The ONLY independent, unbiased source of information on the world's greatest architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, and his work.

This is the thirty-sixth edition of the FLW UPDATE @ FrankLloydWrightInfo.com.

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This site is maintained by William Allin Storrer, Ph.D., Visiting Professor of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin and author of The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion now in a revised edition, and The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, a complete catalog, now in its third edition, revised.

"Imported from Detroit"

The Chrysler 300 TV ad, which starts with the car emerging from an underground garage, ends at the Affleck house, S.274

Wright GUIDE, an iPhone app based on The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, a complete catalog by © William Allin Storrer, is now available from the Apple iTunes Store. Just search “Frank Lloyd Wright.” The app is listed under travel. The Seller is Wayne Boucher of Azara Apps

The Wright GUIDE application for iPhone is based on the world standard reference, The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, a complete catalog, by William Allin Storrer, Ph.D. With descriptions and a photograph of each of the built works by America's greatest architect, one knows the right building has been found when one reaches a site. There are easy links to see what buildings are nearby whatever item is being referenced, and driving directions from the user's location to any building are but a click away. Storrer, who has visited each of these sites several times, who has met many of the original clients dating back to 1923, and who met children of earlier clients, keeps his documentation up-to date and provides useful comments on such items as client, site, construction materials, plan type and layout, date of design by Wright, and updates, restorations and/or alterations made since original construction.
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The Second Page has items of interest to those who would know more about the author of this web page.

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Foreword to the Rediscovering Wright Project.

In 1909 Frank Lloyd Wright left Oak Park and America to write the epitaph to the Prairie School, the Wasmuth portfolio. American, Prairie was, but not Democratic. When Wright returned to America, he was anathema in Oak Park and River Forest. He took what commissions he could, mostly commercial, to get feet. His goal, to create an American Democratic architecture, was what remained from before. Now, 1913, Wright gets his opportunity. E W Cumm stock office was designed by Wright in 1905, and Harry Hagens, developer, want a “Prairie style” community in River Forest, a whole block of houses. Was block than Frank Lloyd Wright? His office in Orchestra Hall, Chicago, was now staffed with sons Lloyd and John, and Harry Robinson. Efforts were collaborative. Working anonymously as on-site supervisor, Wright’s vision of an American Democratic Architecture came to fruition in 25 homes. The idea would blossom in to the Ravine Bluffs Development, S.185-S.192 for Sherman M Booth in Glencoe, Illinois and then full-blown as the American System-Built Homes, ASBH, S.203, S.203 and S.204. The First World War would end ASBH and put Wright’s dream of a truly America and democratic architecture to rest for a while.

The “Rediscovering Wright Project.”

For the past eight years, Rich Johnson, Dominique Watts and myself have been looking for the missing Wright houses which were initially indicated to me by Henry-Russell Hitchcock. While working on my original Catalog of Wright’s built work (The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, a complete catalog) Hitchcock revealed to me that Wright, while in Oak Park, Hyde Park … would occasionally point to a building and say, “I did that, but nobody will ever know.” Well, after eight years, we know why, and the 29 works referred to by Blair Kamin during his stay in J.L.Silsbee’s office, how the whole goes to together as a unit, and even the shape of lettering on the plan.

Doesn’t this (left) look familiar to anyone? It is a perfect mirror of the Wright design to the right? Yes, the front porch has been glazed in.

I haven’t been able to investigate either of these, but they certainly warrant research as to ASBH possibilities. There is another S.203 type bungalow in or near the Beverly district of Chicago, but my photos elude me.

Remove the additions, and what is beneath? Is that too difficult? Certainly worth considering.

The Team.

William Allin Storrer, Ph.D., author of this web page, is now Visiting Professor of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin and author of best selling The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, a complete catalog and the Frank Lloyd Wright Companion. Richard Johnson is Broadcast Manager for the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University and Daniel Dominique Watts is a professional researcher, historian, preservationist & designer specializing in the works of Frank Lloyd Wright. (again, see Blair Kamin’s blog for a photo of “the Team.”)

The Process.

To identify unknown, presumed built, collaborative or undiscovered Wright works or commissions we employ aesthetic architectural archeology.

Back when the 1800s turned in to the 1900s, Bernard Berenson was turning art critics and connoisseurs inside out. He was telling them they had it all wrong in too many instances. However he had attributed a painting, he often said they were wrong and gave his proof. The proof was unsurving for it wasn’t a long-lost now found document, but simple aesthetic judgments. His study first of the Venetian Renaissance artists then, bit by bit, the remainder of Renaissance Italy, stands even today as revelatory art history. He broke the rules and established new ones. This was, however, hardly new. Musical criticism has followed the same path, looking at the way a composer turned a phrase, modulated key structure, or on the manuscript score the way notes were placed.

Similarly, I and my two research colleagues look at details in the realization of the architectural structure & architectural vocabulary common in Wright's work and his unique signatures developed from his college mentor Conover & also during his stay in J.L. Silsbee's office, how the whole goes together as a unit, and even the shape of lettering on the plan. We gather up signatures of the architect, markers that appear often over time in the artist-architect’s work, much like the police analyze a fingerprint. 7 points of identity is a possibility, 9 a likelihood, and 12 a certainty, and so on.

In the way, our work is like a Robert B. Parker detective novel. Spenser looks for clues in any direction they may take him. It is a spider’s web built from in the cess else on the web. With Vinnie and Hawk, they do what is necessary to find that spider. Likewise Richard Johnson and Dominique Watts research together or separately see something familiar, and stop, gain entry only by sending a letter to the owner asking permission at a later date in time to gain access. Then Dominique and I signatures of the architect suspected of authoring the structure.
1. A two-story house in Glen Ellyn, derivative of the Robie Lamp house (S.097).
2. A two-story house for the brother of #3 above, on Clinton Street in River Forest.
3. Twenty-four two-story houses on William Street in River Forest (further investigations added one more).
4. A two-story ASBH house in Wilmette, type S.204.
5. Two single-story ASBH houses in Berwyn, type S.203.

The 29–30 discovered works.

For comparison, here are two Robinson masterpieces, Paul Victor residence in Naperville (left) and the Truitt house in Naperville (the inset shows the main entry).

#3. Which includes 25 of 26 houses in the 700 block of William Street. While John Thorpe, a respected architect and restorer of many Wright buildings, suggests that houses, a reasonable possibility for one having seen only their exteriors, that argument fails the test. We are certain Thorpe, once he inspects them and compares with proven Robinson homes in Aurora, or the Dr R L Truitt house in Naperville, will join us in celebrating our findings. Interior details of the William Street houses are of several artistic signatures, Frank Lloyd Wright, Lloyd Wright, Harry Robinson and John Wright. No way they were bootlegged by Robinson with all these other signatures present.

By now we were wondering if the only reason Robinson was credited with the Glen E Street houses was the book by the architect’s grandson, James. Rich Johnson, who formed our team, describes this as follows;

"I am Parker's character Spenser. Routinely, I see a story and wonder whether it is the stuff of reality or legend. Oftentimes, upon extended investigation, I discover it. Some stories are interesting, rich characters and stories underneath the first one that led me off in different directions. Like a good detective, I keep following these paths in the field, libraries, any place I meet interesting people who may, or may not, know all the facts that I am using to resolve the mystery. In the end, it takes a combination of dogged determination, legwork and analysis to put all the pieces of the story so they can make a sense as a whole. In most cases, an entirely different story comes to light rather than the one I anticipated at the beginning of the investigation. "Dominique is much like a Dr Watson would be if attached to Spencer." Bill, I think, epitomizes Perry Mason. He is logical, straightforward and able to appraise a situation and take it far down the road where it can be resolved. He loves puzzles, meaning and, at times, their importance. Intuition serves as a guide, but only so far as it can be supported by logic and rigorous analysis. Overall, Bill prefers articulate understandings by everyone so far that it could withstand scrutiny in court.

We are currently looking at 159 buildings in a half-dozen states. We have far more rejections than findings. Many of our finds however are right under the noses of Wright professionals historians to amateur armchair advocates, and adjacent to or behind known Wright homes or projects, yet these Wrightians fail to understand what they and their collaborative efforts, not pure Frank Lloyd Wright.

It also is clear from the set of William Street projects that (Frank) Lloyd Wright (Junior) was a driving force early on in his father's office and assisted his father as early as 1907 per Eric Lloyd Wright's remembrances of what his father told him of his relationship in Frank's office. We are exploring this relationship, because it explains much of what we have found.
Laurie Blazek, who owns one of the 25, was quoted by Blair Kamin as saying she may set up a lemonade stand. We suggest she sell Cherokee Red Kool-aid®.

So, here we have the William Street houses, which some still claim to be by Harry Robinson. But if the houses here are by Harry Robinson, then why haven’t the Robinettes claimed two Clinton Street houses that are identical to two on William Street, but just a block away, south of the James Heald house. Two in the 600 block of Clinton? Identical, mirror images flipped front to rear of William Street houses. Here is 625 Clinton, sadly gutted during reconstruction, but we have a before photo. It is the upper left building. The other three are on William Street, numbers 714, 731 and 711 clockwise. The left two are on the west side of the street, the right two on the east side.

The right group is 609 Clinton with 726 and 754 William Street below. 609 is a front-to-back mirror of the two on William Street, being on the opposite side of the street.

So, where are the Robinson defenders, if they couldn’t recognize the two buildings on Clinton as clones of others on William Street? You’d think they would have driven the area a few times and noticed the similarities. I was unfamiliar with William Street except as I’d been told it was by Harry Robinson, until this year when I took a closer look, then investigated.

Now, the clincher. Later in his long life, Harry applied to the Federal Government for a job. For this, he had to fill out full-page statements of every job he’d held. For the period including William Street, when Harry was in Wright's employ, Harry makes no claim to designing the William Street houses, nor does he claim self-employment for the same time period. In Wright's office, he claims only to have been a supervisor (which credit we give him) and office manager.

#4. This two-story ASBH house is given the catalog number S.204.7 and is located next to S.203.2. The original determination back in 1989 was that it was a Van Bergen design. Later information determined that it was one of two houses, with its single-story neighbor, advertised in the Chicago Tribune as Wright-designed. It turned out the mis-identification could be traced to the fact that the house had an addition of a formal dining room by Van Bergen.

The Chester Bragg home was an effort that was drawn by Lloyd in his father's office as an official Frank Lloyd Wright commission, however Lloyd was responsible for the drawings and possibly many of the details that were worked out for the home's exterior and interior woodwork and layout. Lloyd was also responsible for drawings for Ravine Bluffs (S.185–192), Milwaukee ASBH homes (S.201–204) as well as helping his brother John Lloyd Wright assist their father together on Midway Gardens sets (S.180). His efforts for his father continued with work on the Imperial Hotel, S.194 and into...
photos, the building turned out to be a type S.202 with added sun porch to the rear. The twenties in California and Arizona bore the design traits of ASBH units. They are now S.203.5 and S.203.6.

We expect there will be those who disagree with us. We welcome ideas that will help us refine our approach to identifying architectural works and their rightful creators. You quote chapter and verse exact details of design throughout the project of each and every collaborator you see in the project, and why that makes our decision fault at this way?” don’t count with us, only specific identifiable characteristics of architects will carry much weight with us, unless you can produce a document with irrefutable proof of your assertions.

Thank you for your concerns,

William Allin Storrer Rich Johnson Dominique Watts