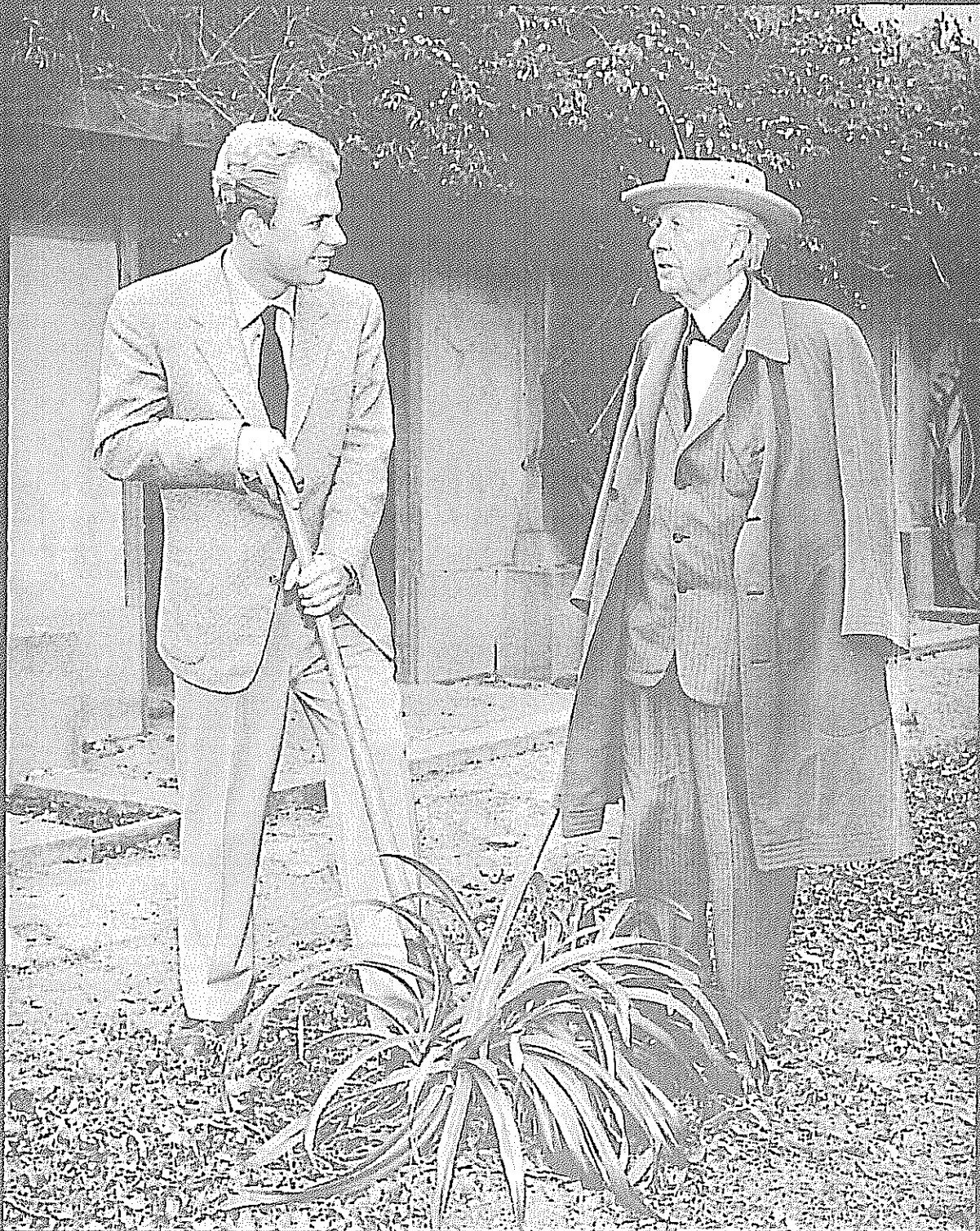


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*Truth Against the World:
The Psychological and Architectural Odyssey of Frank Lloyd Wright 1909-1929*



Hollyhock House, 1917-1920: perspective view. Source: L.A. Cultural Affairs Department.

**"When we build, let us think
that we build forever."**

— Ruskin

In *The Twilight of the Idols*, Friedrich Nietzsche argued that "in architecture, the pride of man, his triumph over gravitation, his will to power assume a visible form. Architecture is a sort of oratory power by means of form." The quintessential personification of this dictum was the

American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. John Wright, Wright's son, recalled once that his father was "a genius who has always been obsessed by an insatiable craving to conquer everything in the world of architecture there is to be conquered." This obsession, which resulted in Wright's search for the essential American architecture, led Wright to develop a mythic persona which protected him from the outside world. Possessed with a highly narcissistic personality, Wright perceived himself as a persecuted

genius in order to achieve "immortality" through his architecture.

Since a building is in many ways a permanent and immortal structure, it is an edifice that is the embodiment and realization of the architect's fantasies. Inasmuch as these fantasies are tied to the architect's own perception of his self-image and the world around him, Wright's whole life, especially his so-called "Middle Period," 1909-1929, accurately illustrated historian David Brion Davis' third level of cultural history, "the intersection between the development of culture and individual personality." Wright's architecture, life, and persona all reflected the culture he lived and worked in. As much as Wright and his peers might disavow it, he was very much the product of his times, a turn of the century man in search of a Progressive solution to America's problems.¹

Frank Lloyd Wright was born on June 8, 1867, the son of an itinerant minister, musician, and teacher, William Russell Cary Wright, who moved his family from one town to another throughout the Middle West and New England in a futile quest for personal fulfillment. Preaching or teaching music wherever he went, William was successfully received but earned little compensation. This lack of financial success was both mystifying and embarrassing. Frank wrote in his *Autobiography* that "failure after failure added to failure" produced "the inveterate and desperate withdrawal on his [William's] part into the arid life of his studies, his books, and his music, thereby ignoring the needs and wishes of his wife and children." But if the father was inattentive, Wright's mother certainly was not.²

Psychoanalysts such as Heinz Kohut agree that the childhood of the artist is intrinsic to understanding his later creativity. The great artists are, according to psychoanalyst Charles Kligerman, usually the male first-born child of an artistically inclined family, doted upon by a mother who sees the baby as the "most wonderful, beautiful child in the world." Phyllis Greenacre, a psychoanalyst specializing in creativity, argued that often the parents of the artist will force the child to "realize some expansive ambitions in which they have felt themselves frustrated."³

Wright's father instilled in Frank a sense of the importance of music and forced him to learn several musical instruments. Frank wrote in 1957 that "his [Frank in the third person] father taught him music. His knuckles were rapped by the lead pencil in the impatient hand that would force the boy's hand into position at practice time."

Wright's sensitivity to music was later reflected in his architecture. Wright often compared architecture to music, "[t]he symphony, as my father first taught me, is an edifice of sound. I now felt Architecture not only might be but ought to be symphonic in character." As art historian Peter Blake pointed out, there are "clear parallels between the horizontal progression of his designs . . . and the rhapsodic flow of Beethoven . . . between his [Wright's] geometric, and Bach's musical, symmetry." William Wright's scholarly attitudes also impressed Frank with the value of the intellect.⁴

Often William Wright would lock himself away from his family to work on his writings or music, a legacy of self-reliance and independence that was left for Frank. In his *Autobiography*, Frank described activities he did alone but hardly mentioned things he did with his siblings or parents. This sense of self-reliance was carried over into his later life, especially after he was forced to assume adult responsibilities when his parents were divorced. In his later years, Wright began to resemble his father in many ways. He was moving constantly from one locale to another, especially between 1909 and 1929, always discontented with his present environment, and always searching for a place of some stability. Both men had trouble managing money, and both were highly ambitious. The ambition to be a great artist resulted in both men neglecting their families and in their unusual desire for privacy.⁵

Wright's association with his mother, Anna, was a different story. "The lad was his mother's adoration. She lived much in him." Wright was by all accounts a beautiful baby and his mother adored him, and had pre-natally determined that he was to be an architect. "The boy, she said, was to build beautiful buildings." She hung pictures of great cathedrals in his room, and brought him up using Friedrich Froebel's "gifts" of wooden blocks, cards, and colored paper. These toys could be stacked, shaped, and arranged in various combinations, lessons which he put to use in his great geometric buildings, particularly in his Unity Temple (Oak Park, 1904) and Los Angeles houses.

Wright often idealized his relationship with his mother, but he was nevertheless profoundly influenced by her. Until her death in the 1920s, Wright either lived with her or kept in close contact with his mother. Frank was often the center of her attentions and he believed that "the differences between husband and wife all seemed to arise over that boy [Frank]. Mother always on the defensive, father taking the offensive."⁶

These "differences" led to his parents eventual divorce in 1885, when Frank was eighteen. Both parents believed in the sanctity of the house and family, but they had become so incompatible that divorce was the only alternative. Anna had difficulty in adjusting to William's constant mobility and financial hardships. William eventually sued for divorce on the grounds that she did not love him anymore. On one occasion, William recalled, she had told him that "I hate the very ground you walk on," and had refused him "intercourse as between husband and wife" since 1883. On April 24, 1885, a divorce was granted and Frank Lloyd Wright later significantly remarked that "the father disappeared and never was seen again by his wife or his children."⁷

The divorce had a traumatic effect on the young Wright. He said that he and others were "shamed because of her 'disgrace.'" He became even closer to his mother and resolved not to disgrace her by failing as an architect — her cherished dream for her son. He also believed that she was the victim of "injustice" and became extremely resentful towards his father. Anna, proud and unsympathetic to William, had told Frank that the divorce was initiated by her, in order to bring her wayward husband into line. She argued that she was the plaintiff and not the defendant in the divorce action. Frank, who never saw his father again, accepted her side of the story not only because he believed her, but because he also knew that his mother could provide a psychological anchor to his life. Throughout Wright's "middle period" when his paranoia increased, his mother steadfastly remained loyal and sympathetic to his architecture and personal problems. He identified his own perceived "persecution" during those years with that of his mother's after the divorce.⁸

The necessity to be a successful architect in order to live up to his mother's expectations, among other factors, resulted in Wright's deliberate falsification about the extent of his college education. He wrote in his *Autobiography* that "Architecture, at first his mother's inspiration, then naturally his own desire, was the study he wanted." He never completed high school, but was admitted to the University of Wisconsin as a "special student" in 1886, and finished no more than one complete year and received grades in only two classes. Yet he later remarked that he "ran away from school several months before I was to receive a degree." He fabricated his educational record in order to provide his architecture with more academic substance, thus becoming in his own mind, and that of his mother's, a better architect.

As much as he disavowed academic architectural educa-

tion throughout his life, "the university years is mostly dull pain," he so valued the status that such an education conferred upon an architect that he later stated that he left Wisconsin during his senior year and even accepted a honorary degree from his alma mater later in his life.⁹

Another reason for his leaving the university at such an early date was due to his low grades in the courses he did take, which was particularly disconcerting to Wright. Kohut discussed the concept of "narcissistic shame," when a creative person believes he suffers a humiliating blow in which he then wants to cover up and keep from public knowledge. Wright was never a good student; in high school he received a "poor" in Physics, and he failed Algebra; in college he received a grade of "average" in Descriptive Geometry and Drawing. Classes such as these are essential in any architectural education, and he was sufficiently embarrassed by these grades to misrepresent them all his life.¹⁰

After Wright's early departure from the university, he went to Chicago to work under several architects before settling in with Louis Sullivan, who profoundly influenced Wright's life and architecture. Kohut wrote that "during periods of intense creativity — certain creative persons require a specific relationship with another person — a transference of creativity." This transference occurred between Sullivan and Wright. Sullivan, Wright's "leiber Meister," taught Wright the fundamentals of his architectural philosophy — the stripping of useless ornament, the meaning of his famous maxim, "form follows function," and the necessity for a building to fit the area it is built on — which dominated much of Wright's own architecture. Wright understood Sullivan's influence, but more importantly, Sullivan was one of the few influences he ever acknowledged. Sullivan was "the master for whose influence, affection and comradeship I have never ceased to feel gratitude."¹¹

But their relationship was not simply that of pupil to master, for Sullivan soon recognized Wright's genius. Sullivan was older than Wright, who soon became a substitute son for Sullivan, whereas Sullivan became Wright's substitute father. But there were tensions in the relationship, since Sullivan became jealous of Wright's obviously superior domestic designs and Wright grew increasingly irritated with Sullivan's paternalistic and professional rules and restrictions. The two men became estranged in 1892 over a bitter fight involving Wright's unauthorized work on several domestic residences. To Wright, "this seemed unjust," and Wright's 1893 design for a new Public Library and Museum in Milwaukee — in

the Beaux-Arts neo-classical mode which Sullivan abhorred — was an unconscious reaction against his former mentor. The feud between the two was finally patched up in 1908, but by then Wright was considered an architect on par with Sullivan, so he had little to lose in terms of psychological injury by reconciling with his former teacher.¹²

Wright also learned from Sullivan the necessity for creating a new architectural style, one which exemplified the "democratic," "individualistic," "organic," "natural," and technological aspects of the American identity. This goal of a new unified American architecture dominated Wright's whole architectural life, from his Prairie School Style, to his middle years, to his later Usonian period. "The American Nation has a heart and a backbone and a pattern of its own and is rapidly forming a mind of its own," Wright told an audience in 1900. Wright was opposed to the eclectic Beaux-Arts architecture that had dominated in the United States since the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, since "this hectic quest for sentimental bosh in architecture in our beloved country has wasted billions of perfectly honest dollars, done spiritual harm, more or less violent, to millions of otherwise pretty good people."¹³

Wright was opposed to bringing over European styles to America since they were not applicable to the United States. He disliked neo-Roman bath houses in Chicago, neo-Greek temples in Madison, and neo-Gothic houses in Oak Park. "Just why," he asked, "[do] architects borrow the semblance of styles from the past, adopting or even adapting those forms which changing conditions have robbed and left barren." To Wright, the prevalence of this "imitative" architecture was the clarion call to a fight for a new organic American architecture, challenging the older European architecture which "demoralized all values artistically until utter prostitution results."¹⁴

In politics, Wright was a Progressive who believed in American democratic individualism. "Individuality," he noted, "is the most precious thing in life . . . An honest democracy must believe that it is." But the problem, as he saw it, was that "here, in our country, . . . individual distinction of the highest order . . . [has been] distorted or swamped in the clogging surge of 'good taste'." The old architectural styles were thus undemocratic, and Wright took it upon himself to bring about democracy through the vehicle of his organic design. Wright defined his organic architecture as "an architecture that *develops* from within outward in harmony with the conditions of its being as distinguished from one that which is *applied*

from without." Organic architecture had to be open and flowing and part of nature, since democratic man always must be free and able to flow into free space and free ideas — the backbone, Wright believed, of American democracy.¹⁵

When Wright was twelve, his family finally settled in Madison, Wisconsin, and he spent the subsequent seven summers working on the farm of his uncle in nearby Spring Green — an experience that led to his profound love and respect for the values of nature. "I loved the prairie by instinct as a great simplicity — the trees, flowers, and the sky itself . . ." Wright also respected nature to the degree he did precisely because his mother did too. Wright's sister recalled that "nature and knowledge, those were her [Anna's] early and abiding passions." But Wright also understood the importance of technology. "In the machine lies the only future of art and craft," he argued in 1900. He thought that machinery and such new technical materials as steel would reflect the new twentieth century, but he disliked the fact that steel was being used to support the stone facades of Beaux-Arts architecture. This, to Wright, denied the modern age. Wright remarked that as the beauty of wood "lies first in its qualities as wood," so the beauty of steel should lie in its natural, organic use. The final goal of his organic architecture was unity. Everything should be harmonious and unified: interiors, exteriors, building structure, and materials.¹⁶

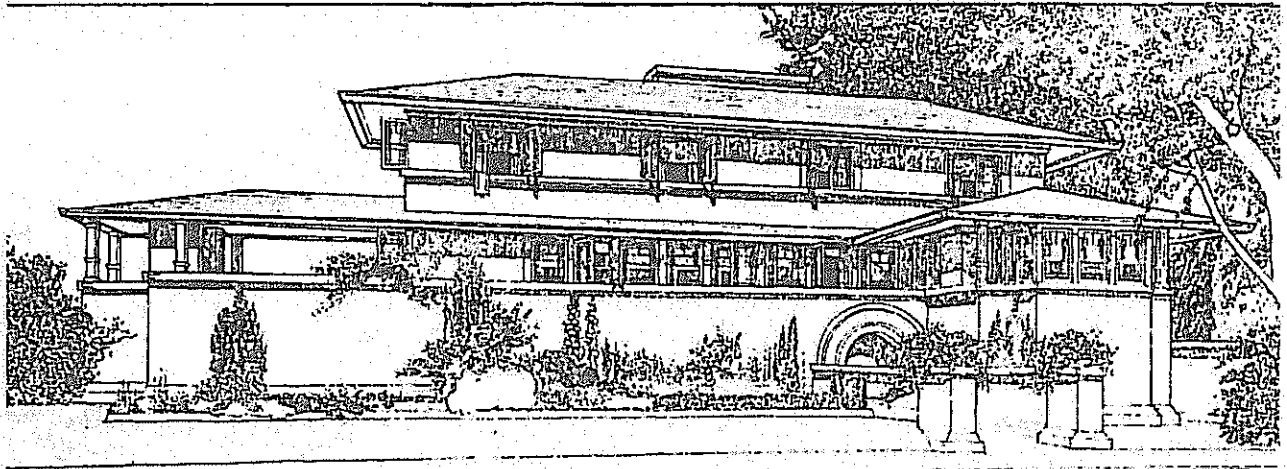
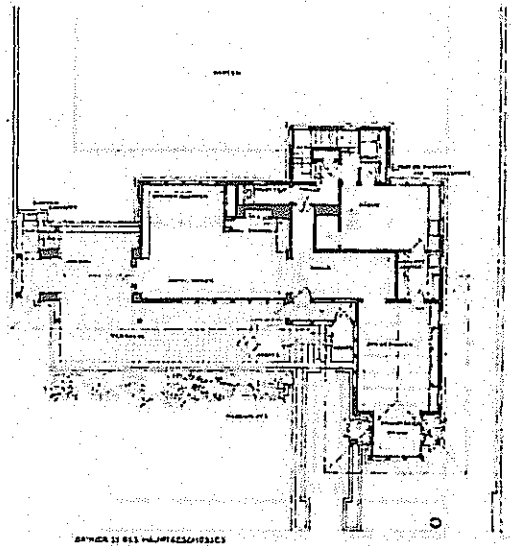
His first attempt to build a single unified organic architecture was his Prairie Style. Though his non-domestic buildings of the period were slightly different, his Prairie Style houses were no longer "boxes" that people merely occupied, rather they were houses designed to merge and meld the environment, structure, and home dweller into one. Prairie houses, with their horizontal quasi-Japanese orientation, were firmly anchored to the ground yet retained a sense of expansionism. This expansionism accurately reflected the work of Wright's favorite poet, Walt Whitman:

The earth expanding right hand and left hand . . .
O highway . . .
You express me better than I can express myself . . .
I inhale great draughts of space,
The east and the west are mine and the north and the south are mine.¹⁷

The Prairie house also illustrated Wright's psychological development at the time. Wright was profoundly aware of the importance of the family, especially after his own experiences as a child and adolescent. He admired his

uncle's family, their loyalty and equality, yet he also was aware of how fragmented families could become if members chose to neglect them, as Wright believed his father had. Compounding these troubles, the family was also under assault in the industrial age. This occurred especially in the urban environment, where most of Wright's domestic designs were constructed. Houses, if designed for the family, could provide a bulwark in which to bring the family together.

Wright's Prairie "open plan" merged the dining, living, and other rooms together, so the family would be able to spend more time together. Instead of rigidly segregating each room into "boxes . . . [which] implied ancestors familiar to penal institutions," as he put it, Wright screened and subdivided the house so that the family was always aware of other members. If privacy was needed, there were always bedrooms, or for children, nurseries.



Frank Thomas House, 1901: perspective view & first floor plan.

These houses were not fortresses, as some of his later domestic designs became, rather retreats with entrances in hard to find areas or in the rear, signifying Wright's fear that outside influences might disturb the tranquility of the home and family.¹⁸

Wright's Prairie houses became exceedingly popular, attracted much attention, and made Wright a prominent architect as well as a well-known social figure. But, in September 1909, he seemingly destroyed his entire previous career, when he eloped to Europe with a client,

Mamah Borthwick Cheney, abandoning his wife and children, and leaving his architectural practice in the hands of his associates. The resulting scandal made Wright *persona non grata* within his Oak Park community for the next few years, and as the commissions dwindled, Wright's psyche began to change. He began to see himself as a persecuted genius and his architecture began to change in both scope and substance.

Wright's relationship with women was both confusing and complex. As a youth, Wright tended to fantasize in his little attic retreat for hours on end, reading fantasy books or working on his art work. His adolescence was certainly not characterized by vigorous activity with other teenagers. "He preferred reading to playing with other boys," Wright later remarked about himself, but more importantly, "the sight of a girl would send him like a scared young stag, scampering back into his wood." This fear and insecurity around females led Wright to propose to the first woman who expressed an interest in him, Catherine Lee Tobin.¹⁹

Catherine was 18 years old in 1889 when she married Wright, but she was well schooled in the social graces. Wright knew that his clients expected their architect to act like a "gentleman," so he had Catherine instruct him in social etiquette. But Wright soon began to tire of Catherine. "The young husband found that he had his work cut out for him. The young wife found hers cut out for her. Architecture was my profession. Motherhood became hers. Fair enough, but it was a division." Wright found her intellectually inferior to him, and even worse in his eyes, not really interested in his work. Wright complained that she "knew only a few of her husband's clients' names or what buildings he was building." Wright's insecurity around women was so pronounced that he needed a wife who was both his intellectual equal and very knowledgeable and supportive about his work. Since Catherine was neither, Wright subsequently abandoned her and his family.²⁰

Mamah Cheney was a free-spirited woman, who preferred activity in the arts and humanities to the household. She was disappointed with the role of women in society, and regarded her marriage to Edwin Cheney as a disaster. Mamah and Edwin commissioned a house from Wright in 1904, but only she worked with Wright on it. She was actively interested in Wright's work and was a strong believer in the philosophy of the Swedish feminist Ellen Key, who took a dim view of the institution of marriage.²¹

Wright used Ellen Key's and Mamah's views on marriage when he tried to rationalize and justify the abandonment of his family. Wright wrote that "marriage not mutual is no better, but is worse, than any other form of slavery . . . Only to the degree that marriage is mutual is it decent. Love is not property. To take it so, is barbarous. To protect it as such is barbarism." Wright also justified his actions, although he acknowledged that they violated social mores, by proclaiming himself exempt from the "average," hence, beholden to "higher laws." "The ordinary man cannot live without rules to guide his conduct . . ." Wright argued, but when "he [referring to himself] has displayed some spiritual power, has given some concrete evidence of his ability to see and to feel the higher and better things of life, we ought to go slow - in deciding if he has acted badly." The persecution he felt, and some did exist, towards his conduct — which he interpreted as being against his architecture — only reinforced his own image as the persecuted genius.²²

The image and value of the family, once one of Wright's dominant psychological building blocks in his Prairie houses, also began to change in 1909. The family was no longer a positive institution for him. He began to see it in a more negative sense. Wright had mixed feelings about his children. He loved them, yet he was constantly irritated by them, irritated enough to design and build a separate studio next to his house in order to gain some peace and quiet. But his children still bothered him and he soon began to resent their need for constant attention. Wright remarked, "I hated the sound of the word papa." So successful was Wright in designing for and creating a close-knit family, that it had begun to intrude upon his individuality. Wright's father left home because his family was too fragmented and weak; Wright left for just the opposite reasons.²³

Wright was not only growing dissatisfied with his domestic relationships, he was also getting bored with the Prairie Style. He desired freedom and originality both in his life and in his architecture. His radically new and daring Prairie houses seemed stale and lifeless. "This absorbing, consuming phase of my experience as an architect ended about 1909," he later wrote, "I was losing grip on my work and even my interest in it . . . [my work on the Prairie designs] seemed to leave me up against a dead wall." Coupled with this disillusionment was the belief that his work was being copied and exploited. He was aware that his work was highly original and valuable, and as he came to this realization, he began to picture himself as an artist and became more and more jealous of his individuality. Becoming "free" of the confining bounds

of a successful architectural style and family soon became his overriding ambition.²⁴

He felt, in 1909, that his work had also become too successful, because everyone knew what to expect from him. He had come to be identified with the Prairie Style and with other Prairie architects, which was particularly galling to an individualist like Wright. In addition, he believed that his innovative role in developing the Prairie Style was being forgotten. He argued in 1914 that "twenty-one years ago, I entered a field he [Sullivan] had not, in any new spirit, touched — the field of domestic architecture — and began to break ground and make the forms I needed, *alone — absolutely alone.*"

As Wright grew older, he also actively promulgated the belief that his Prairie houses were ignored by his countrymen. As with much of Wright's hyperbole, this is incorrect. Between 1889 and 1909, Wright built close to 140 structures, an impressive figure for any architect, received excellent press notices about his buildings, and had earned the professional respect of many local architects. The Chicago Architectural Club honored him with two large exhibitions, one in 1902, and one in 1907. As architectural historian Robert Twombly pointed out, "no Chicago architect including Sullivan had ever been so honored."²⁵

Wright's rejection of his family in 1909, and his growing dissatisfaction with the Prairie Style which he founded, occurred around Wright's fortieth birthday, which might possibly be classified as a type of "mid-life" crisis. This crisis grew out of personal feelings of threat, boredom, social ostracism, and a public response to his ever-present arrogance. In Wright's 1909 and subsequent actions, there were elements of paranoia, messianism, and even martyrdom. Unless Wright received total praise for "his" style, he suspected a conspiracy to discredit him by architects and others. Wright wrote to Harriet Monroe that "I seem beset on all sides, with prejudiced and sometimes evil intent." He later began to attack other architects; he even called the A.I.A. the "Arbitrary Institute of Appearances." He did not realize that good, constructive criticism of his work was not an attempt to destroy him; neither could he regard imitation of his designs as anything else but robbery. Competition within his "own style" was often regarded as an act of war.²⁶

But Wright never did completely reject the Prairie Style. Elements of it would appear throughout his later work, but the alterations reflected his later psychological development. Taliesin I, the house he built for Mamah and his

mother in 1911 in Spring Green, Wisconsin, was intended to be the greatest Prairie house ever — to prove to the world that he originated the style — yet it also reflected Wright's dissatisfaction with the style and his previous life. Wright described Taliesin as a "modest human programme . . . around the hilltop in a series of four varied courts . . . forming a sort of drive along the hillside flanked by low buildings on one side and by flower gardens against the stone walls that retained the hill crown on the other."²⁷

The plaster, stone, and wood buildings had low-slung pitched roofs in the best Prairie manner, while the series of ribbon windows with wood mullions created a sense of natural unity with the house to the surrounding Wisconsin countryside. "I wanted a *natural* house to live in myself," declared Wright. The most prominent features of Taliesin were the roofs, with their gable elements, penthouses, and long, stretched out overhangs, as if an integral part of the landscape. The interior had low-slung roofs in the personal rooms like bedrooms, yet had high roof ceilings in the communal and less personal rooms. The bulky wood furniture was designed by Wright, and Wright's very large Japanese and Chinese art collection was displayed throughout.²⁸

Taliesin developed the idea of privacy further than in any of his other Prairie houses. It became a fortress near the top of a hill overlooking nearby Spring Green. Wright had begun to value his privacy more as the Cheney scandal broke, and Taliesin had a refuge-like atmosphere to it. It was intended to be as self-sufficient as possible for he built a granary, stables, and ice house adjacent to the house. He also grew much of his own food and kept a personal water supply. In addition, Wright said that he would set the rules for personal and professional behavior at Taliesin: the house of a self-confident, yet persecuted man. The remote Wisconsin location also forced his clients to travel a fair distance to see him, which reaffirmed Wright's sense of self-importance.²⁹

Taliesin was Wright's last major Prairie house. After it, he intensified his search for an indigenous "American" architecture. The Prairie Style seemed boring, and since it was so widely imitated, even tainted. Wright began to search for new sources of inspiration and found them in the aboriginal cultures of America — the Native American and Mayan civilizations. Wright's search for an American past echoed that of D. H. Lawrence, who believed that the Native Americans held "the full force of the demon of the continent" within their spirit — hence the essential ingredient in Wright's "American Architec-

ture" Wright recalled that "I remember how . . . primitive American architecture — Toltec, Aztec, Mayan, Inca — stirred my wonder, excited my wishful admiration." Mayan and Indian architecture, combined with Wright's knowledge of Japanese architecture gained in visits to the 1893 World's Fair and his 1905 trip to Japan, confirmed to him the simple validity of massed monumental geometric shapes and isolated abstract ornamentation.³⁰

Though he had used them sparingly in Unity Temple (Oak Park, 1904), Wright's first major use of Native American motifs was in his design for the Chicago Midway Gardens in 1913. The massive complex brick and concrete edifice at once threatened to overwhelm the viewer, but Wright managed to create a dignified, harmonious, and unified building. Intended to be a large elaborate restaurant and open-air concert and beer garden for affluent Chicagoans, the park was planned around a central garden which was surrounded by differing elevations of brick and concrete block pavilions, balconies, and turrets. The Gardens also contained beautiful abstract murals and sculpture by Alfonso Iannelli and Richard Bock, suggesting Wright's affinity to European Cubism, and Futurism and Secessionist art. The geometrically massive textile concrete blocks were strongly reminiscent in an abstract way of Mayan architecture. But the Gardens contained other references as well, signifying Wright's still incomplete search for Native American motifs. "To many it was all Egyptian," Wright wrote of the opening crowds, "Maya to some, very Japanese to others."³¹

In the 1915 A.D. German Warehouse at Richland Center, Wisconsin, there was no confusion about Native American influences with its obvious relationship to the Temple of the Three Lintels at Chichen Itza. Both had massive bodies pierced by three narrow openings and were topped with a large decorative frieze of abstract design with diagonal Mayan corner brackets. This monumental "temple" also differed from the relatively open area of the Midway Gardens and reflected Wright's reaction to the tragedy that occurred at Taliesin in August, 1914.³²

On August 14, 1914, while Wright was in Chicago supervising the completion of the Midway Gardens, he received a phone call that Taliesin was in flames. Upon returning home, he learned that Julian Carlston, a recently hired cook from Barbados, had locked the dining room door, set gasoline fires under the windows, and killed Mamah Cheney and five others with an ax. Since Carlston committed suicide a few days later in jail, his motives were never fully explained. Wright was emotionally scarred by these events and became physically sick. "The

gaping black hole left by fire in the beautiful hillside was empty, a charred, and ugly scar upon my own life." Wright buried Mamah with his own hands and retired to live with friends in Chicago.³³

The press, hostile to Wright after 1909, sensationalized the tragedy. Many believed that the radical, free-thinking architect who lived in an unusual and "exotic" house and flaunted social mores, deserved this. Others thought that the murder and fire was the wrath of God. This real persecution only fueled the flames of Wright's paranoia and contributed to his persona of the persecuted artist. Wright later wrote that "waves of unkind, stupid publicity had broken over Taliesin again. The human sacrifices at Taliesin seemed in vain. Its heroism was ridiculed, its love mocked."³⁴

Wright soon found that his only solace was in designing and building, in creating new works of art. "After the first terrible anguish," Wright recalled, "a kind of black despair seemed to paralyze my imagination . . . I could get relief only by looking toward rebuilding — get relief from a kind of continuous nausea, by work." The first job, after completing the Midway Gardens, was the rebuilding of Taliesin. "There was to be no turning back nor any stopping to mourn. What had been beautiful at Taliesin should live as a grateful memory creating the new, and come who and whatever might to share Taliesin, they would be sure to help in that spirit. So I [had] believed and resolved." With that sense, Wright undertook to build Taliesin II, not as a replica of Taliesin I, but more as a monument to Mamah and as a reaffirmation of Wright's individuality and genius in the face of persecution.³⁵

For all of Wright's narcissism and self-confidence, he was dependent upon women and very insecure without a "sympathetic companion." Soon after the fire, Miriam Noel, an artist, sent Wright a sympathetic note expressing condolences and they soon became intimate friends. Again, the press and even his friends criticized Wright's seemingly hypocritical actions with Miriam so soon after Mamah's death, thus further intensifying Wright's paranoia.

Wright undertook several more commissions in the area, the boxy, severe Sherman Booth House (Glencoe, Ill., 1915), the brick Emil Bach House (Chicago, 1915), the Roman brick square F.C. Bogk Residence (Milwaukee, 1916), the Arthur L. Richards Duplex Apartments (Milwaukee, 1916), and the Arthur Munkwitz Duplex Apartments (Milwaukee, 1916), the latter two in a "stacked" geometric design. All these designs were breaks from the

Prairie mode, and even with the Midway Gardens. When Wright became aware that his privacy was not safe even in his fortress-like Taliesin, he built houses that were still organic, but with no free flow of space between the interior and exterior. These houses were consciously and unapologetically designed to protect the dwellers from the outside world. But by now the Midwest contained too many painful memories, so Wright continued his search for an American architecture and a safe, private place where he could create his buildings, a search that would ultimately lead him to Japan and California.³⁶

Wright accepted, in 1915, a commission from the Emperor of Japan to design a modern new hotel to handle his country's growing trade and tourist industry. The Imperial Hotel took a total of seven years to construct. It was a massive, unapproachable, and private brick and limestone building, one of Wright's acknowledged masterpieces. The hotel was deceptive in scale, low in the entrance and yet rising to seven stories. It contained 230 rooms with shops, a post office, a theater seating 100, and the Peacock Room, a large dining room. The plan of the building was shaped like the letter "H," with the public rooms in the center, reminiscent of Japanese houses. The exterior ornament, as much Mayan as Japanese, was delicate and intricate, creating many beautiful effects as the shadows changed throughout the day.

But the main importance of the Imperial Hotel lay in its construction techniques. Located on a drained marsh composed of 60 feet of liquid mud overlaid by 8 feet of fill, Wright "floated" the hotel on a bed of mud. Earthquakes also posed a problem to Wright's design, so he proposed to construct the hotel in as many small and independent parts as possible in order to redistribute the stress of the building. Wright suffered some abuse from fellow architects; one called the plan and construction of the hotel "a monstrous thing of supposedly antique influence . . . Its originality is so antiquated that it embalms and mummifies the brains of the beholder." But Wright was vindicated from these attacks when the hotel survived the 1922 Tokyo earthquake with only minor structural damage. Baron Okyra, Chairman of the Board of the Imperial Hotel, sent Wright a telegram which stated that the "hotel stands undamaged as a monument of your genius." This only reaffirmed what Wright always believed.³⁷

In the meantime, Wright had contracted with Aline Barnsdall to build his masterpiece of his middle period, the Barnsdall-Hollyhock house in Los Angeles. Wright complained that he never liked Los Angeles, he called it the "Great American Commonplace," and argued that its

architecture had no "thought or feeling for integrity" and was characterized by "a flatulent or fraudulent . . . cheap opulent taste for tawdry Spanish Medievalism." But Los Angeles, with its sunny climate and Spanish Colonial and Mexican atmosphere, seemed the ideal place in which to continue his search for the quintessential American architecture. Los Angeles, to Wright, was the perfect setting for his neo-Mayan architecture.³⁸

By 1917, Wright's perception of himself as a great artist had begun to manifest itself to a much greater degree than before. He had sought this recognition in 1909 when he went to Europe to publish the *Wasmuth folios*, and he became more active in Maurice Browne and Ellen Van Volkenberg's experimental Chicago Little Theater. Through his connections at the Theater he met Aline Barnsdall, the eccentric socialistic heiress of a large California oil fortune. Barnsdall contracted with Wright to build an entire artistic community in Los Angeles, one centered around her theatrical friends and interests. She wanted to bring "culture" to Los Angeles, a quality in which both Barnsdall and Wright agreed Los Angeles was lacking.³⁹

Barnsdall's great Los Angeles plan called for Wright to design 45 buildings, including two theaters, (one in Chicago), two personal houses, sixteen stores, twenty-one other houses, one apartment building, one entrance pavilion, one motion picture theater, and one playhouse-kindergarten. She purchased the thirty-six acre Olive Hill tract for most of this plan at the reported cost of \$300,000. But for a variety of reasons, some financial, some personal, only one house — the Hollyhock house — and two smaller guest houses were ever built.⁴⁰

Olive Hill in 1919 was still a semi-rural area, so named because an enterprising businessman had planted olive trees there. One contemporary critic remarked that "it overlooks on one side, vast areas that stretch to the rugged foothills of the Sierra Nevadas; over the Pacific on another side; and on a third, one can see the skyscrapers of this modern coast city . . ." Wright thought the site similar to his site for Tanyderi, a 1907 house built on a hill in rural Wisconsin, and Taliesin. But Wright wanted Hollyhock to be a "natural house . . . native to the region of California as the house in the Middle West had been native to the Middle West." To achieve this, Wright looked to Mayan and Pueblo architecture.⁴¹

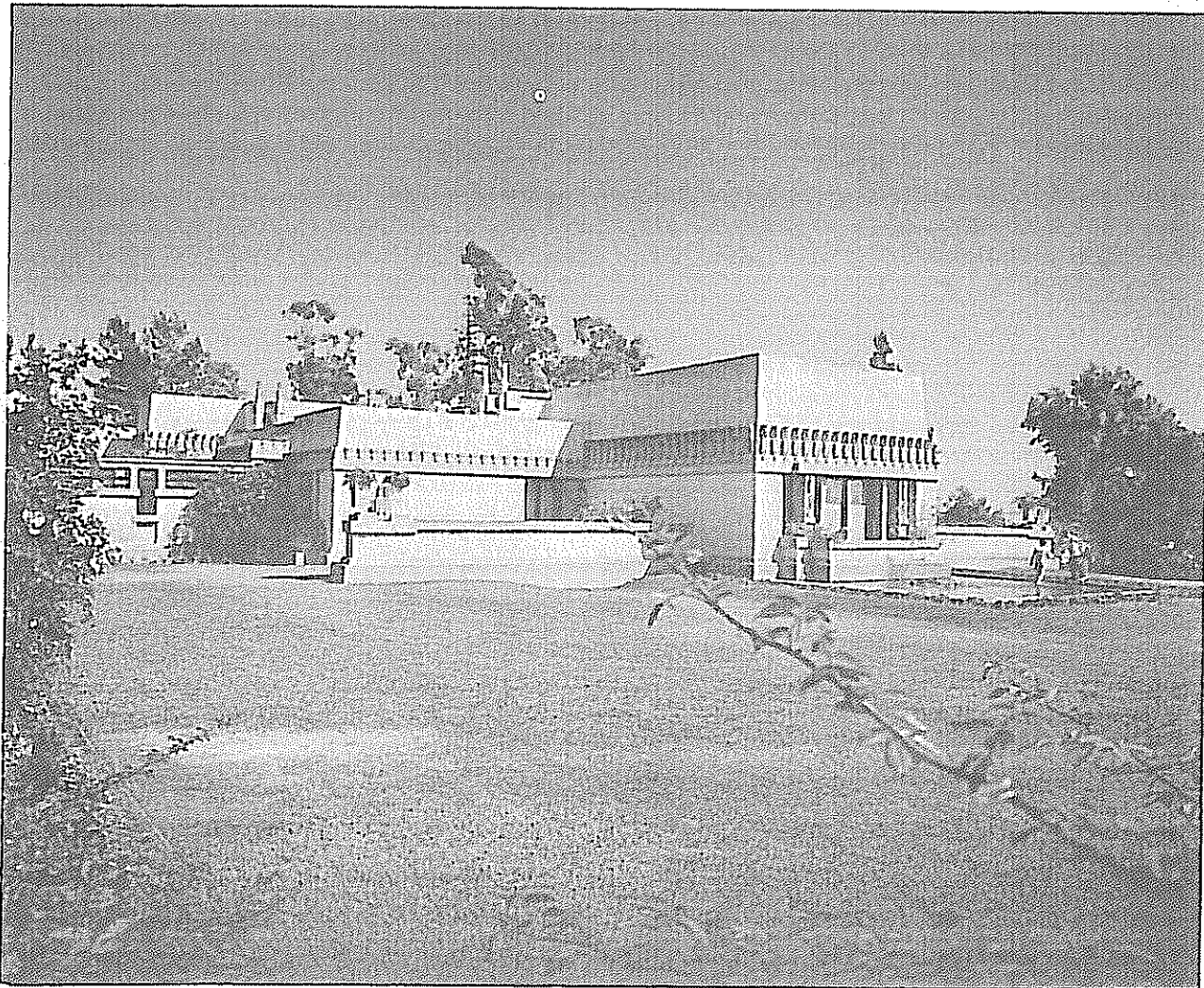
The house itself is monumental, built of poured concrete, and overlooking the neighborhood as if it were a private fortress. The house was centered around an interior

garden courtyard which was connected to the service wing, a roof terrace, living room, and guest wing by a series of loggias, pergolas, and colonnades. The house was "U" shaped, with a modified cross-axial plan which shifted the central mass from the living room, as occurred in his Prairie Houses, to the outside patio. This reflected both the changes in climate between Oak Park and Los Angeles and the flowing space between the interior outside court and the house.

The exterior of the house, except for the interior court, was solid, massive, and only relieved by narrow windows and the abstract "hollyhock" flower design that Barnsdall

had insisted upon. The interior of the house was also monumental, yet in a smaller, more domestic sense than the exterior. The walls and ceilings were plaster, painted in light purple, tan, gold and green colors, contrasting with the deeper, darker colors of the Prairie houses. The plaster was finished with wood mouldings which tended to outline and sharpen the interior space. All furnishings — furniture, carpets, and artwork — were either designed or purchased by Wright in order to unify the building.⁴²

The interior garden court was to have been used for theatrical performances. The roof terraces, which acted as balconies on three sides, were the seating areas. A broad



Hollyhock House. Photo: Julius Shulman.

lawn was the performance area, while an electronically controlled fountain was the curtain. The landscaping was to act as the background. The landscaping of the house was designed by Wright and implemented by Wright's associate Rudolf Schindler. Wright and Barnsdall decided to plant "pine groves behind on the hill and great masses of Eucalyptus to enclose the pines . . . and great carpets of brilliant flowers for ground cover." "Artists came and admired it," Wright wrote, "Hollyhock became known as a work of fine art in the various ateliers of the continent where she [Barnsdall] would go every summer. Europeans came and saw in it something of the higher harmony of the spirit of man." Wright, believing himself a great artist, called his creation a "California Romanza," part of that "greatest of arts — Architecture." Even the orientation of the house reflected Wright's preoccupation with art; the Prairie dining room was no longer the central room, rather the central courtyard for artistic purposes became the focal point of the house.⁴³

But Wright was still preoccupied with his search for an American architecture through Mayan and Pueblo forms. Wright believed that California was the ideal location in which to build a neo-Mayan and neo-Pueblo building. The Hollyhock house was strongly reminiscent of a squashed-down Usumacinta Temple and its spatial massing resembled the Temple of the Tigers and the Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itza. But Lloyd Wright, Frank's son, described another influence. "He [Frank Lloyd Wright] had submerged himself into the area in spirit and developed a true expression . . . of the Southwest . . . What he had built was a mesa silhouette, terrace on terrace, characterized and developed by Pueblo Indians."⁴⁴

Wright was still recovering from the murders at Taliesin when he designed the Hollyhock house, and this was reflected in the architecture. Wright was wandering around the world without any permanent roots, and he designed Hollyhock as another place of refuge, sanctuary, and retreat from the world. Aline Barnsdall was in a way similar to Wright; her socialist views were not particularly popular in California. She needed a comfortable place to live among her artistic friends, yet kept away from her real or imagined enemies. To a large extent Wright succeeded in achieving this. This house, along with the Imperial Hotel, provided Wright with a comfortable income during this time of crisis, making it possible for him not to deal with other, perhaps less sympathetic, clients.⁴⁵

Wright further explored Native American Indian motifs in his plans for the 1922 Lake Tahoe Summer Colony and

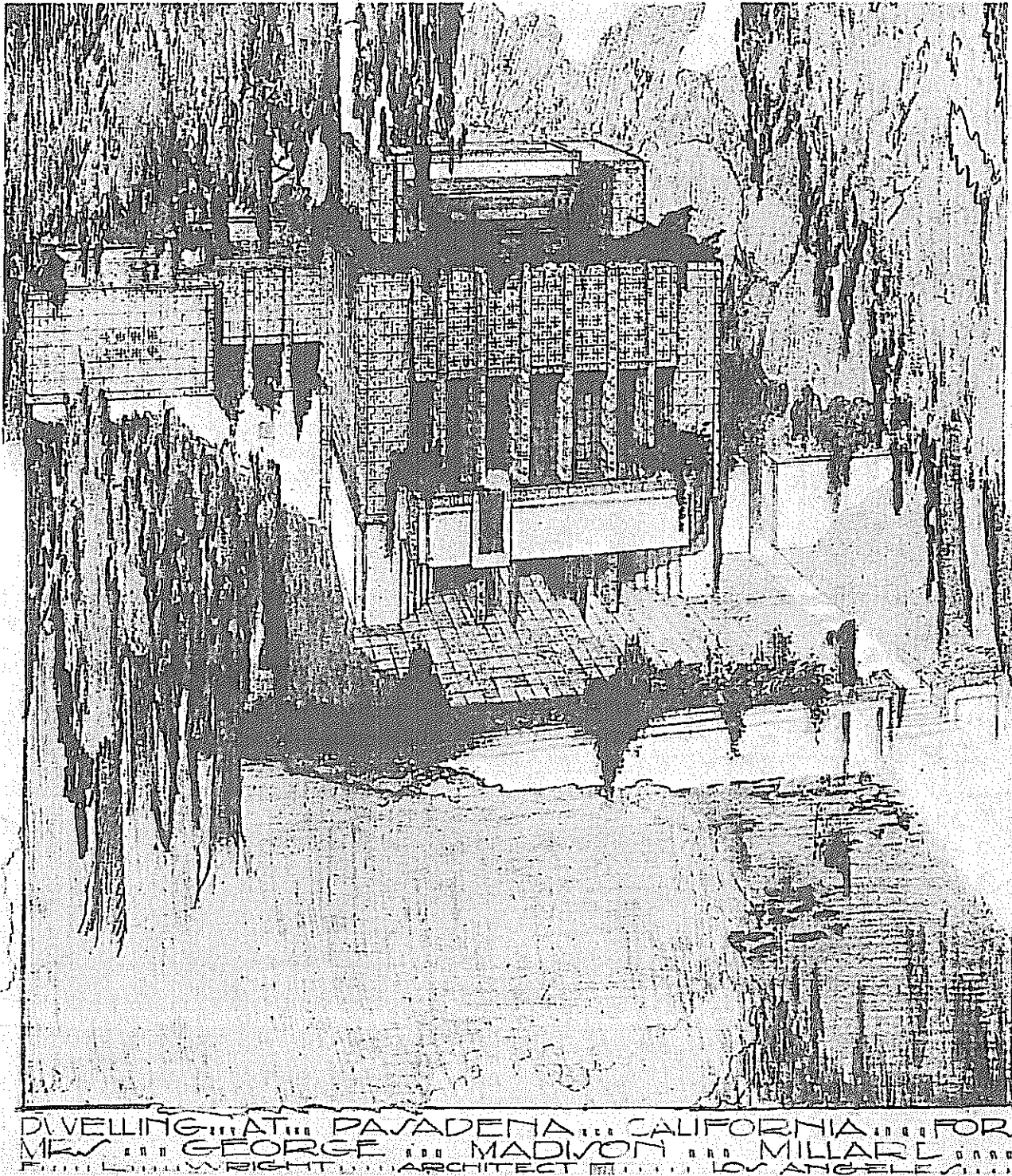
the Nakoma Country Club project of 1924. Instead of Pre-Columbian or Pueblo Indian styles, Wright adopted the conical teepees of the Plains Indians. Neither project was built and Wright dropped the Plains Indian influences from his later work. He felt that the more stable, less nomadic Indian architecture of the Southwest and Mexico reflected American values and ideals better than the nomadic Plains Indians did.⁴⁶

His use of Pueblo and Mayan motifs is strongest in his Los Angeles concrete block homes of the 1920s. Wright was beginning to have trouble with Miriam Noel when he designed his first concrete block house, the Millard House (Pasadena), in 1923. He wanted to retreat even further from the world. No longer content to detach his houses from the public and seek mere privacy, he wanted to isolate himself and his clients from a hostile world. Isolation — both in terms of the fortress-like exteriors of the block houses, and also in terms of a reinforced concrete building method — dominated the architecture of his final four California commissions of the 1920s.⁴⁷

A contemporary engineer described Wright's construction process: "The system consists of concrete block slabs about two or three inches thick . . . [which are] laid on end with interlocking grooves, reinforced horizontally and vertically by means of steel rods . . . Concrete is poured into the holes through which the rods extend, forming a complete weatherproof, structural bond" within the building. Wright thought it would "be fit for a new phase of our modern architecture . . . It might be permanent, noble, beautiful. It would be cheap." The greatest of Wright's concrete block houses was "La Miniatura," the Millard House.⁴⁸

Built for a widow, Mrs. George Millard, who had earlier commissioned a Prairie House from Wright, La Miniatura was the most vertical of Wright's houses. Wright sought to build "nothing less than a distinctly genuine expression of California in terms of modern industry and American life — that was all." The Millard House was simple in plan and composition. Two stories high, it rose out of a ravine in Pasadena. The entrance was on the second floor, along with a garage, guest room, bathroom, living room and balcony. The first floor contained a kitchen, dining room, and storage space.

The exterior, isolated amongst dense vegetation, was massive and overpowering, consisting of narrow bands of windows, and Mayan-like abstract ornamented concrete blocks. The exterior massing in La Miniatura was also strongly reminiscent of Mayan architecture. Wright's



DWELLING AT PASADENA CALIFORNIA FOR
MR. GEORGE MADISON MILLARD
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT ARCHITECT LOS ANGELES

Millard House, 1923: perspective view.

paranoia also surfaced in building this house, his *Autobiography* recounted the problems he had with other contractors and architects that were out to "get him." When it turned out that the Millard House roof leaked — a common occurrence in many Wright-designed houses — Wright believed that "the local A.I.A., Mrs. Millard's private secretaries, her too many vigilant and confidential advisers, the local realtors, aspiring inferior desecrators, convincing contractors, roofers, loafers, lawyers, plumbers, tourists, butchers, grocers, roofers, and servants" — all tried to "assassinate" his building and his architectural practice.⁴⁹

Wright's other concrete block houses were similar in design to the Millard House. The Storer House (Hollywood, 1923) was the most accessible of the four houses, with a large two-story high living room that overlooked the street with its column-like facade of thin glass windows. The Freeman House (Los Angeles, 1923) was perched on a hill and was isolated from the street, its main rooms faced the city of Hollywood. An attractive open balcony connected with the main living room terraced on the hill. His last block house, the Ennis House (Los Angeles, 1924) was also his most monumental. It resembled a monolithic Mayan temple, or even a mausoleum. The house sought to be part of the hill, and yet distinct from it, as it overlooked Hollywood and the nearby Hollyhock House.⁵⁰

The isolation of these houses reflected Wright's personal life. Miriam Noel became increasingly unstable after 1915, and in December 1923, he married her in an attempt to calm her down. Wright apparently still loved her, for she had remained loyal to him during the emotionally difficult period after the murders, and had assisted him financially as well. But as Wright was later to remark, "marriage resulted in ruin for both. Instead of improving with marriage, as I had hoped, our relationship became worse." Wright asserted that "with marriage she seemed to lose what interest she had in life at Taliesin and became more than ever restless and vindictive. Finally under circumstances altogether baffling — she left to live a life of her own. To oppose her now in the slightest degree meant violence. I did not really wish to oppose her." Miriam left Wright five months after the wedding, but a lengthy and bitter divorce suit followed. Wright had by then returned to Taliesin II, and soon met another woman, Olgivanna Lazovitch, who later was to stay with Wright until his death. Miriam became jealous, and after a series of tragic and almost comical maneuvers, succeeded in getting a harassed Wright arrested for violating the Mann Act. Finally, a judge granted a divorce on

August 25, 1927, and the unfortunate Miriam died a few years later in a sanitarium.⁵¹

Wright's life was further complicated by the death of his mother in 1923 at the age of eighty-three. In 1925, Taliesin II again went up in flames due to an electrical fire, but this time there was no loss of human life. Wright built Taliesin III for many of the same reasons as he had built Taliesin I. In addition to these troubles, legal costs from the divorce and rebuilding costs from the fire forced Wright to sell his beloved Japanese art collection for a loss. Wright was broke, with only a few commissions in the late 1920s, and he was forced to incorporate himself and sell shares in future projects in an effort to stay solvent. It was no wonder that Wright's paranoia and his belief that he was a persecuted genius increased. It was as if a "Superhuman Providence," God himself, had conspired against him.⁵²

This paranoia undoubtedly led to Wright's near fanatical attacks on the International Style and Le Corbusier in particular. Wright believed he himself was the greatest architect — living or dead — and would tolerate no rivals. The clarified, simple, abstract lines of European modernism appeared to him as sterile, incomplete, and anti-organic; furthermore, he was well aware of the impact his Wasmuth folios had upon the High Modern movement. Wright's own buildings were often acknowledged by Richard Neutra, Walter Gropius, and other modern architects as prototypes of theirs. For example, Gropius' 1914 Cologne Exposition factory was clearly influenced by Wright's 1908 Mason City, Iowa Hotel.

But, as Vincent Scully has remarked, Wright ironically was clearly influenced by the International Style aesthetic himself, the Millard House was strikingly similar to Le Corbusier's 1922 Citrohan projects.⁵³

Wright built several houses in Arizona, reflecting Indian designs, and proposed a marvelous design for a gigantic cantilevered glass and copper apartment building, for the St. Mark's-in-the-Bowery Church of New York. But his last building of the 1920s, "Westhope," a house designed in Tulsa, Oklahoma for his cousin, Richard Lloyd Jones, seemed to sum up his last twenty years. It contained Mayan and American Indian references and ornamentation. Fortress-like, secluded, built of textile concrete blocks, it reminded the viewer of Wright's preoccupation with privacy and reflected Wright's continued paranoia and persecution complexes. The alternating window and concrete piers that made up the walls suggested an affinity to the International Style, especially Mies Van der

Rohe's Brick Country House Project, 1923, or his Wolf House (Guben, Germany, 1926).

Wright aspired to be a modern artist, and in terms of architecture, he succeeded. In addition, the very fact that Wright created so much window space confirmed that Wright was beginning to accept the outside world again. He was recovering from his self-imposed isolation of 1909, the 1914 murders, and his personal problems of the 1920s, and in doing so, he helped usher in his extremely productive 1930s "Usonian" period, culminating in his masterpieces at Bear Run, Pennsylvania and Racine, Wisconsin.⁵⁴

Frank Lloyd Wright built as much for America as for himself. He passionately believed that America needed its own art and architecture, and he devoted his whole life in search of it, starting with his Prairie Style, continuing on to his neo-Mayan and neo-American Indian second period, and concluding with his Usonian designs of the thirties, forties, and fifties. He was convinced that architecture was a powerful instrument of social progress capable of bringing about a better world. Architecture was for Wright "essentially human stuff," but he was also well aware of the political implications of his art.⁵⁵

Wright's psyche was a study of contradictions, not only to other people, but to himself as well. A man who devoted his life to following his mother's wishes was also very insecure around women. A man who came from a broken home, he dedicated his life to the perfection of the perfect family house, but abandoned his first wife and children. During his seventy-two year career, close to six hundred of his eight hundred designs were for domestic houses. His paranoia led him to believe that he was a persecuted genius, since, as Charles Kligerman pointed out, "we are accustomed to think the genius-self develops through the vicissitudes of life . . . Hence, the conventional wisdom that the genius has to suffer in order to become great."⁵⁶

Wright created a mythic persona for himself, one that placed him alone and at the forefront of the artistic and architectural world. As he became more and more successful, he began to perceive himself as a rugged individualist, an artist who had earned the right to flout social conventions and mores. Wright's flight to Europe in 1909 was as much as symptom of boredom with Catherine and his work, as it was an attempt to show the world that he could do as he pleased. His persecution complex developed even further during the 1910s with the murder and fire at Taliesin I; the insensitivity of the public seemed proof of this. His designs for the Imperial Hotel, the

Hollyhock House, and the concrete block houses reflected his fear of the outside world.

Wright's narcissistic desire to be an artist led him to deliberately falsify his college records and turn helpful, constructive architectural criticism into deadly personal attacks. He blamed others for any problems he had with his architecture, and whenever business was off, he believed that someone was out to get him. By acting this way, Wright absolved himself from doing anything wrong, all the while moving further and further into a personal fantasy world where his constructed persona reigned supreme. In the late 20s, when commissions were few and he was the target of personal and legal problems stemming from Miriam Noel, he wrote his *Autobiography*; and his role of the persecuted genius, at first a defense mechanism, soon began to dominate his life. His narcissistic personality was as fragile as it was over-developed.

The irony of all this was that Wright did not have to create this persona, for he was widely recognized, then, as in the 1980s, as an architectural genius. His popularity waned only when he deliberately flouted social conventions or designed incredibly anti-social dwellings — as in the block houses — but even these were not that unpopular. Wright's problems with the Prairie Style were not a lack of clients or an unsympathetic public, rather, they were his own restless quest for an American architecture. His personal problems of the 1920s, rather than public distaste for his designs, prevented him from capitalizing on the international acclaim accorded him after the Imperial Hotel survived the earthquake.

By creating a persona of a persecuted genius, he came to believe that his architecture was that of a genius - thus insuring his own immortality. By thinking that attacks on his personal lifestyle were also attacks on his architecture, he further fueled his paranoia, but at the same time these attacks absolved him from any of his actions. This persona allowed him to blame "them" for all his problems, and allowed him to emerge as the "victor" time after time. The motto of his mother's family appropriately summed up his "middle period" and indeed his whole life: "Truth Against the World."⁵⁷

NOTES:

[Note: The title "Frank Lloyd Wright," will be abbreviated "FLW" after the first citation.]

1. John Lloyd Wright, "In My Father's Shadow," *Esquire* XLIX (Feb 1958), 55; David Brion Davis, "Some Recent Directions in American Cultural History," *American Historical Review* LXXIII (Feb 1968), 704.
2. Robert Twombly, *Frank Lloyd Wright: His Life and Architecture* (N.Y.: John Wiley, 1979), 6; Maginal Wright Barney, *The Valley of the God-Almighty Joneses* (N.Y.: Appleton-Century, 1965), 66, quoted in Twombly, *FLW*, 6.
3. Charles Kligerman, "Art and the Self of the Artist," *Advances in Self-Psychology* (N.Y.: International Universities Press, 1980), 385; Phyllis Greenacre, "The Childhood of the Artist: Libidinal Phase Development and Giftedness," *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* XXII (1957), 56. Ernst Kris was one of the first major psychoanalysts to deal with the psychological nature of the creative process. He believed that "artists have greater access to the unconscious, are able to use the intensely mobile cathexes for the primary process, and are able to transform primitive fantasies into a viable work by a regression in the service of the ego followed by a return to the higher critical faculties of the secondary process." (Kligerman, "Art and the Self," 389-90). But, Phyllis Greenacre argued that creative people have a "collective love affair" with their audience. An artistic creation "has the character of a love gift, to be brought as near perfection as possible and to be presented with pride and misgiving," and not purely for the narcissistic "gratification of the self." (Greenacre, "The Childhood of the Artist," 58). Kris and Greenacre, among others, laid the groundwork for the Austrian psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut to formulate his psychology of the self. Kohut's theories deal with the relationship of creativity to narcissism. Kohut's work outlines three currents in the creative drive. First, the artist feels an intrinsic joy in producing and creating a work of art. Second, the artist needs to repeat the "exhibitionistic grandiose ecstasy" of being the creator in creation after creation, always striving toward greater perfection. Third, the desire for perfection rises out of a loss of self-esteem while the artist is not creating. This would "amount to healing the threatened fragmentation and restoring firm self-cohesion through a merger with the self-object - the work of art - and a bid for mirroring approval by the world." (Kligerman, "Art and the Self," 387-88, Heinz Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self* (N.Y.: International Universities Press, 1978).
4. Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography* (N.Y.: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943), 12-13; Frank Lloyd Wright, "Architecture and Music," *Saturday Review* XL (28 Sept 1957), 73; Peter Blake, *Frank Lloyd Wright: Architecture and Space* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1960 [1964]), 60.
5. Frank had two sisters and three stepsiblings. In his *Autobiography*, only three people figure in his early life: his mother, father, and himself. Twombly, *FLW*, 16, 39-40.
6. Wright, *Autobiography*, 49, 12.
7. Circuit Court Files, "William C. Wright v. Anna L. Wright" n.p., quoted in Thomas S. Hines, "Frank Lloyd Wright -The Madison Years: Records Versus Recollections," *JSAH* XXVI (December 1967), 228; Wright, *Autobiography*, 51.
8. Wright, *Autobiography*, 51; Twombly, *FLW*, 13-14; Hines, "FLW," 229.
9. Wright, *Autobiography*, 52; Ronald May, "Frank Lloyd Wright, Alumnus," *Wisconsin Alumnus* LI (Nov 1949), quoted in Hines, "FLW," 230.
10. Hines, "FLW," 229-231; Madison High School Records, "1884-1885 Room Four," and Frank Lloyd Wright, Official Transcript, University of Wisconsin Archives, cited in Hines, "FLW," 230, 231; see also Heinz Kohut, "Some Thoughts on Narcissism and Narcissistic Rage," *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* XXVII (1972), 360-400.
11. Heinz Kohut, *The Search for the Self* (N.Y.: International Universities Press, 1978), I, 86-7; Wright, *Autobiography*, 92.
12. Wright, *Autobiography*, 110; Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *In the Nature of the Materials: The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1941* (N.Y.: DaCapo Press, 1975 [1942]), *passim*; Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "The Evolution of Wright, Mies and Le Corbusier," *Perspecta* no. 1 (Summer 1952), 10-11; Twombly, *FLW*, 21-4.
13. quoted in Blake, *FLW*, 36; Wright, *Autobiography*, 226.
14. quoted in H.R. Sell, "Interpretation, Not Imitation: Work of Frank Lloyd Wright," *International Studio* LV (May 1915), lxxix; Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture: Second Paper (May 1914)," reprinted in Frederick Gutheim, ed., *In the Cause of Architecture* (N.Y.: Architectural Record, 1975), 123.
15. Wright, *Autobiography*, 233; Frank Lloyd Wright, "Louis Henry Sullivan: Beloved Master," *Western Architect* (June 1924), reprinted in H. Allen Brooks, *Prairie School Architecture: Studies from the "Western Architect"* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 64; Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture: Second Paper," 122.
16. Wright, *Autobiography*, 139; quoted in Twombly, *FLW*, 2-3, 50, 51.
17. quoted in Blake, *FLW*, 37. The Prairie School was not as original as Wright said it was. It contains the influence of H.H. Richardson (shingle style); his old mentor, Silsbee; McKim, Mead and White (axial layout of interior space), and Japanese

influences.

18. Wright, *Autobiography*, 142.
19. *Ibid.*, 16, 48.
20. *Ibid.*, 109-111; Catherine rather pathetically forgave Wright, believing that the breakup was due to Edwin Cheney for not keeping Mamah away from Frank, and Mamah herself, that "vampire," who stole Frank away from her. Wright was completely guiltless. She thought that Wright would eventually come back to her; she refused to grant a divorce until the early 1920s.
21. Twombly, *FLW*, 129-138.
22. *Chicago Tribune*, December 26, 1911, quoted in *Ibid.*, 138; Wright, *Autobiography*, 163.
23. Wright, *Autobiography*, 114-117; Twombly, *FLW*, 121; Norris Kelly Smith, *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Study in Architectural Content* (Watkins Glen: American Life Foundation, 1979), 112.
24. Wright, *Autobiography*, 162.
25. Twombly, *FLW*, 125-7, 105, 34; Blake, *FLW*, 57; Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture: Second Paper," 122, italics mine.
26. Wright to Monroe, April 20, 1914, Monroe Poetry Collection, University of Chicago Library, quoted in Twombly, *FLW*, 162; Frank Lloyd Wright, "Architecture as a Profession is Wrong," *The American Architect* CXXXVIII (Dec 1930), 84; Twombly, *FLW*, 162.
27. Wright, *Autobiography*, 171.
28. *Ibid.*, 168, 174; Hitchcock, *In the Nature*, 64-5; Blake, *FLW*, 62-3.
29. Twombly, *FLW*, 134-5, 141.
30. D.H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (N.Y.: Doubleday, 1955), 44-5, quoted in Vincent Scully, *Frank Lloyd Wright* (N.Y.: Braziller, 1960), 25; Frank Lloyd Wright, *A Testament* (N.Y.: Horizon, 1957), 96.
31. Twombly, *FLW*, 157, 153-4; Wright, *Autobiography*, 191; Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., "Crisis and Creativity: Frank Lloyd Wright, 1904-1914," *JSAH* XXV (Dec 1966), 295; D.T. Tselos, "Exotic Influences in the Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright," *Magazine of Art* XLVI (1953), 166.
32. Tselos, "Exotic Influences," 163; Scully, *FLW*, 24.
33. Twombly, *FLW*, 167; Wright, *Autobiography*, 186.
34. Winthrop Sargeant, "Frank Lloyd Wright: The Titan of Modern Architecture Still Flings His Houses and His Insults at Backward Colleagues," *LIFE* (12 Aug 1946), 90; Blake, *FLW*, 667; Wright, *Autobiography*, 188.
35. Wright, *Autobiography*, 189-90; Twombly, *FLW*, 173.
36. "To the Countryside," *Weekly Home News* (Spring Green), June 10, 1926, quoted in Twombly, *FLW*, 176.
37. Wright, *Autobiography*, 214-16; Blake, *FLW*, 69-72; L.C. Mullgardt, "A Building that is Wrong," *Architecture and Engineering* LXXI (November 1922), 81-2; Wright built six other buildings in Japan, all of which fell between his earlier Prairie Style and his later concrete block houses.
38. Paul Hunter, "Mr. Wright Goes to Los Angeles," *Pencil Points* XXI (March 1940), 36; "People," *TIME* (5 Feb 1940), 40; quoted in Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1973), 359; Wright, of course, would deny that he was neo-anything.
39. Kaufmann, Jr., "Crisis," 31; Kathryn Smith, "Frank Lloyd Wright, Hollyhock House and Olive Hill, 1914-1924," *JSAH* XXXVIII (March 1979), 32-3, 16-18; David Gebhard and Harriette Von Breton, *Lloyd Wright, Architect* (Santa Barbara: UCSB Press, 1971), 24-5; Art Ronnie, "Hollyhock - The Wright House," *Westways* LXVI (Nov 1974), 18.
40. David Gebhard, *Schindler*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 39-40; K. Smith, "FLW," 15; Ronnie, "Hollyhock," 18.
41. K. Smith, "FLW," 20, 21; Wright, *Autobiography*, 226; F. W. Vreeland, "A New Art Centre for the Pacific Coast," *Arts and Decoration* XXVIII (1927), 64-5, quoted in K. Smith, "FLW," 21; William A. Storrer, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright: A Complete Catalog, Second Edition* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978), no. 134.
42. K. Smith, "FLW," 25-7; Hitchcock, *In the Nature*, 70-1; Ronnie, "Hollyhock," 19-20.
43. Wright, *Autobiography*, 231, 232, 226, 232; K. Smith, "FLW," 25.
44. quoted in Ronnie, "Hollyhock," 20; David Gebhard and Robert Winter, *A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1977), 24; Tselos, "Exotic Influences," 166; Vincent Scully, "Wright vs. the International School," *Art News* LIII (March 1954), 64; Vincent Scully, *American Architecture and Urbanism* (N.Y.: Praeger, 1969), 124.
45. McWilliams, *Southern California*, 337; Twombly, *FLW*, 195-6; Wright, *Autobiography*, 228.
46. Tselos, "Exotic Influences," 166; Scully, *FLW*, 25-6; Geb-

hard and Von Breton, *Lloyd Wright*, 30-2; Noted scholar Wayne S. Grajewski has also pointed out that Wright's Los Angeles buildings were *not* constructed out of wood, rather concrete and stone — perhaps as a response to the Taliesin fire. Wrobel, interview with Grajewski, Pasadena, March 30, 1984.

47. Twombly, *FLW*, 197-8; Wright further retreated from American society because he was appalled by the anti-German sentiment released by the American intervention in WWI. Wright wrote that "War soon broke out ... The course of normal human life everywhere was soon upset." (*Autobiography*, 191). He was also upset that the War killed off the Arts and Crafts Movement and other cultural movements he was active in. (N. Smith, [*FLW*], 125-6).

48. Wayne Andrews, *Architecture, Ambition, and Americans* (N.Y.: Free Press, 1964), 240; Storrer, *FLW*, no. 214; A.N. Rebori, "Frank Lloyd Wright's Textile Block Construction," *Architectural Record* LXII (December 1927), 452-3; Wright, *Autobiography*, 235.

49. Wright, *Autobiography*, 241, 251; Andrews, *Architecture*, 240; Hitchcock, *In the Nature*, 76.

50. Gebhard and Winter, *Guide*, 145, 160; Scully, *FLW*, 25; Hitchcock, *In the Nature*, 77; William Stephens, "Architectural Shrines are Expensive Homes," *Los Angeles Times* Sept 4, 1972, I 3; Esther McCoy, "West Coast Architects: Lloyd Wright," *Arts and Architecture* LXXXIII (October 1966), 76; Twombly, *FLW*, 195-6.

51. Twombly, *FLW*, 163, 191; Sargeant, "FLW," 93; Blake, *FLW*, 68-9; Wright, *Autobiography*, 260; Olgivanna brought some stability to Wright's life, but her actions after his death have tarnished Wright's legacy to some extent.

52. Blake, *FLW*, 84; Wright, *Autobiography*, 262; Twombly, *FLW*, 190.

53. Scully, *FLW*, 23-5; Twombly, *FLW*, 203-5; Paul and Percival Goodman, "Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture," *Kenyon Review* IV (Winter 1942), 22.

54. Hitchcock, *In the Nature*, 78; Jenkin Lloyd Jones, "A House for a Cousin: The Richard Lloyd Jones House," *Frank Lloyd Wright Newsletter* II (Fourth Quarter 1979), 1-3.

55. Wright, *Autobiography*, 254.

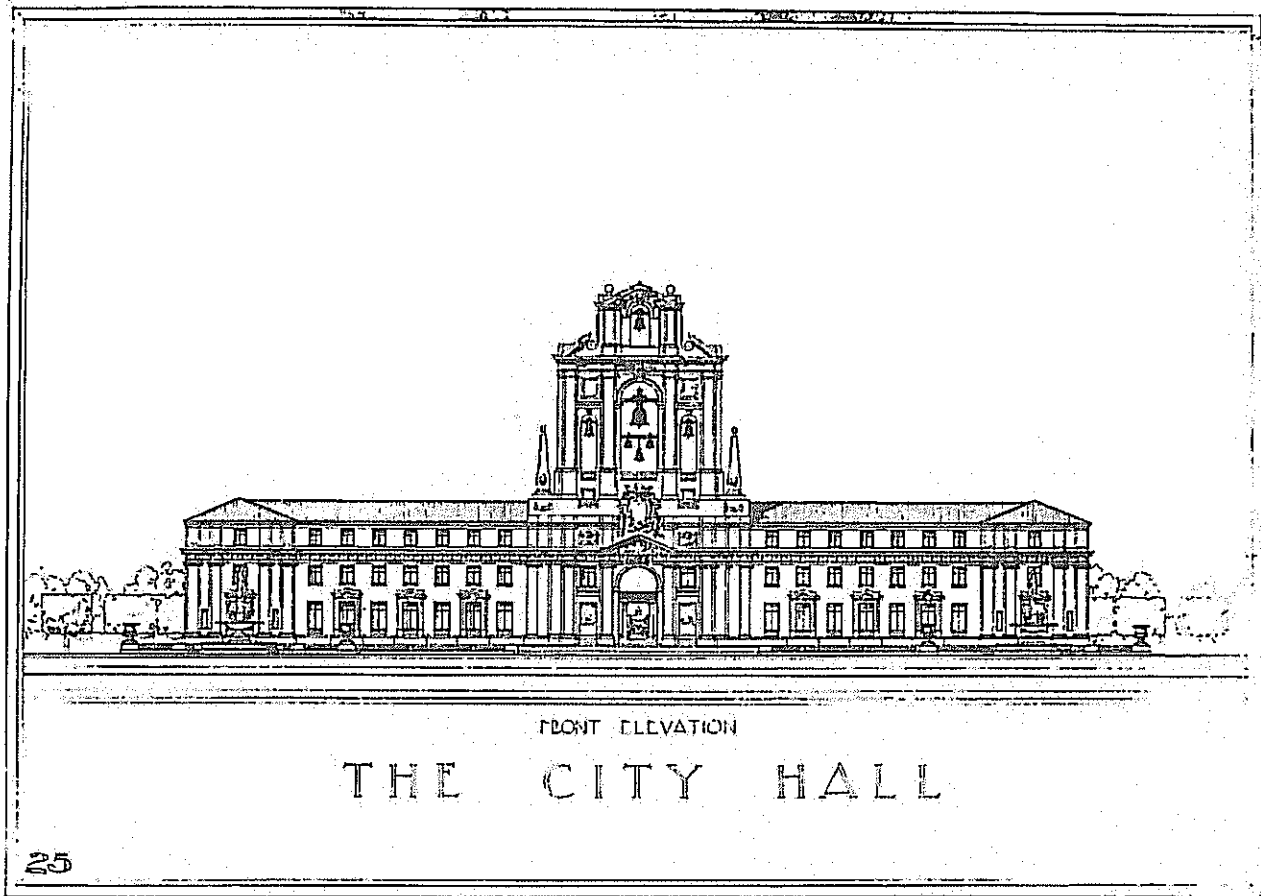
56. Twombly, *FLW*, 38; Kligerman, "Art and the Self," 384.

57. Twombly, *FLW*, 409-11; Wright, *Autobiography*, 6.



Ann Scheid

*Pasadena Civic Center:
A Brief History — Part II*



Bakewell and Brown's winning design for Pasadena City Hall, with tower strongly reminiscent of the "campanario" of the San Gabriel Mission. Source: Urban Conservation Department, City of Pasadena.

After the encouraging victory at the polls, French turned to the question of the competition. In a letter in July, he informed Hale that the Planning Commission did not favor a national architectural competition,¹ much less an international one, such as Hale had always envisioned. The California fear and distrust of "the East" is expressed in French's reservations about contact with the architect over so great a distance and the thought "that

an eastern man has little or no knowledge of building materials or labor conditions of the Coast." French suggested that Bennett and Parsons be employed as consultants to study the work of California architects and suggest the names of those outstanding enough to be invited to the competition. The Commission would then choose the top three and assign them one building each, with Bennett and Parsons advising the three in order to

attain harmony among the designs.

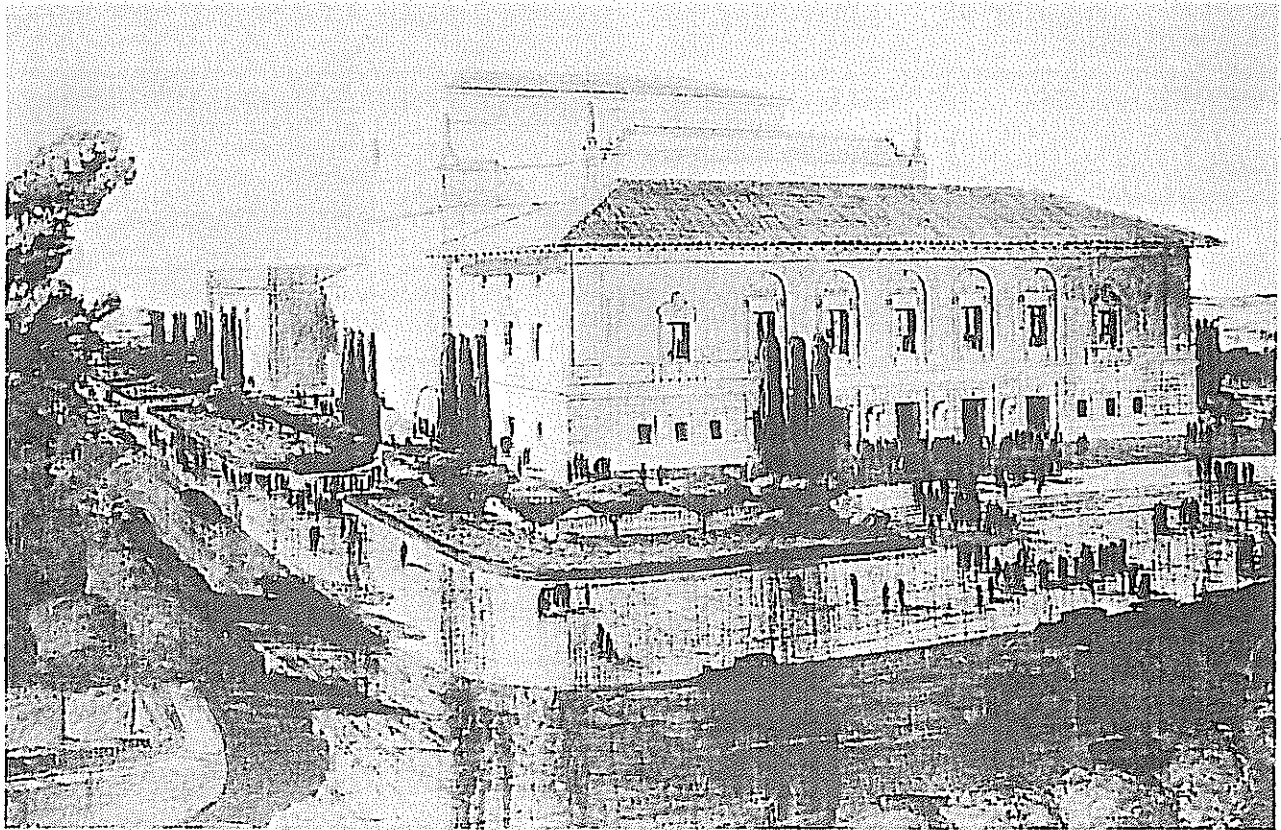
Initially the names proposed by the consultants were limited to Southern California architects, but in a letter to Hale in September, Bennett agreed that "Willis Polk can and should be included."² Hale expressed his disappointment at the abandonment of a national competition in a letter to the Planning Commission but French reiterated his opposition to an "eastern firm."³ Notes in Hale's diary indicate he asked Goodhue's advice on the matter: "Goodhue prefers Polk, Allison and Allison, Bliss and Faville, Farquhar, Winslow (with G[oodhue] as assoc[iate])."⁴

THE COMPETITION

Planning Commission Report No. 8 to the Board of City Directors dated December 1, 1923, sets out the procedures and rules for the competition and lists the architects to be invited. The list reads like a roll call of the

important California architects of the day, including a few from Pasadena itself. From San Francisco, Bakewell & Brown; Bliss & Faville; and Willis Polk were invited to submit drawings. From Southern California, Allison & Allison; Robert Farquhar; Carlton Winslow; Bergstrom, Bennett & Haskell; Johnson, Kaufmann & Coate; Marston, Van Pelt & Maybury; and Myron Hunt were invited to compete. Members of the jury were George Hale, Chairman; Ernest Batchelder (also a new member of the Planning Commission), Stuart French and John Galen Howard. A fifth member of the jury was to be a California architect chosen by the competitors. Pierpoint Davis was selected by the architects, and Robert Farquhar later replaced Howard on the jury. Advisers for the competition were Bennett, Parsons and Frost, retained to help advise the jury and prepare the program, but having no vote. The Chicago firm was also to consult with the architects after the award to assure coordination and harmony of design for their buildings.

The competitors were required to submit drawings for



Bergstrom, Bennett and Haskell's winning design for the Pasadena Civic Auditorium. Source: Urban Conservation Department, City of Pasadena.

each of the three buildings although only one or two might finally be selected. Drawings were returned to the unsuccessful entrants after the award, with a compensation fee of \$1,000.⁵ A careful system was devised to preserve the anonymity of the competitors until after the designs were chosen.

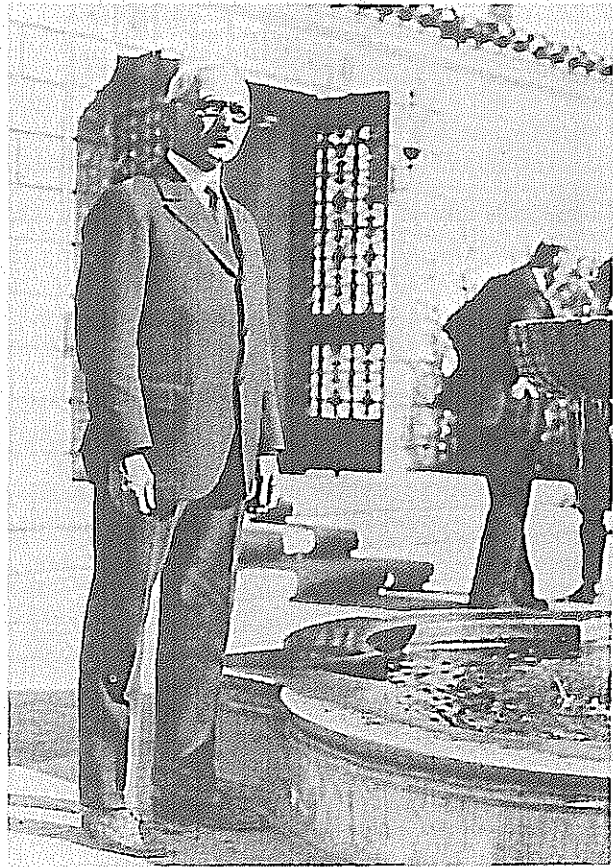
The competition deadline was February 15, 1924, and the program stated that the buildings finally selected would be subject to revision by the owner, a matter which was to become an issue in the case of the City Hall design.

Specifications for the three buildings were general, giving only the square footage required for individual departments and areas in the buildings. A patio to function as an outdoor reading area was suggested for the Library, but not required. Auditorium specifications required "a hall or pavilion on the grounds for exhibitions," the convention center desired by the business community. Furthermore, "adequate provision [was to] be made for the circulation and parking of automobiles."

In the final paragraphs, the instructions stress the importance of creating designs "adapted to the special needs of Pasadena and to the climate of the region . . . Consistent with this idea it is suggested that the architecture of the Renaissance or later periods in the European countries bordering upon the Mediterranean Sea may serve as fruitful sources of inspiration."

On February 28, 1924, the jury and the Board of City Directors convened at the tea house in Carmelita Gardens to view the competition entries.⁶ Ernest Batchelder discussed the various proposals and outlined the reasons why each winner had been selected. The jury commended the architects of the Auditorium, Bergstrom, Bennett and Haskell, for the interior plan, particularly the seating arrangement of the main hall, and for the provision for the addition of an Exhibition Hall at the rear. They also commended the design of the facade terminating the Garfield axis as "simple and dignified . . . Recognition of its northern exposure and its use of color about the second story windows is well conceived." The jury also approved the arrangement of the entrance steps and terrace in front of and around the building.

The library design by Myron Hunt was praised for its patio entrance which "creates at once an atmosphere of seclusion from the public street." The jury found the interior spaces to be well-planned and liked the provision the architects had made for expansion.⁷ The jury also praised Hunt for the exterior design of "unusual interest from all the various points of approach to the



Architect Myron Hunt standing in the patio of the Pasadena Public Library on its dedication day, February 1927. Source: Urban Conservation Department, City of Pasadena.

building, . . . appropriate for a southern exposure and . . . a charming terminal for the street which it faces."

As for the City Hall design, by San Francisco architects Bakewell and Brown, the jury especially liked the rectangular plan enclosing a large cloistered court. Furthermore, the jury said, the floor plans "afford all the practical advantages of a modern office building, following one of the best known types where the building is erected around the four sides of a central court." In addition, the jury pointed out that "the arcades and the circulation through the garden give a perfect system of circulation and access to all departments, while the small stair towers in the four corners of the court complete this system and lend additional interest." In his comments to the City Board, however, Batchelder made it clear that the proposed tower with mission chimes (referred to by Hale as "the horrible belfry"⁸) would not necessarily be incorporated into the final design. Towers were com-

mon to many of the designs; clock towers and campanili are mentioned.

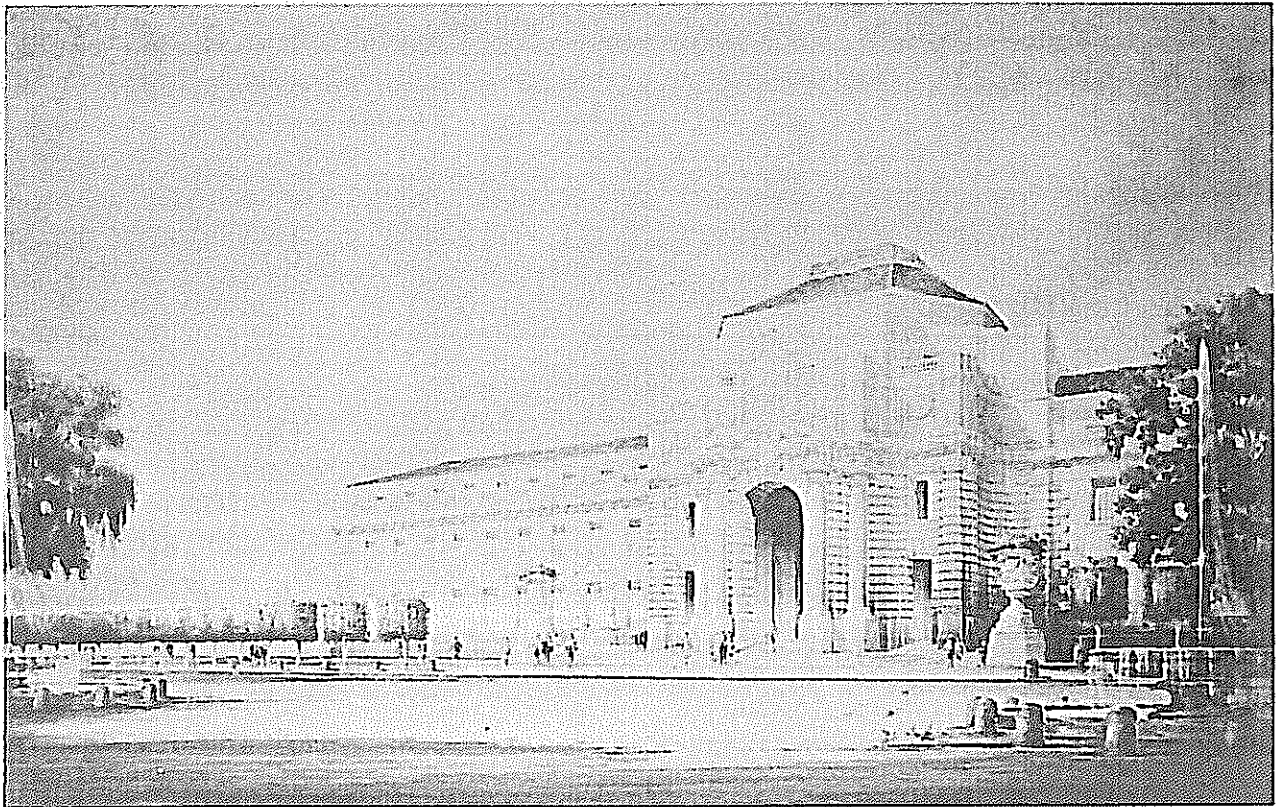
Various modifications were made to the design of City Hall, especially regarding the location of the Council Chambers and department offices within the building. The location of the present Council Chamber was considered temporary, as was the arcaded walk on the Euclid Avenue side. Blueprints in the Arthur Brown, Jr. Collection at the Bancroft Library in Berkeley show a proposed expansion along Euclid enclosing the courtyard completely with a three-story building featuring a two-story Council Chamber with arched windows echoing the rhythms of the arcade.

The tower, however, provoked the most controversy. The original bell tower design was modified into a "modernization of the tower of the San Gabriel Mission."⁹ This however, still failed to satisfy the jury, and a dome was proposed. The architects were instructed to prepare two sketches, one showing the completed dome

and the other showing a scheme which would allow the later addition of the dome.¹⁰

In the midst of these design discussions, a city election changed the composition of the City Board. The newly-elected and more frugal Board of Directors was concerned that the dome would cost \$66,000 more than the original "belfry" and they therefore were prepared to insist that the dome not be built immediately. However, the unattractive appearance of the building without the dome, and the fact that only \$32,000 would be saved, after the necessary structural reinforcing, apparently convinced them that the dome should be built.¹¹ The design of the stair tower cupolas was altered only at the last minute to match the dome.¹²

In the midst of the controversy about the dome, an attempt was made to limit building heights in the Civic Center area to a maximum of four to five stories.¹³ Although the Citizen's Savings Building had been built as early as 1914 in the Civic Center area, the eight-story



Bakewell and Brown's cost-saving design for Pasadena City Hall, without the dome. Source: Urban Conservation Department, City of Pasadena.

Maryland Apartments and the ten-story Security Pacific Bank had not yet been built. Strenuously opposed by the realtors, the measure failed, and the Civic Center remains relatively unprotected to this day.

In reminiscences told to Helen Wright, Hale's biographer, Batchelder described the political battles after the election of the new Board in March, 1924.¹⁴ In their efforts to economize, the Board cut the size of the Gold Room in the Auditorium, so that the stage could not accommodate the musical events planned for it. Perhaps Batchelder was concerned with the Coleman Chamber Concert series founded by his wife, Alice Coleman Batchelder. The Art Museum, a project which Batchelder favored above all others, also failed to materialize in the new era of frugality.

Stuart French, however, continued to push the Art Museum project. A letter from him in June, 1924, to Hale reports on a visit to Bennett's office where he met a French designer, Lambert, who was designing Chicago's Buckingham Fountain on the Chicago lakeshore.¹⁵ French felt Lambert would be a good designer for the Carmelita site; "he has done much in designing and developing villas and gardens in Southern France," French wrote. Bennett was enthusiastic, French wrote, but "fears being blocked by local talent. They have had a sad experience with our Civic Center architects, due to the wording of the contracts as accepted by the City Directors. Bergstrom and Hunt have attempted to sidetrack them."

Already, too, French feared that the money would run short, corners would be cut and the buildings would be only half-built. He also opposed building the exhibition hall "until we have completed a perfect main auditorium, but popular clamor is stampeding the Board." French continued: "We must not lose sight of the permanence of these buildings and make no error in accepting make-shift."

Lambert did make a study for the Carmelita site. The only record of it is a watercolor view now kept in the City Planning Department and a photograph also preserved in the Planning Department. This grand entrance to the city was to feature a complex of buildings set in a beautiful park. Two art galleries, a lecture room and a school occupied the highest portion of the site, with an open-air theater. A series of artist's studios ran along the north of the site, and the garden cascaded down the slope diagonally toward a large circular pool flanked by a formal rose garden on the south and surrounded by trees and shrubs.

A flagstaff near the eastern end of the bridge in front of the Carmelita site at the Colorado-Orange Grove intersection signaled the entrance to the city.

Plans for the Art Institute apparently went forward, for there is evidence that Bertram Goodhue or his office (Clarence Stein) did drawings for at least one building on the site. A letter from Arthur Fleming to Stein in 1926 discusses the colored tile dome, the balcony and the deeply recessed windows of the west wall of the building as being the primary focal point of the entrance from the Colorado Street Bridge.¹⁶ In the end, of course, although Hale did not get the Art Institute he envisioned, the Pasadena Art Museum (later the Norton Simon Museum of Art) on the Carmelita site has brought the international recognition of Pasadena that Hale sought. Unfortunately, the architecture of the building turns its back on the entrance to the city, and the site-plan and landscaping completely ignore the topography and park setting which the earlier plan used to enhance the design.

The Memorial Flagstaff, designed by Bertram Goodhue with sculpture by Lee Lawrie, was finally located where Goodhue wished it to be, at the intersection of Orange Grove Boulevard and Colorado, centered in a landscaped rondel. According to Hale, Goodhue visited the site three times in order to determine the exact place for the flagstaff designed as a memorial to the fallen of World War I.¹⁷ In 1948 the flagstaff was moved to its present location at the northeast corner of the intersection.

The Library interior was apparently also a source of controversy for Hale reported to French in the same letter that "Hunt has taken out most of the columns that produced such a turmoil, and Miss Drake [the librarian] while not yet quite calm, is less disturbed than before."

In November, 1924, the voters were asked to approve a bond issue for an additional \$750,000 to cover the cost of increased square footage in City Hall to meet increased space requirements and to cover the \$300,000 in excess expenses incurred from the purchase of the land for the Civic Center.¹⁸ This extra expense occurred despite the fact that the sites chosen were for the most part occupied by "old buildings of low value on account of inaccessibility although only a short distance, a block or so, from the highest priced business property in the City."¹⁹

The laying out of the Civic Center did in fact stimulate property values and encourage further building in the area. By the time the first building, the Library, was completed in early 1926, the American Legion Building



*Bakewell and Brown's final design for Pasadena City Hall, with a dome.
Source: Urban Conservation Department, City of Pasadena.*

(by Marston, Van Pelt and Maybury) and the First Baptist Church (by Carlton Winslow with Frederick Kennedy, Jr.) were underway on Marengo at the eastern edge of the Civic Center. The YMCA remodeling began in 1925, and the building of the City Hall began in 1926. The Maryland Hotel Apartments of 1928 did not conform to the desired height limit but did blend with the overall design. In 1929, the Gas Company building was added with its sgraffito panels which matched the William Wilson office of 1926 by Marston and Maybury south of City Hall on Garfield. The Hall of Justice (Police Department) designed by J.J. Black in a conforming style was built in 1930.

Not until 1931 did work on the Auditorium begin, and

the money was only made available by the sale of part of the City Farm in Alhambra. Completed in 1932, it was the last major building of the Civic Center to be built. The effects of the Depression and World War II stopped major building efforts for about 15 years.

AFTER 1935

The Civic Center plan was not forgotten, however. In the late 1930s, Marston and Maybury designed an addition to the Post Office which integrated well into the original plan and makes a significant contribution to the Civic Center Plaza in front of City Hall. The 1950 addition to the Police Department by Palmer Sabin is also well-inte-

grated into the original design. Even the small County Courts Building of 1952 designed by Breo Freeman fits in with the Civic Center Plaza. The Library addition in 1955 to house the Alice Coleman Batchelder Music Library was the last design to conform stylistically to the Civic Center theme.

Later buildings, such as the massive addition to the County Courts Building, also designed by Freeman, and the Mutual Savings Building south of City Hall, severely violated the integrity of the Civic Center. Only a few years ago, the most serious damage was done: the blocking of the Garfield axis by the Plaza Pasadena, isolating the Auditorium from the rest of the Civic Center and destroying the integrity of the plan. The earlier Pasadena Center, a culmination of the Convention Center always wanted by the businessmen of the community, while surrounding the Auditorium with a hardscape of Brutalist structures, at least did not obscure it from view.

In the end, Bennett's careful selection of a Civic Center site which would not compete with the main commercial thoroughfare, Colorado Boulevard, fell prey to the commercialism he so wanted to avoid. One can only hope that the commitment of Bennett, French and Hale to the permanence of the buildings themselves will cause them to oust the intrusions in their midst.

NOTES:

1. Letter from French to Hale, July 8, 1923.
2. Letter from Bennett to Hale, September 25, 1923.
3. Letter from French to Hale, September 26, 1923.
4. Hale Diary, n.d. (1922-23?)

5. Unlike the many famous schemes from the Tribune Tower, the drawings rejected by the Pasadena jury have apparently not survived. A search of the Myron Hunt and Carlton Winslow collections in Santa Barbara and of the Arthur Brown, Jr. Papers in Berkeley might yet turn up the long-lost drawings.

6. "Choose City Building Designs," Pasadena Star-News, February 28, 1924.

7. A recent review of Hunt's plans revealed that the architect had planned for the addition of two more stories in the stack area, a solution which is now being implemented to alleviate the severe space shortage in the Library building.

8. Letter from Hale to French, September 9, 1924.

9. "Site of City Hall Will Be Developed Along Best Lines," Pasadena Star-News, November 1, 1924.

10. "Minutes of Meeting of the Building Committee, Board of Directors and City Hall Architects," January 28, 1925. Hale Papers, Caltech Archives.

11. "Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Directors, General Building Committee and the City Hall Architects," February 14, 1925. Hale Papers, Caltech Archives.

12. Minutes of Board of Directors, City of Pasadena, September 1, 1926. Office of the City Clerk.

13. "Height Limit Plan Viewed as Mistake," Pasadena Star-News, March 7, 1925.

14. Wright, Helen, *Explorer of the Universe: A Biography of George Ellery Hale*. E.P. Dutton, New York: 1966. pp. 382-383.

15. Letter from French to Hale, June 27, 1924.

16. See folder labeled "Pasadena Art Institute" in Box 72, Hale Papers, Caltech Archives.

17. Letter from Hale to French, September 9, 1924.

18. "Alter Plan of Civic Group," Pasadena Star-News, October 28, 1924.

19. Thomas, op. cit. A number of houses moved from the Civic Center have been discovered by the architectural survey currently in progress. Many seem to be substantial late Victorian or turn-of-the-century two-story houses. It is thought that one house by Greene and Greene, located on North Euclid, was removed to make way for City Hall.

(The author wishes to credit the research efforts of Megs Meriwether for the pre-1920 newspaper articles and Alson Clark for his guidance and comments.)

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Frank Lloyd Wright & Eric Wright, 1954, groundbreaking, in Los Angeles Art Gallery, Bernardini Park. Source: L.A. Cultural Affairs Department.

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