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## WRIGHT IN WISCONSIN

MEMB OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT IFGACY



# Back to Madison

WRIGHT AND LIKE RETURNS TO MAD CITY FOR 2020 SHOWCASE page 4

## PAGE 2

Wright in Wisconsin welcomes Vintage Photos focuses on the a new office administrator

## PAGE 5 Wisconsin River Terrace

PAGE 6 Mark Hertzberg remembers the life, career of Ron McCrea

### PAGE 8

Wright Thoughts: The process of planning a Usonian house

## Wright in Wisconsin Welcomes Bill Swan

## New office administrator brings deep ties to our group and enthusiasm for Frank Lloyd Wright

by MARK HERTZBERG



Bill Swan's Wright resume has gotten even more impressive as he settles into his duties as Wright in Wisconsin's new office administrator. He succeeds Sherri Shokler, who left in August, after more than 20 years with us, to pursue a new career path.

Swan, who lives in Sun Prairie, is a familiar face to Wright and Like participants.

He has been a docent on our tours each year since 2012. If that is not enough to bring him into our fold, he was a bus captain for the 2015 and 2018 Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy

conferences in Wisconsin. If that is still not enough for you to bring him into our fold, also consider that he has been a docent at Wright's Laurent House in Rockford, Illinois, since 2015, and that he has done extensive research into the house, including in the Wright archives at the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library at Columbia University.

He has visited or stayed overnight in Wright

BILL SWAN CONTINUES ON PAGE 07



WRIGHT IN WISCONSIN is published three times annually in February, May and September by Wright in Wisconsin, a nonprofit organization designed to promote, protect and preserve the heritage of Frank Lloyd Wright, his vision and his architecture — as well as the work of his apprentices, Taliesin Associated Architects and like-minded architects — in his native state of Wisconsin. Membership benefits include discounts at the Monona Terrace Gift Shop and on Wright and Like<sup>™</sup> tour tickets, this newsletter, volunteer opportunities and more. Donors of \$100 or more receive reciprocal membership benefits at Wright sites nationwide (benefits vary by location). To join, visit us at **www.wrightinwisconsin.org** or contact us at the number or address below.

#### Wright in Wisconsin Member Newsletter

#### Editor Mark Hertzberg

Designer and copy editor Brian R. Hannan Special thanks to Patrick J. Mahoney for the vintage postcard and to Robert Hartmann for his vintage pictures.

#### Wright in Wisconsin Board of Directors and Staff

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#### Wright in Wisconsin

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#### REGULAR FEATURES

Award

ARTICLES

05 Vintage Photos 10 Tours & Events 12 Vintage Postcard **08** Wright Thoughts

#### ON THE COVER: Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center. Learn more at mononaterrace.com.



As we begin the new year, thank you to those of you who recently sent in unsolicited memberships and contributions, attesting to your faith in this organization. And to all of you awaiting the start of our annual membership campaign, thank you for your patience.

You are the ones I have in mind as I write this column. In the past six months, we have regrouped and committed ourselves to rebuilding the organization.

We now have a streamlined board, including two new members: Brian R. Hannan, our new vice president for communications from Evanston, Illinois; and Curt Szymczak, our new treasurer from Racine. They join our continuing board members: Ken Dahlin; Mark Hertzberg, our secretary and newsletter editor; Henry St. Maurice; and myself.

We expect the eight public sites to shortly name their own representative to the board. Our intent is to work individually with each public site to learn its unique needs and how we might better develop services of value. We have earmarked funds to assist the public sites (and the Frank Lloyd Wright Trail) with reprinting what we call our sites brochure, a rack card distributed at many Wisconsin tourist information centers.

We hired Bill Swan, as office administrator, to assume the many tasks that Sherri Shokler, our former office administrator, so ably performed. Bill, a mechanical engineer with an abiding interest in Frank Lloyd Wright, brings skills to us from the private sector, as well as experience as a long-time volunteer with the Laurent House in Rockford, Illinois, the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation and the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy. We look forward to working with him on your behalf.

In addition to announcing our upcoming Wright-related speakers, we'll soon have a save-the-date announcement for a fall bus tour to Minneapolis that's being planned with former board member Karen Bergenthal. She also helped with the logistics for our 2017 and 2018 tours of the Wright at 150 exhibit

02

## **President's Message**

by GEORGE HALL



Our newly reorganized board of directors meets at the Hardy House (1905) ir Racine. Members include (left to right): Henri St. Maurice (Arnold House, 1955); Curt Szymczak (Hardy House); Brian R. Hannan; George Hall; and Bill Swan. Mark Hertzberg, our long-time board secretary, took the photograph.

at the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan and our excursion to Mason City to stay in Wright's Park Inn Hotel and see Wright's Stockman House — along with Walter Burley Griffin's Rock Creek/Rock Glen subdivision.

You may well read this column before our 2020 membership campaign finally unfolds. It's delayed while the board proactively gets our corporation back up to speed, including developing several surveys to help us better plan a range of events and services that meet your interests — as well as the demands of the preservation community and the owners of these marvelous buildings that inspire us all.

Your Wright in Wisconsin is built on volunteer help.

As we round out our reorganized board, we hope to find Wright-inclined members with a variety of areas of expertise, including a bookkeeper to assist our treasurer and an attorney familiar with nonprofit law. If you'd like to volunteer, please reach out to us at wrightinwisconsin.org/contact.



The Rudin House (1957), a Marshall Erdman prefab house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in Madison, will be open for tours during the upcoming Wright and Like

## **Return to Madison**

## Wright and Like heads back to Mad City for its annual architectural tour, set for June 12-14

by WRIGHT IN WISCONSIN

With George Hall taking the lead on our annual big event, planning is in full swing for Wright and Like<sup>™</sup> tour in Madison, scheduled for the weekend of June 12-14.

Those of you who attend our annual tours around the state know that every year we usually feature, along with homes by Frank Lloyd Wright, a nearly forgotten mid-century architect or littleknown homes by Taliesin apprentices or associates.

This year's tour in Madison will be no different.

Our house list is currently expanding as the steering committee pitches ideas

and we speak with owners.

Meanwhile, a three-day event is shaping up.

It begins with a Friday afternoon Wright exhibit at an art museum that isn't yet fully vetted, followed by an evening presentation by Jack Holzhueter on the John Howe materials in the Wisconsin Historical Society archives that concludes with conversation and heavy hors d'oeuvre catered by the University Club in the society foyer.

For Saturday, we're considering several sites tour headquarter sites, along with homes by Wright and apprentices and associates of Wright, several of which

have never been available for tour.

On Sunday, a pontoon boat excursion will enable a viewing of Wright's several Lake Mendota sites of note (Pew House from the water, the site of Rocky Roost, designed for Wright's Madison school friend Robert (Robie) Lamp and the site of Wright's Lake Mendota boat house) to round out the weekend.

Helping with this year's tour is a steering committee comprised of: Terri Boyd, Ken Dahlin, Robert Downing, Mary Jane Hamilton, Brian Hannan, Mark Hertzberg, Traci Schnell and Gary Tipler. We look forward to seeing you in Madison.



## Vintage Photos

by ROBERT HARTMANN

Frank Lloyd Wright had long envisioned a restaurant along the sloping site overlooking the Wisconsin River on Highway 23 near his home and studio, Taliesin.

Wright's first proposal for this site was a speculative scheme for Glen and Ruth Richardson for a service station, restaurant and residence in 1943. It never came to fruition.

A decade later, Wright's restaurant plan clearly emerged. The red square on Wright's original concept drawing for The Wisconsin River Terrace and Restaurant bears his initials and the date 1953. Construction on the project was

initiated in 1954. Progress continued in 1955, including It was not until 1966, when Willard H.

the installation of huge steel beams that Wright had purchased in 1948 as salvage from the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Wolverine. These beams elevated the restaurant above treetops along the banks of the river and would eventually provide breathtaking views of the water and Wisconsin hillside when the restaurant was completed. Work on the restaurant continued intermittently for the next few years but ultimately came to a complete standstill upon Wright's death in 1959. Keland, H.F. Johnson's son-in-law,

## Wright's vision for a restaurant near Taliesin takes shape with Wisconsin River Terrace project

The Spring Green restaurant nears completion during the summer of 1967. Windows and exterior trim work are being installed on the north face of the building. Wood batten strips on the soffit above the windows are not yet in place.

formed the Wisconsin River Development Corporation (WRDC) and purchased the building and 3,000 acres of land from the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation that work on Wright's restaurant was once again underway. This time it would be completed and be named The Spring Green restaurant.

Taliesin Associated Architects headed

VINTAGE PHOTOS CONTINUES ON PAGE 07



## **Remembering Ron McCrea**

by MARK HERTZBERG

Ron McCrea, Wright scholar and former journalist, died December 15, 2019, of cancer. He was 76. McCrea, the long-time survivor of a liver transplant, was in hospice care in Fitchburg, near his home in Madison.

In late November, he told his friends that he had decided to forego any further chemotherapy because of the low expectation of success. His goal was to finish "Monumental Women," his second book about Wright, in the 10 to 12 months he had been told to expect.

The book would have been published by the Wisconsin Historical Society Press, publisher of his landmark 2012 study of Wright's beloved home and his life with Mamah Borthwick, "Building Taliesin: Frank Lloyd Wright's Home of Love and Loss." The new book was about the women who shaped Wright as a person and who helped shaped his career, as well as his personal relationships.

Ron McCrea was moved to play the piano in the living room at Taliesin, at an annual celebration of Frank Lloyd Wright's birthday.

In addition to writing books about Wright, McCrea wrote numerous articles and lectured widely about the architect. McCrea came to the world of Wright after a distinguished career in journalism.

McCrea worked twice at the (Madison) "Capital Times," the second time as city editor and senior news editor. He retired in 2008.

He also worked at "The (San Jose) Mercury News," (New York) "Newsday," "The Washington Post," "The Washington Star" and "The Boston Globe."

McCrea served as press secretary to Wisconsin Gov. Tony Earl from 1983-1986.

A memorial service was held on January 30, his birthday.

## VINTAGE PHOTOS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 05 -----

by Wright's son-in-law, William Wesley Peters, were retained by the WRDC to provide architectural and planning services. Apprentice Alan "Davy" Davison was first put in charge. Later, apprentice James Pfefferkorn took the project to completion after Davison became ill. Work was completed by the fall of 1967.

A gala pre-opening reception, attended by President Lyndon B. Johnson's wife, "Lady Bird," along with Mrs. Wright and other notable dignitaries, was held on the evening of September 22, 1967. The restaurant officially opened to the public on October 14, 1967.

During the summer and fall of 1967, I shot more than two dozen photos of the restaurant. To date, this is the largest known collection of photographs documenting its construction.

More than 20 of these photos are now on permanent exhibit in the building. In 1993, the restaurant was purchased by Taliesin Preservation Inc., giving new life to the building that now serves as the Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center.

## **BILL SWAN**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 02

buildings in 15 states, including Wisconsin.

Outside of the Wright world, Swan has been an active volunteer with the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation. He holds two Bachelor of Science degrees from the University of Wisconsin: cartography and mechanical engineering.

We asked Bill to tell us about his interest in Wright and his work:

"I first became aware of the work of Frank Lloyd Wright during a trip to Taliesin with my father while I was in high

## paper on his architecture.

"Around 2005, I began taking short trips to see his southern Wisconsin structures, which really rekindled my interest from those early days. I started reading and collecting books about his work and life, which proved to be endlessly fascinating.

"I went on my first Wright and Like tour in 2008 and started volunteering as a docent in 2012. That led to helping the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy during the recent Milwaukee and Madison conferences — which also led to becoming a docent at the Laurent House in Rockford.

## **Taliesin Preservation Earns Historic Preservation Award**

from TALIESIN PRESERVATION

Taliesin Preservation was honored to accept the 2019 Trustees Emeritus Award for Historic Site Stewardship from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in October. This national award was received at the PastForward conference in Denver by executive director Carrie Rodamaker and board chair Ray Lipman.

This award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation recognizes a nonprofit organization that has demonstrated sustained and superlative achievement in historic preservation, management and programming at historic sites. Each year, an independent jury of national and international thoughtleaders from many disciplines select the recipients of the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Award.

Taliesin Preservation is dedicated to preserving the culture of Taliesin, along with the built and natural environments that make up the 800-acre estate. Taliesin Preservation has contributed more than \$10 million to preservation projects at the Wisconsin estate since 1993. Projects undertaken include reconstruction of the Romeo and Juliet Windmill and the restoration of Wright's bedroom terrace.

Other projects also include the restoration of Tan-y-Deri, the guest wing, the loggia and loggia terrace, Wright's studio, the Hillside Studio roof and the Welsh Hills prairie.

school. It inspired me to write a term

"My wife and I have traveled to and stayed at some of Mr. Wright's wellknown buildings and stopped to photograph others along the way. I am especially interested in the Usonian houses and appreciate his solutions to providing beautiful dwellings to people of more average means.

"The opportunity to help out the only statewide Wright organization in the nation is something that I'm extremely excited about. I look forward to meeting and working with the members of Wright in Wisconsin!"

We look forward to Bill's expertise and enthusiasm as he settles in at our new office on Madison's Capitol Square.



## WRIGHT THOUGHTS

by KEN DAHLIN, AIA

## **Unsonian Planning**

## Process plays a critical role in designing a modern Usonian house

As indicated in my last article, we will look, in this article, at several pragmatic considerations for building a Usonian home today, beginning with planning. There is a growing interest in the elegance and attraction of the Usonian home, but how can an 80-year-old form of architecture be made to work with contemporary lifestyles and the functions we now expect in our homes?

Wright's Usonian homes of the 1930s through the 1950s marked a major shift from his plan types in his earlier Prairie School period, reflecting newer lifestyles, technology and expectations of the home. But this wasn't just Wright reflecting on the current cultural state of the time; he also wanted to show how one should live in a contemporary, natural house. Likewise, from the middle of the last century to today, expectations and lifestyles have changed significantly. These factors must be considered when attempting a Usonian home today.

This begins with the program, or wish list, of spaces and functions one organizes for the home. The average Usonian home by Wright was smaller than the average new home built today.

A three-bedroom home of 1,200 to 1,500 square feet was the norm. There was typically no basement (other than a small one, perhaps for mechanical equipment) and no attic. Sometimes there was a smaller second floor. Cars were accommodated in carports.

The kitchens were generally small by design. Wright called them "workspaces," basically a small laboratory for cooking. Bedrooms were not large and certainly fewer and simpler than today.

The clear spatial hierarchy fell upon the living room — or what might be considered today a great room with its blending with the dining area. However, views into the kitchen were usually carefully edited so that they wouldn't be seen from the living room. The

idea of fully opening up the kitchen into the living space had not yet arrived.

Even with the prototype Usonian, the Jacobs I home in Madison, Wright wrote in the January 1938 edition of "Architectural Forum" that the client "must themselves see life in somewhat simplified terms." More of the house would be given to the quality of the architectural configuration and spatial richness and less to undefined storage spaces typical of basements and attics.

Wright's polliwog, or L-shaped, plans were the *parti pris* from which so many Usonians sprang. This creates extended horizontal wings that stretch out on their lots and provide plenty of opportunity for fenestration and views. These wings are anchored in brick or stone cores, typically with some vertical emphasis breaking through the horizontal roof planes. This increases perimeter area in proportion to square footage enclosed and, thus, expense.

This is in contrast to the typical spec home built today. Plans are driven by efficiency and are very compact shapes more or less square in shape to maximize square footage within the minimal volume of the shell to bring the cost down. Gables and complications are added for marketing effect, done to give the most bang for the buck. An exception to this today is in the tiny house movement and a return to simplicity and minimalism.

Another consideration is the TV screen, which has continued to grow in size and, in the living room, competes with the fireplace, which cannot compete in terms of size with today's TVs. This is not a problem limited to the Usonian home, but it can be tricky when trying to keep the fireplace a primary focal point, diminish the TV and have abundant views outside, all while somehow working the furniture out to view the TV, fireplace and exterior views.

Because of this, some people opt to place



At Still Bend in Two Rivers (1939), Wright did not have to factor the size of the owners' TV into the design - a decision people building a Usonian home today will have to make.

the TV in a different area. It is sometimes possible to create a place for a large TV in a built-in cabinet when carefully positioned, however.

Even more architecturally difficult than the large screen TV is the contemporary garage. Three- or four-car garages are the norm, even on homes of only 2,000 square feet or so. This creates a disproportion of garage to house proper, like the tail wagging the dog.

Wright's carports were strong architectural statements, reinforcing ideas of the cantilever and flowing horizontal planes. The large spatial void under the carport roof works compositionally well with the more solid, street-facing walls next to them. In his argument for carports, Wright said that cars are not horses that need to be stabled.

Nevertheless, garages have come to serve for much more than shelter. They house much of the stuff of life today such as lawn equipment, bicycles, motorcycles, workbenches and outdoor furniture. In northern climates, an enclosed garage does have benefits.

hidden, it is now in the open.

I have found that these changes in the kitchen, unlike some of the other changes listed above, actually work well in the Usonian design. The Usonian plan already had the kitchen located in a central location, so the problem to be solved is how to open it up more and find more space for it. This requires a reconsideration of the masonry core and how to give the kitchen more openness and views, both to the rest of the house and also to the outside.

Other areas also could be addressed, such as the quantity and size of bathrooms. There are more opportunities

The kitchen is an area that has undergone much change in the last 80 years. It has become larger, with more appliances, islands, eating areas and walk-in pantries. The kitchen has become the heart of the home and the place for gathering and entertaining. Rather than something to be

and potential for beautiful renditions of these spaces, compared to their small and merely functional mid-century counterparts. The type and number of plumbing fixtures available now would have been something Wright would have incorporated into his designs.

However, the cumulative effect of larger kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms and such is that the new home is larger than its predecessor. While size itself is not contrary to great Usonian design, if not carefully proportioned, the design can become clumsy, boxy and lacking in the flowing, integrated types of spaces we know the Usonian home represented.

One of the most successful things one can do when planning a Usonian home is to prioritize quality over quantity, to consider what is truly essential to include in the home.

Sarah Susanka popularized this approach in her "Not So Big House" series. A similar approach today is a good starting point for good Usonian design.

WISCONSIN WRIGHT SITES Taliesin® \ Hillside Studio and Theater \ Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center A.D. German Warehouse \ Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church \ American System-Built Homes Monona Terrace® Community and Convention Center \ Seth Peterson Cottage \ SC Johnson Administration Building Still Bend / Schwartz House \ Unitarian Meeting House \ Wingspread (H.F. Johnson House) \ Wyoming Valley School



### Wright Calendar: Wright Design Series at Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center

Free tickets are required: mononaterrace.com/eventbrite

**TOURS &** 

AT WISCONSIN

WRIGHT SITES

EVENTS

WINTER 2020

February 13 \ 7 to 8:30 p.m. Community and Lowercase Architecture Presented by Lou Host-Jablonski, AIA

A "citizen architect" reflects on four decades in a nonprofit architectural office, using community advocacy to advance local design literacy and creating accessible, lowercase architecture. The civics of design as local democracy; service versus statement as practice. Creativity and fun in the neighborhood sandbox. And thinking globally along the way, collaborating on nation-leading research into alternative, sustainable construction techniques.

#### March 5 \ 7 to 8:30 p.m. The Intersection of Place and Craft Presented by: Steve Raike, AIA, LEED AP BD+C

Raike, of Lake Flato Architects, will discuss how place and craft inform the firm's design process in the pursuit of buildings intimately connected to the land.

Raike is an architect and educator with more than 25 years of experience working on a broad range of project types – ranging from institutional and civic architecture to single-family residences. Throughout his career, he has focused on the fusion of beautifully crafted architecture with the science of sustainability, resulting in numerous national design and sustainability awards. Raike has taught and lectured throughout the U.S. and Canada to a wide range of audiences on the topics of tectonics, craft and building performance. March 26 \ 7 to 8:30 p.m. The Bauhaus, De Stijl, Mies + Frank Lloyd Wright

Presented by James M. Dennis, professor *emeritus*, Department of Art History, University of Wisconsin at Madison

The design of residential architecture was radically changed by a young, Madison-raised genius living in a Chicago suburb at the beginning of the 20th century. In Europe, only a handful of architects would achieve anything comparable to the works of Frank Lloyd Wright before World War I. After the war ended, the first house designs of the German-born Bauhaus, under the direction of its founder, Walter Gropius, were faltering attempts to catch up.

Through many illustrations, Dennis shows how, by the time the Bauhaus was forced to close in 1933, its associated house designs had flourished full force. Whether termed "Bauhaus," "International" or "Miesian," its final phase occurred in Chicago, where Mies Van der Rohe found refuge and an entertaining friendship with Wright.

## April 23 \ 7 to 8:30 p.m. Art Deco Chicago and the Real International Style

Presented by Robert Bruegmann

Where Bauhaus designers only talked about changing the world through design, Chicago's companies and designers actually made life easier and more aesthetically pleasing when they produced an entire series of design icons between the two world wars: buildings by Holabird & Root, tools and appliances from Sears, Roebuck and Co., Bell System telephones from Western Electric, bicycles from Schwinn, radios from Radio Flyer and mixmasters and toasters from Sunbeam.

## **Ongoing Tours and Events**

### A.D. German Warehouse

Richland Center \ Cost varies Every Sunday: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tours begin at 15 minutes past the hour \$15 for adults; \$5 for students with ID and children 12-18; \$25 for private tours Group tours by appointment for an additional cost Cash or check only See website for other monthly events Email info@adgermanwarehouse.org adgermanwarehouse.org

### American System-Built Home Model B-1

Milwaukee \ \$15 per person \ Reservations can be made on the website but are not required Last tour begins at 2:30 p.m. wrightinmilwaukee.org

### Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church

Wauwatosa \ 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 \ \$5 per adult, \$3 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 Reservations at (262) 260-2154 or scjohnson.com/visit

### Seth Peterson Cottage

Lake Delton \ \$5 for adults; children 12 and under are free Open house and tours second Sunday of each month 1 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.

### Still Bend / Schwartz House

Two Rivers \ \$15 per person See website for dates and times Email michael@stillbend.com stillbend.com

#### Taliesin

Spring Green Reservations strongly recommended A variety of tours, times and prices Weekend tours begin April 3; daily tours begin May 1 taliesinpreservation.org

#### **Unitarian Meeting House**

Madison \ Reserved online: \$12.50 | Day-of: \$15 Groups by appointment (608) 233-9774 fusmadison.org/tours

## Wingspread – The Johnson Foundation

Wind Point Tours Wednesday - Sunday. By appointment only. Register at **scjohnson.com/visit**, call (262) 681-3353

### Wyoming Valley School

Spring Green \ Donation appreciated (608) 588-2544 wyomingvalleyschool@gmail.com

**Below:** The curvilinear Spring Green Bank, now occupied by BMO Harris Bank, was designed by Wright's son-in-law and apprentice, William Wesley Peters. It was completed in 1972.



## FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT WISCONSIN HERITAGE TOURISM PROGRAM

P.O. Box 6339 Madison, WI 53716-0339



## VINTAGE POSTCARD

courtesy of PATRICK J. MAHONEY

This postcard shows the meeting house of the First Unitarian Society of Madison. This view is of the prow-like apex of the building that faces the street to the north. Frank Lloyd Wright likened the unusual, copper-roofed auditorium structure to hands folded in prayer. The Taliesin Fellowship helped to complete the church, with Marshall Erdman acting as its general contractor.

Published by William Wollin Studio, Madison

