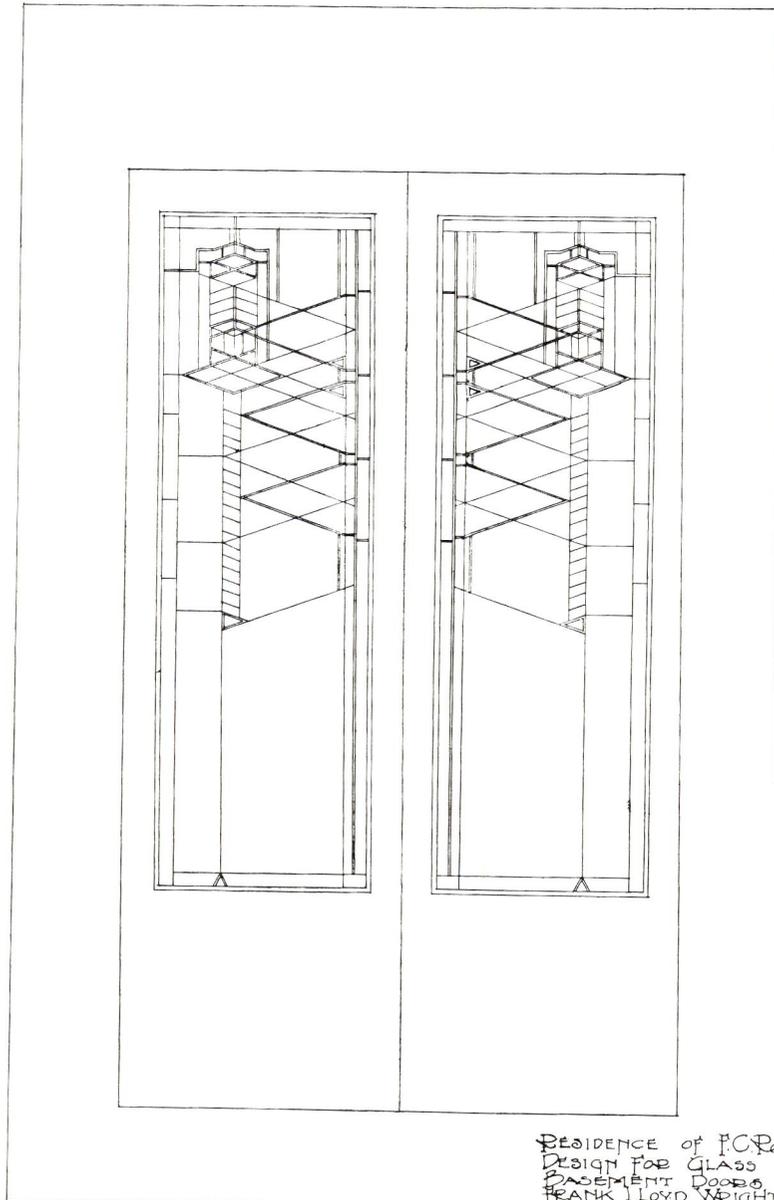


The
PRAIRIE
SCHOOL
Review

Volume IV, Number 4

Fourth Quarter, 1967

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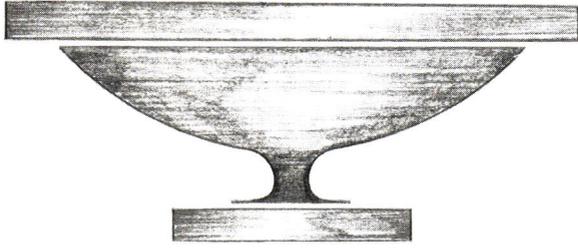
LEFT: One of several drawings which Frank Lloyd Wright prepared for the windows, doors and other fittings in the Robie House.

COVER: This detail photograph of the planter on the garden wall of the Robie House could have been taken at any number of Frank Lloyd Wright designed houses of his "Prairie" period. The planters were almost a hallmark of Wright's work. Beyond the foreground the crisp modern lines of the Robie House can be seen framing a gothic tower of another era which Wright's work surpassed and supplanted. Photo by Richard Nickel.

CONTENTS PAGE: A detail from Frank Lloyd Wright's Pope-Leighey House. Photo by Jack Boucher for HABS.

RESIDENCE OF F. C. ROBIE.
 DESIGN FOR GLASS IN
 BASEMENT DOORS
 FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT ARCHT.
 907 COTTELLWAY HALL CHICAGO.
 NO. 14

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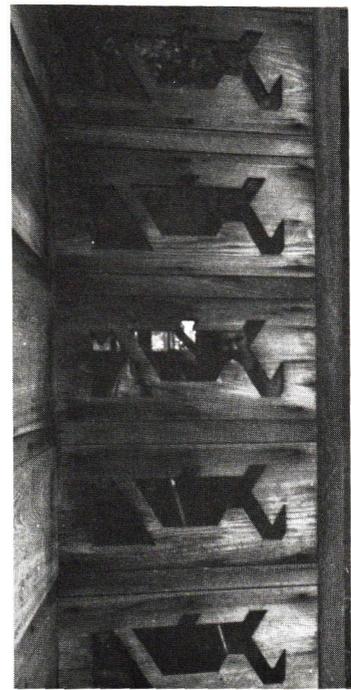
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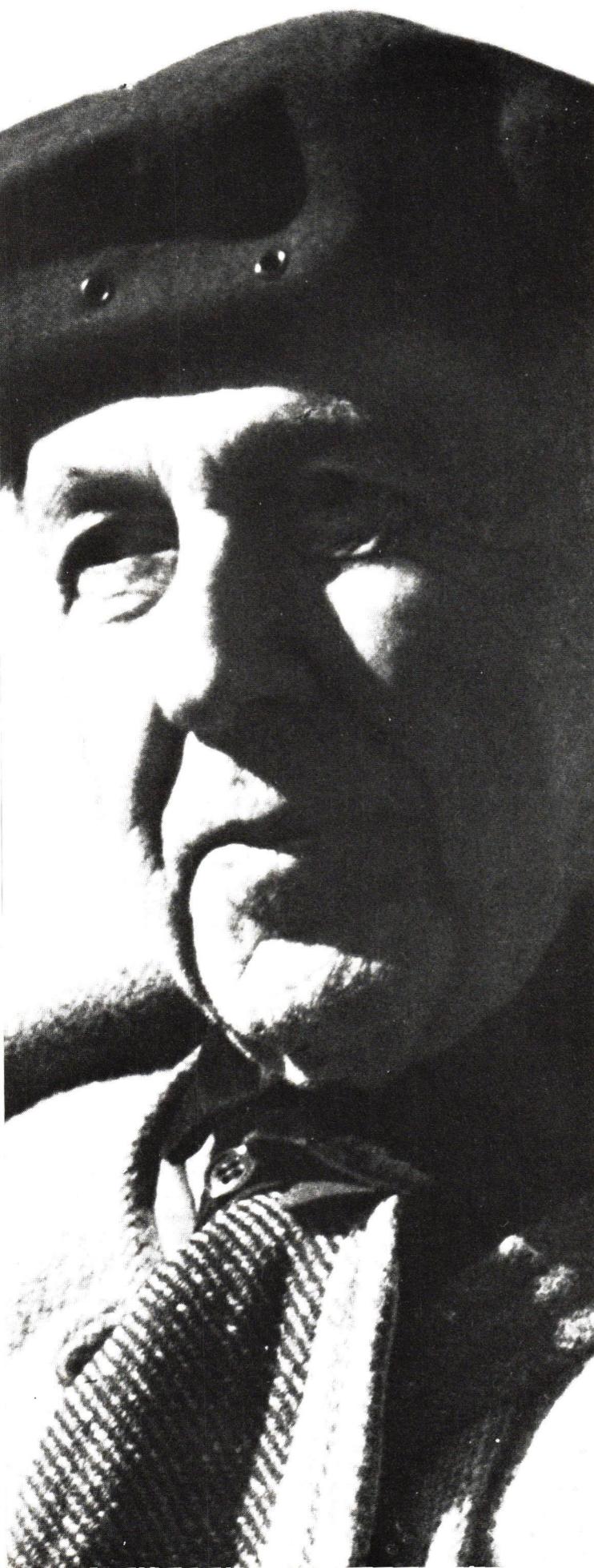
From the EDITORS

Several years ago, following the demolition of the Garrick Theater in 1961, the State Legislature of Illinois passed The Illinois Landmarks Law. It was immediately hailed as a model law which incorporated the most relevant features of all similar laws then existing. The law was, however, only enabling legislation. That is, it could not be used for the preservation of buildings of architectural significance unless local municipalities passed companion ordinances. Chicago, for whom the law was actually intended, sat on her hands. The necessary City Ordinance was written but somehow never managed to get out of committee, past the City Council and into the City Code.

Now at last, Richard J. Daley, Mayor of Chicago, has finally advised that the City's budget for 1968 will contain an item of \$50,000 for the administration of the Commission on Landmarks. Furthermore, he is recommending that the proposed Ordinance become law. In Chicago, of course, the Mayor's word is tantamount to approval by the City Council. Thus Mayor Daley adds one more laurel to his list of cultural achievements of recent date.

Passing the Landmarks Ordinance is only a second step. The Mayor must also appoint a new Commission to implement the provisions of the law and thus provide for the preservation of the Landmark Buildings of Chicago. The members of this Commission will need to be carefully selected to insure that structures of genuine significance are selected and that the law is properly enforced.

Several important Chicago landmarks have been lost in recent years. Perhaps their loss has helped to bring about the concern now shown by Mayor Daley. If this is true, they did not fall in vain.



Frank Lloyd Wright*

1867-1967

by Henry-Russell Hitchcock

Professor Henry-Russell Hitchcock, the acknowledged dean of American architectural historians, teaches at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. He has written numerous books on many aspects of architectural history including basic studies on Richardson and Wright. Through his intelligent, disciplined and scholarly approach to the field of architectural history, he has established the current standards of excellence in architectural writing that we have come to expect.

To the end of his life eight years ago Frank Lloyd Wright believed he was born not in 1867 but in 1869. He was, I had long been convinced, wrong about something he could not have known firsthand. Twenty-five years ago when I was working with Wright at Taliesin on *In the Nature of Materials* his sister, Mrs. Andrew Porter, who lived nearby at Tan-yr-Allt showed me a family genealogy in which Wright's birth date was entered as 1867. The latest investigations of Thomas S. Hines, Jr. published in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Winter 1967, have finally proved from U. S. Census documents that Wright was indeed born in 1867, and that his centenary therefore comes this year.

Centenaries need not be exact to the year — the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago was held in 1893, 501 years after the discovery of America! It is a happy coincidence, however, that in this centenary year this important biographical fact should finally have been confirmed.

This centenary, however, in its relation to a career that, including the posthumous execution of several important works, ended only three or four years ago, is very different from another famous architect's centenary which falls in 1967¹, that of Josef Maria Olbrich. Olbrich's life ended a full

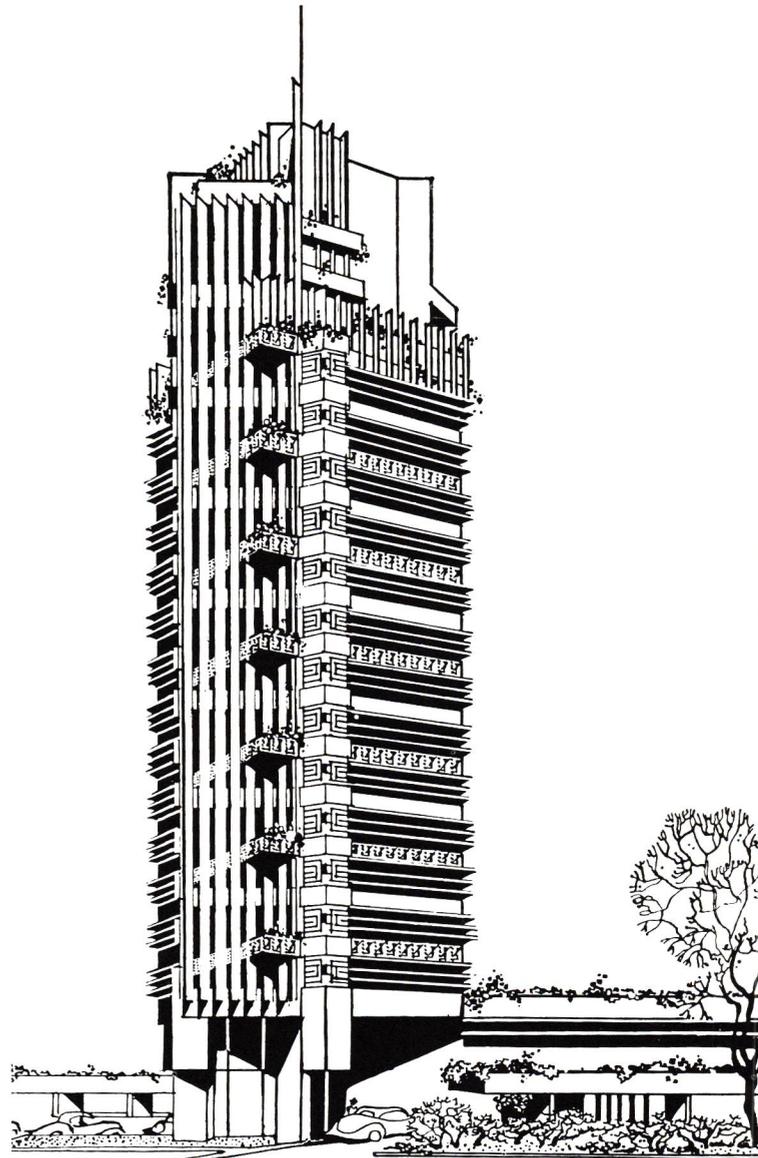
* This article originally appeared in slightly different form in the Italian Journal ZODIAC 17, Milano, Italy (Distr: Wittenborn & Co., New York).

¹ 1967 is also the centenary of the painter, Kandinsky, whose earliest abstract works preceded Wright's murals of 1913 in the Midway Garden by only two or three years.

half century before Wright's and his work paralleled in time and, up to a point, in influence only the early phase of Wright's career which came to an end with his removal to Europe in 1909. Olbrich was hardly in those fifty years forgotten, for his three most important works, the Secession Building in Vienna of 1897-98, the buildings of the Künstlerkolonie in Darmstadt of 1900-1908, and the Tietz (now Kaufhof) Department Store in Düsseldorf designed and begun just before his death in 1908, remained and still remain very conspicuous in those three cities. Of Wright's vastly more extensive production the same could be said only of the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo and possibly the Guggenheim Museum in New York. Wright's long life, including a roster of buildings that began with his own house of 1889 in Oak Park and did not end even with his death seventy years later, reduces the significance of the centenary of his birth. If, by the late 1960's his work is no longer contemporary, it has only just ceased to be so.

When, in 1938, the centenary of Wright's great American predecessor, H. H. Richardson, came round, the situation had been entirely different. From a position of accepted national leadership at the time of his death at the age of 48 in 1886, Richardson's reputation had sunk very low, even though he had never been forgotten — in part because, as in the case of Olbrich, certain of his buildings occupied very conspicuous locations in several large cities. But in the 1920's his work was, if not rediscovered, at least effectively re-evaluated by Lewis Mumford, and by the time of the centenary his work had already been the subject of a major exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art — the museum's first retrospective exposition of architecture — and a full-length monograph. Such treatment Wright received, of course, within his own lifetime, and his death did not bring to an end the flood of publications.

The continued actuality of Wright's work down into the early 1960's was the result not alone of the completion in those years of major works for which he left drawings, most notably the Kalita Humphreys Theatre in Dallas and the Marin County Buildings in California — still not entirely complete — but by his continuing influence on younger architects. Eero Saarinen, whose early death followed two years after Wright's, could find justification for the kaleidoscopic variousness of his own work of the 1950's in the variousness of Wright's even in that decade, based though that was on a long lifetime of experiment. Since it was only too easy for Eero to outbuild his own father, Eliel Saarinen, there was also the not entirely un-



The Price Tower, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, 1955, Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect.

conscious aspiration to outbuild Wright. Paul Rudolph in the Art and Architecture Building at Yale owed as much conceptually to Wright as to Le Corbusier. Like Saarinen, he had his eyes on the old master as he himself developed rather more than on Gropius, whose pupil he was, or on Mies, who was the dominant influence in American architecture when Rudolph's career began.

Now, however, in the late 1960's Wright's work is no longer current and actual. When in 1965 I saw, after the Marin County Buildings and before the Dallas Theatre, Wright's Price Tower of 1955 in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, I was even more convinced than I expected to be that this was essentially the ultimate realization of his St. Mark's Tower project for New York of 1929, a project

which he had in the intervening years offered over and over again in various forms to a considerable number of clients. Indeed, in that little town — hardly more than a village — of story-and-a-half wooden houses, it was one of the other three skyscrapers which house there the headquarters of the Phillips Oil Company that truly belonged in date and in character to the third quarter of this century.

A hundred years after his birth Wright has little to offer today's architects (even probably in Italy which was the latest country to feel his influence thanks to the critical enthusiasm of Bruno Zevi) beyond that sense of the power of architecture as the major art which all great architects of the past continually provide.

The difference from a Michelangelo, a Bernini, or a Soane is only that Wright's example proves that great buildings could still be produced under the conditions of the 20th century. Trained as an engineer, Wright had no inclination to abdicate control of the building art to the technicians; rather he made them his servants. Slow, in the years before World War I, to give up traditional materials and methods of construction as compared with Perret or Behrens, he was one of the first, earlier by a year or two actually than Perret, to explore the architectural as distinguished from the purely structural possibilities of concrete in a design for a bank published in *The Brickbuilder* in 1901. Although he never felt certain that he understood the "nature" of concrete intuitively as he was convinced that he did the nature of wood or stone, and hardly ever using the other most characteristic material and structural method of the 20th century, the steel frame, he never ceased all the same to exploit the new materials with a quite personal virtuosity from the concrete-block houses of the early 1920's in California, through the All-Steel house projects of a decade later, down to his Mile High Skyscraper scheme of the late 1950's. Where Perret kept on the whole to a single track, perfecting his own conception of the aesthetic possibilities of concrete in ever narrower compass, Wright tried out, from the exposed pebble aggregate of the Unity Church in Oak Park of 1906 down to the smooth-painted surfaces of the buildings of the last few years of his life, almost all the innumerable alternatives the material offers for architectural expression. Paradoxically the latest that he employed, recalling the rendered surfaces of the European architecture of the 1920's which he had earlier reviled, was perhaps the least successful, particularly as com-

pared to the prefabricated blocks of his own houses of the 1920's whose ornamented surfaces at the time were then so unacceptable to advanced European taste.

As to Wright's continuing or, more likely, recurring influence on architects one may, less than a decade after his death, be inclined to dismiss him too flatly. Even the Mile High Skyscraper now has an echo in Chicago! But there can be no question that the interest of scholars in Wright's work has been maintained; indeed, as regards the more general Midwestern architectural scene in the early decades of this century, it has been increasing. Most important have been the reprints of early publications, above all that of the *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright*, the Wasmuth portfolio of 1910 re-issued in near-facsimile by the Horizon Press in 1963 as *The Buildings, Plans and Designs of Frank Lloyd Wright*; for this is a basic work that, if previously available at all, had risen in price into the thousands of dollars. More modest, but also valuable, are other items such as the article by Robert C. Spencer, the first to consider Wright's work, which was originally published in the (Boston) *Architectural Review* in 1900 (republished in 1964) and in W. C. Gannett's *The House Beautiful*, of 1896-97, printed by Wright's first client W. H. Winstow and with elaborate decorations throughout designed by Wright. These were both reproduced in offset by The Prairie School Press in the last few years.

Horizon Press's *Frank Lloyd Wright Drawings for a Living Architecture*, published in 1959, an especially handsome book entirely in color, went early out of print. But in 1962 the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition "Frank Lloyd Wright Drawings", including many never seen before, provided the occasion for Arthur Drexler's *The Drawings of Frank Lloyd Wright*. In this connection one of the latest relevant items, an article by H. Allen Brooks, "Frank Lloyd Wright and the Wasmuth Drawings," in the *Art Bulletin* for June, 1966, discusses in detail the actual authorship of these and other "Wright" drawings, assigning them in most cases to one or more of his assistants.

It is characteristic of current investigation that scholars are turning away from exclusive preoccupation with Wright as an isolated phenomenon and paying increasing attention to the work of architects who were his near-contemporaries and who had in many cases been his assistants. The survival of some of these men made possible direct questioning with results not always flattering to Wright.

But these investigations have fruitfully broadened the picture of the Midwestern — and indeed also of the Californian — architectural situation in the years between 1900 and the outbreak of World War I. M. L. Peisch in *The Chicago School of Architecture, Early Followers of Sullivan and Wright*, New York, 1964, and Carl Condit in the revised and enlarged edition of his book *The Rise of the Skyscraper*, newly entitled *The Chicago School of Architecture*, Chicago, 1964, have treated the field broadly and perhaps prematurely; the more thorough study by Brooks has not yet appeared. Studies of individual architects have been on the whole more rewarding though less important historically than the more general accounts.

Of actual monographs there are as yet only two: One is James Birrell's *Walter Burley Griffin*, Brisbane, 1964, concerning a former Wright assistant who had a notable international career that began when he won the competition for the plan of Canberra, the Australian capital, in 1913 and continued into the 1930's in Australia and also in India. The other is Leonard Eaton's *Landscape Architecture in America, the Life Work of Jens Jensen*, Chicago, 1964. Both of these have, however, the special interest that they deal with aspects of urbanism, a matter generally neglected as regards this period except for the projects and the production of D. H. Burnham and the academic "City Beautiful" planners. At least as important as these two books have been the many articles on various individual designers that *The Prairie School Review* has published in the last four years.

There is doubtless something exaggerated in this burst of scholarly activity centering in an area as circumscribed as the states around Chicago — though Californian parallels have not been neglected — and a period which begins, if one includes the earlier skyscraper story in Chicago, in the late 1880's; which reached its culmination as regards skyscrapers around 1900; and, as regards the more characteristic "Prairie" houses and other smaller work, somewhat later; only to come to an almost complete end during the years of World War I in the Middle West and parallelly on the Pacific Coast. Yet already this concentrated activity, hardly yet equalled for this period by European scholars despite all the interest of the last few years in the Art Nouveau, has notably modified the historical picture. No longer do Sullivan and Wright, for all the admitted superiority of their work, seem to have flourished alone in a cultural vacuum. Instead we can now see them as they were, true *chefs d'ecole*,

especially fortunate, the one until 1900, the other until his departure for Europe in 1909, in the number and in the importance of their commissions; arrogant in their relations with contemporaries; and somewhat less than fair in recognizing the contributions of their assistants and associates. I doubt that George Elmslie really contributed quite as much to Sullivan's major works as he claimed in the last years of his own life when David Gebhard consulted him². Yet the evidence of his own later work after 1911 in partnership with William G. Purcell at the least establishes him as a truer disciple of Sullivan than the more highly publicized Wright.

For all the evidence, not rare with architects of any period, that most of the drawings which have survived from Wright's practice and are recurrently published and referred to as "Wright drawings" were executed by others, there is no real reason yet to doubt that the essential design of all Wright's buildings before 1909 was his, though Marion Mahoney may have been responsible for some of the ornament, as she certainly was for many of the most characteristic presentation drawings. Of the latter fact Wright made no secret. When he gave me the 1895 drawing of the Oak Park Studio he mentioned no other delineator and few doubt that this drawing is by his hand. But he told me the drawing of the unexecuted Yahara Boat Club was by Marion Mahony and remarked, a little deprecatingly, "I was *inspired* by Japanese prints, but Marion *copied* them", a judgement whose justice is evident to everyone in her drawings of the Hardy house in Racine.

The fact that existing houses by Drummond, by Griffin, and by Van Bergen are generally taken to be unrecorded works of Wright is proof, if any were needed, that the originating force in design in these years in Chicago was Wright. Yet this does not diminish the interest of the project of 1912 for Henry Ford by Van Bergen and Mahony; while other more modest executed houses by Drummond and by Purcell & Elmslie introduce variations of level in the principal interiors that one does not find so early in Wright's own houses. Finally there are architects such as Dwight Perkins, George Maher, and the firm of Schmidt, Garden & Martin whose work is much less dependent on Wright, indeed for the most part quite devoid of his personal influence and, as a result, more comparable to that

2 No full-length study of the work of Purcell & Elmslie yet exists, but an exhibition catalogue and various writings by Gebhard resume at least the story.

of advanced European architects in the same years 1900 to 1914.

Since historians have not yet succeeded in putting together a truly synthetic picture even of remoter 19th-century architecture, being too much influenced still by the polemics of a generation ago, it is unlikely that this newer picture of American architecture in the early 20th century will for some time be further broadened to include aspects of what has since been consistently denigrated as stiflingly "traditional" or "historic". The dichotomy between the American East Coast and the West, between the free architecture of Wright and his group and the Renaissance or Georgian Revivalism of McKim, Mead & White and their contemporaries in New York, or between the functional slabs of the early Chicago skyscrapers of 1890-1910 and the Renaissance and Gothic towers of New York in the 1910's and 1920's still appears all but unbridgeable. Not too exaggeratedly did Thomas Tallmadge in 1928 write of Sullivan and Wright in a chapter entitled "Louis Sullivan and The Lost Cause".

Several rising tendencies in America suggest this may not always be the case. On the one side, the side of current stylistic modulation, there is the aspect of current American architecture that European critics castigate somewhat exaggeratedly as Neo-Beaux-Arts, not to speak of the Beaux-Arts roots of the most esteemed American architect of the day, Louis Kahn³. On the other side there is the growing interest on the part of young people, young architects as well as scholars, induced by the present rate of destruction of major monuments and the mere passage of time — what father built is horrid, what grandfather built is quaint — in even the less defensible work of the Eastern architects in those last secure years before 1914. Most significant perhaps are researches of the order of that of George Collins, who has at his disposal at Columbia University the entire files of the Guastavino Company, into notable structural achievements by East Coast architects that incorporated what Le Corbusier was much later to make famous as *vôûtes catalanes*. A most obvious example is the Grand Central Station in New York where tile vaults are used in great variety everywhere except in the main concourse. But Grand Central, as a whole, it is now generally realized, is an extraordinary example of three-dimensional organization, with several pedestrian levels of communica-

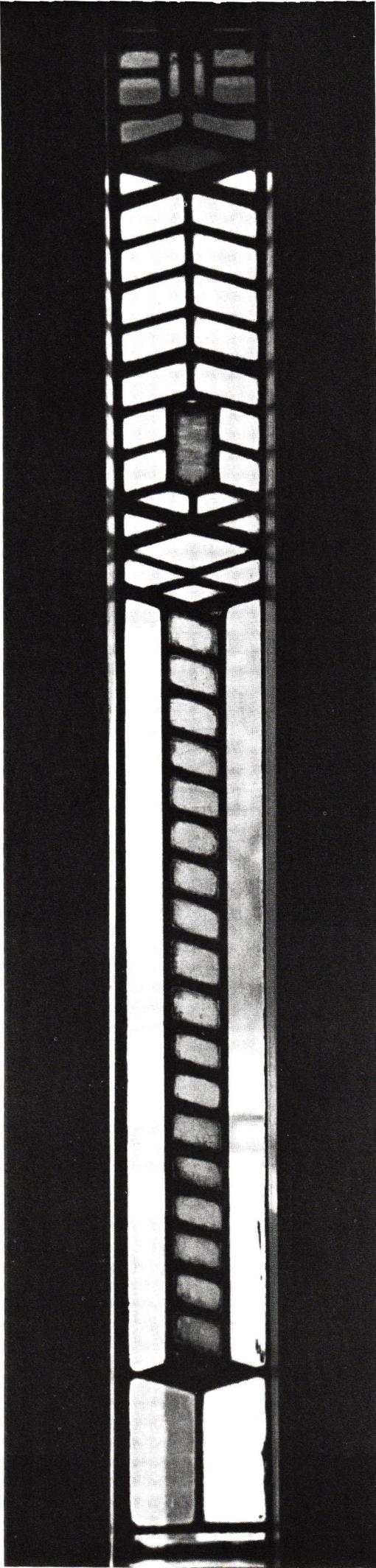
3 Kahn was a pupil of the French architect Paul Cret in Philadelphia.

tion, covered access for automobiles, and above all three or four levels of railroad and underground railway tracks. Finally its grand concourse, defaced though it is today by advertising, is today recognized as a noble space that has hardly been rivalled since in dimensions or in dignity of design. It is not easy to condemn out of hand as blind conservatives the architects, Reed & Stem, who were most responsible for the organization of the station over the years 1903-1913, or even the other firm, Warren & Wetmore, whose Beaux-Arts training proved so much more helpful in the scaling and detailing of this station inside and out than that of the French architectural "pope" Laloux in the Gare d'Orsay in Paris.

Doubtless Wright, never one to be generous to his rivals, would have been glad to see the end of the Pennsylvania Station with its concourse so directly borrowed from the *thermae* of ancient Rome. Younger architects were among the leaders in the protests against its destruction. Grand Central has not had to be "saved" yet, though overpowered by the new Pan Am Building to the North.⁴

Such changes in the climate of taste, such reversals of earlier judgements are evidence that Wright, and perhaps already other old masters rather younger than he such as Gropius, who had a hand in the design of Pan Am, belong now to history. Wright's battles, thanks to the totality of his sociological ambitions and his anti-urban tastes, could never be entirely won. But the battle that he and his group lost in the second decade of this century did not lose the war. The battles that the next generation, who matured in Europe in the difficult between-the-war years of the 1920's and 30's, won in the 1940's and 50's were perhaps won too easily, or so it may now seem in retrospect. For all the current broadening of the picture of the early 20th-century years in America, Wright still stands alone as *the* American modern architect in relation to the achievements of his own generation abroad, and even of most of the next except for Le Corbusier. A hundred years after his birth, however, we may most properly see him as belonging now to the past, in a rank to which only the greatest have ever attained. No longer is he a contemporary figure, no longer the subject of current controversy as he was as regards the Guggenheim Museum down to the day of his death, but an architect for the ages.

4 The "saving" of Grand Central has already become an issue since this article was first written.

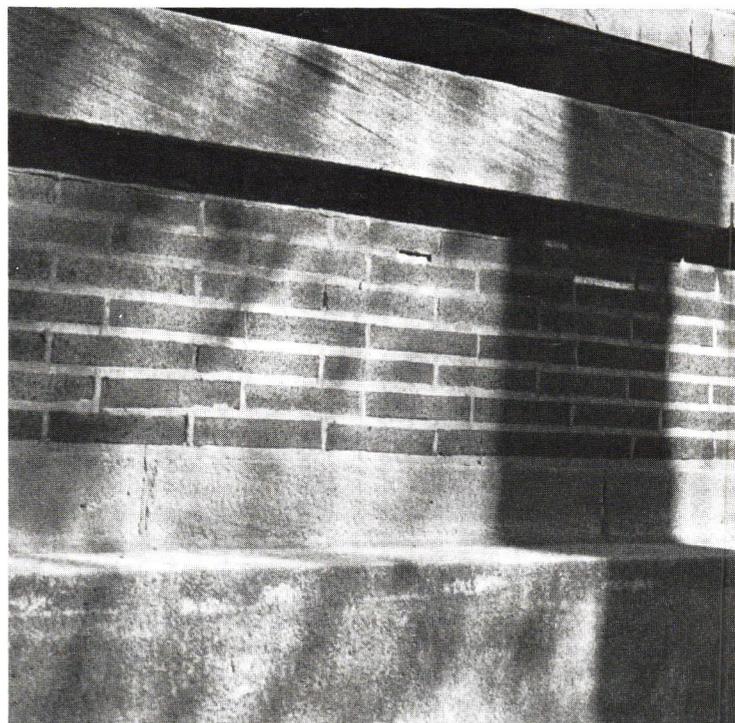


The house Frank Lloyd Wright designed for Frederick C. Robie has been called the most influential single structure of modern architecture. Ten years ago it was announced that it was to be demolished. Through the efforts of a concerned public the house stands today, occupied by the Adlai Stevenson Institute of International Affairs.

Frederick C. Robie House,

The Robie House was designed by Wright in 1907 and built in 1908. The Robie family occupied it in 1909 but lived there only two and a half years. The W. Taylor family then owned it for six months after which it was acquired by the Marshall D. Wilbur family. The Wilburs lived in the house until 1926 when it was sold to the Chicago Theological Seminary.

The Seminary used the Robie House as a dormitory and conference center but permitted tours by architects and interested visitors. Just before World War II, they announced plans to build a new



Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect

structure on the site. A committee was formed to prevent destruction of the house with W. F. Dekenatel, an apprentice of Wright in the early days of the Taliesin Fellowship, as chairman. Their work was interrupted however, when World War II began and all private construction was delayed.¹

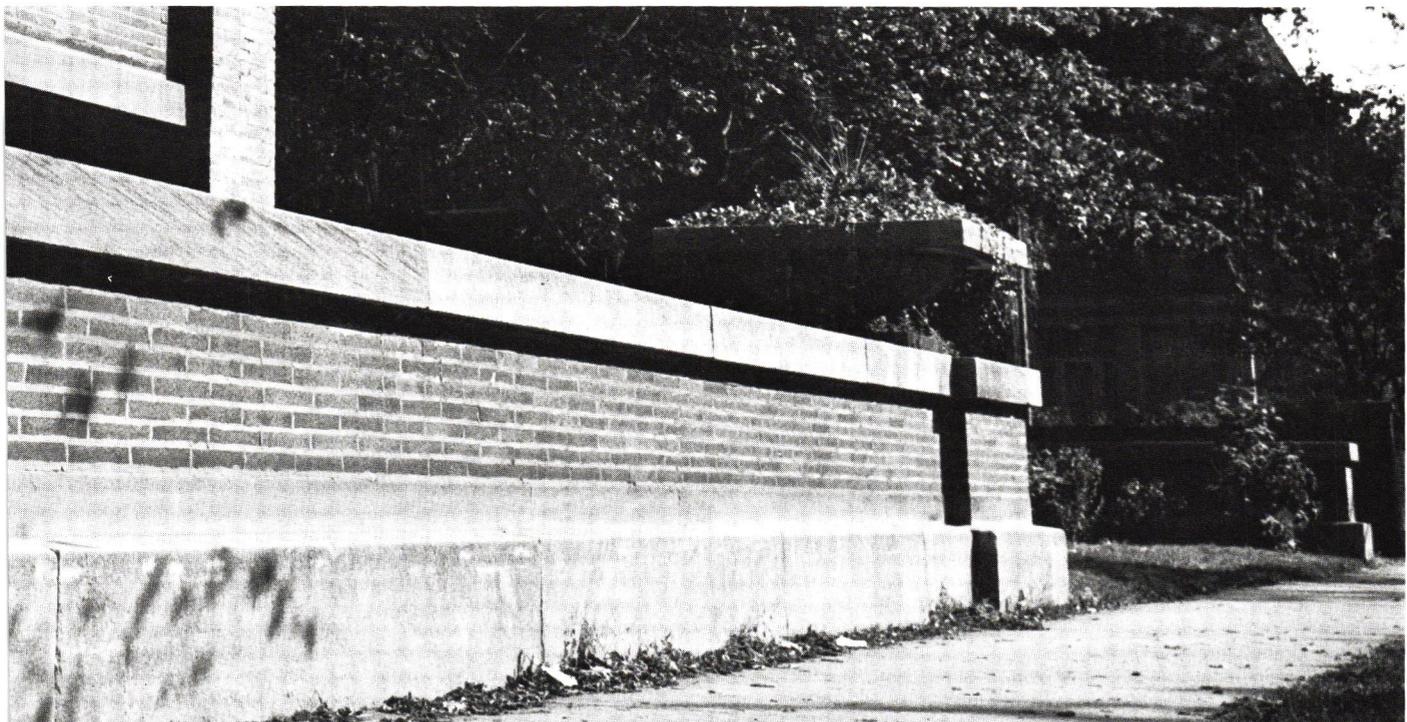
In 1957, the Seminary again announced its intention to expand. This was the year when Robie House received its most widespread public recog-

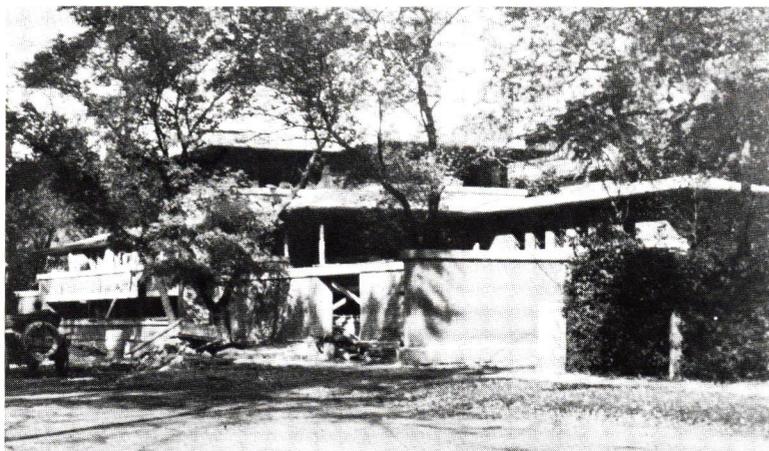
¹ The records of this committee were preserved and deposited in the archive of the Burnham Library of Architecture at the Art Institute of Chicago.

niton.² A panel of leading architects and art historians cited the house as one of the two outstanding residences built in the United States in

² A citizens group "The Committee to Preserve The Robie House" was formed early in 1957 under the chairmanship of W. B. McDonald. Most of the members of this group have remained active and several still serve on the present "Robie House Committee."

The horizontal lines of the Robie House are emphasized in this illustration of the garden wall on 57th Street.





This rare picture shows the Robie House under construction. The original high courtyard wall is clearly evident. Photo from the PSP collection.

Below is the Robie House as it appears today. The courtyard enclosure is the same height as the garden wall. It is planned to eventually rebuild this wall to its original condition.



RIGHT:

The garden area on the south side of the house provided a protected play area for the Robie children. Photo courtesy of the University of Chicago.

the previous hundred years.³ Also in 1957, the City of Chicago established the Chicago Commission on Architectural Landmarks. The Robie House was designated a landmark⁴ and the Commission offered assistance to the Seminary in preserving the building. In December of that year, Webb and Knapp, Inc., agreed to purchase the house for use as headquarters for their Chicago renewal projects. They owned the building for just over five years.

On February 4, 1963 William Zeckendorf, chairman of Webb and Knapp, presented the deed to Robie House to George W. Beadle, president of the University of Chicago. The ceremony also opened a fund-raising drive. Only minimum maintenance had been done for the building in the previous 20 years, and it was estimated that \$250,000 would be needed to restore it to original condition. The University agreed to use and maintain the house in perpetuity, provided that the initial funds could be raised for restoration.

3 "One Hundred Years of Significant Building" *Architectural Record*, February, 1957. (Series on One Hundred Years of Significant Buildings. First place tie in the house division, The Robie House and The Kaufman House, both by Frank Lloyd Wright.)

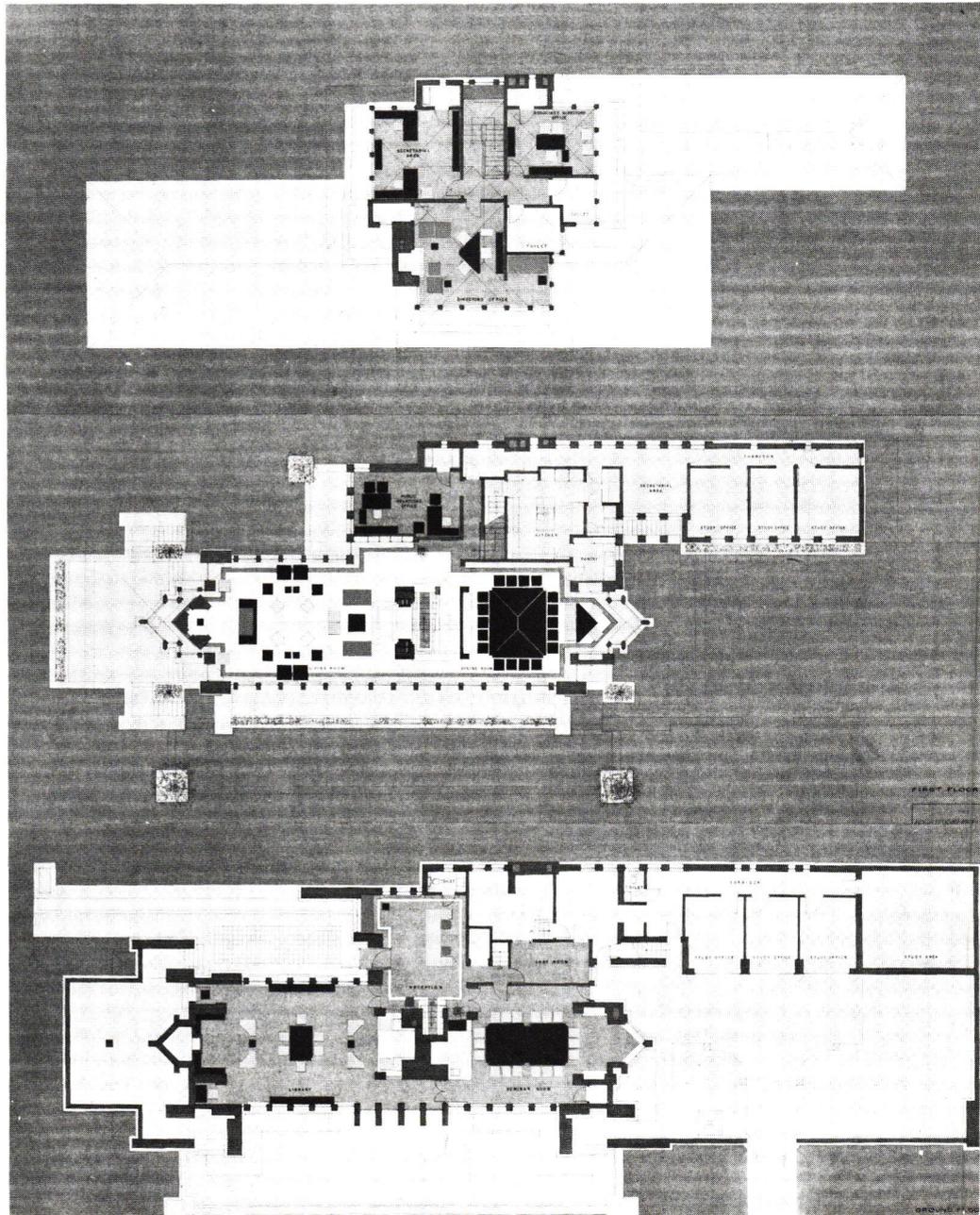
4 The Citation on the commemorative plaque stated, "In recognition of the creation of the Prairie House, a home organized around a great hearth where interior space, under wide sweeping roofs, opens to the outdoors. The bold interplay of horizontal planes, about the chimney mass, and the structural expressive piers and windows, established a new form of domestic design."



An international committee of more than 100 architects, historians, critics, and educators was then formed to raise the money required to restore the house.

Despite this prestigious committee, the campaign was not notably successful. To date only about \$70,000 has been raised and much work still remains undone. Nevertheless, the available funds are being used.

The first stage of the restoration was started in 1965, even though no decision had been made as to the ultimate use of the building. It was felt that further deterioration could be prevented if certain work were undertaken at that time. Therefore, a new tile roof, heating system, electrical wiring, and painting of interior and exterior plastered surfaces and exterior window frames were completed by the summer of 1967 when the Adlai Stevenson Institute moved into the house.



Plans of the renovated Robie house.



The living room of the Robie House is used by the Adlai Stevenson Institute as a lounge.

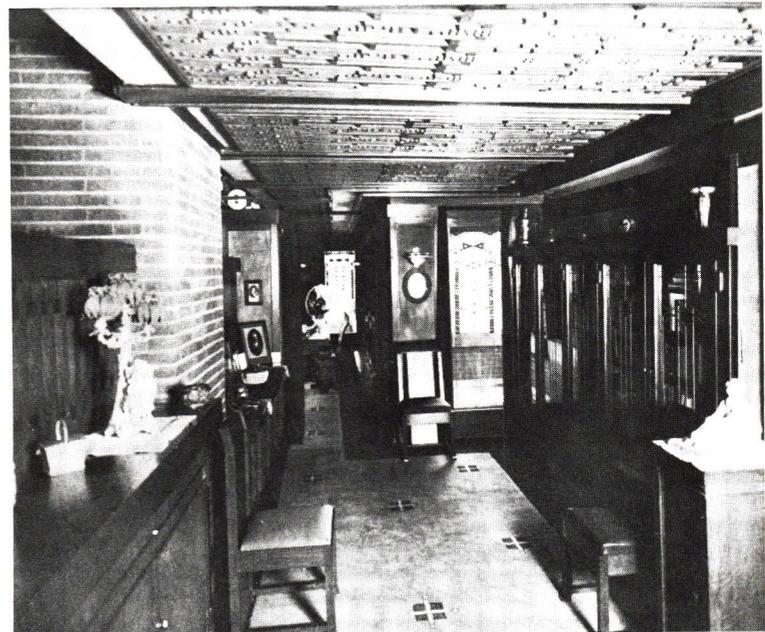
RIGHT: The main floor entry area as it appears today.

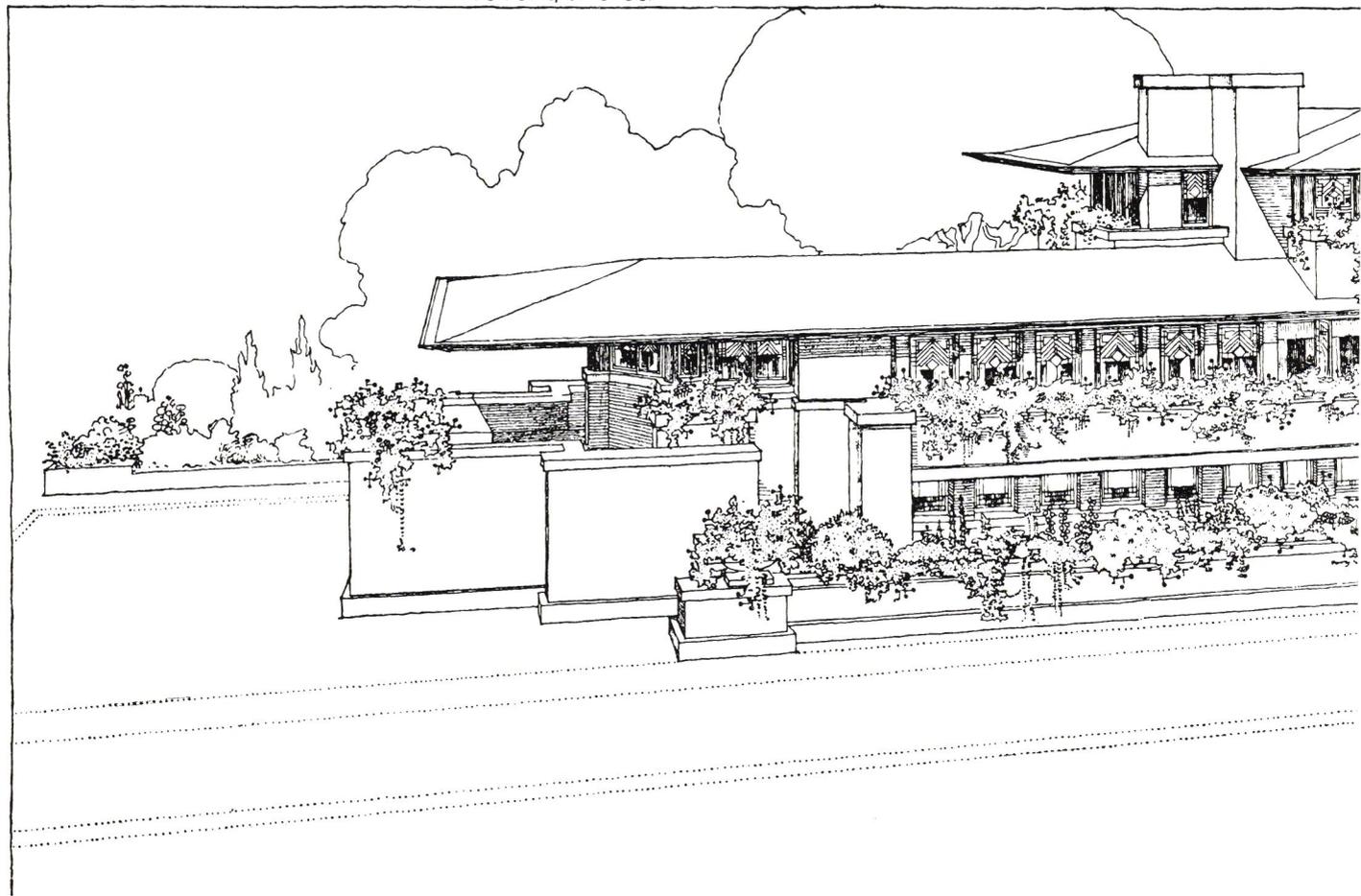
BELOW: The main floor entry area as it appeared during the time the house was occupied by the Marshall D. Wilbur family.

The Institute is well suited to occupy Robie House. It was organized in 1966 as a memorial to the late Ambassador Adlai E. Stevenson of Illinois. Announcement of the memorial was made on July 14, 1966, the first anniversary of the distinguished statesman's death, by Hermon D. Smith, President of the Stevenson Memorial Fund. He said that the Institute "will provide a center in which the world's most distinguished statesmen . . . will meet to study problems affecting international peace." Provost Edward H. Levi, speaking for the University said: "We at the University of Chicago are extremely pleased by the decision to make our campus the home of the Stevenson Institute . . . The University is making available Robie House . . . to serve as the home for the Institute. It seems especially fitting that this world-significant new venture, . . . should now be housed in this architectural landmark on a university campus."⁵

In their planning for the use of the Robie House, the Institute and their architects wished to achieve an environment for conference and seminar use while providing offices for staff and fellows of the Institute. Lack of funds prevented a complete restoration and, as the house was structurally sound, it was decided to bring it up to modern code re-

5 "Robie House, Home of the Stevenson Institute" *The University of Chicago Magazine*, October, 1966.





quirements, do a thorough cleaning and to provide needed facilities by careful use of furnishings, new as well as original. The plan of the house, with main rooms accessible from the central circulation core, requires minimum cross traffic, and was easily adaptable to their needs. Moreover, no "remodeling" was necessary at this stage, although it is planned to make minor changes in the kitchen area during the final stage of renovation.

On the ground floor, the entrance hall is now used as a reception area. A Wright designed chair stands against the brick chimney wall, and a reproduction of the fern stand is placed on the opposite side of the main stairway. The concrete stairs have been sanded to their original mellow tan integral color. The carpet incorporates the original border design and continues up the stairs to the landing where the stairs become wood.

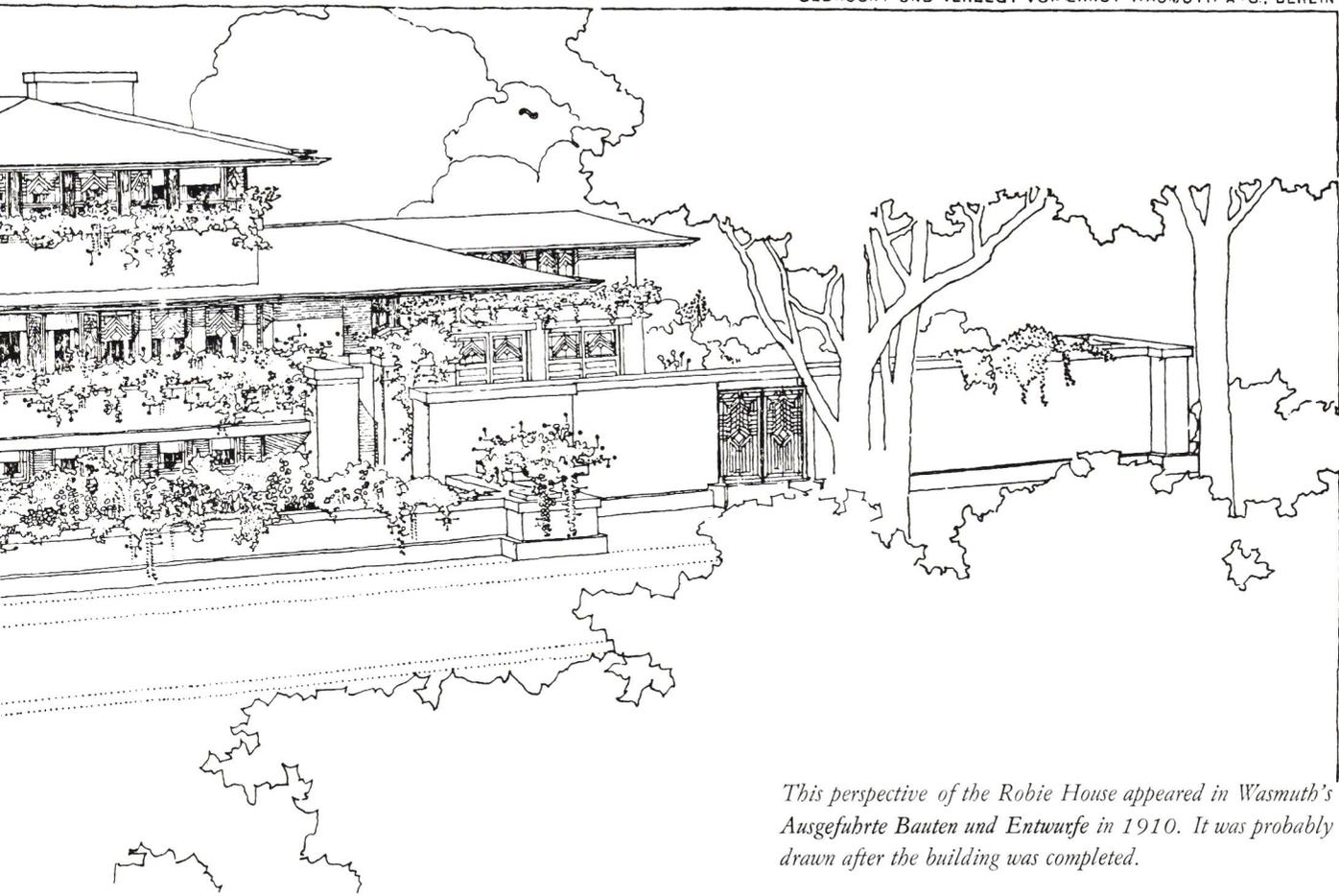
The billiard room, off the entrance hall, is now the Institute Library. New wood shelving has been installed at the far end and extra space for books has been provided along the north and south sides of the room by connecting the existing wood heating unit enclosures with shelving below the leaded windows. Illumination is provided by concealed

cove lighting at the juncture of the low and high ceiling heights. Existing wood mouldings at these points were extended to enclose the light source.

The architects proposed that the center of the room be occupied by an original Wright designed table and high back chairs. The Institute staff, however, has since decided against using these pieces and they are now in storage. Two groups of upholstered chairs of S.O.M. design provide informal seating, one facing the fireplace and the other at the opposite end of the room.

The former play room will be used as the principle seminar room by the Institute. Lighting is similar to that used in the library. Contemporary furniture is used but a Wright chair has been placed near the fireplace to remind visitors of the scale of the original furnishings.

The living room on the main floor is used by the Institute as a lounge. The central feature of the room is the sofa, an exact reproduction of the original Wright design. Original small occasional tables of Wright design are used, and the coffee table before the fireplace is an adaptation of the table design to a larger size. Upholstered seating is of S.O.M. design. Original globe light fixtures



*This perspective of the Robie House appeared in Wasmuth's *Ausgefuehrte Bauten und Entwurfe* in 1910. It was probably drawn after the building was completed.*

held by wood frames forming part of the ceiling mouldings, have been restored in both the living room and dining room. The dining room will contain a special table system allowing 23 persons to be seated for dinner.

The guest room on the first floor will be the public relations office for the Institute and is furnished with wood desks finished to blend with the golden oak woodwork of the house.

The bedrooms on the top floor are being used as offices with the master bedroom serving as the director's office. The director's desk, typing unit and credenza, designed by the architects, is placed in the area originally occupied by the bed. Other furnishings cluster around the fireplace along with original tables of Wright design. The dressing alcove has been altered to provide a built-in couch and lighted bookshelves for use as a retreat for reading and working.

Above the credenza the remaining Wright designed brass wall fixtures have been mounted with new half-globes. Approximately 30 of these pieces were originally included in the house but only these two remained when the house was occupied in 1967. The Committee of Architectural Heritage, a

Architects for the remodeling and restoration: 1967-1968

J. Lee Jones, University Architect, University of Chicago

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Architects and Engineers

Partner In Charge of Design:

Walter A. Netsch

Project Manager:

Donald E. Ohlson

Project Designer:

Robert W. Peters

Project Designer, Interiors:

Donald D. Powell

Contractor:

H. B. Barnard Company

Upholstered seating pieces of S.O.M. design by Lakeside

Furniture, Chicago. The Frank Lloyd Wright sofa reproduction

was manufactured by Wells Furniture, Chicago. Brass side chairs by

Stembridge and Lakeside Manufacturing Company of Chicago. Original Wright wood furniture

refurbished and upholstered by Wells Furniture and all

reproductions of original designs and S.O.M. adaptations of Wright

designs by Woodwork Corporation of America. Seminar tables manufactured by

Stembridge and Johnson Plastic Tops. Lacquered reception desk and all lacquered

cube tables, writing table and typing stand of S.O.M. design by

Woodwork Corporation of America. Office desks and file units by

Fritz Hansen, Inc., Denmark. Executive and secretarial seating by

Brickel-Eppinger, New York, Seminar Stacking arm chairs by

General Fireproofing. Carpet by Kent Division of V'Soske, Puerto Rico. Unless

otherwise credited, all Robie House Photographs are by

Richard Nickel.



The master bedroom of the Robie House now serves as the office for the Director of the Adlai Stevenson Institute.

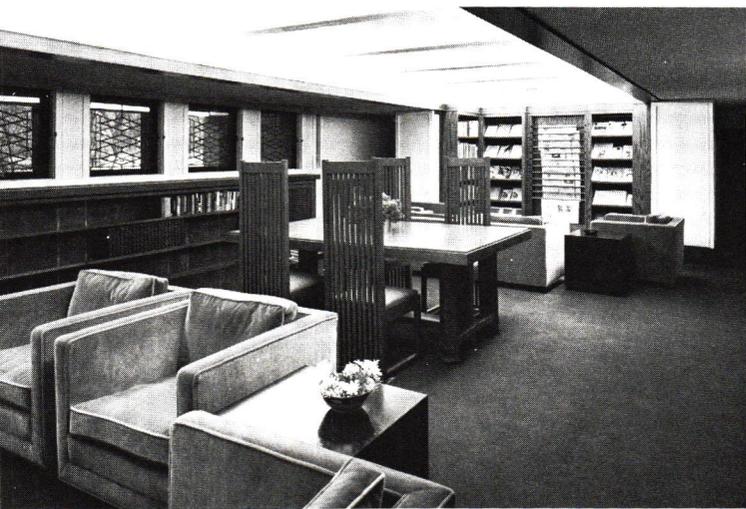
student group at the University of Illinois has announced that they will provide funds to duplicate the missing fixtures elsewhere in the house.⁶ The planting box outside the south windows has been filled with greenery to reflect the low winter sunlight through the transparent tinted glass which forms the continuous band of light in the room.

The colors developed by the architects for use in furnishing the house form a rich palette including

6 The Committee of Architectural Heritage was formed in 1965 at the University of Illinois Urbana Campus with Professor Hermann G. Pundt as faculty advisor. Funds for the restoration of Robie House were raised at an exhibition titled "Frank Lloyd Wright, Vision and Legacy" and through the sale of the exhibition catalog of the same name.

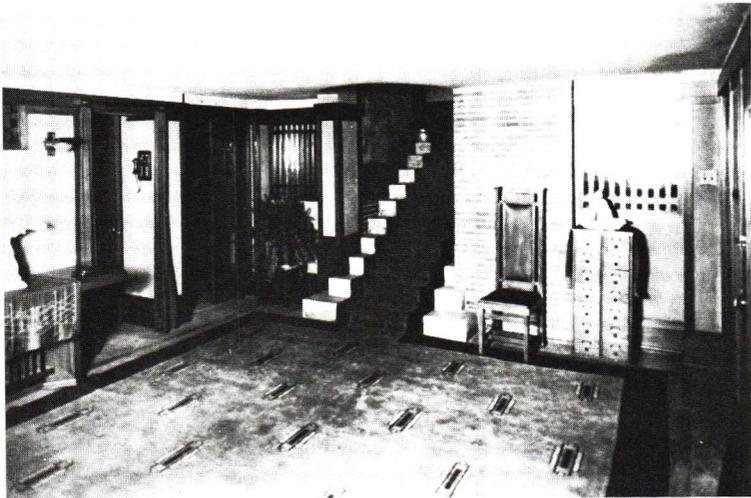
a deep saffron gold, brown, carmine red and plum, all of which compliment the golden oak woodwork, roman brick and brass hardware. Fabrics include wool, mohair and upholstery silk for upholstered furniture, and natural leather for built-in bench covers, couch and ottomans, and side chairs.

Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House is safe. Nevertheless, a good deal of work remains to be done to complete the "restoration". Many built-in furnishings and fittings are missing such as the dining room buffet and the inglenook seat beside the living room fireplace. On the exterior, the unfortunate tuckpointing performed in recent years must be removed and redone to re-establish the proper horizontal emphasis to the house. The east garden wall should be restored to its original height and the addition to the garage must be removed.



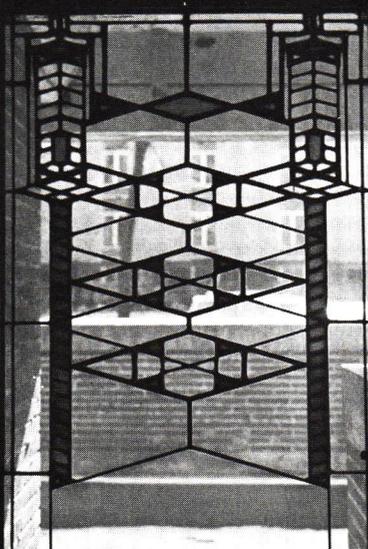
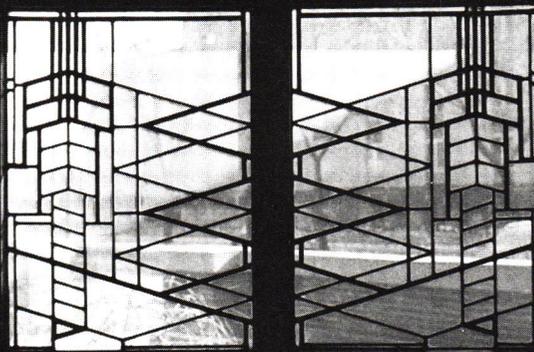
ABOVE: The former billiard room on the ground floor now serves as the Institute library.

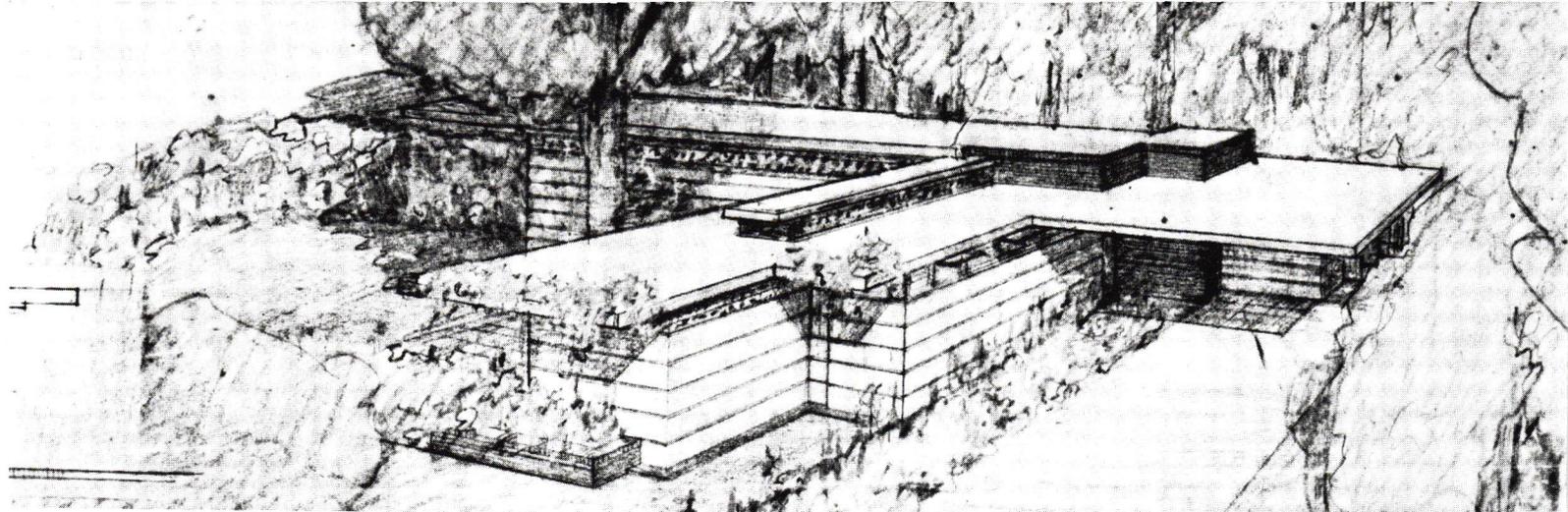
BELOW: The main entrance area of the Robie House as Frank Lloyd Wright designed it.



While the optimum use of the Robie House would have been for it to have remained in private use as a family residence, it is extremely doubtful that its perpetual care and preservation could have been insured under such conditions. Its occupancy by the Stevenson Institute certainly is a satisfactory alternative, and they are to be commended for assuming the burden of "living in a landmark". Eventually, they will seek new quarters and perhaps at that time the University of Chicago will find the funds required to complete the restoration.

This house is one of the really great buildings of our time. It is more than just a building; it is a monument to man's ability to improve his society through architecture. It is particularly appropriate that it has been restored in the one hundredth anniversary year of its architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. May it stand forever.





Wright's Pope-Leighey House*

by Terry Brust Morton

The author became editor of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in July 1967, having been involved in the Trust's publications program since 1957. Mrs. Morton is the editor and a contributing author to the recently published book, Decatur House, concerning another historic house owned by the Trust.

The story of the Pope-Leighey House begins in 1940 when the late Frank Lloyd Wright was commissioned by Washington, D. C., newspaperman Loren Pope to design a small, inexpensive house. Decades earlier, Wright's architectural genius had been acknowledged around the world. At his death in 1959, almost 20 years after he built the Pope house, he was honored universally. Still a controversial figure, however, he had never been awarded a commission by the United States government, and there was no Wright-designed structure in the nation's capital city.

There were, however, three small Usonian houses in the Washington area that carried his signature. Two of them, of a series of houses using concrete block as the main construction material, were built in the 1950's. The first, located in the Maryland woods near Chevy Chase, was designed for his son, Robert. The other concrete block Usonian house was built in 1952 for the Marden family. It is situated in the Virginia woods overlooking the Potomac River.

The earliest of the three Washington area houses, however, was of cypress and brick built for the Popes. It was located in Fairfax County, near Falls Church, Virginia, just eight miles from the White

House. To reach it one passed sprawling suburbs and shopping centers and turned down a narrow dirt road flanked by many trees. At the end of the road, almost growing out of the woods, was the Pope House.

In 1946, the Popes left the Washington area and offered their house for sale at the same time the Robert Leigheys were preparing to move to Washington from Richmond. The Leigheys, to their delight, discovered this Frank Lloyd Wright house for sale and bought it immediately for approximately \$17,000. After living in it for nearly 20 years, the Leigheys learned in 1963 that their home in the woodland was to be condemned by the State Highway Department to make way for a four-lane superhighway.

Mrs. Leighey, in the spring of 1964, asked the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Department of the Interior to save her home. Although she was still unable to believe that it would be destroyed, she wondered if there were time to save her property which she, and her husband who had recently died, once planned to present to the state as a small public park.

The National Trust and the Interior Department asked Virginia's Governor Albert S. Harrison and Secretary of Commerce Luther Hodges to reverse the decision. Both were approached since the threat was caused by a highway being built with 90% federal funds and 10% state money. The Trust and Interior were joined by other preservation groups, including the American Institute of Architects and its Virginia chapter.

Practicing the fine art of living room diplomacy,

* This paper was presented at the 21st Annual Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians, St. Louis, Mo., January 27, 1968. The author acknowledges the assistance of Robert R. Garvey, Jr., Executive Secretary, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, who was Executive Director of the National Trust when the house was rescued and became a National Trust property. She also expresses appreciation for photographic assistance to M. Hamilton Morton, Jr., D. Deane Hall, Jr., Howard C. Rickert and the National Trust archives.

Interior Secretary Udall called a conference in the Pope-Leighey House one rainy Saturday morning. Invited were representatives of the National Trust, the American Institute of Architects, the National Park Service, and federal and Virginia highway and conservation officials. During the conference, with some 20 persons standing in the small living room, Udall commented, "Actually, more than just this house is at stake. Maybe we can keep America beautiful after all, though some mornings when I get up I wonder." A plan to salvage the structure by moving it was discussed because the Virginia Right-of-Way Engineer and the Federal Highway Administrator maintained that right-of-way acquisition and road alignment had gone too far to be stopped or changed.

Architects testified that the house could be moved if a wooded site, gently rolling like the one it was on, could be found. Two such sites were considered, the most likely being on the grounds of the National Trust property, Woodlawn Plantation at Mt. Vernon, Virginia. The Trust volunteered custodianship if the house were moved to Woodlawn.

The project was agreed upon, and contract signing five months later marked the conclusion of complicated negotiations between state, federal and private officials. In Secretary Udall's office, Mrs. Leighey signed documents accepting \$31,500 for the house; like the highway appropriation, 90% of it federal funds and 10% state money.

In its arrangement with Mrs. Leighey, the Trust agreed to provide a site, maintain the house after reconstruction, open it to the public at specified times and permit the former owner to use it during her lifetime. Mrs. Leighey contributed not only the house but the entire \$31,500 condemnation award to help finance the rescue and reconstruction of the house. Costs were estimated to run to a total of \$50,000, part of which was raised from a number of anonymous donors. The Lord and Taylor Company, at the time it opened its Landmark Store in Northern Virginia, gave \$5,000 to restore the original Frank Lloyd Wright furnishings.

The new site is about 15 miles from the old, and is similar in orientation and native vegetation to the original one and one half acre woodland where the house was built for Mr. Pope. The new location was chosen by a committee representative of all the groups involved in the project, and the re-siting was accomplished to the satisfaction of all. Taliesin Associated Architects, Mr. Wright's successor firm, advised on the re-siting and helped make sure that the Usonian house would not in-

trude upon the restored gardens and Woodlawn, the early 19th-century mansion, which had been open to the public as a historic museum since 1948.

Before the meticulous and tedious dismantling was started, Mrs. Leighey left for Japan to serve as a missionary. Writing from overseas, she declared her happiness that the house would be preserved, saying, "here has indeed been a selfless devotion to hard work by many people who have made this possible."

The rescue of the Pope-Leighey House was the result of endless hours of searching for ways and means by many people. For months the house had to be saved all over again each day, as new obstacles arose. One might view its rescue and relocation as neither success nor failure. It would have been a complete success if it had been possible to work out a solution to save the house on its original site; it would have been a failure if it had been crumbled by the highway bulldozer. A historic structure has its greatest value in its original setting, and relocation never will be the ideal solution for preservation.

As in many parts of the country, when the Pope Leighey House was threatened, there was no survey of landmarks in Fairfax County, Virginia, which most certainly would have designated for protection this Wright house and other significant buildings. Such a survey might have uncovered not only the Pope-Leighey House as an interesting building in itself, but also as an example of the culmination of one phase of the architectural thought of one of this country's most creative artists. The Usonian Pope Leighey House was one of Wright's answers to a long search for a reasonably priced, yet expressive dwelling-house form. In it he used what he had learned in the large and expensive Prairie House style structures where he had achieved organic unity, space that was free and fluid, buildings related to their natural settings and indigenous materials of which they often were made.

At Woodlawn Plantation, the Georgian mansion with the Pope-Leighey House nearby affords an unusual and instructive contrast between plantation life of earlier centuries and the 20th-century suburban citizen's needs and interests. It was the imitation of such structures as the main house at Woodlawn that Wright believed to be wrong for the 20th-century American. He had written in 1938, "The house of moderate cost is not only America's major architectural problem but the problem most difficult for her major architects. As for me, I would rather solve it with satisfaction to myself and

Usonia, than build anything I can think of, . . .”¹

He wrestled with the problem in a series of houses for individuals of modest means. Five of his Usonian houses were built on the eastern seaboard during the 1940’s, the Pope-Leighey House being the second of this group.² Wright called them Usonian, after the name for this country used in a book by Samuel Butler. “To give the little . . . family the benefit of industrial advantages of the era in which they live,” Wright said: “something else must be done for them than to plan another little imitation of a mansion. Simplifications must take place. They must themselves see life in somewhat simplified terms.”³

The stately mansion at Woodlawn, like the Pope-Leighey House, is constructed of wood, glass and brick, but of a decidedly different proportion of these materials. It represents the elegance of affluence and privilege, and the conventions of an earlier century. It was the home of Nelly Custis Lewis, the granddaughter of Martha Washington, and Lawrence Lewis, George’s favorite nephew. Being especially pleased with the match, the Washingtons presented the Lewises with 2000 acres of land from the Mount Vernon estate and designated the house site. To design it, the Washingtons selected their friend, Dr. William Thornton, first architect of the U. S. Capitol.

Woodlawn represents all that was necessary for a busy household with 8 children, and servants necessary to feed and clothe them, to maintain the estate and to farm the land. The house, the servants, and the income of a producing plantation made it possible for the Lewises to entertain in a sumptuous fashion. It was the day of the horse and carriage and of undeveloped open spaces — and social visits that extended for weeks.

Wright’s clients of a century later traveled in fast automobiles and airplanes, and the discerning saw the spaciousness of the open country leaving forever. Wright attempted to replace it with spaciousness in the home. By uniting a small house with its immediately surrounding natural site, he

felt he could set man apart in a personal retreat from the hectic and fast-moving day of the 20th century.

Wright’s concepts, and his revolt against the prevailing building styles and methods, had attracted Loren Pope. He wrote:

The genesis of the house occurred in the late ‘30’s when a magazine article finally sparked my interest in Wright’s *An Autobiography*. I . . . soaked up every chapter two and three times before going on to the next one. Long before the book was finished, the light had become dazzling and I was a true believer.

From the reading of Wright’s *Autobiography* on, my bride and I stopped buying colonial reproductions or thinking about the picketed Cape Cod we were planning to build. Instead, my friends began telling me I was a little giddy to think about approaching the great, expensive, and imperious Frank Lloyd Wright.

But . . . I decided that no matter how busy or important, the master would listen to someone who wanted one of his works so much. In due time, a letter was dispatched telling how important was a house by him, along with a map of the site, contours, and trees, and some of the specifics a client would give his architect. . . .⁴

About three weeks later he received a reply from Wright, “Dear Loren, Of course I’m ready to give you a house. . . .”⁵

Mr. Pope has since explained the technical difficulties of bringing an idea into being:

Because neither federal nor private agencies wanted to touch my house, only the willingness of the *Washington Evening Star* (the newspaper which was then Pope’s employer) to finance houses for its employees enabled us to go ahead. The *Star*, moreover, knew we couldn’t get the fiscal security of a general contract because builders either wouldn’t bid or quoted figures prohibitive enough to cover their fears. . . . Fortunately, we encountered Howard C. Rickert of Vienna, Va., the only builder who saw the simplicity and order of the structure and sensed its rationale. With him we were willing to

4 Loren Pope, “Twenty-Five Years Later: Still a Love Affair.” *Historic Preservation* (National Trust for Historic Preservation), Volume 17, Number 3, May-June 1965, pages 99-100. See also Loren Pope, “The Love Affair of a Man and His House,” *House Beautiful*, August 1948, pp. 32-4.

5 Loren Pope to Mrs. Terry Brust Morton, April 26, 1965, page 2, National Trust Archives.

1 Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Architectural Forum*, January 1938, p. 78.

2 William Wesley Peters, “The Story of the Loren Pope House”, transmitted with correspondence between Robert R. Garvey and Edmond T. Casey, April 1, 1964, National Trust Archives, (the other four were the Theodore Baird House, Shays Street, Amherst, Mass.; the William Guenther House, East Caldwell, N. J.; the James B. Christie House, Jockey Hollow Road, Bernardsville, N. J.; the Joseph Euchman House, 6807 Cross Country Boulevard, Baltimore, Md.)

3 Frank Lloyd Wright, *ibid.*

forego the safety of a contract. The result was a work of art, and most of the furniture, built with cabinetmaker skill, for about the price of a conventional house without furniture. Living in the house was the kind of still glowing and exciting love affair that everyone ought to have the opportunity of having.⁶

Mr. Wright visited the site of the Pope House several times during construction, and Gordon Chadwick from Wright's Taliesin Fellowship, served as construction supervisor. Chadwick roomed and boarded with the Popes and was paid an apprentice fee in addition to the fee paid Mr. Wright. Today Chadwick is a partner with George Nelson in a New York City architectural firm known as Nelson & Chadwick.

At the same time that the house was being built, Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Leighy had become devotees of Wright, also through reading of his *Autobiography*, and Mrs. Leighy described their experience of living in it for 17 years as a noble one. "I think you become a better person by living here. Little by little your pretensions fall away and you become a more truthful, a more honest person," she said.

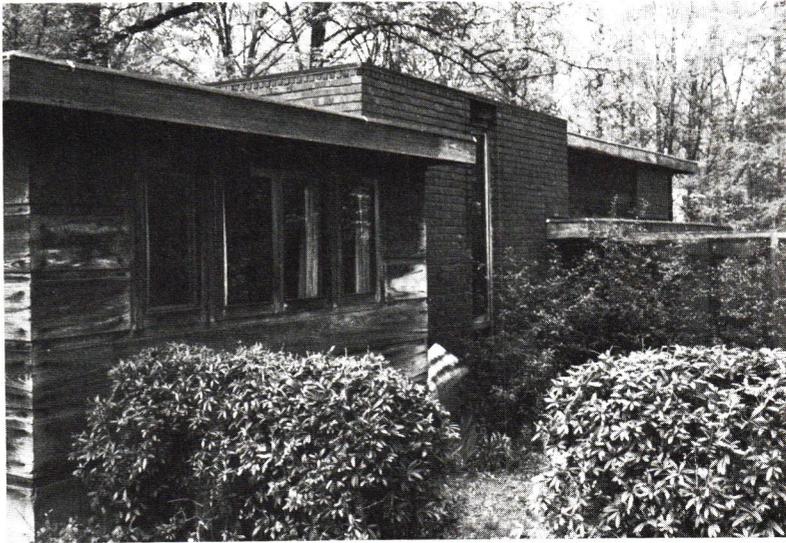
Mr. and Mrs. Leighy shared the house with all the curious who arrived at their door over the years, usually unannounced. The State Department showed it officially to foreign visitors, and the Falls Church High School mechanical drawing classes came to examine it. Architectural students boasted about having discovered a Frank Lloyd Wright house in Falls Church.

We called it a four-room house, with kitchen and bath. One of these four is quite large. If you stand at our front door, it would be 40 feet your eye would travel before you get to the bookcase wall at the far end of the living room. That large living room has a dining area. There are also two bedrooms and a study. Even though it is limited in space, approximately 1200 sq. feet, it feels much larger than houses three or four times as large because of his flow of space and his way of uniting the parts; you never feel cut off and there is always some place you can see around.⁷

But the house had to be moved, and so it was taken apart — first its roof was lifted off and then,

6 Loren Pope, "Twenty-Five Years Later: Still a Love Affair," *ibid*, pp. 100-1.

7 Mrs. Robert A. Leighy, WGMS Radio Interview, March 3, 1964, transcript in National Trust Archives.



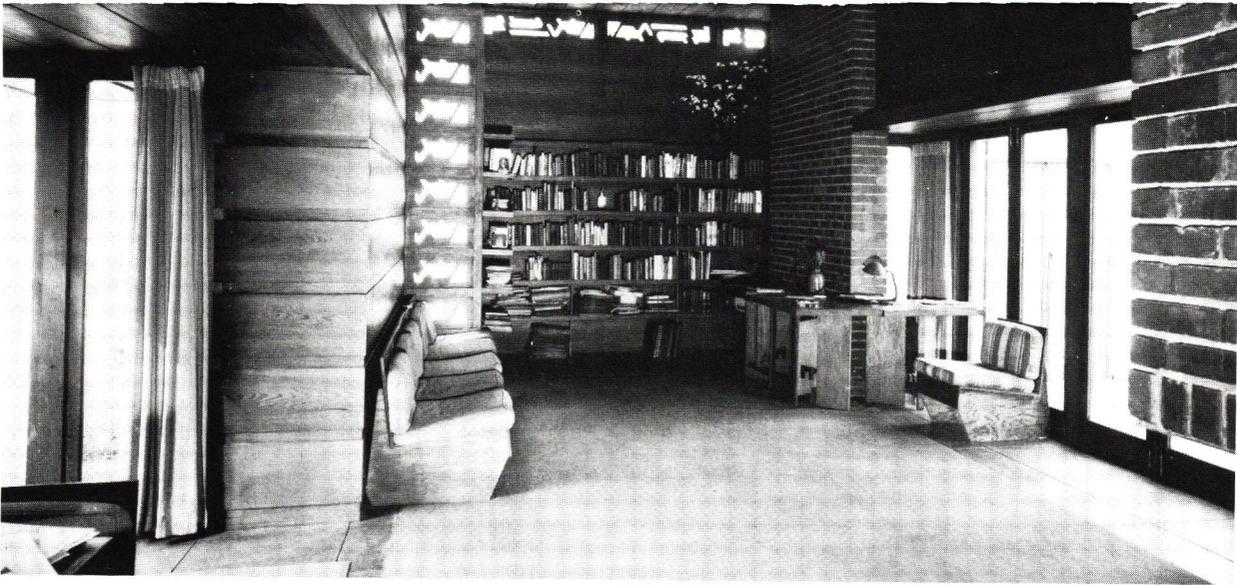
The Pope-Leighey House at its original site. HABS photo by Jack Boucher.

section by section, the walls were trucked across Fairfax County's superhighways.

As circumstances would have it, the same builder and his master carpenter who had built the house for the Popes in 1940 dismantled and reset the house 25 years later. Acting as supervisory architects were staff members of the Department of Interior's National Park Service.

In the development and refining of his Prairie House style, Wright made an infinite number of innovations. The Pope-Leighey House contains many elements developed by Wright that were *Woodlawn plantation includes this Georgian mansion now owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Photo by Barrett, 1963.*





unusual for their time.⁸

The flat roof was constructed of a system of laminated two-by-fours. Roof gutters and downspouts were eliminated; holdovers from the old-fashioned steep roof, they were no longer necessary.

The cantilevered entrance also served as a carport, since complete enclosure was no longer necessary with automotive design improvements.

Radiant heating was installed. The house rested on a concrete slab and under it, on a broken stone filling, the hot water pipes were placed. Here at the new location, the old iron pipes, taken from the original foundation, are being placed in the new foundation.

The red-colored concrete floor laid over the pipes performed a dual function — it provided a warmth, and at the same time, a decorative surface throughout the house.

There is no interior trim. The walls of cypress board, the same inside and out, are revealed here during reassembly at Woodlawn.

In a sense, the walls were prefabricated on the job. Of sandwich construction the plywood center was lined on both sides with building paper and faced on the exterior and the interior with 12-inch cypress siding. Then they were screwed together and the panel set into a steel channel imbedded in the concrete.

There is no skeleton of studs, and the wall sections, prepared in advance, were joined together at the corners.

The Pope-Leighey was the first house in which this slab-wall of boards was approved by building officials. Mr. Wright set up a sample wall and demonstrated by weighting it with bricks and cement, that it was capable of supporting more than four times the anticipated load. The use of cypress wood eliminated the need to paint the exterior in order to preserve it. No plastering was used in

8 Peters, *op. cit.*

This is an interior view of the Pope-Leighey House at its original site. HABS photo by Jack Boucher.

the building. Cypress as the finished surface for walls and ceilings also eliminated costly maintenance. Windows are an integral part of this wood wall, rather than isolated holes. Wall-high doors provide large areas of glass, while above other walls abstract-designed clerestory windows are arranged high at the eaves. No light fixtures were used, Wright's design having introduced indirect lighting in this Usonian house.

On June 16, 1965, there was a great stir in the woods where the Pope-Leighey House had been resettled — it was dedicated as a historic house by Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall.⁹ He planted an oak tree where one had been designated on Mr. Wright's original plans, his actions overseen by Mr. and Mrs. Pope and their son. The ceremony was attended by members of the National Trust and delegates to the annual convention of the American Institute of Architects.

Udall paid homage to Wright and to George Washington, both of whom he said "were in quite different ways Founding Fathers"; he spoke of the generosity of the gentlewoman, Mrs. Leighey, who preferred to walk away from her home empty-handed rather than to see a work of art destroyed, and of the National Trust for its concern with the identification and preservation of historic landmarks. He called attention to "the defeat of the bulldozers and those arrogant agents of progress who have a bulldozer mentality."

Also present on the dedication program was Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. During his remarks Mr. Kaufmann said that:

Frank Lloyd Wright left his greatest legacy to the nation in this small house . . . Why is the

9 Stewart L. Udall, "Preservation and the Quality of American Life," *Historic Preservation*, Volume 17, Number 3, pp. 94-5.

Pope-Leighey House such a treasure? Wright created many buildings more startling and more ingenious. But the very modesty of the task faced here makes Wright's meaning clear beyond misconception.

The Pope-Leighey is great because of the principles it embodies, not because of its real portions of beauty, or livability, or economy, or or architectural logic. These are but manifestations of its vitality. This vitality can enliven any building, from a hen coop to a country seat or a house of worship. And in the Pope-Leighey House the power of this creative victory is presented, as clear as a handful of spring water.¹⁰

One last walk through the house — guided by the words of Mr. Kaufmann:

Wright demonstrated the hierarchy of parts and processes, and their interweaving. Floor and roof express shelter, yield heat and modulate light. Brick masses punctuate the space, bear weight, carry utilities, and channel fumes of fire and stove alike. Glass and wood not only screen, they color and shape the interior space that is drawn from, and opens out to, the space around it. Mere hallways, even in so small a house, are angled to give variety and separation to the paths of daily life, and in doing so, also articulate the architectural mass to yield clarity of design which Wright called the first essential.

The identity of this house lies, of course, in its interior, in the freedom of floor space that lets the living room flow into book place and fireplace, dining area and open area toward the garden. And in the enclosure of its services and the privacy of its bedrooms. Just as Wright folded this house around its site, so he folded the panes of glass and wood and the mat of

heat-bearing concrete until they have become part of each other and more; they yield to the terrace, welcome the light, and serve the dwellers. This is a living architecture.¹¹

There are many other subtleties of "the melody in the glen," as Loren Pope called the house in its new setting. "There," he said, "the weathered newcomer is as much a part of the glen it ornaments as any spot of flowers, showy dogwood or great oak and has as much to say."

It seems wise to conclude with an assessment of the place of the Pope-Leighey House in preservation history.

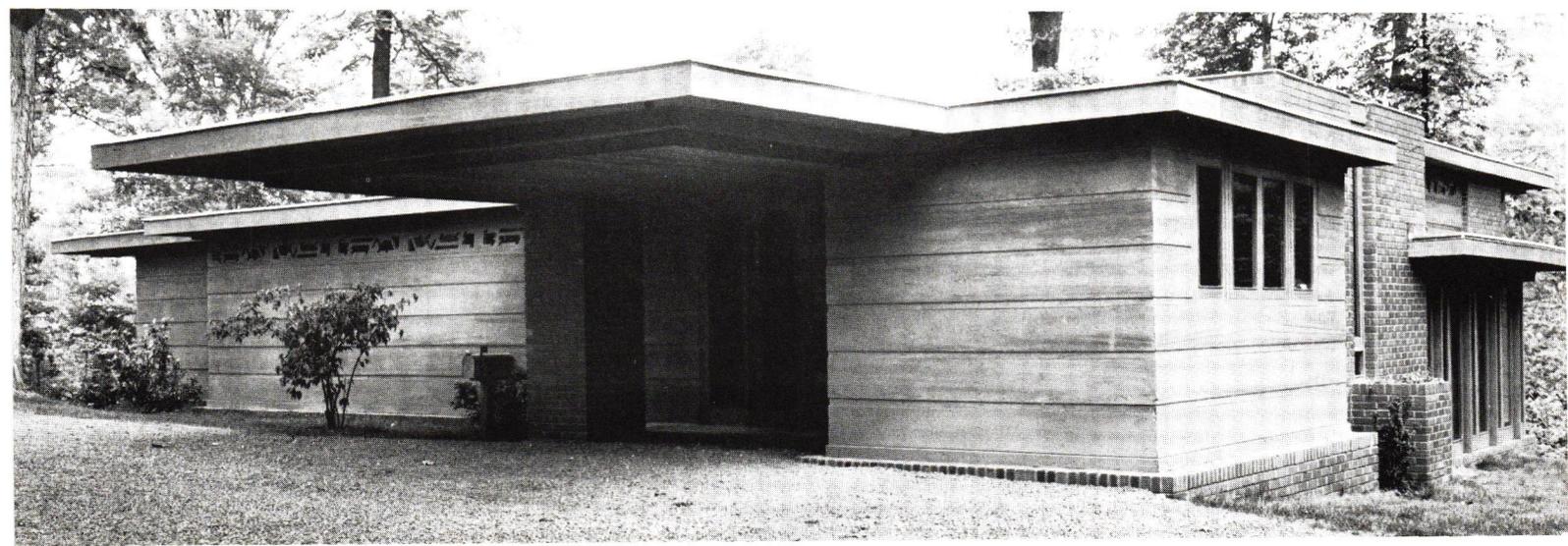
In addition to the lessons which are taught with this modest house designed by one of America's greatest 20th-century architects, acceptance of the structure was tangible evidence that the Trust was interested in landmarks of our own time, as well as aged ones.

The threat to the house occurred during International Monuments Year of which the National Trust was the official designatee of the State Department to lead this campaign in the United States. The house was an official cause for a very close relationship between the Department of the Interior and the National Trust. The episode showed the absurdity of having to solve problems which involved environmental values between two federal agencies at the last minute in the arena of political compromise. Mr. Udall had recently won from the Bureau of Public Roads the Merrywood battle for the protection of the Potomac Palisades; and for one reason or another accepted the decision to move the house from the path of the highway. The situation showed the citizens and the government of Fairfax County, Va., to be at fault in that there was no survey of their historic heritage and

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-7.

The Pope-Leighey House at Woodlawn plantation, Mt. Vernon, Virginia, after restoration. Photo by Barrett for the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

¹⁰ Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., "The Usonian Pope-Leighey House," *Historic Preservation*, Volume 17, Number 3, p. 96.



no legal means of saving it.

What has transpired in the intervening four years since the spring of 1964? The original site of the house remains as it was left, the highway which was to go through its living room has not developed, although the site itself has been surrounded by inexpensive, insensitive development houses. While Pope-Leighey House admittedly suffers some from having been taken apart and from not having the master's touch on its new location, its new outdoor space and its near distant vistas at Woodlawn are safe, more nearly like the isolated natural setting into which Wright placed it, than its original site which today has so badly been encroached upon.

The house is used as a men's dormitory for students at the Trust's annual conference for Historical Administrators at Woodlawn. The house has been visited by thousands of persons, and its guest book reveals interesting and conflicting comments: "We would like our children to have such a simple natural environment. . . Cheap dump. . . The girls are deeply impressed and aware of the contrasts in living between Woodlawn and Pope-Leighey House . . . Could live here the rest of my life. . . One feels like part of it. . . The largest small house we ever saw. . ."

Since the house came to the Trust without an endowment, it is now rented to a bachelor who agreed to become part of the furniture if he is at home during visiting hours.

Mrs. Leighey returned this summer for a home leave from her mission post in Kyoto, to which she has since returned for another three years. Her advice and criticism as a sensitive consultant are invaluable as is that of Mr. and Mrs. Pope who are again living in the area.

Three months after the house was threatened the Bureau of Public Roads announced a new policy designed to protect recreational and historical resources in the construction of federal-aid highway projects. The staff of the Bureau of Public Roads has stated that if they had been more aware of the sites which their projects affected they could have been more sympathetic and done more — and said unofficially, at least they could have granted more money in order to help in the move.

With the organization of the Department of Transportation and under the 1966 Transportation act,¹² the Secretary can not approve any project which requires the use of any lands from a public park, recreation area, wildlife refuge, or historic

12 Public Law 89-670.

site, unless there is no feasible alternative to the use of such land, and then the program must include all possible planning to minimize harm to such areas. We have also been assured that the new Department of Transportation is concerned not only with the letter of the new act but also with its spirit and intent.

We now have two very important programs. In 1966 the National Historic Preservation Act¹³ made possible the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation which acts as a mediation board with federal agencies whose construction and licensing programs may endanger properties on the National Register.¹⁴ The legislation also calls for the states to submit to the Register those districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture, of national, state or local importance.¹⁵

Today Fairfax County has a staffed Landmarks Commission, is working on its survey in order to present entries to the National Register, and is seeking ways to protect the historic property before it is threatened and the means to maintain it. Recently Fairfax Council passed legislation creating a buffer zone around a landmark, causing to be reviewed any development within a quarter of a mile of its boundaries.

We invite you to visit the Pope-Leighey House and enjoy its distinctive character — a sense of space, light and freedom to which Wright felt all Americans were entitled. It is just as appropriate to the citizen of today's democratic society as was the elegant plantation mansion to the aristocrat of the pre-war South.

13 Public Law 89-665.

14 This program is administered under the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service, Department of Interior, 801-19th Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

15 "The Federal Responsibility in Historic Preservation," the topic of a panel session at the National Trust's 21st Annual Meeting, October 20, 1967, is featured in *Historic Preservation*, Volume 20, No. 1, January-March 1968. The papers deal with the programs of the U. S. Departments of Interior, Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and presents three case histories. A later report on the programs of the Department of Interior under the National Park Service appears in *Preservation News*, February 1968, "National Park Service Holds Second Preservation Conference, pages 1-2. The quarterly magazine, *Historic Preservation*, and the monthly newspaper, *Preservation News*, are published by the National Trust and are received regularly by its members. Copies may be obtained for \$.50 and \$.10 respectively. Requests should be addressed to the Trust's headquarters office, 748 Jackson Place, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

Book Reviews

THE JAPANESE PRINT, An Interpretation, by Frank Lloyd Wright. Horizon Press, New York, 1967. 144 pp., 32 plates, \$30.00.

The first edition of this book in 1912 had only 35 pages, measured 5-1/4" by 8-1/4", and was printed on light tan papers. A single line drawing of a symbolic crane was used on both the cover and the title page as a "mon" or seal. It was a small book containing a very big idea.

This new edition has been expanded in size, boxed, and a portfolio of 32 color reproductions of Japanese prints from Frank Lloyd Wright's collection have been included. Some later writings about Japan and Japanese prints by Wright have been added. The publisher's profits from the book's sales will be donated to the committee for the preservation of the ill-fated Imperial Hotel.

In either edition, Frank Lloyd Wright's *The Japanese Print* touches on ideas whose origins have been forgotten and are therefore believed to be totally new. Here is also a forgotten chapter in our own cultural history and perhaps in the world history of art as well. It seems unfortunate that as this book was being expanded some additional information was not added to reveal these complex relationships.

At the turn of the century, the collecting of Japanese prints was known as "the Chicago craze", and the great American collections were being formed at this time mostly in Chicago. The Ukiyo-e prints had been exhibited at the 1893 Columbian Exposition with their usual immediate impact, setting off one of the discoveries of Japan that happen every twenty years. Connoisseurship and historical research were slowly developing, but the appeal of the prints was immediate . . . based essentially on their visual values. One must remember that at this time most art was verbal in its appeal, with literary elements of historicism or sentimentality far more important than the "look" of a painting. Wright devoted a large part of this book to the definition of those visual values and referred to a popular painting that commanded great public attention at that time, titled "Breaking Home Ties."

'Breaking Home Ties', for instance, nor any of its numerous kith and kin can be dignified as art. There are many degrees, to be sure, of kinship to 'Breaking Home Ties' not so easy to detect, yet all of which bear the marks of

vulgar pretense. The message of these Japanese prints is to educate us spiritually for all time beyond such banality.

Not alone in the realm of the painter is the message being heeled, but also in that of the musician, of the sculptor and of the architect. (p. 32)

As we look at the verbalism and curious historicism that prevade Pop-art, Funk-art on the one hand, and the sentimentality of a pseudo-photographic art such as Wyeth on the other, the home ties appear more difficult to break. There is this time however, a third direction trying to discover meaning through basic forms.

Exotic as these Japanese prints may have appeared, they were essentially a democratic art form and as Hugh Duncan has shown, this was the functioning critical unit of measurement in Chicago at this time . . . both conscious and unconscious.

The Ukiyo-e prints were the natural expression of the merchant class, who ranked in 17th, 18th and 19th century Japan at the bottom of the social scale, even below the farmers. Until the 20th century, participation in a particular art form was determined first by one's social class. In the 17th and 18th century sumptuary laws were evoked to keep their arts appropriate to their class and even official censorship was established. Such elegant new developments as the use of mica in the printing inks or embossing were at times subject to such sumptuary laws, and it is interesting to note the puritanical tendency for Japanese businessmen today to avoid ostentation in every form. The whole system was in danger as the merchants of Edo (now Tokyo) and Osaka grew in both wealth and behind the scenes power.

Ukiyo-e originally meant art of the miserable world, but evolved to mean art of the passing or floating world. These prints, which were Japan's first mass media, concerned themselves with the common everyday scenes of the people of Edo. Life in the teahouses, the red-light Yoshiwara district, various occupations such as carpenters, wrestlers, famous stars of the Kabuki theater, noblemen in disguise while 'slumming', the everchanging world of fashion and travel along the way to the capital at Kyoto . . . all were carefully explored in this view of the floating world. However, seen within the over-all context of Japanese art, which is one of the profound arts of the world, these prints held a position not too different from that of the Comic Book today. Yet the psychology of

Chicago's newly developed merchant class was probably not essentially different from Japan's new merchant class of two centuries before. Because Ukiyo-e prints were and are a great art, they communicated through time to new audiences.

Many important collections formed at this time, Mr. Buckingham being fascinated by the early

charge of the New York branch of the Yamanaka Company, dealers in Japanese art and antiques. It was through his influence that the offer of a commission was made. Wright simply bought everything he could without prejudice to period or edition. He functioned as an unofficial dealer during his trips to Japan, buying for his own collection and for others. He personally caused print prices to inflate in Japan, where Japanese authorities estimate he spent about \$250,000 on prints alone. He also bought paintings, porcelains and sculpture.

He was mainly interested in the decorative arts of Japan, rather than in the Zen arts of sumi painting, calligraphy, or such rough naturalistic ceramics as Raku or Bizen. It is this Zen inspired art that seems most meaningful to us in our most recent discovery of Japan.

Wright was known to have settled a financial debt owed Griffin with the barter of prints and the largest part of his collection was auctioned off in 1927, when he was faced with the possible loss of Taliesin. Part of this collection is now in the Art Institute of Chicago. Wright's own connoisseurship was apparently limited to printmaker and subject, rather than edition or variation. Ukiyo-e prints are still being produced today that are based on 18th and 19th century designs, and their beauty persists. . . but as financial investments they are far more complicated. Wright loved the prints for what they were to see, and for the great principle of art and design he found. . . perhaps for the first time, within them.

Wright found in the prints a humanism, an awareness of nature that were also ordered by a startling and harmonious system of design, a new kind of geometric orchestration. Basic geometric forms were used as visual systems, whose abstract content paralleled the verbal content of the scene itself. Triangles, circles, squares and spirals as pure forms carried meaning in themselves. In Austria, Wright met Gustav Klimt the Successionist painter who was also working in this way. This is still a current art idea today, as we can see in our Op-art and in the Minimal art.

Wright published this idea in this book a year before Kandinsky did in his own exposition of this idea, in *On the Spiritual in Art*. Both Wright and Kandinsky had as children attended Froebel Kindergartens with its specific emphasis on geometric forms and composition with those forms. A series of graded problems called 'gifts', were based on discovering both the expressive and the structural aspects of these forms. This theory also supplied



Frank Lloyd Wright designed this exhibit of Japanese prints for the Art Institute of Chicago in 1908. Photo Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.

'Primitives', Mr. Gookin by Shuncho, a large general collection made by the Evanston engineer Charles Morse, and many others. Wright and Walter Burley Griffin both collected, and Sullivan was interested in many phases of oriental art. Many of these collections served to form the core of the unequalled collection now in the Art Institute of Chicago, numbering over 8,500 carefully chosen and rare prints.

Wright's interest in prints indirectly led to his commission for the Imperial Hotel. Wright had become a friend of Aisaku Hayashi who was in

the basis of the Bauhaus foundation course, now found in some form in every school of architecture and art. The influence is quite apparently in Kandinsky's paintings or in Wright's floor plans and ornaments. . . particularly in the Midway Gardens and the Imperial Hotel.

The prints influenced Wright in many ways, the first being direct imitation. Details of rendering based on the prints can be found as late as the 1945 Morris house, with its Hokusai-like wave washing the rock, as well as in the presentation renderings done by Marian Mahoney. Japanese carpentry details can be found in his early work, such as the wooden entryway at the wall of the Coonley house or in lanterns at Taliesin and Unity Temple. Most influential of course, were those principles which he reinterpreted into the American idiom. . . scale, materials, light and shadow, and naturalness.

Doctor's orders kept Wright from ever returning to Japan, where a specific localized Amoebic Dysentery threatened his life if he should return. He had left dangerously ill, but the prints and the experience of Japan had formed a newer image of an architecture.

Wright grew to develop a reputation for disliking modern art, which reached a high point in the still untold story of the Guggenheim Museum. He had at various times invited artists such as the Mexican muralist Orozco or the sculptor Brancusi to live and work at Taliesin, while criticising the sentimental art that seemed to persist. After the Guggenheim Museum opening, the art critics accused Wright of building a personal monument and not even understanding modern art at all. Perhaps if any of them should happen to read this book, and even perhaps understand it, they might even understand the Guggenheim. And for any book, that's quite a lot.

Reviewed by Robert Kostka

ARCHITECTURAL ESSAYS FROM THE CHICAGO SCHOOL, Thomas Tallmadge, Louis H. Sullivan, Jens Jensen and Frank Lloyd Wright from 1900 to 1909, ed. by W. R. Hasbrouck. Collected from The Architectural Review, The Ladies Home Journal, and The Brickbuilder. The Prairie School Press, Park Forest, Illinois, 1967. 28 pp. including 2 foldout plates, paper, \$2.50.

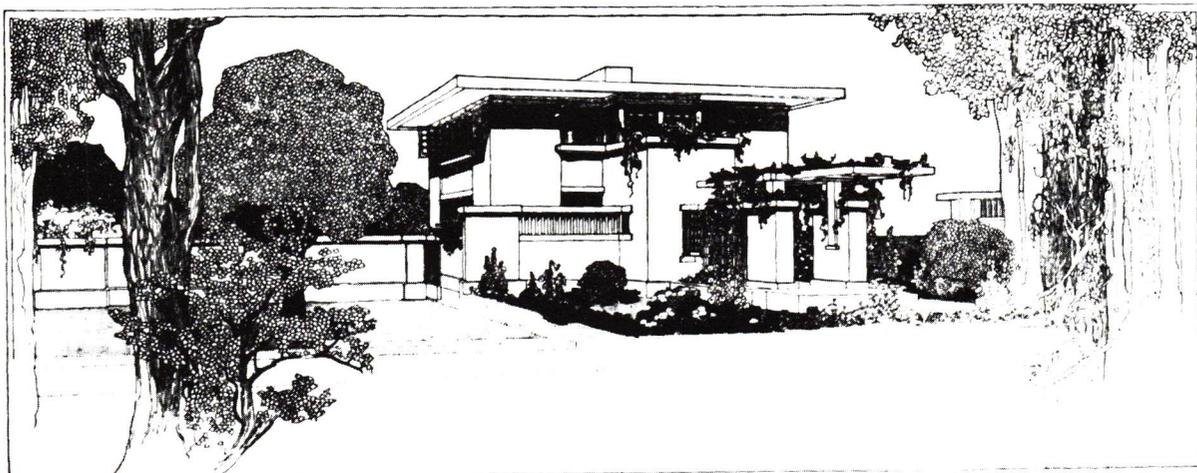
Continuing a policy of making important but long out of print material available to architectural historians, the Prairie School Press has now republished this collection of significant essays from periodicals published around the turn of the century.

The title of this collection derives from Thomas Tallmadge's article "The Chicago School" which first appeared in *The Architectural Review* of April 1908. This comprehensive article was the first to establish without question that a group of talented architects in the midwest had indeed established a "school" of architecture.

The remaining articles consist of an essay on landscape architecture by Jens Jensen and four shorter articles by Frank Lloyd Wright. These include the three houses Wright designed for *The Ladies Home Journal* and his "Village Bank" published by *The Brickbuilder* as part of a series. Finally, two double page foldouts of Louis Sullivan's drawings for "Island City", an Amusement Park near Philadelphia, complete the collection.

All of the articles are reproduced by offset in their original format. Copies of the original editions of any of these are virtually unobtainable although they can be seen at larger libraries. Previous attempts to reproduce illustrations from these essays have been generally unsatisfactory. The reproduction in the present instance is generally excellent and the paper is of excellent quality.

This, along with similar material published by the Prairie School Press in the past, provides a basic library of information to those persons interested in the development of modern architecture.



Letter to the Editors

Sirs:

I have just read the following quote in *The Prairie School Review* letters Third Quarter 1967: "Unless new evidence comes to the light Elmslie should receive as much credit for the design of this (Owatanna) bank building as Sullivan".

That does it.

Suppose some one might write in years to come: "Unless new evidence comes to the light, John Lloyd Wright should receive as much credit for the design of The Midway Gardens as Frank Lloyd Wright".

BANG!

Elmslie was an architect for many buildings. Why pick one of Sullivan's buildings for an Elmslie credit instead of one for which Elmslie was the architect?

Do mice play since the cat is away?

John Lloyd Wright
Del Mar, California

In Chicago

The Chicago School of Architecture Foundation will begin accepting memberships in 1968. The Foundation, which owns and occupies the John J. Glessner house, will use funds obtained through memberships in expanding its operations, programs and restoration efforts.

Members will enjoy the facilities of the Foundation free of charge except for occasional special events. All membership fees are contributions and will be tax deductible.

Following are the various categories of memberships available and the fees for each:

Student (annual)	\$5.00
Regular (annual)	15.00
Sustaining (annual)	50.00
Life (individual)	300.00
Life Patron (individual)	\$1,000 or more
Life Patron (group)	\$5,000 or more

Those persons desiring to become members should direct their correspondence to L. Morgan Yost, FAIA, Executive Director, The Chicago School of Architecture Foundation, 1800 South Prairie Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60616.

Barry Byrne, 1883-1967

Barry Byrne was killed on December 17, 1967 when he was struck by an automobile. Mr. Byrne was one of the most distinguished and successful of the architects who were trained in the Oak Park studio of Frank Lloyd Wright in the first decade of the Twentieth Century. His work had a quality of its own, however, and he was not merely a "follower" of Frank Lloyd Wright. The Fourth Quarter, 1966 issue of *The Prairie School Review* was devoted entirely to his work.

Preview

The first issue of Volume V of *The Prairie School Review* will be a Special Double issue. The principle article will be devoted to Minneapolis architect Harvey Ellis. This strange and talented designer has long been a difficult figure to assign to a particular place in the history of the modern movement in architecture. We hope our next issue will bring to light little known information on Harvey Ellis.

We will also continue our policy of publishing significant current architecture by presenting some of the work of a talented young man now practicing in the Minneapolis area.

Several books have recently been published which are devoted to the architecture of a specific state or city. We will review a number of these including:

The Architecture of Wisconsin

Richard W. E. Perrin

Minnesota Houses

Roger Kennedy

Sixty Sketches of Iowa's Past & Present

William J. Wagner, FAIA

Architecture in Michigan

Wayne Andrews

Landmark Architecture of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

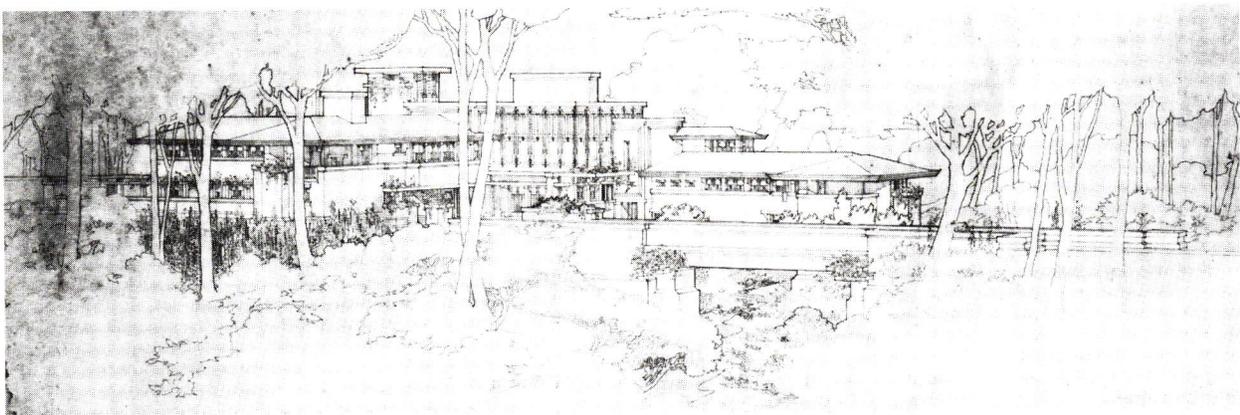
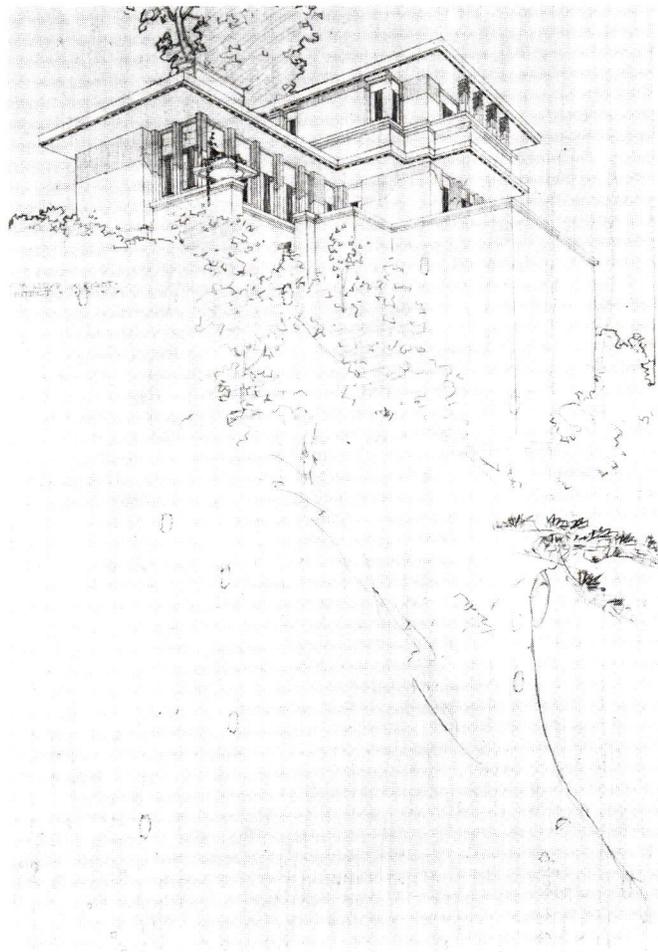
James D. Van Trump & Arthur Ziegler, Jr.

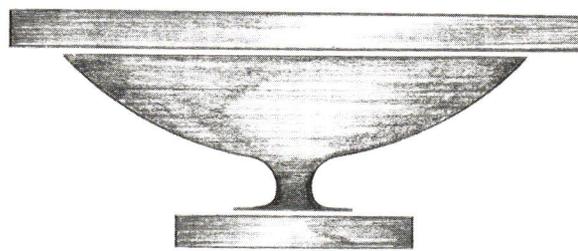
We continue to be interested in articles concerning the development of modern architecture for possible publication. Authors should submit outlines to the editors for review prior to completing their final manuscripts.

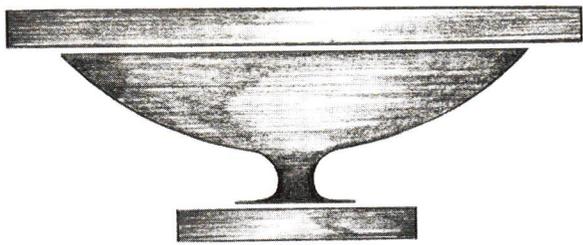
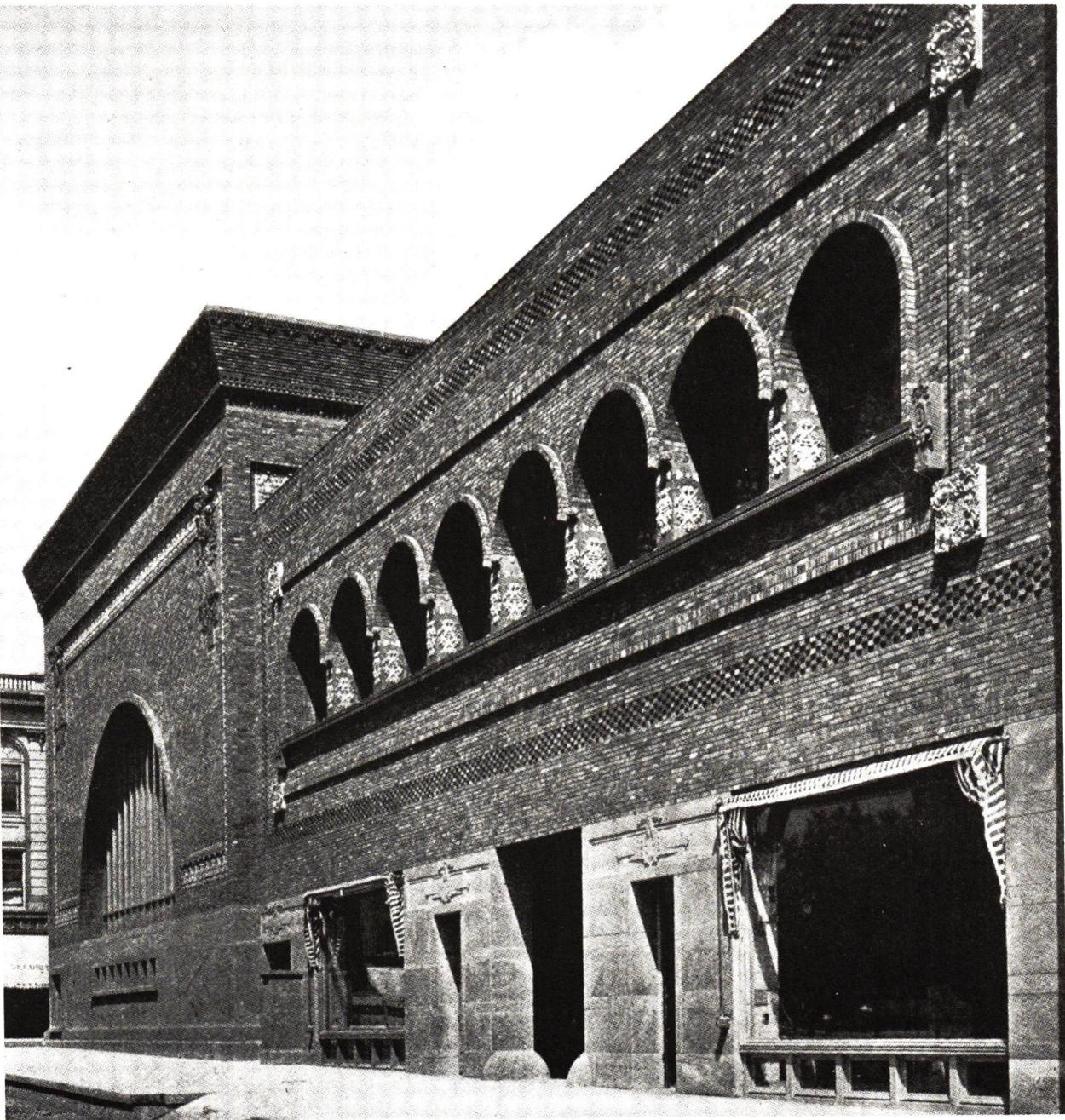
Wright Drawings

The two drawings on this page were gifts from Frank Lloyd Wright to the School of Architecture at Texas A & M University. We are indebted to the University for permission to reproduce them.

*The drawing below is a perspective of a project for Sherman Booth in Glencoe, Illinois prepared in 1911. A similar sketch was published in 1962 in *The Drawings of Frank Lloyd Wright* by Arthur Drexler. The drawing at right has not been identified. It is reminiscent of the Hardy house at Racine, Wisconsin. It may have been an early study for the George Stewart house at Santa Barbara, California.*





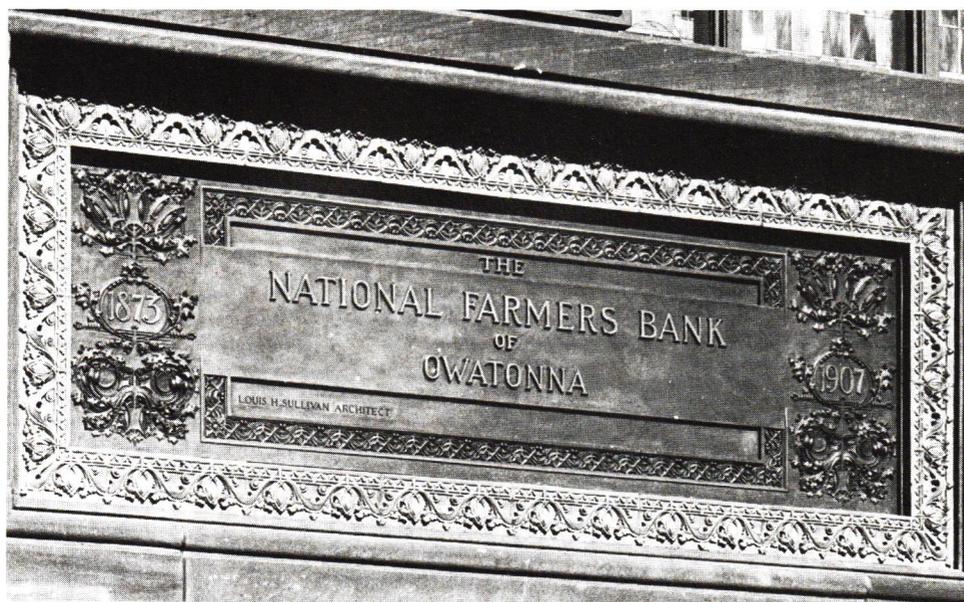


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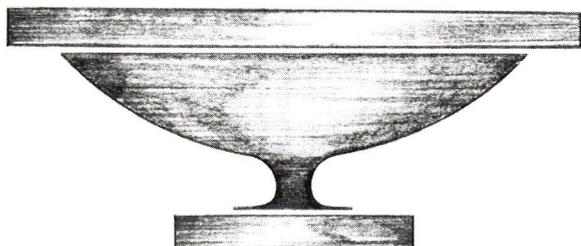
\$1.50 a copy



ABOVE: This was the original sign over the entrance to the National Farmers' Bank of Owatonna. Sullivan, like nearly all architectural innovators of his time felt it necessary to design, or at least to supervise closely, the design of all accessories of his buildings. Thus we have the beginnings of the "total design" concept of today. His signs were always tasteful and restrained and sometimes, as here, incorporated his name as architect.

COVER: This view is of the south side of the National Farmers' Bank of Owatonna, as it originally appeared. Today it remains essentially the same, with exception of the addition of several signs.

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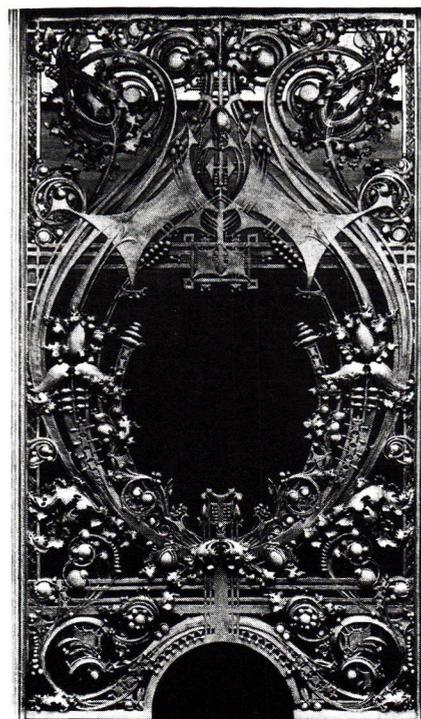
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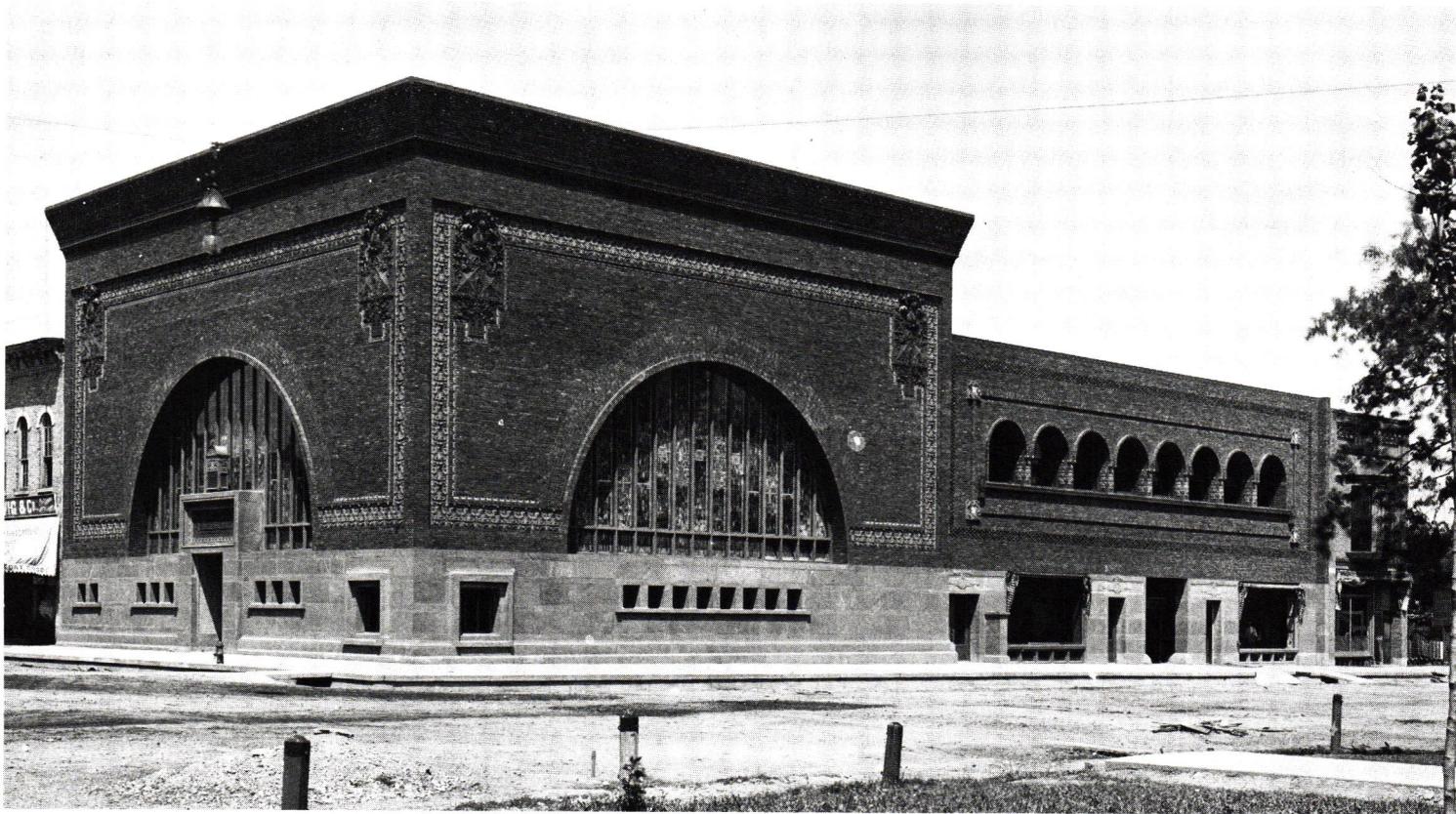


From the EDITORS

We are beginning our planned expansion of THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW with this issue. The editorial content this quarter is larger than ever before and, we believe, as significant as any work we have previously published. We are particularly pleased with the book review section in this issue where we have printed the longest and best critical analysis ever to appear in THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW. Similar reviews of this calibre will be a matter of standard editorial policy in the future. Furthermore, our reviewers and readers can be assured that their reviews will continue to appear exactly as written whether or not we agree with what they might say. On the other hand, we may offer authors or other reviewers the opportunity for a rebuttal in the same or a subsequent issue of THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW.

We also expect to begin the publication of contemporary work done in the "Prairie Spirit". By this we mean recent architecture demonstrating the original thought and creative talent that seems to be native to the American Midwest. Not that we plan to confine ourselves to regional architecture by any means. THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW will publish the best work we can find regardless of where or by whom it is done. This will include architectural criticism as well as architecture.

What we plan for the future is to be in addition to what we have done in the past, for we do not expect to give up any of our, or our readers', interest in the history of the development of modern architecture. Rather we intend to demonstrate that architecture is a total concept involving history, criticism, literature, the arts, planning and design.



The National Farmer's Bank, Owatonna, Minnesota

By Paul E. Sprague

Professor Sprague is presently teaching Architectural History in the Department of Architecture at the University of Notre Dame. He has recently completed his doctoral work at Princeton University. The subject of his thesis was "Louis Sullivan's Architectural Ornament". Professor Sprague has been the author of several articles concerning Louis Sullivan, his work, and his contemporaries.

In 1906 Louis Sullivan published an essay in the *Craftsman* which he called, "What is Architecture: A Study of the American People of Today."¹ Its import was that the American architect, by using historic architectural forms, was creating an environment which denied rather than expressed the collective spirits of his time and place. Sullivan believed that, in America, the primary spiritual force demanding expression was the democratic ideal — "a philosophy founded on man — the integrity, responsibility and accountability of the Individual". He argued that the American architect,

by virtue of his own untrammelled freedom and individuality, should search out, interpret and give appropriate form to this amorphous democratic spirit. The process by which the architect was to conceive of appropriate non-historic architectural forms was necessarily subjective. No formula was possible, but Sullivan clearly believed that each architect, acting with "responsible" freedom, could evolve by way of personal intuition and imagination an appropriate expression of the democratic ideal.

¹ *Craftsman*, X (May, 1906), 145-49; (June, 1906), 352-58; (July, 1906), 507-13. The essay was originally published in the *American Contractor*, XXVII (Jan. 6, 1906), 48-54. Reprinted in *Kindergarten Chats* (revised 1918) and *Other Writings*, Isabella Athey, ed. "The Documents of Modern Art," New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc., 1947, pp. 227-41.

That Carl Bennett, the vice president of a bank serving the small agricultural community of Owatonna in southern Minnesota, should have been capable of grasping Sullivan's message seems quite extraordinary in itself. Surely most hard-headed businessmen of the time would have bogged down

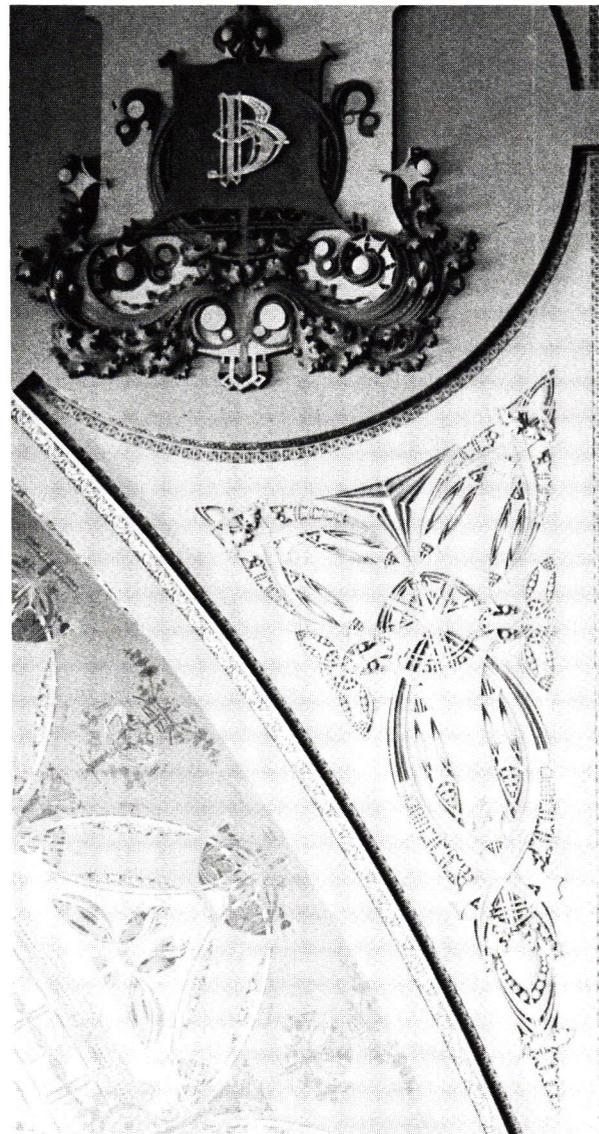
in Sullivan's rhetoric without even beginning to perceive the essence of his argument. And for a bank executive to have passed over — and apparently without offense — Sullivan's tirades against pecuniary ethics and commercial morality also seems astounding:

Look at your business. What has it become but a war of extermination among cannibals? Does it express Democracy? . . . In (contemporary academic) buildings the Dollar is vulgarly exalted — and the Dollar you place above Man. You adore it twenty-four hours each day: — It is your God! . . . By what right does any man say: I am! I own! I am therefore a law unto myself! How quickly among you has *I lead!* become — *I possess! I betray!* How glibly have you acquiesced. With what awful folly have you assumed greed to be the basis of Democracy!²

Yet the banker, Carl Bennett, was indeed an extraordinary man. Not only did he comprehend the meaning of Sullivan's "What is Architecture" when he chanced to read it in 1906, but he also convinced his board of directors to name Sullivan as architect of their projected new building for the National Farmers' Bank at Owatonna, Minnesota.

Bennett had several reasons for engaging Sullivan. First, he believed that a well-designed building expressive of its purpose would be of value both for its own sake and for the additional business it would attract as well. Second, he thought academic architecture highly impractical. In his enthusiasm for the building after its completion, Carl Bennett went so far as to write about it in the pages of the *Craftsman*. His reasons for engaging Sullivan are well stated in that article and it is appropriate, therefore, that we let him tell his own story:

With increasing business came the natural need for a large and more convenient banking room, and the officers of the bank not only felt the necessity of adequate and practical housing for its business, but also desired to furnish its patrons with every convenience that was necessary and incident to its environment. But this was not all. They believed that an adequate expression of the character of their business in the form of a simple, dignified and beautiful building was due to themselves and due to their patrons . . . Further than that, they believed that a beautiful business house



Sullivan was fond of weaving monograms into his architectural ornament. He seems to have felt that this was a more sophisticated type of sign and one that could be made more aesthetically pleasing than the ordinary kind. The "B" presumably stands for "Bennett", the family which originally commissioned and owned the bank building. Fuermann Photo.

2 "What is Architecture: A Study of the American People of Today". My quotation is taken from a typewritten copy in the Morrison Papers.

would be its own reward and that it would pay from the financial point of view in increased business.

The layout of the floor space was in mind for many years, but the architectural expression of the business of banking was probably a thing more felt than understood. Anyhow, the desire for such expression persisted, and a pretty thorough study was made of existing bank buildings. The classic style of architecture so much used for bank buildings was at first considered, but was finally rejected as being not necessarily expressive of a bank, and also because it is defective when it comes to any practical use.

Because architects who were consulted preferred to follow precedent or to take their inspiration 'from the books,' it was determined to make a search for an architect who would not only take into consideration the practical needs of the business but who would heed the desire of the bank officers for an adequate expression in the form of the building of the use to which it would be put.³

In its issue of October 27, 1906, the *Chicago Economist* carried a notice stating that, "Louis H. Sullivan is working on plans for a three story bank, store and office building, 68 x 150 feet, to be built for the National Farmers' Bank at Owatonna, Minn. It will cost \$80,000."⁴ Sullivan, Elmslie and whoever remained from the previously large office staff labored on the necessary drawings from October 1906, through August 1907.⁵ Photographs of various ornamental details were published between June 1907, and April 1908.⁶ The major photographic essays illustrating the finished bank were published in October and November of 1908. Judging by the dates when these ornamental and architectural photographs were published, the bank was finished between April and October and, most likely, about July or August of 1908.⁷

Although it would seem obvious enough to say that George Elmslie, Sullivan's chief draftsman after 1893, had played a subsidiary role in the design

3 Carl K. Bennett, "A Bank Built for Farmers: Louis Sullivan Designs a Building Which Marks a New Epoch in American Architecture," *Craftsman*, XV (November, 1908), pp. 176, 183.

4 *Economist* (Chicago), XXXVI (Oct. 27, 1906), 662.

5 Plans and working drawings, on microfilm, Ricker Library, University of Illinois.

6 See Bibliography.

7 See Bibliography.

and detailing of this building, David Gebhard believes the reverse was true:

The National Farmers' Bank . . . has long been considered one of Sullivan's major contributions to American architecture. It has been known for a number of years that Elmslie's work on this building was by no means insignificant. In fact the building was basically designed by Elmslie with only two elements of the design being by Sullivan: one of these was the ornamental pattern on the underside of the interior soffits of the great arches; the second was the basic box-like conception of the building. Except for these, Sullivan did no other design or drafting work on the building.⁸

Gebhard is certainly correct in asserting that Elmslie's role in the design of the bank was much greater than normal for a chief draftsman. For example, all of the six surviving drawings for ornamental details are clearly and without question in Elmslie's hand.⁹ Also, all of the terra cotta and plaster decorative details are in Elmslie's own style as a comparison with any of his independent ornaments after 1909 will quickly show.¹⁰ The only decorative design in the building that can be absolutely attributed to Sullivan is the stencil on the interior walls below each of the four large arches. That this stencil was personally designed by Sullivan is confirmed by William Purcell, Elmslie's partner between 1909 and 1921, who wrote that the only ornament designed by Sullivan himself "was the stencil on the underside of the interior soffit of the great arch."¹¹

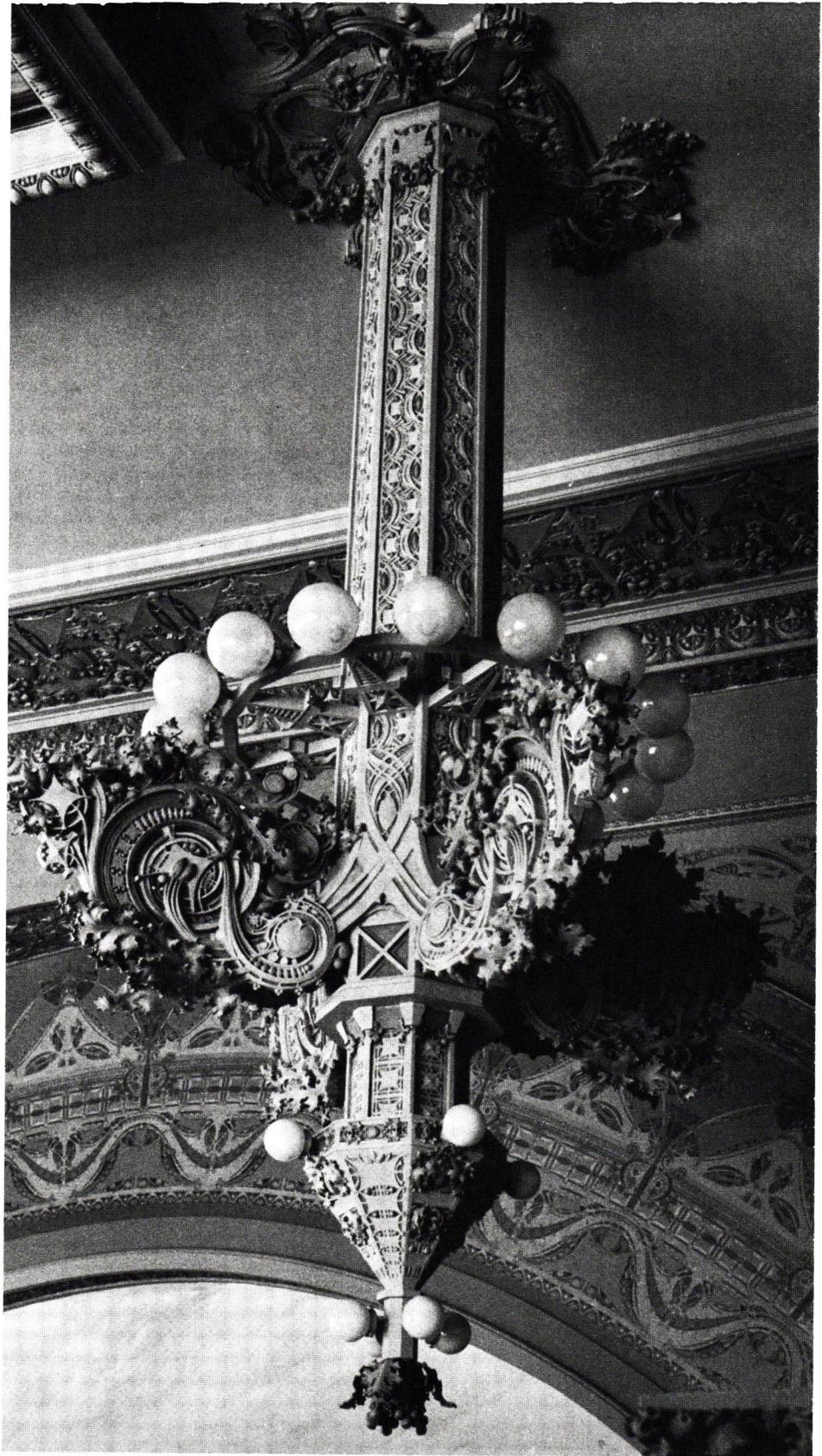
But for Gebhard to have limited Sullivan's contribution to a single stencil and to the "basic box-like conception of the building" was going much too far. The truth of the matter was clearly stated

8 "Louis Sullivan and George Grant Elmslie," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XIX (May, 1960), 66.

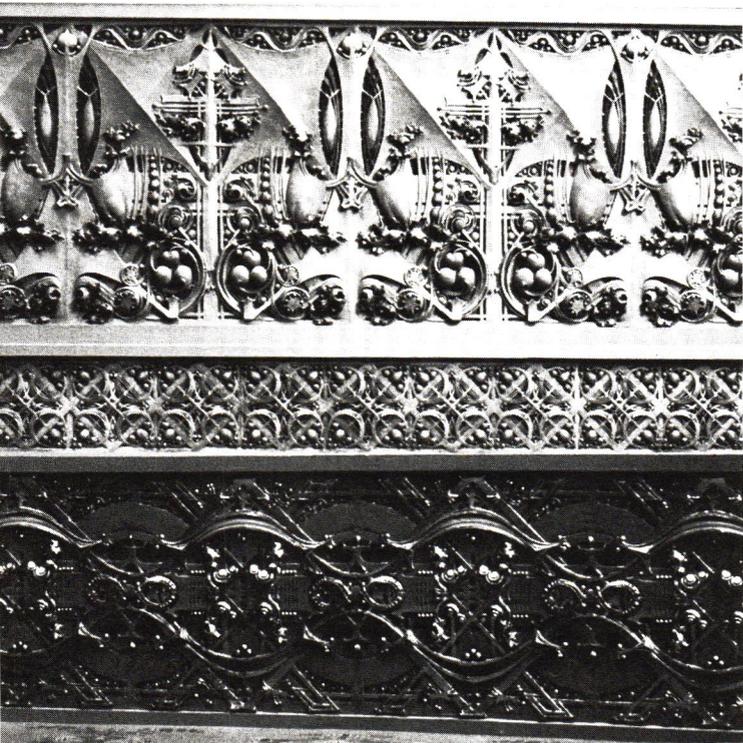
9 Avery Architectural Library, Columbia University. I would like to thank Adolf Placzek, Avery Librarian, for his generous assistance during my many visits to the Avery Library. I wish to thank him also for his kind permission to publish the ornamental drawings which accompany this article.

10 For Elmslie's ornament and ornamental drawings see, "The Statics and Dynamics of Architecture: The Work of Purcell, Feick & Elmslie, Architects," *Western Architect*, XIX (January, 1913), 1-10; reprinted by the Prairie School Press, 1966.

11 David Gebhard, "William Gray Purcell and George Grant Elmslie and the Early Progressive Movement in American Architecture from 1900 to 1920," 2 vols., unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1957, 1, 85.

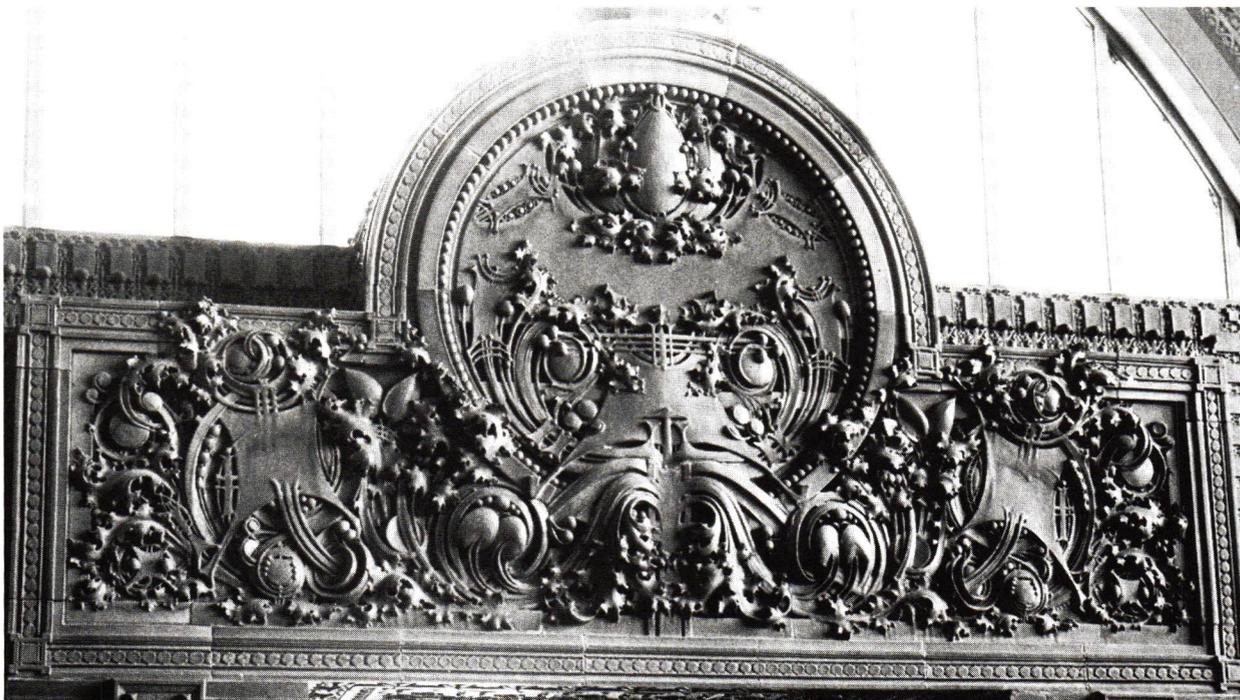


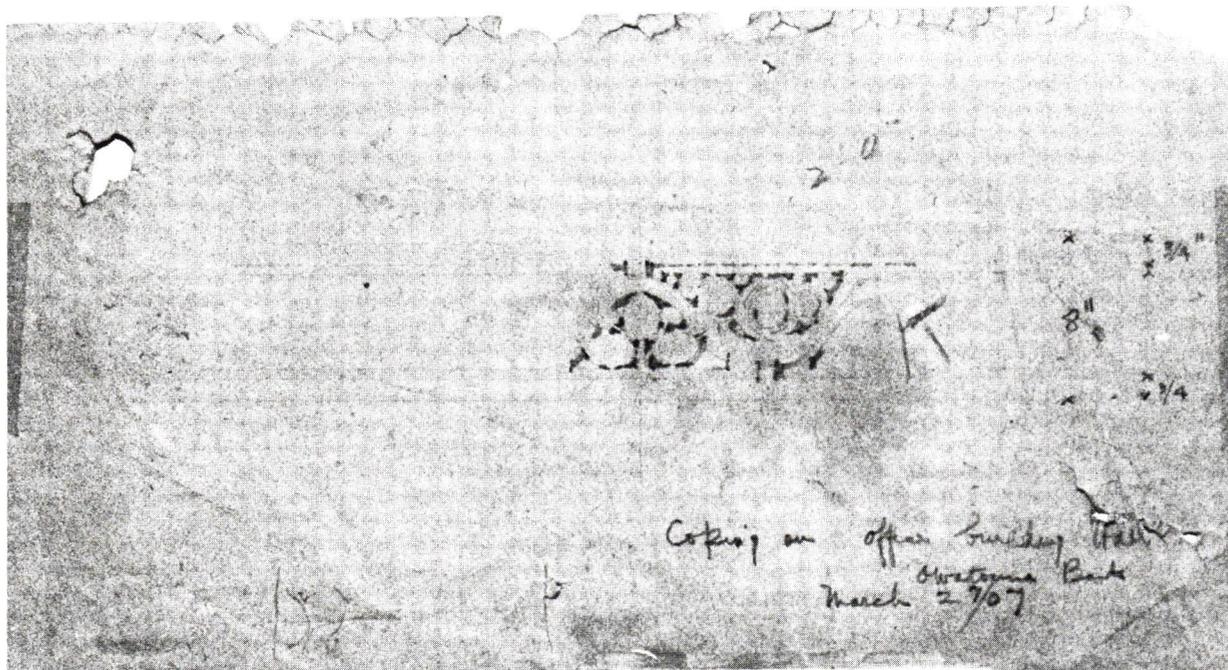
One of the four great chandeliers or "electroliers" as they were called at the time. Electroliers of a similar shape may be traced back in Sullivan's work as far as the Auditorium Banquet Hall of 1890. The decoration of this electrolier is very much in Elmslie's style of the time and the lavish, quality also conforms to Elmslie's practice of the years after 1909 when he opened his own office. Sullivan never went quite this far. Photo by Fuermann.



These three moldings are executed in plaster. The darker one which covers the soffits of the great arches is surfaced with gold leaf. A drawing for the one with large rectangles whose sides are concave still exists. It, and the narrow molding next to it, frames the ceiling of the bank. All three of these appear to be the work of Elmslie; however, it is most likely that Sullivan provided sketchy suggestions for these moldings and that Elmslie developed them in his own style. Photo by Fuermann.

This large complex decoration is greenish terra cotta over the inner side of the entrance to the bank. Although the design is primarily the work of Elmslie, it demonstrates that the origins of Sullivan's ornament lay in the botanical interests of nineteenth century designers. Although there are sweeping curves in these plant motifs, this and other ornaments in the bank cannot be called Art Nouveau for two significant reasons. Where Art Nouveau architectural ornament was generally structural, this ornament is non-structural. Where Art Nouveau ornament was generally asymmetrical, this ornament is always symmetrical. Both Art Nouveau and Sullivanesque ornament represent contemporaneous solutions to the problem of evolving a new, non-historical architectural decoration. Their similarities result from both having come from similar sources. Photo by Fuermann.





by Elmslie himself as early as 1931 where, in a letter to Lewis Mumford, he wrote:

When (Sullivan) . . . returned from Owatonna he had some sketches of requirements and a study for the design. His design embodied three arches on each of the two fronts. I suggested a great thirty-six foot arch, instead of the three. The building was so built. I made every drawing for the building, every detail, every ornament without exception¹² as well as establishing its characteristic motif, the big arch.¹³

Obviously Elmslie did not mean to take credit for the planning of the bank, for the conception of the great forty foot high unobstructed interior space, for the lighting through skylight and side windows, for the structural and mechanical systems, for the choice of materials, for the scheme of coloration or for the location of ornaments and ornamented areas. Apparently Elmslie supplied the idea for the single arch on each facade, designed all of

This drawing for a "coping on officebuilding hall", dated March 27, 1907, seems to be entirely the work of George Elmslie. The inscription is in his handwriting. Photo courtesy of the Avery Library.

the ornament and made all of the working drawings. The fact that the ornamental details are so much more satisfactorily integrated into the fabric of the building than was the case in Elmslie's independent work after 1909 implies that Sullivan also played some preliminary though obviously minor part in the design of each ornament. Thus, even though Elmslie's part was considerable, we cannot agree with Gebhard that "the building was basically designed by Elmslie".

Nevertheless, George Elmslie must be given his due, especially regarding the ornamental details of the bank. They are among the finest, if in fact they are not the finest, that Elmslie ever designed. Indeed, they are even superior to Sullivan's own ornaments after the turn of the century. Such elegant and imaginative ornamental details as the tellers' wickets, clock frame, ceiling ornament and entrance decoration mark Elmslie as one of the outstanding decorative designers of all time. In fact, it is something of a paradox that Sullivan is best known not for his own ornaments but rather for those by Elmslie on the National Farmers' Bank and on the Schlesinger & Mayer Building (Carson, Pirie, Scott). Clearly the time has come for a reappraisal of Sullivanesque ornamentation whereby Sullivan will become known for his own fine work

12 Although this seems to conflict with my attribution of the stencil to Sullivan, I believe that in his letter to Mumford, Elmslie had in mind only the "plastic" ornament and not this two-dimensional stenciled decoration. This assumption also serves to explain Purcell's otherwise incorrect statement, quoted by Gebhard, *Dissertation, op. cit.*, 1, 85, that Sullivan designed the stencil.

13 Letter from George Elmslie to Lewis Mumford, May 29, 1931, partly recorded in the Morrison Papers. Elmslie repeated the essentials of this statement in a letter to Frank L. Wright dated June 12, 1936, published in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XX (October, 1961), 140.

of the eighteen-eighties and nineties and Elmslie for his impressive ornamental achievements after 1900.

The owners of the bank wanted a monumental self-contained banking room on the corner of their land and a business building, containing a store, offices, a printing plant and a warehouse on the remainder. Sullivan did not disappoint them. He designed an elegant brick, stone and terra cotta edifice some forty feet high and sixty-eight feet square for the corner site. Within this shell he provided a single grand unobstructed space floating over a central public area. He subdivided the perimeter by means of nine foot high partition walls

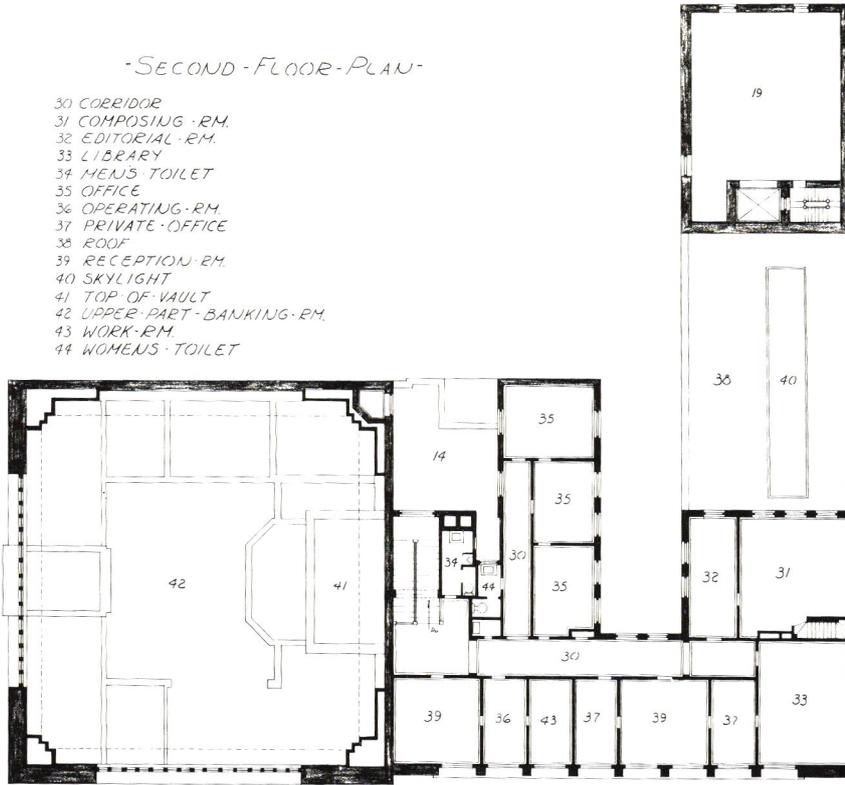
This is a view looking west in the bank toward the entrance as seen from the officer's platform. This is the best view we have showing the relationship of the public and subsidiary spaces to the grand magnificently decorated thirty foot high space that floats overhead and unifies the interior. Fuermann Photo.

Below is the great stained glass window which faces south. Sullivan did not make the mistake of contemporary architects who would have put in clear plate glass and then spent considerable effort trying to reduce the glare and heat losses. This window is actually double-glazed with plate glass in steel mullions on the exterior, stained glass on the interior to soften and distribute the light, and a partial vacuum between to provide insulation. Photo by Richard Nickel.



-SECOND-FLOOR-PLAN-

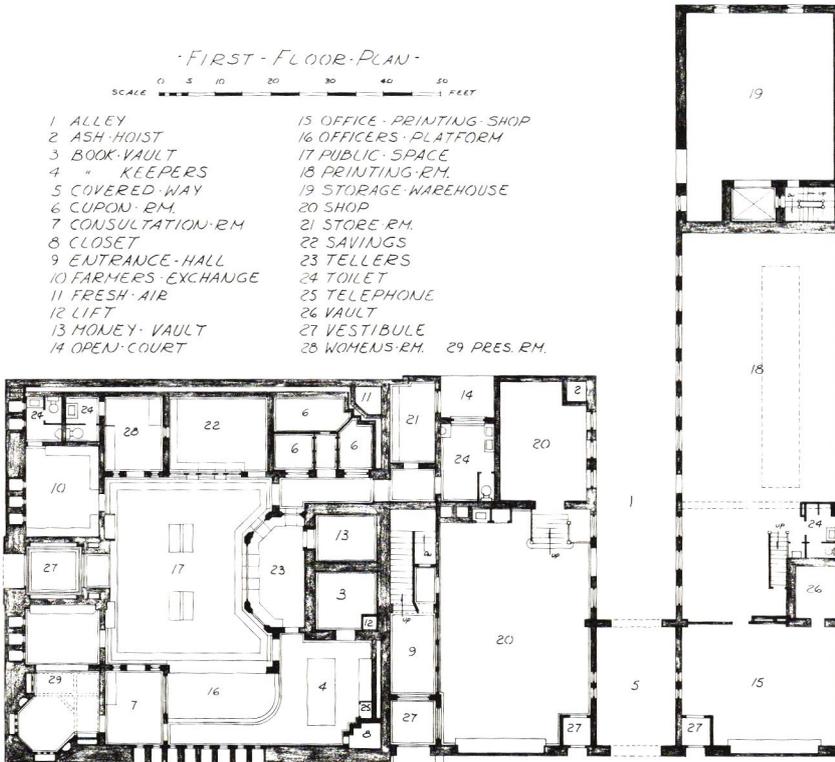
- 30 CORRIDOR
- 31 COMPOSING-RM.
- 32 EDITORIAL-RM.
- 33 LIBRARY
- 34 MEN'S TOILET
- 35 OFFICE
- 36 OPERATING-RM.
- 37 PRIVATE-OFFICE
- 38 ROOF
- 39 RECEPTION-RM.
- 40 SKYLIGHT
- 41 TOP OF VAULT
- 42 UPPER-PART-BANKING-RM.
- 43 WORK-RM.
- 44 WOMEN'S TOILET



-FIRST-FLOOR-PLAN-

SCALE 0 5 10 20 30 40 50 FEET

- 1 ALLEY
- 2 ASH-HOIST
- 3 BOOK-VAULT
- 4 " KLEPERS
- 5 COVERED-WAY
- 6 COUPON-RM.
- 7 CONSULTATION-RM.
- 8 CLOSET
- 9 ENTRANCE-HALL
- 10 FARMERS-EXCHANGE
- 11 FRESH-AIR
- 12 LIFT
- 13 MONEY-VAULT
- 14 OPEN-COURT
- 15 OFFICE-PRINTING-SHOP
- 16 OFFICERS-PLATFORM
- 17 PUBLIC-SPACE
- 18 PRINTING-RM.
- 19 STORAGE-WAREHOUSE
- 20 SHOP
- 21 STORE-RM.
- 22 SAVINGS
- 23 TELLERS
- 24 TOILET
- 25 TELEPHONE
- 26 VAULT
- 27 VESTIBULE
- 28 WOMEN'S-RM.
- 29 PRES. RM.



into a series of specialized spaces in accord with the wishes of his client. Only in the northeast corner, where Sullivan placed a workroom and an employee's toilet, did he find it necessary to go beyond the confines of the sixty-eight foot square.

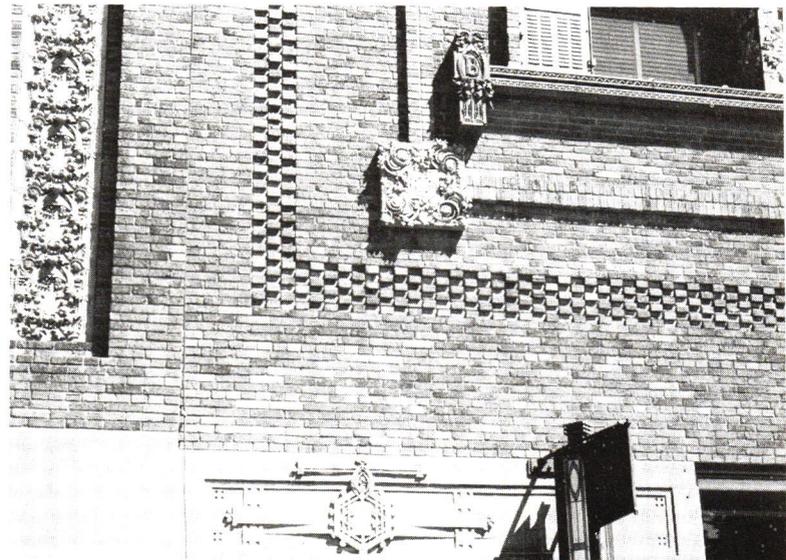
In the center of the square and approached by a vestibule was the public area above which hovered the grand, magnificently decorated thirty-foot high upper space. Straight ahead were the tellers' cages and behind them the vaults. To the right, arranged in an eminently rational manner, were the bank offices. The president's office occupied the southwest corner of the building. Next to it was a consultation room which looked out into the public area through large plate glass windows. It communicated with the president's office on the one side and the officer's platform on the other. In the southeast corner there was space for the desks and cabinets of the bookkeepers. To the left, or northern side of the public area, were spaces devoted primarily to the service of the bank's patrons. In the northwest corner there was a farmers' exchange, essentially a lounge and meeting room for male clients, and next to it on the north was a similar room for the use of women and children. Each communicated with toilet facilities. Further along the north wall was a savings department and beyond it were coupon rooms for those patrons having safety deposit boxes.

Behind the bank, facing south, was the business building. Its association with the bank was suggested by its similar style and materials. It was, however, completely subordinated to the monumental corner structure by its lower height, smaller scale and unified facade. In fact, the facade was considerably more unified than the rather complex structure behind it. Although Sullivan wove the building together by a variety of horizontal and vertical elements, namely corridors, stairs and an elevator, he allowed the various functional entities of offices, shop, printing plant and warehouse to retain their separate identities.

A covered way communicating with an alley divided the ground floor into two quite distinct parts. At the western end of the building next to the bank an entrance, vestibule, and stairway gave access to offices on the second floor. Next came a shop with an interesting two level plan, its higher rear section being placed over the boiler room of the entire bank-business building complex. Separating the shop from the ground floor office of the printing firm was the covered way. It provided access to an alley at the rear through which the print shop and warehouse were serviced. The print shop

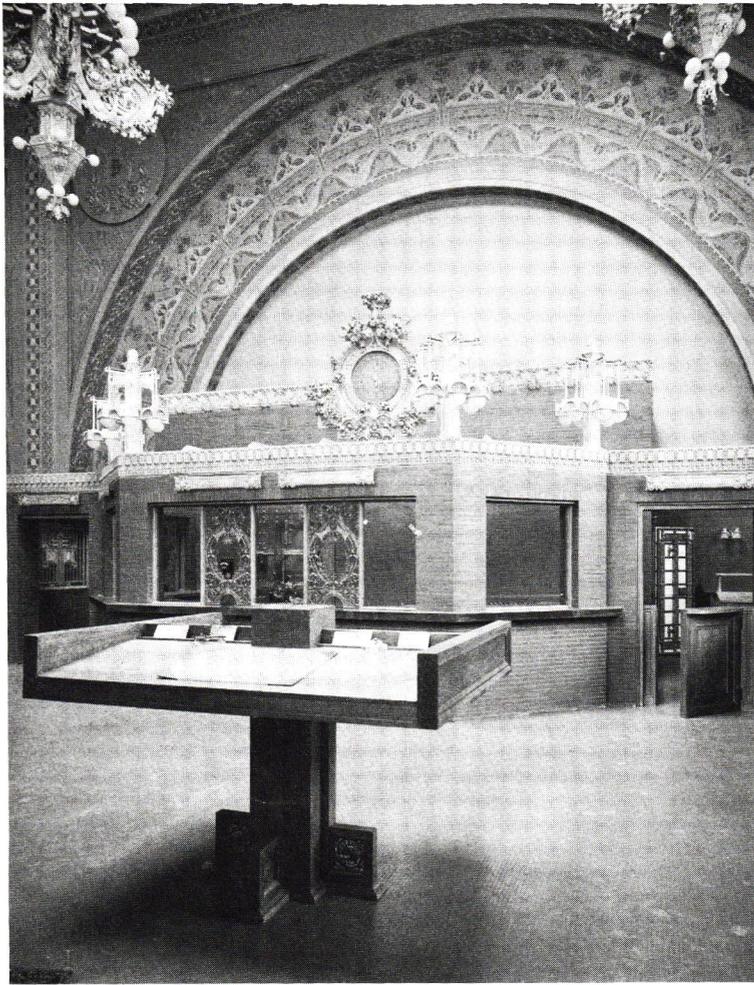
occupied a long rectangular skylit room facing on the alley. Besides having direct access to the front of the building through its ground floor office, the print shop communicated by means of an internal stairway with a group of offices belonging to the firm that were located on the second floor. Behind the print shop and also facing on the alley was a self-contained four-story warehouse with its own stairs and elevator. In the upper story of the business building there were some nine offices in addition to those occupied by the printing firm which communicated by way of two corridors with the stairway at the western end of the building.

Although the planning of the bank and business building may seem rather obvious and elementary to mid-twentieth century eyes used to extremely complex horizontal and vertical planning, Sullivan's simple and direct solutions were not without virtue. To have organized within the limits of a simple rectangular volume bounded by four planar surfaces the desired banking spaces, logically arranged, and to have envisioned a grand monumental space giving unity and breadth to the whole interior as well, was no mean accomplishment. And to have answered the more complex but less pretentious requirements of the business building with equal verve was also a quite respectable achievement.



This photo shows the junction between the bank and office building. A drawing survives for the stone carving at the bottom and another survives for the decorations on the piers between the windows. Both drawings can be seen on pages 16 and 17 of this issue. Photo by Richard Nickel.

While it is not difficult to understand the bank and even grasp something of its aesthetic qualities from the study of plans and monochrome photographs, the building must be seen to be fully appreciated since so much of its total effect depends

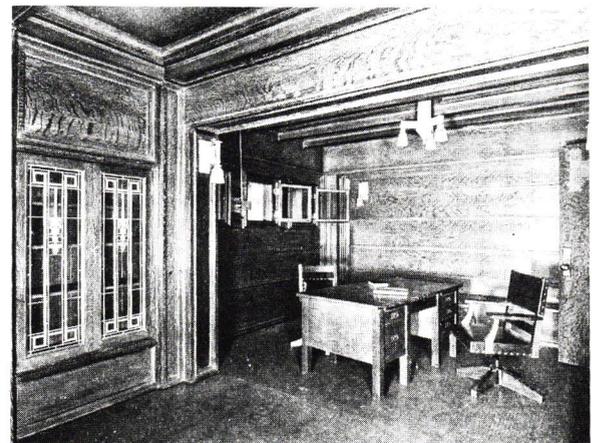
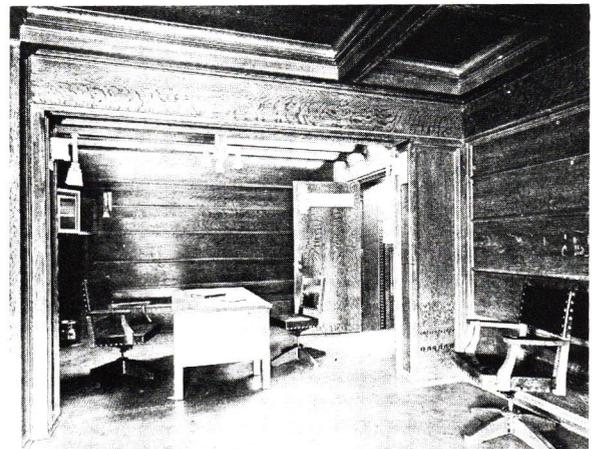


This early view of the bank looks east toward the vault. Even the check desk in the foreground was designed by the architect as can be verified by the ornamental base. Photo by Fuermann.

Below are two photographs of the President's office showing the furniture selected by the architect. All the furniture was by Craftsman and was done in natural Oak as was the interior cabinetwork. Note the small square window openings which were cut into the base of the building on the exterior. Photos by Fuermann.

upon color and texture. This bank alone belies Wright's claim that Sullivan did not understand the innate nature of building materials. There can be no question that every visible material used in the bank was carefully selected for the effect that its color and texture would contribute to the entire ensemble. True, Sullivan's choice of materials was not as earthy as Wright's, in that Sullivan normally chose the more elegant and more sophisticated, but this does not mean that he was insensitive to the elemental qualities of brick, stone and wood. While he preferred the more finished over the less finished, Sullivan never hesitated to use unadorned materials where they fitted his scheme. For example, some of the furniture in the bank was specially built in plain oak from designs perhaps by Sullivan but more probably by Elmslie. The remaining furniture, also of unadorned oak, was purchased from Gustav Stickley's Craftsman's Guild.¹⁴ Carl Bennett himself tells us that

the woodwork (was) . . . all of quarter-sawed white oak, laid in broad smooth surfaces and panels finished in Craftsman style, which gives the wood a soft brown tone in which there is a subtle undertone of green. The furniture is Craftsman throughout



¹⁴ See John C. Freeman, *The Forgotten Rebel: Gustav Stickley And His Craftsman Mission Furniture* Watkins Glen, N.Y.: Century House, 1966.

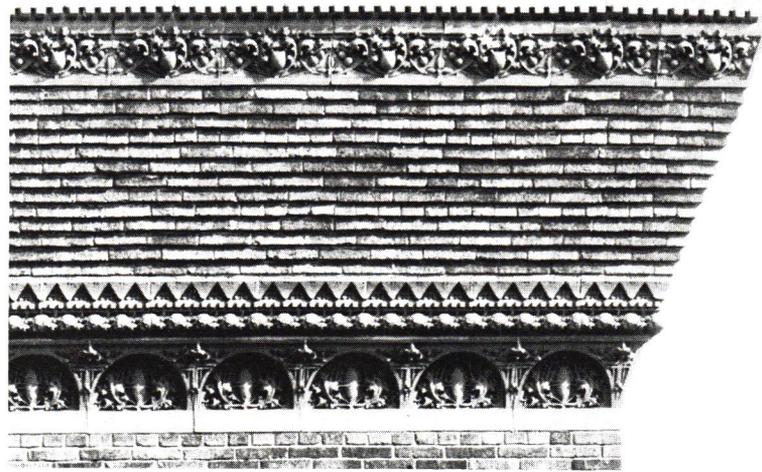
and is all of oak finished to match the
woodwork Along the walls (of the
Farmers' Exchange) are comfortable built-in
seats covered with Craftsman cushions
. . . . The President's Room is finished wholly in
wood and is charming in its friendly simplicity
of oak paneling. It is fitted with a Craftsman
office desk and swivel-chairs upholstered
in soft dull-red leather (The Consultation
Room) is furnished with a big Craftsman
desk, comfortable office chairs, and a settee
well filled with Craftsman cushions.¹⁵

The exterior of the building consists of a reddish
brown sandstone ashlar base surmounted by walls
of multi-colored rough-faced bricks. According to
Thomas Tallmadge, it was Sullivan himself who
introduced and popularized this type of brick, a
type which came to be known as "tapestry brick."¹⁶
In fact, Sullivan once wrote an introduction to a
catalogue of these bricks in which he discussed
their aesthetic qualities:

When laid up promiscuously . . . the general
tone suggests that of a very old oriental rug
and the differing color values of the individual
bricks . . . are taken up and harmonized in the
prevailing general tone It lends itself
admirably to association with other materials
susceptible to color selection or treatment, such
as stone, terra cotta, wood, glass and the metals
and admits in these, because of its broad sup-
porting neutrality, a great variation in range
of treatment.¹⁷

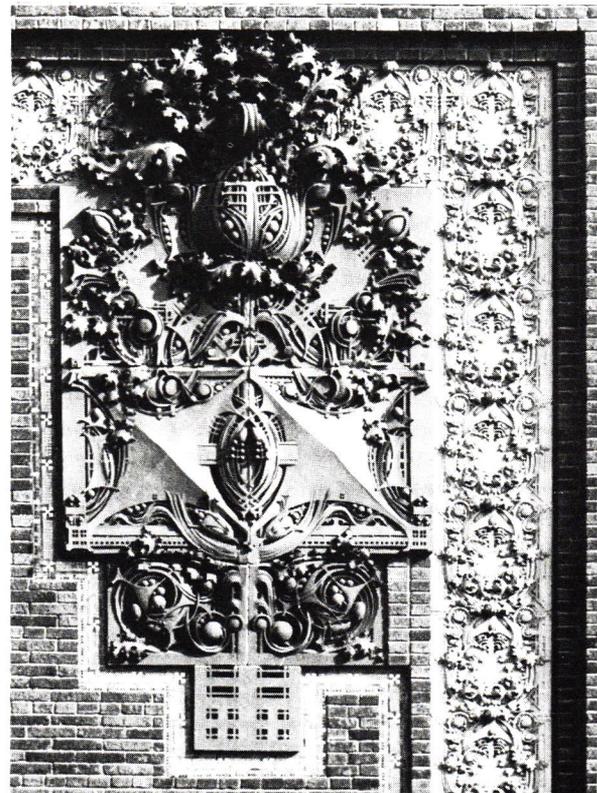
In the National Farmers' Bank Sullivan did, in
fact, combine his tapestry bricks with all of these
materials and their colors for Carl Bennett has al-
ready provided us with a vivid account of the color
decoration as it appeared when the building was
newly finished:

A wide band of polychromatic terra cotta (chiefly
Teco green) and a narrow band of glass mosaic
in high color (chiefly a brilliant blue) 'frame in'
the bank exterior, which is further enriched by
corner ornaments and a cornice of brown terra
cotta. The two massive brick arches enclose
stained glass windows which have a general
effect of rich variegated green. The shop and

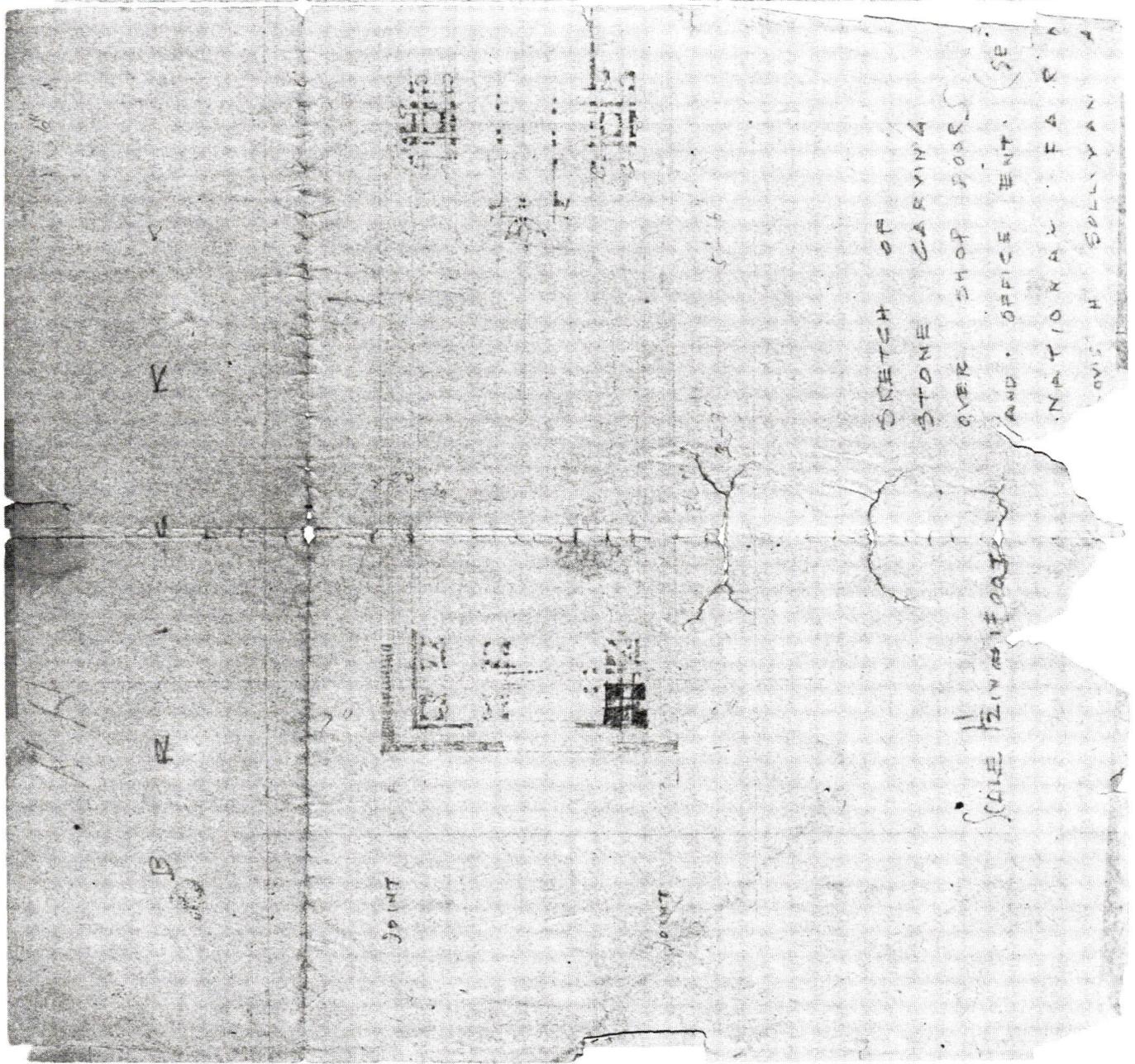


*The magnificent cornice of the bank combines both simplicity
of silhouette with complexity of detail. The alternate areas
of plane brick courses and minutely treated terra cotta de-
tails also reflect this guiding principle of Sullivan's architec-
ture. He was not interested in the barren simplicity of the
developing European modernists nor was he content with the
overblown complexity of many European Art Nouveau archi-
tects.*

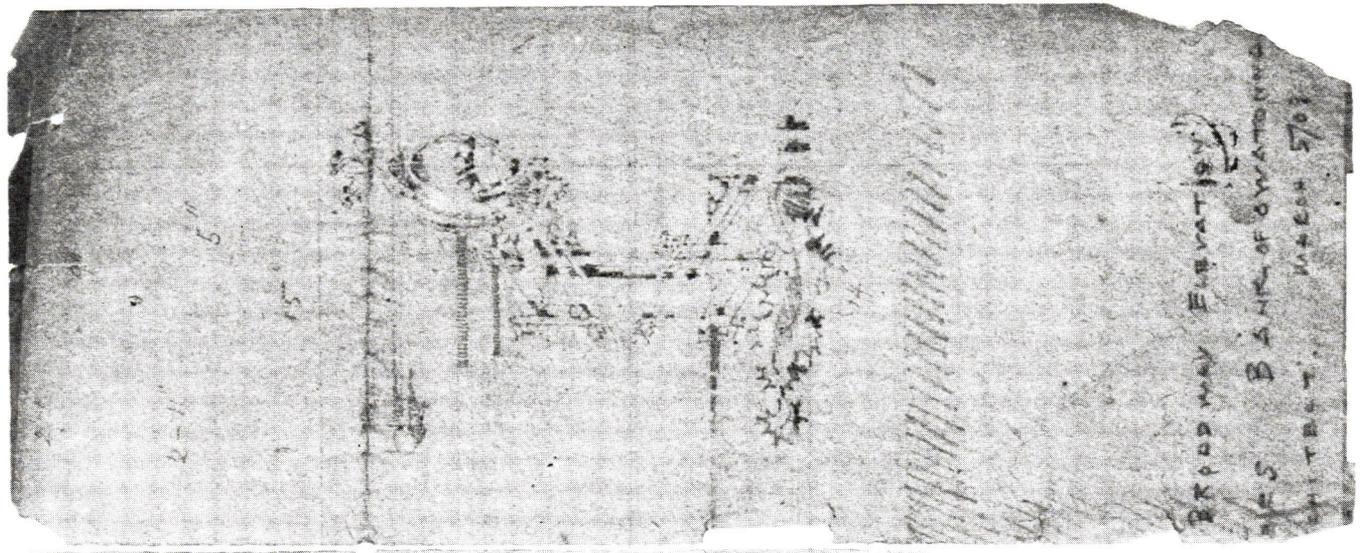
*The large terra cotta ornaments below accentuate the upper
corners of each facade. In the lower left can be seen the
band of highly reflective polychromatic mosaic that frames
each facade. At the top and right another band of greenish
terra cotta provides a further subtle chromatic contrast.
Photos both by Richard Nickel.*



15 "A Bank Built for Farmers," *loc. cit.*, p. 184.
16 *The Story of Architecture in America*, New York: W.W.
Norton & Co., 1927, p. 225; see also Hugh Morrison,
Louis Sullivan: Prophet of Modern Architecture, New York: W.W.
Norton, 1935, p. 202.
17 "Artistic Brick," *Suggestions in Artistic Brick*, St. Louis:
The St. Louis Hydraulic-Press Brick Co., N.D., p. 10. This
entire essay is reprinted on pp. 24-6 of this issue.

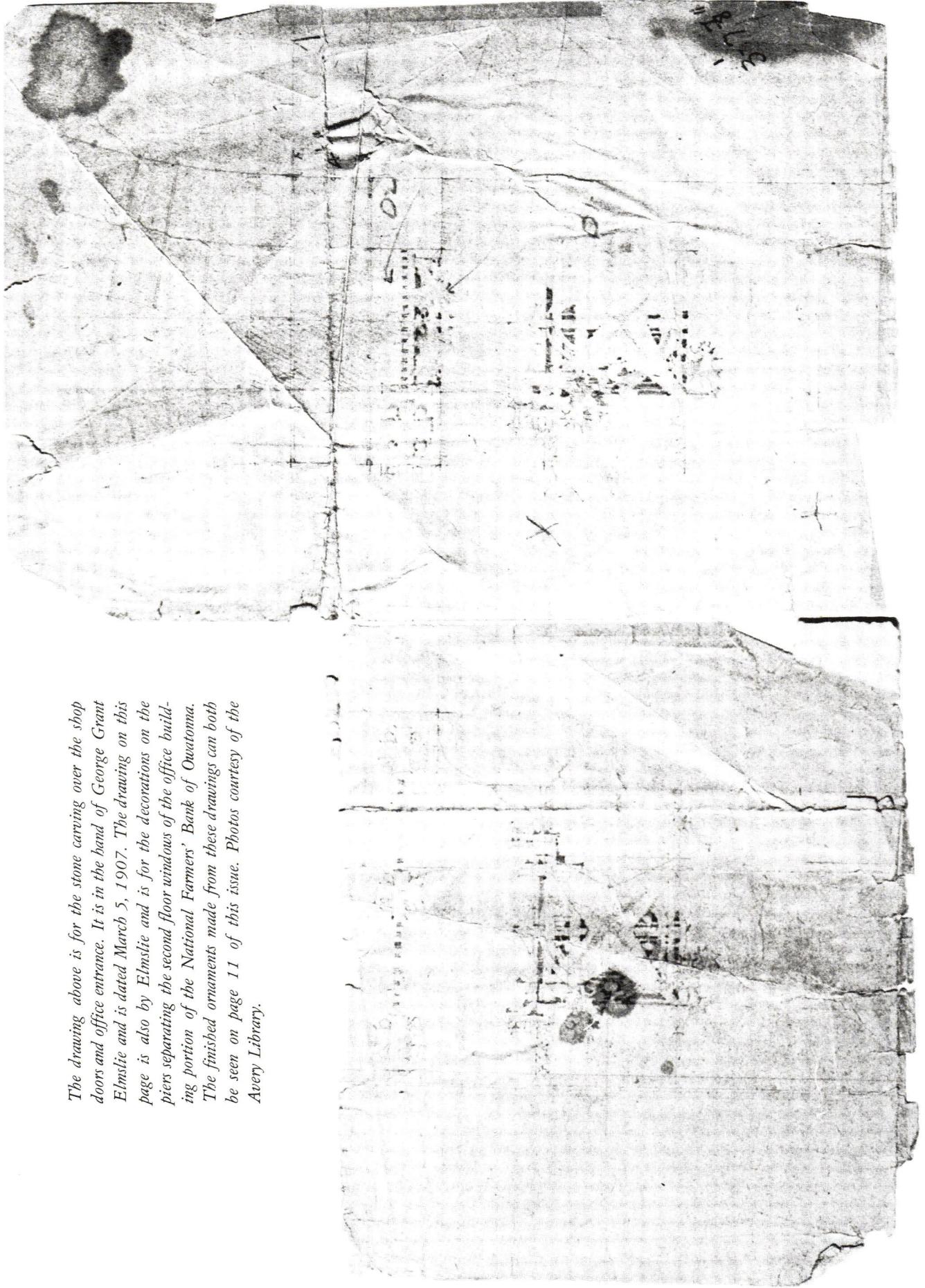


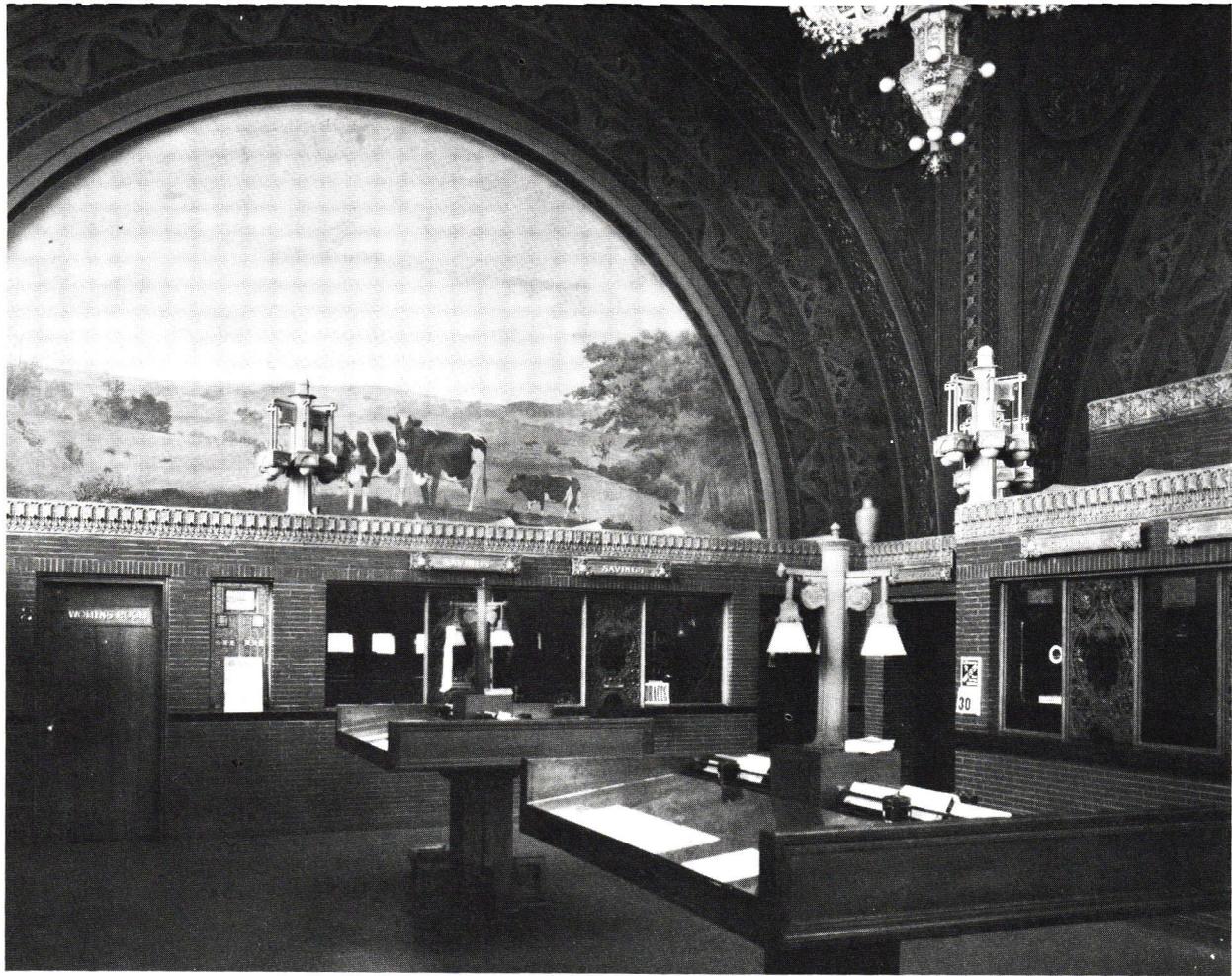
SKETCH OF
 STONE CARVING
 OVER SHOP DOOR
 AND OFFICE ENT. (SE)
 NATIONAL F.A.S.A.
 LOUIS H. SULLIVAN



BRADWAY ELEVATION
 F.A.S. BANK OF CHICAGO
 ARCHT. MARCH 1893

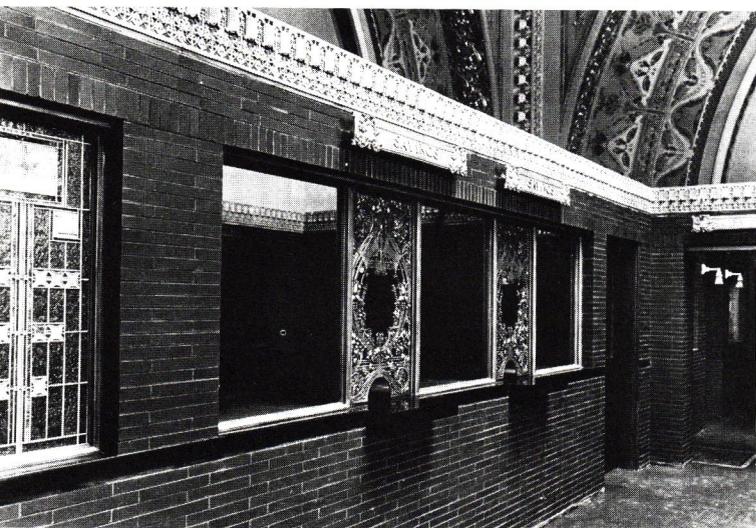
The drawing above is for the stone carving over the shop doors and office entrance. It is in the hand of George Grant Elmslie and is dated March 5, 1907. The drawing on this page is also by Elmslie and is for the decorations on the piers separating the second floor windows of the office building portion of the National Farmers' Bank of Owatonna. The finished ornaments made from these drawings can both be seen on page 11 of this issue. Photos courtesy of the Avery Library.





The walls opposite the great stained glass windows are large murals executed by Oskar Gross. This one illustrates a dairy scene such as might be seen in the area around Owatonna, Minnesota.

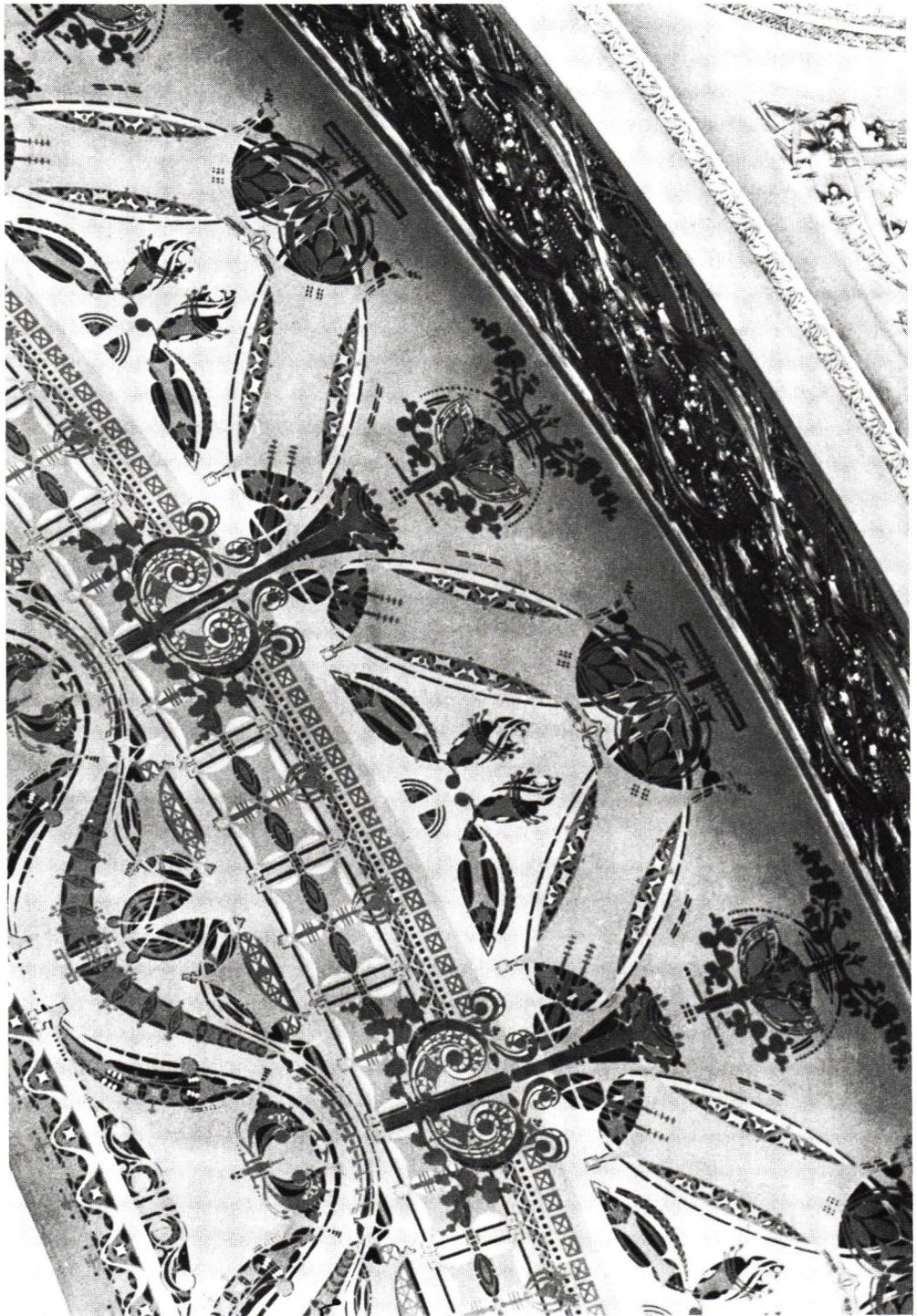
This bronze colored cast iron teller's wicket was somewhat of a departure from tradition at a time when vertical bars were the rule. Although he was probably following some miniscule sketch by Sullivan, George Elmslie developed the design into his own personal idiom. The result is one of the finest ornamental products that Elmslie ever designed. Fuermann Photo.



office portion of the building is notable for its piers of rich brown terra cotta, enlivened with ornaments of Teco green and bright blue. The color effect of the exterior is hard to describe for it has something of the color quality of an old Oriental rug, — that is, all the colors, when seen from a distance, blend into a general impression of soft red and green, while at close range, they maintain their strong and beautiful individuality. The exterior of the building gives at once the impression of strength and solidarity as well as beauty. Above all, it suggests 'bank' — a safe place for keeping and valuables.

Within, a floor of plain green tile is laid over all. The wainscoting is made of Roman bricks of a rich red color, capped with an ornamental band of green terra cotta. The counters and partitions are of these same red Roman bricks capped with green terra cotta and the counter tops and deal plates are of Belgian black marble. Above the wainscoting the walls and ceiling are a glory of luxuriant color and form. The colors of early spring and autumn predominate, with a steady note of green throughout the entire scheme . . .

Cast iron is not usually thought of as a good medium for art expression, but the grilles or wickets and the electroliers show marvelous

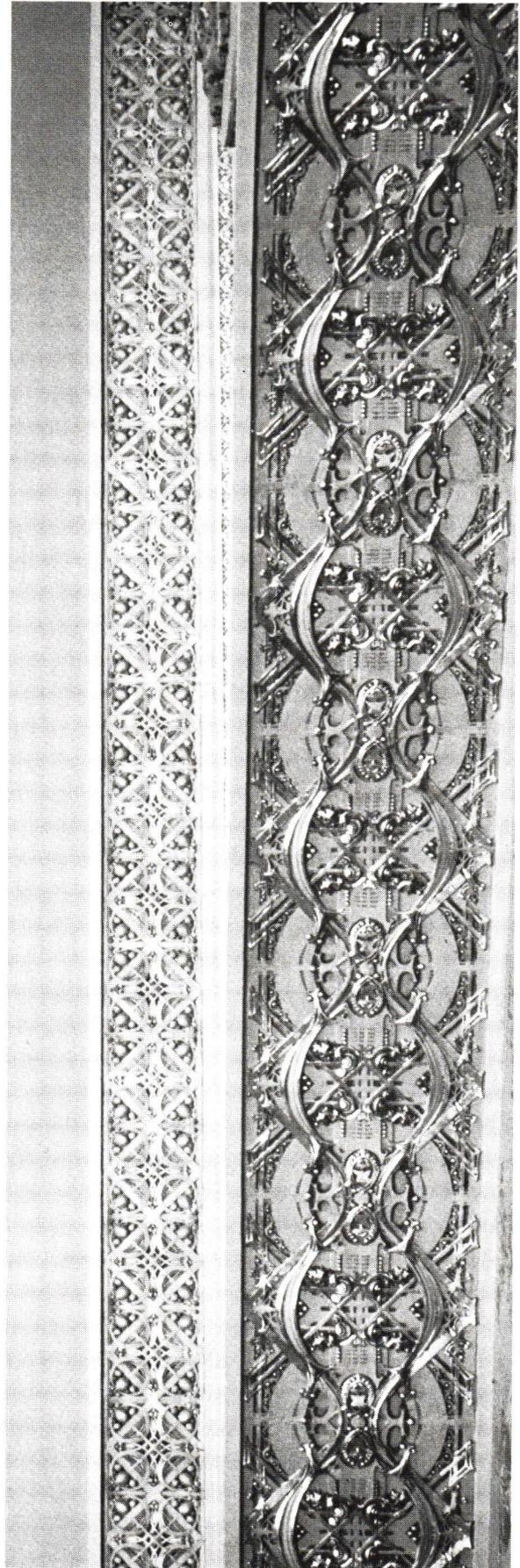


Of all the decorative areas in the bank only the color stencil framing of the four great arches of the interior represents the unadulterated work of Louis Sullivan. This interest in stencil decoration goes back to the early 1870's when Sullivan designed fresco decorations for Moody's Church and Sinai Synagogue in Chicago. This elegant stencil must be seen to be appreciated so much does its total effect depend upon subtle variations in tone and intensity of color. Photo by Fuermann.

taste and skill in shaping this material into forms that are both useful and beautiful, and that show strong individuality in design and handling. Another detail that does much to make up the beauty of the whole is the way in which color has been used on the walls and in the stained glass of the windows. The general effect is warm, rich and glowing without being overbrilliant.¹⁸

This lovely bank at Owatonna ushers in the twilight years of Sullivan's career. It was not the manifesto of a young man eager to alter the course of architecture, to make it a living organic art intimately related to the times from which it had sprung. Rather the bank represented the continued affirmation by an older man of a youthful vision of architectural change. Sullivan never lived to see the realization of his vision and, in 1906, when he designed the National Farmers' Bank, he could not have had much hope that the seeds he had planted would ever survive the overwhelming tide of a re-emergent classicism. Yet the bank at Owatonna stands, nonetheless, as a monument to Sullivan's unyielding efforts to turn that tide, to the vow of this lonely man to stand firm, unwavering and devoted to his ideal, even though as a result of this decision his personal world was crumbling about him.

It is an American tragedy that this magnificent bank at Owatonna should have to stand in silent witness to the triumph of those very feudal and anti-democratic forces against which Sullivan inveighed in his "What is Architecture: A Study of the American People of Today". The eventual capitulation of nearly all progressive American architects to the autocratic power of commercial classicism permitted the European avante-garde to capture the lead in architectural modernism. Their very different view of what the new architecture ought to look like, a view which gradually came to prevail during the second quarter of the century, has had the effect of making the post-1905 work of Wright, Elmslie and Sullivan seem somehow estranged and exotic in the American architectural landscape. Yet it was this very architecture — the architecture of the Farmers' National Bank — that was native to American soil. Had it not fallen victim to a historicism, foreign both in time and place to twentieth century American conditions, it might well have come to occupy so significant a place in the American scene that works like Sullivan's Owatonna bank would not only seem completely in character

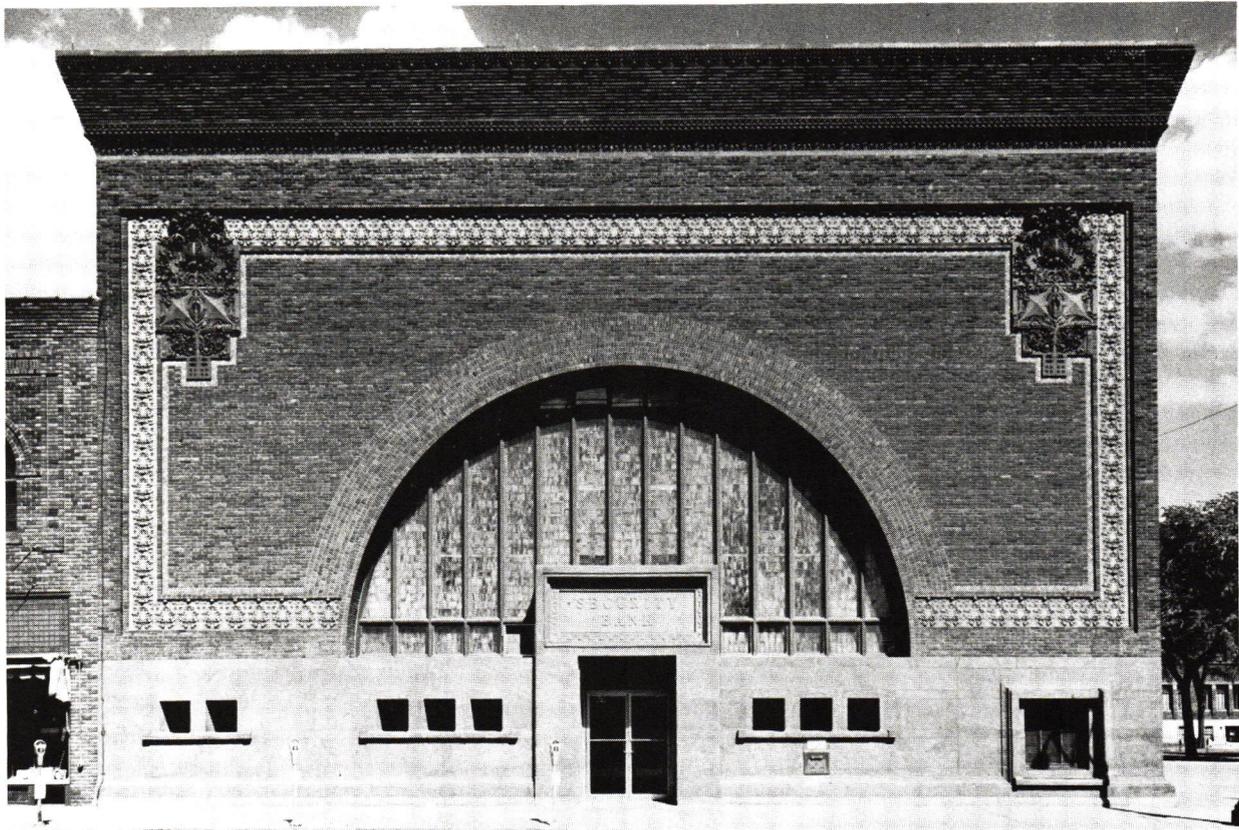
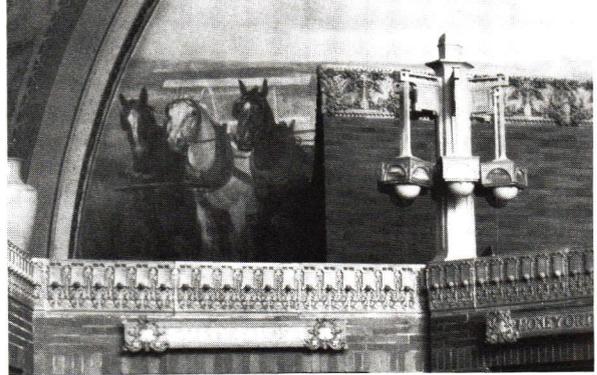


18 "A Bank Built for Farmers," *loc. cit.*, pp. 183-85.

but would also appear as specific forerunners of modern architecture. But destiny ruled otherwise and what was genuinely native to America now seems somewhat foreign and unnatural.

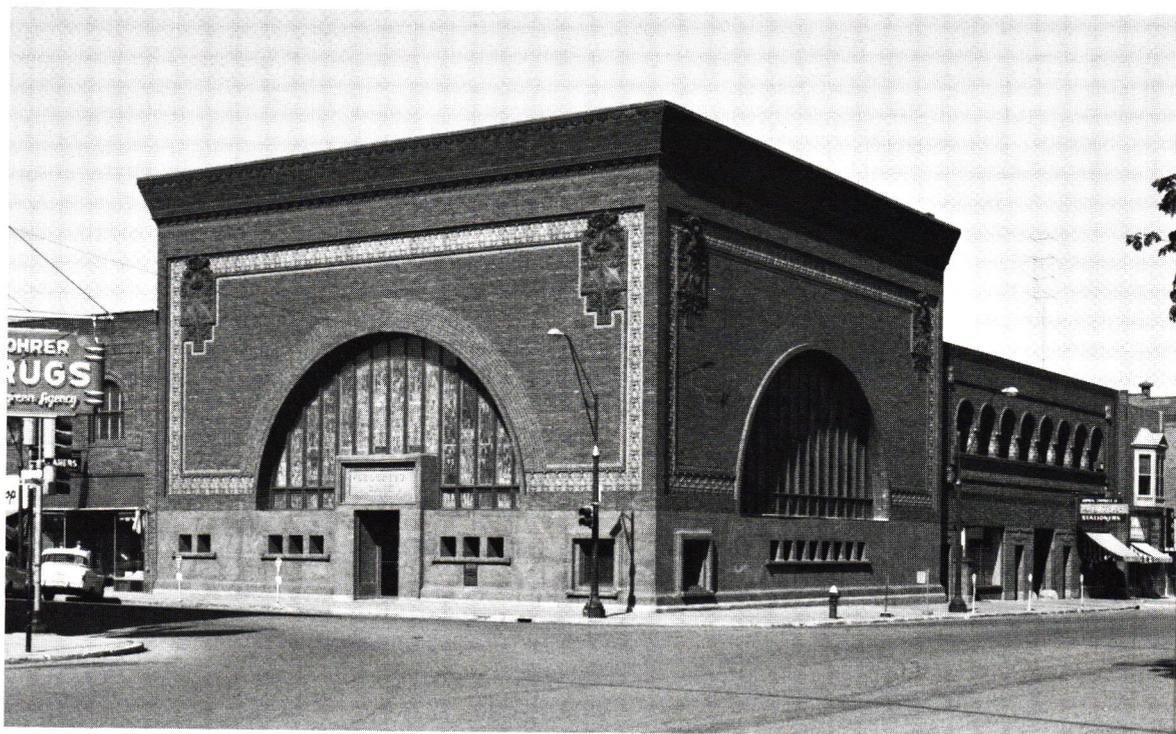
As such, the significance and validity of Sullivan's bank at Owatonna rests exclusively on its own intrinsic qualities. It was not Sullivan's first manifesto of a new non-historical architecture. Neither was it Sullivan's finest building, though it was surely among his finest. Nor was its style especially typical of Sullivan's commercial style during his most successful period between 1890 and 1900. Nor did the building exercise any significant influence on the subsequent evolution of architecture. Rather it has been entirely upon its own intrinsic aesthetic qualities that this elegant architectural creation has stood the test of time. From its planning, spatial organization and massing to its materials, colors and ornamental details the National Farmers' Bank of Owatonna, Minnesota, has proved to be one of those rare, nearly perfect

specimens of the architectural art. It stands alone and unchallenged, among its undistinguished colleagues, both historic and modern, as a great and unique work of art. And it stands also as a testimony to the democratic spirit, for it is indeed a monument to the freedom and integrity of two individuals of vision and genius, the one a businessman-banker, Carl K. Bennett, and the other, an artist-architect, Louis H. Sullivan.

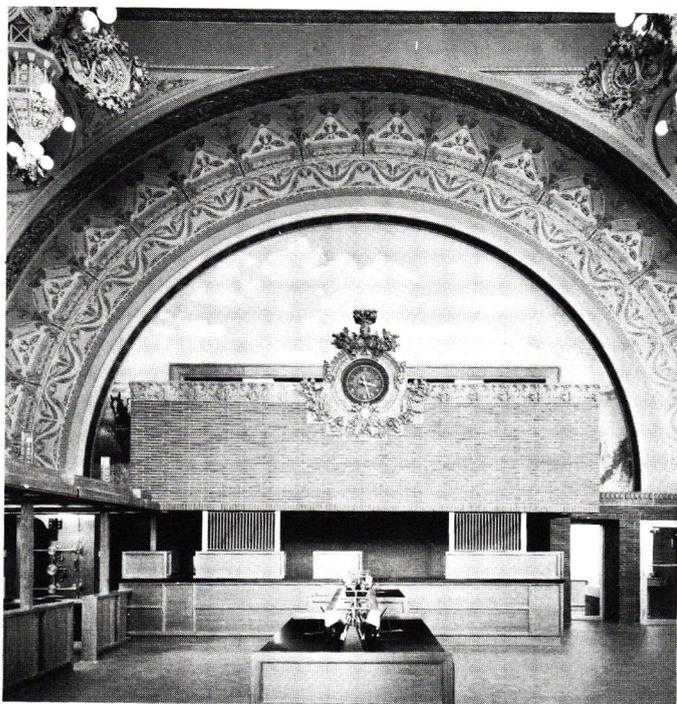


This view of the principle facade emphasizes Sullivan's continued adherence to academic principles even after inventing a new architectural and ornamental vocabulary. The classical repose is here associated with traditional Renaissance architecture achieved by means of symmetrical design with the traditional arrangement of base, middle and cornice, and the idea of making each facade a closed composition. The large arch, the horizontal series of square windows and the clean-cut character of the openings are legacies of Richardson. The polychromatic character of the facade and the architectural ornament goes back to the Gothic Revival. Sullivan made good use of "Tapestry Brick" in gaining the effect he desired for this structure. Photo by Richard Nickel.

The Restoration of Sullivan's Bank in Owatonna



The bank as it appears today.

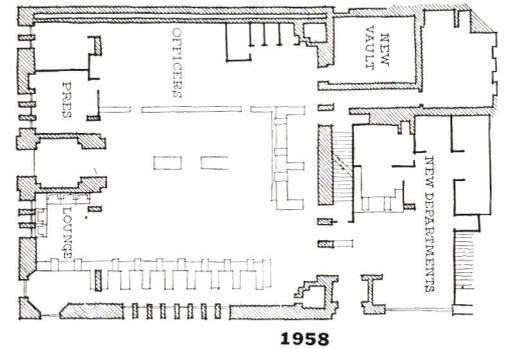
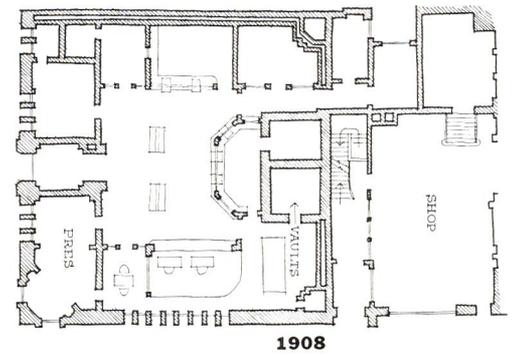


22

Sullivan's bank at Owatonna still stands. Today it is the Security Bank and Trust Company of Owatonna. The exterior has mellowed with the patina of over 60 years aging but remains virtually unchanged. The interior has been altered twice. The photos on these pages show the bank as it appears today.

In the early 1930's the interior of the bank was remodeled and much of the spacial quality of the original interior was lost. The magnificent ornamental tellers' grilles were also removed at that time. This was the condition of the bank when Clifford C. Sommer became president in 1955.

LEFT: Upon entering the bank, the visitors' balcony appears in place of the brick tellers' room provided by Sullivan. The massing of the new element is similar to the original and it is a successful alteration. Photo by Clark Dean, Infinity, Inc.



ABOVE: Plans courtesy of the ARCHITECTURAL FORUM.

LEFT: The view of the entrance to the bank from the interior.

BELOW: The major change in the plan is the addition of these tellers' cubicles along the south wall of the bank.

Photos by Warren Reynolds and Associates.

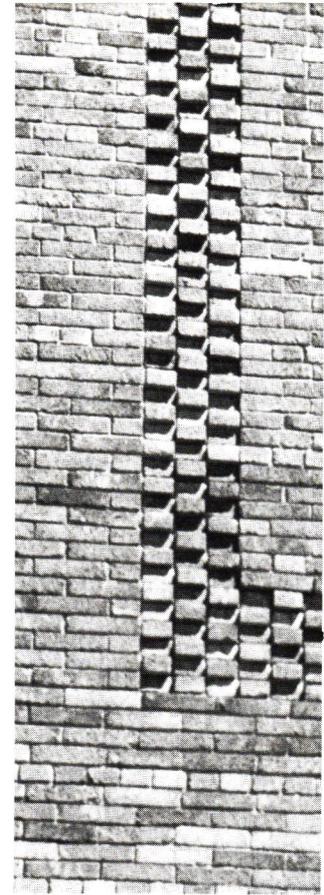
Mr. Sommer, with the support of his Board of Directors and the Bank's parent company, Northwest Bancorporation, began a program of renovation. He employed A. Moorman & Company as architects. Harwell Hamilton Harris was engaged as consulting architect and under his direction the needs of a modern bank were tastefully incorporated into the great space originally conceived by Louis Sullivan. The results clearly demonstrate how a thoughtful combination of alterations and restoration can permit an architectural masterpiece to continue to serve the needs of its owners even though the requirements may have changed with the years.

The bank today is a monument to private enterprise. It is one of the very few, perhaps the only, major work of architecture to have been saved entirely through the efforts of a business, its management and its money. It was the best investment the Security Bank and Trust Company will ever make.



Artistic Brick

By Louis H. Sullivan



*This essay first appeared as a foreward to a pamphlet entitled *Suggestions in Artistic Brickwork* which was published by the Hydraulic-Press Brick Company, St Louis. Although it was not dated, the pamphlet appeared in 1910. Sullivan continued to use the type of brick described in this essay for the remaining years of his career.*

There are many instances in modern building construction where the use of a clean-cut mechanically perfect pressed brick is desirable. Particularly so perhaps for large office buildings and structures where exact surfaces and lines are desired. As the modern mechanically pressed brick with its many colors and shades is a development of the old red brick, so is the rough-faced brick an outgrowth of the "Paver."

The paver served to call attention to the artistic advantages of a brick not strictly uniform in color and shape. This created the desire and made possible the change from the old single or "shirt front" buildings, to the full four-front or all-around structures of simple but excellent materials.

The growth in the use of terra cotta kept pace with the new practice and the new demand; and improvements in manufacture and coloring quickly followed. New glazes and slips were produced, and the use of terra cotta and brick took on new life and new meanings.

With these facilities at the hand of the architect, he began to feel more sensible of the true nature of a building as an organism or whole: an individual or fully-expressed structure, rather than a mere slice showing one character for the front and another for the sides. And with this sensibility began

to come the vision that the exterior of the building is, in essence, the expression, the full expression of the plan.

Hence this new style brick, if we may call it so, has led to a new development, namely, that in which all the functions of a given building are allowed to find their expression in natural and appropriate forms — each form and the total shape evidencing, instead of hiding, the working conditions of the building as exhibited in its plan.

This is nature's continuously operative law, whereby every single thing takes up its individual form in materials, and is recognizable as such. This law is not only comprehensive, but universal. It applies to the crystal as well as to the plant, each seeking and finding its form by virtue of its working plan, or purpose or utility; or, if you choose to say so, by virtue of its desire to live and to express itself.

This desire to live and to express itself is also just as characteristic of the plan of the building, for such plan is but the expression of a desire for something useful, something that will functionate or work freely. The building plan therefore clamors for expression and freedom, not indeed in any one particular way or mannerism, but in a way that will satisfy its desires, and thus, in the so doing, ex-

Sullivan used tapestry brick in several of his small bank buildings, both interior and exterior.

RIGHT: An interior view of the Merchants' National Bank of Grinnell, Iowa. Photo by Child.

BELOW: The Purdue State Bank of West LaFayette, Indiana. Photo by E. K. Warren.



press them unmistakably. This is, in essence, the natural basis of the anatomy and physiology of architectural planning and design. It is simple, perhaps too simple. For few have had the vision to see it entire and the will to grasp it entire. Thus, as all large things turn upon small, so a significant and promising architectural movement has hinged upon the advent of a new kind of brick. Yet this new kind of brick was but the herald of better things. Manufacturers by grinding the clay or shale coarser, and by the use of cutting wires,

produced on its face a new and most interesting texture, a texture with a nap-like effect, suggesting somewhat an Anatolian rug; a texture giving innumerable highlights and shadows, and a moss-like softness of appearance. Thus the rough brick became really a fine brick and brought with it new suggestions of use and beauty.

A feature, however, that was positively fascinating lay in the fact that these bricks, as they came from the kiln showed a veritable gamut of colors. Not merely a scale of shadings or gradua-

tions of intensity all related to a single average color, as in the "pavers," but a series of distinct colors, having each its own graduations and blendings. These colors are soft in tone and very attractive, modified in intensity as they are in each brick and in mass by the nap of the brick surface. They were at first, and, in many cases are now, the accidental effect of the position in the kiln and the kind of fuel used.

In these later days the subject has been made a matter of technical research, and specific treatment of the clays (burning in individual kilns, muffling the kilns, and fuel variations) have produced an added series of colors and shades, some of remarkable individuality and character.

Progress in the manufacture of terra cotta kept pace in tone and texture with the new color series in brick.

As might be expected, these recent bricks, depending, as they do, for their full effectiveness upon color and texture, are handicapped when laid with a flush mortar joint of whatever color or width. They are at their best when laid with a raked-out joint leaving the individual brick to play its part as a unit therein, and the mass free to express its color and texture in a broad way.

Inasmuch as the color scale varies from the softest pinks through delicate reds, yellows, (varying the intensity) through the light browns, dark browns, purples and steel blacks — each of these colors with its own graduations and blendings — the possibilities of chromatic treatment are at once evident. When laid up promiscuously, especially if the surface is large, and care is taken to avoid patches of any one color, the general tone suggests that of a very old oriental rug and the differing color values of the individual bricks, however sharply these may seem to contrast at close view, are taken up and harmonized in the prevailing general tone. Composed of many colors, this general tone is, in a sense, neutral and is rich and impressive. It lends itself admirably to association with other materials susceptible to color selection or treatment, such as stone, terra cotta, wood, glass and the metals, and admits in these, because of its broad, supporting neutrality, a great variation in range of treatment.

Thus arises before the mind of the architect the possibility, indeed the certainty of a feasible color scheme for the entire building, which it is within the power to vary from a substantial monotone to the higher development of polychromatic treat-

ment. He may segregate his bricks into separate color mosaics, he may graduate or blend them in any desired way, he may use them with mosaic effect, he may vary his forms to any rational extent, and finally he may effect combinations with other materials of any desired degree of richness or plainness of color and surface, in such wise as to secure an effect of totality or singleness of purpose.

To be sure a building may have its functions of plan and purpose expressed in a literal mechanical way that tends to repel, just as music may be written strictly according to rule and yet be unmusical. This certainly is up to the architect. For if the head and its intellectual activities be not suffused by that complexity of emotions and sentiments, we call the heart, no building can be beautiful, whatever means in the way of materials may be at hand.

In this sense architecture is truly a social function and form, and it is the feeling of humanity that makes a structure a beautiful creation. In its absence the building can be at the best but a statement of facts and at the worst a mis-statement of facts.

But this does not change the fact that the invention and perfection of a brick, new in texture and color, has opened up a new and wide field for the architect.

The brick itself is but the visible symbol of a train of social activities, an expression of industrial thought and energy.

It used to be said that it took two to make a building, the owner and the architect, and that each was necessarily the psychological counterpart of the other. It takes more than two. The intelligent brick manufacturer is today a most essential factor in modern building construction. The two may initiate, but it takes many men working their various ways and contributing technical support. Such is the development of modern society — new requirements, new forms to give them expression, and each reacting upon each and all.

We never know how important anything may become, no matter how small and seemingly insignificant its initial appearance.

So small a thing as a brick has wrought a significant modification in the architectural art, and this has reacted upon the sensibilities of the social body, through the subtle influence of its mere presence.

— Louis H. Sullivan.

Book Reviews

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, *His Life, His Work, His Words*, by Olgivanna Lloyd Wright. Horizon Press, New York, 1967. 224 pp., illus., \$7.50.

Exactly why was this book produced? The precise motivations which prompted it are not, at face value, apparent. Only when it is placed within the context of the author's earlier titles and within the larger syndrome of Taliesin hagiolatry, does the book fall into place. For, despite the stature of its subject and the good intentions of its author, it is, regrettably, little more than the latest testimonial from a curious (and self-defeating) hero cult.

Frank Lloyd Wright, His Life, His Work, His Words, is the fourth volume in seven years by the architect's widow, Olgivanna Lloyd Wright. *Our House* (1959), *The Shining Brow*, *Frank Lloyd Wright* (1960), and *The Roots of Life* (1963), totaled over 850 pages of anecdotes, reminiscences, and nuggets of the world views of Frank and Olgivanna Wright. Some of the material was interesting, relevant, and charming. Much of it was not. Good or bad, however, most of the material in the first three volumes was Mrs. Wright's own, whether reprints of her newspaper columns, her informal talks to Taliesin colleagues, or rambling notes and memoranda of her life with Frank Lloyd Wright.

The new book, on the other hand, is comprised largely of long quotations from her husband's writings or statements and is presented in a roughly chronological and loosely biographical form presuming to cover Wright's entire life. Approximately one-third of the text consists of direct quotations from Wright's published works. In one particularly redundant section, Mrs. Wright quotes directly from her own recent works, *Our House*, and *The Shining Brow*. The non-quoted material is largely a close paraphrase of previously published works. Besides a few delightful anecdotes, the only "new" materials in the text are the direct quotations from Frank Lloyd Wright's informal talks at Taliesin, some of which are fresh, most of which, however, were variations or paraphrases by Wright, himself, of his own ideas previously or subsequently published elsewhere. The dates of the talks are not given and often have only slight relation to the "biographical" framework.

The first three chapters, drawn from Wright's oft-quoted *Autobiography*, skim lightly over his early years in Wisconsin, Massachusetts, and Chicago.

Other sections review briefly, and rather tiresomely, the great but familiar stories of the building of Unity Temple, the Larkin Building, the Imperial Hotel, the two Taliesins, "Falling Water", the Johnson Wax buildings, and the Guggenheim Museum. Fragments of Wright's architectural philosophy, artistic tastes, and literary preferences are extracted from various autobiographical works and repeated in concluding chapters.

Three appendices follow: a list of "innovations", some of which are validly "Wrightian", others (especially the early, more general ones) lending themselves to no such monopolistic claims; an illustrated section of undated projects by the Taliesin Associated Architects, presumably following Wright's death; and most significantly, an "official" version of a chronology, including bits of biographical data but dealing chiefly with "The Buildings and Projects of Frank Lloyd Wright". Containing several indisputable errors, major and minor, and other data of a somewhat arbitrary validity, the chronology is valuable chiefly as a frame of reference and a point of departure for future scholarly investigation. For example: Wright's birth year is erroneously given as 1869, not 1867 (though Mrs. Wright has subsequently acknowledged the latter year). There is no mention of Wright's childhood residence in MacGregor, Iowa. Wright entered the University of Wisconsin in 1886, not 1885.¹ The first name of his mentor, Allan Conover, is misspelled in the list and in the text. Wright's famous Hull House lecture, "The Art and Craft of the Machine" was not delivered in 1894, but in 1901, a difference of seven important years of ferment in Wright's thinking. And so on.

The problem of the dating of buildings is even more complex than unraveling the biographical tangle, since a prefatory note to the chronology states that "the dates given to his architectural designs are those that most closely refer to the time of conception." What does "conception" mean in this case? the first time that a possible design flashed through Wright's mind? the time when he related his store of abstract concepts to site and client? or the time he put them into initial or final blueprint form? Was not the Robie House, for example, designed in 1906 and completed in 1909? What is the meaning of Mrs. Wright's "conception" date of 1908? Indeed, most of the building dates

1 "Frank Lloyd Wright—The Madison Years: Records versus Recollections" by Thomas S. Hines, Jr., *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Volume L, Number 2, Winter 1967, pp. 109-119.

are useful only as interpolative approximations pending more explicit dating and dating criteria from the Taliesin Archives. The book is rather vaguely documented in general. It contains no index.

Mrs. Wright is at her best in describing her husband's droll response to the King of Iraq, his delighted reaction to the Welsh countryside, and their mutual appreciation of the *Tragic Sense of Life* by the Spanish writer, Unamuno. Also valuable is her inclusion of Wright's own account of his troubled reaction, during a voyage from the Orient, to a Christian missionary's callous and bigoted burial at sea of a Shinto, Japanese child. She is less attractive (as was her husband) in her insulting references to Le Corbusier and other great architects of the "International Style".

The photographs in the book are excellent and do full justice to the complex people and the marvelous buildings they depict. Horizon Press, as usual, has designed and published an esthetically pleasing volume. One only regrets that its editors have not used more restraint in advising Mrs. Wright's literary ambitions in general. Would not her recollections, reminiscences, and anecdotes of life with her husband have been better presented in one solid, well-organized effort rather than scattered through the thousand pages of her four unwieldy volumes? If hers and Mr. Wright's informal talks to the Fellowship are of value and interest, could they not have been collected, edited, dated, and published as such? Whatever Mrs. Wright's notions may have been, her publishers obviously conceive of the book as a general, introductory treatment, or in publishing terms, appropriate for "young adults". But even on those grounds, would not such works as Finis Farr's popular biographical essay, despite its faults, be a better introduction for the young or uninitiated?

Allan Temko's reaction to Mrs. Wright's literary efforts in his 1959 *New York Times* review of *Our House*, holds equally true for her subsequent work:

These encomiums, incessantly reiterated, are embarrassing enough, but when Mrs Wright's own philosophical pronouncements follow them on page after page, together with rehashes of her husband's familiar disquisitions on architecture, nature, religion, and other high matters, the effect is wearisome. 'Mother,' she quotes Mr. Wright as saying to her, 'You are the only person in the world with whom I never get bored.' Alas, the reader wishes he could say the same.

Most serious scholars have quietly ignored the

problems raised by Mrs. Wright's subsequent books. Is it, indeed, the best policy to regard the books as harmless and understandably biased and get on to other things? Or should the books be criticized for the very thing that Mrs. Wright is apparently seeking to counter-act in others — the minimization and misunderstanding of the genius of Frank Lloyd Wright?

Though Wright's work deserves and commands the highest honor, respect, and praise, his wife and his closest disciples would serve him better by exercising more restraint. For too long and too often they have expressed an unquestioning loyalty to Wright, in all his roles, with a saccharine piety and a patronizing simplicity that annoys even the staunchest Wrightophiles. Like her husband before her, Olgivanna Wright not only talks in a presumptuously personal vocabulary, but too often announces the most obvious platitudes in the gravest of tones. In both their own rhetoric and in that of their closest associates, there are too many ludicrous and uncomfortable religious metaphors that tend to deify a remarkable *human* being. Wright, himself, suggested this with such book titles as *A Testament*. A son's book was called *My Father Who is on Earth*. In *The Roots of Life*, Mrs. Wright reprinted an address to the Phoenix Art Museum League in which she had asked: "Can one individual represent his time? Does Frank Lloyd Wright represent the cultural level of America in his architecture?" followed by the question: "Did Christ represent His Era? He was a great rebel against the established religious dogmas of His time." So, she continued, "Can we then call great men characteristic of their time, in the sense of the seeing eye of their times, and prophets of the future? They are always trying to change the evils and prejudices of the time in which they live. . . ." After the glories of the Middle Ages, she asserted, there was a general cultural stagnation. "Architecture suffered the most, in a decline that continued for 400 years. Then Frank Lloyd Wright was born and the creation of new ideas in architecture began."

The same tone continues in her latest book. But leaving aside her sense of history, should not Mrs. Wright seek different Biblical comparisons? If she wants religious analogies, is not her husband's life rather closer to Job than to Jesus? If she presumes to write biography, should she not discuss the qualities in Wright's make-up that invited disaster as well as those that sustained him through it and allowed him to triumph over it?

Wright was a complex *man*, who, despite Herculean obstacles, made incomparable architectural contributions. He was neither a god who effortlessly sprinkled buildings about, nor an architectural prince who created by Divine Right. Indeed, Wright's work epitomized the artistic credo of William Faulkner's Nobel Prize address: "a life's work in the agony and sweat of the human spirit . . . to create out of the human spirit something which did not exist before." The attempts, conscious or unconscious, to deify Frank Lloyd Wright minimize, in effect, the *human* dimensions of his achievement.

As more biographical data is collected and analyzed, it seems highly probable that the contradictions between Wright's own contentions and the "objective" documents, between the records and his "recollections" can best be explained by Wright's need for a mythical persona to protect him from unpalatable realities. If such was the case, his critics should moralize with extreme caution, for without the myth, the Frank Lloyd Wright we know might never have materialized. Is it not possible that in the "real" world of America, the Middle West, Mamah Cheney, and Miriam Noel, Wright's genius might not have been able to survive except as guarded by a kind of protective screen that filtered and re-arranged the "facts" of life as Wright felt was necessary in order to get on? Like most artists of his stature, Wright's genius was tough and fragile at the same time. If the fragile side of his nature needed the myths in order to sustain the man who created the buildings, then are we not better off for it?

But can Mrs. Wright be similarly excused and exempted from having to face the facts as they are? Is she also entitled to play the game by *his* rules? One wishes that she were not and that instead of obfuscating her husband's complexities, she had tried honestly to explicate them and to help us understand them better. In their early life together, Olgivanna Wright, patiently and courageously, shared and perhaps ameliorated her husband's hardships and harassments, a side of the story that her writings virtually ignore. And their problems did not end in the 1920s. She has written at great length about their later celestial moments, but could she not also have dealt with the darker, earlier times that tried them and marked them so profoundly? By writing more candidly and critically, she might have made a truly unique contribution to our understanding and appreciation of Wright's genius.

Reviewed by Thomas S. Hines, Jr.

THE FLOWERING OF ART NOUVEAU, by Maurice Rheims. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1967. 430 pp., illus., \$20.00.

Until recently, Art Nouveau was considered a decadent and crass art form which developed primarily in Europe to satisfy the masses who didn't really know what they were getting. However, the past decade has seen a new interest in the products and the history of Art Nouveau. Dozens of books have appeared on the subject covering every phase from Beardsley to Tiffany. The present volume is one of the better ones.

The author has assembled what might be considered a catalog of the Art Nouveau. He has given us twenty-three separate categories plus an introduction, index, and acknowledgments. 595 separate examples are illustrated and described. The printing is magnificent. Unfortunately the text and photographs are almost always separated due to the fact that they were printed in the Netherlands and in France respectively. Only the half dozen or so tipped-in color plates are on the same page as their text.

It is a big, beautiful book, ideal for browsing but a bit difficult to use for reference.

Reviewed by W. R. Hasbrouck

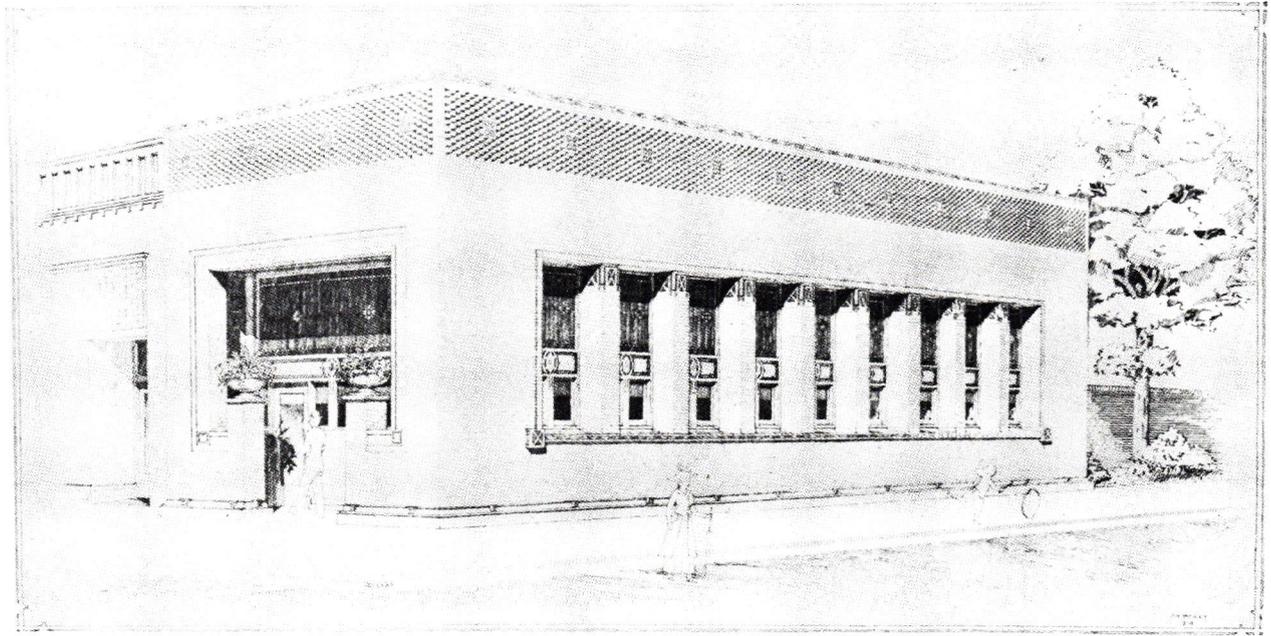
AMERICAN BUILDING: The Historical Forces That Shaped It, by James Marston Fitch. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1966. 350 pp., illus., \$12.50.

This book is a new edition of a volume with a similar title which appeared first in 1947 and has been a standard since that time. Actually, it is very nearly all new. Almost every page shows the effects of extensive rewriting and updating. The results are uniformly excellent.

The chapters concerning the major development of modern architecture are titled "1860-1893: The Great Victorians" and "1893-1933: Eclipse." Both headings are misleading since these pages are perhaps the best in the book. The later chapters are less interesting perhaps because of the difficulty of historical perspective when writing of one's own time.

The book is superbly illustrated with excellent photographs and drawings. It is well indexed and documented with footnotes throughout although these notes are placed at the end of the book which makes reference awkward.

Professor Fitch has written a fine book which should be in the library of anyone interested in the history of American Architecture.



Letter to the Editors

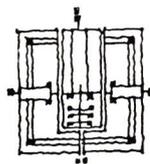
Dear Sirs:

It was indeed a pleasure to see your recent publication of the works of the late Parker N. Berry. I had not been aware of the calibre of his private practice before this.

Your readers might be interested in knowing that further evidence of his close collaboration with Louis Sullivan is documented in the May 1916 issue of *The Architectural Record*. There, in an article entitled "An Architectural of Democracy" by A. N. Rebori, is an illustration of a rendering of the "Land and Loan Office" at Algona, Iowa, designed by Louis H. Sullivan. The rendering is signed in the lower right hand corner "P. N. Berry, 1914".

Lloyd Henri Hobson

We have reproduced the rendering Mr. Hobson refers to at the top of this page. The Editors.



Anyone interested in receiving Catalog Number 2 listing all publications available from the Prairie School Press is invited to write for a copy at 117 Fir Street, Park Forest, Illinois 60466.

Preview

The next issue of Volume IV of THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW will be a special issue with a guest editor. It will be a photographic essay concerning the recently renovated Auditorium Theater in Chicago. The restoration of this building under the guidance of Architect Harry Weese and his staff has resulted in the theater being once more available for public use. It is expected that it will open in the fall of 1967.

Several recently published books will be reviewed, including:

R. M. Schindler, Architect

David Gebhard

St. Croix Trail Country

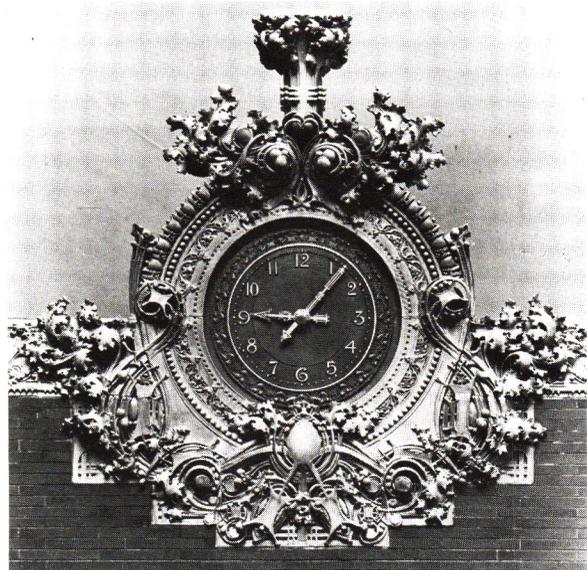
William Gray Purcell

Several short reviews

We are embarking on an editorial policy of broadening our coverage of Architecture in America. Articles of general interest concerning the development of modern architecture will continue to be published. In addition, we will welcome articles concerning contemporary architecture done in the "Prairie Spirit". Critical essays will also be considered for publication. Any questions prospective authors might have should be directed to the editors.

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The clock in the National Farmers' Bank of Owatonna is another of Elmslie's exuberant terra cotta creations. In perfecting this style, which Elmslie developed with great individuality, Sullivan felt it necessary to supervise the design of the smallest element of his buildings. Note, for example, that both the clock face and the hands are enriched with Sullivanesque ornament. Photo by Fuermann.

