

## **Spectacular Frank Lloyd Wright Homes**

### **By Dr. Reese Halter**

The architect, author, social commentator and philosopher Frank Lloyd Wright had a lifelong passion for nature.

Wright was born in 1867 in Wisconsin. He was one of the most influential architects of the twentieth century. During the course of his long and prolific life he designed over 1,100 buildings, those included houses, churches, schools, libraries, offices and museums. Over 400 of his plans were built and today some 20 of them are open to the public.

He was a voracious reader who enjoyed poetry, literature and philosophy. In addition to architecture he studied civil engineering. With a strong background in structure and technology he was readily able to incorporate new materials and cutting edge technology of the industrial revolution.

Wright believed that buildings should fit into their natural environment and be a product of their place, purpose and time by interpreting the principles of nature.

Throughout his life he never wavered in his belief that people should live close to the outdoors and be one with nature.

One of his early goals was to give interior space, particularly in homes, a new freedom. He did away with compartmentalizing houses, which he felt were detrimental to family life.

Between 1900 and 1920 he created homes known as Prairie Style-designs.

They were horizontal rather than vertical in outline and emulated the flat terrain of the Midwest; rarely more than two stories most often they were single-storied with wings as extensions. Most of his homes did not have basements he preferred instead a solid, defined platform. Rooflines were low and oversized extending far beyond the walls, and chimneys were squat and broad-shaped.

The heart of every Frank Lloyd Wright Prairie Style dwelling was a hearth inside the home; it was the heart of the family.

Wright's roofs were said to mimic the branches of a tree, the wings of a bird or an overhanging rock formation. His cantilevered construction was one of his signatures and they were absolutely magnificent.

Wright never painted wood.

The harmonious relationship between form and function extended throughout the house to create unity.

Throughout his long and illustrious architecture career Frank Lloyd Wright designed some spectacular homes. One of the templates for future Prairie Styled homes is the Robie House on the corner between Fifty-ninth Street and Woodlawn, next to the University of Chicago campus, in Chicago.

The house was built between 1906 and 1909 for Fredrick Robie and his wife, Lora.

Red Roman bricks, exquisite cantilevered red roofs, wonderful art glass, custom Wright designed furniture, an open interior plan, and a three bay garage with an engine pit and a carwash were outstanding examples of the talents and ingenuity of this young inspirational architect.

The Robie House is open to the public and is a must see when next visiting Chicago [www.wrightplus.org](http://www.wrightplus.org).

One of the most stunning Wright homes was built for Charles Ennis on a half-acre plot in the Los Feliz area of Los Angeles. Wright thought that homes should grow and merge into their environment.

The Ennis House was made from 16-inch square tile of cast concrete just a little under 4 inches thick. There were no visible mortar lines, and seems were filled with liquid concrete giving the effect of the adobe houses of the Pueblo Peoples of Arizona and New Mexico. Some of the tiles have patterns mimicking the monumental Mayan buildings of Middle America.

The Ennis House has been used for 20 Hollywood films including House on the Hill in 1959 and Blade Runner in 1982.

Sadly, the house has fallen into disrepair and currently is listed on the World Monument Fund list of 100 most endangered sites of the world.

Voted by members of the American Institute of Architects to be “the best all-time work of American architecture” Fallingwater is a Wright home that merges seamlessly into its natural surroundings, harmoniously enabling people to live with nature.

Edgar Kaufman commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to create this breathtaking home. The house stands on Bear Run, a creek on the Appalachian Mountains of Fayette County, western Pennsylvania.

Wright positioned the house over the falls with almost as much outdoor space as indoor. Dramatic cantilevers blended with the natural rock ledge formations. And window walls brought the outside in and vice versa.

The music of the stream can be heard everywhere in the house and Wright said “you listen to the sound of water as you listen to the quiet of the country.”

Fallingwater is open to the public [www.wrightplus.org](http://www.wrightplus.org).

Wright’s dream was to design mass-produced homes for American middleclass that were functional, aesthetically pleasing, energy efficient and affordable.

And in the 1930s that’s what he did. He called them Usonian (United States of North America): Prairie- Styled homes adapted to a smaller budget. He designed 300 of which about 130 were built including 11 Marshall Erdman Prefab Houses.

Frank Lloyd Wright adored trees and revered Mother Nature’s blueprint.

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