

Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Tour Fact Sheet

The Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio tour fact sheet is not a script. It presents a series of structured talking points to help interpreters develop their own tours of the house. A set route through the house is provided, along with suggested timing. In order to ensure the fluid operation of tours at the Home and Studio, the standard tour must be kept to 60 minutes in length.

More information is provided than can be included in a 60-minute tour, so select key points, depending on the interest of your group.

The purpose of these training materials is to provide factual information that serves as a backbone for the tour that you develop. Your own reference reading will also provide useful information. The goal of training is to help volunteers create tours that are fact-based, but very importantly, tours that are your own. You must feel comfortable and relate information that you are confident is reliable and that you have selected to share in your own words.

Text in *italics* is supplementary material for selected use if you wish.

Here are guidelines for timing your tour.

These times include the logistics of moving your group to the next stop.

ON EACH STOP, INDICATED IN RED, YOU WILL FIND THE LOGISTICS OF WHERE TO STAND AND HOW TO LEAD THE GROUP THROUGH THE DIFFERENT ROOMS.

OUTDOOR AND MAIN FLOOR TOTAL

20 minutes

Stop 1: Courtyard orientation and exterior stop – 10 minutes

Stops 2 and 3: Living Room/Dining Room – 10 minutes

2ND FLOOR AND WALK TO STUDIO TOTAL

15 minutes

Stops 4, 5, and 6: Bedrooms/Dayroom – 5 minutes

Stop 7: Children's Playroom – 10 minutes (includes walking time to the studio)

STUDIO ENTRANCE, DRAFTING ROOM, RECEPTION HALL/ LIBRARY TOTAL

20 minutes

Stop 8: Studio Outdoor Entrance – 5 minutes

Stop 9: Drafting Room – 10 minutes

Stop 10: Client Reception Hall / Library – 5 minutes

At 55 minutes, you must be starting your courtyard conclusion

Stop 11: Courtyard Conclusion – 5 minutes or more if needed

Total time: 55 minutes and 5 minutes (or more) for conclusion in the courtyard.

Courtyard and walking along Chicago Ave. towards Forest Ave.

▪ Introduce yourself

“Welcome to the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio. My name is _____ and I am a volunteer interpreter with the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust.”

What you will see today

- This is Frank Lloyd Wright's Home and Studio where he lived and worked for 20 years (1889-1909), growing from a young man of ambition and talent to a mature architect of brilliant achievement.
- Only 2 other sites – Taliesin and Taliesin West – can describe Wright’s personal and professional growth over an extended period of time.
- All of the sites that Wright designed throughout his life, whether larger in scale or more advanced in technology, are based on design concepts he developed here.
- This is Wright’s first and richest center of creativity. In this place, American architecture was born. It was democratic. It was modern. It broke the box of tradition and changed everything.
- Here in the Midwest prairie is where the story begins.

Historical beginnings

- The history of Oak Park did not begin with Frank Lloyd Wright.
- Oak Park is situated on the ancestral land of the Potawatomi, Miami, Kickapoo, and Peoria native people. We honor them and thank them for their stewardship of the land.
- Settlers began to arrive in this area in the 1830s, but significant growth in the population began in the late 1860s and 1870s after the Civil War.
- This post-Civil War house dates to 1868. It is one of the earliest homes in Oak Park and was built by John Blair, who was a landscape gardener by trade. He planted this Ginkgo tree in the courtyard. Many years later, the home was purchased by Frank Lloyd Wright's mother Anna. Today it is an administration center for the Trust.

BEGIN WALKING TOWARD FOREST AVE. ALONG CHICAGO AVE. PAST THE STUDIO ENTRANCE.

- During the time Wright lived here, Chicago Avenue was a dirt road. Horse-drawn carriages would pull up in front of Wright's studio and hitch their horses. After 1900,

automobiles began to appear.

- Look at the homes across the street to see the traditional Queen Anne Victorian styles of Wright's era.

Stop 1: Forest Avenue Sidewalk



STAND FACING THE GROUP ON THE LOW CURB
IN FRONT OF THE BUSHES LINING THE GARDEN.
PROJECT YOUR VOICE DUE TO TRAFFIC NOISE
AND OTHER DISTRACTIONS. TO ENSURE YOU
ARE HEARD, DO NOT FACE AWAY FROM THE
GROUP WHEN YOU ARE TALKING TO THEM.

Early Years

- In 1887, at the age of 19, Wright left Wisconsin to come to Chicago to become an architect. Wright had briefly studied engineering at the University of Wisconsin but left to gain practical experience in Chicago.
- In the wake of the Great Fire of 1871, which destroyed almost four-square miles of the city, Chicago became a hub for progressive architects and designers. This was a rich environment for a young and aspiring architect.
- In 1887, Wright began his career in Chicago working for the residential architect Joseph Lyman Silsbee. An East Coast transplant, Silsbee's ideas informed Wright's earliest residential designs, including the Oak Park home. At this time, American architectural styles were typically derived from historical European architecture.
- A year later in early 1888, Wright secured a position with the pioneering firm of Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan. Sullivan, who became Wright's architectural mentor, was a vocal advocate for the development of a modern American architecture.
- In 1889, Wright married and moved to Oak Park, 12 miles west of Chicago. He borrowed \$5000 from his employer Louis Sullivan to purchase this large corner lot and designed his new home in Shingle style. Wright lived here 20 years until 1909 when he moved to Wisconsin and built Taliesin as his new residence.

Exterior of the Home

- The house is Shingle style. Shingle style was found in the affluent communities of the east and Wright was eager to impress. He set the home far back on the site to create a rustic natural setting – a characteristic of his domestic architecture throughout his career.
- **Simplicity** – Notice the strikingly simple geometry of the façade. A giant triangle floats above an articulated main floor with bay windows and a front sitting porch walled for privacy.
- **Originality** – The soaring gable and crisp roofline visually suggest an imposing and significant home, despite its modest scale.
- **Creativity** – Although designed as a home for his wife Catherine and family, the house became a site of architectural experimentation for the young architect during the 20-year period he lived here.
- The original size of the home was approximately 2,000 sq. ft. Later, Wright added a new dining room, a playroom for the children, a studio for his growing practice, and finally a garage.
- For the materials of his home, Wright chose brick and wood shingles in a palette of earth tones that harmonize with the natural landscape.
- Wright discretely integrates the house into its site. The building is set back from the street and sequestered from passers-by with a generous lawn.
- **Nature** – it would be a constant influence on Wright's work, integral to almost every aspect of his architecture.

Additional background:

The semi-rural Village of Oak Park, where Wright built his home, offered a retreat from the hurried pace of city life. Named "Saint's Rest" for its abundance of churches, Oak Park was originally settled in the 1830s by pioneering east coast families. In its early years farming was the principal business of the village; however, its proximity to Chicago soon attracted professional men and their families. Along its unpaved dirt streets sheltered by mature oaks and elms, prosperous families erected elaborate homes. It was in Oak Park and the surrounding neighborhoods that Wright found a receptive clientele for his work.

Wright married Catherine Tobin on June 1, 1889. Wright was 21 and Catherine, called "Kitty," was 18 years old.

LEAD YOUR GROUP THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR AND INVITE THEM TO ASSEMBLE IN THE LIVING ROOM. MAKE SURE THE DOOR IS CLOSED AFTER THE GROUP IS INSIDE. AS YOU SPEAK, POINT OUT THE VARIOUS FEATURES OF THE ROOM TO DIRECT THE GROUP'S ATTENTION TO THE SUBJECT, RATHER THAN TO YOU. SPEAK AT A NATURAL PACE AND DON'T RUSH. MOVE AT INTERVALS TO AVOID APPEARING TO STAND AND LECTURE. PAUSE AND INVITE QUESTIONS AT LEAST ONCE DURING EACH STOP. CREATE A MOOD OF CONVERSATION. YOUR PURPOSE IS TO HELP THE GUESTS EXPERIENCE WRIGHT'S HOME MORE FULLY THROUGH THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE IN A NATURAL MANNER.



Stop 2: Living Room

STAND TO THE LEFT OF THE FIREPLACE. INTERPRET THE ENTRANCE HALL FROM THE LIVING ROOM.

Entrance Hall

- As a young man of 22 at the start of his career, Wright's financial resources were limited. The original plan of the building was modest, but the house was filled with the warmth of natural light.
- In contrast to traditional houses of the day, which often featured brightly colored and richly patterned wallpapers, Wright's simple and earth-toned color palette provides a seamless transition from outdoors to interior spaces.
- The plaster frieze at the top of the wall is a domestic-scale copy from the ancient Greek altar of Pergamon. Commercially available via catalogue, the frieze was a classical reference that Wright used to impress guests entering his home.



- It was a common belief in late nineteenth-century America that a beautiful and enriching artistic home environment would have a positive effect on the character of those living within.
- By all accounts, the first ten years that the Wrights lived here were happy years of family life.

Living Room

- To maximize the open space of this small room, Wright designed **built-in furniture for the room** – a device he would use throughout his career, installing an expansive seating area under a horizontal band of west and north facing windows.
- He also **widened the openings between rooms** to facilitate the flow of space through the ground floor. This concept anticipates the open plan of Wright's Prairie houses, which emerged 10 years later in the first decade of the 20th century.
- The Oak Park home **references standard Arts and Crafts design features**, such as the simple oak woodwork and diamond-paned leaded glass windows. These were pre-ordered and not Wright's design. In later rooms added to this house, you will see windows designed by Wright himself.
- The house blends Arts and Crafts architectural design with Wright's particular innovations. While the dentil molding (a tooth-like band) framing the ceiling evokes classical architecture, the continuous horizontal **band or "ribbon" of casement windows points to the future direction of Wright's early architecture**. In his later Prairie buildings, Wright created ribbons of uninterrupted casement windows and doors, emphasizing the horizontal form of his buildings and blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior. The windows in the living room represent an early expression of this concept.
- The focal point of the living room, and the **heart of the 1889 home, is the fireplace**. A symbol of security and shelter, the fireplace remained a defining element of Wright's buildings throughout his career.
- Set deep within an **inglenook**, an old Scottish word meaning "flame corner," the fireplace forms a private enclosure, a room within a room.
- The motto carved in the oak panel above the fireplace, **"Truth is Life,"** is a variation of Wright's mother's family motto. An extended family of Welsh immigrants who settled in Wisconsin in the 1840s, the Lloyd-Joneses raised Wright immersed in Welsh culture, literature, history, and religion, all of which helped shape Wright's liberal world-view.

- The inglenook fireplace and the decorative use of inspirational mottos were common features in **British Arts and Crafts architecture**.

Additional background on the Arts and Crafts movement:

The Arts and Crafts Movement was one of the most influential design movements of the modern era. It began in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century and quickly spread to Europe and America.

Fueled by concern over the detrimental effects of industrialization on design, craftsmanship and the lives of workers, the movement established a new set of principles for living and working. In contrast to the factories and mass production of the industrial age, it emphasized social reform through new workshop practices, and promoted original, innovative designs rather than revivals of historic styles. Arts and Crafts objects were produced in all media: metalwork, ceramics, glass, textiles, and furniture, while architecture typically provided the context within which these objects were brought together.

The Arts and Crafts movement provided a powerful impetus to Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural principles. The architect was a charter member of the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society, founded in 1897 at Hull House. While Wright supported the group's handcrafted works and annual exhibitions, he believed the machine could be an invaluable tool in the hand of the artist.

*Wright's lecture, *The Art and Craft of the Machine*, was presented at Hull House in March 1901. In his address, Wright diverged from the British Arts and Crafts movement, championing the machine and urging artists and craftsmen to embrace modern technology in their work.*

Artwork, objects, furniture



Living Room, circa 1893

To compensate for the modest scale of the house and to create an inspiring environment for his family Wright filled his home with artwork, decorative objects, Oriental rugs, potted palms and prairie grasses.

The furniture, objects, and artwork you will see in the Home and Studio consist of 4 types: original pieces by Wright designed while he lived and worked in Oak Park but not original to this building; reproductions of Wright designs; typical nineteenth-century pieces; and a few rare examples of original pieces Wright designed for the Home and Studio. I'll point out some of these on our tour today.

Foliate plaster panels at the corners of the ceiling and stencils on the cupboard doors above the fireplace are designs used in Adler and Sullivan's Auditorium building in Chicago, the building Wright first worked on when hired by the firm.

To furnish his new home, Wright initially attended local house auctions to purchase furniture and decorative objects. The carved wooden chest displayed in the room today is such an example.

Two oak armchairs may have been designed for the home by Wright around 1893. With cushioned backs and seats originally of brown velvet, they are similar to chairs designed by William Morris, the leader of the British Arts and Crafts movement. These chairs have been removed to allow more space for safe circulation in the living room. They are installed in Catherine's sitting room.

A bronze bust of Beethoven is a reminder of the importance of music in the Wright household, in which all the children were encouraged to learn an instrument. The bust was owned by Wright and appears in early photographs of the home from the 1890s.

The cast of the Venus de Milo in the front hall was originally owned by William Drummond, an architect of Wright's Studio.



Charles Corwin (b.1857- d.1938),
Wheat fields, ca. 1890-1893, pastel on linen



William Wendt (b.1865- d.1946), Landscape, c. 1890
oil on canvas

As Wright's tastes matured over the course of the 1890s, he began to collect paintings of American landscapes by local artists. Two works originally owned by Wright are exhibited in the room today: an oil painting depicting a wooded landscape by artist William Wendt, and a pastel drawing of a wheat field by Charles Corwin. Corwin later worked as a staff artist and muralist at the Field Museum of Natural History.

The Japanese print displayed on the wall is a reproduction of Rokugō Ferry at Kawasaki, by Utagawa Hiroshige, c. 1833. Wright began collecting Japanese prints very early in his career and would become a print dealer. Wright was drawn to the simplified compositions of Japanese prints and their ability to convey deep space with color gradations.

Utagawa Hiroshige (b.1797- d.1858), Rokugō Ferry at Kawasaki, from the series "Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido ca. 1833, color woodblock print



- *About 1902 he designed several folding tables to display Japanese prints. The table in the living room today is original – one of two designed for the Oak Park Home and Studio. Wright created print tables for several of his clients.*



Frank Lloyd Wright Print Table, ca. 1902-03

Additional background on Wright and Japan for selected use as appropriate

A pioneer collector of Japanese prints, Wright's lifelong interest in the art and culture of Japan was sparked early in his career. In contrast to many of his contemporaries in the United States who adopted European architectural styles in their work, Wright viewed Japan and its culture as an aesthetic model for his architecture.

Wright's first physical encounter with Japanese architecture came in 1893 at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. There he visited the Japanese pavilion, a recreation of the Ho-o-den (Phoenix Hall), an 11th century Buddhist temple near Kyoto. The Fair pavilion created various types of traditional Japanese interiors.

Wright traveled to Japan in 1905, with his wife Catherine, and his clients Ward and Cecilia Willits. While abroad the architect invested heavily in Japanese prints. The following year, Wright mounted an exhibition of his Japanese prints, works by Hiroshige, at the Art Institute of Chicago. Wright participated in a second, larger exhibition at the Art Institute in 1908, in collaboration with some of the foremost collectors in the US.

Wright's longstanding interest in Japan would be instrumental in his securing the commission for the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo in 1913. In 1911, as Wright worked to rebuild his architecture practice in Chicago after a year abroad in Europe, he was recommended as a potential designer for the new Imperial Hotel in Tokyo. For six tumultuous years, from 1917 to 1923, he struggled to complete the enormous commission of the Imperial Hotel, one of the landmark designs of his career.

BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE STUDY, PASSAGEWAY, AND PANTRY FROM THE LIVING ROOM, STAND IN THE DOORWAY BETWEEN THE LIVING ROOM AND STUDY.

Study

- This was the original dining room for the home.
- Wright and Catherine would have 6 children in the home. In 1895, to accommodate his growing family, Wright undertook his first major renovation of the building. As part of the renovation this room was remodeled as a study.
- The room was designed with a built-in buffet under the window and a cupboard for china accessible from both front and back
- The table is a Wright design but is not original to the Home. The slant-back chair was a design originally created in 1903 and used in several Wright commissions, including the Oak Park Home and Studio. One of the chairs is original and the others are reproductions. Another original slant-back chair is on view at Robie House in the 3rd floor gallery.



Fritz Thaulow,
Norwegian, 1847-1906
Thawing Ice
Ca. 1889, photogravure

- On the east wall is a color photogravure of a pastel by Norwegian artist, Fritz Thaulow. The original pastel was exhibited at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

Passageway

- In 1898, when Wright built his studio next to his house, he created this passage to connect the two structures.
- Wright's philosophy of architecture was rooted in nature. The architect always sought to carefully integrate his buildings with their sites. Here at his home, the passageway was built around an existing willow tree that stood on the site, the branches of which extended through the building.
- In the original 1889 floor plan, the wall where the passageway begins marked the rear of the house, which opened onto a small porch.

Pantry

- Located between the original kitchen and dining room, the pantry is a functional space filled from floor to ceiling with built-in cabinets and shelves.

LEAD GROUP TO PASSAGEWAY, STAND BY PASSAGEWAY, DIRECT GROUP THROUGH PANTRY INTO DINING ROOM, FOLLOW THE LAST PERSON INTO THE DINING ROOM

Stop 3: Dining Room

STAND BETWEEN THE FIREPLACE AND THE DOOR TO THE ENTRANCE HALL.

- This room was originally the kitchen. In 1895 Wright remodeled the space as a dining room, adding a window bay at the south wall to enlarge the room.



- We saw in the entrance hall and living room how Wright unifies the design of a building through his use of color and materials. The new dining room was conceived as a fully unified composition where architecture, interior finishes, furniture, lighting, concealed heating, and furniture became integral parts of the whole.
- Wright would later characterize his architecture as “Organic,” meaning that all of a building’s features—from its interior space and exterior shape, to its furniture and fixtures—relate to and complement each other as parts of one organic whole, but here in 1895 you can see this idea taking shape.
- Note how Wright uses simple materials to create a sense of unity within the room. On the walls honey-toned linen brings texture to the interiors without adding ornamentation. The cloth extends up the walls and onto the ceiling. Similarly, the earth-tone quarry stone tiles of the floor extend onto the wall surface of the fireplace.
- The leaded-glass windows demonstrate Wright’s familiarity with design publications of the day. The design, featuring stylized lotus flowers, was adapted from a German glass journal published in 1886. After the house next door was built in 1897, the lower portion of the windows was filled in with panels for privacy.
- The new dining room is a warm and intimate space to gather with family and friends. The Wrights entertained frequently, and were joined at their table by clients, artists, authors and international visitors. Elbert Hubbard, founder of the Roycroft movement, visited on several occasions.



Artwork, Furniture, Objects

- Wright soon identified the need for specially designed freestanding furniture that harmonized with the design of his rooms.
- Characterized by straight lines and rectilinear forms, Wright’s early oak furniture is designed with the Arts and Crafts preference for solidity and simplicity.

- The dining table and chairs are original to the house, along with the child's highchair. Two of the chairs have a dark finish, because they are on loan and do not match the restored set.

Lighting

- In place of the traditional chandelier above the table, Wright integrates innovative electric lighting within the ceiling, recessed and shielded behind translucent paper and a decorative wood grille. Wright embraced the opportunity to use this new technology.
- The distinct space created by the design of the dining furniture is reinforced by Wright's use of artificial lighting. In the evening, when the natural light fades, the ceiling fixture bathes the table in a warm beam of light that follows the form of the table.



ASSIGN SOMEONE TO BE THE LAST PERSON AS YOU LEAD THE GROUP UP THE FRONT STAIRS. FOR SAFETY, ASK VISITORS TO HOLD THE HANDRAIL ON THE WAY UPSTAIRS, WHICH SLANT SLIGHTLY FORWARD. THE HANDRAILS ARE NOT ORIGINAL TO THE HOUSE. WHEN UPSTAIRS, STAND IN THE HALL FACING THE DOORS TO THE CHILDREN'S BEDROOM WHILE DIRECTING THE GROUP INTO THE BOYS' BEDROOM.

Stop 4: Children's Bedrooms (west bedrooms)

STAND BETWEEN THE DOORS TO THE HALL AND CLOSET.

- In the original 1889 plan of the house, Wright designed a large studio workroom for himself on the second floor, overlooking Forest Avenue. It was in this room that Wright would work designing buildings for his employers Adler and Sullivan, along with his own designs. Two of Wright's "bootleg" designs, commissions he took on independently while still working for Sullivan, can be seen less than a block from Wright's Oak Park home on Chicago Avenue.
- In 1893 when Wright left Adler & Sullivan, he began his own practice with office space in downtown Chicago, and later he remodeled this room into two bedrooms for his children.
- The south half of the room was occupied by Wright's daughters, Catherine and Francis, His two younger sons, David and Robert Llewellyn shared the space in which we are



standing. Later, the two older Wright boys, Lloyd and John, were usually in Wisconsin at the school run by Wright's aunts, or at work on his uncle's farm.

- The partition wall installed to separate the rooms does not reach the ceiling, providing both air circulation and a more spacious effect to these bedrooms than if it extended the full height.
- The high ceiling framed with oak molding evokes the rural architecture of Wisconsin lofts and barns familiar to Wright's childhood.
- The rectangular opening high on the east wall was originally an attic vent to help with air flow in the home. It originally would have been covered with a small curtain that could be opened or closed as needed. Today the opening operates as a return for the modern HVAC system in the building. The narrow rectangular slits in the molding of the ceiling are supplies for the HVAC system.
- The boys' bedroom is connected to the primary bedroom via a closet.

Stop 5: Primary Bedroom

**STAND IN FRONT OF THE DOOR LEADING OUT TO THE HALL.
ENCOURAGE VISITORS TO CIRCULATE AS YOU SPEAK.**

- In the primary bedroom Wright integrates art, architecture, furnishings, and decorative arts.
- Through his design of the room, Wright makes the room seem larger than its actual dimensions. The arched ceiling, expansive murals and glass doors all contribute to this sense of openness. The doors open to a small balcony that was truncated when Wright added his studio to the north in 1898.
- Encircling the room is a frieze featuring a repeating gold stencil of stylized floral elements and geometric forms. The design was used in Adler and Sullivan's monumental Auditorium Building in downtown Chicago. Wright designed decorative elements for the building while working as a draftsman in Sullivan's office.



Artwork, Furniture, Objects



- On the north and south walls, **murals featuring Indigenous Peoples** were painted by Orlando Giannini. A muralist, illustrator, and glassmaker, Giannini was one of the many talented craftspeople Wright engaged to help realize his design vision.
- The **suspended light fixtures suggest lotus pods**. In final decades of the 19th century, American designers became increasingly interested in the design elements of other countries and cultures, including Japanese, Greek, Persian, Moorish, and Egyptian designs. The taste for the exotic was expressed in various design details.
- The bed is a reproduction of Wright's original design, while the dresser, side table, and small chair are original pieces that Wright designed for the Avery Coonley house, built in nearby Riverside in 1907.

BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE BATHROOM FROM YOUR POSITION IN THE PRIMARY BEDROOM.

Bathroom

- Wright's home was among the first generation of American middle-class houses to have indoor plumbing, considered a luxury in 1889.
- The wide, horizontal wooden planks of the wall treatment provide a clean, distinctly modern aesthetic for the bathroom.
- Without original photographs of the room, pipe arrangements and notches in the wall studs determined placement of the bathtub, toilet, and sink.

WHILE STANDING IN THE HALL FACING THE BATHROOM, DIRECT THE GROUP INTO THE DAYROOM.



Stop 6: Catherine Wright's Dayroom

STAND IN THE DOORWAY

- The room originally served as a nursery, but after Wright turned his studio into two bedrooms for his growing family, the room became Catherine Wright's Dayroom, a private space for sewing, reading, and caring for the children.
- Located above the 1895 Dining Room, the dayroom was enlarged at the same time with a window bay to the south.
- In its original design a stenciled pattern in gold encircled the room. This 1889 feature, a small section of which is shown on the wall behind the door, stands in contrast to the simple white fabric and oak molding that Wright installed in his 1895 renovation of the room. The change represents Wright's transition toward a simpler aesthetic in his interiors.



Artwork, Furniture, Objects

The spool crib was a family heirloom of Catherine's and can be seen in historic photographs of this room.

The framed passports on the wall are copies of those used by Frank and Catherine on their visit to Japan in 1905. It is telling that when the 37-year-old architect made his very first trip outside America, in 1905, it was not to Europe — the center of Western architecture — but to Japan.

VISITORS TEND TO LINGER IN THIS ROOM, BE MINDFUL OF THE TIME SPENT HERE. DIRECT THE GROUP DOWN THE HALL TO THE CHILDREN'S PLAYROOM. FOLLOW THE GROUP INTO THE PLAYROOM.

Stop 7: Playroom

WALK TOWARD THE FIREPLACE AND STOP ABOUT 10 FEET IN FRONT OF IT. HAVE THE GROUP MOVE INTO THE ROOM WITH YOU SO THEY EXPERIENCE THE SPACE. AS YOU SPEAK, WALK BACK TO THE ENTRY DOORWAY AND STOP THERE FOR YOUR FINAL COMMENTS.

- In addition to the dining room, the barrel-vaulted playroom, built above the new kitchen, was a major part of the 1895 renovation of the home. Designed to inspire and nurture his children, this is one of the great spaces of Wright's early career.

- Wright controls your experience. The contrast between the low, dark, passageway and the expansive light-filled playroom makes the room immediately seem larger than its actual dimensions. Wright extends the space visually by using skylights, windows, and the mural over the fireplace.
- Above the fireplace, a mural depicting a scene from the story of the Fisherman and the Genie from *The Arabian Nights* is painted on the plaster wall.
- The mural was painted by the artist Charles Corwin in collaboration with Wright's concept. Corwin's brother Cecil was an architect – an early friend and colleague of Wright's at the architectural firm of Joseph Lyman Silsbee.
- The high barrel-vaulted ceiling rests on walls of Roman brick. Longer and narrower than traditional brick, Wright used Roman brick in many of his Prairie buildings to help emphasize their horizontal form. Here as an interior wall treatment, they help establish the natural palette of the room, and provide a durable surface to withstand the wear and tear of children playing.
- The wood crown molding that encircles the room at the base of the ceiling vault sets the natural height of the room at a lower level – closer to the range of a child's height.
- The wood framing of the vault leads the eye upward to a skylight, covered by a wood screen of stencil-cut pods and blossoms – a design evoking nature filters the light from above.
- The small windows at the base of the vault date to 1895, the year the playroom was added to the home, while the tulip window designs were added 10 years later in 1905. Frank and Catherine Wright made their first trip to Japan in 1905. The projecting light fixtures evoking Japanese lanterns were added after that trip.
- On either side of the room window bays, at to the height of the mature trees that surround the lot, place the viewer amidst a canopy of foliage. The bays feature storage drawers and also serve as seating for children.



- The leaded glass windows feature stylized tulips on tall stems, simply rendered with bold geometric forms. These later 1905 window designs by Wright demonstrate how far his design vocabulary had matured since the house was first built in 1889.

Additional Information about Wright's career:

In 1893 Wright departed the practice of Adler and Sullivan after an altercation with Louis Sullivan about Wright's moonlighting. In that year Wright designed Winslow House, his first major independent project, which set the stage for his rising career. It was the year of the World's Columbian Exposition, where Wright first saw Japanese architecture. In 1895, he began to design additions to his home that increasingly demonstrated his emerging vision of a new American Prairie-style, which begins with the opening of his Oak Park Studio in 1898.

Additional information on the Fisherman and the Genie mural and the International Arts and Crafts Movement for selected use as appropriate:

Corwin's painting suggests a lunette window on the east side of the room. The figure of the fisherman on a seashore, featuring temples, domed mosques and distant sailing ships, are rendered naturalistically. A genie, hovering above the startled fisherman, was likely designed by Wright and is rendered in a remarkable blend of flat, geometric forms, combined with motifs from exotic cultures, such as the Egyptian winged scarabs.



This fusion of art, architecture, and design aligns Wright's work with that of his early international contemporaries. Wright was one of a generation of visionary designers, including Charles Rennie Mackintosh in Scotland, C. F. A. Voysey in England, and the Vienna Secessionists in Austria, that absorbed the lessons of the British Arts and Crafts movement as they worked to create a modern architecture for their respective countries.

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 the English designer C. R. Ashbee, were also important factors that shaped his early career.

NOW STAND BY THE ENTRANCE TO THE PLAYROOM

- The playroom was sparsely furnished, providing a multi-purpose space for the Wright family to use. It served as the site of Catherine Wright's kindergarten for neighborhood children and it was a playroom for the Wright children. The tiered gallery was used alternatively as a stage or audience seating for the children's play-acting and a site for family celebrations and musical gatherings.
- The display case in the bookshelf features a selection of educational tools created by Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), the German educator and founder of the kindergarten movement.
- Froebel developed a revolutionary educational system that influenced a generation of modern artists, architects, and designers. Froebel's series of play materials was designed to teach children about the geometric forms and patterns that structured every object in nature. Wright's mother introduced him to Froebel materials as a young child. He would reconnect with them through the education of his own children. He considered them an important influence on his architecture because they made him think about architectural designs in terms of basic geometric volumes.
- Wright's two oldest sons, Lloyd Wright and John Wright, became architects and John invented toys, notably the classic Lincoln Logs, on display here.
- A concert parlor grand piano is suspended beneath the stairs leading up into the gallery. This unique feature saves space in the room.

BRIEFLY MENTION THE 1895 KITCHEN WHILE STILL IN THE PLAYROOM. BEFORE LEADING THE VISITORS DOWN THE BACK STAIRS, ASK THE SAME PERSON TO BE LAST. WARN VISITORS TO WATCH THEIR HEADS ON THE PIANO. AT THE FOOT OF THE STAIRS, TURN TO THE RIGHT FOR A QUICK LOOK AT THE KITCHEN.



AT THIS POINT, THERE ARE TWO OPTIONAL TOUR ROUTES FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE TOUR.

OPTION #1 THE OUTDOOR ROUTE:

USE DURING WARM WEATHER IF THE HOUSE IS FILLED WITH GUESTS. THIS ROUTE AVOIDS COLLISION WITH GUESTS TOURING THE GROUND FLOOR.

This route demonstrates the way a client would enter Wright's Studio.

1895 Kitchen (reconstructed)

- The 1895 kitchen was no longer present when the house was restored. The fixtures and fittings on display today are typical of the period, but not original to the house.
- The wooden cabinets just outside the kitchen are an icebox, common in the era before electric refrigerator.

HOLD THE BACK DOOR OPEN AND DIRECT THE VISITORS TO GATHER IN THE COURTYARD. MAKE CERTAIN THE BACK DOOR IS SECURELY CLOSED. PROCEED TO THE FRONT ENTRANCE OF THE STUDIO.

Stop 8: Studio Exterior Entry

STAND IN FRONT OF THE BRICK PIERS WITH RELIEF CARVINGS.



- In 1898, Wright built a new studio alongside and connected to this home.
- Clad in wood shingles and brick, the Studio exterior is consistent with the earlier home. However, the low, horizontal entry roof sets it apart from the earlier structure.
- The indirect path of approach from either side of the wall was created before 1909, by filling in the original wide steps that led from the sidewalk.
- The sheltered entrance to the Studio can be found behind a series of decorative piers. Through his design, Wright encourages the visitor to engage with and experience his architecture. You are turned multiple times in your pathway from the street to the entrance, gaining a different perspective of the building each time.

Art and Architectural Design

- Artistic details such as the leaded glass windows, pier reliefs and figural sculptures added to the artistic character of the building and enhanced the impression of arriving clients.
- The piers at the Studio entrance feature decorative plaster capitals executed by Wright's frequent collaborator, the sculptor Richard Bock. They were all cast from a single mold and were painted to resemble bronze, a far more costly material.
- The design describes the tree of life and the book of knowledge above a scroll of architectural plans. Flanking the scroll are two storks, which represent wisdom and creative fertility.
- The entrance to the Studio is flanked by a pair of crouching figural sculptures also created by Richard Bock, who named them "The Boulders." The sculptures represent man's struggle to transcend his earthly bounds—a metaphor for Wright's progressive ideals. They are identical, cast from the same mold, but are set at different angles—a cost effective alternative to commissioning two different sculptures. The sculptures seen today are reproductions based on period photographs.
- Adjacent to the entrance a stone plaque announces to the world, "Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect." The plaque features Wright's first logo, comprising a cross and circle within a square, pure geometric forms found throughout Wright's architecture, and

repeated in elements such as the four urns atop the wall in front of the Studio.

WHILE HOLDING THE DOOR OPEN, DIRECT THE GROUP TO THE CENTER OF THE DRAFTING ROOM. MAKE SURE THE DOOR TO THE STUDIO DOOR IS SECURELY CLOSED.



Stop 9: Studio Drafting Room

STAND IN FRONT OF THE VAULT.

- **This is the birthplace of American architecture, where Wright created the Prairie style.** This dramatic two-story drafting room was Wright's laboratory. Square in plan, the drafting room features an open octagonal balcony. While Wright's drafting staff worked in the space below, artists and craftsmen used the balcony above.
- Windows admitting generous natural light were situated high to avoid distraction of outdoor views from the intensity of work. Here supported by a lively studio staff, Wright created the Prairie style of architecture.
- Wright designed over 150 projects here. The important buildings of his Prairie years (1899-1910) were designed in this room, including the Darwin Martin House in Buffalo, NY (1903), Unity Temple in Oak Park (1908), and the Frederick C. Robie House in Chicago (1908-1910).
- The two-story space, which terminates in an octagonal dome, is flooded with light from above. Horizontal chains form an octagonal tension ring above the balcony opening. The harness resists the outward thrust of the sloped roof. A separate system of vertical chains suspends the balcony from the roof beams above. The system allows the room to be free of supporting columns, providing an open sense of space. To express the architectural structure, Wright leaves the chains exposed.
- Wright's fascination with domed structures culminated in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York City 1943-1959), his final project completed the year he died at the age of 91.



- On the south side of the room a brick-lined vault supplied safe storage for the firm's plans and drawings, along with Wright's growing Japanese print collection.
- The prismatic Holophane globes are designed to refract and enhance the weak light of early 20th century electric bulbs. Adjustable individual lights hang from electric cords, one green shaded light over each table. The lights could be raised or lowered depending on the needs of the person working at the drafting table.
- 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, Francis Byrne, and the artists, Richard Bock, Orlando Giannini, and George Mann Niedecken.

Additional background on the Studio:

In the eleven years that Wright's practice flourished in the Oak Park Studio, Wright accomplished a third of his life's work.

Wright's employees came to the Studio attracted by the forward-thinking principles Wright espoused. Some like Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony were degreed and licensed architects, others like Barry Byrne came with little or no training. Despite their different backgrounds Wright's staff was united ideologically. They were strongly influenced by the principles of the British Arts and Crafts movement. They shared a reverence for the natural world. 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 historic European styles, and designed for the contemporary American lifestyle.

During the Studio years Wright maintained a staff of six on average to draft his designs, but around 20 architects are documented as having worked at Wright's Studio. They often came and went with no official record of their name, contribution, or length of stay. Some worked at the Studio for just a few weeks, or on a project-by-project basis, others stayed for a period of years.

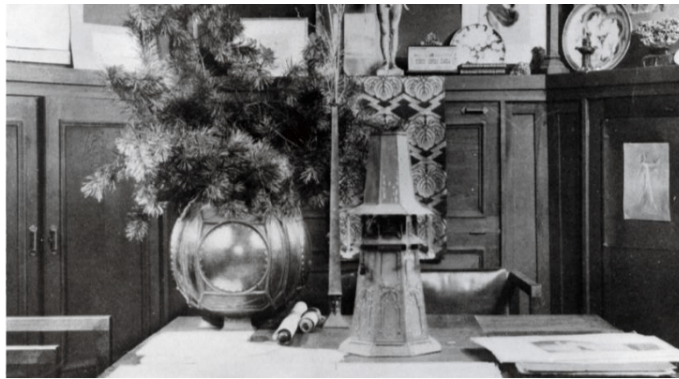
By most accounts, the Studio was not merely a successful practice, but a place of learning and intellectual exchange. The years spent with Wright would have a lasting impact upon his staff. After leaving his employ, many of the individuals who worked at the Studio would play a critical role in the development and dissemination of the Prairie style of architecture.

Art and Furnishings

The staff worked on drafting tables and stools designed by Wright. The tables and stools you see in the room today are reproductions of the originals.

The Studio was richly decorated with displays of art, designed objects, and native plants. Japanese prints, casts of classical sculptures, as well as models and drawings of buildings designed in the drafting room, filled the interiors of the Studio. In Wright's Home the integration of art and architecture provided an enriching environment for his family. In the Studio, these same elements serve a further purpose, the marketing of Wright's artistic identity to his clients and the public at large.

The frieze by Richard Bock above the fireplace is a copy of the original that hung in its place. Designed by Wright for the Isidore Heller House (1896) in Chicago, it is a repeating panel of classical maidens framed by "Sullivan-esque" ornament.



Copper urn, weed holder and table lamp,
Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio,
Chicago Architectural Club Exhibit, 1902

The Frank Lloyd Wright Trust owns two of Wright's original and most iconic designed objects from his Prairie years, a large copper urn dating to 1899 (studio drafting room) and a slender vase, commonly referred to as a "weed-holder" dating 1895-1902 (studio office). Wright, like his Arts and Crafts contemporaries, found copper appealing both because it was a simple material and because its autumnal color blended well with his prairie schemes. The copper objects Wright designed—including a table lamp, urn, and vase—were fabricated by the firm of James A. Miller and Brother, a local roofing company in Chicago that worked in slate, tin, and copper.

A quotation from Rudyard Kipling's poem, McAndrew's Hymn of 1893, which had appeared in the popular Scribner's magazine, is used like a motto on the balcony wall. The poem celebrates modern machinery and human invention and served as an inspiring message for Wright's staff.

BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE OFFICE BEFORE LEADING THE GROUP THROUGH THE ROOM AND OUT INTO THE CLIENT RECEPTION HALL.

Office

- The “study” as it was referred to in Wright’s plans for the building, functioned as a general office for Wright’s practice.
- The design of the room is enlivened by the inclusion of a leaded glass skylight and a series of leaded glass windows that frame the view to the garden.



Stop 10: Client Reception Hall/ Library

STAND AT THE WEST END OF SPACE, NEAR THE DOORWAY INTO THE LIBRARY.

- The client reception hall served as the entrance to the studio. A waiting room for clients and a place for Wright to review architectural plans with contractors, this low-ceilinged space forms an axis connecting the rooms of the Studio.
- Despite its small scale the room presents a notable first impression of the building to arriving clients. Plaster walls painted gold and a magnificent trio of leaded glass skylights create a rich environment.
- The skylight, added in 1905, features a complex geometric design in a palette of gold and green iridescent glass. The design is exemplary of Wright’s ability to render the natural world abstractly. The dappled light evokes sunlight filtered through a canopy of leaves.



Furnishings

Wright designed a low-backed square spindled armchair for use in several rooms of the studio. Four reproductions of the chair are displayed in the reception hall and three in the library. An original is on view in the American Art galleries of the Art Institute of Chicago.

DIRECT THE GROUP INTO THE LIBRARY AND THEN FOLLOW THEM IN. STAND IN THE DOORWAY.

- A low, dark hallway, similar in concept to the playroom entrance, leads from the Client Reception Hall into the Studio Library. You emerge from an enclosed space into a double height light-filled room richly adorned with works of decorative art, books, and Wright's drawings. It is a quiet inner sanctum.
- The octagonal library was used by Wright as a consultation room for clients. The high windows frame views of the treetops, and the skylight bathes the room with natural light that illuminates Wright's architectural plans and renderings on display here.
- The table is original to this room. Clients could be seated here in a private conference with Wright.
- Despite its height, the room's proportions are held to human scale by the strong horizontal lines that articulate the walls. A series of octagonal moldings lend a dynamic energy to the room.
- The walls are lined with leaded glass bookcases, storage cabinets, and display panels. Wright designed swinging wood frames, hinged to the cabinet posts, to display presentation drawings.
- In 1907 – 1908 Wright added a common-brick fireplace to the south wall of the room. Its flue is diverted through the wall so as not to disrupt the rhythm of the windows.

LEAD THE GROUP OUT OF THE WEST DOOR OF THE STUDIO. HOLD DOOR OPEN AND MAKE SURE EVERYONE HAS LEFT THE BUILDING. CLOSE THE DOOR BEHIND YOU AND BE SURE IT IS LOCKED. DIRECT THE GROUP DOWN THE RAMP TO THE COURTYARD.



Stop 11: Outdoor Courtyard/Conclusion

FOLLOW THE GROUP DOWN THE RAMP AND ADDRESS THE GROUP BETWEEN THE TWO ACCESS POINTS OUT TO CHICAGO AVENUE.



- **BIRTHPLACE OF AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE** - Before Wright created the Prairie style, American architecture was primarily influenced by European models.
- **WRIGHT'S LABORATORY** - Over 30 homes designed by Wright in this studio are in the immediate surrounding neighborhood. This is a creative center for Wright's work and the largest concentration of his work anywhere in the world.
- **A VISIONARY TALENT** - In 1908 he published *In the Cause of Architecture* and declared his philosophy of Organic Design, architecture as a complete work of art with all parts contributing to the whole.
- **INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION** - Wright went to Europe in the fall of 1909 to work on the publication of a monograph – 100 lithographs of his buildings and projects, nearly all of which had been designed in the Oak Park Studio. It was called the *Wasmuth Portfolio*, and it introduced Wright's Prairie style to Europe. Because of this publication, Wright's architecture influenced a generation of international architects who recognized his Robie House in particular as a masterpiece of modern architecture.
- **THE STORY CONTINUES** - After Wright departed for Europe, he never lived here again. On his return in 1910, he began plans for a new Home and Studio, Taliesin, which he would build on family land in Spring Green, Wisconsin.
- **ALWAYS EVOLVING** – He would continue to create more masterpieces of modern architecture such as Fallingwater in 1939, and the Guggenheim Museum, completed in 1959, the year of his death at age 91. Wright's long career finally took him to Arizona, where he established Taliesin West.
- **GENIUS** - Far removed by distance and time from Wright's final home in Arizona, this Oak Park Home and Studio of his first 20 years remains the place where his genius was first revealed and his stature in modern architecture confirmed.
- **PRESERVING PLACES** - In 1966 Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act to preserve historic sites in the U.S. The Act established the National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks.
- **RESTORATION** - By the 1970s the preservation movement swept through local communities across the country. The Village of Oak Park instituted the Frank Lloyd Wright historic district. In 1974, the Trust, then known as the Home and Studio Foundation, began restoration of this site, and in 1976 it was awarded National Landmark status.
- **TODAY** the Home and Studio is the oldest of Wright's buildings open to the public. It tells a story of the young Frank Lloyd Wright's life and offers remarkable insights into his

development as an artist and his achievement in American architecture.

- **THANK YOU** for visiting the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio. To learn more about the Trust's other historic Wright sites and programs that we offer you can stop in at the museum shop or go to our website, flwright.org. The care and ongoing preservation of the Trust's sites is made possible through tour revenue, Trust membership, and purchases made in our shops. Thank you for supporting our work.

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