

Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Tour Fact Sheet

Text in italics is supplementary material for selected use as appropriate.

Suggested timings for each stop are included throughout.

Photographs demonstrating where to stand at each stop are included throughout the fact sheet.

Introduction: Courtyard

- Welcome to the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio. My name is _____, and I am a trained interpreter with the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust.

Stop 1: Forest Avenue Sidewalk

Approximately 3 minutes

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.



- Frank Lloyd Wright was one of the most renowned architects of the 20th century. It was in Chicago during the first decade of the 20th Century that Wright pioneered a distinctly modern and uniquely American form of architecture, the Prairie Style.
- In 1889, at the start of his career, Wright built a small 2-story residence in Oak Park, ten miles west of downtown Chicago. Designed as a home for his family, the house was a site of experimentation for the young architect during the 20-year period he lived here.
- The site also includes Wright's architectural studio, added to his home in 1898. It was here that Wright and a small but dedicated staff led the development of what became known as the Prairie School of architecture.
- Opened to the public as a museum in 1974 by the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, Wright's Oak Park Home and Studio underwent an extensive restoration to return the building to its 1909 appearance, the last year Wright lived at the site. Today the building is owned and operated by the Trust, a Chicago-based not-for-profit organization that preserves and operates a network of historic Wright sites in the Chicago area.

Early Years

- In 1887, at the age of 19, Wright left his family farmlands in Richland, 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 a 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.
 - 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.
 - The ambitious young Wright did not remain long with Silsbee's firm. 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.
 - Married in June 1889, Wright and his wife Catherine moved to the semi-rural village of Oak Park.
 - Sullivan loaned Wright \$5,000 in order to build his Oak Park home.
 - *Square footage: Original 1889 home: 2163 sq. ft.
Home and Studio site today (including basement, bookshop and apartment) 11,454 sq. ft.*
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Additional background on Oak Park for selected use as appropriate

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.

Exterior

- For the design of his home, Wright adapted the picturesque Shingle style, fashionable for the summer homes of prosperous East Coast families, and introduced to the Chicago area by his employer, Joseph Silsbee.
- In contrast to the neighboring houses, Wright's home is defined by clearly articulated geometric forms and volumes – a substantial triangular gable set upon a rectangular base, polygonal window bays, and the curved wall of the wide porch.
- Wright sensitively integrates the house with its site. The building is set back from the street by a generous lawn. The gable and roofline visually weigh the building

down, anchoring it to the earth.

- Nature would be a constant influence on Wright's work. It is integral to Wright's buildings and informs almost every aspect of his architecture. For example, look at the materials Wright uses to build his home – how the brick and wood shingles form a palette of earth tones that harmonize with the natural landscape.

BEFORE LEADING THE GROUP TO THE HOUSE, ASK THAT THEY HAVE THEIR TICKETS READY FOR YOU TO TAKE CHECK AT THE FRONT DOOR. WALK UP THE INTERIOR SIDEWALK ALONG THE CHICAGO AVENUE WALL AND ENTER THE HOME THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR. CHECK TICKETS HERE, DIRECTING VISITORS TO GATHER IN THE LIVING ROOM FACING THE FIREPLACE. MAKE SURE THE DOOR IS CLOSED AFTER THE GROUP IS IN THE BUILDING.



Interior

Stop 2: Living Room

Approximately 5 minutes

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

As a young man at the start of his career, Wright's funds for the house were limited. The original plan of the building was very modest.



Entrance Hall

- The entrance hall, with plastered walls of quiet green framed by simple oak moldings, establishes the decorative themes of the residence. The natural color palette and materials are used as a unifying device throughout the building.
- In contrast to traditional houses of the day, which often featured brightly colored and patterned wallpapers, Wright's simple color palette and use of natural woodwork provide a seamless transition from exterior to interior.

Artwork, objects, furniture



A plaster cast of a frieze section from the Pergamon Altar, circa 1890s

- The plaster frieze at the top of the wall is a scale copy from the Ancient Greek altar of Pergamon. Commercially available via catalogue, the frieze was one of the many beautiful objects that Wright used to create an inspiring and nurturing environment for his family.
- It was a common belief in late nineteenth-century America that a beautiful and enriching home environment would have a positive effect on the character of those living within. While Wright's career stretched far into the 20th Century, this idea would remain central to his architecture.

Living Room

- **Flow of Space:** In his architecture, Wright worked to break from traditional conventions in house design. He sought to create open, flexible living spaces suited to a modern American lifestyle. On the ground floor of the home, while there are distinct rooms, they are connected by wide openings that facilitate the flow of space through the ground floor. The concept anticipates the open floor plan of Wright's Prairie houses which emerged in the first decade of the 20th century.
- The Oak Park home represents the work of a young architect drawing on the traditions of the past but looking at the progressive work around him for a new direction. The living room exhibits historic sources of design that Wright employed early in his career—such as the diamond-paned leaded glass windows and the dentil molding that encircles the room—along with contemporary sources—such as the floor plan and expansive windows—that point to the future direction of Wright's architecture.
- **Light Screens:** At the north and west walls, a pair of window bays form an almost continuous band of leaded glass casement windows. This visually expands the space and reinforces the connection between the interior of the home and the world of nature outside. The north bay was added in 1895.
- 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. He called these windows "light screens." The windows in the living room represent an early expression of this concept.
- **Built-in seating:** Built-in seating in the window bays eliminates the need for large furniture pieces in the room. This design innovation would become an important feature of Wright's mature Prairie interiors, allowing Wright to create open and flexible living spaces.
- **Fireplace:** The focal point of the living room, and the heart of the 1889 floor plan, 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, distinct from the living room. Wright rejected the existing concept of rooms as single-function boxes. Instead he created open spaces with

shared functions. He created areas of use with screens, furnishings, and subtle changes in ceiling heights.

- 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 for selected use as appropriate

The Arts and Crafts Movement was one of the most influential design movements of modern times. 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 in 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 (information in italics for selected use as appropriate)



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.*



Unknown Maker
Carved Chinese Taboret, 19th century,
Teak



Unknown Maker
Carved Chest, 19th century
Oak,

- *To furnish his new home, Wright initially attended local house auctions to purchase furniture and decorative objects. The carved wooden chest and small carved teak taboret (stool/table) displayed in the room today are two such examples.*
- *The two oak armchairs are believed to have been designed for the home by Wright around 1893. With cushioned backs and seats originally of brown velvet, they demonstrate Wright's observation of similar chairs designed by William Morris, the leader of the British Arts and Crafts movement.*
- *A bronze bust of Beethoven is a reminder of the importance of music in the Wright household, in which all of 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.*



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



William Wendt (b.1865- d.1946),
Untitled Landscape, ca. 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 the Chicago artist William Wendt, and a pastel drawing of a wheat field in summer by Charles Corwin, the artist brother of Cecil Corwin, an architectural colleague of Wright's.



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

- The Japanese print displayed on the wall is Rokugō Ferry at Kawasaki, by Utagawa Hiroshige, c. 1833. Wright began collecting Japanese prints very early in his career and would become a major print dealer in the US. Wright's deep appreciation for Japanese prints carried over into his architecture. While he insisted that the Japanese aesthetic only validated concepts he had generated himself, he did single out qualities found in the prints that he sought to replicate in his architecture. First and foremost, he was drawn to the prints' simplified compositions. He was impressed by the artists' ability to eliminate all that was extraneous to the point of approaching abstraction.



Frank Lloyd Wright
Print Table, ca. 1902-03
Oak

- As Wright's interest in Japanese prints grew, in about 1902 he designed several folding tables to display them. The table in the living room today is one of two designed for the Oak Park Home and Studio. The leaves of the table can fold down to display prints and

portfolios. Wright created print tables for several of his clients.

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, within which were created different kinds 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 china cupboard 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.*



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

- *On the east wall is a lithograph by Norwegian artist, Fritz Thaulow. Thaulow created several versions of the scene, one of which 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

Approximately 5 minutes

STAND IN THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF THE DINING ROOM 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 began to unify the design of a building through his use of color and materials. The new dining was conceived as a fully



unified composition—where architecture, interior finishes, furniture, lighting, concealed heating, and furniture became integral parts of the whole.

- Wright called his architecture “Organic.” In organic architecture, 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 an organic whole.
- 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 red clay 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.



Artwork, Furniture, Objects

- As Wright worked to develop his early Organic interiors he soon identified the need for specially designed furniture that harmonized with the 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 high back chairs that Wright designed for his Oak Park dining room are revolutionary for the time. Designed as an integral part of the room, the table and chairs form an intimate secondary space within the room, the table shielded by the high backs of the chairs.

Lighting (information in italics for selected use as appropriate)

- 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 rectangular form of the table.

ASSIGN SOMEONE TO BE THE LAST PERSON AS YOU LEAD THE GROUP UP THE FRONT STAIRS. FOR SAFETY, ENCOURAGE VISITORS TO HOLD THE HAND RAIL ON THE WAY UPSTAIRS. 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.



Upper Level Tour Stops

Stop 4: Children's Bedrooms (west bedroom)

Approximately 2 minutes

STAND BETWEEN THE DOORS TO THE HALL AND CLOSET.

(Information in italics for selected use as appropriate)

- 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 overtime 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.
- After 1893, when Wright left Adler & Sullivan to begin his own practice with office space in downtown Chicago, he remodeled the 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 Llewellyn shared the space in which we are standing. 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 (*as recalled by David Wright)*
- 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 also contributes to this sense of openness.
- *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 master bedroom via a closet.

Stop 5: Master Bedroom

Approximately 3 minutes

STAND IN FRONT OF THE DOOR LEADING OUT TO THE HALL. ENCOURAGE VISITORS TO CIRCULATE AND SEE THE BATHROOM AS YOU TALK.

- In the master bedroom Wright integrates art, architecture, furnishings, and decorative arts.
- Through his design of the room, Wright manipulates our experience of the space, making 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 (information in italics for selected use as appropriate)



- On the north and south walls, murals featuring Native American figures 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.
- *Artwork depicting Native Americans became common in late nineteenth century American culture. As the nation shifted from a rural to an industrial society, there was a sense that the western way of life, and the expansive American wilderness, were slowly vanishing. Wright, like many members of the urban middle-class, owned several sculptures depicting Native American figures.*
- *The Egyptian-style costumes in the murals compliment the pendant light fixtures that hang from the ceiling. The gilt plaster medallions feature traditional Egyptian motifs of a sunburst and lotus blossoms. In the decades following the Civil War, American designers*

became increasingly interested in the artwork of other countries and cultures, including Japanese, Greek, Persian, Moorish, and Egyptian designs. The taste for Orientalism and exoticism was manifested in various decorative arts.

- *The bed is a reproduction of Wright's original design, while the dresser, side table, and small chair were created by Wright for the Avery Coonley house, built in nearby Riverside in 1907.*

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

Bathroom

(Information in italics for selected use as appropriate)

- Wright's home was in 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 Day Room

Approximately 2 minutes

STAND IN THE DOORWAY.

(Information in italics for selected use as appropriate)

- The room originally served as a nursery, but after Wright turned his studio room into two bedrooms for his growing family, the room became Catherine Wright's Day Room, a private space for sewing, reading, and caring for the children.
- Located above the 1895 Dining Room, the Day Room was enlarged at the same time with a window bay to the south.
- Wright rejected the existing concept of rooms as single-function boxes. Instead he created open spaces with shared functions. In the Day Room you can see how Wright



creates an area of defined space with the change in ceiling height in the window bay.

- *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 (information in italics for selected use as appropriate)

- *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

Approximately 5 minutes

STAND IN FRONT OF DOOR TO HALL.

- 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.
- Through his design of the space, Wright manipulates your experience of the architecture. Consider your experience of entering this room. 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 beyond the limits of the room by using skylights, windows, and the mural over the fireplace.
- 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.



- Rhythmic bands of wood framing the ceiling lead the eye upward to a skylight shielded by wood grilles displaying stylized seed pods and blossoms that provides illumination.
- On either side of the room projecting window bays, raised to the height of the mature trees that surround the lot, place the viewer amidst a canopy of foliage. The window bays feature storage drawers and also served as seating.



- The leaded glass windows feature stylized tulips on tall stems, simply rendered with bold geometric forms. These window designs by Wright from 1908, demonstrate how far his design vocabulary had matured since the house was first built in 1889. Consider them in comparison to the simple diamond-paned windows you saw in the living room.

Artwork, Objects, Furnishings



- 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 designed by Wright and painted by the artist Charles Corwin. Corwin's brother Cecil was an early colleague of Wright's at the architectural firm of Joseph Lyman Silsbee.

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

In Corwin's painting, the figure of the fisherman and the Middle Eastern landscape, featuring temples and domed mosques, are rendered naturalistically. The genie, which hovers above the prone fisherman, was designed by Wright and is rendered abstractly, a remarkable bend of flat, geometric forms, combined with motifs from exotic cultures, such as the Egyptian winged

scarabs. The design extends beyond the painted frame of the mural, becoming part of the architecture.

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.

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 styles of architecture and local materials should be respected, that new buildings should integrate with the surrounding landscape, and that freedom from historical styles was essential. Their work would shape the course of architecture and design in the 20th century.

*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.*

- The playroom was sparsely furnished, providing a multi-purpose space for the Wright family to use. It served as the site and focus of Catherine Wright's work – a kindergarten for neighborhood children; it was a playroom for the Wright children, the tiered gallery used alternatively as a stage or audience seating for the children's play-acting; and a site for family 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 was introduced 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, in part because they helped him think about architectural designs tangibly in terms of basic geometric volumes.
- *Indeed, Wright's two oldest sons, Lloyd Wright and John Kenneth 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 allows the room to remain an open and flexible space. The stair

risers are hinged and a trap door on the landing can be raised so that the sound of the piano is not muffled.

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



1895 Kitchen

(Information in italics for selected use as appropriate)

- 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 refrigerators.*

Stop 8: Studio Exterior

Approximately 4 minutes

STAND IN FRONT OF THE BRICK PIERS WITH STORK CAPITALS.



- In 1898, Wright built a new studio wing 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 profile, a key feature of Wright's mature Prairie buildings, 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.

Artwork, Objects, Furnishings (information in italics for selected use as appropriate)

- Artistic details such as the leaded glass windows, pier reliefs and figural sculptures add to the artistic character of the building and impressed 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. This original design represents a progression in Wright's architecture from his earlier use of classical sculpture, as we saw in the entrance to the Oak Park home.
- *The unique design features the tree of life, a symbol of natural growth, the book of knowledge, beneath which a scroll of architectural plans unrolls. Flanking the scroll are two storks, which traditionally represent wisdom and 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 IS SECURELY CLOSED.



Stop 9: Drafting Room

Approximately 5 minutes

STAND WITH YOUR BACK TO THE VAULT.

- It was here in the dramatic two story drafting room that Wright and a small, but dedicated staff, created the Prairie style of architecture. Many of the most important buildings of Wright's Prairie years were designed in this room, including the Darwin Martin house in Buffalo, NY (1903), Unity Temple in Oak Park (1908), and the Frederick Robie house in Chicago (1910).



- Square in plan, the drafting room features an octagonal balcony above. While Wright's drafting staff worked in the space below, artists and craftsmen used the balcony space.
- The 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. With his typical desire to express architectural structure, Wright leaves the chains exposed.
- The two-story space, which terminates in an octagonal dome, is flooded with light from above. Subsequent Wright buildings using this concept include the Larkin Building (Buffalo, NY, 1903), Unity Temple (Oak Park, IL, 1908), the Johnson Wax Building (Racine, WI, 1936), Wisconsin, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York, NY, 1943–1959).
- 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 Oak Park Studio for selected use as appropriate

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.

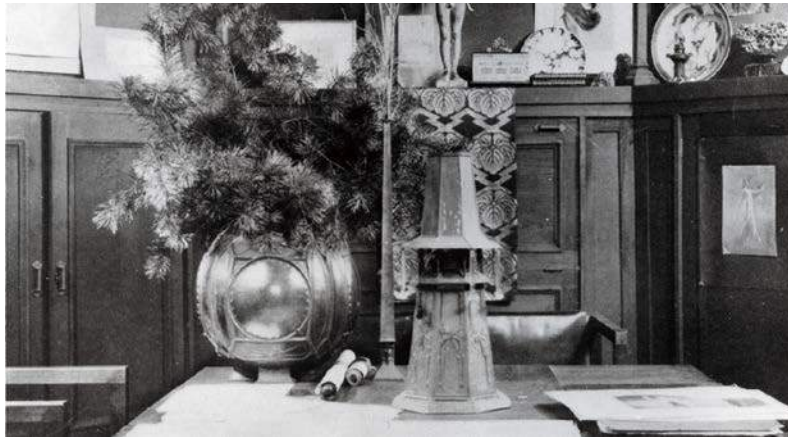
During the Studio years Wright maintained a staff of six on average to draft his designs, but around 20 architects are documented as having worked at Wright's Studio. They often came and

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.

Artwork, Objects, Furnishings (information in italics for selected use as appropriate)

- *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 artwork, 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 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 comprises a repeating panel depicting a classical maiden framed by Sullivanesque ornament. The frieze was sculpted by Richard Bock.*



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 most iconic decorative designs from his Prairie years, a large copper urn (studio drafting room) and a slender vase, commonly referred to as a "weed-holder" (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 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: Reception Hall

Approximately 1 minute

(Information in italics for selected use as appropriate)

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

- The 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.*



Artwork, Objects, Furnishings

- *Wright designed a low-backed square spindle armchair for the Studio. Four reproductions of the chair are displayed in the reception hall. The low dimensions of the*

chair are in keeping with the dominant horizontal lines of the Studio building.

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

Stop 11: Library

Approximately 3 minutes

STAND IN THE DOORWAY.

(Information in italics for selected use as appropriate)



- A low, dark hallway, similar in concept to the playroom entrance, leads from the Reception Hall into the Studio Library. Again, Wright shapes your experience of his architecture as you emerge from an enclosed space into a light-filled room that initially seems larger than its actual proportions.
- The octagonal library was used by Wright as consultation room for clients. While the high windows frame views of the treetops, and the skylight floods the room with natural light, the design of the room is intended to minimize distractions from the world outside.
- Despite its relative height, the room is held to human scale through the strong horizontal lines that define the space. A series of rotating octagonal lines brings a dynamic quality to the room.
- The walls of the room are lined with leaded glass book cases and storage cabinets which held architectural drawings on racks. Wright also designed swinging wood frames, hinged to the cabinet posts, to display presentation drawings of his projects.
- *In 1907 – 1908 Wright added a common-brick fireplace to the south wall of the room. The flue is diverted through the wall so as not to disrupt the clerestory 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 12: Courtyard/Conclusion

Approximately 2 minutes

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



- The wooded corner lot that Wright selected for his Home and Studio was once the site of a nursery for local landscaper gardener, John Blair, whose small Gothic Revival house stands just to the east of Wright's. Blair planted the substantial ginkgo tree in the courtyard.
- Anna Lloyd Jones, Wright's mother, purchased Blair's house at the same time Wright bought the corner lot. Today the Blair house serves as administrative space for Trust staff.
- In the fall of 1909, Wright left America for Europe to work on the publication of a substantial monograph of his buildings and projects, the majority of which had been designed in the Oak Park Studio. The result was the Wasmuth Portfolio of 1911, which introduced Wright's work to Europe and influenced a generation of international architects.
- Wright remained abroad for a year, returning to Oak Park in the fall of 1910. He immediately began plans for a new home and studio, Taliesin, which he would build on family land in Spring Green, Wisconsin. Wright continued to explore concepts of organic architecture, but would seek new influences beyond that of the Midwest prairie.
- He would go on to create such masterpieces of modern architecture as Fallingwater in 1939, and the Guggenheim Museum, completed in 1959. While far removed by distance and time from the small house Wright built for his family in Oak Park in 1889, the spark of genius behind these icons of 20th century architecture began here in this modest residence.
- Today the Home and Studio is the oldest of Wright's buildings open to the public. It provides a foundation for examining Wright's life and work, and offers a remarkable insight into the origins of one of the twentieth century's greatest architects.

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 revenues, memberships and purchases made in our shops. Thank you for your continued support.