

Timeline of Historic Events and Chronology of Ownership

- **May 1908:** Frederick C. Robie buys the lot at 5757 S. Woodlawn Avenue from Harold Goodman, who also owned the adjacent lot (currently the site of the Chicago Theological Seminary dormitory). Robie pays \$13,500 for the lot, which measures 60 feet x 180 feet. Frederick Robie is a bicycle and sewing machine manufacturer in Chicago. Robie ' s wife, Lora Hieronymous, is a graduate of the University of Chicago (U of C) .
- **Summer 1908:** Robie commissions Frank Lloyd Wright to design his home.
- **March 1909:** Working drawings are signed by Frederick Robie. Construction begins in April and is supervised by general contractor Harrison B. Barnard, a University of Chicago alumnus.
- **September 1909:** Interior architect George Mann Niedecken is hired by Wright and is responsible for the design, production, and supervision of the majority of the interior furnishings. Frank Lloyd Wright departs for Germany, where he oversees the publication of Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright, a collection of drawings of his architectural projects commonly known as the Wasmuth Portfolio . His architectural practice is turned over to Hermann von Holst, a licensed architect whose offices were located in Steinway Hall in downtown Chicago, where Wright maintained a practice in addition to his Oak Park studio. Marion Mahony, a draftsman who worked with Wright in his Oak Park Studio, is retained by von Holst to supervise completion of the Wright commissions in progress.
- **Spring/Summer 1910:** The Robie family moves into the house.
- **December 1911:** David Lee Taylor purchases the house from Frederick Robie. The majority of the Niedecken-designed furnishings remain with the house as part of the purchase agreement for each successive owner. The Taylors were from Wilmette. Mr. Taylor, an advertising executive, bought the house as a Christmas present for his wife Ellen and their six sons. His Christmas card read: "To Momma/Our \$50,000 house/Pop." Mr. Taylor died in October 1912.
- **November 1912:** The Wilber family purchases the house from Ellen Taylor. The Wilbers already lived in Hyde Park when they bought the Robie House. Marshall D. Wilber and his wife, Isadora, have two daughters, Marcia and Jeannette. Mr. Wilber is the treasurer of the Wilber Mercantile Agency, owned by his uncle. Marcia attends the University of Chicago, where she graduates in 1914 with a degree in philosophy.
- **November 7, 1916:** Marcia Dodge Wilber passes away in 1916 at the age of 25, and the family has a series of interior photographs taken to commemorate her. These are the first known interior photos since 1910, and they document almost the entire house.
- **Winter 1926:** Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) purchases Robie House from the Wilbers for \$90,000. The house is used as a dormitory and dining hall for married students.

- **1941:** CTS announces plans to demolish Robie House and erect a new, larger dormitory on the site. Frank Lloyd Wright participates in a letter-writing campaign to save the house. Demolition is halted.
- **1957:** CTS again announces plans to raze the house for the same purpose. Frank Lloyd Wright, at the age of 90, visits the house to draw attention to the need to save the building from demolition. In April 1957, Robie House is the first building to be declared a Chicago Landmark as part of the newly formed Commission on Chicago Architectural Landmarks.
- **August, 1958:** Demolition is averted when William Zeckendorf, president of Webb & Knapp, a New York-based development firm, buys the house from CTS for \$125,000. The two lots to the north of the Robie House become available, and CTS builds its dormitory there.
- **December 1962:** Webb & Knapp gives Robie House to the University of Chicago.
- **April 1964:** Robie House is certified a United States Registered National Historic Landmark. It was the first National Historic Landmark in the city of Chicago, and the first one to be selected solely on the basis of its architectural merit.
- **July 1966:** The Adlai Stevenson Institute for International Affairs, a think tank of professors and visiting speakers sponsored by the University of Chicago, uses Robie House as office and meeting space.
- **May 1970:** Student riots at the University of Chicago result in damage to some art glass and furnishings.
- **1975:** The Adlai Stevenson Institute leaves the house and the development offices of the University of Chicago use Robie House as office space.
- **1980:** The University of Chicago Office of Alumni Affairs relocates to Robie House.
- **April 8, 1980:** Robie House is designated an Illinois Historic Landmark.
- **February 1, 1997:** The FLW Trust assumes operation and care of the site. A three-way agreement is reached between the Trust (which assumes operation of, undertakes the restoration of, and provides public access to, the house), the University of Chicago (which retains ownership of the house.) An expanded tour schedule is implemented.
- **1997:** The Trust begins research and planning for the restoration of Robie House.
- **November 1998:** The Trust hosts a review conference of architects and historians to discuss the master plan for the restoration of Robie House.
- **2001:** Restoration begins on the exterior of Robie House.
- **2004:** \$4+ million restoration of exterior and upgrading of mechanical infrastructure

completed. Fundraising for restoration of the interior of Robie House continues.

- **2008:** 1.5+ million spent to date on interior restoration. Fundraising for remaining restoration work of the interior of Robie House continues.
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COLLABORATORS

George Mann Niedecken (1878 – 1945)

Frank Lloyd Wright contracted with George Mann Niedecken to complete the interior furnishings for Robie House. Niedecken was an interior architect who collaborated with Wright on a number of Prairie-style buildings, including the Susan Lawrence Dana (Dana-Thomas) Residence, Coonley Residence, and Meyer May Residence. Furniture designs for Robie House reflect the collaboration between Wright and Niedecken. However, Niedecken was solely responsible for the textile and carpet designs. A number of furnishings were made at the Niedecken-Walbridge company, Niedecken's own firm in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, while others were fabricated by companies both locally and abroad.

Harrison B. Barnard (1872 – 1952)

Harrison B. Barnard was the contractor for the construction of Robie House. Barnard was an alumnus of the University of Chicago. He kept careful records of the construction of Robie House, including photographs, ledgers, and working drawings. These are housed at the University of Chicago Special Collections at the Regenstein Library. The Robie House project was the only documented instance of Barnard's work with Frank Lloyd Wright.

Hermann von Holst (1874 – 1955)

A graduate of the University of Chicago and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), von Holst opened his own architectural practice in the Rookery Building in downtown Chicago in 1905. In 1909 von Holst moved his office to the ninth floor of Steinway Hall, the location of Frank Lloyd Wright's downtown practice. In 1909, when Wright left for Europe, Robie House construction was already underway. Hermann Von Holst was contracted to complete Wright's unfinished projects, including Robie House.

Marion Mahony (1871 –1962)

Marion Mahony was an architect who worked sporadically in Wright's studio from 1895 until Wright's departure in 1909. She was the second woman architect to graduate from MIT (1894). She was the first female architect to receive an architectural license in both Illinois and in the country. Part of the terms of the agreement between Wright and von Holst stipulated that Mahony would be hired to oversee Wright's unfinished projects, including Robie House. Specific information regarding Mahony's role in the completion of

Robie House has not been uncovered.

RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

Adlai Stevenson Institute of International Studies (A.S.I.)

- An institution devoted to the study of international affairs, A.S.I. used Robie House as its headquarters from 1966 to 1975. In May 1970, A.S.I. was the target of protests organized by students at the University of Chicago. Students forcefully entered the building, and damage was done to the building and some of its furnishings. The exact nature of the damage is unclear. It is uncertain whether the front door was destroyed during these protests.

Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS)

- The third owner of Robie House was the Chicago Theological Seminary, which acquired the building in 1926 from the Wilber family and proceeded to use the building as a dormitory and dining hall until 1958, when they sold the building. The Seminary tried to demolish the building on two occasions, once in 1941 and again in 1957; on both occasions Frank Lloyd Wright got involved to help save the building. Robie House was finally sold to Webb & Knapp in 1958.

Webb & Knapp

- A development firm involved in Hyde Park's urban renewal, Webb & Knapp purchased Robie House from the Chicago Theological Seminary in 1958; they later donated the house to the University of Chicago in 1962.

University of Chicago

- The University of Chicago currently owns Robie House.