Colleagues & Clients: Women's Role in Frank Lloyd Wright's Architecture

Call for Papers | Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy Annual Conference
September 27 - October 1, 2023 | Minneapolis, Minnesota

The Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy's 2023 annual conference, *Colleagues & Clients: Women's Role in Frank Lloyd Wright's Architecture* will explore the significant but little-examined role women played in the creation of Wright's work throughout his 70 year-career.

Over the course of his career, Frank Lloyd Wright frequently engaged with and advanced the work of women at a time when questions of gender parity, feminism, voting rights, education, and professional opportunities for women were emerging as critical social and political issues. Examination of the considerable roles women played in shaping Wright's architecture is overdue. Both in his Chicago office and Oak Park studio years (1893-1916), Wright employed a number of women architects at a time when few were in the profession, not always without contention. Most notable were Marion Mahony and Isabel Roberts. During the Taliesin Fellowship years (1932-59), Wright enrolled a number of women as apprentices, including Hulda Drake, Cornelia Brierly, Elizabeth Wright Ingraham, Elizabeth Mock Kassler, Read Weber, and Lois Gottlieb. These women went on to distinguished careers in their own right, yet their contributions have seldom been recognized. Early clients such as Susan Dana, Aline Barnsdall, Isabelle Martin, and Queene Coonley had strong ideas about the houses they commissioned, helping to mold them to a considerable extent, and also were actively involved in many progressive social and political reforms, especially education and the kindergarten movement. Other figures such as Jane Addams of Hull House engaged his experience of the broader social context directly. Wright was also influenced on a personal and professional level by several women with whom he had significant relationships: his mother Anna, who famously steered him towards an architectural path; his youngest sister, Marginel Wright Enright, a leading children's book illustrator and graphic artist; his aunts, Jane and Ellen Lloyd Jones, who founded the progressive Hillside Home School to advance educational reform; his partner Mamah Cheney, with whom he defied marital conventions of the day and for whom he built Taliesin; and Olgivanna Lloyd Wright, with whom he co-founded the Taliesin Fellowship.

An understanding of the evolving role of influential women in this work is exemplified by three Minnesotans who commissioned residences from Wright: Mary Little, Nancy Willey and Virginia Lovness. During the Prairie era, most clients were from the upper strata of society, with typically progressive leanings. During the Usonian period, most were idealistic young professors, newspaper people, and the like, building on very limited budgets. While the residential designs across his career have typically been named exclusively after the husband in the couple, the strong roles of such examples in shaping the houses they commissioned make their stories all the more compelling.

How to submit: Proposal should present original material and/or interpretations. They should be submitted as an abstract of no more than one page, single-spaced, with the author's name at the top. The text should concisely describe the focus and the scope of the 20-minute presentation, and note any extraordinary audio-visual needs. The proposal should be accompanied by a one-page biography/curriculum vitae that includes the author's full name, affiliation (if applicable), mailing address, email address and telephone number. In-person presentation is expected. PDF files are preferred and filenames should include the author's name. **Proposals must be received no later than February 27, 2023. Notification will be sent by early April 2023. Please submit proposals online at savewright.org/proposals.**

About the Conservancy: *The Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy facilitates the preservation and stewardship of the remaining built works designed by Frank Lloyd Wright through advocacy, education and technical services. Learn more about the Conservancy at savewright.org.*