



# NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 4 NUMBER 1 FIRST QUARTER 1981

## THE MUIRHEAD HOUSE: AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT AND BETTY MUIRHEAD

by Gay L. Pearson

After World War II, Robert and Betty Muirhead, long interested in architecture, began to think about building a house of their own—one which would suit their particular needs. With their five children, they were living in the old family house on the farm which Mr. Muirhead's grandfather had settled in the 1860s. The farmhouse had been added onto by each generation, and by the 1940s the Muirheads were finding it quite inconvenient—to get from one part of the second floor to another, it was necessary to walk downstairs and climb a second set of stairs!

They approached an architect in nearby Elgin, Illinois, and had made an appointment to see him. Having subscribed to

*Gay Pearson is managing editor of the Frank Lloyd Wright Newsletter.*

*Architectural Forum* for many years, they were familiar with the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and in the summer of 1948 decided to drive up to Spring Green to look around Taliesin. They had no intention of asking Wright to design their house, feeling that such a great architect would have no interest in a house for common, ordinary farmers; they simply wanted to see Taliesin. While visiting they met Wright's secretary, Gene Masselink, and told him of their plans. He showed them through the living quarters of Taliesin and said that if they could wait a few minutes, Wright would see them. They waited. "We figured that since we had had to wait six months to see that fellow in Elgin," says Mrs. Muirhead, "we could wait 20 minutes to see Mr. Wright!"

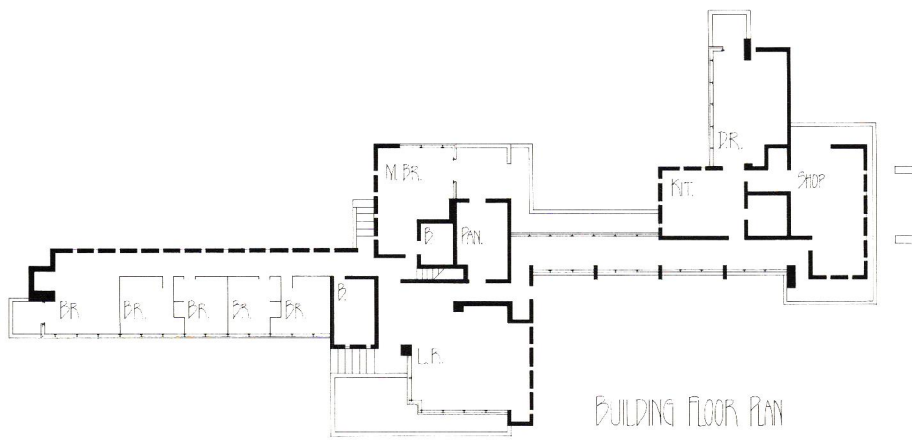
Wright was cordial and friendly, interested in them and their lifestyle. After considerable discussion, he suggested they think further about their needs and how they wished to *use* a house. Then they should write to him, including information about their hobbies, entertaining style,

budget. He also suggested they visit several other clients who had recently built houses. On the drive home from Taliesin, the Muirheads stopped to visit Herbert and Katherine Jacobs, who were in the midst of building their famous solar hemicycle house, and they also drove by the house which the Jacobs had built earlier in Madison. They visited the Albert Adelman House in Fox Point, Wisconsin.

After about a month, the Muirheads were ready to enumerate their needs. They stressed their simple country life and informal entertaining. Six bedrooms were specified so that each child could have his own space, even if it was very small. After climbing so many steps in the old farmhouse, Mrs. Muirhead wanted a house all on one floor. Farm life demanded certain things. Although they appreciated the Usonian houses they had seen and read about in which living and dining areas were combined, they knew this was not practical on the farm where large meals for many farm hands were part of the regular routine; a separate dining room was a must. Preparation of



Floor plan, Muirhead House. Drawn by Thomas Zurowski.



such meals, as well as the canning and freezing Mrs. Muirhead did, called for a large kitchen. A workshop and garage adjoining the house were specified, too.

By October, 1948, a letter was received from Wright stating that he would be happy to undertake to design the house. They were elated and eagerly awaited the first sketches. They waited—at first patiently, later with impatience. When inquiring about why it was taking so long, they were told that this was Wright's way of working. He would carry ideas around in his head for months, turning them over and over, working on them consciously and subconsciously. After such a period of incubation, they were told, Wright would be able to sit down and draw the complete design.

Finally, a year and a half later, in the summer of 1950, the initial sketches and plans arrived. The Muirheads opened them with great excitement and spent the next week studying them, carefully analyzing all aspects. They were very pleased with the overall scheme, feeling it would suit their needs well. The kitchen and dining room were located in a separate wing that also included the workshop and garage; farm hands could come and go freely and the family maintain their privacy in the living quarters. While keeping the house all on one level as specified, Wright had varied the ceiling heights to achieve spatial excitement. The Muirheads were pleased with the long, low lines of the house and with the easy, informal relationship between indoors and out. And the choice of materials—Chicago common brick and cypress wood—pleased them too.

A number of changes were necessary, however, and arrangements were made to meet with Wright again. "Mr. Wright

was very receptive to changes," recalls Mrs. Muirhead, "if you had good reasons. For instance, the original plan had only an open breezeway connecting the main part of the house with the kitchen/dining wing. I explained that was very impractical in our climate, especially in the winter when getting the family off to school in the mornings. Mr. Wright argued, 'First you get everyone dressed and then you go to the other part of the house for breakfast.' I said, 'No, Mr. Wright, that's NOT the way it's done!' " Wright relented, and the breezeway became an enclosed walkway. The Muirheads also felt the walkway was too long. "Mr. Wright said that would be easy to change. He simply picked up a knife, cut the drawing, took out a section of the passageway, and taped the drawing back together again! Our walkway now is about half the length of the original breezeway."

Other changes were made as well. For reasons of cost, the Muirheads asked that the attached garage be eliminated and a carport built instead. A "front" door was added near the living room and the pantry configuration changed slightly to accommodate a larger freezer.

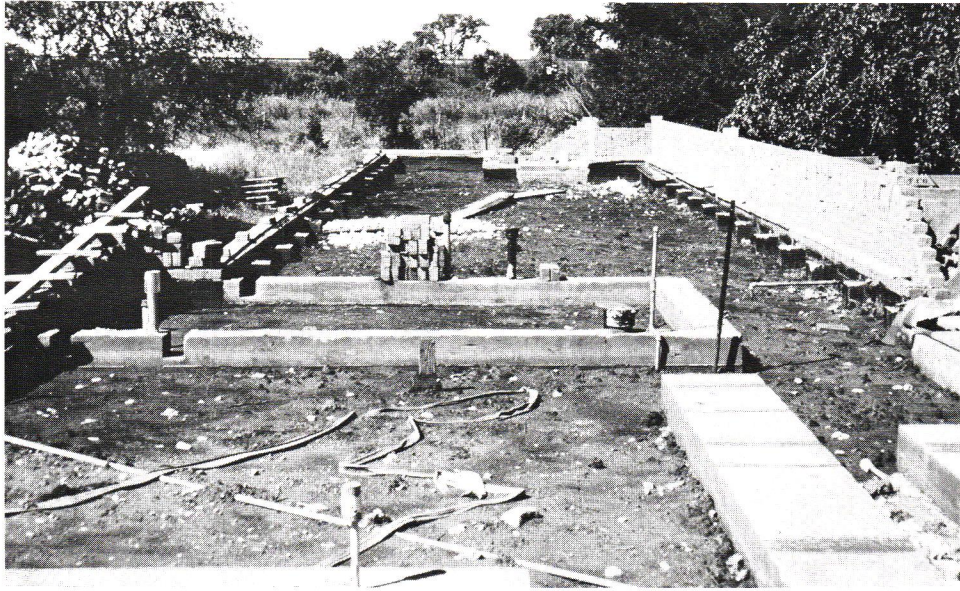
During the meeting, Wright explained that they were building their house at the time their space needs were the greatest, and, therefore, he had planned the house so that it could be converted into two residences. By turning the shop into a bedroom and adding a shower to the powder room, the kitchen/dining wing could become a separate 3-room house. The rest of the building, by converting the laundry room into a new kitchen and by using the master bedroom as a dining room, would be a 5-bedroom house suitable for a family. Says Mrs. Muirhead, "We haven't thought seriously about

doing this yet, but we have all the plans, and there are even two furnaces and water heaters. If we did make it into two residences, we'd still be no closer to our neighbors than you are in town!"

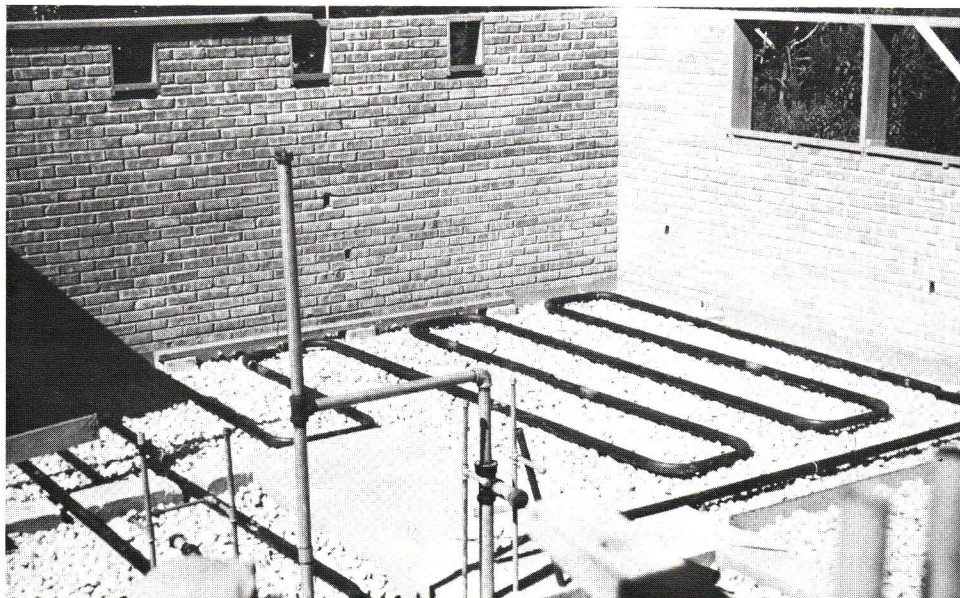
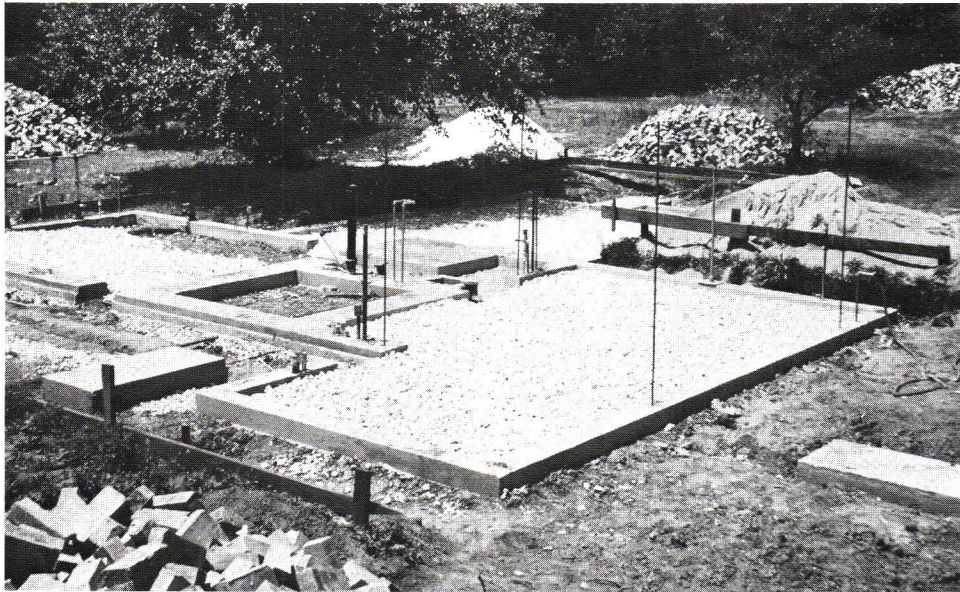
Later, the site of the house also was changed. As requested, the Muirheads had sent Wright a topographical survey of the farm as well as many photographs of it. The location they envisioned, near where the pond is now, must not have pleased Wright, and he made an unexpected visit to see the property. Unfortunately, he arrived when his clients were not at home (they were out pricing brick), but he walked around the farm admiring the rural beauty. He later suggested a location further north. "We told Mr. Wright that spot wouldn't do at all. First of all, it was very open and unprotected and would have been much too cold in the winter. Besides, it was down-wind from the pig pens! Well, Mr. Wright thought that was a pretty good reason," laughs Mrs. Muirhead, "so he suggested we consider building the house in the orchard. That's what we finally did, and it's been a wonderful location. It's so beautiful in spring when all the trees are in blossom."

The orchard site required reversing the original plan. The house was designed to take maximum advantage of the sun. The plot plan specifies the long axis of the house at "52½° east of north." Thus oriented toward the southeast, the window walls in the living room and the smaller windows in the bedrooms let in the warm, low, winter sun, while the very wide eaves provide shade from the hot, summer sun. The house is also naturally cooled in the summer. No matter how still the air is outside, the clients relate, a cooling breeze can always be created in the house by opening different combinations of windows and doors.





*(Above) Looking south from the living room along the bedroom wing. The 9" concrete grade beam is in place and the brick walls are beginning to be laid up. Photo courtesy Mr. and Mrs. Robert Muirhead. (Below) Looking north across kitchen and dining room. Vertical reinforcing tie rods and plumbing pipes are in place; crushed stone is being spread preparatory to laying the heating pipes. Photo courtesy Eugene Castle. (Bottom) Here the radiant heat pipes are in place in the master bedroom; more crushed stone will soon be added. Photo courtesy Mr. and Mrs. Muirhead.*



The working drawings arrived in the fall of 1950. In order to save money, Mr. Muirhead decided, with Wright's approval, to act as his own general contractor. Working on the farm, he would be on hand to supervise all aspects of the construction and would do much of it himself. Alan Davidson, the apprentice assigned to the project, would come to inspect the progress from time to time.

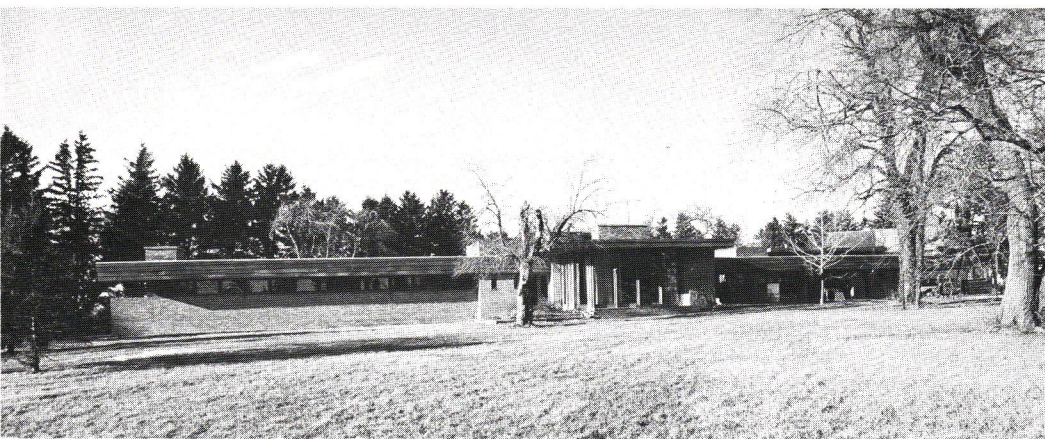
Wright had been delighted with this opportunity to build a farm house out in the country, where there were no building codes with which to contend. As in some other Usonian houses, he was able to employ construction techniques which could save a considerable amount of money for his clients. Rather than the standard 4' deep, 10" thick concrete foundation wall and footing, Wright used a 9" concrete grade beam set on top of 18" of crushed stone. Mr. Muirhead boasts that only 25 yards of concrete were needed for his foundation and that there have been no problems with it.

As in most Usonian designs, a system of radiant floor heating was used. Pipes were embedded in a layer of crushed stone on top of a bed of sand, and a concrete slab floor was poured on top of that. The floor of the house established the 4' square grid upon which it was designed. Rather than pouring the entire floor and scoring the grid lines into it, workmen poured each 4-foot module separately, in checker board fashion, to allow for expansion and contraction. A red pigment was worked into the surface of the concrete before it had set. Unsatisfied with the finishing job that was being done, Mr. Muirhead fired the workman after several hours and applied the pigment himself. This heating system has functioned very well for the past thirty years, keeping the house uniformly warm in winter. Mrs. Muirhead recalls that the children loved to have slumber parties on the warm, cozy floors.

Although ground was broken early in the spring of 1951, the family did not completely move in until 1955. Progress was slow, with Mr. Muirhead working on the house in between farm responsibilities. The family moved in little by little, and the girls "camped out" in it long before the family actually began to live in the house.

During construction the house attracted many curiosity seekers, especially after





*East elevation, Muirhead House. The bedroom wing is to the left, the living room at the center, and the kitchen/dining wing to the right. Photo courtesy Thomas A. Heinz.*



*(Above) West elevation, Muirhead House. The dining room is to the left, the kitchen at the center, and the master bedroom to the right. Photo courtesy Thomas A. Heinz. (Below) The brick walls are nearing completion. The living room fireplace may be seen at the right. Photo courtesy Eugene Castle.*



it was featured in the Elgin newspaper. It was common for 80 or more people to stop by on a Sunday afternoon. One day a group of men introduced themselves; they worked for the Illinois Central Railroad, whose tracks ran near the house. Having watched progress on this unusual building for many months, they decided to stop by to find out what it was going to be. "A motel?" they asked.

Much of the finishing work was done after the family moved into the house, and most of the interior carpentry was done by Mr. Muirhead himself with the help of an elderly carpenter. A number of modifications were made. The design for the northeast wall of the living room called for a series of free-standing chairs placed together to form a unit (similar to those designed for the Pope House). To afford more storage space and simplify cleaning, Mr. Muirhead built one single seat along the wall. In order to keep the floor space more open, built-in seating extending out from the other side of the fireplace on the original plan was not installed. Wright designed additional tables and chairs which were never built.

Mrs. Muirhead sewed the covers for the living room cushions, and Wright explained to her how to make drapes for the floor to ceiling windows. He suggested the fabrics should be natural and unobtrusive, and apprentices later told her that he would have been very pleased with her choice—rough cotton purchased for 30¢ a yard from a manufacturer of seed corn sacks.

The Muirheads are still at work on the house. To emphasize the horizontal line, Wright specified that the vertical mortar joints be flush and the same color as the bricks and the horizontal joints white and raked. In order to save money, the Muirheads decided to apply colored mortar themselves after the masons had finished; this is nearly completed inside but remains to be done on the exterior. Thermal pane windows, not available in such large sizes in the early 1950s, have been installed during the past year. Mr. Muirhead is currently adding more insulation, refinishing much of the woodwork, and completing the recessed ceiling lighting in the living room. He plans to begin soon on the built-in cabinetry planned for the hallway of the bedroom wing.



For over thirty years the house has continued to hold their interest. Asked whether they would do it all again, the Muirheads answer a resounding yes. One of the best parts of the experience has been the interesting people they have met over the years. Wright sent many prospective clients to see their house, and from around the world have come requests to visit. The Muirheads have been gracious, enjoying the opportunities to share their house and to talk about their experiences as Wright's clients. Quips Mrs. Muirhead, "If all the architecture students we've shown around over the years are really out there practicing now, there certainly must be a glut on the market!" ■

## TOURS

### The Wright Way in Buffalo Buffalo, New York

Join friends of the Darwin D. Martin House for a Frank Lloyd Wright birthday celebration on Saturday, June 6 and Sunday, June 7, 1981. The celebration will include tours of selected Frank Lloyd Wright houses, a Larkin buffet and home movie, a Larkin lecture, and formal dedication of the Darwin D. Martin House as a Canadian-American center.

Tickets for the events are limited. Tour—\$10; Larkin buffet and movie—\$8; Larkin lecture—\$2. The celebration is being sponsored by the Restoration and Fund Raising Committee of the Darwin D. Martin House to benefit the restoration that is presently underway.

For additional information, please write: Restoration and Fund Raising Committee Friends of the Darwin D. Martin House, 509 Capen Hall, Buffalo, New York 14260; or call Jane Golebiewski at (716) 636-2901.



### Wright Plus Oak Park, Illinois

The annual housewalk sponsored by the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation will be held May 16, 1981, in Oak Park, Illinois. Five buildings designed by Frank Lloyd Wright will be open for viewing from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Three houses on the tour are the William G. Fricke House (1901), the William E. Martin House (1903), and the Edwin H. Cheney House (1904). In addition to Unity Temple and Wright's own home, two private apartments at the home and studio will be open.

Wright created one apartment in 1911 when he converted the studio to a duplex for his wife Catherine and six children. The foundation has removed a bedroom ceiling, and the chain harness and studio roof are clearly visible. The other apartment was added with the garage in 1918.

The tour also includes the work of other Prairie school architects. The Charles Helder house designed by E. E. Roberts in 1906 has a richly decorated interior. The Goldbeck House designed by Tallmadge and Watson in 1914 typifies this firm's approach to the style.

Tickets for Wright Plus are \$15 (\$12.50 before May 1) and may be purchased by mail from the Frank Lloyd Home and Studio Foundation, 951 Chicago Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois 60302. Purchase price includes admission to ten buildings, shut-

tle bus service, tour brochure with map, and restaurant listings. A hotel list will be sent with the tickets.

Wright Plus is a benefit sponsored by the foundation to sustain tour and education programs, research and archives, and restoration of the two buildings.

Those who wish to do more may become a Wright Plus patron with a \$100 donation. Patrons receive two tickets for Wright Plus and an invitation for two to a party for patrons and Wright Plus homeowners at the Chauncey Williams House (1895).

## RESTORATION UPDATE

### Frank Lloyd Wright House Oak Park, Illinois

Working toward its goal of restoring Wright's home and studio to their 1909 appearance, the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation has recently removed a porch which was added to the front of the house in 1911 when it was converted to a rental property. Now one can again perceive the great sense of shelter provided by the broad gable that extends down to the top of the first floor windows and can see clearly the undulating wall surface of the bays. What emerges is a shingle style cottage strongly related to some of Bruce Price's commissions which were widely published during the 1880s.





# FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S ART GLASS: A PHOTO ESSAY

by Thomas A. Heinz

This is the first of a series of photo essays on Frank Lloyd Wright's art glass. Although it is unfortunate that we cannot print the photos in color, I think that much can be learned from studying the designs in black and white. It is not my goal here to analyze, except in the most cursory manner, Wright's work in the medium; rather, I hope that this photo essay—the first significant collection of photos to be published on the topic—will allow the reader a unique opportunity to study the works and draw his own conclusions.

There are a number of ways to approach the topic, and I have arbitrarily divided the works into two broad categories: overall designs and border patterns. Some of the overall designs are presented in this issue.

They are presented chronologically and (unless information is known to the contrary) have been assigned the date of the building for which they were executed. One can see a design development paralleling that of the Prairie house itself. The art glass of the 1890s exhibits the same search for expression as do the houses of those formative years, during which Wright was trying to shed all reliance on historical and contemporary influences in order to create totally new forms. About 1900, a consistency of expression can be seen to emerge from the variety which preceded it.

It is Wright's work in art glass during the first decade of the twentieth century which places him at the forefront of artists in the medium. One aspect unique to his work is the integration of the structural elements, i.e., the comes, into the total design. To Wright, the lead (or zinc) was not merely the "glue" which held the design together; by varying the widths of the comes—some in the Boynton House, for instance, are about an inch wide—they became an integral part of the design itself.

*Thomas A. Heinz, editor and publisher of the Frank Lloyd Wright Newsletter, has spent the past six years studying and photographing Wright's art glass. Funding for this research has come in part from a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. He has lectured widely and is currently preparing a major book on the topic.*



**1. Fan lights and side lights, 1892, George Blossom House, Chicago, Illinois.** *The door and window configurations and the glass pattern of the fan lights are consistent with the formal, colonial style of the house. The pattern in the side lights, however, shows the influence of Sullivan upon his young employee. Only clear glass was used in these windows—a feature which Wright moved away from after 1893. All photos courtesy Thomas A. Heinz.*

A variation of this concept is found in the ceiling lights of the Willits House (1902) and the buffet doors of the remodeled McArthur House dining room (1901). Here Wright eliminated the comes completely in sections of the design, fitting together small pieces of glass cut with painstaking exactness. The result is an extremely subtle "feathering" effect. Because this technique was not waterproof, it could be used only on interior art glass.

Wright's abilities as a designer of art glass were recognized early. Although no textual reference is made to his work, a 1900 article in *Brush and Pencil*<sup>1</sup> included a photo of a window by Wright along with those by Louis J. Millet and Louis Comfort Tiffany. The window is identified only as a "simple design in glass—Frank L. Wright." Robert Spencer's 1900 article<sup>2</sup> on Wright's work illustrates several glass designs, while in the 1908 *Architectural Record*<sup>3</sup> many are featured.

<sup>1</sup>Kirk D. Henry, "American Art Industries—Stained Glass Work," *Brush and Pencil* VII (Nov. 1900), p. 154.

<sup>2</sup>Robert C. Spencer, Jr., "The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright," *Architectural Review* (Boston) VII (June 1900), pp. 61-72.

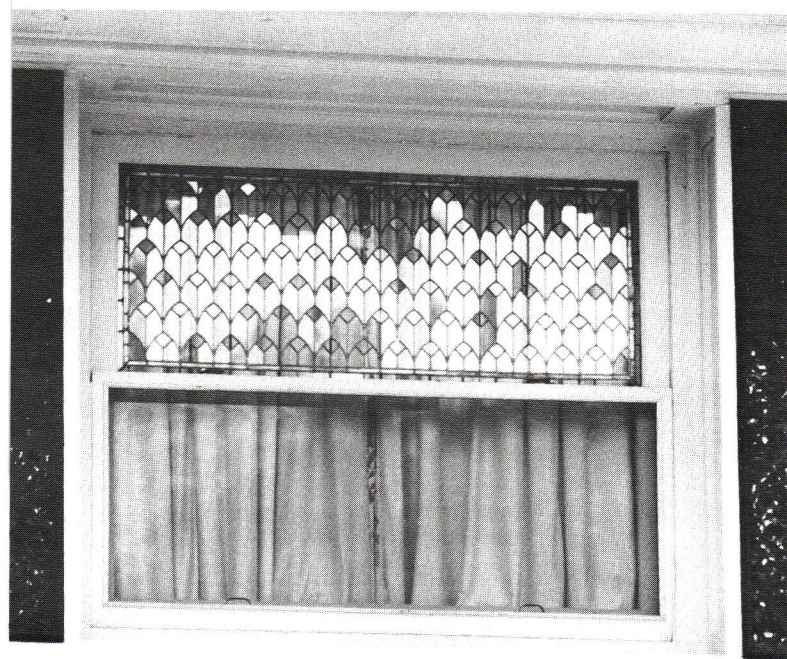
<sup>3</sup>Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture," *Architectural Record* XXIII (March 1908), pp. 155-221.

With very few exceptions, Wright's designs after 1900 are rooted in Froebel-type abstractions of plant forms. It is well worth noting that he did not draw inspiration, as did many other designers of this period, from animals or landscapes or literary subjects.

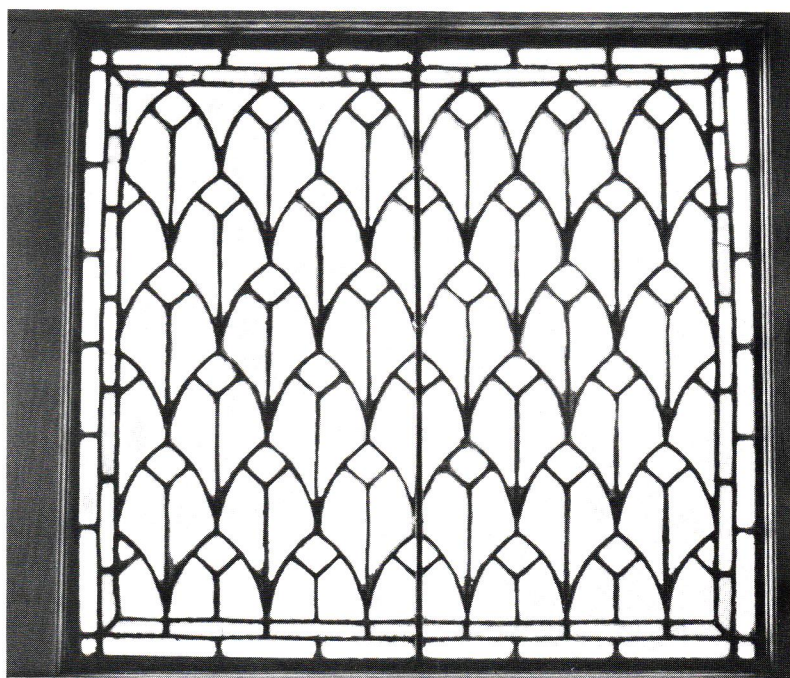
Between 1900 and 1908 the designs became more and more abstract. One can recognize quite readily the wheat motif of the Dana House dining room (1902), but there is no such correlation in the highly abstracted pattern of the windows of the Mrs. Thomas Gale House (1909). However, other than this tendency toward greater abstraction and simplification, there is not a tremendous growth of technical mastery or a progression of design expression in the work after 1901.

The quantum leap of genius occurred then. What we encounter afterwards is basically the full flowering of a mature style and a demonstration of Wright's virtuosity as a glass designer, as he created pattern after pattern to complement and complete his interiors. The infinite variety of expression is evident, as is, I think, the sense of Wright's sheer joy of combining color and shape into such visual delights. ■

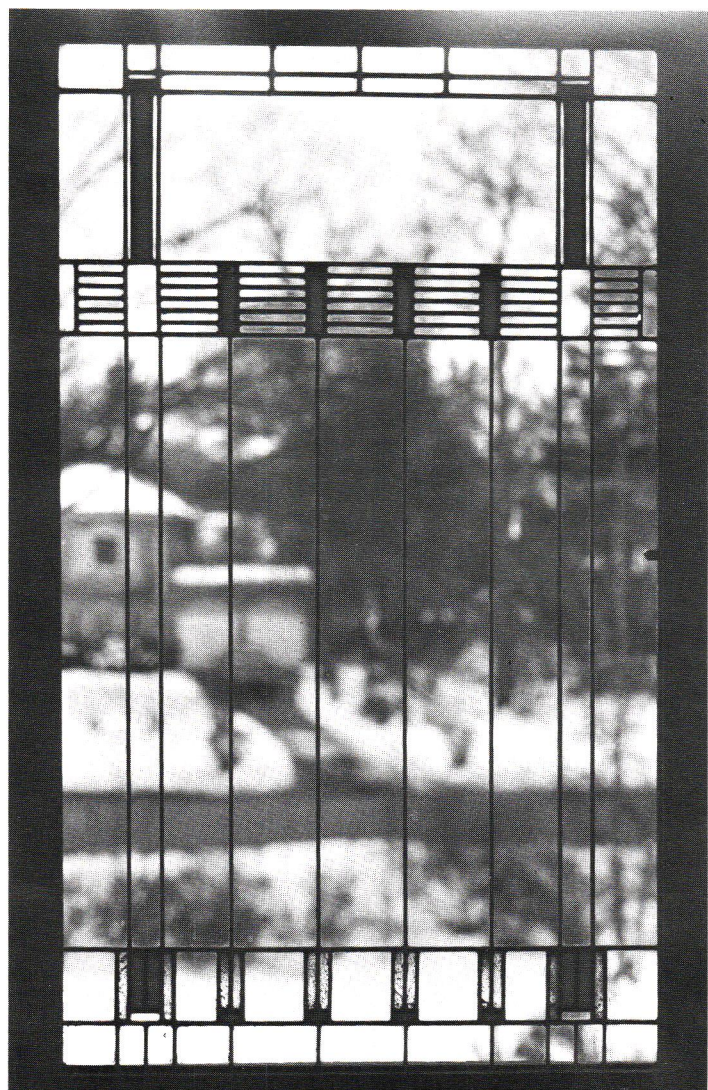




**2. Bedroom window, 1893, William Winslow House, River Forest, Illinois.** Like all young architects, Wright, in his early work, adapted designs from other sources. Two almost identical designs, identified as Egyptian motifs, were published in 1886 in a German glass publication, *Kunstverglasungen*. Curious—and unexplained—is why art glass was used only in the upper sash of these double hung windows. The pattern also appears inside the house in two reception hall doors.

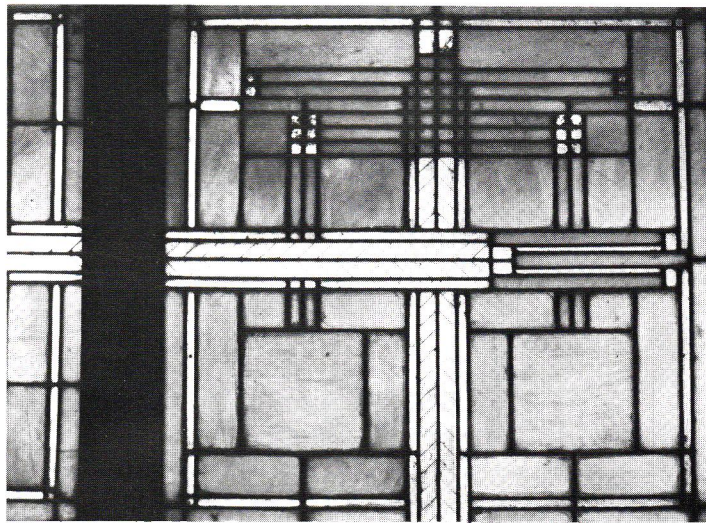


**3. Dining room window, 1895, Frank Lloyd Wright House, Oak Park, Illinois.** Wright incorporated the same pattern he had used in the Winslow House into the remodeled dining room of his own home. This is one of only two known instances where Wright, who attempted a unity of architecture and all decorative elements, used the same art glass design in two different buildings. Here the pattern is clear glass with a border of mottled blue glass.

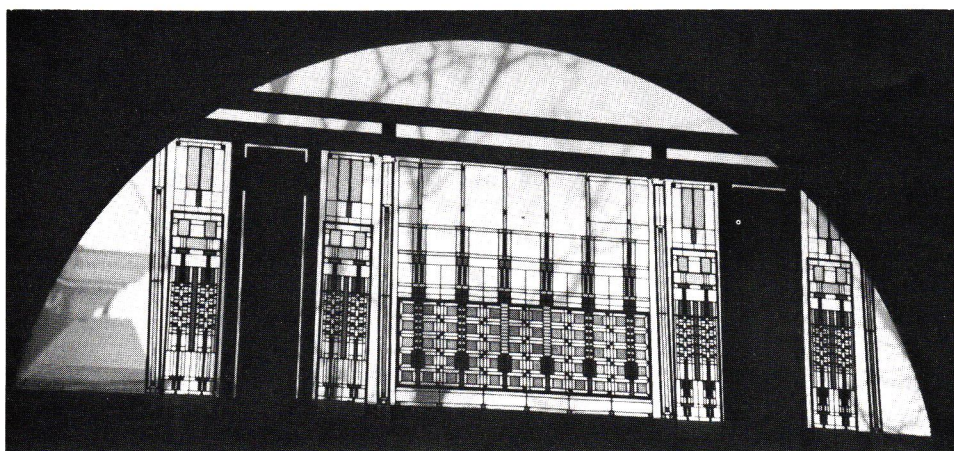
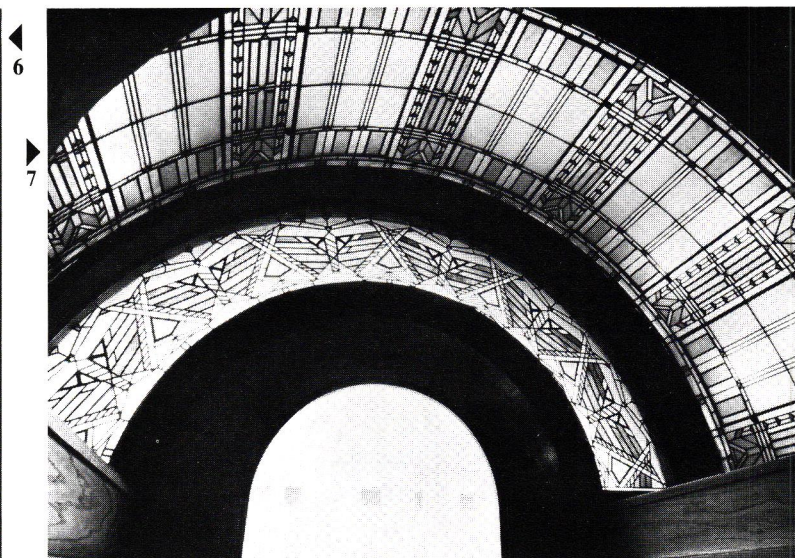
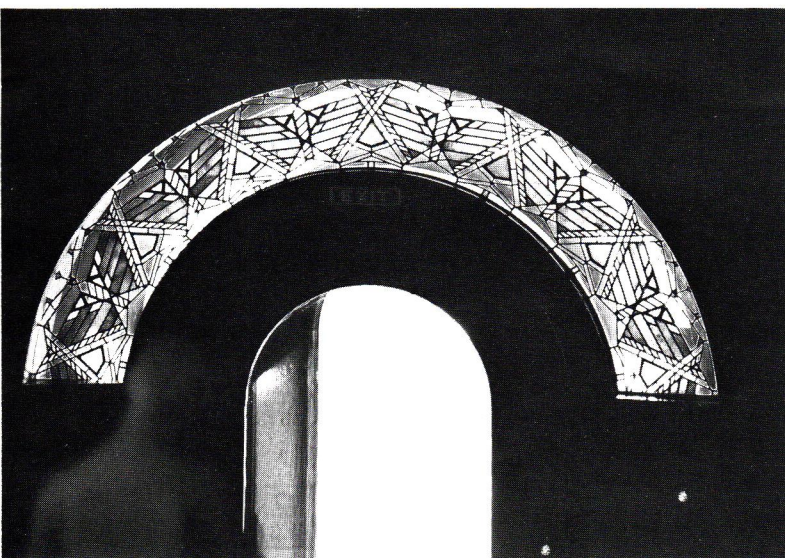


**4. Bedroom windows, 1902, Ward Willits House, Highland Park, Illinois.** One of the earliest abstract designs, this window is evidence of the pattern and proportion lessons Wright learned in his childhood Froebel training. The color palette is quite limited; the window is mostly clear glass with gold and white panes providing the accents. Beginning in 1897 with the Heller House (Chicago), Wright experimented with different came materials. The Willits House has copper comes, which provide an additional richness to the color palette. The use of such copper comes, however, was never repeated. The majority of his work has zinc comes; more rigid than lead, these allowed more precision, and thinner comes could be used in complex patterns of tiny panes.

**5. Panel, dining room ceiling light, 1902, Willits House.** On interior art glass, where water-tightness was not a factor, Wright was free to innovate. Here small pieces of glass were set together without comes to achieve a subtle "feathering" effect. This technique was first used in the dining room ceiling light of the Bradley House (1900) in Kankakee, Illinois. To conceal the light source, Wright used no clear glass in this pattern, but the gold and white accents in the predominantly yellow design repeat the colors of the windows of the house. Note the pattern relationships between this design and the windows.

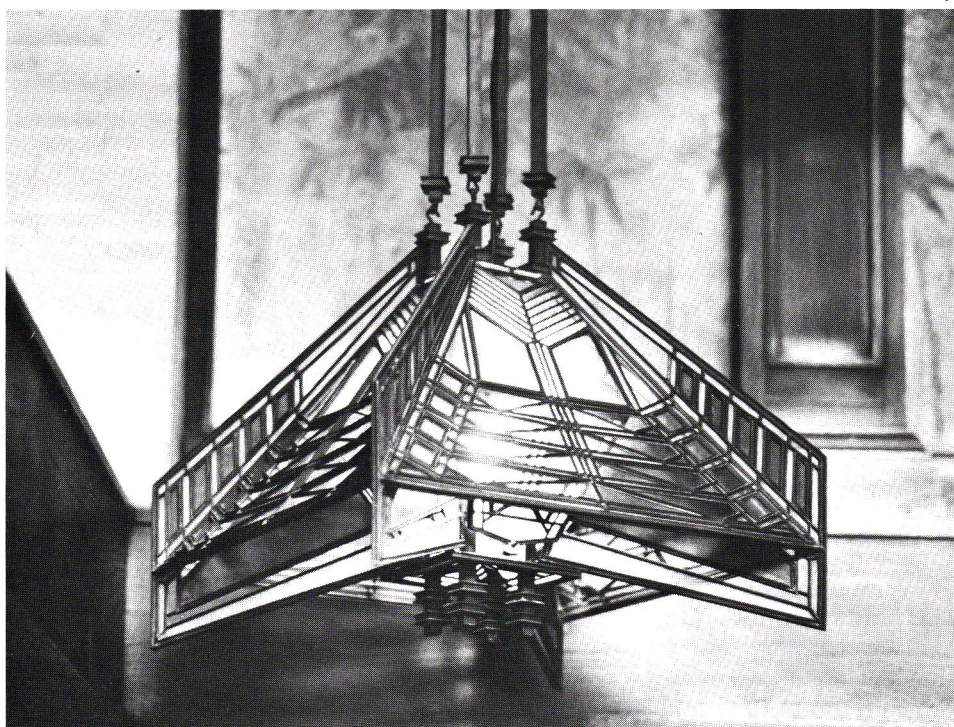






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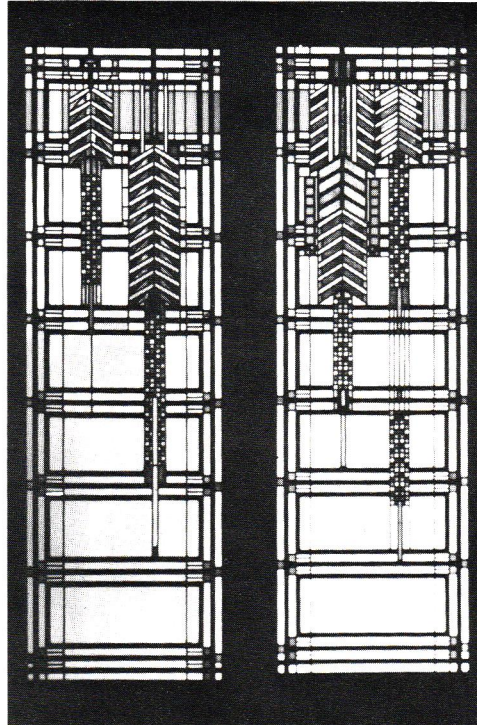
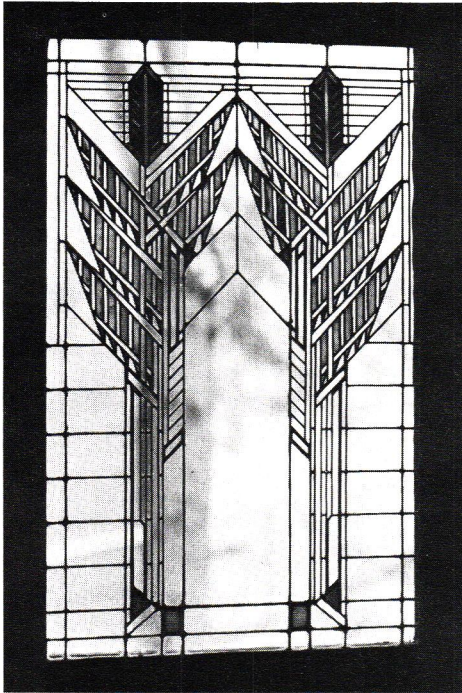
**6. Entry door surround, 1903, Susan Lawrence Dana House, Springfield, Illinois.** *This is the only instance in Wright's work where the source of an abstraction is animal life—here, a butterfly—rather than plant life. His ingenious technique of variation of the came widths began about this time. Rather than serving only to hold the pattern together, the comes themselves became an integral part of the design. Again, the color palette is very narrow, with only subtle differences between the yellows. The palest yellow panes were coated with a metal oxide to make them iridescent.*

**7. Entry ceiling panel and door surround, 1903, Dana House.** *A sense of richness and visual delight is experienced with one's first step inside the front door and grows as one moves throughout this magnificent building which contains some of Wright's finest art glass, both in terms of design and quality of workmanship. Note how the rhythm established by the butterfly arc is reiterated in the barrel vaulted ceiling light.*

**8. Art glass "curtain," 1903, Dana House ballroom.** *Nine free-hanging panels suspended on a wooden frame inside the actual window make this art glass "curtain" Wright's most innovative work in the medium. It was a technique which he never used again, however.*

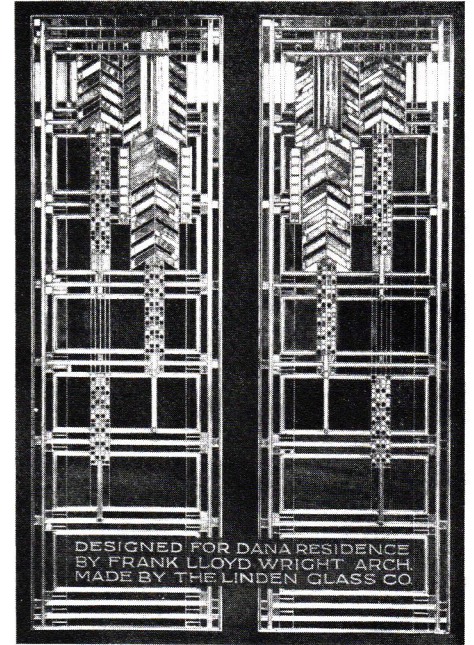
**9. Dining room light fixture, 1903, Dana House.** *These four dining room fixtures, along with another which hangs near the gallery, are certainly the most complex three-dimensional works in art glass produced by Wright. Eleven different planes are present, but the overlapping and illusionary techniques employed give a sense of even more. Note the design relationships between the light fixture and the windows (fig. 10).*





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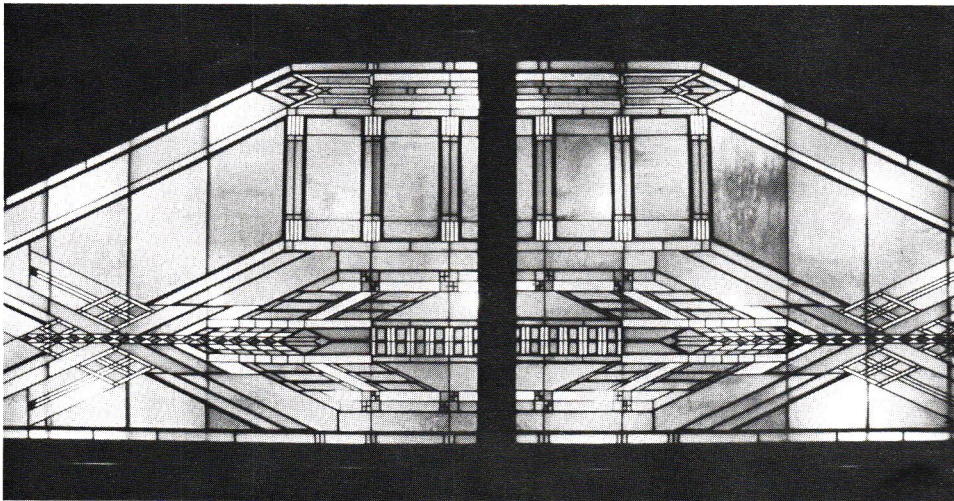
10. Dining room window, 1903, Dana House. Absolute precision was necessary in such intricate, complex patterns as this, where many pieces measure only  $\frac{1}{4}$ ". In places where as many as 42 individual panes are aligned across the window, a size variation of only  $\frac{1}{42}$ " on each would cause the window to be off by one inch! One can only marvel at the exacting workmanship of these craftsmen.



## LINDEN GLASS COMPANY

1216 MICHIGAN AV. CHICAGO · DESIGNERS · MANUFACTURERS  
IMPORTERS · DECORATIVE LEADED GLASS · MEMORIAL  
WINDOWS · GLASS MOSAIC · LAMPS · ELECTRIC FIXTURES  
HAND EMBROIDERY · FURNITURE · DRAPERIES · RUGS  
DECORATION & EVERYTHING FOR COMPLETE FURNISHING

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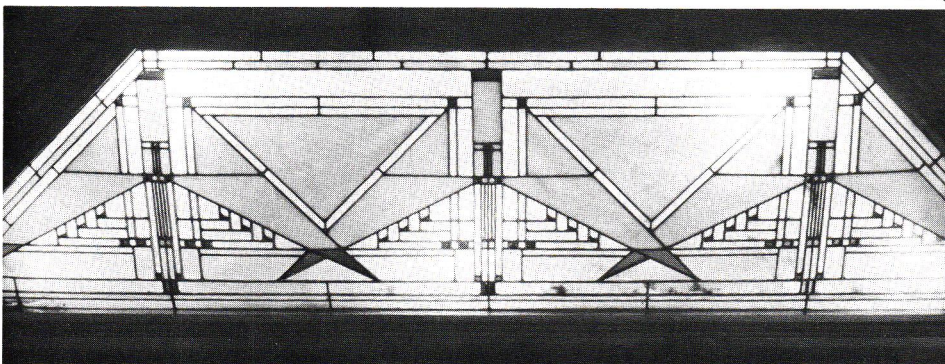
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11. Reception hall doors, 1903, Dana House. As in nature, where no two specimens are identical, so it is in Wright's abstractions of nature: although at first glance these doors appear to be symmetrical, closer observation reveals very subtle design variations. Natural form and man-made form are combined in this abstraction of wisteria on a trellis. The wide band of white glass near the top serves to unify the design from one door to the next of this configuration which includes six doors and two windows. In my opinion, these are the finest art glass designs Wright produced.

12. That the Linden Glass Company was proud of its work at the Dana House is obvious from this advertisement which appeared in professional magazines of the period. Note that the ad shows two identical doors as a pair, which is not the way they were subsequently installed in the house.

13. Ballroom ceiling light, 1903, Dana House. The overall shape of this light repeats that of the fireplace and settees beneath it. The trellis motif, used several other places in the house, is also incorporated into this very dynamic design.

14. Living room ceiling light, 1902, Arthur Heurtley House, Oak Park, Illinois. Viewed upside down, the pattern forms a silhouette of the house itself; its broad hip roof and strong horizontal eave line can be easily seen. Unlike designs in many other houses, there is no relationship between this pattern and the art glass windows. To see the importance of came width variation, compare this design to the more powerful art glass ceiling light of the Dana House (fig 13).

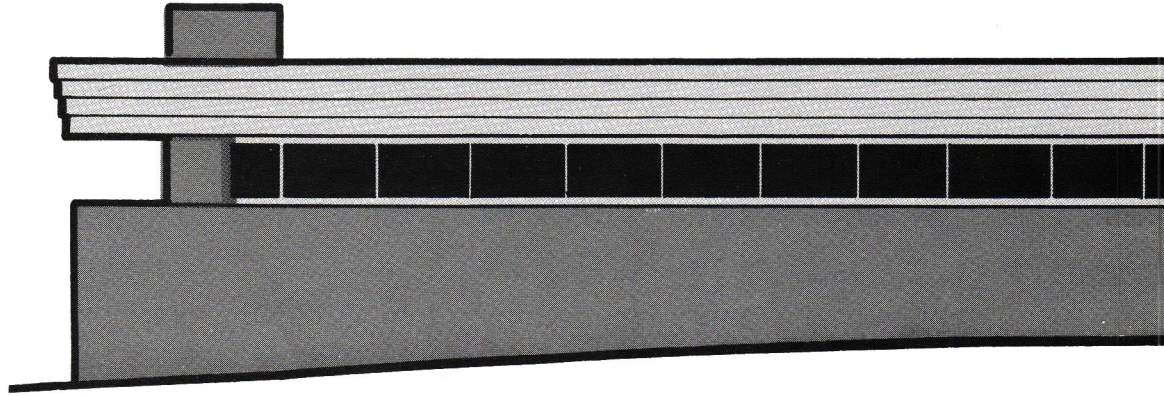


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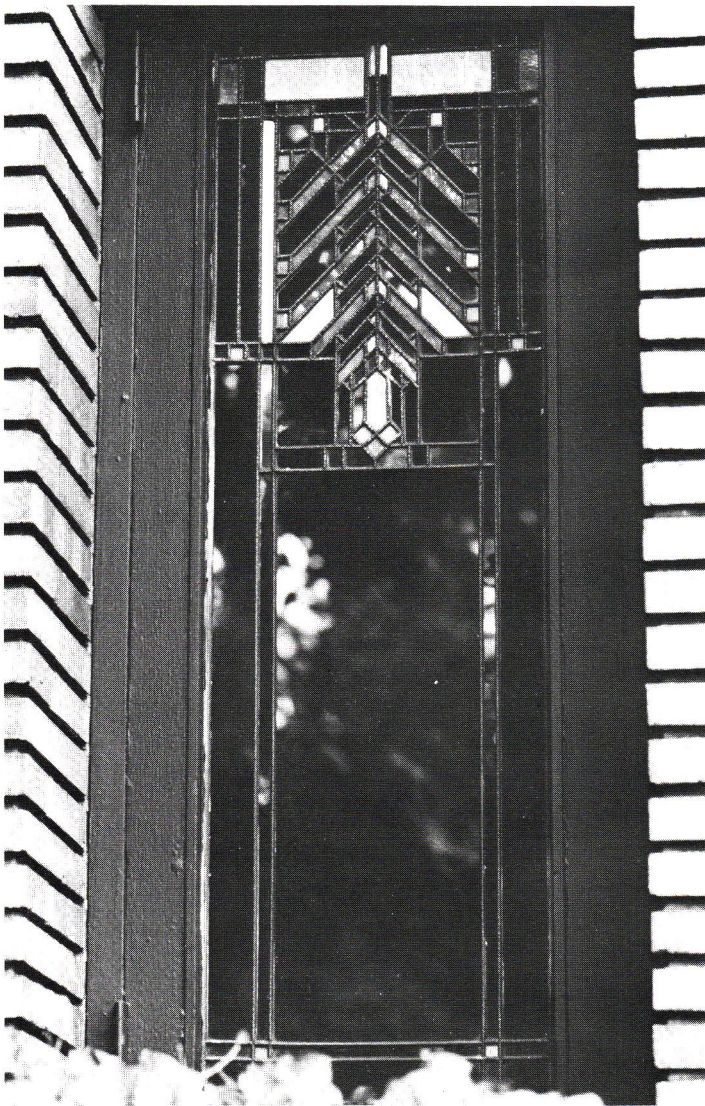


## SCALE DRAWING

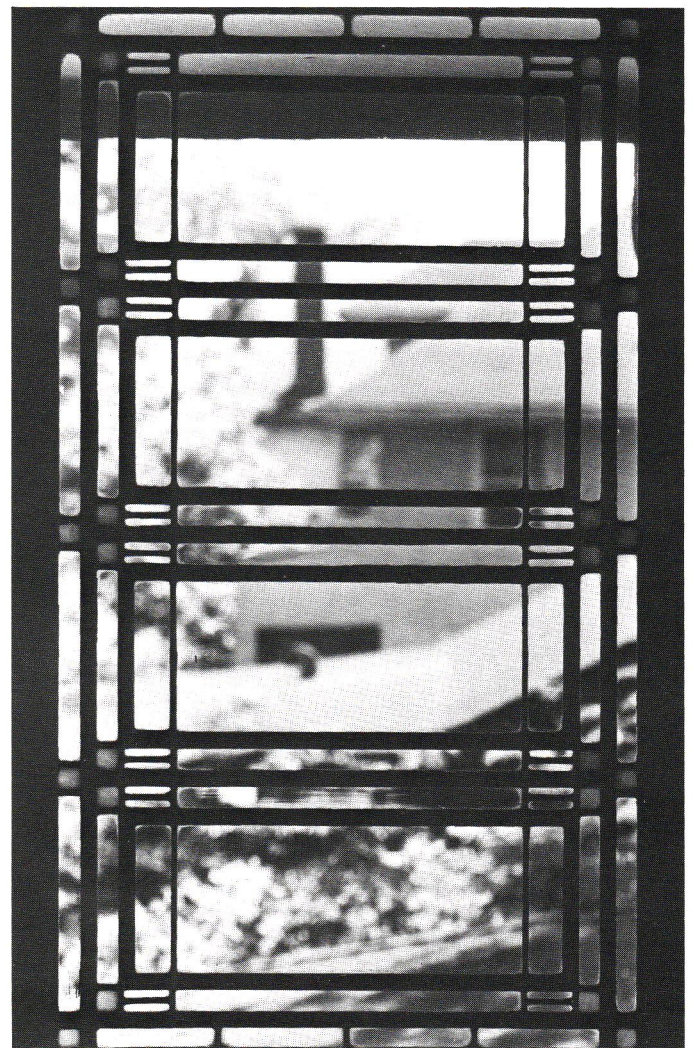
Scale drawings, a regular feature of the newsletter, aid in understanding the relative sizes of Wright's buildings. All drawn to the same scale ( $\frac{1}{8}" = 1'$ ), they afford an opportunity to line up the buildings on an imaginary street for comparison and study.



*Southeast elevation of the Robert Muirhead House, Plato Center, Illinois. Drawn by Thomas Zurowski.*

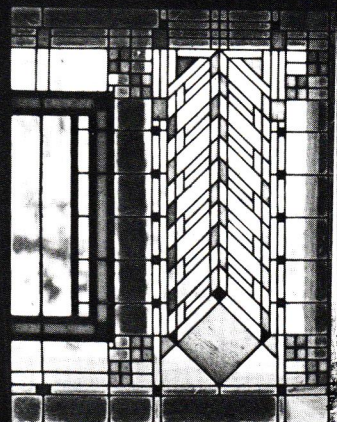
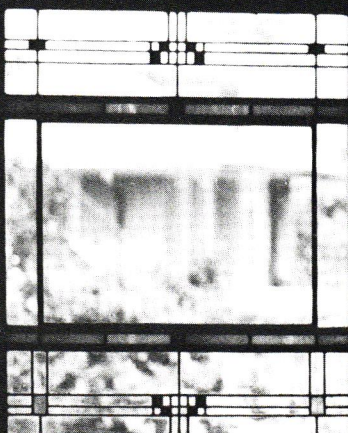
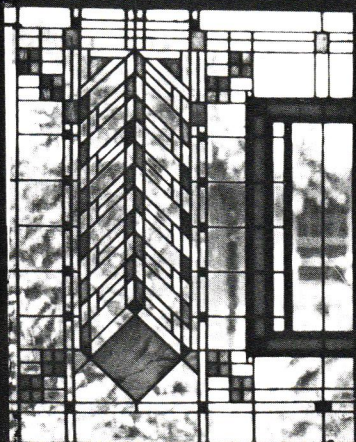


**15. Living room window, 1903, George Barton House, Buffalo, New York.** In these windows, zinc came were used for their additional strength which eliminated the use of bracing bars and provided a greater degree of design precision. The overall window configuration is Wright's version of a Chicago window, with two art glass casement windows flanking a large, fixed center pane of clear glass.

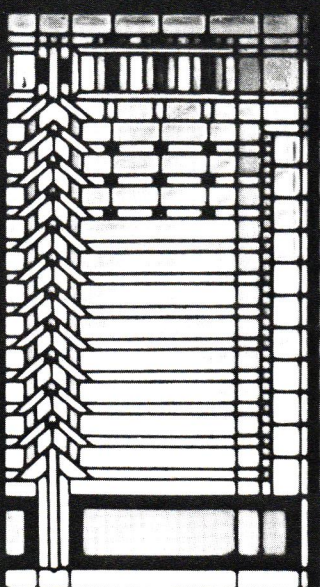
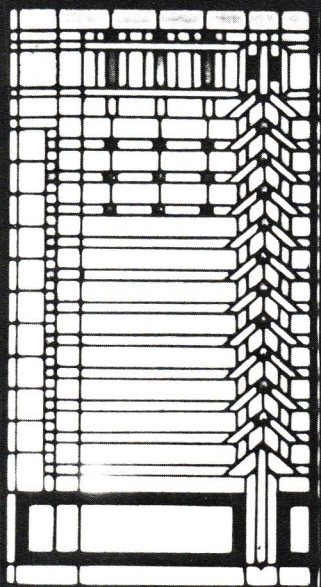


**16. Bedroom window, 1903, William E. Martin House, Oak Park, Illinois.** The trellis motif of the Dana House is repeated here without the floral abstractions, possibly because Wright felt that the extensive gardens to the south of the house provided sufficient natural themes. Only white and clear glass are used in the pattern.

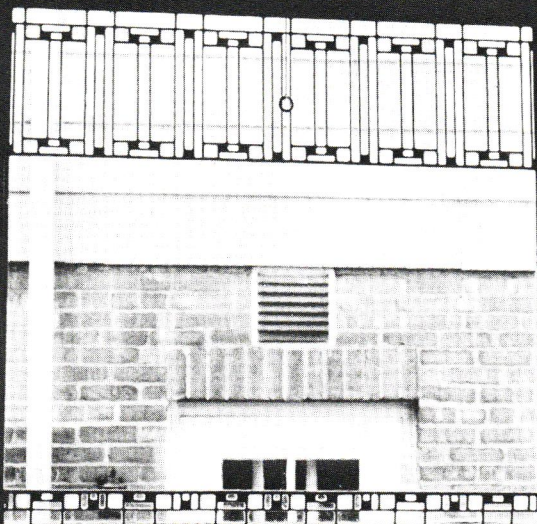
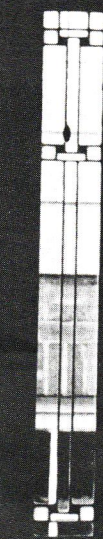




▲  
21. Stairway windows, 1905, W. R. Heath House, Buffalo, New York. Here, for the first time, three windows form one, integral composition. The fact that the top and bottom borders of the center window do not align with those of the two side windows is probably due to manufacturing difficulties.

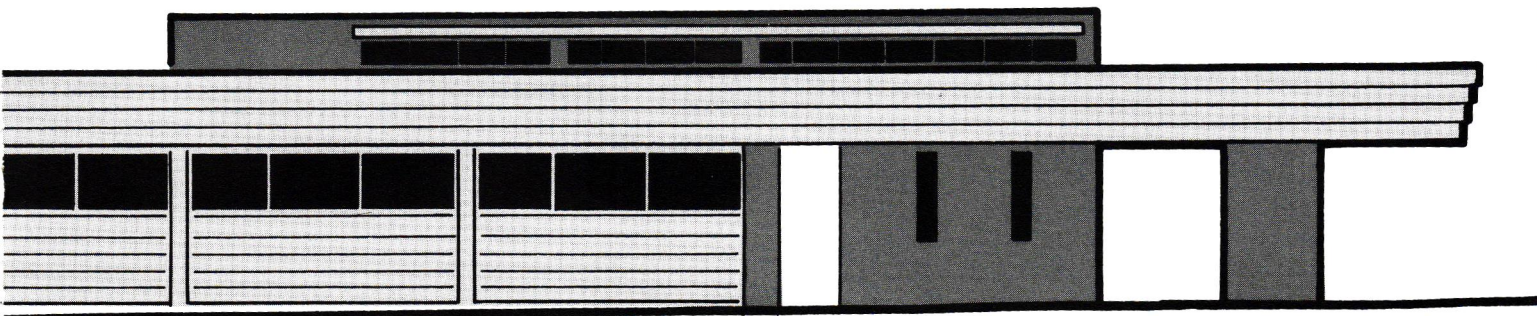


22. Living room window, 1904, Darwin Martin House. In this use of another trellis and floral motif, a strong relationship is created between the two windows by the wide band which spans them at the bottom.

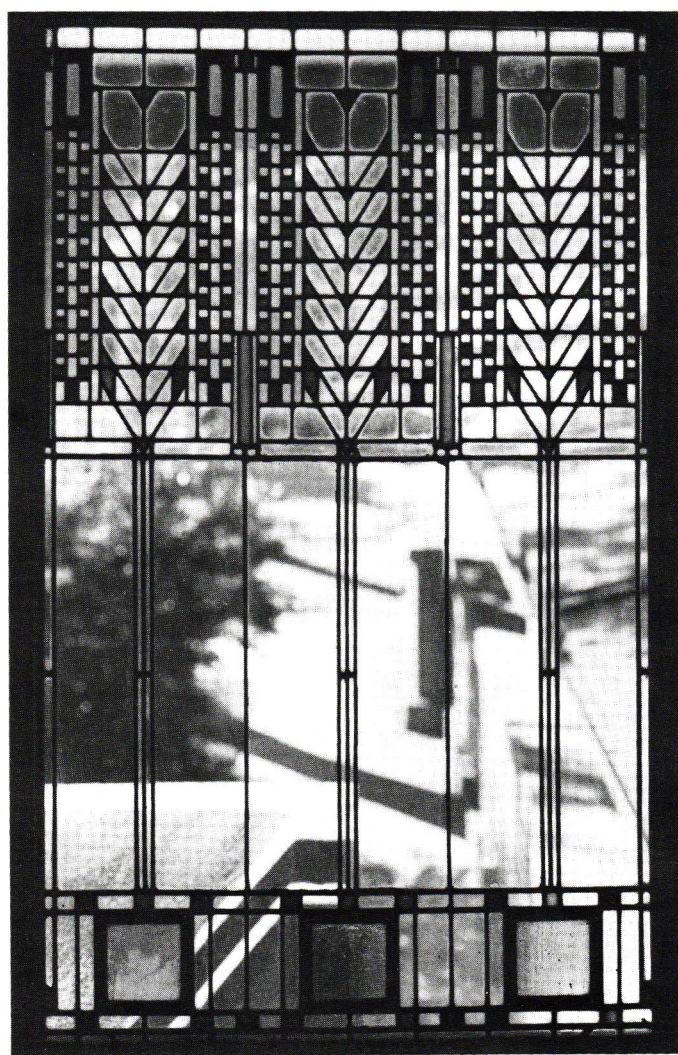


23. Library window, 1905, Charles Brown House, Evanston, Illinois. With very narrow side panels, this is another variation of a Chicago window. The border at the bottom is a repetition of the lower portion of the top border.

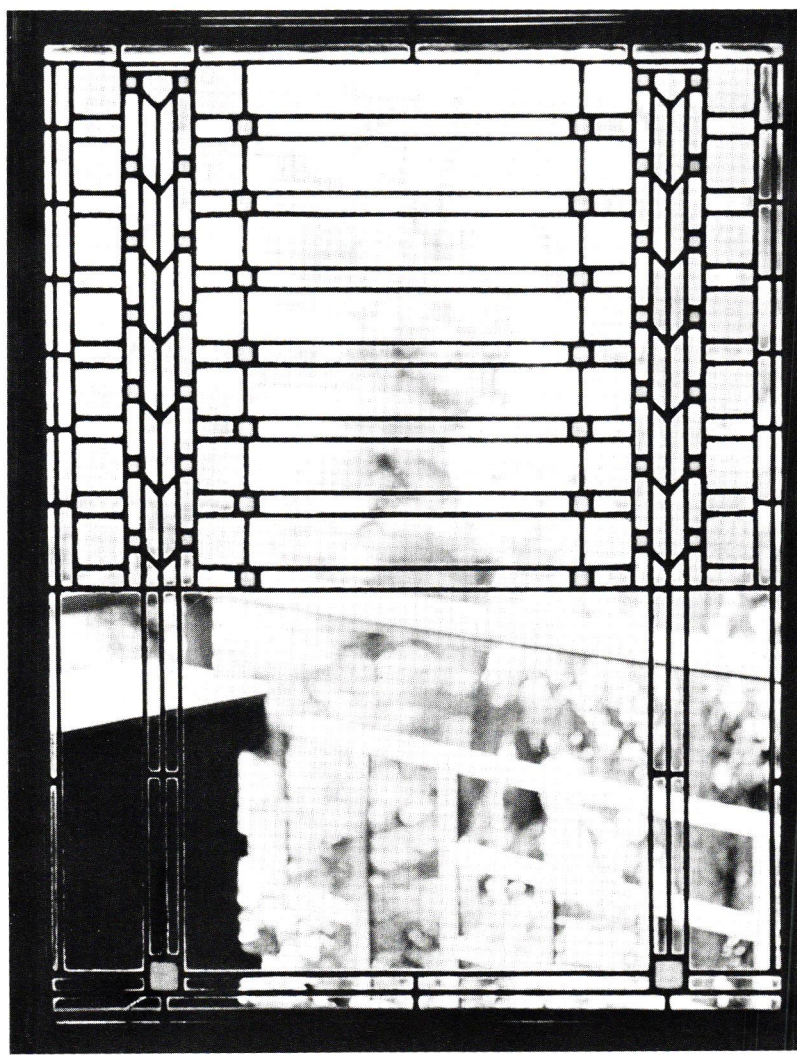




# ELEVATION

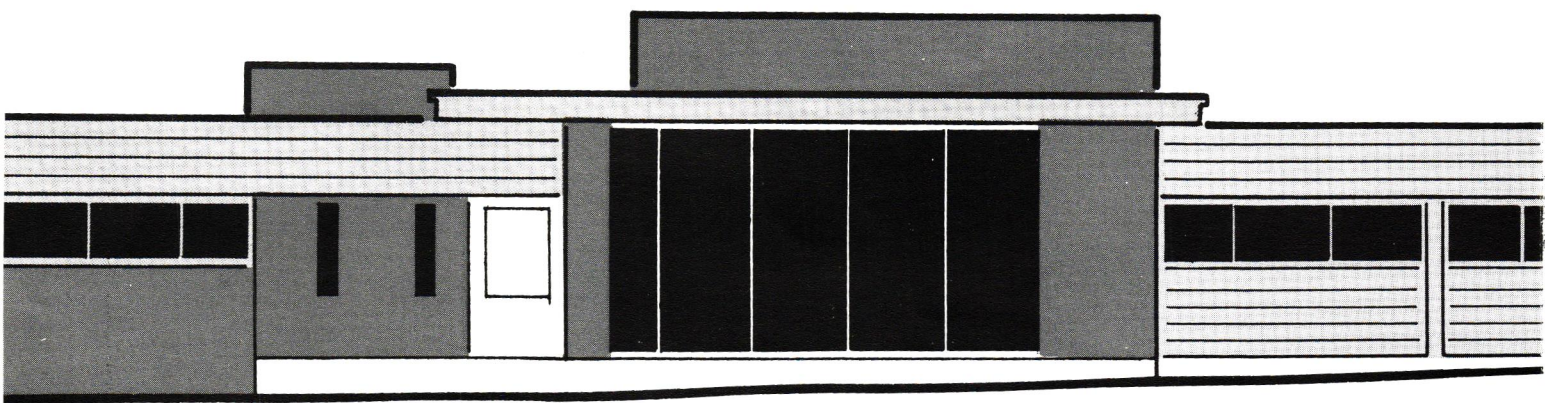


**19. Bedroom window, 1904, Darwin Martin House.** Compare this window to the one from the Cheney House (fig. 17). Wright designed many windows with very strong pattern emphasis at both the top and bottom. Although the design of each individual window is mainly vertical, when they are grouped in a band the repetition creates an overall composition that is strongly horizontal. This abstracted "Tree of Life" is used in the house in windows of several different sizes—down to a narrow slit window that is barely an inch wide!



**20. Library window, 1905, William A. Glasner House, Glencoe, Illinois.** This is one of the few designs of the mature Prairie years which does not make use of variations in came thickness. It does, however, contain some of the most colorful iridescent glass. The design seems to be a more simplified expression of the "Tree of Life" motif used in the Darwin Martin House.

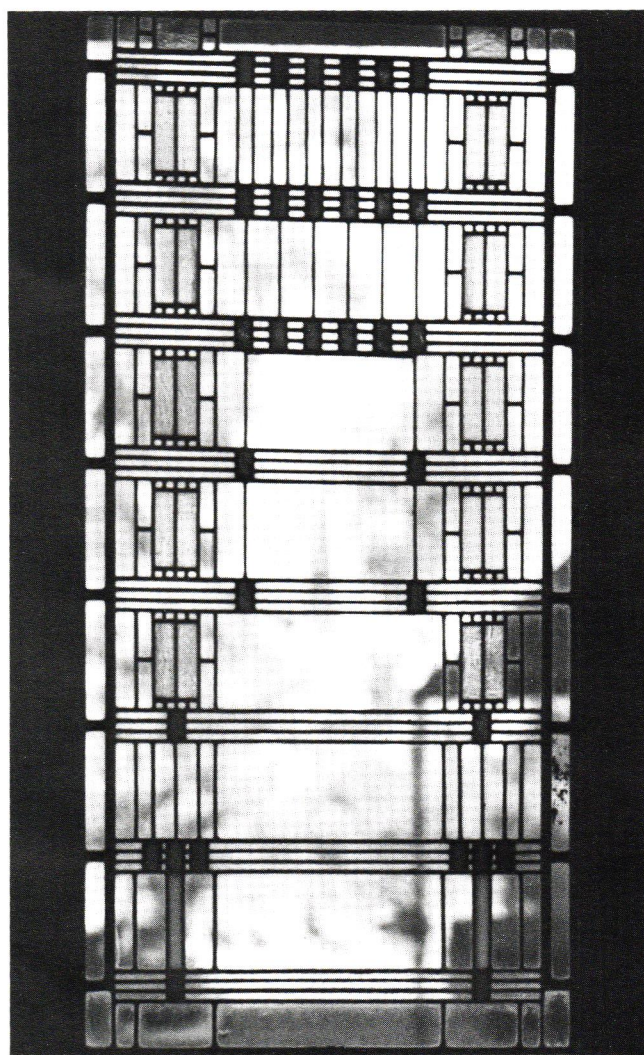




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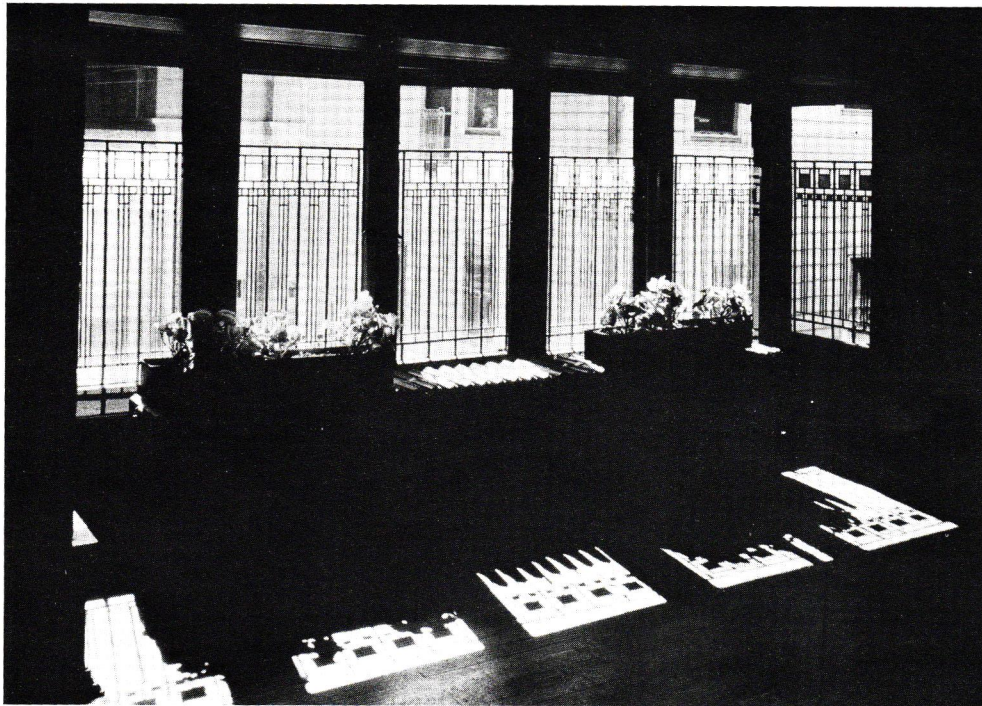
17. Living room window, 1904, Edwin Cheney House, Oak Park, Illinois. *The iridescence of these windows makes them truly magnificent. Reflecting sunlight during the day, they treat the passer-by to a continually changing play of colors; at night they sparkle inside the house in response to the electric light. These windows have been documented as being produced by the Chicago firm of Giannini and Hilgart.*



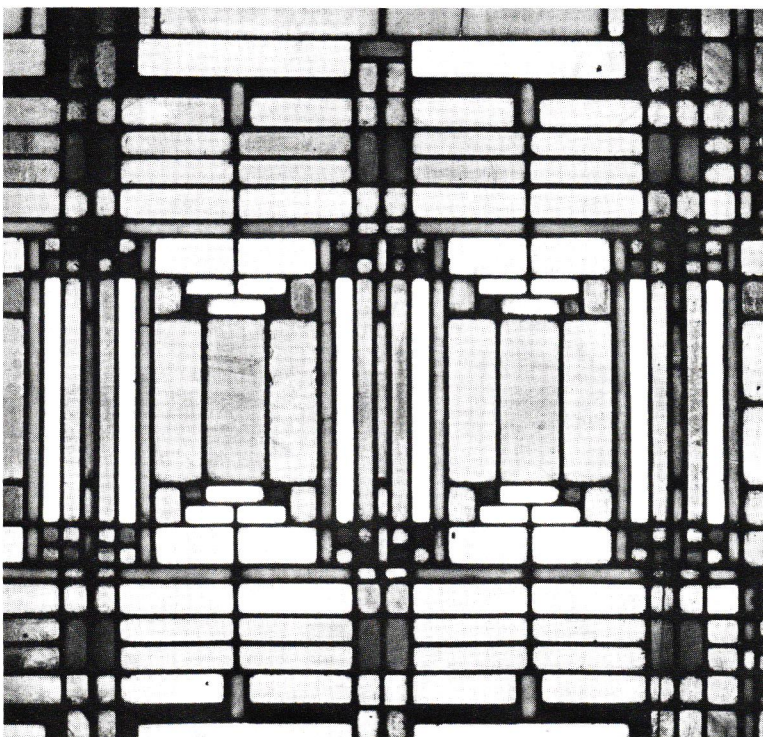
18. Dining room window, 1904, Darwin D. Martin House, Buffalo, New York. *More highly abstracted, the trellis motif is used again here. The secondary interior border, present in most of Wright's windows, is especially important to the success of this design.*



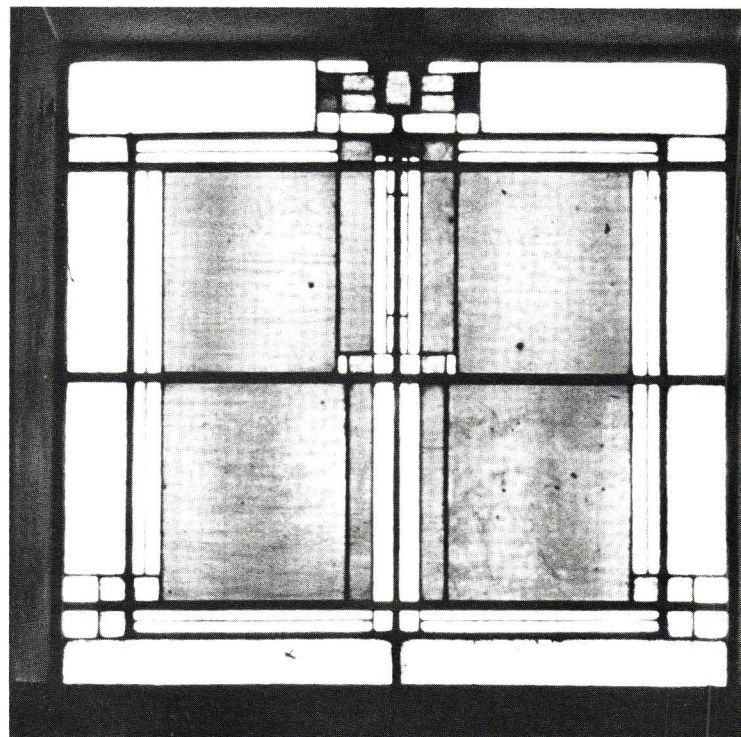
**24. Playroom windows, ca. 1906, Frank Lloyd Wright House.** *The way in which repetition transforms individually vertical designs into a horizontal element is well demonstrated here, where the art glass becomes a screen over the lower three-quarters of the openings.*



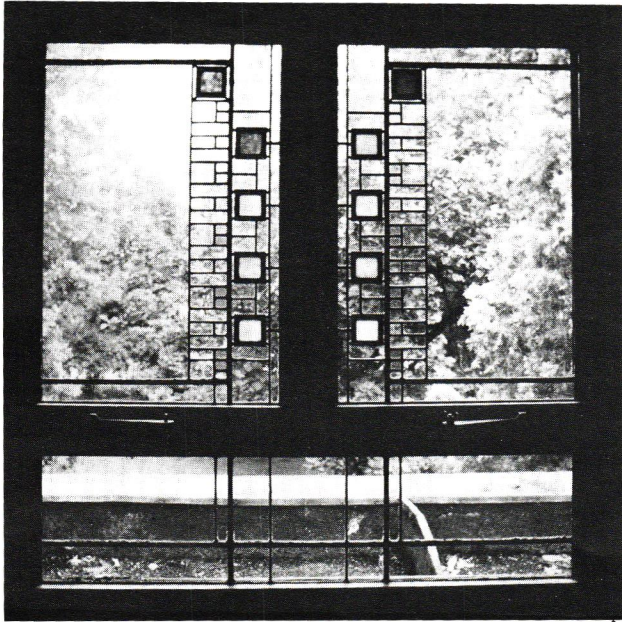
**25. Reception room skylight panel, ca. 1906, Frank Lloyd Wright Studio, Oak Park, Illinois.** *An extremely intricate work, this skylight is the most dense all-over pattern Wright designed.*



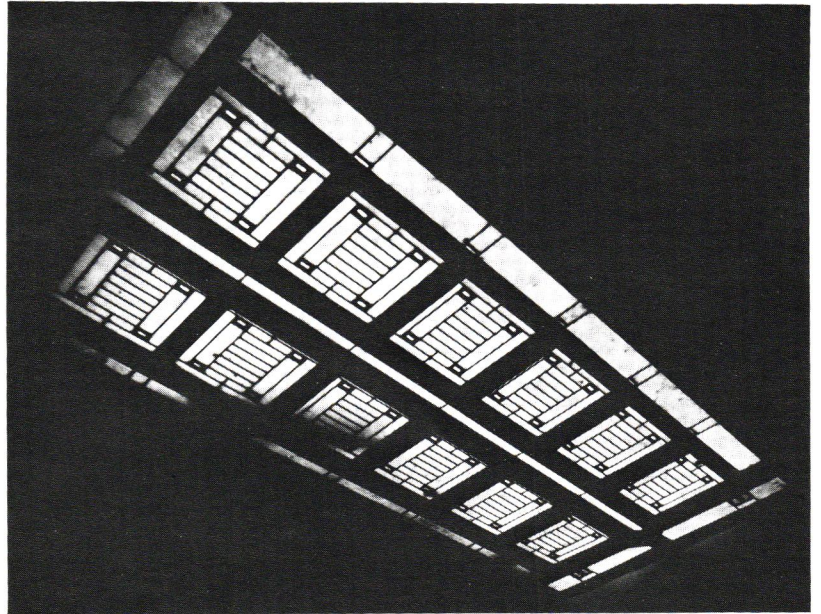
**26. Skylight panel, 1906, Unity Temple, Oak Park, Illinois.** *As in the building itself, this marvelous design is based on the square. Wright's ability to take a simple geometric form and use it over and over again, manipulating it in many different ways without the design becoming boring or contrived, is testament to his genius.*







27 ▲



▲ 28

29 ▼

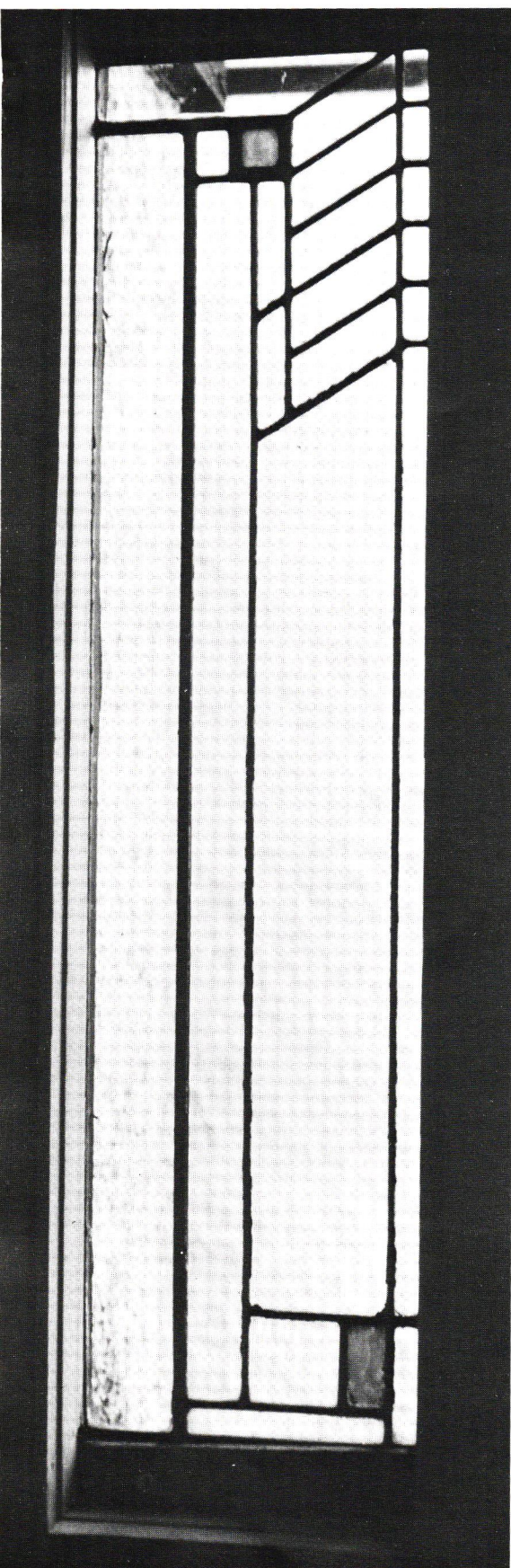


27. Dining room window, 1907, Avery Coonley House, Riverside, Illinois. The small squares of lime green glass repeat the colors in the center field of the carpet which Wright also designed for the house. Here casements form the top portion of the window, while the horizontal panel at the bottom is fixed. This unusual configuration was also used in the bedrooms of Robie House.

28. Study skylight, 1907, Coonley House. Destroyed in the fire of 1978, this skylight integrated wood muntins into the art glass design. A mottled blue-green glass was used throughout.

29. Living room window, 1908, F. F. Tomek House, Riverside, Illinois. Pale yellow is the only color in this pattern, which, although seemingly very simple, is actually composed of 92 separate pieces of glass. The design may be regarded as a simplified variation of the "Tree of Life" motif first used in the Darwin Martin House.





**31. Living room door and window, 1909, Frederick C. Robie House, Chicago, Illinois.** *In the exciting spaces of Robie House, these windows are somewhat disappointing. Perhaps this is due to the heavy handedness of the design or to the bilateral symmetry which becomes repetitive when used fourteen times along the length of the window-wall.*

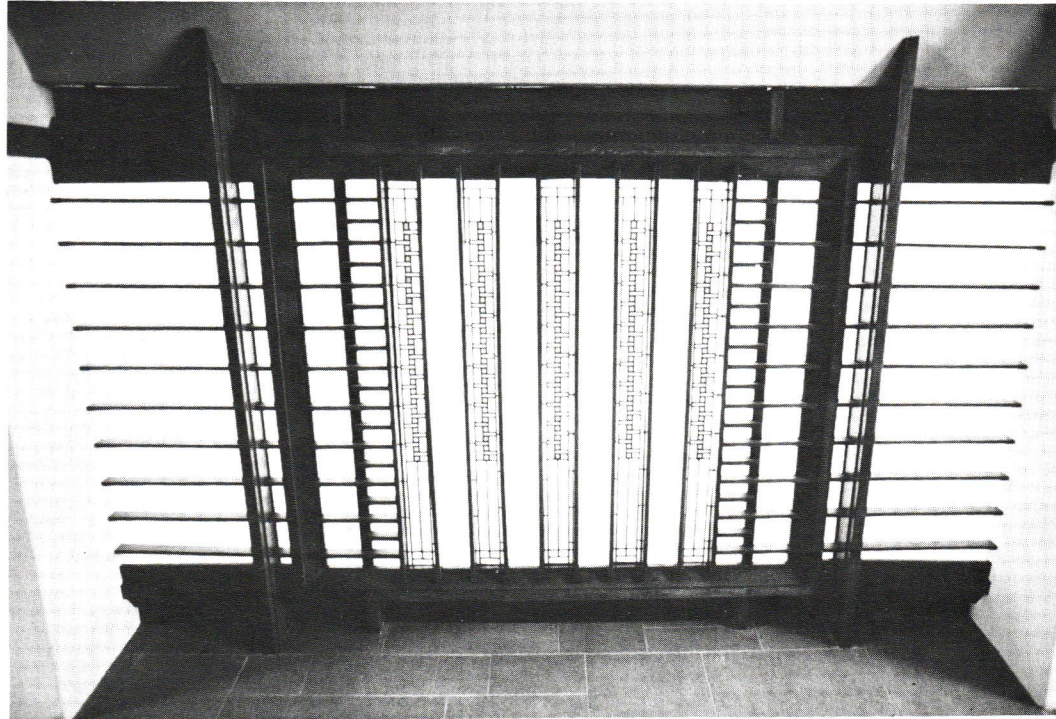
**30. Entry hall window, 1909, Mrs. Thomas Gale House, Oak Park, Illinois.** *The house itself, with its flat roof, dramatic cantilevers, and abstract massing, signaled the beginning of a new chapter in Wright's career. With their high degree of simplification, these windows are an integral part of the expression of this forward-looking house.*

**32. Terrace doors, 1913, Harry Adams House, Oak Park, Illinois.** *Although an interesting rhythm has been established with two doors, four glass panels, and three pattern divisions, the overall composition lacks both a focus and an upper terminal and cannot be considered one of Wright's more successful designs.*

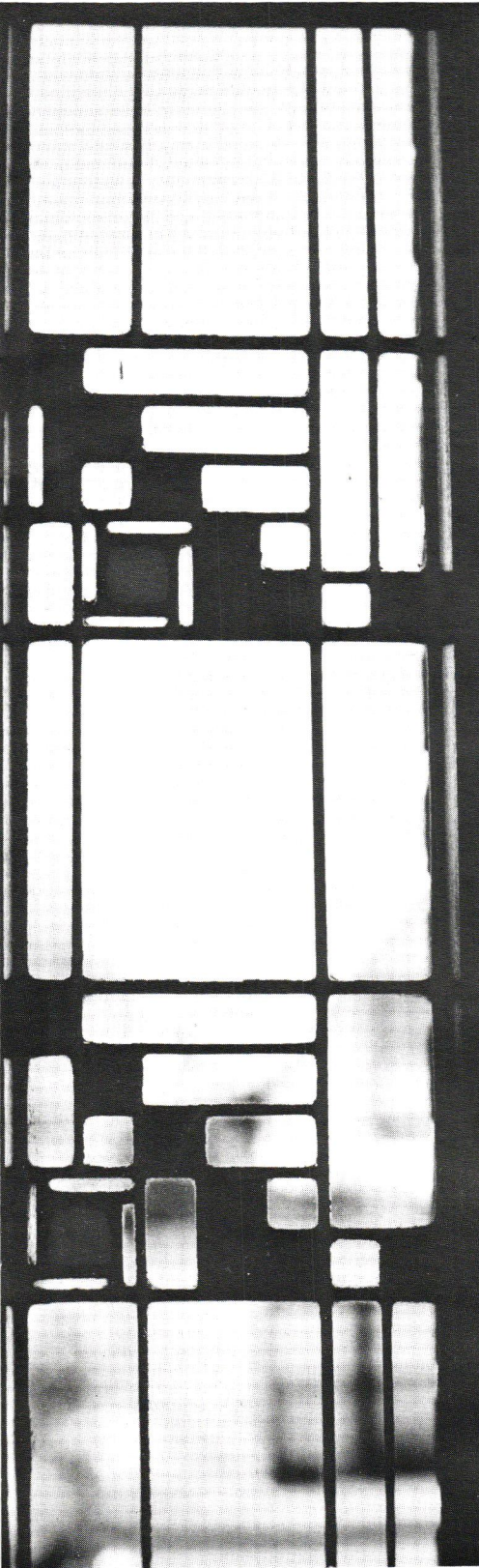




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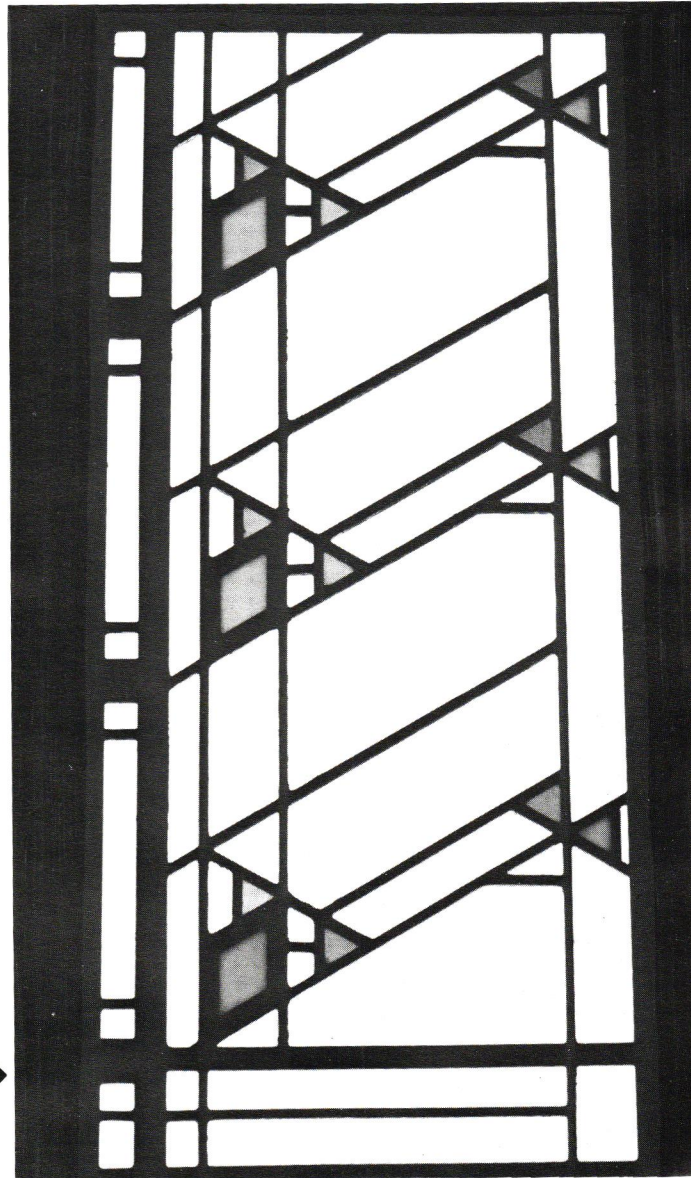
33▼



33. Living room window, 1916, F. C. Bogk House, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Like the Dana House doors (fig. 11), the pattern repetitions in this window are similar but not identical. In this respect, design in organic architecture is like nature: although every oak leaf, say, resembles every other oak leaf, no two are identical. It is subtleties such as this which make Wright's works in art glass such visual delights.

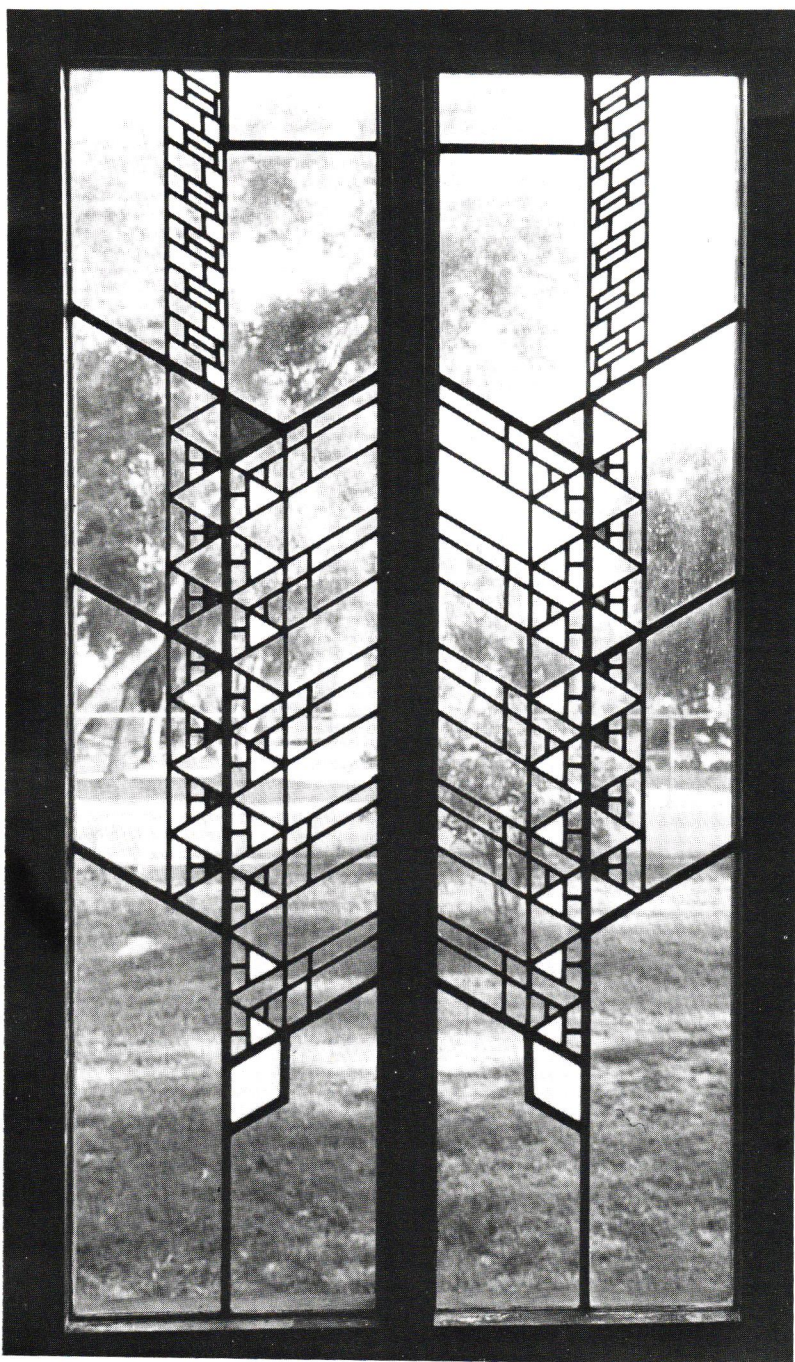
34. Skylight, 1919, Aline Barnsdall House, Los Angeles, California. As in the Coonley House of eleven years earlier (fig. 28), Wright designed a skylight which integrated wood and art glass, creating a composition which almost appears to be a grille. The very minimal use of color adds to this impression. It is curious that this skylight has no relationship, either in form, proportion, or line, to the very dramatic fireplace directly beneath it.

35. Living room window, 1919, Barnsdall House. This pattern is unique in that none of the glass pieces are square. The diagonal motif, first used in the Oscar Steffans House (1909), is a consistent theme in all the glass patterns of the Hollyhock House.

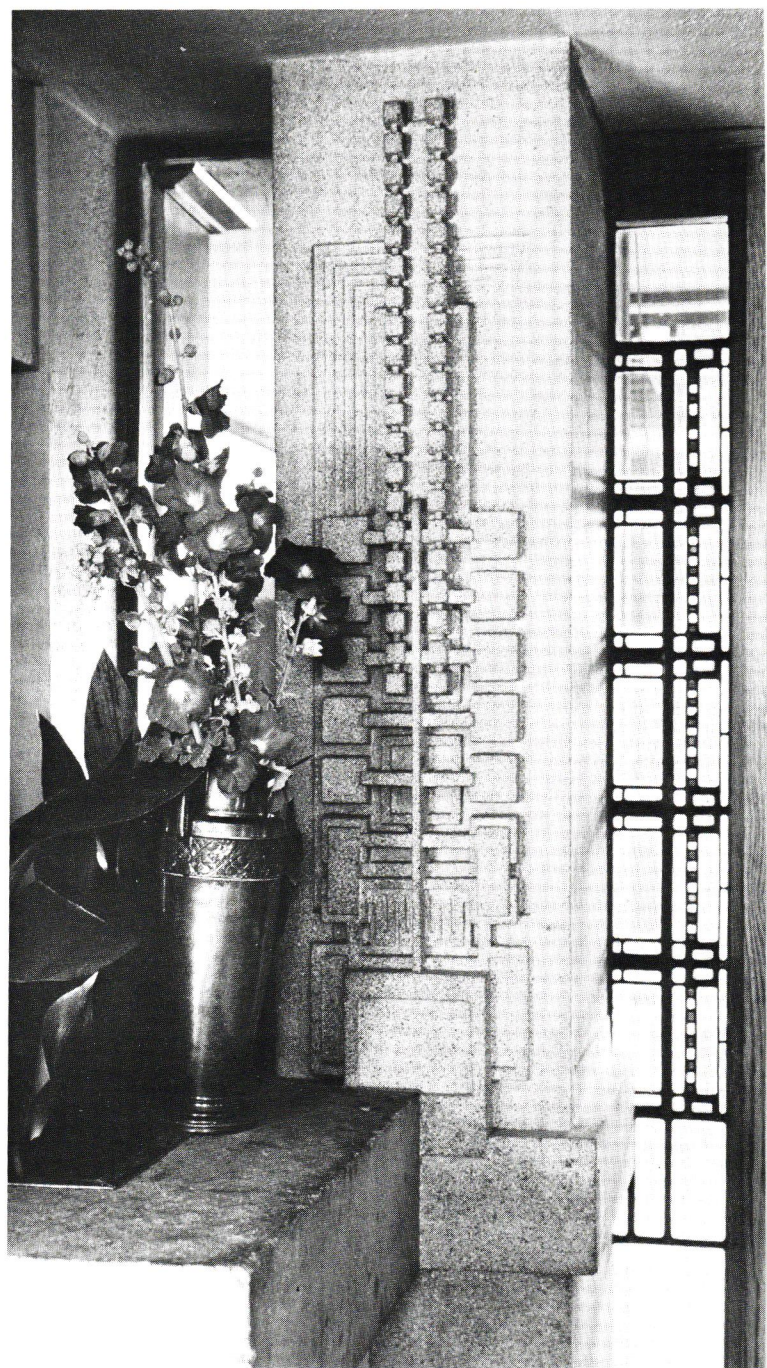


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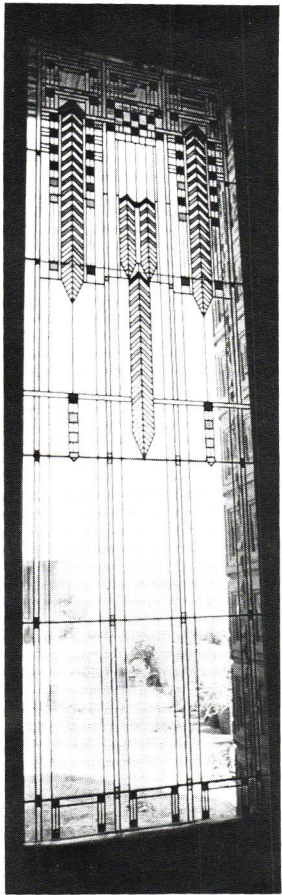


**36. Sun room door, 1919, Barnsdall House.** *The art glass in this house is the first to break with the color palette of the Prairie period. Instead of yellow or green, the cathedral glass is purple and violet accented with white milk glass. This is one of the few designs that seems to work equally well upside down. The vertical came which divides each door is unusual in that it extends from top to bottom; normally Wright interrupted such lines at some point before they ended at the frame.*

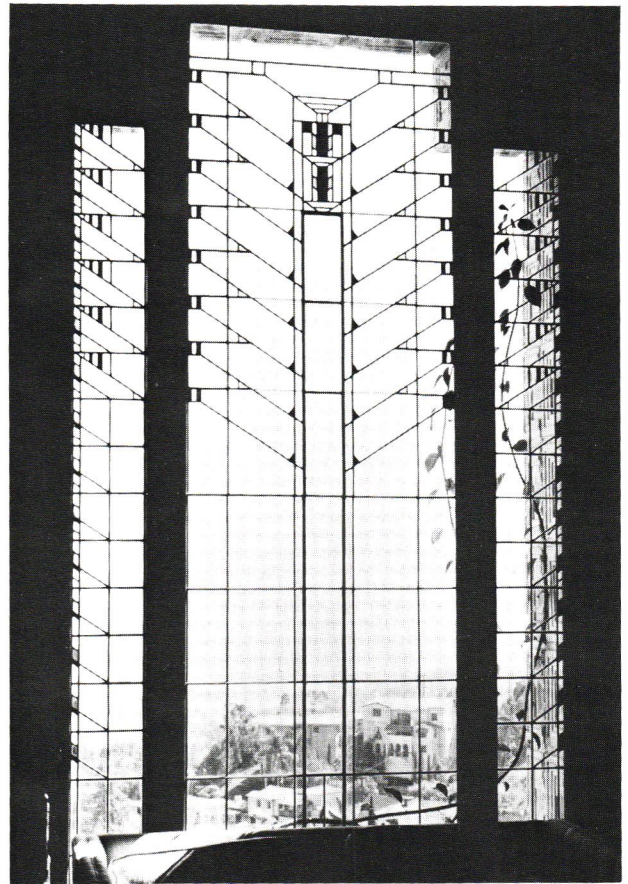


**37. Entry window, 1919, Barnsdall House.** *Visualizing the clear glass window on the left with art glass that was a continuation of the pattern on the right, one can see Wright again setting up a trellis motif against which is placed the abstract hollyhock of the concrete pier. The checkerboard-like row of dark purple and clear glass squares, the same width as the came to its left, "reads" almost like a perforated vertical came—an ambiguity which adds immeasurably to the design.*





38. Library window, 1924, Charles Ennis House, Los Angeles, California. This window is nearly identical to some executed in 1907 by Giannini and Hilgart for the Brinsmaid House by Arthur Heun in Des Moines, Iowa. Perhaps Ennis knew the Brinsmaid House and admired it; perhaps Giannini also worked on the Ennis House and suggested the theme to Wright. Both possibilities are purely conjectural at this point.



39. Dining room window, 1924, Ennis House. This house is the last of Wright's buildings in which art glass appears, and it certainly seems to be an anachronism—especially when one considers the innovative window treatments employed in the Samuel Freeman House designed just before this one. Possibly art glass was an element demanded by the client. Quite clearly, Wright's "heart" was not in this design.

## THOUGHTS ON THE MASTHEAD DESIGN

by Al Drap

The masthead designs of the *Frank Lloyd Wright Newsletter* are important as expressions of creativity, freedom, and individuality. The designs are a direct form of communication without words. They are also a form of ornament and as such should provide variety, delight, and beauty. On other levels, they can also be meaningful as examples of organic design and as symbolic representations of the principles of organic architecture.

The most important principle of organic architecture to me is unity. The principle of unity, if it is understood on all of its levels of meaning, contains all the principles of organic architecture within this one idea. It means that the problem and the solution are one. Form and material are one. Form and purpose are one. The building and the site are one. The building and the life within are one.

Nature provides the most perfect examples of organic design. An animal, as an organic design, is one thing—much

more than a collection of parts. It must be appreciated as a whole, and each part can only be evaluated in its contribution to the whole. The form of the animal, how it lives, and where it lives are completely unified. Nature, however, does not limit itself to merely functional design. It transcends functional requirements to achieve beauty and provide variety and delight. An eagle is a functional design that transcends functional design—it appeals to the spirit and captures the imagination.

Organic architecture is man's attempt to reach the excellence achieved in nature. In this attempt, there is no set formula to follow. There is logic, but organic design goes beyond logic. There are principles, but they must be applied according to one's own nature. Ideally, the principles of organic architecture and the lessons of nature are totally absorbed into one's thinking and become a part of the most intuitive thoughts.

These ideas are the basis of any design I do. I assume that I have absorbed the principles of organic design to such a degree that I don't have to think about them on a conscious level. My designs,

therefore, are basically intuitive. Some designs arrive complete. Other designs develop from an idea or form. Some are the result of a playful mood.

In the design of a masthead there are fewer restrictions than in most design problems. This allows more freedom. In order to exploit this freedom, I have tried not to impose any unnecessary restrictions on myself. This series of four designs will not have a standard format as such. Each design will have a geometric shape which will serve as the generating idea. My graphic designs usually do not have a literal subject—they are non-objective. I think of them as abstractions of ideas or abstractions of relationships. I consider all of my work to be related or of a piece. I consider all of my work to be related or of a piece. My own sense of proportion, form, and color will be the constants linking the four designs.

Because I do take an intuitive approach to design, it is difficult to describe the process in words. The designs should speak for themselves. ■

*This is the first of a series of four mastheads designed by Al Drap which will be featured in 1981.*





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Frank Lloyd Wright, Taliesin West, 1957  
Photograph by Yosuf Karsh

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International Standard Serial (ISSN) 0160-7375.

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*Wright in his Taliesin garden in the late 1930s. Photo courtesy Edgar Tafel.*

