still present while allowing for modifications that are sympathetic to the historic character of the house.

Zone 2 (Contributing Significance)

Preserve the contributing materials and elements of spaces still present while allowing for modifications of non-contributing elements to allow for programmatic needs of the house.

Zone 1 (Non-Contributing)

Allow for rehabilitation, modifications, and possible removal or replacement of spaces and elements that are non-contributing to accommodate operation of house.

ENDNOTES

1. Frank Lloyd Wright, "Studies and Executed Buildings by Frank Lloyd Wright," (Rizzoli International Publications, 1986), 19.
2. For a thorough account of the Wasmuth venture, see Anthony Alofsin, *Frank Lloyd Wright the Lost Years, 1910-1922* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), 73-78.
3. Franz Schulze, *Mies Van Der Rohe: A Critical Biography*, (University of Chicago Press, 1985), 68.
4. Thomas S. Hines, Richard Neutra and the Search for *Modern Architecture: A Biography and History*, (University of California Press, 1994), 23.
5. Mitch Glazer, "Neutra vs. Schindler: Battle of the L.A. Architects," *Vanity Fair*, April 1999.
6. Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.). 1969. *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition, New York, Feb. 10 to March 23, 1932*. [New York]: Published for the Museum of Modern Art by Arno Press, 34.
7. J.J.P. Oud, "The Influence of Frank Lloyd Wright on the Architecture of Europe," *Wendingen*, 1925, p.85-89.
8. Donald Langmead, *Architectural Excursions: Frank Lloyd Wright, Holland and Europe*, (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000), 64.
9. Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.). 1969. *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition, New York, Feb. 10 to March 23, 1932*. [New York]: Published for the Museum of Modern Art by Arno Press, 33.
10. Musée du jeu de paume (France), Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.), and Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.), *Trois siècles d'art aux États-Unis: [peinture, sculpture, architecture, art populaire, photographie cinéma] Musée du Jeu de Paume, Paris, mai-juillet, 1938* (Paris: Éditions des musées nationaux, 1938), 74.
11. Cited in U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Robie House Nomination Form, (1964).
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid
14. City of Chicago Landmark, 1971.
15. Illinois Register of Historic Places, 1979.
16. The following section is drawn from a detailed article on the heating and cooling systems at Robie House, Justin Estoque, "Heating and Cooling Robie House," *APT Bulletin*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1987), pp. 38-51.
17. Wasmuth, *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright* (Berlin, 1910). Reprinted in Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings* (Rizzoli International Publications, 1992), 112.
18. Ibid.
19. Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography* (Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 1943), 139.
20. Ibid, 145.
21. Ibid, 141-143.
22. Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture," *Architectural Record* 23 (March, 1908), reprinted in, Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings* (Rizzoli International Publications, 1992), 95.
23. Wasmuth, *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright* (Berlin, 1910). Reprinted in Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings* (Rizzoli International Publications, 1992), 112.
24. Wright in a letter to Sara Weil, March 20, 1941, cited in Donald Hoffmann, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House: The Illustrated Story of a Masterpiece* (Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1984), 94, and "Wright Terms Doomed Robie House Sound, Hits Plan to Raze Structure," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 19, 1957.
25. Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture," *Architectural Record* 23 (March, 1908), reprinted in, Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings* (Rizzoli International Publications, 1992), 84-100.

"Whether people are fully conscious of this or not, they actually derive countenance and sustenance from the 'atmosphere' of the things they live in or with. They are rooted in them just as a plant is in the soil in which it is planted."

The Natural House, Frank Lloyd Wright 1954



04

CHAPTER 04: PROGRAMS AND USE

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4.1 House to House Museum, 1997

In February 1997 the University of Chicago entered into a perpetual agreement with the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, designating the Trust as steward and proprietor of the Robie House “...for the purpose of restoring, maintaining, operating, and administering the Robie House for the benefit, enjoyment, education, and inspiration of the public.” With this agreement, the Frederick C. Robie House began its transition from a private home to a public museum (Fig. 4.1).

The Trust’s Home and Studio site had been designated an American Alliance of Museums (AAM) accredited museum in April 1995, and the Trust moved quickly to establish museum standards of operation and an adaptive re-use plan to meet the physical requirements of a museum at Robie House. A 1999 Robie House Master Plan, created by the Trust, served as a source document for this initiative.

Expanding public access and education is at the heart of the Trust’s mission. Immediately upon execution of the lease agreement, the Trust initiated educational public tours of Robie House for a local, national, and international audience, while adding visitor amenities such as ADA-accessible washrooms and a book shop, ticketing, and information center.

Special seminar programs and evening events held at Robie House provide experiential learning opportunities that allow visitors to enjoy the house in a prolonged and immersive manner and absorb the atmosphere of the house restored to Wright’s original vision. Audio tours in eight languages accommodate the educational requirements of an international audience. All museum programs seek to provide a unique and memorable experience of the house.

Preservation of the house for future generations depends upon individual appreciation and broad public awareness of its heritage value and cultural meaning. Robie House is set in a rich and unparalleled context of Frank Lloyd Wright’s built work in the Chicago area that the Trust includes in its narrative on Wright’s legacy.



4.1. A twilight program at Robie House



4.2. A Frank Lloyd Wright Trust interpreter leads a tour of the Robie House

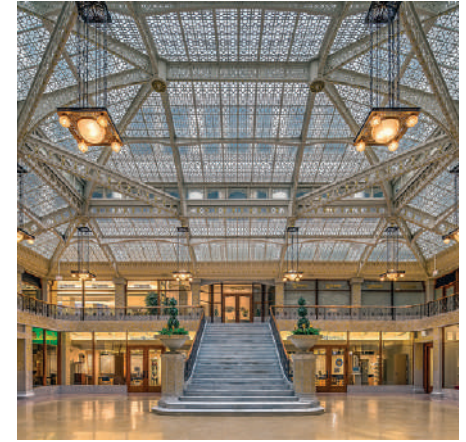
As owner and operator of Wright's Home and Studio (1889/1898), where Prairie style was created, the Trust expands the Robie House narrative to include the setting and creative environment of its design and to present the significant architectural context of its era in Wright's career (Fig. 4.3). Also operating at The Rookery building where Wright renovated the public court in 1905, Unity Temple (1908), and The Emil Bach House (1915), the Trust conveys Wright's prodigious contribution to cultural heritage through a series of significant buildings that visitors can experience as museums or as preserved architecture dedicated to private and public uses (Fig.s 4.4, 4.5, 4.6).

National communities protect historic monuments and sites they recognize as essential to their cultural narrative and living history. In its role as a public museum directed by the Trust, the Robie House is endowed with a purpose to engage, educate, and inspire the public through interpretation of Wright's design legacy and preservation of his original sites for future generations. Preservation and education are integrated and interdependent.

With its transformation into a museum, the Robie House annual visitation from 1997 to 2017 grew from 5,000 to 40,000 with capacity to continue growth in years ahead. The house is preserved to a maximum capacity of 90,000 annual visitors, but the Trust maintains a visitation guideline below maximum capacity with personnel and electronic monitoring of visitor behavior. Usage guidelines protect the house, while allowing for optimum public access.



4.3. The Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio (1889/1898)



4.4. The Rookery Light Court, Frank Lloyd Wright (1905-07)



4.5. Unity Temple, Frank Lloyd Wright (1905-08)



4.6. Emil Bach House, Frank Lloyd Wright (1915)

4.2 Robie House Museum Usage Policies

Tour Protocol:

- Tour capacity is 12-14 persons per tour.
- Guided tours are led by trained interpreters who remain with the group throughout the tour and monitor visitor behavior.
- Children under the age of 12 must be accompanied by an adult.
- The ground floor of the house is ADA accessible. Information on special needs tours is available on the Trust's website. Advance reservations are recommended.
- Open house and social events include trained monitors observing visitor behavior in all areas of the house.
- The Trust reserves the right to dismiss an individual or group not following conduct that ensures the safety of the house or others.

Program Capacities:

- Courtyard Program: 60-65 persons.
- Full House Program: 60 persons.
- Ground Floor Program: 40 persons.
- Living Room Program: 20 persons.

Food and Beverage Allowance:

- Food and beverages may be served on the ground floor.
- Beverages are permitted on the main floor.
- Food may be prepared, warmed, and served in the kitchen, but no cooking is permitted.

Visitor Conduct:

- Visitors are not permitted to move through the house unsupervised.
- No smoking is permitted in or around Robie House.
- Large umbrellas, brief cases, and back packs may not be carried through the house. These items must be checked at the information center.
- To ensure protection of interior finishes, visitors are prohibited from touching walls, woodwork, and original furniture on display.
- Pencils only are permitted for sketching and note taking.
- Visitors are instructed to use railings on staircases for their safety.
- Pets are not permitted in the house with the exception of service dogs.
- Visitors may be seated in reproduction furniture, casual seating for visitors, and furniture for lectures.
- Tables and chairs are provided for workshops and special events.

Information Graphics Displays:

- All identity and educational information should be presented on freestanding museum display furniture easily readably by visitors. No graphic panels or labels may be installed on the walls or woodwork of the house.
- Visitors may access information about the house on their mobile phones, which may be used throughout the house.

4.3 Academic and Public Education Partner

The Trust's 1999 plan identified five educational objectives that were incorporated into tour content. To enhance public understanding of:

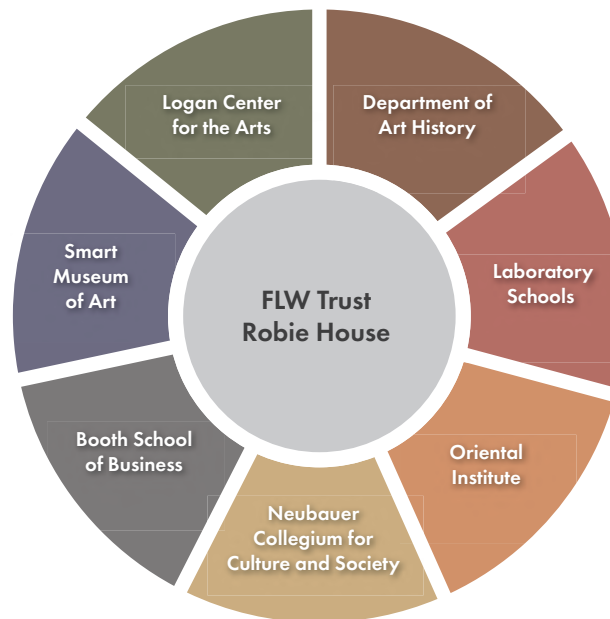
- Robie House as the foremost example of Prairie Style architecture
- Wright's contribution to architectural history
- the importance of conserving historic buildings and objects
- the 1910 context in which this innovative building was designed
- and the evolving role of the Robie House in a contemporary setting.

Beyond the dedication to broad public access through tours and special events at Robie House, lecture and symposium events held at the house or in adjacent university and community lecture halls instill a deeper knowledge of the significance of Robie House as a landmark in architecture and illuminate its relationship to aesthetic and intellectual history and to contemporary social issues (Fig. 4.7).

The Trust maintains relationships with University of Chicago departments and schools in order to enrich the cultural meaning of Robie House across many academic disciplines. The character of programming depends upon the particular orientation of students in various fields and schools. An internship program with the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools trains junior and senior high school students in the philosophy and management of historic sites. The relationship between the Trust and the Lab Schools is particularly close, due to the alignment of social and educational philosophies of contemporaries Frank

Lloyd Wright and John Dewey, founder of the Laboratory Schools. The Lab School Gordon Parks Arts Hall is located one block east of Robie House, and the school's lecture and studio facilities are used for joint student, family, and adult programs with the Trust.

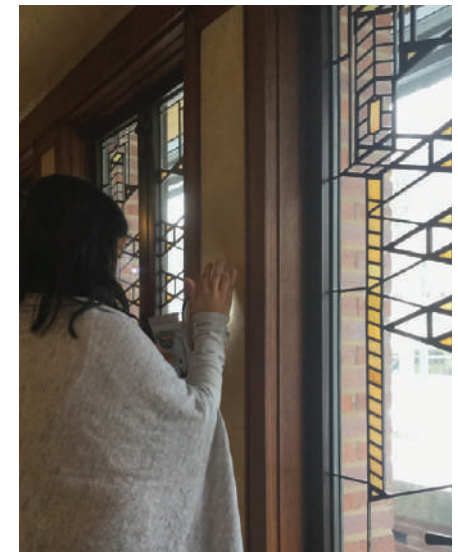
The Department of Art History holds seminars and special programs at Robie House and partners with the Trust on selected lectures by visiting scholars, and the Booth School of Business inside the Charles M. Harper Center across the street from Robie House regularly features Robie House in its alumni programs (Fig. 4.8). Collection sharing with the Smart Museum of Art and joint art and design programs with the Logan Center for the Arts and other university museums extend and enrich the impact of Robie House in its



This graphic illustrates the multiple relationships of the Trust to the University that result in collaborations that benefit the academic community.



4.7. A Robie House lecture by James Corner, Founding Partner and CEO of James Corner Field Operations, NY



4.8. Students from the Suzanne Deal Booth Conservation Research Seminar in the Department of Art History at the University of Chicago examine finishes at Robie House

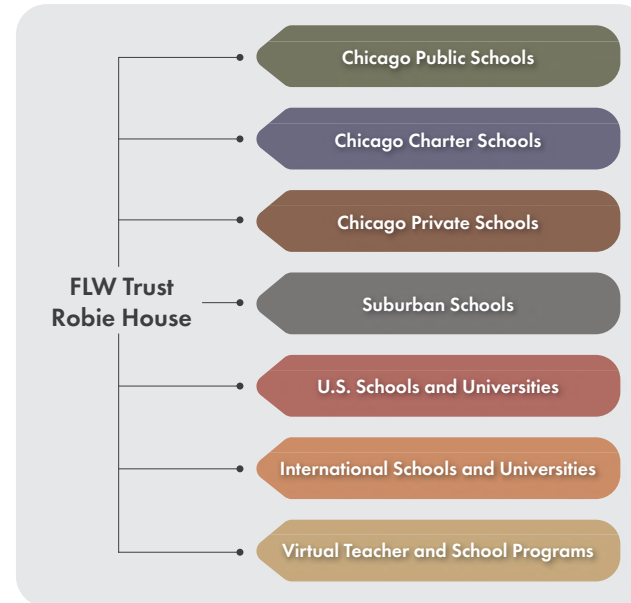
surrounding academic and social community. As immediate neighbors, the distinguished Oriental Institute and visionary Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society provide opportunities for original shared programs and events.

Working with the Department of Campus Planning + Sustainability on both operational and programmatic policies, the Trust ensures that Robie House plays a productive and integrated role in campus life while also engaging a wider public audience (Fig. 4.9).

Since its founding in 1974, the Trust has conducted in-school and on-site programs with Chicago public, private, and charter schools, schools throughout the region, and visiting school groups from around the country and the world (Fig. 4.10). The Trust education department works with an advisory committee composed of educators and education administrators who provide guidance on current trends in education and national guidelines for curriculum and teacher training.

Robie House serves a national and international audience of students, educators, and families. It immediately acts as a cultural resource for schools in underserved communities on Chicago's South and West sides.

Robie House education initiatives, both on-site and in local schools, are centered on the importance of art and design to one's quality of life and draw inspiration from Wright's philosophy of Organic Architecture (Fig. 4.11). The Robie House serves as primary source for students and educators to explore Wright's design philosophy and its contemporary relevance. Specific emphasis is placed on connecting Wright's design philosophy to contemporary issues in science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM).



This graphic illustrates the multiple relationships the Trust maintains with schools and universities.



4.9. View south on Woodlawn Avenue showing the Robie House and Charles M. Harper Center



4.10. A school student explores the Robie House



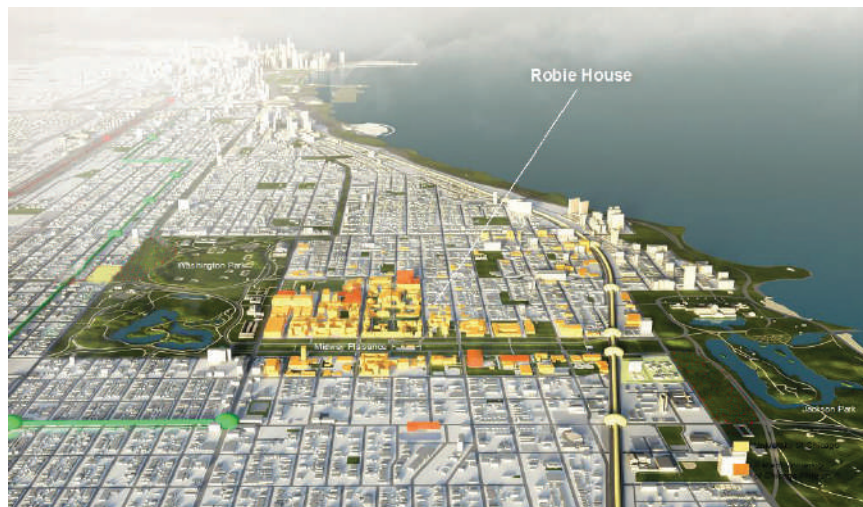
4.11. Guided by Trust educators, students learn about lath and plaster at Robie House

4.4 Community and Cultural Partner

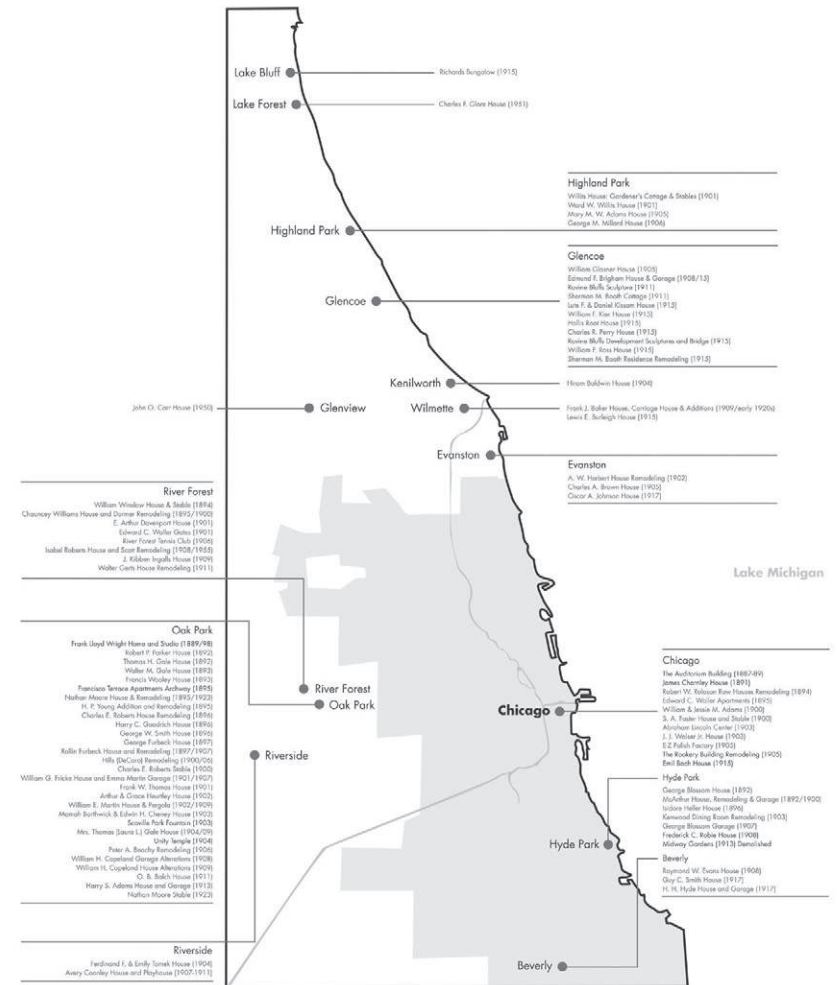
Robie House occupies a position of distinction in a major U.S. city known for its architecture (4.12). In order to ensure its identity as the Gateway to Wright's Chicago, the Trust engages with multiple community partners to affirm the contemporary relevance of Wright's design legacy and reach a broad and diverse audience (4.13).

Primary community partners include the City of Chicago Cultural Affairs Department, Chicago Parks District, Chicago Loop Alliance, Choose Chicago, the Village of Oak Park, Visit Oak Park, Rebuild Foundation, and Hyde Park Art Center. Through these partnerships, the Trust has become an established citywide institution that speaks to Frank Lloyd Wright's significant presence in the area where the largest number of his built works survive.

A 9,000 square-foot residential building, Robie House nonetheless has a monumental architectural significance that aligns programmatically with leading cultural institutions such as The Art Institute of Chicago, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Architecture Biennial, Chicago History Museum, National Building Museum, Museum of Modern Art, and Guggenheim Museum of Art, all of whom have been exhibition and program partners.



4.12. The Robie House and the city of Chicago



4.13. Chicago area Frank Lloyd Wright structures

4.5 International Destination

Robie House is a destination for international tourists aware of its stature and influence on subsequent 20th century modernism. International visitors compose 20% of visitation, traveling as cultural tourists or as school and university groups.

The Trust operates an international travel program that positions Wright's Chicago years in the context of early international modernism. With rotating trips to Europe and Great Britain, the program also features annual trips to Japan, whose architecture and design influenced the Robie House.

Wright's discovery of Japanese architecture at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition Ho-o-den (Phoenix Hall) Japan Pavilion is marked today with a Japanese Garden on the site one mile from the Robie House (Fig.s 4.14 and 4.15). During the final stages of completion at Robie House, Wright published his Wasmuth Portfolio in Berlin. Robie House has taken its place on an international stage, recognized in Europe and Asia as a preeminent standard in architectural history, a landmark of 20th century modernism, and a cultural heritage destination.

Over 750,000 visits per year to the Trust's website extend information about Robie House to a worldwide audience. The Trust's website is a significant resource for in-depth and scholarly information about Frank Lloyd Wright's Chicago years and the creation of Prairie style. Resources include historic photographs, timelines, essays, and videos, along with lesson plans and materials for teachers. As a museum, the Robie House is dedicated to the dispersion of knowledge through authentic experience and shared information and research.



4.14. Ho-o-den (Phoenix Hall) erected by the Japanese government for the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.



4.15. The Court of Honor at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition

"Bring out the nature of the materials...
Reveal the nature of the wood, plaster,
brick or stone in your designs, they are
all by nature friendly and beautiful. No
treatment can be really a matter of fine art
when these natural characteristics are, or
their nature is, outraged or neglected."

In the Cause of Architecture, Frank Lloyd Wright 1908



05

CHAPTER 05: CONSERVATION POLICIES

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5.1 PURPOSE AND FRAMEWORK

Conservation policies protect the historic and architectural significance of a site. These general policies provide the philosophical approach to ongoing care, interpretation, development and management of the property and address specific features and materials of the site. Policies are consistent with national and international historic preservation standards and protect the property's historical and cultural significance.

5.1.1 Methodology and Terminology

Standard historic preservation methodology and terminology used through the chapter are based on the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, referred to here as the *Standards*. The *Standards* offer four distinct approaches to the treatment of historic properties—preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction—with accompanying guidelines for each.

The following glossary of terms reflects accepted international standards for the conservation of culturally significant places.¹

ASSOCIATIONS are the connections that exist between people and a place.

CONSERVATION is the process of regular maintenance and preservation treatments that retain the cultural significance and original character of the site.

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE is the aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual values for past, present or future generations that are embodied in a place. Cultural significance may describe the importance of the overall site, its material fabric, how the building is used, and meanings associated with the place. Places may have a range of culturally significant values for different individuals and groups.

FABRIC is the physical material of the place including elements, fixtures, contents and objects.

INTERPRETATION is the way of presenting the cultural significance of a place.

MAINTENANCE is the continuous protective care of a place and its setting. It is to be distinguished from repair which involves restoration or reconstruction.

MEANINGS are the aspects that denote what a place signifies, indicates, evokes, or expresses to people.

PLACE is a geographically defined area. It may include elements, objects, spaces and views. Place may have tangible and intangible dimensions.

PRESERVATION is the maintaining of a place in its existing state and retarding deterioration. The *Standards* similarly describe preservation as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property.

RECONSTRUCTION is the returning of a place, or a significant element of a place, to a known earlier state and is distinguished from restoration by the substantial introduction of a new material.

REHABILITATION is the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

RESTORATION is the returning of a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing elements with the minimal introduction of new material. The *Standards* definition is again more precise and defines restoration as the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period.

SETTING is the immediate and extended environment of a place that is part of or contributes to its cultural significance and distinctive character.

USE is the functions of a place, including the contemporary activities and traditional and customary practices that may occur at the place or are dependent on the place.

5.2 GENERAL POLICIES

Frank Lloyd Wright Trust Conservation Philosophy

The Frank Lloyd Wright Trust recognizes the irreplaceable heritage of original Frank Lloyd Wright sites under our stewardship. The Trust advocates a conservation philosophy that perpetuates the life of the original building, applying conservation and maintenance treatments and protocols in response to degradation and critical conditions, while preserving the site's authenticity and cultural significance. The Trust's conservation philosophy is conservative, restoring only missing elements to the original documentation or making code-required upgrades. Our philosophy affirms the cultural, educational, aesthetic and inspirational legacy of these sites for future generations through a well-managed tourism program. Documentation of all conservation procedures and interventions along with analytical reports and original building fragments are publicly available in our archival and restoration resource center. Frank Lloyd Wright Trust conservation and restoration standards comply with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) standards for conservation and restoration as stated in The Venice Charter of 1964 and International Cultural Tourism Charter of 1999.

POLICY 1

Protect Frank Lloyd Wright's Frederick C. Robie House following the conservation philosophy of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust in accordance with national and international preservation standards.

Frank Lloyd Wright's Design Philosophy

Frank Lloyd Wright documented his design philosophy in numerous publications. These writings are essential to understanding the Robie House and Wright's groundbreaking philosophy of Organic Architecture. Listed below are some of the essential qualities of the Robie House based on Wright's design concepts as outlined in his 1908 essay in *Architectural Record* entitled "In the Cause of Architecture."



5.1 Robie House, Entry Hall

1. Integral relationship between a building and its setting.

A building should appear to grow easily from its site and be shaped to harmonize with its surroundings if nature is manifest there, and if not try to make it as quiet, substantial, and organic as she would have been were the opportunity hers.²

We of the Middle West are living on the prairie. The prairie has a beauty of its own and we should recognize and accentuate this natural beauty, its quiet level. Hence, gently sloping roofs, low proportions, quiet sky lines, suppressed heavyset chimneys and sheltering overhangs, low terraces and out-reaching walls sequestering private gardens.³

2. Color schemes based on earth tones.

...so go to the woods and fields for color schemes. Use the soft, warm, optimistic tones of earths and autumn leaves in preference to the pessimistic blues, purples or cold greens and grays of the ribbon counter; they are more wholesome and better adapted in most cases to good decoration.⁴

3. Sincerity in the use of materials.

Bring out the nature of the materials, let their nature intimately into your scheme. Strip the wood of varnish and let it alone—stain it. Develop the natural texture of the plastering and stain it. Reveal the nature of the wood, plaster, brick or stone in your designs; they are all by nature friendly and beautiful.⁵

4. Organic unity of design.

I have endeavored in this work to establish a harmonious relationship between ground plan and elevation of these buildings, considering the one as a solution and the other an expression of the conditions of a problem of which the whole is a project. I have tried to establish an organic integrity to begin with, forming the basis for the subsequent working out of a significant grammatical expression and making the whole, as nearly as I could consistent.

...from one basic idea all the formal elements of design are in each case derived and held well together in scale and character.⁶

POLICY 2

Preserve the Robie House to reflect Frank Lloyd Wright's design philosophy.

POLICY 3

Align conservation decision-making with historical and scientific research. Decisions regarding the conservation of the Robie House are based on historical research and scientific analyses of materials that result in balanced and informed decisions. Treatments follow national and international standards of conservation practices.

POLICY 4

Align maintenance and usage of the Robie House with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, and with levels of significance for each building element as defined in The Robie House Conservation Management Plan, Chapter 3.5, "Levels of Significance of Spaces in the Robie House"

Zone 4 (Primary Significance)

Spaces in Zone 4 spaces have a significant level of original building fabric and are essential to the interpretation of the building.

Zone 3 (Secondary Significance)

Spaces in Zone 3 have a significant level of original building fabric and are important to the interpretation of the building but are overall not as critical as Zone 4 spaces.

Zone 2 (Contributing Spaces)

Zone 2 spaces contribute to the significance of the structure but are not critical to the interpretation of the structure.

Zone 1 (Non-Contributing Spaces)

Zone 1 spaces do not contribute to the interpretation of the structure or have minimal original building fabric in place.

5.3 THE SITE AND ITS HISTORIC FABRIC

5.3.1 Robie House Neighborhood

The Robie House is located in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago at the northeast corner of East 58th Street and South Woodlawn Avenue. It is at the transition zone between a residential neighborhood and the University of Chicago campus. The residential neighborhood lies predominantly to the north and east and consists primarily of late 19th and early 20th century freestanding houses on relatively wide lots. The older houses along Woodlawn are primarily owned by the University of Chicago and serve various support functions such as academic departments or student clubs, etc.

Directly to the north of the Robie House is the 1959 McGiffert House, which presently houses University offices, the Seminary Co-Op Bookstore, and the Plein Air Café. The University of Chicago campus borders the Robie House on its other two sides with the massive Charles M. Harper Center, home to the Booth School of Business, located directly across the street to the south. Completed in 2004, the Harper Center was designed by internationally renowned Uruguayan architect Rafael Viñoly. The building is designed to mirror both the Gothic Rockefeller Memorial Chapel in its use of stone cladding and interior winter garden, and the Robie House with its cantilevered roofs and continuous window bands.

To the west of the Robie House, across Woodlawn Avenue, is Saieh Hall, formerly home to the Chicago Theological Seminary, and now renovated to house the University of Chicago's Becker Friedman Institute for Economics. The Seminary's red brick façade accentuated with limestone trim distinguishes the Gothic Revival building from the traditional limestone structures of the University. It was originally constructed between 1923 and 1928 by Chicago architect Herbert Riddle.



5.2 Map showing University of Chicago campus buildings surrounding Robie House

To the east, the Robie House is bordered by an alleyway and a modest French Eclectic style residence designed in 1923 by the architect Philip Maher for Nobel-prize winning physicist Albert Michelson. The Michelson residence today houses the Lumen Christi Institute.

When the Robie House was originally designed, there was an open view to the Midway Plaisance. Today, looking southwest from the Robie House is one of the University of Chicago's main landmarks, the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel. The chapel sits in a park-like setting and was designed in the Gothic Revival style

by Bertram Goodhue, and was constructed between 1925 and 1928. Goodhue was a celebrated Gothic Revival architect who is perhaps best remembered for his work with partner and likewise noted Gothic Revivalist, Ralph Adams Cram.

The Robie House therefore occupies a unique position, being at once part of the Hyde Park residential community but visually very much part of the campus setting. Wright's Prairie style architecture disassociates the Robie House from its more traditional residential neighbors and the surrounding gothic campus, but at the same time creates a unique architectural dynamic which Viñoly was to reference a century later.

POLICY 5

Preserve the campus and neighborhood setting. In collaboration, the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, the City of Chicago and the University of Chicago should carefully consider the impact to the Robie House that might result from any alterations or new development in the vicinity.

POLICY 6

Retain public access to the site. Cultural tourism strengthens public awareness and deepens understanding of the site. It supports the ongoing preservation and maintenance of the Robie House. Public access to the site is essential.

POLICY 7

Maintain surrounding lawn areas and trees. Whenever possible, the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust will work collaboratively with the City of Chicago and the University of Chicago to maintain surrounding urban and campus landscape and walkways.



5.3 Robie House neighborhood context

5.3.2 Robie House Site

WEST LAWN

POLICY 8 Preserve the original footprint of the west lawn and its relationship to the west porch of Robie House.

At the corner of Woodlawn Avenue and 58th Street, a small grass lawn fronts the west façade of Robie House. Consistent with Wright's Prairie design philosophy there is no landscaping between the lawn and the building: the grass runs up to the limestone water table, forging a strong visual connection between structure and site.

WALKWAY AND ENTRY COURTYARD

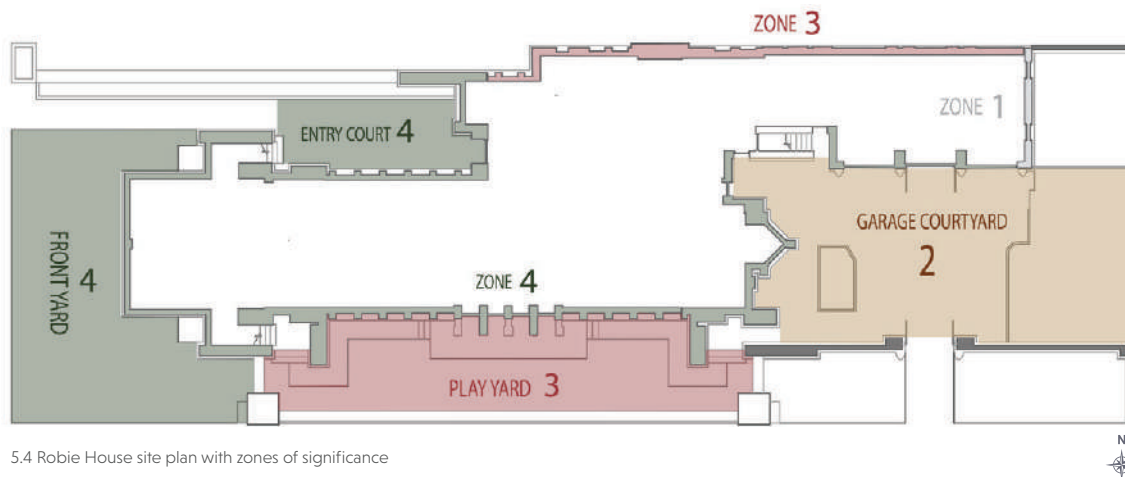
POLICY 9 Preserve the character, sequencing of space, and spatial arrangements along the formal walkway to the entry courtyard at the front entrance to the Robie House.

Wright located the main entrance of the Robie House off Woodlawn Avenue. The entry is positioned well back from the sidewalk and is partly concealed by the west porch and an overhanging bedroom balcony. The entry is approached via a narrow sidewalk that eventually widens to create an entry court in front of the door that serves as a transition from exterior to interior space.

The north side of the walkway and courtyard is lined with a continuous planting bed, stone retaining wall and shrubbery. A marked change occurs along the entry path as one proceeds from the public sidewalk, down a narrow path framed by the steps to the west porch and into a semi-private entry court. The courtyard features a central field of red clay quarry tiles. A critical feature in Wright's architecture, semi-concealed entrances and carefully choreographed circulation routes are characteristic of Wright's Prairie designs. These devices were used to manipulate one's sense of space and heighten one's sense of exploration, beginning with the exterior approach to the building, into and through the entry sequence, concluding with the central living spaces of the residence.

POLICY 10 Establish cyclical maintenance of entry courtyard to address ongoing water drainage damage to tiles.

The walkway/entry court is a low point for drainage from the west yard and from portions of the property to the north. In addition, a scupper from the north wall of the entry court also discharges water into the space. Water drainage causes damage to the clay tiles of the entry court. None of the original tiles exist. However, historic documentation provides information on the color and size of the original tiles.



5.4 Robie House site plan with zones of significance

POLICY 11

Retain the slightly raised flowerbed, retaining wall, and shrubbery along the north side of the walkway and entry courtyard. These elements provide a visual and physical border to the entry route and are important both to the aesthetics of the arrangement and to the intimate quality of the entry courtyard.



5.5 Robie House, Entry Courtyard

CHILDREN'S PLAY YARD**POLICY 12**

Restore and maintain the Children's Play Yard to its original grass lawn.

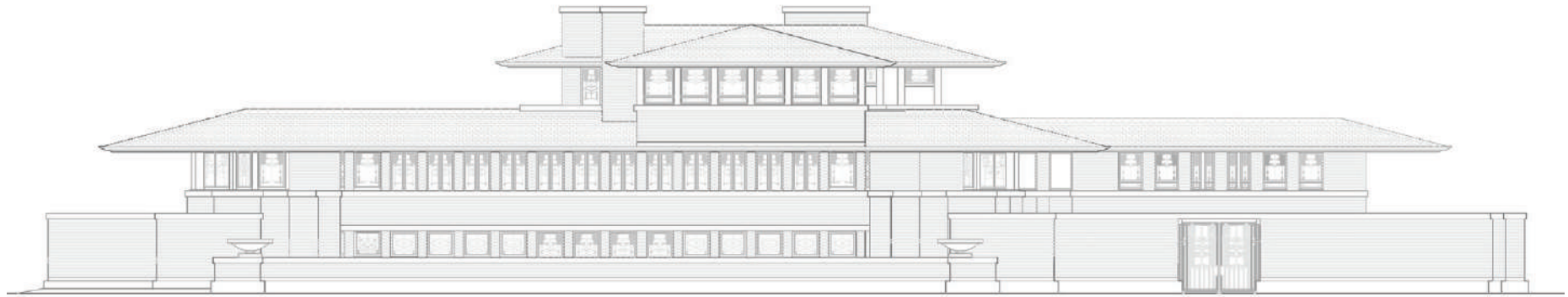
A small courtyard, once serving as a Children's Play Yard, is located directly to the south of the house. It is a long narrow outdoor space that lies slightly lower than the main courtyard and is enclosed to the south, east and west by a low masonry wall and by the house to the north. Access to the Play Yard is from the exterior by either stairs along the south side of the west porch or from a narrow passageway and stair to the courtyard. White landscape rocks provide the primary paving material in the Play Yard except for a raised concrete platform in front of the Billiard Room doors. The courtyard with landscape rocks does not reflect its original appearance, which was a grass lawn.

GARAGE COURTYARD**POLICY 13**

Rehabilitate garage courtyard to facilitate visitor access and needs while maintaining the historic and cultural integrity of the space.

The former vehicle entryway and courtyard are located along 58th Street, at the southeast side of the house. Two large ornamental gates provide access to the courtyard which now serves as the primary area for visitor arrival to Robie House and provides access to the shop and information center in the Robie House Garage. The courtyard is enclosed by a masonry fence to the south and east, and by the house itself to the north and west. The courtyard consists of a concrete paved area that is bordered by a small lawn area to the east. Rehabilitation of this area would prioritize visitor access and needs while maintaining the aesthetic integrity of the courtyard.

5.4 BUILDING EXTERIOR



5.6 Robie House South Elevation

5.4.1 Overall Form and Materials

The exterior of the Robie House is sculptural in its three-dimensional massing and use of natural materials that are textured and earth-toned in coloration. The building projects outward from a central hearth and chimney in the form of two overlapping rectangles, with the family quarters to the southwest and servants' wing to the northeast. By placing the main wing of the house where the family lived closer to the street corners, it is given more public prominence. Deep roof overhangs set horizontal courses of leaded-glass doors and windows back into the exterior walls. Porches and balconies are shaded by the dramatic horizontal extensions of the roof. The servant's wing to the northwest is less prominent. Utilizing materials consistent with the public elevations, this wing is more subdued with a courtyard façade above the garage.

Although the Robie House is an overlapping two-part plan, it is visually a single cohesive form. Consistent material and coloration combined with limestone banding unite the house into a single architectural form that is simple, horizontal, and modern in expression. The primary exterior materials consist of Roman brick, limestone banding, stucco soffits, wood windows and doors with leaded glass, copper cornices and clay roof tiles. Most of these materials are used in their natural condition, sometimes with design treatments for emphasis. The vertical mortar joints are struck flush and pigmented a similar color as the Roman brick, which allows the gray raked horizontal joints to be more pronounced.

POLICY 14

Conserve original and existing exterior architectural elements of the design consistent with the organic character of each façade, including open-air terraces, porches and balconies.

POLICY 15

Preserve original open-air terraces, porches, or balconies as exterior spaces that cannot be enclosed, because this would alter the original character of the building.

POLICY 16

Preserve the historic façade materials and color palette. Frank Lloyd Wright's selection of exterior building materials and limited color palette are essential to his expression of the Robie House and are to be preserved. Materials are left in their natural state and reflect Wright's preference for warm "autumnal" colors. Where materials need to be replaced, they should be replaced in-kind and based on the latest material analysis.

POLICY 17

Preserve the overall footprint of the house consisting of two off-set but slightly overlapping rectangles.

POLICY 18

Preserve the different architectural complexities between the main family wing and servants' wing.

5.4.2 Roof and Water Drainage System

CLAY ROOF TILES

The shallow pitched hipped roofs are an essential feature of Wright's design for the Robie House. The roofs are constructed of 2x6 rafters and supported by structural steel beams. They were originally tiled with "Huntington" shingle tiles fastened with copper nails. In 1965, all the original flat roof tiles were replaced with interlocking roof tiles. At this time several of the original flat 13x6 roof tiles were stored in the Robie House cellar. The 1960s work replaced rotten roof decking and rafters as well as the copper flashing, counterflashing, and gutter liners. In 2002, the interlocking clay roof tiles were replaced with historically appropriate new flat clay tiles, based on the salvaged originals. An ice and water shield was installed beneath the tiles.

POLICY 19

Retain original roof tiles permanently in the Trust's Archive as a historical record and for replication.

POLICY 20

Conduct routine inspections of roof tiles and document damaged tiles for replacement. Record patterns of loss to determine correlation to roof drainage issues.

COPPER EAVES AND GUTTERS

The roofs of the Robie House terminate in copper eaves with built-in gutters. Both the eaves and gutters were restored in 1965. The work included replacing the copper gutter lining, straightening the eaves, and installing new brass screw fasteners.

In 2002, the copper eaves and gutters were refinished by the Chicago firm Conservation of Sculpture and Objects Studio, that applied a dark brown/green restoration patina intended to provide a consistent appearance to the unevenly corroded copper. At that time the patinated copper surfaces were coated with Incralac.

The Robie House downspouts are copper, and by Wright's design do not extend all the way to grade and away from the building. As such, the downspouts drain directly onto building surfaces, resulting in inefficient rainwater dispersal. Routine engineering review of building drainage is critical.



5.7 Robie House, restoration roof detail

POLICY 21

Routinely inspect copper gutters and maintain patina.

POLICY 22

Routinely conduct engineering inspections of water drainage from the roof and gutters and rehabilitate as needed.

STUCCO SOFFITS AND WALLS

All of the soffits and walls below the third-floor windows are finished with stucco with a float finish. The existing stucco is painted yellow. According to Wright's original specifications, the stucco was to include a "mineral coloring" in the mix, which strongly suggests that the stucco was to be exposed rather than painted.

POLICY 23

Align restoration of exterior stucco with Wright's original specifications, informed by current scientific analysis.

5.4.3 Masonry Walls

BRICK MASONRY

The face brick of the Robie House is a Roman brick with dark iron spots, originally specified as “Collinsville 110 A Roman Dark” and laid up in a 1/3 running bond. Wright originally tinted the vertical mortar joints red and brought them flush with the brick surface to blend with the brick while leaving the horizontal joints a light gray and with a concave profile, which accentuated its horizontality.

POLICY 24

Align mortar replacement and repair with Wright’s original specifications, informed by current standards of material quality and endurance.

LIMESTONE

On the exterior of the Robie House, cream-colored Indiana Limestone is used for the base, as wall coping units, window sills, and as horizontal banding. The limestone visually links multiple surfaces together while also accentuating the horizontality of the overall design.

POLICY 25

Maintain the limestone horizontal bands as integral elements of the overall design connecting disparate elements to visually unite the building’s overall horizontality.

POLICY 26

Routinely monitor the condition of the limestone for cracks and spalls.



5.8 Robie House, south west urn

URNS AND PLANTERS

Built-in planter boxes lined with zinc sheeting are located along the south balcony and below the Servant Bedroom windows of the Main Floor, and outside the Third Floor bedroom windows. Free-standing limestone urns are located at either end of the wall along 58th Street, in-front of the Children’s Play Yard, and on the balcony of the Guest Bedroom above the entrance on Woodlawn Avenue. The planters and urns are a critical element of Wright’s design for the Robie House, integrating nature and architecture.

POLICY 27

Retain and maintain planters and urns as integral elements of the Robie House design.

5.4.4 Doors and Windows

DOOR & WINDOW FRAMES

Exterior door and window frames are wood and painted a dark brown color. According to Wright's specifications the doors and doorframes are oak while the window frames were to be clear cypress with either clear pine or cypress sashes. The historic wood doors and windows retain much of their original historic fabric and are highly significant elements to Frank Lloyd Wright's design. Wright's original design included wood sash screens for the interior of the doors and windows. None of the screens are extant. Screen hardware including ball catches and butt hinges remain in some of the window openings.

POLICY 28

Maintain the historic exterior wood door and window frames. Conservation and repair of the wood windows and doors should be undertaken with an understanding of the existing material properties and conditions in order to preserve the original aesthetic.

LEADED GLASS

The leaded glass doors and windows of the Robie House represent one of Wright's most significant achievements in decorative glass. A defining feature of the building, most of the leaded glass windows and doors at the Robie House are original.

POLICY 29

Retain and restore leaded glass windows and doors.

The leaded glass casement windows and doors, consisting of clear and colored glass held by copper-plated zinc comes, are designed in geometric patterns unique to Robie House. They are essential to the character of the house. Repair and modification of leaded glass must take into consideration the impact to the material properties and visual characteristics of the design. The highest priority is the retention of original glass and zinc comes.



5.9 Robie House, leaded glass exterior detail

5.5 INTERIOR SPACES

5.5.1 Ground Floor

Ground Floor Zone 4 (Primary Significance) Spaces

Zone 4 spaces of the Robie House most fully express Wright's design philosophy in terms of their complexity, finishes, and materials. Zone 4 spaces on the Ground Floor include: Entry Hall, Main Staircase and Billiard Room. These spaces are similar in materials and design and were comprehensively restored to the highest degree in 2018.

POLICY 30

Maintain Ground Floor Zone 4 (Primary Significance) spaces at the highest professional standard of preservation and restoration.

ENTRY HALL AND MAIN STAIRCASE

With its plastered walls, autumnal palette, oak screens, moldings and cabinetry, and leaded glass windows and doors, the entrance hall establishes the decorative themes for the interior of the residence. The Hall is the primary entrance point to the residence and serves as a circulation hub connecting the spaces of the Ground Floor. The Hall is part of a sequence of controlled spaces toward the central living area on the Main Floor of the Robie House. Marked by a sense of progressive discovery, the sequence leads from the Entry Hall to a central staircase set tightly within the brick chimney core at the heart of the plan, ultimately terminating in the great, open living space on the Main Floor.

POLICY 31

Maintain the Entry Hall as the primary point of entry for those experiencing the house.

POLICY 32

Maintain the Entry Hall and Main Staircase as sequential spaces that are key aspects of Wright's directed path to the main floor.

POLICY 33

Review the Entry Hall and Main Staircase for deterioration due to visitor usage over time.



5.10 Robie House Ground Floor plan with zones of significance

BILLIARD ROOM

The Billiard Room is the largest room on the Ground Floor and extends west from the Entry Hall. Stylistically similar to the Entry Hall, the Billiard Room feels more expansive due to its raised ceiling and the rows of leaded glass casement windows that line the north and south walls.

A fireplace is located along the east wall framed by two pillars creating a shallow inglenook. At the west end of the room Wright creates another nook lined with bookcases and a centrally placed vault. On the north side of the nook, a corridor leads to the original Wine Cellar under the west porch. To the south there is a small storage alcove.

The Billiard Room retreats behind the Main Stair and leads to the Playroom to the east through another pair of leaded glass doors. At the south wall the Billiard Room provides access to the exterior Children's Play Yard through four leaded glass doors. The Children's Play Yard is not accessible from the Children's Playroom.

The ceiling of the Billiard Room is stepped so that it is lower along the north and south walls and raised at its center. The dropped ceiling contains large steel I-beams spanning east and west. In the raised center section of the ceiling, concealed by plaster, smaller steel joists span north-south connecting into the larger steel I-beams.

Wright and his associates did not design furniture for the Billiard Room and today it remains devoid of domestic furnishings. It currently functions as a multi-use program space.

POLICY 34	Maintain the authenticity and integrity of the Billiard Room as a Zone 4 space.
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POLICY 35	Review the Billiard Room for deterioration over time and user damage.
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Ground floor Zone 3 (Secondary Significance) Spaces

Zone 3 spaces at the Robie House are not as significant as Zone 4 spaces, however they strongly contribute to the character and understanding of the building. The Zone 3 spaces of the Ground Floor include: The Entry Coat Closet, Children's Playroom, and Garage. The Entry Coat Closet and Children's Playroom were restored in 2018.

POLICY 36	Maintain the overall configuration, design, and material integrity of Zone 3 spaces on the Ground Floor.
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ENTRY COAT CLOSET

The Entry Coat Closet is a small space along the east side of the Entry Hall. A service space, the coat closet features rows of coat hooks along the walls. The space shares many of the same architectural features as the Entry Hall, including a magnesite floor, rough textured painted plaster walls and ceiling, and wood trim. A door in the east wall of the closet provides access to the servants' stair and marks a transition to the service wing of the house.

POLICY 37	Review the Entry Coat Closet for deterioration over time and user damage.
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CHILDREN'S PLAYROOM

Located to the east of the Entry Hall via a pair of leaded glass doors, the Playroom is essentially rectangular in shape with a stepped ceiling configuration like the Billiard Room. The north wall of the Playroom separates it from the utilitarian spaces of the house, while the south wall is lined with leaded glass casement windows. At the east end, the Playroom terminates in an angled window bay, while the west end of the room features an inglenook fireplace with a built-in oak bench along its north side. Leaded glass doors in the southwest corner of the room connect the Playroom to the Billiard Room. The Playroom currently serves as a multi-use program space.

POLICY 38	Review the Children's Playroom for deterioration over time and user damage.
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GARAGE

The attached three-car Garage at the Robie House occupies the Ground Floor of the service wing. The ceiling of the Garage is concrete with a wood floor on sleepers above, providing a fireproof division between the Garage and the servants' bedrooms above. Compromised during its history, the space was remodeled as a museum shop and information center in the late 1990s. Although it has been extensively remodeled, the Garage still contains its original clear and leaded glass windows, walls of Roman brick, and concrete ceiling. The main garage doors have been carefully recreated to Wright's original design.

POLICY 39

Preserve the original Garage elements and maintain recreated garage doors as remnants of the original space and function of the Garage.

Ground floor Zone 2 (Contributing) Spaces

Zone 2 spaces are typically service spaces and bathrooms that still retain contributing materials and design features. They are not deemed critical to the interpretation of the house.

POLICY 40

Maintain Ground Floor Zone 2 spaces with balanced consideration for usage needs and material integrity.

GROUND FLOOR TOILET

The room to the north of the Entry Hall was originally a small toilet room. The room has rough-textured walls and ceiling and is painted with the same technique and colors as the Entry Hall. The floor is magnesite. The space currently serves as storage.

Ground Floor Zone 1 (Non-Contributing Spaces)

Ground Floor Zone 1 spaces contain little or no historic fabric or design integrity and do not contribute to the interpretation of the Robie House. These spaces include:

- Wine Cellar
- Vault
- Laundry/Bathrooms
- Boiler Room
- Historic Garage Bathroom
- Garage Storage Room

POLICY 41

Ground Floor Zone 1 spaces are not significant, and alterations are acceptable.

5.5.2 Main Floor

Main Floor Zone 4 (primary Significance) Spaces

Zone 4 spaces of the Robie House most fully express Wright's design philosophy in terms of their complexity, finishes, and materials. Zone 4 spaces on the Main Floor include: Upper Hall, Living Room, and Dining Room. In accordance with Wright's philosophy of Organic Architecture the spaces are conceived as a unified whole, sharing similar materials and overall unity of design. Zone 4 spaces on the Main Floor were comprehensively restored to the highest degree in 2018.

POLICY 42

Maintain Main Floor Zone 4 spaces at the highest professional standard of preservation and restoration.

UPPER HALL

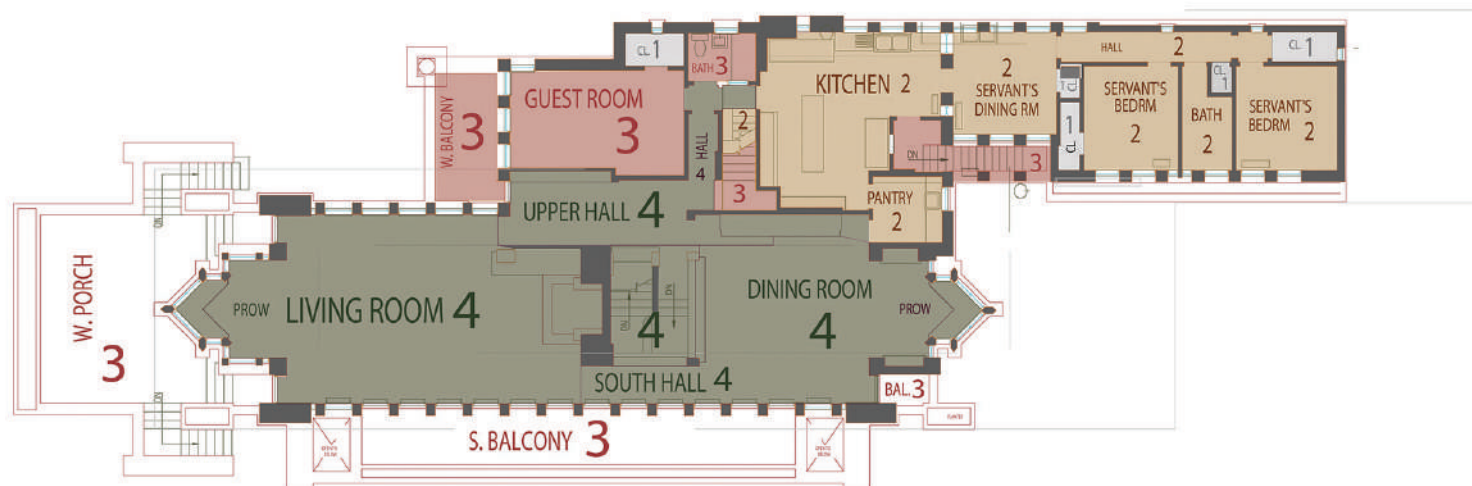
Located at the top of the main stair, the Upper Hall is another transitional space on the path to the central living area of the Robie House. The space serves as a central circulation hub for the Main Floor, providing access to the Living Room to the west, the Dining Room to the east, and access to the bedrooms and servants' quarters to the north.

The Upper Hall is enriched by its many decorative elements. Brass walls sconces and geometric ceiling grilles cast dramatic shadows, while bookcases with leaded glass doors line the north wall. On the south side of the space, the rear of the Living Room inglenook features built-in cabinetry with wood screens and shields the view from the Hall into the Living Room.

The Upper Hall was restored in 2018. This work included the reconstruction of the cabinets and slotted wood screen on the rear of the reconstructed inglenook bench to the left of the fireplace in the Living Room.

POLICY 43

Preserve the Upper Hall as a transitional space that contributes to Wright's designed path through the Robie House, and as a circulation space for the Main Floor.



5.11 Robie House Main Floor plan with zones of significance

LIVING ROOM

Architecturally, the Living Room is the most significant space in the Robie House. Designed as an open and flexible living space, the room is lined on three sides by leaded glass casement windows and doors that illuminate the interior with natural light. Rectangular in form, the room terminates at the west end in an angled window bay, flanked by leaded glass doors that provide access to the west porch. Along the east wall is a fireplace and inglenook formed by a partial height partition wall with a wood bench. The fireplace of Roman brick divides the living and dining spaces of the Main Floor. The fireplace is breached at the ceiling with a rectangular opening that visually unites the living and dining spaces. The north wall features five leaded glass casement windows, while to the south, 24 leaded-glass doors form a continuous 47-foot span connecting the Living Room and Dining Room. The doors open to a narrow balcony that extends across the length of the south façade. Simple oak trim delineates the walls and ceiling, while along the dropped edge of the ceiling electrified globe fixtures project into the room. In addition to the brass wall sconces and decorative ceiling grilles, these globe fixtures contribute to the complex lighting scheme in the house, which masterfully balances natural and incandescent light.

DINING ROOM

Consistent with Wright's philosophy of Organic Architecture, the Dining Room shares a common design vocabulary with the Living Room. Smaller in size, the Dining Room contains fewer windows since its north wall abuts the service wing of the house. The room terminates at the east end in an angled window bay that echoes the west end of the Living Room. The Dining Room features built-in cabinetry along its west side, separating the space from the Main Stair, and a built-in buffet along much of its north wall. A door at the northeast corner of the room leads to a Butler's Pantry and connects to the Servants' Wing of the house.

POLICY 44

Preserve the Living Room, Dining Room, and Upper Entry Hall as a highly significant unified space that fully expresses Wright's Prairie Style vision for the Robie House.



5.12 Robie House, Living Room

Main Floor Zone 3 (Secondary Significance) Spaces

Zone 3 spaces at the Robie House are not as significant as Zone 4 spaces. However, they strongly contribute to the character and understanding of the building. The Zone 3 spaces of the Main Floor include: Guest Bedroom Hall, Guest Bedroom, Guest Bathroom and stair to the bedroom level. The Guest Bedroom Hall and Guest Bedroom were restored in 2018.

POLICY 45

Maintain the overall configuration, design, and material integrity of Zone 3 spaces on the Main Floor.



5.13 Robie House, Guest Bedroom

GUEST BEDROOM HALL

The Guest Bedroom Hall is the primary circulation route that connects the private family quarters (Guest Bedroom, Stair to Third Floor) with the Servants' Quarter (Servant's Stair and Servant's Wing) and the formal family rooms of the Main Floor. The space is of a similar design to the adjacent rooms with wood strip flooring, semi-rough textured plaster, paint treatments, and oak trim.

GUEST BEDROOM

The Guest Bedroom is located to the west of the Hall. It features three leaded glass windows along the west wall and one at the north wall. The space is consistent in design with the adjacent Hall, with oak strip flooring, heavy-textured painted plaster walls, wood wall trim, and original brass wall sconces.

GUEST BATH

The Guest Bath is located at the north end of the Guest Bedroom Hall. The room features original beige mosaic floor and wall tiles and a painted plaster ceiling. The plaster has a semi-rough texture and is painted white. At the north wall a leaded glass window provides natural illumination. On the south wall is an interior window with textured glass.

STAIR TO BEDROOM LEVEL

The stair to the third-floor bedroom level is located at the east side of the Guest Bedroom Hall as one enters from the Upper Hall. The stair makes three turns, with the first 90-degree turn occurring just two steps up from the Main Floor and the second 180-degree turn at an intermediate landing located along the north wall. Above the intermediate landing, a pair of leaded glass windows are flanked by two side windows, also of leaded glass. A built-in storage bench of oak lines the wall below the windows.

The stairs and stair landings are oak, while the walls and pitched ceiling are a rough-textured plaster. The original color scheme was consistent with the Guest Bedroom Hall, featuring a base coat applied thinly over the textured plaster to which an accent coat was then lightly applied. Oak trim is used throughout to connect different surfaces as well as define boundaries. Small original brass light fixtures are located at the landings and on the main ceiling.

POLICY 46

Routinely review Zone 3 spaces of the Main Floor for deterioration over time and user damage.

Main Floor Zone 2 (Contributing) Spaces

Zone 2 spaces are typically service spaces and bathrooms that still retain contributing materials and design features. They are not deemed critical to the interpretation of the house. The Main Floor Zone 2 spaces are located in the Servants' Wing and include: Kitchen, Pantry, Servants' Dining Room, Servants' Hall, Servants' Bedrooms (1 and 2), and Servants' Bathroom. While the spaces are similar in design, palette, and materials to the family living spaces, they are typically simpler in concept and execution. The walls and ceilings of the Servants' wing are of smooth rather than textured plaster and feature an opaque paint. Several of the windows obscured from public view feature clear glass rather than leaded glass.

POLICY 47

Maintain Main Floor Zone 2 spaces with balanced consideration for usage needs and material integrity.

KITCHEN

The Kitchen is located to the east of the Servant's Stairs to the Ground Floor. It is an L-shaped room that wraps around a small exterior stair landing and a Pantry at the southeast corner. The Pantry connects the Kitchen to the Robie House Dining Room. Wood base and wall cabinets line the south and west walls, while additional base cabinets and a stand-alone sink are located on the north wall. At the northwest corner of the Kitchen, where the original range was located, the walls feature white ceramic subway tiles rather than plaster and wood trim. One casement window with leaded glass and three casement windows with clear glass are located in the north wall. At the east wall, there is a single lite door flanked by two interior windows of clear glass, separating the Kitchen and the Servant's Dining Room. Original brass wall sconces are located between the windows on the north wall. A custom reproduction bronze pendant light hangs from the center of the ceiling.

PANTRY

The Pantry is a small space between the Kitchen and Dining Room. Double-swinging wood doors separate the rooms. The Pantry features wood cabinets and a window along its east wall.

SERVANTS' DINING ROOM

The Servants' Dining Room is located between the kitchen to the west and the servants' bedrooms to the east. Along the north and south walls, the room features clear glass casement windows. The ceiling of the Servants' Dining Room is pitched with an original brass fixture at the center. Original brass sconces are located between the windows on the south wall. The sconces are the same model that is used in the private family quarters of the Robie House. The room currently serves as a multi-purpose staff space.

SERVANTS' HALL

From the Servants' Dining Room, a corridor runs along the north side of the Servants' wing providing access to two bedrooms and a bathroom to the east. Three clear glass casement windows are located along the north wall. The original servants' call system remains on the south wall.

SERVANTS' BEDROOMS (EAST AND WEST)

The two Servants' Bedrooms overlook the main courtyard to the south and are separated from each other by a bathroom. Both spaces have pitched ceilings, smooth plaster walls and ceilings, oak trim and strip flooring and leaded glass casement windows. The rooms are almost identical in design, except that the east Bedroom has a closet within the room, while the closet for the west Bedroom is in the Hall. Both bedrooms currently serve as office space for Trust staff.

SERVANTS' BATHROOM

The Servants' Bathroom is located between the two bedrooms and overlooks the main courtyard to the south through two leaded glass casement windows. In contrast to the bathrooms of the family wing, the room features oak strip flooring and walls of smooth plaster with oak trim rather than ceramic tiles. Built-in medicine cabinets are located in the northwest corner above a corner sink. Bathroom fixtures are salvaged period originals that closely match Wright's original specifications.

Main Floor Zone 1 (Non-Contributing) Spaces

Main Floor Zone 1 spaces contain little or no historic fabric or design integrity and do not contribute to the interpretation of the Robie House. These spaces include:

- Servants' Quarter closets

POLICY 48

Zone 1 spaces are not significant, and alterations are acceptable.

5.5.3 Third Floor

Third Floor Zone 3 (Secondary Significance) Spaces

Zone 3 spaces at the Robie House, although not as significant as Zone 4 spaces, strongly contribute to the character and understanding of the building. The Zone 3 spaces of the Third Floor include: Master Bedroom, Master Bedroom Dressing Room, East Bedroom, West Bedroom, and Third Floor Hall.

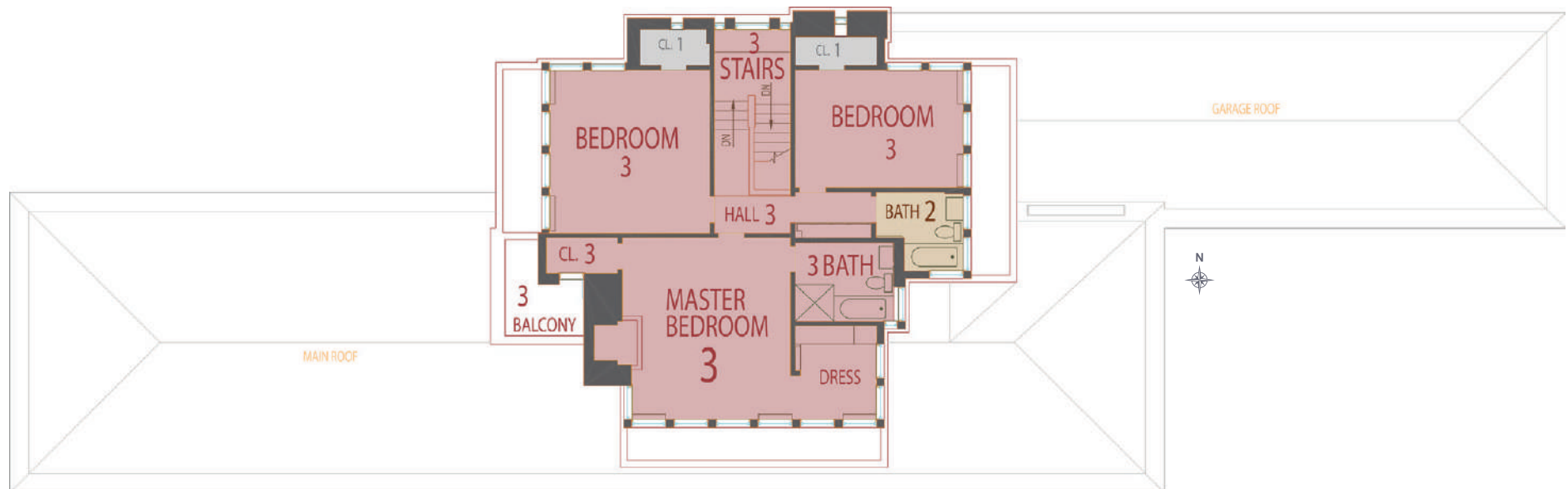
The family bedrooms are all located on the Third Floor. Architecturally, the bedrooms are designed in a similar fashion with pitched ceilings, rough textured painted plaster walls and ceilings, oak trim and oak strip flooring. The original paint

colors were all similar to one another and based on earth tones consistent with the interior color palette of the house. Custom brass sconce lights, simpler in design than those installed in the public spaces of the Ground and Main floors, are used at both the walls and occasionally at the ceiling.

The Third Floor bedrooms of the Robie House are currently used as exhibit spaces, displaying original furniture and objects designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

POLICY 49

Maintain Third-floor Zone 3 spaces with balanced consideration for usage needs and material integrity.



5.14 Robie House Third Floor plan with zones of significance

THIRD FLOOR HALL

At the top of the stair from the Main Floor of the house is an L-shaped Hall that acts as a circulation hub for the Third Floor. The Hall provides access to the Master Bedroom to the south, a bedroom and bathroom to the east, and a bedroom to the west. Both the upper stair landing and Hall are designed in a similar manner to the stair from the Main Floor.

MASTER BEDROOM & DRESSING ROOM

The Master Bedroom is the largest bedroom in the house and opens to a Dressing Room to the east. The north wall of the Dressing Room features built-in wood closets. The Master Bedroom and Dressing Room both have pitched ceilings. Leaded glass windows line the southern wall of the room. A single leaded glass window on the west wall and two leaded glass windows on the east wall create the impression of a continuous band of leaded glass that wraps around the corners of the room. Built-in drawers are located under several of the southern windows. In addition to natural illumination, custom brass wall sconces are used on the walls and in places on the ceiling. At the west wall of the bedroom is a brick fireplace and hearth. To the north of the fireplace a door opens to a walk-in closet that leads to a small balcony to the west of the bedroom.



5.15 Robie House, Master Bedroom

MASTER BATHROOM

The Master Bathroom is located in the northeast corner of the Master Bedroom. The room features a pitched ceiling, two small casement windows with leaded glass at the southeast corner, and walls and floor of mosaic ceramic tiles. Two medicine cabinets are located adjacent to one another along the east wall and are separated by a custom brass wall sconce. Bathroom fixtures are salvaged period originals that closely match Wright's original specifications.

WEST BEDROOM

The west bedroom looks out over the Entry Court with four leaded glass windows along the west wall and two at the north wall. Like the Master Bedroom, the room features a pitched roof, rough textured plaster walls and ceilings, and was painted in a similar manner. Built-in drawers are located below the two middle windows on the west wall.

EAST BEDROOM

The East bedroom is the smallest of the Third Floor bedrooms and is located at the northeast corner of the Third Floor. The room features three leaded glass windows along the entire east wall and two on the north wall. Built-in drawers are located below the middle window on the east wall.

Third Floor Zone 2 (Contributing) Spaces

Zone 2 spaces are typically service spaces and bathrooms that still retain contributing materials and design features. They are not deemed critical to the interpretation of the house.

POLICY 50

Maintain the overall design and material integrity of the Zone 2 spaces of the Third Floor.

BATHROOM

A bathroom is located at the east end of the Third Floor Hall. Consistent with the Master Bathroom, the room features a pitched ceiling and ceramic mosaic tiles on the floor and walls. The room features three small leaded glass casement windows, two along the east wall and one along the south wall. Bathroom fixtures are salvaged period originals that closely match Wright's original specifications.

Third Floor Zone 1 (Non-Contributing) Spaces

Third Floor Zone 1 spaces contain little or no historic fabric or design integrity and do not contribute to the interpretation of the Robie House. These spaces include:

- Bedroom closets

POLICY 51

Zone 1 spaces are not significant, and alterations are acceptable.

5.6 INTERIOR CONTRIBUTING MATERIALS AND ELEMENTS

5.6.1 Flooring

MAGNESITE FLOORING

Magnesite was a material used as flooring by Frank Lloyd Wright in several important buildings during his Prairie years, including the Larkin Administration Building, Buffalo, New York (1903) and the Darwin Martin House, Buffalo, New York (1903). The material, made from magnesium oxide, magnesium chloride, sand, and wood fibers, is remarkably durable with a compressive strength more than twice that of concrete. Magnesite is used throughout the Ground Floor of the primary wing of the Robie House. Toned with iron oxide, the rich burnt-sienna color of the magnesite contributes to the autumnal palette of the house.

A modern magnesite floor was installed as part of 2018 restoration to match the original magnesite in the Ground Floor Entry Hall, Playroom, Billiard Room, Coat Closet, and Entry Hall Bathroom. Original magnesite remains on the lower portion of the Main Stair.



5.16 Installation of Billiard Room magnesite floor, 2019

POLICY 52

Maintain the magnesite flooring as an important contributing element of Wright's design for the interiors. Conservation and repair of the magnesite should be undertaken with an understanding of the existing material properties and conditions in order to preserve the original aesthetic.

WOOD STRIP FLOORING

The flooring in Wright's original specifications for the Robie House was "plain red oak, blind nailed in every joist and thoroughly planed and scraped." Consistent with these specifications, red oak strip flooring is used throughout the Main Floor and Third Floor of the house. Per Wright's original specifications, the strip flooring in the Kitchen and Pantry is maple.

POLICY 53

Maintain the wood flooring as an important contributing integral element of Wright's organic vision for the interiors



5.17 Robie House, Billiard Room with magnesite floor

5.6.2 Interior Wood Work

WOOD TRIM

“Reveal the nature of the wood, plaster, brick, or stone in your designs,” Wright advised, “they are all by nature friendly and beautiful,” adding “strip the wood of varnish and let it alone—stain it.” Consistent with Wright’s vision for the modern Prairie house, simple red oak trim is used extensively throughout at the Robie House. The trim is a dynamic visual device, framing windows and doors, delineating ceilings in the central living area on the Main Floor, and unifying spaces on each level of the building. Originally finished with a mixture of pine resin and linseed oil, restored trim has a rubbed Tung oil finish of polymerized Tung oil and urethane resin. Unlike linseed oil, Tung oil will not yellow and darken over time.

POLICY 54

Maintain the wood trim as an integral element of Wright’s organic vision for the interiors. Conservation and repair of the wood trim should be undertaken with an understanding of the existing material properties and conditions in order to preserve the original aesthetic.

CABINETWORK

“The most truly satisfactory apartments,” Wright declared, “are those in which most or all of the furniture is built in as a part of the original scheme considering the whole as an integral unit.”⁸

Built-in cabinetwork of red oak throughout the interiors of the Robie House integrates with wood trim and harmonizes with the free-standing furniture designed for the house.

POLICY 55

Preserve historic cabinetwork and protect recreated cabinetwork as an integral element of Wright’s organic vision for the interiors. Conservation and repair of cabinetry should be undertaken with an understanding of the existing material properties and conditions in order to preserve the original aesthetic.



5.18 Robie House Main Stair and Upper Hall, wood trim



5.19 Reinstalling restored wood trim, 2018

5.6.3 Wall Treatments

PLASTER

The plaster walls and ceilings are a defining feature of Wright's interiors of the Robie House. Per Wright's specifications, the plaster is made of non-hydraulic lime with a sand aggregate applied half-an-inch thick on wood lath. Several different plaster finishes are used throughout the house. In the primary family wing the plaster is textured with a sand float finish. Smooth plaster is used throughout the service wing of the house.

Within the family wing there are two types of textured plaster; a rough textured plaster is used throughout the Ground Floor and in the family bedrooms, while a semi-rough textured plaster is used in the formal living spaces on the Main Floor including the Upper Hall, Living Room, and Dining Room. The subtle changes in texture and paint application to the plaster enhance the organic quality of Wright's design.

POLICY 56

Maintain the texture, color, and location of the different plaster types as an integral element of Wright's organic vision for the Robie House interiors. Conservation and repair of interior plaster should be undertaken with an understanding of the existing material properties and conditions in order to preserve the original aesthetic.

PAINT

In his 1908 essay, *In the Cause of Architecture*, Wright advised his readers that, "Colors require the same conventionalizing process to make them fit to live with that natural forms do," and that they should draw inspiration from "the woods and fields for color schemes." Accordingly, the Robie House interiors feature a warm, autumnal palette of yellows, oranges, beiges, and browns. The color palette reinforces the sense of unity in the design of the house.

The application of paint to the textured plaster is complex. Three different applications are used on the textured plaster, while a fourth application of even, opaque paint is used on the smooth plaster in the service wing of the house.



5.20 Restoration of Guest Bedroom plaster, 2018

TYPE A: Application of a thin opaque base paint, allowing paint to build in the interstices between protruding aggregate components. The highest points of the aggregate are then wiped clean to expose the plaster underneath. This technique produces a variegated finish where the textured plaster plays a significant role in the final appearance.

TYPE B: Following application of a thin opaque base paint as in Type A, the highest aggregate points are then covered with an opaque accent paint.

TYPE C: Following application of a thin, opaque base paint as in Type A, a tinted, transparent glaze is applied as a thin wash. The glaze builds between the interstices of the protruding plaster aggregate.

POLICY 57

Maintain the color, technique, and location of the different paint schemes as an integral element of Wright's organic vision for the Robie House interiors. Conservation and repair to paint finishes should be undertaken with an understanding of the existing material properties and conditions in order to preserve the original aesthetic.

5.6.4 Furnishings and Fixtures



5.21 Robie House Living Room with light fixtures

LIGHT FIXTURES

Wright's lighting scheme for the Robie House included multiple custom light fixture models.

TYPE A: Square brass fixture with an intricate top plate featuring elaborate patterns of chevrons, a half globe glass shade, and a cruciform wall plate. This fixture model is used in the Entry Hall, Billiard Room, Upper Hall, Living Room, and Dining Room.

TYPE B: Globe fixture supported in a geometric frame of red oak. This fixture model is used at the dropped edge of the ceiling in the Living Room and Dining Room.

TYPE C: Small brass fixture with a square wall plate and exposed bulb. This fixture model is used in the Billiard Room, Playroom, Guest and Family Bedrooms, and in the bathrooms and service areas of the house.

Additional incandescent lighting is located on the Main Floor of the house recessed in the dropped edge of the ceiling in the Living and Dining Rooms, and in the ceiling of the Upper Hall. Concealed fixtures shine through frosted glass and decorative oak ceiling grilles.

POLICY 58

Preserve historic light fixtures and maintain replica light fixtures and their specific locations as an important contributing element expressing Wright's organic vision for the interiors of the house.

CARPETS

The original carpets for the Robie House were designed by Wright's long-time collaborator, George Mann Niedecken. Patterned carpets were created for the Entry Hall, Upper Hall, Living Room, Dining Room, and Guest Bedroom. Designed in harmony with the house, the carpets feature repeating geometric patterns that echo forms found throughout the residence. While closely related, the patterns change from room to room. The Main Stair and Stair to the Third Floor featured carpets with a linear border and plain central field. The original carpets are no longer extant. Replica carpets based on the original designs have been made for the Entry Hall, Main Stair, Upper Hall, Living Room, and Dining Room.

POLICY 59

Protect and maintain recreated carpets as an important contributing element expressing Wright's organic vision for the interiors of the house.

POLICY 60

Recreate carpeting as use requires to specifications outlined in historic documentation in the Niedecken Archives at the Milwaukee Museum of Art, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

FURNITURE

Wright and his associates designed free-standing furniture for the formal spaces of the Robie House: the Entrance Hall, Living Room, Dining Room, and Guest Bedroom. Built from red oak, and characterized by straight lines and rectilinear forms, the furniture is designed with the traditional Arts and Crafts preference for solidity and simplicity. The Robie House presently displays a combination of original and recreated furniture pieces.

POLICY 61

Preserve original furniture as an integral element of Wright's Organic vision for the interiors. Conservation and repair of original furniture should be undertaken with an understanding of the existing material properties and conditions in order to preserve the original aesthetic.

POLICY 62

Protect and maintain recreated furniture as an important contributing element expressing Wright's organic vision for the interiors of the house.



5.22 Robie House original hall chair, Collection of the David and Alfred Smart Museum, University of Chicago

5.7 BUILDING STRUCTURE AND SYSTEMS

5.7.1 Structure

The Robie House structural system includes exterior load-bearing walls, steel girders and joists, wood floor joists, and wood rafters—a combination not commonly found in residential design of the time.

Wright's iconoclastic design of the Robie House depends on steel's inherent structural capabilities. Concealed steel amplifies interior spaces, extends exterior soffits, and allows masonry to seemingly float above open space. Stabilization of the building structure was undertaken between 2000-2010. Accommodations were made at this time for increased visitation.

POLICY 63

Maintain the Robie House structural system to ensure building integrity and safety.

POLICY 64

Review routinely to ensure structural integrity of the Robie House.

5.7.2 Mechanical Systems

Climate Management System

The climate management system for the Robie House was installed in 2002. The system was sensitively integrated to ensure minimum impact on the historic character of the building. The system is designed to modulate heating and cooling to protect the historic interiors of the house, to ensure visitor and staff comfort, and to not adversely impact the historic fabric of the Robie House. It features a series of air-handlers and humidifiers providing tempered air and heat to the rooms, supported by fan-coils and radiators hidden within historic radiator cabinets. Steam humidifiers provide humidification, while two boilers in the Ground Floor Boiler Room provide heat. Cooling is provided by a chiller located in the alley to the east of the house. The four-pipe system comprises a heating supply and return, and a cooling supply and return. Pipes installed under the Ground Floor slab of the house are copper with a Permapipe insulation system. The computer control system that manages climate within the building was originally installed in 2002 and upgraded to a new Carrier IVue system in 2017.

Electrical

During the exterior restoration of the Robie House from 2002-2007, a new 240 Volt three phase service was installed to provide power to the building. Subterranean power lines extend from the alleyway to the east to four distribution panels in the Robie House Boiler Room: a main panel, emergency panel, lighting panel, and power panel. Sub-panels were also installed in the Boiler Room for mechanical equipment and pumps. An additional sub-panel was installed in the Wine Cellar at the west end of the building, supplying power to mechanical systems housed in that area, these include: VESDA control panel, fire pumps, and fire pump controls. All supply wiring to outlets and fixtures was replaced at this time, if modern wiring was not already in place. The process was facilitated by the presence of original gas piping that was used as conduit throughout the building.

Plumbing

During the exterior restoration of the Robie House from 2002-2007, a new 12" water service was installed from Woodlawn Ave to the southwest corner of the Robie House Wine Cellar. The service splits into two lines which feed the fire pumps and general building water service. A new copper service was installed below ground extending back to the Boiler Room, which then supplies water to fixtures throughout the building. Plumbing fixtures were installed in new visitor bathrooms (located in the former Laundry Room) and in the Servant's Dining Room. Period appropriate salvage fixtures were installed in the Kitchen, Servant's Bathroom, Guest Bedroom Bathroom and the two Third Floor bathrooms. New supply and drain piping were installed to these bathrooms where the original was missing, or existing piping was inadequate. Water was not restored to the Third Floor Master Bathroom which is located directly above the Dining Room.

POLICY 65

Maintain and routinely upgrade mechanical systems as a critical function to the preservation of the house.

5.7.3 Life Safety Systems

Life safety systems at the Robie House consist of a pre-action sprinkler system and an aspirating smoke detection (VESDA) system. Additionally, emergency lighting, strobes, and horns are installed on all levels of the house. In accordance with City of Chicago code, exit signage is located throughout the house.

POLICY 66

Maintain and routinely upgrade life safety systems as a critical function of the Robie House as a public museum.

5.8 OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

5.8.1 Accessibility

Designed in 1908 as a private residence, the Robie House does not meet modern standards of accessibility. Accessibility studies confirm that adapting the building would severely compromise the aesthetic integrity and historic fabric of the Robie House. Following completion of the 2018 restoration, accessible spaces include: The Entry Court and Walk Way, Entry Hall, Playroom, Billiard Room, Garage (Museum Shop and Information Center), Garage Courtyard, and two accessible restrooms and hall leading off from the Garage. The Main Floor and Third Floor are not accessible.

POLICY 67	Protect the aesthetic integrity and historic fabric of the Robie House while ensuring viable spaces remain accessible.
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5.8.2 Climate Change

Consideration of climate change has become an increasingly important factor in the management of historic sites. Between 1900 and 2010, the Midwest has experienced an average air temperature increase of more than 1.5-degree Fahrenheit, with temperatures projected to continue to rise over the next century. The changing climate presents new challenges such as increased flood risks, increased and more intense precipitation, changing flora and fauna (including pests), all of which can negatively impact staff and facility management, building mechanical systems, and utility costs.

POLICY 68	Monitor local, regional, and national climate change projections and their associated environmental impacts on Robie House.
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POLICY 69	Incorporate environmental risks in institutional and emergency planning for Robie House.
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5.8.3 Maintenance Plan

The maintenance plan for the Robie House outlines a cyclical schedule for preventative maintenance to ensure the ongoing protection of the building and its historic fabric. It concerns all practical and technical measures necessary to maintain the site in proper order.

POLICY 70	Routinely review and update the maintenance plan to ensure the ongoing preservation and maintenance of Robie House.
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5.8.4 Archival Management

Documentation and archival management are critical elements in the management and ongoing preservation of the Robie House. They are also essential for preventative maintenance at the site. Accountancy procedures help identify recurring issues in maintenance work, contribute to preventative maintenance, and allow ongoing issues to be identified and corrected. Archival records for the Robie House are maintained at the Trust's John G. Thorpe Restoration Resource Center.

POLICY 71	Maintain archival records as an essential tool for understanding Robie House and ensuring its ongoing preservation and maintenance.
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5.8.5 Change Management

Designed as a private residence, today the Robie House operates as a public museum. Over time, physical and environmental factors can impact the historic fabric and structure of the site. Efficient management must be able to identify, measure, and anticipate these changes and adapt appropriately to implement sound conservation practices while ensuring an enriching cultural experience for visitors.

For an historic site like the Robie House, which cannot be physically regenerated but only preserved and maintained, sustainability means ensuring the significance and

authenticity of the site through the thoughtful management of change responsive to the historic environment. Documentation of changes at the Robie House is critical to the management and ongoing preservation at the site.

Change management at the Robie House is undertaken in alignment with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, and with levels of significance for each building element as defined in The Robie House Conservation Management Plan, Chapter 3.5, "Levels of Significance of Spaces in the Robie House."

POLICY 72

Preserve and maintain the significance and authenticity of the Robie House through thoughtful and informed change management.

POLICY 73

Align change management decision-making with historical and scientific research. Decisions regarding change management at the Robie House are based on historical research and scientific analytics of materials that result in balanced and informed decisions. Treatments follow national and international standards of conservation practices.

ENDNOTES

1. Terms included here are drawn from the *Burra Charter*, an Australian adaptation of the Venice Charter. The Burra Charter is an internationally accepted document which outlines the basic principles and procedures for the conservation of culturally significant places.
2. Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture," *Architectural Record* 23 (March, 1908), reprinted in, Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings* (Rizzoli International Publications, 1992), 87.
3. Ibid, 87.
4. Ibid, 87.
5. Ibid, 87.
6. Ibid, 89.
7. Ibid, 87.
8. Ibid, 87.
9. Ibid, 87.



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HISTORICAL GRAPHICS

The following pages provide a selection of images from the Robie and Wilber periods of occupancy at the Robie House. Multiple photographs of the Robies and their son, Fred Robie, Jr., were taken in the fall of 1909 at the Robie House construction site. Additional photographs of the construction site were taken by the contractor, Harrison B. Barnard.

Five photographs of the completed Robie House were commissioned in 1910, after the Robies had taken residence. One photograph is an exterior image, while the others document the appearance of furnishings and interior details in the Entry Hall, Living Room, and Dining Room.

In 1916, Marshall Wilber commissioned a series of photographs of his family taken at the Robie House. These photographs show the family posed in various rooms of the house and document the interiors during the Wilber residency.

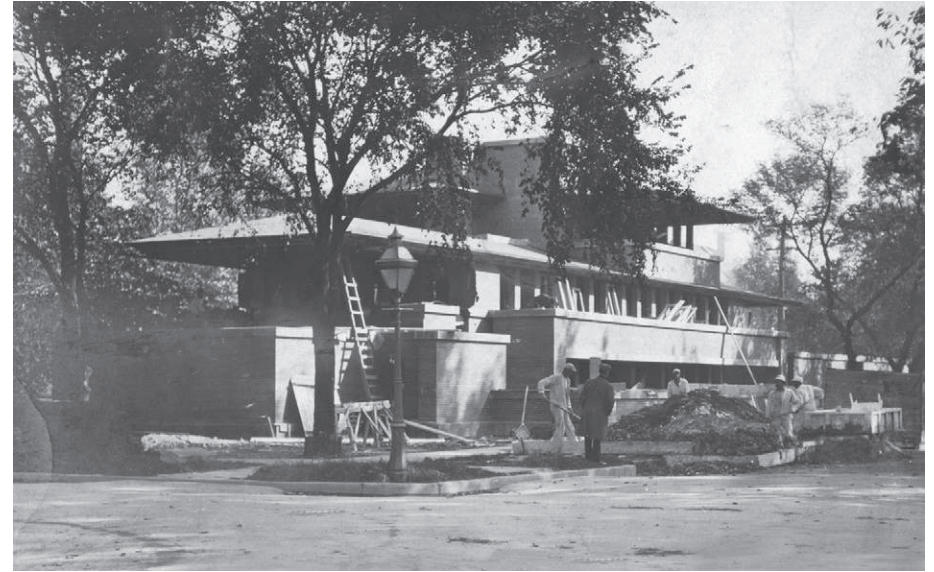


Fred Robie Jr. in front of the Robie House on 58th Street, ca. 1910

1909 Robie House Construction Photographs



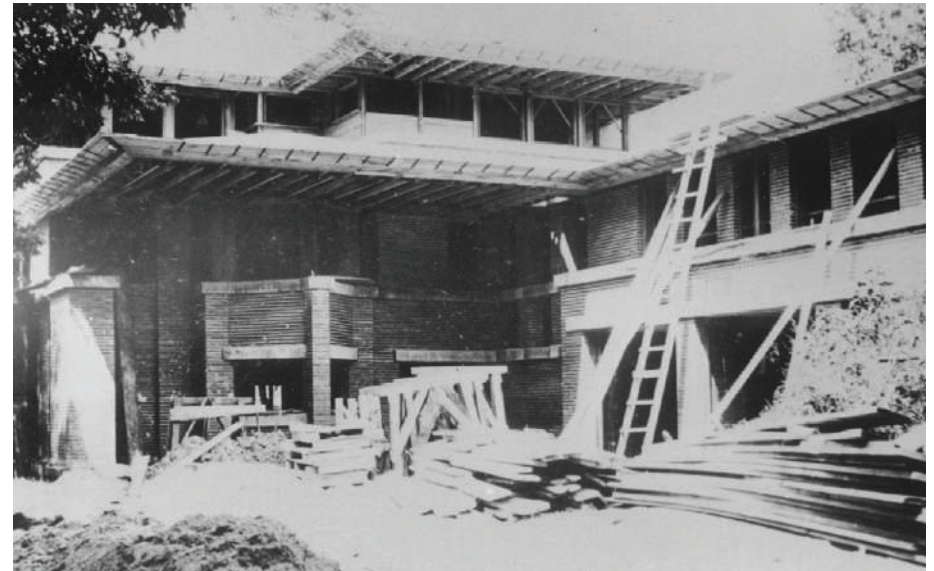
The Robie Family at the construction site, 1909



Robie House construction, 1909



Teams of horses dig shallow foundation trenches, 1909



Robie House construction, 1909

1909 Robie House Construction Photographs



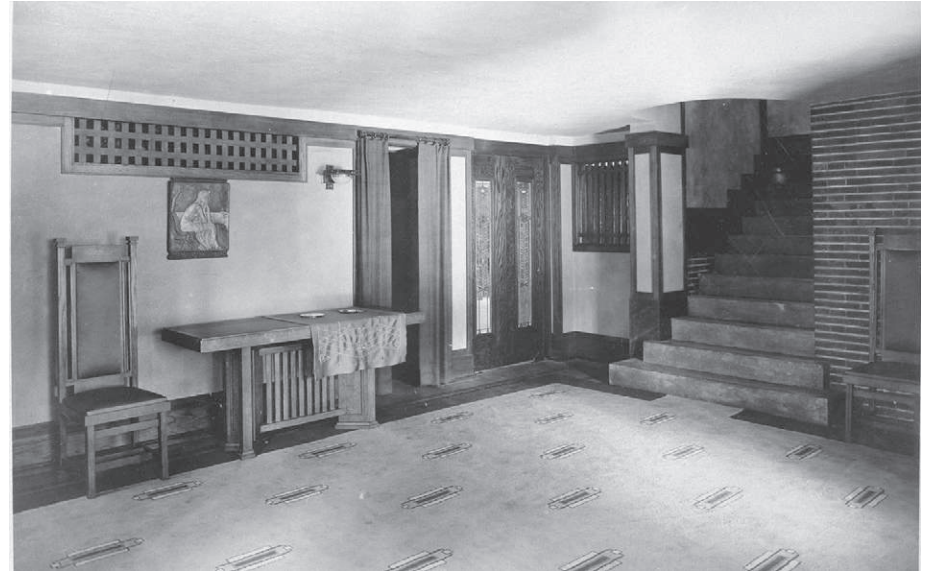
Fred Robie Jr. at the construction site, 1909



1910 Robie House Photographs (Robie period)



Exterior, south elevation looking east, 1910



Entry Hall looking southeast, 1910

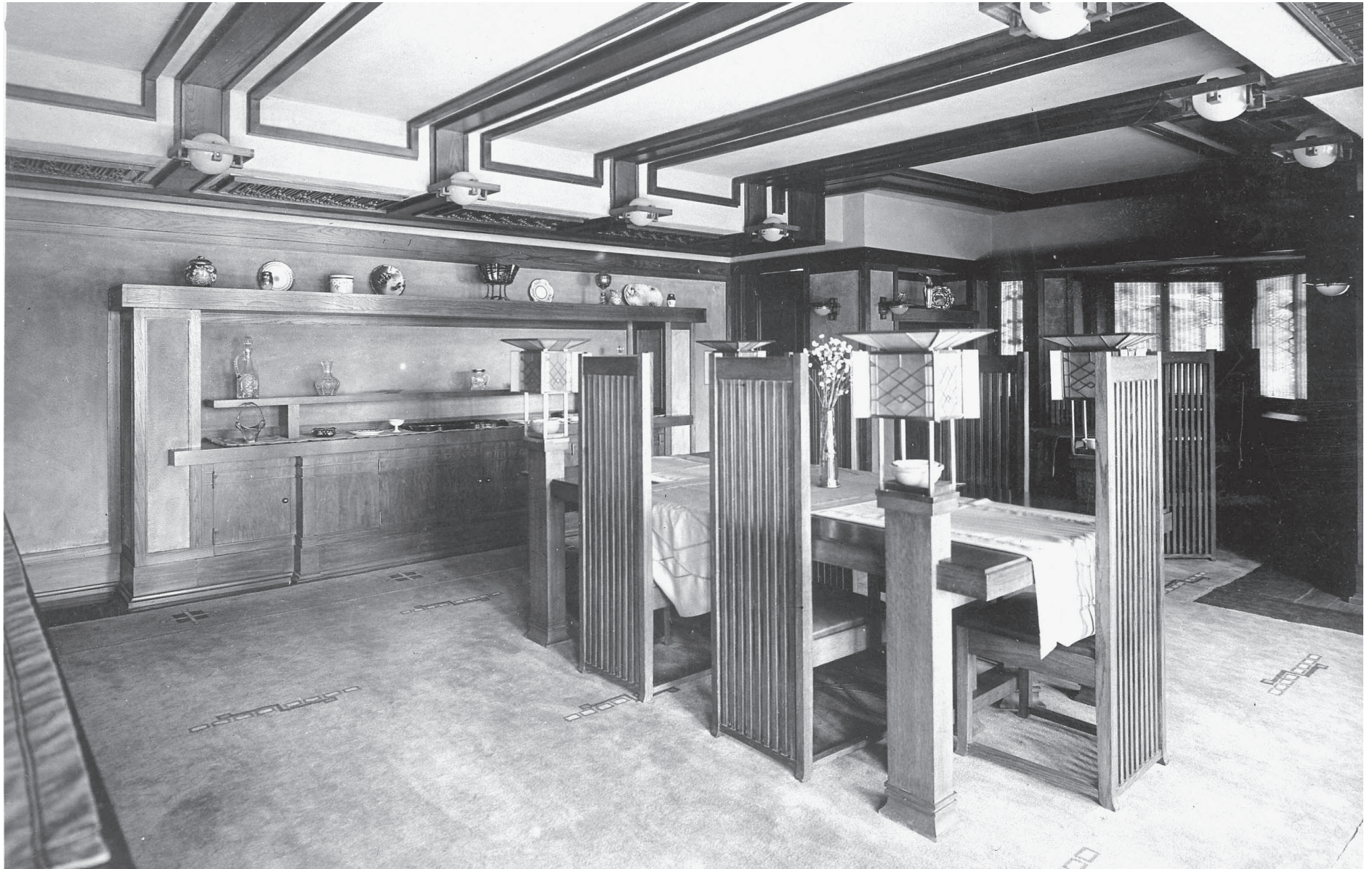


Living Room looking northwest, 1910



Living Room looking east, 1910

1910 Robie House Photographs (Robie period)

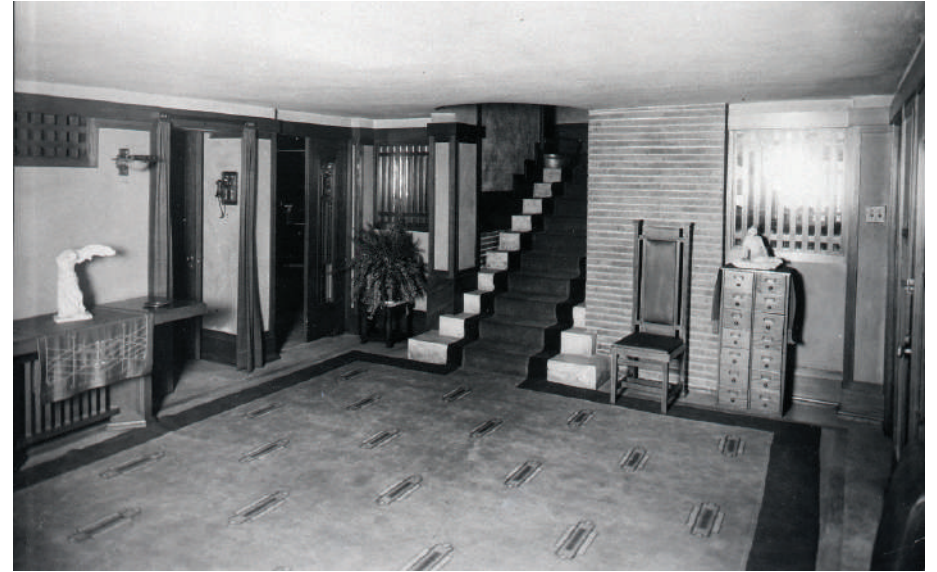


Living Room looking northwest, 1910

1916 Robie House Photographs (Wilber period)



Entry Hall looking northwest



Entry Hall looking southeast



Billiard Room looking west



Playroom

1916 Robie House Photographs (Wilber period)



Upper Hall looking west



Living Room looking southeast, with the Wilber family

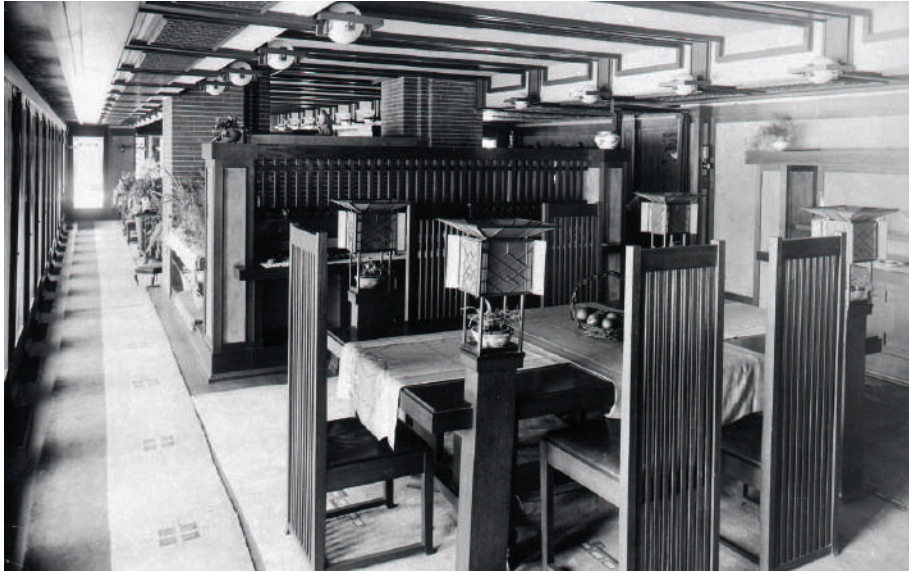


Living Room looking west, with the Wilber family

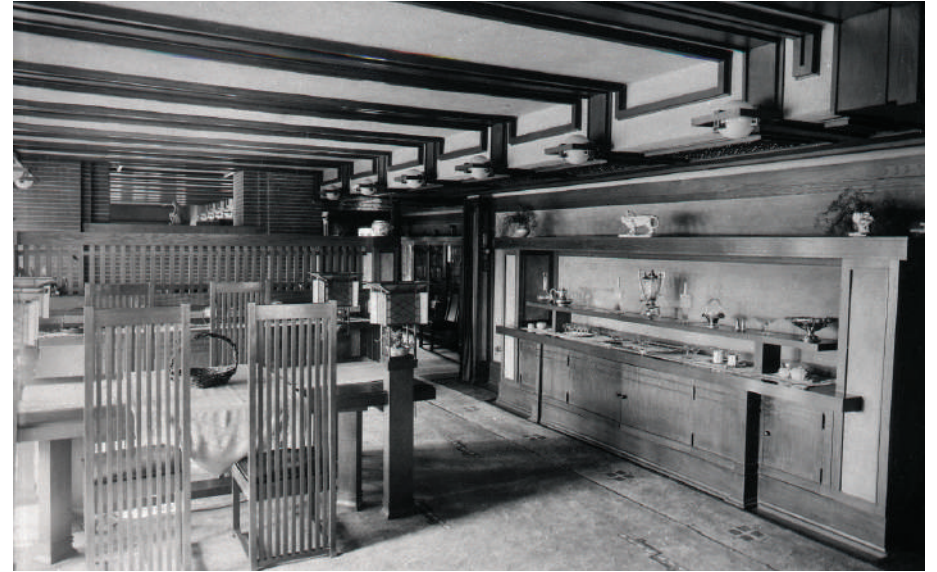


South corridor looking west to Dining Room, with Jeanette Wilber

1916 Robie House Photographs (Wilber period)



Dining Room looking west



Dining Room looking northwest



Dining Room looking southeast



Guest Bedroom looking west

1916 Robie House Photographs (Wilber period)



Kitchen looking southwest

1916 Robie House Photographs (Wilber period)



Master Bedroom looking west, with the Wilber family

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Wright, Frank Lloyd. *Frank Lloyd Wright: Europe and Beyond*, ed. Anthony Alofsin. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

IMAGE CREDITS

Front Cover

Robie House, South Elevation

Photograph by Tim Long, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

Chapter 1

TITLE PAGE IMAGE: Robie House West Elevation

Photograph by Tim Long, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

1.1 Robie House, View from south corridor into Dining Room

Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

1.2 Robie House Living Room

Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

1.3 Robie House Entry Hall

Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

Chapter 2

TITLE PAGE IMAGE: Robie House Living Room, 1910

Henry Fuermann, Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

2.1 Paul Cornell, Founder of Hyde Park

2.2 Italianate Residence of Paul Cornell, 1857

Architect Unknown

2.3 The Romanesque Charles Hosmer Morse House, Hyde Park, 1893.

Mifflin Emlin Bell

The Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art, Winter Park, Florida,

© The Charles Hosmer Morse Foundation

2.4 Administration Building and Machinery Hall, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893

Richard Morris Hunt

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540

USA, cph 3b34103 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b34103, 2002716148, <https://lccn.loc.gov/2002716148>

2.5 Daniel Burnham

From *The World's Work*, Volume 10, 1905, Doubleday, Page & Company, New York

2.6 Frederick Law Olmstead, ca. 1892

From *The World's Work*, Volume 6, 1903, Doubleday, Page & Company, New York

2.7 Midway Plaisance, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, Illinois, 1893

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, cph 3a51889 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3a51889, <https://lccn.loc.gov/2006680017>

2.8 Panoramic view of the University of Chicago, ca. 1907

Geo. R. Lawrence Co.; September 23, 1907, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, pan 6a34605 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pan.6a34605, <https://lccn.loc.gov/2007663919>

2.9 Henry Ives Cobb. From *The Final Official Report of the Director of Works of the World's Columbian Exposition, June, 1894*, vol. 1, pp. 47-49. Ryerson & Burnham Libraries, The Art Institute of Chicago. Digital File # DFRWCE.Port_Cobb

2.10 The Greek Revival Henry B. Clarke House, Chicago, Illinois, 1836

Architect Unknown

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/5/5e/Clarke_House.jpg

2.11 William K. Vanderbilt Mansion, New York, 1882

Richard Morris Hunt

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

2.12 Watts-Sherman House, Newport, Rhode Island, 1875

H. H. Richardson

A.D. White Architectural Photographs, Cornell University Library Accession

Number: 15/5/3090.00538, Cornell University Library

2.13 John J. Glessner House, Chicago, Illinois, 1885

H. H. Richardson

Historic American Buildings Survey Photocopy ca. 1923 from J. J. Glessner,

The Story of a House Front elevation, HABS ILL,16-CHIG,17—2, Repository:

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

2.14 Mary Fiske Stoughton House, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1883

H. H. Richardson

HABS MASS,9-CAMB,62—9, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Washington, D.C. 20540 USA <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

2.15 Richard Treat Paine Estate, Waltham, Massachusetts, 1882

H. H. Richardson

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Robert_Treat_Paine_Estate#/media/File:PaineEstate_MainHouse_with_terrace.jpg

2.16 Louis Sullivan, ca. 1895

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/01/](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/01/Louis_Sullivan_circa_1895.jpg)

[Louis_Sullivan_circa_1895.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/01/Louis_Sullivan_circa_1895.jpg)

2.17 Auditorium Building, Chicago, Illinois, 1890

Adler and Sullivan

A.D. White Architectural Photographs, Cornell University Library Accession

Number: 15/5/3090.00152, Cornell University Library

2.18 Wainwright Building, St. Louis, Missouri, 1890

Adler and Sullivan

Photograph by Emil Boehl, 1907

Courtesy of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

2.19 Frank Lloyd Wright, ca. 1887

Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

2.20 David Gamble House, Pasadena, California, 1908

Greene and Greene

2.21 Charles Rennie Mackintosh by James Craig Annan

Modern bromide print, 1893

NPG x132515, © National Portrait Gallery, London

2.22 Hill House, Helensburgh, Scotland, 1904

Charles Rennie Mackintosh

Photograph by Tony Hisgett

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Hill_House,_Helensburgh#/media/File:Hill_House_1_\(36698087814\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Hill_House,_Helensburgh#/media/File:Hill_House_1_(36698087814).jpg)

2.23 Josef Hoffmann, Portrait, ca. 1903. Josef Hoffmann Museum,

Brtnice © MAK Archive

2.24 Palais Stoclet, Brussels, Belgium, 1905-1911

Joseff Hoffmann

Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA), Brussels, Belgium, © KIK-IRPA, Brussels, Belgium

2.25 Charles Robert Ashbee, 1900

Photographed by Frank Lloyd Wright in December 1900.

Reproduced in Alan Crawford, C. R. Ashbee. *Architect, Designer & Romantic Socialist* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1985)

2.26 Frank Lloyd Wright, ca. 1906
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

2.27 The Rookery Building, Chicago, Illinois, 1888
Burnham and Root
Courtesy Chicago Historical Society - Rookery Building, 209 South LaSalle Street,
Chicago, Cook County, IL, HABS ILL,16-CHIG,31—10, Library of Congress Prints
and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

2.28 Exterior of the Frank Lloyd Wright Studio, Oak Park, Illinois, ca. 1898
Frank Lloyd Wright
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

2.29 Frank Lloyd Wright Home, Oak Park, Illinois, 1889
Frank Lloyd Wright
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

2.30 William Winslow House, River Forest, Illinois, 1893
Frank Lloyd Wright, from *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright*,
1911
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

2.31 Ward Willits House, Highland Park, Illinois, 1902
Frank Lloyd Wright, from *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright*,
1911
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

2.32 Frederick C. Robie House, Chicago, Illinois, 1910
Frank Lloyd Wright, from *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright*,
1911
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

2.33 Imperial Hotel, Tokyo, Japan, 1923
Frank Lloyd Wright
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

2.34 Drafting Room, Frank Lloyd Wright Studio, Oak Park, Illinois, ca. 1906 - 1909
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

2.35 Marion Mahony Griffin, ca. 1915
National Library of Australia, PIC/9929/1958 LOC Album 1092/18

2.36 Walter Burley Griffin, 1912
State Library of New South Wales, FL3233490

2.37 Richard Bock (center left) and William Drummond (center right)
Richard Bock Sculpture Museum, Greenville, IL

2.38 Frederick C. Robie Residence, plate xxxvii, (Chicago, Illinois), 1910. From
the series *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright* (Studies and
Executed Buildings by Frank Lloyd Wright), Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, June 1911.
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

2.39 Drafting Room, Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio, Oak Park, Illinois, ca.
1906 – 1909
Frank Lloyd Wright
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

2.40 Design for Robie House Front Terrace Gate
The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery
Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York), 0908.002

2.41 George Mann Niedecken, Self-Portrait, ca. 1900
Palladium print
George Mann Niedecken Archive of the Milwaukee Art Museum
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Jacobson PA2007.50.25.

2.42 Presentation Drawing of Living Room for Mr. Robie, ca. 1909
Pencil and watercolor on paper
George Mann Niedecken
George Mann Niedecken Archives, Milwaukee Museum of Art, PA2008.200.44
Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Robert L. Jacobson

- 2.43** Frederick C. Robie, ca 1902
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.44** Lora Robie, ca 1902
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.45** The Isadore Heller House, Chicago, Illinois, 1906
Frank Lloyd Wright
From *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright*, 1911
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.46** The Taylor Family with Robie House table lamp, ca 1915
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.47** The Wilber Family in the Living Room of the Robie House, ca 1916
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.48** The Robie House with the Goodman House seen to the north, ca. 1910
University of Chicago Photographic Archive, [apf2-04060], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library
- 2.49** Frank Lloyd Wright at the Robie House, March, 1957
Chicago Sun Times
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.50** Ceremony conveying transfer of ownership of Robie House to the University of Chicago, 1963
- 2.51** Architectural drawing of the Robie House Dining Room refurbished to accommodate the Adlai Stevenson Institute of International Affairs
University of Chicago Photographic Archive, [apf2-06503], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
- 2.52** Robie House restoration, installation of new roof, 2002
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.53** Robie House restoration, deconstruction of south balcony wall, 2002
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.54** Robie House restoration, restoration of south elevation soffits, 2002
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.55** Robie House restoration, installation of west cantilever soffit lath, 2002
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.56** Robie House restoration, north elevation foundation trench, 2002
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.57** Robie House restoration, recreation of missing inglenook bench, 2018
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.58** Robie House restoration, restoration of guest bedroom plaster, 2018
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.59** Robie House restoration, installation of Billiard Room magnesite floor, 2018
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.60** Robie House restoration, oiling of original magnesite stair, 2018
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust
- 2.61** Robie House restoration, reinstallation of original molding in Living Room, 2018
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

Chapter 3

TITLE PAGE IMAGE: Robie House Living Room leaded glass doors
Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.1 Exterior view of the Frederick C. Robie House, 1910
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.2 Ground Floor Plan, Frederick C. Robie Residence (Chicago, Illinois), 1910. From *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright* (Studies and Executed Buildings by Frank Lloyd Wright), Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, June 1910
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.3 South Façade, Frederick C. Robie House
Photograph by Tim Long, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.4 Roman Brick, detail, Frederick C. Robie House
Photograph by Tim Long, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.5 Leaded Glass Doors, Frederick C. Robie House Living Room
Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.6 Frederick C. Robie Residence, plate xxxvii, (Chicago, Illinois), 1910. From *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright* (Studies and Executed Buildings by Frank Lloyd Wright), Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, June 1910
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.7 Wendingen, vol. 4, no. 11, 1921

3.8 Robie House (far left), Installation view of the exhibition, “Modern Architecture: International Exhibit,” 1932. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN15.4. Photograph by George H. van Anda.

3.9 Robie House model, Installation view of the exhibition, “Three Centuries of American Art,” 1938. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN76a.7A

3.10 The Robie Family on the construction site of the house, steel beams shown in background, 1909
University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center, apf2-06526

3.11 Framing above the Ground Level, Frederick C. Robie House
Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.12 Living Room Cross Section, Frederick C. Robie House
Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.13 Framing above the Main Level, Frederick C. Robie House
Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.14 Master Bedroom, Frederick C. Robie House
Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.15 Fred Robie Jr. in front of the Robie House Garage, 1910
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.16 Panoramic exterior view of the Frederick C. Robie House
Photograph by Tim Long, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.17 Living Room, Frederick C. Robie, 1910
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.18 Leaded glass windows, Dining Room, Frederick C. Robie House
Photograph by Tim Long, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.19 Dining Room with custom furniture, Frederick C. Robie House, 1910
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

3.20 Robie House Living Room, recreated inglenook
Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

Chapter 4

TITLE PAGE IMAGE: Robie House view from Upper Hall to Living Room
Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

4.1 A twilight program at Robie House
Collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

4.2 The Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio (1889/1898)
Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

4.3 The Rookery Light Court, Frank Lloyd Wright (1905-07)
Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

4.4 Unity Temple, Frank Lloyd Wright (1905-08)
Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

4.5 Emil Bach House, Frank Lloyd Wright (1915)
Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

4.6 A Frank Lloyd Wright Trust interpreter leads a tour of the Robie House

4.7 A Robie House lecture by James Corner, Founding Partner and CEO of James Corner Field Operations, NY
Photograph by Jason Smith

4.8 Students from the Suzanne Deal Booth Conservation Research Seminar in the Department of Art History at the University of Chicago examine finishes at Robie House
Courtesy of the University of Chicago, Photograph by Lisa Zaher

4.9 View south on Woodlawn Avenue showing the Robie House and Charles M. Harper Center
Photograph by Tom Rossiter, Courtesy of the University of Chicago

4.10 A school student explores the Robie House

4.11 Guided by Trust educators, students learn about lath and plaster at Robie House

4.12 Guided by Trust educators, students learn about lath and plaster at Robie House

4.13 The Robie House and the city of Chicago

4.14 Chicago area Frank Lloyd Wright structures

4.15 Ho-o-den (Phoenix Hall) erected by the Japanese government for the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

4.16 The Court of Honor at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition
From Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, Press Chicago Photo-Gravure Co.

Chapter 5

5.1 Robie House, Entry Hall
Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

5.2 Map showing University of Chicago campus buildings surrounding Robie House

5.3 Robie House, exterior looking east
Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

5.4 Robie House site plan with zones of significance

5.5 Robie House, Entry Courtyard
Photograph by Tim Long, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

5.6 Robie House South Elevation

5.7 Robie House, restoration roof detail

Photograph by Tim Long, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

5.8 Robie House, south west urn

Photograph by Tim Long, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

5.9 Robie House, leaded glass exterior detail

Photograph by Tim Long, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

5.10 Robie House Ground Floor plan with zones of significance

5.11 Robie House Main Floor plan with zones of significance

5.12 Robie House, Living Room

Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

5.13 Robie House, Guest Bedroom

Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

5.14 Robie House Third Floor plan with zones of significance

5.15 Robie House, Master Bedroom

Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

5.16 Installation of Billiard Room magnesite floor, 2019

5.17 Robie House, Billiard Room with magnesite floor

Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

5.18 Robie House Main Stair and Upper Hall, wood trim

Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

5.19 Reinstalling restored wood trim, 2018

5.20 Restoration of Guest Bedroom plaster, 2018

5.21 Robie House Living Room with light fixtures

Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

5.22 Robie House original hall chair, Collection of the David and Alfred Smart Museum, University of Chicago

Photograph by James Caulfield, Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL DOCUMENTATION

The policies outlined in Chapter 5 of this Conservation Management Plan are informed by comprehensive analytic studies and historical research. The most recent documentation on materials analysis and climate control systems are included with this Conservation Management Plan.

Materials Analysis: Compilation of Current and Previous Research
Building Conservation Associates, Inc. (2014)

Leaded Glass Window Condition Analysis
Julie L. Sloan (2014 and 1993)

Interior Environmental Management Summary
Watson Henry Associates, 2012

Robie House Plaster Replication
Architectural Conservation Services, LLC (2006)

Robie House Wood Finishes Study
Evergreene Painting Studios, Inc. (2005)

Material Analysis Report
The Deller Conservation Group (2003)

Copper Gutter and Fascia Treatment Report
Conservation of Sculpture & Objects Studio Inc. (2002)

Master Landscape Plan
CYLA Design Associates (2002)

Analysis of Wood Coating Samples from Interior of Robie House
McCrone Associates, Inc. (2001)

Custom Mortar Matching Report
US Heritage Group (2001)

Climate System Report
Stefan Michalski (2001)

*The Master Plan for the Restoration and Adaptive use of the
Frederick C. Robie House*
Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation
(Frank Lloyd Wright Trust) (1999)

Investigation of Interior Paint Finishes
Robert A. Furhoff (1999)

Paint/Pigment Analyses Report
Welsh Color & Conservation, Inc. (1999)

Structural Investigation
Tylk, Gustafson & Associates, Inc. (1998)

Leaded Glass Window Condition Analysis
McKernan Satterlee Associates, Inc. (1993)

A Comprehensive Conservation Plan
Hasbrouck Peterson Zimoch Sirirattumrong (1993)



Frank Lloyd
Wright Trust