

# WRIGHT FOCUS



**THIS WAS THEN**



**THIS IS NOW**

## We Now Have a New Driveway and a Place to Park

The first phase of the improvement of the driveway and parking area was completed in the Fall of 2007. Overwhelming appreciation goes to a challenge grant from the Whitaker Foundation and from foundations such as Trio, Garvey and Clifford W. Gaylord, corporations, benefit attendees and members of The Frank Lloyd Wright House in Ebsworth Park.

The design, which preserved the surprise approach to the Kraus House, was created by County landscape designer, Mike Flad, with input from contractor, Jeff Markway, and FLWHEP project committee members Bob Hall, chairman, Gene Mackey, Peter Shank, Agnes Garino, Jan Nagy, Janet Schoedinger, Laura Meyer and Joanne Kohn.

Since the driveway has been asphalted, the County has cleared snow and enabled us to keep the house open for most tours. Tours may still have to be canceled due to weather but on a day-to-day basis.

Landscape improvements have been made as well. The overgrown pfitzer bushes have been removed and replaced with a smaller bush so the lines of the house are now visible. The viburnum hedge clogged with weeds and volunteer trees has also been removed. Now one can see the grape vine that was placed off the angle of the tool house. Vines such as these can be seen at Taliesin, Wright's home in Spring Green, Wisconsin.

Frank Lloyd Wright, or his associate architects, often designed the landscaping around houses. This was true of the Kraus House as well.



**THE NEW PARKING LOT**

The changes have been very dramatic. We finally have a permanent driveway, places for guests to park, landscaping that does not hide the house and better vistas from which to view the property.



# The Frank Lloyd Wright House in Ebsworth Park

## A Note from the Chairman



Two huge things happened. We completed building a new driveway and a parking lot and we hired our first administrative director, Laura Meyer. The Kraus House was a private residence. We wanted it to continue to feel like a private residence, even though it is now a public house museum. Thanks to a very thoughtful driveway committee, I think we retained a peaceful approach to the house and used materials that are practical for public use yet sympathetic to a Frank Lloyd Wright House.

Thanks to County parks director, Lindsey Swanick, for allowing us to use Mike Flad, County landscape designer, and to Bob Hall who chaired the committee and continues to lead the group towards the next two phases: building a new bridge and a pull-off for busses on Ballas Road.

We are eternally grateful to the Whitaker Foundation, Trio, Garvey and Clifford W. Gaylord Foundations and all our supporters who gave generously to help us improve the access to the house. We also would like to express our deep appreciation to the Caleb C. and Julia W. Dula Educational and Charitable Foundation for their recent, generous gift of \$10,000.

Relying totally on volunteer help to start the organization, we could not have recorded and processed membership and donor contributions without the excellent job done by Janet Schoedinger. Agnes Garino, editor of Wright Focus, put out 10 beautiful issues of our newsletter. Both did a superb job and have retired from those positions. They still remain productive board members. We can't thank them enough for the hours given to FLWHEP to keep track of funders and keep our members informed.

Replacing Janet as membership chairman is new board member, director of THE SHOP and docent, Karen Halla, who is dedicated to carry on the fine work that Janet performed. Laura and I, with the help of contributing writers, will continue to produce the newsletter. John Kohn, our original webmaster, has turned our website, [www.ebsworthpark.org](http://www.ebsworthpark.org), over to Dave Wolfe to whom we are grateful. Thank you, John.

In addition to Karen Halla, Laura McCanna and Debbie Schneider have joined the board and Judith Bettendorf the advisory board. They are great additions to the two boards.

In the last year, we lost two of our board members: Frisky Brigham and Marsha Jordan Nash. We featured Marsha in another newsletter. We were going to write about Frisky in this issue....now the piece is written as a memorial. Frisky was one of our most active volunteers. We miss them both.

**Thanks to everyone for helping us raise the funds to finish the road and parking lot and to hire a very much needed and gifted staff person. Supporting our benefit and annual giving helped make all this possible!**

Joanne Kohn, Chairman  
The Frank Lloyd Wright House in Ebsworth Park

## In Memoriam Frisky Brigham

Fransiska "Frisky" Brigham was an inveterate traveler and believed that one of the great joys of travel was experiencing the architecture of different countries, cultures and religions. Throughout her life as a physician, Frisky had an interest in Frank Lloyd Wright and enjoyed visiting Wright sites throughout the country. Frisky was a supporter of the FLWHEP since 2001, joining the board in 2004. In 2005 and 2006, she served as co-chairman of two benefits that featured noted Wright speakers and that raised funds for the house. She related that her favorite contribution to the organization was as a docent, and she is remembered as a dedicated tour leader who also led the docent enrichment program.



Frisky's generous spirit made the FLWHEP a stronger institution. We are deeply grateful that she chose to dedicate her energies and talents to the organization after her retirement from medicine. She became a treasured friend and we remember her with great affection.

Frisky designated FLWHEP as the recipient of gifts in her memory and the organization has founded a permanent fund in her name.

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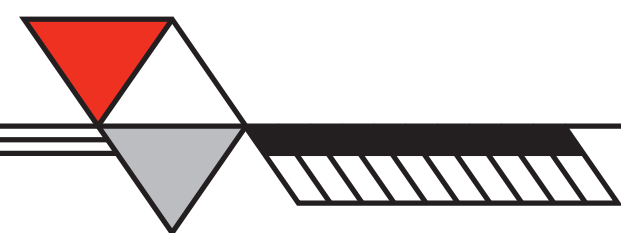
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## FLWHEP Welcomes Laura Meyer as Administrative Director



Laura Meyer has been chosen as part-time administrative director of The Frank Lloyd Wright House in Ebsworth Park (FLWHEP). A graduate of Brown University with a master's degree in art history from Washington University, Laura has been interested in art and architecture for thirty years. Her prior experience includes work

for the Saint Louis Art Museum, COCA, and the Folger Shakespeare Library, as well as board and committee service for organizations including Craft Alliance and the Missouri Botanical Garden.

Since the FLWHEP was founded in 1995, it has had a volunteer staff. Joanne Kohn, Board Chairman, says, "Laura Meyer has been an exemplary member of the FLWHEP board of directors, chairing benefits and helping to build the organization. She brings with her not only a sensitivity to the Frank Lloyd Wright House and architectural history but excellent management and people skills. We are delighted she will continue her work in this newly created professional staff position."

Since she first toured the house in 2003, Laura has been an advocate for the organization: "I was impressed by the house's design and also by its museum-quality restoration. We are really fortunate to have a house museum in St. Louis that illustrates Wright's most steadfast beliefs – the flowing continuity of form and space, the abstraction of geometric pattern, and the reverence for nature." In addition to working to raise funds for the organization, Laura is interested in introducing new audiences to the house and in helping to develop programs and activities. She enjoys working with the organization's dedicated members, volunteers, and board who share her enthusiasm for architecture and design.

## Docent Coordinators Make Tours Work

As we all know, tours are by appointment only. When people seeking tours call 822-8359, Carolyn Noll and Sue Geile, FLWHEP tour coordinators, take messages, return or redirect calls and book tours. They contact docents and match them up to tours and help to train new docents. These two volunteers provide invaluable service to the members, board, docents and general public. They each came to their jobs with a strong interest in architecture and specifically Frank Lloyd Wright.

**SUE GEILE** ■ Like so many others, I developed an interest in Frank Lloyd Wright after reading *The Fountainhead* in high school. Growing up in Fort Wayne, Indiana, I was aware of and very intrigued by a concrete house with lots of ramps and circular features that was rumored to be a Frank Lloyd Wright house. Of course it was not, but the irony is that all along there was an authentic Frank Lloyd Wright Usonian house in another part of town! As time progressed, I began to read about Mr. Wright and his architecture and to visit Wright sites. In 2002 I was happy to learn of the purchase and restoration of the FLWHEP. I called and set up a tour for my husband, myself and some friends and was just thrilled with the house and wanted to be a part of it. I immediately became a member and expressed interest in becoming a docent. A few months later I received a letter inviting me to attend docent training and I've been actively involved ever since.

**CAROLYN NOLL** ■ My interest in Frank Lloyd Wright started as a teenager when I read *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand, but I didn't pursue it further until years later. With a college degree from Valparaiso University in zoology and minors in chemistry and fine art, I worked as a medical research technician. During a break while rearing sons Andrew and Michael, I attended Meramec Community



Carolyn Noll (left) and Sue Geile, FLWHEP's tour coordinators.

College and earned an associate's degree in Architectural Technology. Hank Bauer, an architect and also a volunteer docent at the Frank Lloyd Wright House in Ebsworth Park, was my first drafting teacher. Once in his class, I was hooked on architecture. In an "Introduction to Architecture" class, I learned more about Frank Lloyd Wright and his influence on American architecture.

My husband and I attended a tour of the Kraus House when it was featured on a Kirkwood High School house tour in the late 1990's. From then on, I followed with great interest news of the non-profit organization's attempt to purchase the house. When a letter arrived announcing the final purchase and soliciting membership, I immediately joined and indicated an interest in volunteering.

I have been associated with the organization since the Spring of 2001 and have really enjoyed being a part of this new adventure. It is a good feeling to share my enthusiasm for this project with others and I love showing the house.




# United in Usonia

Twenty-two friends of the FLWHEP joined the architectural tour to New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey from April 12-15, 2007. Despite a major nor'easter that resulted in some schedule changes, the group enjoyed visiting numerous Wright residences, Louis Kahn's Yale Center for British Art and the newly renovated Yale Art Gallery in New Haven, Connecticut, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Noguchi Museum in Long Island City. Highlights of the tour included visits to Usonia, a village of nearly 50 homes in Pleasantville, New York, and three privately-owned Usonian homes in New Jersey.


Since the early twentieth century, Wright was interested in the idea of creating elegantly-designed, moderately-priced residences for all. In the 1930s, he spoke increasingly of "Usonia", an idealized and enlightened community that rejected urban congestion and enhanced daily living for all Americans. "Usonia" was his acronym for the United States of North America, adding an "i" to make it pronounceable. The word denotes a community of Americans united in the belief that democracy, beauty, and continuity with nature feed man's spirit. Wright elaborated on his utopian ideas in his model for a low-density village called Broadacre City that was exhibited at Rockefeller Center in 1935. He designated the smaller houses in Broadacre City as Usonian houses.



 The Sol Friedman House is the most unusual Frank Lloyd Wright house in Usonia.

Wright's concept of the Usonian house was a modest residence with an open floor plan, carefully integrated into its natural setting. The Usonian house featured a spacious shared area for living room, dining room and compact kitchen, a building system based on modules of different sizes and geometric shapes, no attic or basement, a carport rather than a garage, a radiant heating system with warm water flowing through pipes embedded in a concrete slab, a central chimney, and lighting and much furniture built in as integral parts of the whole. The Usonian home was intended to be affordable, efficient, and well-suited to an increasingly informal American lifestyle.




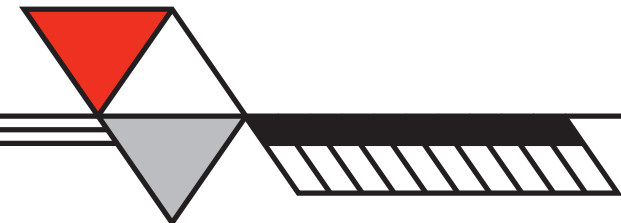
 Roland Reisley giving a tour of Usonia to FLWHEP guests. The Reisley House.

The village of Usonia in Pleasantville NY, the first stop on the tour, was a community inspired by Wright's idealistic concepts. In 1940, a young engineer named David Henken viewed the model of Broadacre City in a Wright retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art. Henken was inspired to recruit a group of New York professionals to join together to form a cooperative to build their homes in a Wright idiom.

Through Henken's efforts, Frank Lloyd Wright designed the site plan for the community. Wright's innovative plan for the 97-acre wooded site featured one-acre circular lots accessed through narrow, winding roads; he maintained that the circular plots would provide greater privacy and a greater impression of space for the residents. Wright also designed three of the houses and approved nearly all of the other homes built by Wright apprentices or disciples.

Roland Reisley, one of the most committed members of the Usonia cooperative, guided the FLWHEP group through his community and home. The Reisley House designed by Wright in 1951 with a 1956 addition is made of cypress and local stone, some blasted from the site. The house is based on a 4-foot triangular module and features nearly 100 triangular light boxes.

 The Serlin house in the village of Usonia in Pleasantville, New York.



Reisley recalled that when Wright visited the site in 1951, he, and his wife, Ronny, suggested that they thought their house would be sited at the top of the rocky hill. "Oh no," Wright said, "That would just be a house on a hill. To experience the hill, be of the hill, you must build into it."

Another home viewed, the Sol Friedman House (1948), is the most renowned and unusual Frank Lloyd Wright design in Usonia. The home is comprised of two cylinders with circular roofs, one with two-stories housing the main living area and the other containing wedge-shaped bedrooms. Constructed mostly of local stone and concrete, the cylindrical house appears almost like a fortress from the exterior. The circular design is echoed in the mushroom-shaped carport, which is reminiscent of the columns in the Johnson Wax building.

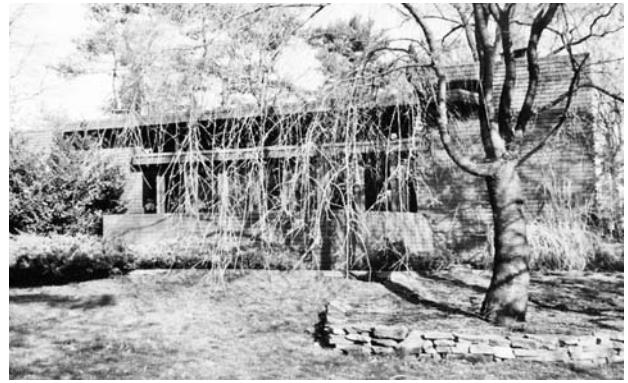
At Usonia, the group also viewed the Edward Serlin House (1950). The Serlin House is based on the square module with an open floor plan. The long, low house made of local stone and cypress blends into its beautiful setting overlooking a steep, wooded hillside.



■ The James B. Christie House (1940) in Bernardsville, New Jersey.

In New Jersey, the group toured three additional privately-owned Usonian houses. The James B. Christie House (1940) is constructed of cypress, redwood, brick and glass and has an "L-shaped" plan reminiscent of several other early Usonians such as the Jacobs, Rosenbaum and Pope-Leighey Houses. The current owners have recently added a master bedroom wing based on a preliminary design conceived by Wright and are in the process of restoring the home.

The Stuart Richardson House, designed in 1941 for a different site and finally built in 1951, presents an early example of the hexagonal module. The owners, John and Edith Payne, greeted the group with a wine and cheese reception and described their efforts to restore and maintain the house. Like the Kraus house, the Richardson house is constructed of brick and cypress with board-and-



■ The Stuart Richardson House (1941, 1951) in Glen Ridge, New Jersey.

batten walls, has specially-made 60 and 120 degree corner bricks, and is striking in its geometric complexity.

The Bachman-Wilson House (1954) has a second story, rare for a Usonian home. The concrete block facade ensures privacy from the street, while the continuous 10-foot glass windows on the rear of the house afford beautiful views of the woods of the Millstone River basin. For the high clerestory windows on three sides of the house, Wright designed a cut-out wooden pattern called "Samara" that creates a lovely play of light.

The tour presented the opportunity to view many variations of Wright's Usonian house concepts. Each of the Usonian houses was unique with Wright varying the design depending on the site, the client's needs, and his own aesthetic vision. "This is an architect's creation," Wright wrote about his ideal Usonian house in his revised (1943) Autobiography, "It is not a builder's nor an amateur's affair."

#### For Further Reading:

Roland Reisley with John Timpane, *Usonia New York: Building A Community With Frank Lloyd Wright*, Princeton Architectural Press, 2001.

Alvin Rosenbaum, *Usonia: Frank Lloyd Wright's Design for America*, The Preservation Press, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1993.

■ The Bachman-Wilson House (1954) in Millstone, New Jersey.





# Friends of The Frank Lloyd Wright House in Ebsworth Park

Thank you to all our individual, foundation, and corporate donors, as well as contributors of in-kind gifts and works of art. This support is a critical component in our efforts to restore, preserve, and maintain the FLWHEP. If you have questions about your membership, please call 822-8359.

The donor list covers gifts received beginning July 15, 2007 through July 31, 2008. Gifts received following that date will be acknowledged in a future newsletter. Our apologies for any errors or omissions.

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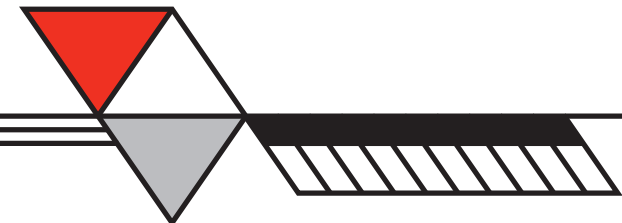
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**The Frank Lloyd Wright House in Ebsworth Park held two great parties on two great rivers.**

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FLWHEP  
 c/o 40 Upper Ladue Road  
 St. Louis, MO 63124

**Afternoon in the Country**

In June 2007, Frank Lloyd Wright's birthday benefit was celebrated at the Mesker Family home on the Missouri River. Chairmen were Mary Susman and Judy Champ.



David Mesker and "Afternoon in the Country" co-chairman Mary Susman.



Co-chairman Judy Champ, Margie Franz and St. Louis Ragtimer Don Franz.

**A great big thank you to the hosts and chairmen who provided memorable events!**

**Afternoon on the Bluffs**

In June 2008, the birthday benefit was held at Greystone, the Piper Family's Gothic Revival Cottage, on the Mississippi River. Chairmen were Lea Virtel and Liz Studt. Hosts were Jane and Joe Gleason.



photo by Charlie Barnes

Hosts Jane and Joe Gleason welcome FLWHEP guests to the Piper Family's Gothic Revival Cottage.



"Afternoon on the Bluffs" Chairmen Lea Virtel and Liz Studt.



Esley Hamilton (center), Preservation Historian for St. Louis County, explaining Gothic Revival architecture to Nancy Kranzberg, Sara Epstein, Fred Epstein and Ken Kranzberg.

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## Lecture by Robert McCarter



The FLWHEP sponsored a lecture by Robert McCarter, the newly appointed Ruth and Norman Moore professor of architecture at the Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts, Washington University, on April 3, 2008. Nearly 460 people attended Professor McCarter's lecture,

"The Houses of Frank Lloyd Wright," at the Saint Louis Art Museum auditorium. Professor McCarter examined selected examples of Wright's Prairie, Concrete Block, and Usonian houses.

## A New Bridge

The next phase of FLWHEP access improvement is the building of a new bridge at the entrance. The one-lane bridge is being replaced with a wider bridge. The expected completion date is October 2nd.

## Do you enjoy gardening?

If you would like to help us maintain the FLWHEP grounds by weeding or planting, please e-mail [info@ebsworthpark.org](mailto:info@ebsworthpark.org) or call (314) 822-8359.

**CONTACT FLWHEP AT 314-822-8359 or  
[info@ebsworthpark.org](mailto:info@ebsworthpark.org) TO DONATE STOCK.**

## Trip to Northwest Arkansas to Visit Works of Architect E. Fay Jones

The FLWHEP trip to Arkansas to see works of E. Fay Jones from November 6-9, 2008, is now filled. To be placed on the waiting list, please e-mail [info@ebsworthpark.org](mailto:info@ebsworthpark.org) or call 314-822-8359. E. Fay Jones, renowned architect and apprentice of Frank Lloyd Wright, is widely known for his Thorncrown Chapel in Eureka Springs.

## Calendar

**September 2 - October 2, 2008:** Kraus House will be closed for bridge replacement

**November 6 - 9, 2008:** FLWHEP Trip to Northwest Arkansas

**April 6, 2009:** Lecture by architect and Wright scholar, Anthony Alofsin, at The Sheldon Concert Hall

**If you are shopping for holiday cards or gifts, don't forget the FLWHEP GIFT SHOP. New holiday cards designed by Peter Shank will arrive soon. The shop also sells Frank Lloyd Wright jewelry, note cards and books. If you are interested in shopping, call 822-8359 to leave a message or email Karen at [info@ebsworthpark.org](mailto:info@ebsworthpark.org)**