From the Editor
by MARK HERTZBERG

We take joy in celebrating unsung Wright in Wisconsin heroes in this issue of our newsletter.

First and foremost is Sherri Shokler, the face of Wright in Wisconsin since 1998.

Sherri is now happily enanced in an exciting, new career opportunity in Madison.

One of her last contributions to our organization was to plan and oversee the move of our office from long-time quarters on West Wilson Street to a new home across Capitol Square at 30 W. Mifflin St., in the same building as the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.

The position of office manager is being recast as that of a part-time executive director. The position has been posted, with applications due in mid-August — just days before this issue of our member newsletter went to press.

While many people helped with the move, Sherri singles out Laurie Graepentine. “She’s been with me nearly every day I was in the office the past several weeks. She’s a super-trooper — as we’ve had no (air conditioning) in that old office!”

Robert Hartmann, a designer in Racine who previously served as president of our organization, spent untold hours designing and shepherding the implementation of our new brandmark/logo.

I also am indebted to Brian R. Hannan, our enthusiastic and very capable newsletter designer, for his skills and for his patience with the demands of designing a newsletter for a volunteer organization — on top of parenting and a demanding, full-time job. His only quibble is that he has not yet had a chance to write more stories for us.

People make Wright in Wisconsin work. These are three of those special people.

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ON THE COVER: Legend has it that the bricks at the Jacobs I House were unknowingly underwritten by SC Johnson because Wright ordered extra bricks for the SC Johnson Administration Building to use in the construction of the house in Madison.

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Taliesin and Jacobs I House Earn UNESCO World Heritage Status

by JACOB MEIJSTRAEVEN

Taliesin and the Herbert and Katherine Jacobs I House in Madison were designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites on July 7, 2019.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) recognizes landmarks or sites for having cultural, historical or scientific relevance throughout the world. These two sites are Wisconsin’s first UNESCO World Heritage sites. This is an incredible honor for a Wisconsin farm kid who spent many years of a prolific career designing buildings in rural Spring Green.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, based in Chicago, has been spearheading this serial nomination of eight major works by Wright. The other buildings inscribed together with Taliesin are: Unity Temple (Oak Park, Illinois), Frederick C. Robie House (Chicago), Holleyhock House (Los Angeles), Fallingwater (Mill Run, Pennsylvania), Taliesin West (Scottsdale, Arizona) and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York). These properties are recognized as prominently shaping architecture in the 20th Century, spanning 50 years of Wright’s career.

The nomination, which was originally reviewed by the World Heritage Committee in 2016, and announcement of the inscription were made during the 43rd session of the World Heritage Committee in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan. The nomination has been in development for more than a decade with the voluntary participation and cooperation of all of the property owners and site stewards.

UNESCO CONTINUES ON PAGE 09
Wright in Wisconsin Unveils New Logo

Design honors Wright’s legacy, celebrates the people who promote, protect and preserve it

by BRIAN R. HANNAH

For Robert Hartmann, the logo he designed for Wright in Wisconsin had to function on two levels.

“First and foremost, it is intended to work as a sophisticated, abstract design evocative of excellence,” he said. “Its function is to serve as a unique, signature element for all things Wright in Wisconsin, including our member newsletter, website, letterhead and business cards — as well as membership cards and award certificates.”

For the attentive viewer, though, Hartmann wanted the design to include “design elements, some overt, some concealed, that are the building blocks of the symbol.

“You can find the letters ‘WI’ — for ‘Wright in Wisconsin’ — as well as ‘FLW’ for ‘Frank Lloyd Wright Wi.’ Some will see these letters, some will not, and that is my intent,” he said. “It is the impact of the overall, abstract design that is most important, but finding the letters in the design gives it deeper meaning.”

For example, Hartmann noted:

• “The three red elements remind the observer of the mission of the organization, which is to promote, protect and preserve the legacy of Wright’s vision and architecture in his native state of Wisconsin.”

• “Finally, the red diamond at the focal point of the symbol represents the organization, Wright in Wisconsin. The lines that extend to the diamond and cradle it embody all those individuals who work hard to keep the organization strong. They are the office manager, the board members, site representatives, volunteers, homeowners and donors who make Wright in Wisconsin unique among Wright organizations.”

Two years in the making, the new logo makes its debut in this issue of our member newsletter. Hartmann said he was guided by Frank Lloyd Wright’s graphic design legacy and the human strength of the organization itself. “The lines that extend to the diamond and cradle it embody all those individuals who work hard to keep the organization strong. They are the office manager, the board members, site representatives, volunteers, homeowners and donors who make Wright in Wisconsin unique among Wright organizations.”

Hartmann began the logo as a “drawing,” while reflecting Wright’s classic graphic design work. I’ve got 50 years of imprinting my mind with Wright drawings and graphics as a designer and visual artist,” Hartmann said.

“I wanted this to be a linear design, with graphics as a designer and visual artist,” Hartmann said.

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Hartmann began the logo as a “drawing,” while reflecting Wright’s classic graphic design work. I’ve got 50 years of imprinting my mind with Wright drawings and graphics as a designer and visual artist,” Hartmann said.

“I wanted this to be a linear design, with squares, rectangles 45-degree angles and diamonds captured in an organic design.”

Hartmann began the logo as a “drawing,” choosing to not use a computer in favor of the tools Wright and Masselink preferred: a pen, pencil, T-square and triangle. In the months that followed, he returned many times to the drawing board, to fine-tune it.

“I just sat down and simplified it — and simplified it,” Hartmann said. “until it was just right.”

Staying at Still Bend

Just prior to a Frank Lloyd Wright tour, my husband, Bill, and I took three years ago next month, I rented Still Bend — the Bernard and Fern Schwartz House — as his birthday surprise.

We were to meet our official tour group in Milwaukee, but I told him how wonderful this house was — only it’s not a part of our scheduled tour. I convinced him to drive up to Two Rivers to see it a couple of days before our tour began.

The afternoon we arrived was chilly and misty — a perfect setting for what I think of as “the house on the bend.” We pulled into the drive, and, asking if I was sure it was vacant, Bill got out of the car and started looking around. I assured him it was and encouraged him to peek in the windows. After a tour around the outside, with lots of peeks inside, we walked to the stairs leading to the river — all the time Bill telling me we need to leave. We’ve been here long enough. Someone would be calling the police.

As we walked back to the car, I said, “Bill, I’m going to try the door. Maybe it’s open, and we can peek inside.” Poor Bill! He was terrified we would get thrown in jail for trespassing and said, “No! Let’s go!”

I did what I said I would — only I secretly had the key. Pretending to find the door unlocked, I said with delight: “Look, Bill. We can go inside!”

By that time, Bill was demanding that I get in the car. I took the key to him and said, “Happy Birthday! This is where we are staying! It’s ours until we pick up our group in Milwaukee.”

He was dumbfounded and didn’t quite believe me. I had to get the receipt from my purse and show it to him. He then smiled with delight and headed for the front door.

It was a wonderful retreat. It is a great home. I knew the story about the upstairs linen closet debate between Wright and Fern, so I made sure to use that bathroom — although it was just the two of us. I’m so glad for the opportunity to visit, inspect and enjoy the home.

Bill never tires of surprises. Even after 16 years of marriage, he is always touched by my ability to surprise him with what he appreciates and least expects. Although ours was a “later-in-life” meeting and I may not bring them all to fruition, I have plans always touched by my ability to surprise him with what he appreciates and least expects. Although ours was a “later-in-life” meeting and I may not bring them all to fruition, I have plans enough to delight this wonderful man, who each day delights me with his presence, for the next hundred years. I think that may be one of the not-so-secret secrets of a happy marriage.

Editor’s Note: Do you have a story to share about your experience with a Wright-designed property? Contact us at our website — wrightinwisconsin.org/contact.
Vintage Photos

Pictures capture a time when ‘all was not right’ with Wright’s Jacobs I House, Taliesin estate

by ROBERT HARTMANN

In July 2019, thanks in large part to the tireless efforts of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, eight buildings designed by Wright were placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list of natural and cultural monuments.

Two of the eight are located in the architect’s native state of Wisconsin: Taliesin (1911), his residence and studio near Spring Green; and Jacobs I (1936), arguably his first Usonian home (along with the Willey House) for Herbert and Katherine Jacobs in Madison. (See the article on the UNESCO inscriptions on page 3.)

Publishing only the most stunning views of Wright’s work is customary. But here, in these vintage photos of two of Wright’s most significant masterworks, we see them as they were — at a time when they had lost some of their original luster and architectural integrity.

The life story of these Wright buildings has been one of transition. Each one has gone through periods of deferred maintenance and, in recent years, masterful restorations.

Not unlike some vintage family portraits, the photos shown here, for the first time, record a moment in the life of these two structures when all was not right. While they are not “beauty shots,” they are stunning in a different way.

They force us to recall how these revered Wright buildings once looked. They’re presented here as a source of reflection and remembrance.

They also serve as a testament to the significant achievements of James Dennis in restoring Jacobs I and of Taliesin Preservation Inc. and the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation in the continuing effort to maintain and restore Taliesin.

Left: Designed in 1936, Jacobs I is now 83 years old. It was only 29 years old when Robert Hartmann first saw it and made the photo above. Note the one-over-one windows and blackened siding conditions.

Above: In 2019, Taliesin celebrates its 108th anniversary. This photo was made in 1967, when Taliesin was 56 years old — 8 years after Wright’s death, in 1959.
While the effect of the UNESCO inscriptions is primarily honorary, they are expected to increase tourism, media coverage and popularity. The inscriptions also provide additional protections of the properties beyond their national historic landmark status.

Said Carrie Rodamaker, executive director of Taliesin Preservation: “We’re elated that Taliesin has been inscribed to the UNESCO World Heritage list. This will be a huge driving force for Spring Green, Madison and the greater Midwest with increased visitation and visibility to a global audience. The lasting impact of this inscription will drive economic development to our region, to the state of Wisconsin and beyond.”

Said Sidney K. Robinson, professor emeritus of art history at the University of Illinois at Chicago: “Inscribing the Jacobs House as a World Heritage Site is a tribute to a uniquely American value declared by Wright: Architecture is for anyone. This first Usonian house demonstrates how the life of the unique individual can be placed alongside communal edifices for its architectural significance. Combining social, technological, structural and aesthetic advances, the Jacobs House’s recognition is a singular honor to an American architecture, a goal which directed Wright’s life.”

Editor’s Note: Meudt-Thering is the communications manager at Taliesin Preservation.
So Long, Sherri Shokler

As Wright in Wisconsin recruits an executive director, we say farewell to our office manager

by MARK HERTZBERG

Sherri Shokler’s part-time student job lasted for 21 years. She started working at Wright in Wisconsin’s office manager in 1998. We bid her a fond farewell when she left us at the end of August to pursue a new career opportunity.

Shokler was the public face of Wright in Wisconsin. She answered the office phone, handled memberships and registered and greeted people at Wright and Like and other special events. She tackled any other task that crossed her desk.

One of her final contributions to the organization was to lead the move of our office this summer from its long-time home on East Wilson Street, across from Capitol Square, to a new space at 30 W. Millin St.

“Serendipity or chance” brought her to Wright in Wisconsin, Shokler said. “I was a returning adult student at the University of Wisconsin, in art and anthropology. A fellow art student asked me if I’d be interested in a part-time job — 10 hours a week, clerical, close to campus, flexible scheduling, perfect for a student.”

Shokler interviewed with Jan Marshall Fox, the organization’s second president. They had friends in common and bonded. Shokler was hired.

Shokler grew up in Independence, Missouri.

“I can’t say I really knew much about Wright before coming to Wisconsin in 1991, except that he was a famous architect and that he designed the Guggenheim.”

Her introduction to the world of Wright came a year later, when her best friend, Virginia Cobb, an interior architect who worked for John Eifler, a Wright restoration architect in Chicago, invited her to join her at the grand opening of the Seth Peterson Cottage (1958) in Mirror Lake. At that big shindig I ended up seeing and meeting Bill Martinelli, Audrey Laatsch and Tom Garver.

Garver, Laatsch and Martinelli were involved with the restoration of the cottage. Laatsch was Wright in Wisconsin’s founding secretary, and Martinelli was on the board when Shokler was hired. Garver later joined the board.

Shokler experienced the cottage as a dwelling that winter when she and Cobb stayed there for a weekend. She was particularly inspired by Laatsch, “In the four years I got to know her, she was the kind of person who had such an impact on my life. She was a real leader to have accomplished the restoration of the cottage.”

Shokler says that while she enjoys her work, she does not think her job title describes her primary role — helping the board of directors be successful. “I would like (my title) to be ‘administrative assistant.’ I think that is much more descriptive of how my job functions and how I see my role. I am the board’s assistant, particularly because we do not have an executive director.”

Shokler was like the quarterback on a team with those volunteer board directors. “This organization belongs to the board and to the members. Sometimes I have 15 bosses. That can be really challenging. Everybody is spread out all over the place. I am the only one sitting in the middle, knowing how those things overlap and intersect. It’s juggling a lot of balls all the time.”

Shokler said she particularly enjoyed working on Wright in Wisconsin’s events, bringing people opportunity to go into these amazing spaces, to be part of something they’ll remember for a lifetime. “That’s the special part of it for me. That’s where I get my juice to do what we do.”

There are unexpected joys that come from connecting people at Wright events, she says, whether it’s new friendships between visitors or romances that have developed.

Membership has more than doubled since Shokler began working in 1998. The purchase of four of Wright’s six American System-Built (ASB) homes on West Burnham Street in Milwaukee and restoration projects for two of them, were significant developments. Shokler believes these developments were important for the organization’s name recognition. (Editor’s Note: The ASB homes are now owned by Frank Lloyd Wright’s Burnham Block Inc.)

Shokler emulated her mother’s career in her job at Wright in Wisconsin. Her mother was the site manager of the historic Bingham Waggner Estate for more than 20 years. “I never thought I’d follow in her footsteps and be the sole employee for a nonprofit, historic organization, but that’s what happened.”

While board members would likely credit Shokler’s work for Wright in Wisconsin’s growth, rather than their own, she shares the credit. “My husband, Jeff, should get a lifetime achievement award! He has been to every Wright and Like I’ve worked at. Some of them I would not have gotten through without his moral support!”

Come June 2020, she and Jeff can enjoy Wright and Like like any other tour participant would, without worrying about myriad organizational and operational details that make the event work.

Kristin Visser Award

The restoration of the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Curtis and Lillian Meyer House — located in Galesburg, Michigan — has won the 2019 Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award.

“It has been a long and challenging process but very rewarding in its outcome,” owner Doug Labbreque said. “I feel fortunate to have had this opportunity, and I am immensely grateful to the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy to be recognized for this work.”

The award, given by the directors of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, is presented every other year to an individual or organization in recognition of past work in historical preservation of a Wright or Prairie School building in Wisconsin or a contiguous state.

The award is in the amount of $5,000.

TRAIL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 58

- Seth Peterson Cottage, Lake Delton
- Taliesin and the Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center, Spring Green
- Wyoming Valley School Cultural Arts Center, Spring Green*
- A.D. German Warehouse, Richland Center*
- Frank Lloyd Wright Trail travelers can collect a landmark stamp at each of the nine designated sites, indicated here with the * symbol.

Once completed, the passport can be redeemed for a Frank Lloyd Wright Trail collectors mug. Travelers also are encouraged to share their adventures on social media using #FLWTraill.
**Usonian Dreamin’**

Wright’s late-in-life architecture remains timely for home design today

This article will be my first in a multi-part series to address the question of what it takes to design and build a Usonian home today, giving it its timeliness for many considering this undertaking.

As one of the “like” architects in many of the Wright and Like tours in Wisconsin, the material I will cover is informed by the many conversations and questions I’ve received from people touring the homes, along with my experience working with owners and builders of new Usonian homes I have designed. I will address topics that include: building technology today as it differs from that in Wright’s time, materials, construction trades and labor, codes, cost and design issues. Or: What does it take today to realize the dream of the Usonian home?

People familiar with the term “Usonian” probably are familiar with Wright’s more modern-looking homes in post-Depression era America, after his more traditional Prairie School period had come to an end. Included in the eight Wright buildings to recently receive UNESCO World Heritage Site status is the Jacobs I House in Madison.

This home features flat roofs, a slab-on-grade, heated concrete floor, wood and brick (inside and outside) within a modular aesthetic of horizontality and harmonious lines that are still as much one with nature as Wright’s earlier Prairie School homes had been. Jacobs I was built in 1937. It may be hard to believe this home is now 82 years old, older than most of its neighbors.

In the subsequent years, Wright would experiment with variations on the Usonian with homes built of concrete block (Usonian Automatic), triangular grids, circular geometries and so on. For sake of this article, I will group these under the Usonian label, even if they technically could be put into separate categories.

Today, the popular resurgence of mid-century modern (MCM) homes includes under its premise, which can be applied to rectangular or circular geometries as well.

While technical and cost issues are significant considerations, I will start, in this issue, with a even more important design considerations that are often overlooked.

Today in MCM design, the “box” is back in vogue; however, while Wright’s Usonians often had flat roofs, he detested the simple box architecture he saw in the International Style. From his early Prairie School period, Wright’s goal was to break down the box and open it up. This concern was, in part, about corner windows and openness to the outside, but it was more than that. It was about the geometry of subordination or, to use a more familiar term, “the integrated whole.”

This means that the parts of a design are not static and self-contained but inflect themselves to other parts they are in relationship with, often in a nested hierarchy. Wright often took some important plan geometry and reflected that in a clerestory window pattern cutout, for example. This example is easy to understand, but it is not the most important aspect of the integrated whole.

More important is the actual configuration of the plan itself and, by extension, its spatial character. I will illustrate this with the Uecker residence plan, a home I designed and one of the homes on this year’s Wright and Like tour in northeastern Wisconsin.

This is the overall floor plan of the home. While this plan is based on a triangular planning grid, that is not important to the following principle, which can be applied to rectangular or circular geometries as well.

The floor plan itself is not an additive process of joining one box to another. Rather the plan is integrative in the sense that each room or part of the plan is integrated into a larger whole. The kitchen, for instance, takes on a hexagonal geometry as it forms the core of the house, yet the shape is incomplete as it opens into and gives way to the dining area and the unfolding spiral of the rest of the home.

Organic architecture is “organic” because of this integrated whole; it is “grown,” not “added,” figuratively speaking. Like a plant or other organism, it has a quality of part-to-whole and a part-to-part relationship that is reflexive.

Another aspect of the Usonian style is that while it is not classical in composition, it still places importance upon proportion and composition. For example, the Jacobs I House has a front elevation that is clearly studied and precise. There is a unique proportion system here compared with classical architecture. The horizontality is emphasized, and the verticals are attenuated. This gives it a strong connection with the site, as Wright spoke of, but it also sets up a grammar of compressed proportion where clerestory windows become narrow bands in a composition of horizontal strata.

While the front elevation is asymmetrical, it’s compositionally balanced with the brick core of the home, acting as a visual fulcrum from which the extending horizontal lines branch out. There is a dynamic equilibrium here, and the principle of the cantilever is expressed.

Something to keep in mind when designing or building a Usonian home is how well these homes balance the tension between a fluidity of expression and a rigorous discipline. While the above design principles are only a very brief survey, they begin to show how a true Usonian design is “organic” in a way many other MCM designs are not.

In the next article, I will look at some more pragmatic considerations of building a Usonian home today, beginning with some planning considerations.
WISCONSIN WRIGHT SITES

Tours & Events

AT WISCONSIN WRIGHT SITES

FALL 2019

Wright Calendar

September 10, 7 p.m.
SITEseeing Film Series — “Leaning Out”
Monona Terrace, Madison • Free ticket required
Leila Robertson, the lead structural engineer of the World Trade Center who oversaw the con-
struction of the tallest building on the planet at the time of its construction, is haunted by its col-
lapse and the events of 9/11.
mononaterrace.com

October 15, 7 p.m.
SITEseeing Architecture and Design Film Series — That Far Corner: Frank Lloyd Wright in Los Angeles
Monona Terrace, Madison • Free ticket required
mononaterrace.com/event-group/site-seeing

September 22, 2:30 p.m.
Percussion Truck — Rural Musicians Concert
Wyoming Valley School, Spring Green • $10, ticket required; children 12 and under or students with IDs are admitted free
ruralmusiciansforum.org

September 29, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Doors Open Milwaukee
American System-Built Home Model B-1, Milwaukee • Free tours
historicmilwaukee.org/doors-open

September 29, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Taste of Taliesin Culinary Event
Taliesin, Spring Green • $150 per person, reservations required
taliesinpreservation.org

October 4, 7 - 9:30 p.m.
Moon Over Monona Terrace
Monona Terrace, Madison • Free ticket required
View the moon and stars with the Madison Astron-
omical Society. Family fun.
mononaterrace.com/event-group/site-seeing

October 18-20, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Furniture and Photography Show
Wyoming Valley School, Spring Green

October 12, 7 p.m.
SITEseeing Film Series — The Human Shelter
Monona Terrace, Madison • Free ticket required
How do we construct homes in places facing the challenges of climate change, globalization and migration?
mononaterrace.com/event-group/site-seeing

November 23-24, 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Art in the Wright Place
Unitarian Meeting House, Madison
Sale of original fine arts and crafts from Wisconsin artists
mononaterrace.com/event-group/site-seeing

Ongoing Tours and Events

A.D. German Warehouse
Richland Center • Cost varies
May-October: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday
Tours begin at 15 minutes past the hour
See website for monthly event costs.
(608) 604-5034 or larbegost@gmail.com
germanwarehouse.org

American System-Built Home Model B-1
Milwaukee • $15 per person • Reservations can be made on the website but are not required
September: 12:30 - 3:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday
Closed September 27
October-December: 12:30 - 3:30 p.m. Saturday
Tours start on the half hour.
wrightmilwaukee.org

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church Waukesha • Cost varies
Groups of 15 or more: $10 per person
Groups of 14 or fewer: $125 flat fee
By appointment only at (414) 461-9400 or annunciationwi.org

Monona Terrace
Madison • $10 per adult, $5 per student
Guided Tours May 1 to October 31, Daily at 1 p.m.
From November 1 to April 30, 1 p.m. Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday.
Closed major holidays.
mononaterrace.com

SC Johnson
Racine • Cost varies
March to December, various tours plus exhibition
Reservations at (603) 260-2764 or scjohnson.com/visit

Seth Peterson Cottage
Lake Delton • $15 per person
Open house and tours second Sunday of each month
11 to 3:30 p.m.
sethpeterson.org

Events are free unless otherwise noted. Visit WrightinWisconsin.org for a complete listing of tour schedules and contact information.
This is a Real Photo Postcard of Taliesin — mailed on July 6, 1936 by apprentice Allen Lape Davison.

Davison notes in this postcard, sent to his relatives in the Pittsburgh area, that he was working on drawings for several small houses. He hoped to finish them by week's end.

Davison was well-known for several renderings he completed of proposed Wright-designed buildings, including those of the Point Park in Pittsburgh Point.

courtesy of PATRICK J. MAHONEY