

# The Wright Way

June marks noted architect Frank Lloyd Wright's 150th birthday

BY CYNTHIA J. DRAKE ■ ILLUSTRATIONS BY VIRGINIA VALLELY

**F**rank Lloyd Wright's legacy of buildings dotting the American landscape continues to influence architects today, 150 years after his birth on June 8, 1867. His career spanned seven decades, beginning with his earliest commissioned work, the rebuilt 1903 Hillside Home School near Spring Green, Wisconsin. His swan song, New York City's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, opened six months after Wright's death in 1959.

Throughout all of his buildings, he pushed the boundaries of space and materials. "Wright's contributions to our ideas about architecture are, on so many levels, profound," says Valerie Grash, associate professor of fine arts at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown.

Here are some of Wright's most notable architectural achievements. Some sites will celebrate this 150th anniversary year with special events, lectures, tours, and exhibits (check websites for more info).

[ Scottsdale, Arizona ]

## Taliesin West

**BUILT:** One of America's earliest snowbirds, Wright started building this desert compound in 1937 as a winter home away from Wisconsin and later as an architectural playground for the Taliesin Fellowship.

**QUICK TOUR:** Taliesin West is set on nearly 500 acres at the foot of the McDowell Mountain Range. An ever-evolving architectural experiment, the site includes a drafting studio, a theater, a music pavilion, and a sculpture garden, and is still where architecture students live and learn from October to May. Always designing to fit the site, Wright pioneered organic architecture, which Taliesin West illustrates beautifully. "It almost feels like Taliesin West grew right out of the ground," says Director of Preservation Fred Prozzillo. In particular, Wright developed desert masonry here, a mixture of sand from the surrounding landscape, cement, and stone.

[ Mill Run, Pennsylvania ]

## Fallingwater

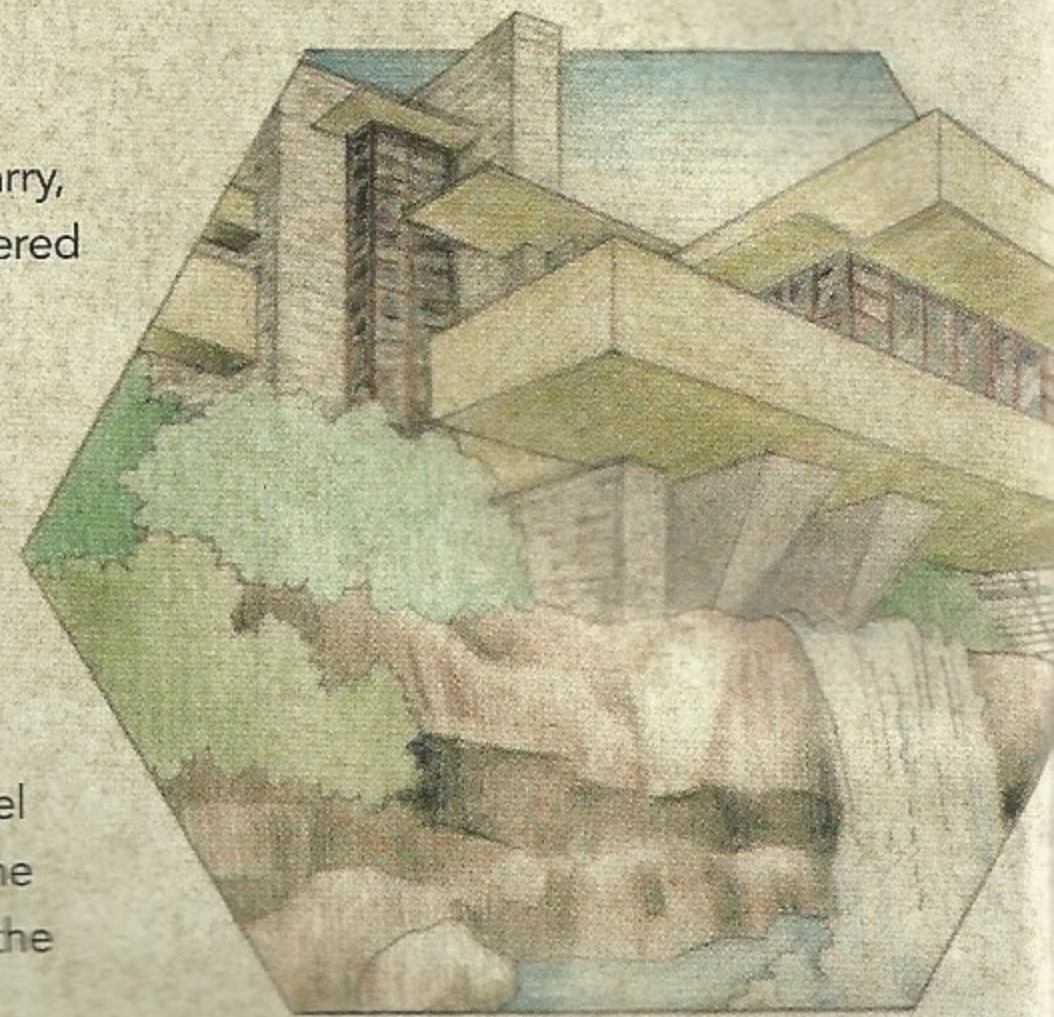
**BUILT:** In 1936, Wright's breathtaking reinforced-concrete house situated over a waterfall in southwestern Pennsylvania signaled his reemergence in American architecture.

**QUICK TOUR:** The house features sandstone mined from a nearby quarry, and four bolsters support a cantilevered main floor. Inside, Wright designed everything from the built-in sofas to the side tables and floor pillows.

**DON'T MISS:** Wright's designs manipulate the senses. While you don't see the waterfall when you're inside, you'll hear it everywhere. Listen also to the sound of the gravel underfoot as you approach. Note the scent of the surrounding trees and the interior's abundant natural light.

**YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW:** Wright procrastinated on this commission, waiting until two hours before meeting with client Edgar J. Kaufmann Sr. to put his masterpiece on paper.

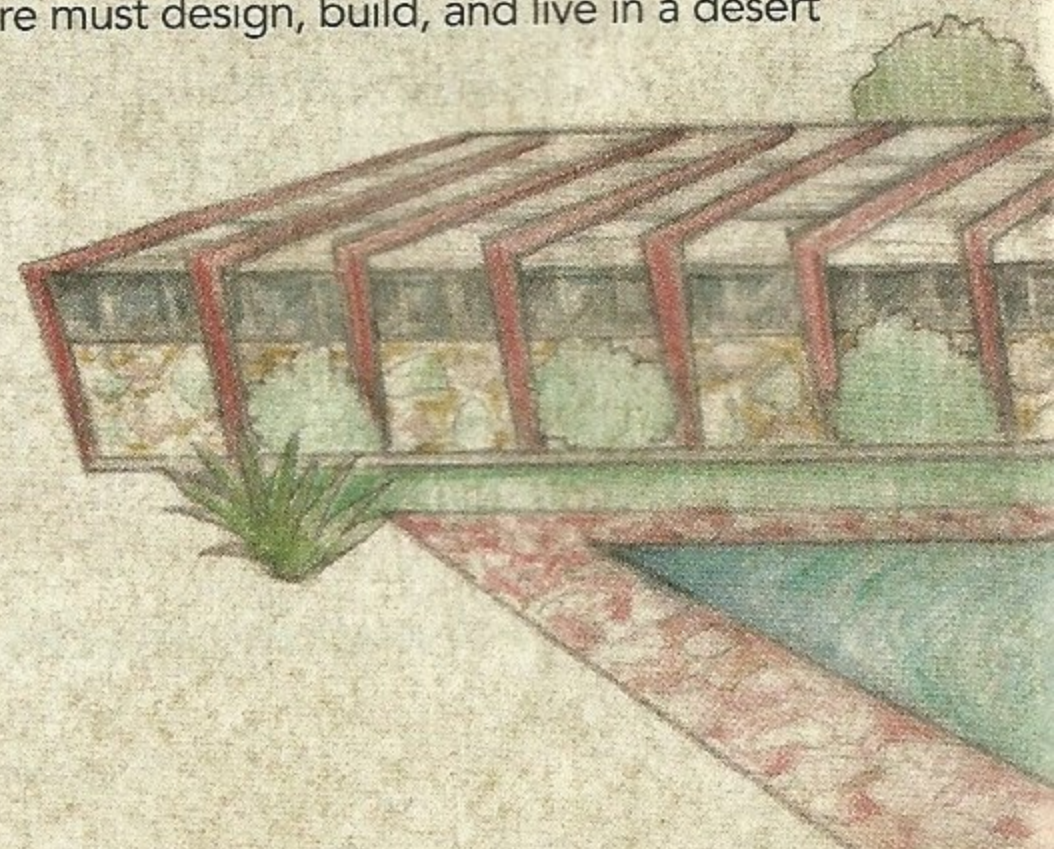
**DETAILS:** Call or check website for ticket prices of guided house tours (reservations recommended). 1491 Mill Run Road. (724) 329-8501; [fallingwater.org](http://fallingwater.org).



**DON'T MISS:** Watch the rich desert tones sparkle on a Night Lights Tour (\$40). "I think it's one of the most magical times to be on the property, when the sun is setting and casting these beautiful long shadows," says Prozzillo.

**YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW:** As they have since the 1930s, architecture students here must design, build, and live in a desert structure before they graduate.

**DETAILS:** Tour ticket prices are \$19-\$75 and can be purchased in advance. 12345 N. Taliesin Drive. (888) 516-0811; [franklloydwright.org](http://franklloydwright.org).





[ Spring Green, Wisconsin ]

# Taliesin

**BUILT:** Taliesin, or “shining brow” in Welsh, became Wright’s home in 1911. It’s the birthplace of his architectural career and the Taliesin Fellowship, an architectural and apprentice program that became the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture.

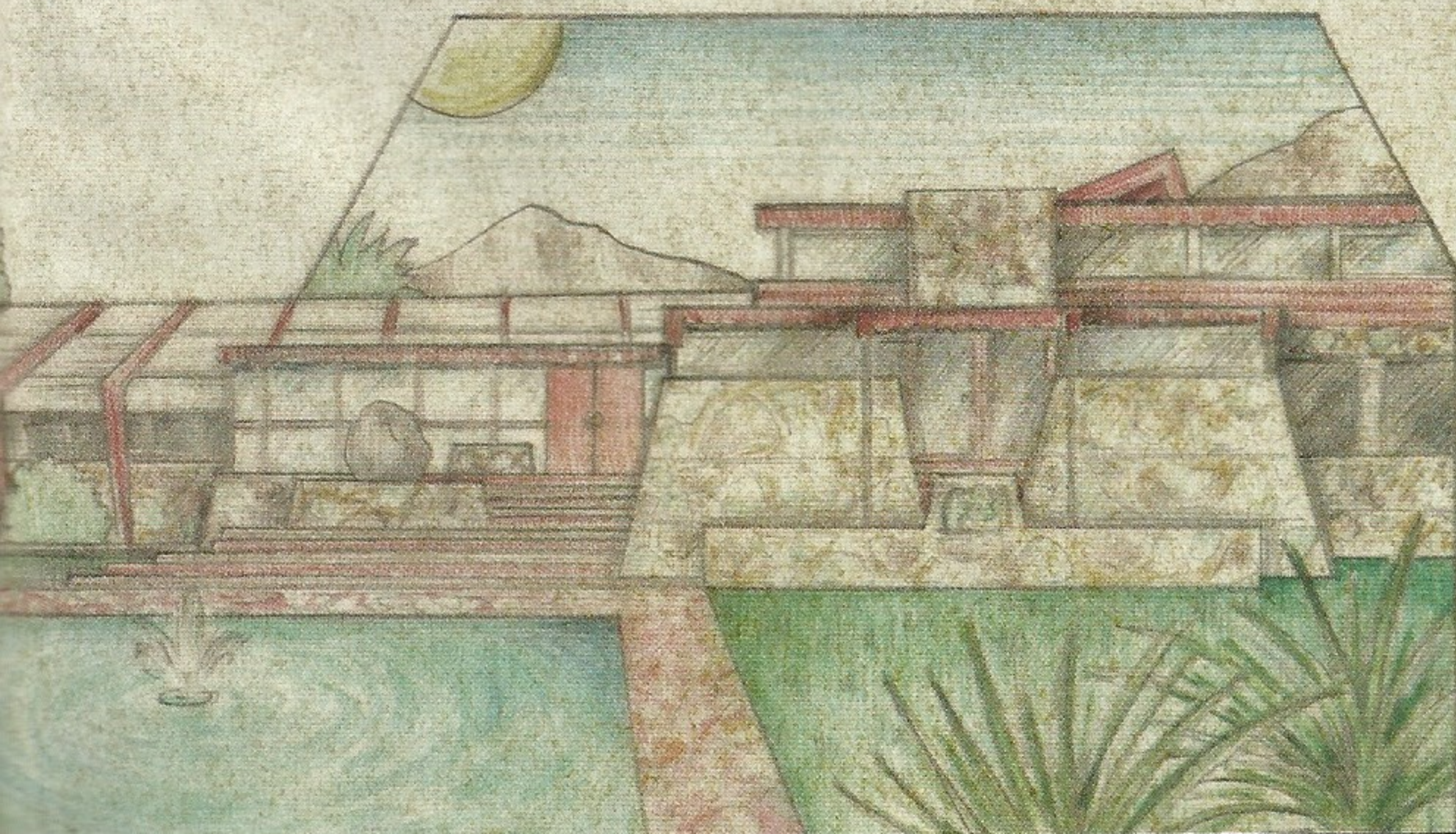
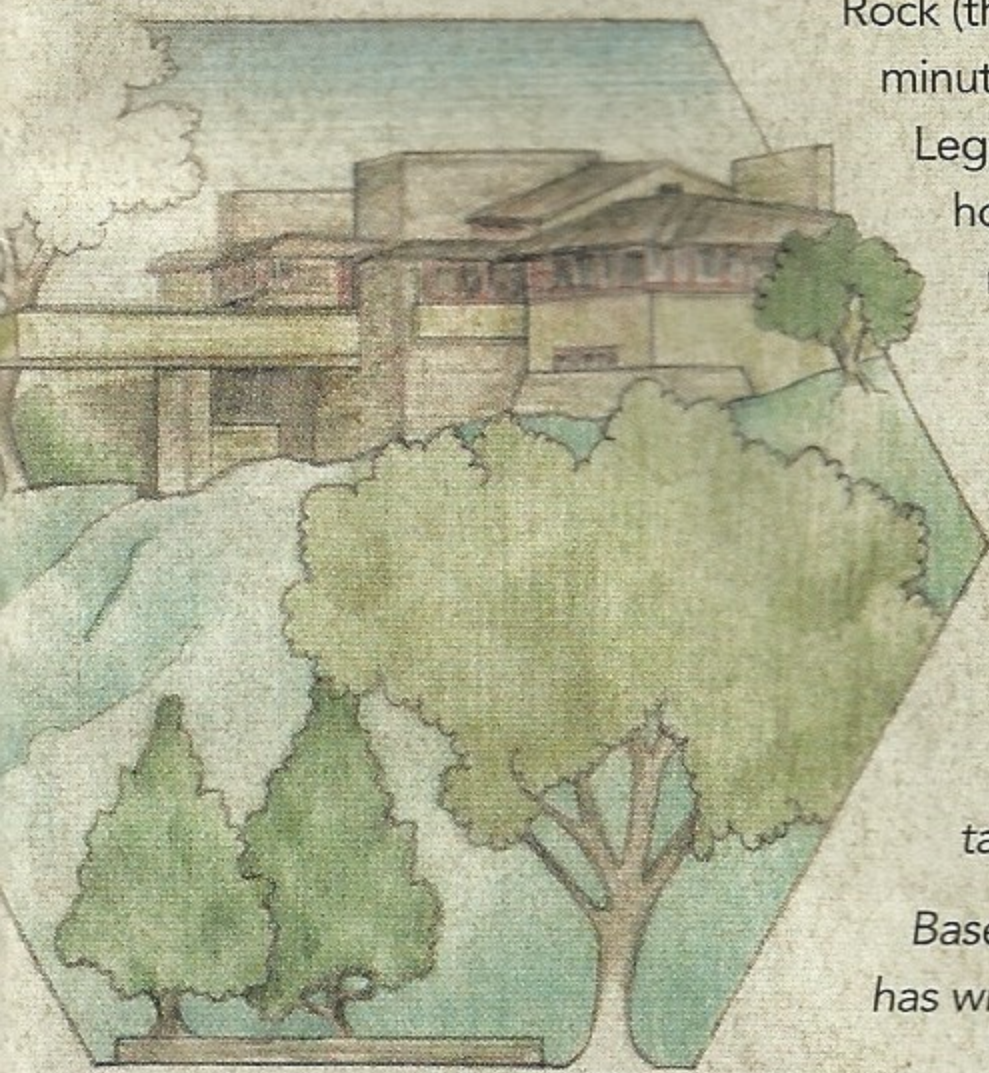
**QUICK TOUR:** This 800-acre estate includes the Hillside Home School and the Romeo and Juliet Windmill, commissions by Wright’s aunts; Tan-y-Deri, a home for Wright’s sister; Midway Barn; and the Hillside Drafting Studio, where students still work on the same drafting tables Wright used. Taliesin went through three major periods of construction, the first after a great tragedy in 1914, when an employee murdered seven people, including Wright’s lover Mamah Borthwick and her children.

**DON’T MISS:** The 108-seat Hillside Theater is designed to give each audience member an unobstructed view of the stage. The Wright Fellowship–designed curtain depicts an abstract tableau of the Taliesin estate.

**YOU PROBABLY DIDN’T KNOW:** For a bizarre experience, visit the House on the Rock ([thehouseontherock.com](http://thehouseontherock.com)) about 10 minutes away, designed by Alex Jordan. Legend has it that Jordan built the house to spite his famous architect neighbor, although there’s no proof that the two ever met. But if there was ever an anti-Wright construction, this would be it.

**DETAILS:** Taliesin tours are \$52–\$100 (reservations recommended). 5607 County Road C. (877) 588-7900; [taliesinpreservation.org](http://taliesinpreservation.org).

*Based in Austin, Texas, Cynthia Drake has written for Texas Highways.*



[ Manchester, New Hampshire ]

# Zimmerman House

**BUILT:** Designed in 1950 for Isadore and Lucille Zimmerman, the 1,667-square-foot home is made of cypress wood and local New England brick. A bank of glass windows overlooks backyard gardens (also designed by Wright).

**QUICK TOUR:** It’s the only Wright-designed home in New England open to the public and one of about 100 Usonian homes that Wright designed to be affordable middle-class housing. Wright used a complex 4-foot-square grid (even the doorknobs are 4 feet off the ground) and soothing earth tones to create a harmonious effect. He also designed the furniture and selected colors and fabrics. The original furnishings (except for two armchairs) remain in the home.

**DON’T MISS:** The Currier Museum of Art offers 90-minute tours, Thursdays–Mondays, April 13–January 7, 2018. A bonus (time permitting): a drive-by peek at the Kalil House, a privately owned Wright-designed home in the same neighborhood.

**YOU PROBABLY DIDN’T KNOW:** Some neighbors didn’t care for the house when it was built. They called it the “chicken coop.”

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY:** Special in-depth tours and twilight tours (the latter with live music) will be held throughout the season. Check website for details.

**DETAILS:** Participants must be at least age 7. Admission (\$25 adults) includes the Currier Museum of Art. Advance reservations recommended; ticket sales open April 1. (603) 669-6144, ext. 150; [currier.org](http://currier.org).

—Diane Bair and Pamela Wright