WRIGHT IN WISCONSIN VOLUME 27 ISSUE 1 & 2
WRIGHT IN WISCONSIN is published three times annually by Wright in Wisconsin, a 501(c)(3) 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 Community and Convention Center gift shop and on wrightandlike.com. For more information, visit us at wrightinwisconsin.org or contact us at the number or address below.

Robert Hartmann designed the Wright in Wisconsin logo.

Editor: Brian R. Hannan
Design: Open
Wright in Wisconsin Board of Directors and Staff
President: Brian R. Hannan
Vice president: Open
Secretary: Open
Directors, at-large: Ken Dahlin, Derek Kalish (A.D. German Warehouse); John Mary, Traci Schnell, Henry St. Maurice; and David Zaleznik (Wyoming Valley School Cultural Arts Center).
Interim treasurer, past-president: George Hall
Bookkeeper: Jill Hartmann
Office administrator: Bill Swan

Wright in Wisconsin
PO Box 8539, Madison, WI 53716-0339
(608) 287-0359
wrightinwisconsin.org

CONTENTS
ARTICLES
03 Wright and Like Heads to Mad City and Middleton
06 Vintage Photos: Munkwitz Duplex Apartments
07 Seth Peterson Cottage Rehabilitation Turns 30
10 Wright Thoughts: A Cause Reconsidered
12 Monona Terrace Marks Silver Anniversary

REGULAR FEATURES
14 Public Sites
16 Vintage Postcard

Follow a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Wright and Like is back for its 23rd season. From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on July 30, Wright in Wisconsin is offering tours of eight private homes in Madison and Middleton.

Of the eight, four are from the hand of Frank Lloyd Wright. The remaining four are by "like" architects, including two by Wright apprentices and two by architects who were either contemporaries of Wright or inspired by Wright's work. Wright aficionados will, for the first time, be able to see and compare the two original prefabricated homes Wright designed for Marshall Erdman, the contractor/builder for Wright's First Unitarian Society Meeting House. Only two of the three differ-ent Wright prefab designs were ever physically realized: the 1956 Eugene and Mary Van Tumellen House (prototype of Prefab No. 1, and reproduced elsewhere in southern Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota and New York); and the 1959 Walter and Mary Ellen Rudin House (prototype of Prefab No. 2, and later replicated just once in Rochester, Minn.).

Also on tour (exterior only) is Wright's National Register of Historic Places-listed 1903 Robert (Robie) M. Lamp House, the construction of which was overseen by William Burley Griff- in, who was then a Wright employee. Largely obscured from pedestrian view due to a combination of its mid-block location and surrounding buildings, the home stands as Wright's oldest remaining work in Madison. Because it is currently utilized as a rental and occupied by University of Wisconsin-Madison stu-dents, interior views of the Lamp House and information re-garding Wright's friendship with Lamp will be shared via storyboards, along with drawings from the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archive at the Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Li-brary, Columbia University. The Lamp House, the archetype for Wright's "fireproof house," is currently the subject of a preserva-tion effort.

Finally, Wright's Herbert and Katherine Jacobs Second House (1946-1948), aka "Jacobs II," a solar hemispheric Usonian listed on the National Register of Historic Places, also will be available all day for exterior viewing. In addition, and as a bene-fit to Wright in Wisconsin or Frank Lloyd Wright National Re-ciprocal Sites Membership Program members, limited first-floor-only tours are available, at 20-minute intervals, from 10 a.m. until noon and then from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. Final tours start 20 minutes before the end of each session. Pre-registration and assignment of a tour time is required. Please call the Wright in Wisconsin office at (608) 287-0339.
Frank Lloyd Wright’s seminal effort to design beautiful, modern and affordable housing for working families, known as American System-Built Homes, exemplified his lifelong interest in solving the problem of small house design. This system embraced building standardization and off-site fabrication, including pre-cut lumber and pre-assembled elements, to reap cost efficiencies without sacrificing architectural individuality or building quality.

VINTAGE PHOTOS CONTINUES ON PAGE 06
American System-Built Homes exemplified (Wright’s) lifelong interest in solving the problem of small house design. This system embraced building standardization and off-site fabrication, including pre-cut lumber and pre-assembled elements, to reap cost efficiencies without sacrificing architectural individuality or building quality.

Wright’s American System-Built Homes offered a great variety of floor plans ranging in size from small and moderate homes to townhouses and apartment buildings. Wright and developer Arthur L. Richards had great expectations for the American System-Built Homes with hope of reaching customers in the U.S., Canada and Europe. However, only a few dozen homes were ever built, with approximately one-third located in the greater Milwaukee area. Six American System-Built Homes built in 1915-16 on West Burnham Street included two single family homes (models C-3 and B-1) and four two-family “C” duplexes. Today this complex forms Frank Lloyd Wright’s Burnham Block. The Munkwitz Duplex Apartments (Model J-52) at 27th Street and Highland Boulevard was completed in 1917 (demolished in 1973). Construction on the Elizabeth Murphy House (Model A-203) at 440 Newton Ave. in Shorewood also began in 1917.

The Munkwitz Duplex Apartments was the largest of the American System-Built Homes plans ever constructed. Developer Arthur R. Munkwitz was the president of American Realty Service Co., and Richards served as company vice-president. Twin two-story apartment buildings were grouped in a unified composition facing 27th Street. Viewed at an angle they appear to be two five-story apartment buildings. The Munkwitz Duplex Apartments stood at the intersection of 27th Street and Highland Boulevard for 56 years. But, in the 1960s and 1970s, heavy volumes of traffic at this intersection threatened their existence. In May 1967, Milwaukee Common Council voted in favor of an urban renewal plan that authorized the widening of Highland Boulevard, including a generously wide right turn lane onto 27th Street to handle traffic flow and save an existing traffic light. The original pentagram design windows and metal caming were still in place, on the upper floor units, when this photo was taken (1964-65). The kitchen, back stairs, bath and two bedrooms were located beyond the living/dining area. The Munkwitz Duplex Apartments stood at the intersection of 27th Street and Highland Boulevard for 56 years. But, in the 1960s and 1970s, heavy volumes of traffic at this intersection threatened their existence. In May 1967, Milwaukee Common Council voted in favor of an urban renewal plan that authorized the widening of Highland Boulevard, including a generously wide right turn lane onto 27th Street to handle traffic flow and save an existing traffic light. (seen on the far right of the photo) thus dooming the buildings. A “Milwaukee Journal” article by Eileen Alt Powell dated May 14,1972, reported Richard W. E. Perrin, historic buildings preservation officer of American Institute of Architects Wisconsin and city development commissioner, as saying “he didn’t fight it”. Perrin continued: “The mere fact that Wright designed it (the apartments) doesn’t throw a halo over it. He, as any other architect, is capable of certain mediocrities, and this is one of them. Even though tearing it down would be regrettable, I would not regard it as an irreparable loss.” In the same article, architectural historian Henry Russell Hitchcock suggested otherwise in a letter to a group of local architects fighting to save the buildings.

Hitchcock stated, “As his (Wright’s) most important contact with multiple housing, the apartments have an historical interest that has not always been realized. They certainly represent a major effort on his part to solve certain problems that we are far from able to accomplish yet.”

Near the end of his life Wright published “A Testament” (1957 edition). In it, he includes the American System-Built Homes (p. 123). A presentation rendering of the Munkwitz Duplex Apartments, complete with a roof garden and floor plans of the Burnham Block duplexes represent the system.

For Chicagoland architect John Eiffer, being chosen as the lead architect for the Seth Peterson Cottage rehabilitation began not with a series of bids and proposals but with a simple gesture: R. Munkwitz raised his hand.

“I attended an early meeting as I was interested in helping out,” Eiffer recalled. “After a long discussion, with many people expressing doubts as to what the cottage could be used for, I approached Audrey Laatsch (who spearheaded the project and helped to create a nonprofit to support it) and asked if she had been talking to any architects. I more or less volunteered.”

“I was fairly young at the time and was in the process of starting my own firm,” he added. “I already had completed the restoration of the Herbert and Katherine Jacobs House (1936) in Madison and found that I very much enjoyed restoring Wright buildings.”

“We recently spoke with Eiffer about the cottage and the upcoming 30th anniversary of its rehabilitation. Eiffer and his partner live in a Wright-designed home.

Why did you feel the Peterson cottage was worth restoring when it was in such a state of disrepair and all but forgotten?

I visited the property, jumped the chain link fence and walked around the outside of the building. It truly was in dreadful shape, but I realized that it had great potential. Besides, I knew enough about Wright that he was incapable of doing a bad building, so I trusted his skills.

Where do you put the Peterson cottage in the Wright portfolio?

Wright’s son-in-law Wes Peters described it as having “the most architecture per square foot” of any Wright project.

Historians have a variety of ways to “classify” Wright’s work. In the case of the Seth Peterson Cottage, I feel that it’s a building that Wright already had presented to a variety of other potential clients for many years. I believe he even wrote a note to one of the apprentices when he took on the job referring to a previous project to get things moving.

Some have referred to it as a Usonian design—which I do not agree with. By this late stage in Wright’s career, the homes were quite different in concept than the Jacobs house (the first Usonian). Also, it’s a one-bedroom, hardly a house for a family. Clearly it’s a custom home, designed specifically for Seth.

The cottage was completed after Seth’s death. Did you tackle other projects that had not been completed originally?

We had the original tables built, and we added chairs that we designed in Wright’s style of the time.

Also, in an attempt to make the chimney draw better, the masonry was extended up 5 feet above the original—which still did not solve the problem. We lowered the chimney to 2 feet above the adjacent roof as required by code, and we then added ductwork connected to the outside and introduced at the hearth for makeup air and better draw. We also lined the chimney with a circular flue to increase the flow of smoke.

What other innovations were needed?

We performed an energy study that showed, on the coldest days, any heating system would have difficulty getting the cottage above 60 degrees—which, of course, was unacceptable.
The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy is a nonprofit, and we learned that everything had to be done at one time—as it’s all tied to funding, and donors do not like to give repeatedly.

Therefore we worked very hard to make the cottage inexpensive to heat—for both environmental and for ongoing cost reasons. We provided for maximum insulation in the ceiling cavity and also insulated beneath the radiant floor.

I should mention that Wright’s specified radiant floor was never installed, probably due to cost, so the cottage utilized forced air with ductwork beneath the slab.

We thought the radiant slab may be a little bit of a problem with guests unfamiliar with its characteristics, as it sometimes takes hours for the place to warm up after turning up the thermostat.

We therefore developed a hybrid system so that when the cottage is calling for immediate heat, a forced-air heating system provides heat quickly, until the radiant slab can come up to proper operating temperature.

Photos of the Seth Peterson Cottage show its condition prior to its rehabilitation—and the progress it made during the 3-year-long process. Photos of the Seth Peterson Cottage show its condition prior to its rehabilitation—and the progress it made during the 3-year-long process.

How did seeing the Peterson Cottage feel once work was completed?

It’s funny, we visited the house regularly during the construction process, so seeing the final product was, if anything, kind of a relief.

Naturally we were pleased, but it was a long, long process.

Why do you think the cottage remains so popular? Thirty years later, overnight stays remain a tough ticket to get—and many people aren’t one-and-done visitors.

It’s a variety of things. Of course, staying in a Wright house is always thrilling for enthusiasts, and it gives the opportunity to experience the house—the light, the sun, shadows, etc. throughout the day. No tours, no rushing through spaces, and no tour guide to tell you what you should think or feel.

It therefore becomes very personal, and the cottage has a very strong “feel” to it of peace, relaxation and experiencing nature up close. Being in a large state park, adjacent to a beautiful Wisconsin inland lake also helps, but people who stay there seem to treasure the experience.

I remember the initial meeting in the Wisconsin Dells. Many expressed hesitation about letting “just anybody” stay at a historical building after spending hundreds of thousands to restore it, but Audrey had a vision—and the success of the project proved her vision to be correct.
A Cause Reconsidered

Frank Lloyd Wright’s seminal essay, “In the Cause of Architecture,” is well known for its March 1908 presentation in “Architectural Record,” wherein Wright lays out his case for organic architecture. “In the Cause of Architecture” also was a series of 16 essays the magazine published between 1908 and 1928—essays that would become the most deliberate and formal statement of Wright’s philosophy of architecture. “Architectural Record” would later compile these essays in a 1975 book: “In the Cause of Architecture: Frank Lloyd Wright.” Frederick Gutheim, an architect, author, historian and urban planner, edited the collection.

If the book’s preface was relevant then, it is more so today: “(These essays) offer a view of architecture that returns to the fundamentals of physical design and materials. Today’s pre-occupation with new humanistic goals of architecture, with vernacular design, with ‘architecture without architects,’ with environmental objectives, with an anti-historicism that has rejected the ‘modern architecture’ of functionalism … has left architects traumatized and bewildered. Let us hope that Wright’s essays will provide an architectural landmark that will be welcomed as much as it is needed today.”

While Wright seemingly would talk and write about all subjects with ease, he never lost his primary focus on an organic architecture centered on the fundamentals of design and materiality and the harmony between architecture and human experience. The coherence evident in his earliest writings in this book, dating back to 1894, to his late writings in the 1950s is remarkable. While his theory had deepened and grown from its nascency, the path he followed never seemed to change. (I recommend this book as a window into how Wright faced the broad stretch of time and various changing moods.)

Organic architecture to Wright, as he expressed it over the years in the “In the Cause of Architecture” essays, was something more than casting off traditional forms or ornamenting ornament from buildings. He felt modern architecture made that mistake, that modern architecture was deprived of the soul.

It wasn’t just this type of modern architecture that Wright was concerned about. It was the commercialization of the work of architecture. When anything was copied for sake of exterior fashion or stylistic trendiness, there was a reduction in and loss of the authentic essence and integrity with which the original came to be.

The best source and inspiration of organic architecture was nature. As he stated in the 1908 essay, “A sense of the organic is indispensable to an architect; where can he develop it so surely as in this school (of nature)? … Where else can he find the pertinent object lessons Nature so readily furnishes? Where can he study the differentiations of form that go to determine character as he can study them in the trees? Where can that sense of inevitableness characteristic of a work of art be quickened as it may be by intercourse with nature in this sense? ‘Japanese art knows this school more intimately than that of any people.”

To Wright, art was part of what architects did, and art to him was the ability to distill the essences lying just beneath the physical character of things. It was not about copying nature as is; it was about abstracting the essence of a natural object to heighten the idea of the thing.

He saw this practiced by the Japanese artists, and he applied it in various ways—both to his renderings and to his architecture.

When Wright designed Prairie School-era art glass such as the stained-glass panels in the “Tree of Life” windows for the Darwin D. Martin House, he was not providing a literal replica of a tree but an abstracted one that conveyed its essence. The same was true of the Hollyhock House ornamental, especially the sculptural reliefs.

The whirlwind of technological changes in the early 20th century played heavily on Wright’s ideas of architecture that are captured in these essays. Wright saw the machine as a tool to be used in the cause of organic architecture. He did not want to see architecture become “dedicated to the Machine!”

Individuality was important to Wright and something he felt stood as an antidote to the tide of mass-produced mass-conformance to which modern society—equipped with modern technology—was susceptible. In his May 1952 essay for “Architectural Record,” “Organic Architecture Looks at Modern Architecture,” Wright states that bringing in a certain level of “negation” was necessary, early on, for the higher purpose of a new organic architecture. This is a reaction against the Victorian and various classical styles of architectural architecture he initially faced. Later he says it became a “negation with negation” and was a too-easy cliche which suited mass commercialization but lacked greater integrity and soul.

By holding on to the importance of individuality, Wright felt that a universal (or International) style of architecture would be very wrong; wrong for place and wrong for the people who would inhabit architecture. And from the beginning, Wright held on to that ideal where the human spirit in harmony with nature would create works of art of poetic and beautiful form.

Art was human activity in its relationship to nature that brought about a unity and place for the human spirit in the world of material things. Art was neither function for function’s sake nor a “machine for living,” but the “house beautiful,” where art and life find place in nature. Good art and architecture point to something more than the merely efficient. It is something higher that elevates the human spirit and leads to the transcendental. A fitting closure to this article comes from Wright’s May 1914 “In the Cause of Architecture” essay: “Nature has made creatures only; Art has made men.”

Editor’s note: Wright’s essays are available online:
• March 1908: tinyurl.com/flw1908
• May 1914: tinyurl.com/flw1914
Here is a brief timeline for Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center. The facility commemorates its silver anniversary on July 23, 2022.

1938
Frank Lloyd Wright generates his first proposal for Monona Terrace, to be built on the site of the current Monona Terrace. The plan includes an auditorium, rail depot, marina, courthouse and city hall. Local newspapers refer to the project as the “Dream Civic Center” linking Wisconsin’s state capitol with Lake Monona. Wright presents his plan to the county board, which defeats it by a single vote.

1941
Madison voters approve funding for a municipal auditorium, and Wright introduces his Monona Terrace plan with some modifications. Wright gathers support for the project when World War II intervenes.

1954-1955
In the post-war economic boom, Madison voters approve a $4 million bond referendum for an auditorium and civic center. Wright is narrowly approved as the architect, and the current site of Monona Terrace is selected. Wright says that being selected project architect for Monona Terrace by the people of Madison means more to him than any other award.

1957-1959
The Monona Terrace project is effectively destroyed in 1957 by a passage of a bill reducing the height of a lakefront building on the site to 20 feet. The law is repealed two years later, and Wright completes his last rendering.

1959
Wright dies on April 9, in Arizona at age 91.

1966
The city commissions Taliesin Architects to prepare a master plan for “Monona Basin,” encompassing approximately three miles of shoreline, including the Monona Terrace site, and to design the first phase of the project, a 2,500-seat performing arts center. But construction bids are well over budget, and the mayor halts the project.

1974
A referendum vote eliminates the Monona Basin auditorium and civic center project.

1980
The city encourages developers to submit proposals for a convention center, all of which fail.

1990-1992
Monona Terrace is revived as Madison’s mayor urges civic leaders to transform Wright’s 1959 civic center into a convention facility. Voters narrowly approve the project in 1992.

1992-1994
Funding is secured through a Madison hotel room tax and municipal bonds, direct support from the state of Wisconsin and Dane County and more than $8 million in private-sector contributions.

1994
Construction begins.

1997
Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center opens in July, 59 years after the inception of the project.
The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy observed the 30th anniversary during the cottage’s rehabilitation. The quote from Frank Lloyd Wright reads: ‘The thing always happens that you believe in and the belief makes it happen.’

The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy observed the anniversary during the cottage’s regular open house and guided tours event in June.

Public Sites Contact Information

A.D. German Warehouse
Rideland Center  •  (608) 649-1915
Email info@adgermanwarehouse.org
adgermanwarehouse.org

American System-Built Home Model B-1
Milwaukee
wrightinmilwaukee.org

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church
Wauwatosa  •  (414) 467-5400
annunciationwlt.org

Monona Terrace
Madison
mononaterrace.com

SC Johnson
Racine  •  (262) 200-2154
scjohnson.com/visit

Seth Peterson Cottage
Lake Delton
sethpeterson.org

Still Bend / Schwartz House
Two Rivers
Email michael@stillbend.com
stillbend.com

Taliesin
Spring Green
taliesinpreservation.org

Unitarian Meeting House
Madison  •  (608) 251-9774
fusmadison.org/tours

Wingspread — The Johnson Foundation
Wind Point  •  (262) 681-3355
wjf.org/visit

Wyoming Valley School
Spring Green  •  (608) 588-2544
Email wyomingvalleyschool@gmail.com

WRIGHT AND LIKE
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 03

Wright apprentices represented on the tour include Herb Fritz Jr., and Herb DeLevie. Overlooking Lake Mendota, Fritz’s 1953 home for Richard B. and Ruth Andrews is notably without even a carport, as the Andrews were both dedicated cyclists and never owned a car. The home contains original do-it-yourself furniture of the type described in University of Wisconsin-Madison Professor Anna Andrzejewski’s winter 2021 article in “The Wisconsin Magazine of History.”

DeLevie, who spent just more than two years at Taliesin (1953-1955), executed his first Madison design for Max and Arlyne Hurwitz while still a resident of California, where he had been working for various Los Angeles architects, including Richard Neutra. Completed in 1966, the uniquely designed, multi-level house utilized more than 75 tons of locally sourced stone. Our two “like” architects are John Steinnemann and Eric Vogelman. Completed in 1953, the Steinnemann-designed home of Dr. O. Sidney and Ottilia Orth offers the key characteristics of mid-century modern architecture, featuring natural materials, built-in cabinets and large expanses of glass. Wright apprentice Marcus Weston prepared the drawings while working for Steinnemann throughout the 1950s.

Eric Vogelman, now residing in Colorado, grew up in a Herb Fritz Jr.-designed home in nearby Shorewood Hills. Additionally, Vogelman worked with Fritz as a young adult and not only designed but also constructed his own 1981 home with the help of one of his brothers. Integrated into the landscape, the home’s interior and exterior design elements are reminiscent of those found in Wright’s Usonians, as well as his home and studio at Taliesin in Spring Green.

How to buy tickets

Advance tickets cost $60 for Wright in Wisconsin members or Frank Lloyd Wright National Reciprocal Sites Membership Program members and $70 for non-members. They are available online at wrightinwisconsin.org or by calling our office at (608) 287-0339. Tickets may be purchased on tour day at the Best Western InnTowner Hotel in Madison. Tickets purchased on tour day cost $70 for members and $80 for non-members. The tour takes place rain or shine. Tickets are nonrefundable. You must provide your own transportation. Wear comfortable walking shoes, and allow the entire day for the tour. Interior photography is not permitted. Children 12 or under are strongly discouraged. These are private homes and not ADA compliant.

COVID-19 protocols

We strongly encourage full vaccination; however, a negative PCR or rapid COVID-19 test no older than three days prior to the tour also will be accepted. Results from at home test kits will not be accepted. Masks are required inside the homes but not outside. Proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test is not required for ticket purchase or volunteer signup. Proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test is required to participate in or volunteer for the event.

As part of your planning to visit a Wright in Wisconsin public site, please use the contact information on page 14 to determine visiting times and conditions.
In June 1904, the Delavan Lake Yacht Club announced the construction of a new clubhouse on the south shore of Delavan Lake. The Frank Lloyd Wright-designed structure featured horizontal board-and-batten walls and a hip roof with a central chimney. The interior included a dance floor showcasing a brick fireplace with a shallow arch. The lakeside of the dance floor featured a series of glass doors to access a broad terrace overlooking the lake below. Water level could be reached by 2 staircases connecting the terrace with a pier. The club relocated around 1945. The Wright-designed clubhouse was demolished and is now the location of a private beach.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT WISCONSIN HERITAGE TOURISM PROGRAM

Please join us at Wright in Wisconsin or renew your membership.

We offer several membership levels that include this newsletter, published three times per year, and member rates on tickets for Wright and Like, our annual house tour.

The 2022 Wright and Like event will be held 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on July 30 in Madison and Middleton.

More information is available on our website: wrightinwisconsin.org.