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WRIGHT REFLECTIONS

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Wright Reflections

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3** Wright's Pennsylvania
Buildings
- 4** SunTop Houses
- 6** Kentuck Knob
- 9** Concerning the
Allentown Art Museum
- 10** An American Synagogue
- 14** Fallingwater

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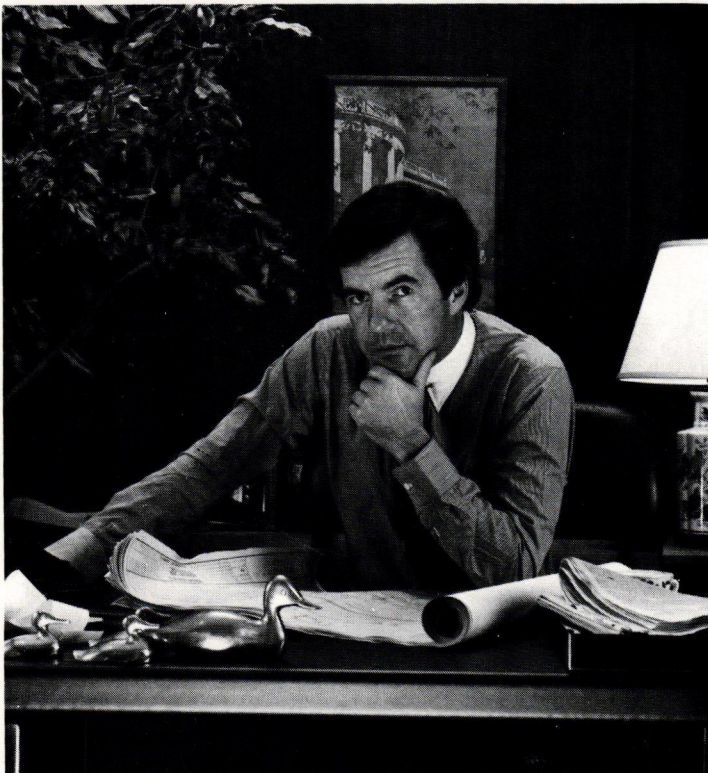
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Wright's Pennsylvania Buildings

by Richard D. Bullock, Ph.D.

The four Frank Lloyd Wright designs actually built in Pennsylvania — Fallingwater at Bear Run, the Hagan House at nearby Chalkhill, the SunTop complex at Ardmore, and Beth Sholom Synagogue at Elkins Park — are all statements of his maturity, accomplishments of his halcyon years. Having won international recognition decades earlier, and finally clear of the early Thirties when he glumly mused that he might never obtain another commission, Wright after 1935 steadily received invitations to design the bold, radical structures that were to confirm his preeminence among American architects.

The Pennsylvania buildings are part of that distinguished group. While the Commonwealth is typical of Eastern states in possessing relatively few Wright structures, each design of the four is notable in the master's oeuvre, presenting the daring, imaginative stroke that characterized so much of his later work. And each attests to Wright's delight in astonishing his viewers, an appetite shared by other originals in the strange mixture of tastes of the time.

In 1936 when the provocative concrete trays of Fallingwater were poured and set, other artists were loosing their own contentious statements: Meret Oppenheim covered a teacup, saucer, and spoon with fur for the surrealist Dadaist "Objet (Dejeuner en fourrure)"; Albert Speer began his Congress Hall in Nuremberg; Mondrian showed his "Composition in Red and Blue"; Picasso started work on "Guernica"; and Wright's earlier cordiality to the machine received a witty rebuke in Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*.

Three years later the construction of Wright's "SunTop" complex sought to demonstrate the wisdom of low-cost, high-efficiency Usonian housing in an inhospitable milieu: high-cost, class-conscious Ardmore, a Philadelphia Main Line suburb. Violating Ardmore's single-house-big-lot tradition, the SunTop project provoked a good deal of hostile response, rather much in keeping with the spirit of other 1939 events. Apart from Britain and France entering warfare with Germany, that bellicose year saw James Joyce continue his own war on standard English with *Finnegan's Wake*, Anton Webern his attack on the well-tempered scale in his "Cantata No. 1," and Vassily Kandinsky his battle with objectivity in his aptly titled "Ambiguity." Possibly more to Wright's liking was a peaceable 1939 masterpiece, Jean Renoir's humane, conciliatory comedy, *The Rules of the Game*.

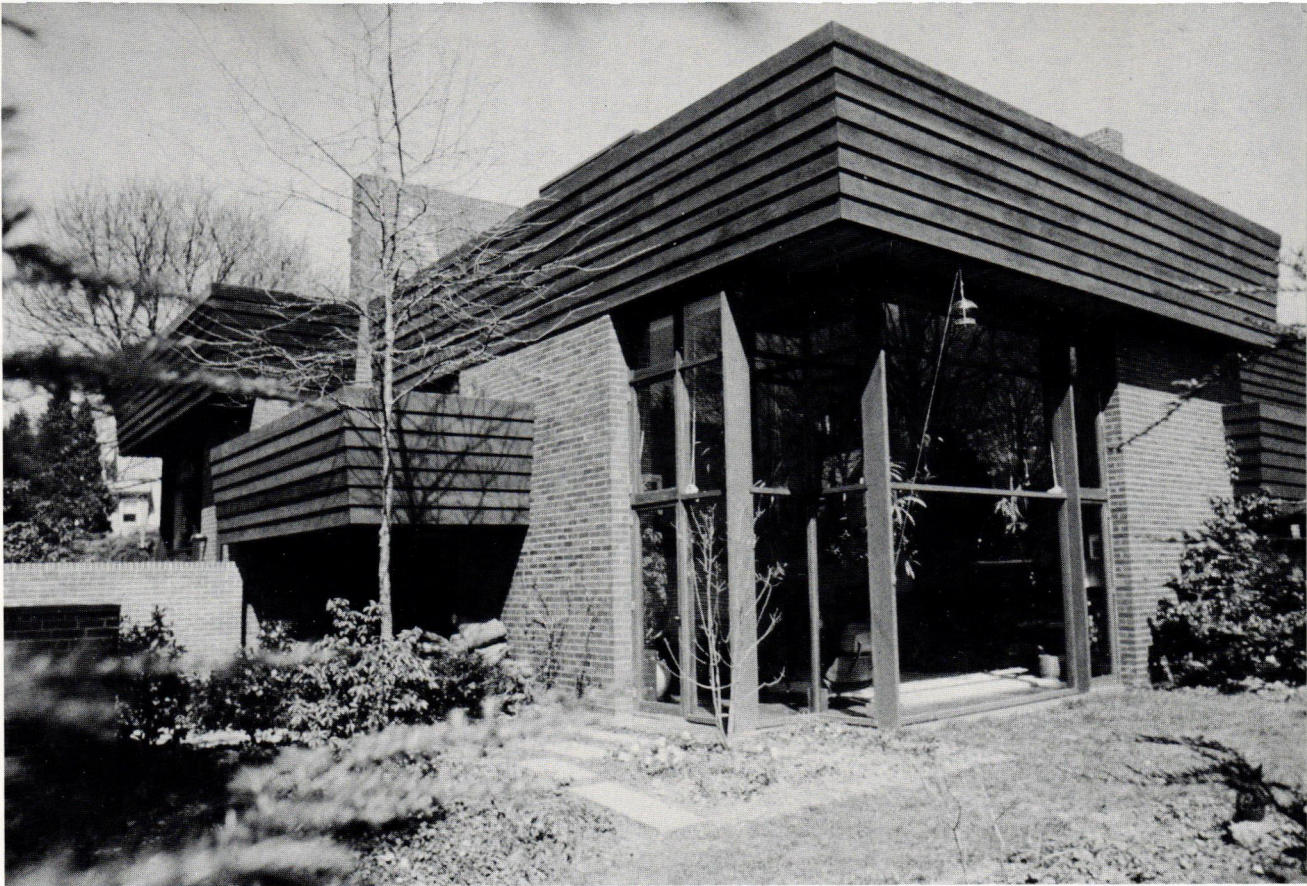
The Hagan House at Chalkhill and Beth Sholom Synagogue in Philadelphia's Elkins Park were both begun in 1954, the first presenting a dramatic prow motif leading a composition of hexagonal modules, the latter accomplishing Rabbi Mortimer Cohen's vision of the "mountain of light" with its translucent, glowing roof. The same year saw construction start in England on Basil Spence's Coventry Cathedral, and in Mexico City on Felix Candela's Church of the Virgin Malagrosa. Aaron Copeland completed his opera *The Tender Land* (whose melodies are often associated with showings of Wright's Prairie designs), William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* questioned

the benevolent Nature that underlay Wright's world view, and Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* reaffirmed the essentiality of the individual's courage in the face of the mob.

Although few in number, the Pennsylvania structures by Wright are choice. One of them, Fallingwater, may be the most loved building of modern times. PSA members attending the October Forum at Seven Springs and Bear Run directly experienced Fallingwater's power to excite wonder and affection when they spent part of an evening in the house's rooms and grounds in the Forum's closing feature.

Earlier in panel discussions they had heard firsthand accounts of Fallingwater's planning and construction from Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., who gave the house to the public through his donation to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and from three former Taliesin fellows who supervised work on the job: Wesley Peters, Edgar Tafel, and Byron (Bob) Mosher. The account that emerged was of an extraordinary partnership between a genius architect and a client — Edgar J. Kaufmann — uniquely gifted in aesthetic insight and humane values.

Fallingwater, together with Wright's other Pennsylvania structures — the Hagan House, the SunTop Complex, and Beth Sholom Synagogue, forms a design group affirming the architect's concern for beauty, human dignity, spirituality, the environment, and technological progress — in short, the architecture of American democracy that was his goal.



SunTop Houses

by Lela Shultz

Designed in 1939, the SunTop Houses are the only built example of low-cost housing designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. The project was financed by The Todd Company led by Otto Mallory, a Chestnut Hill investor. Whether you know them as the SunTop Homes, the Ardmore Experiment, the Quadruple Homes, or the Cloverleaf House, the building is as modern today as it was when it was built.

The original plan called for four buildings, each containing four units. However, because of the war only one building was ever constructed. The building was constructed at a cost of \$16,000 (\$4,000 per unit) and was to rent for \$55 a month. Even though the neighbors objected to its construction as being too radical for the neighborhood, there was a waiting list of tenants.

The SunTop House has been described as a "rowhouse in the round" and a real estate flyer used to sell one of the units describes it simply as, "Built in 1939 of cypress, brick and glass with the 'Wright' feeling of spaciousness.

Two-story living room with fireplace opening onto private garden, balcony dining area overlooking garden, two bedrooms and 1½ baths — each bedroom with own terrace — plus carport and storage area. Complete privacy." A simple description of a simple, but complex structure.

The building is based on two red-brick walls that cross each other with a unit in each quadrant. The original design of the interior contained six rooms, carport, penthouse and roof deck on three levels, and a basement storage area. The first level is a living room which is 13 feet high, completely opened up with floor-to-ceiling glass curtain walls on two sides. The second level has a cantilevered balcony overlooking the living room with a kitchen/dining room, bath, and one bedroom. The third level contains two bedrooms. The second and third levels also contain sundecks. The third level sun-deck is the same size as the living room, therefore the name SunTop House. Each unit has approximately 1,000

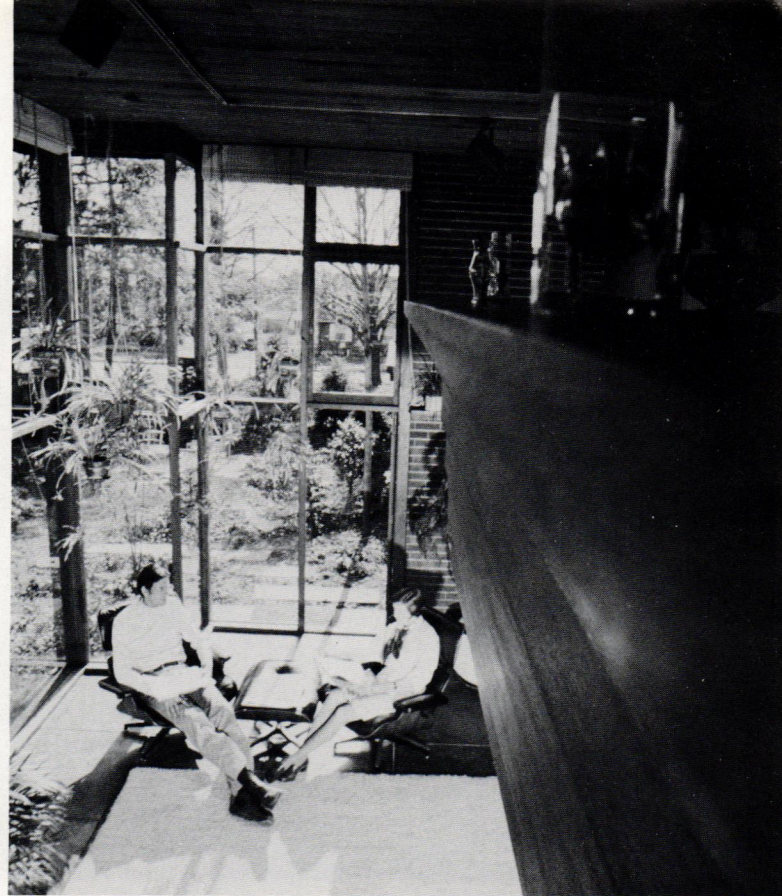
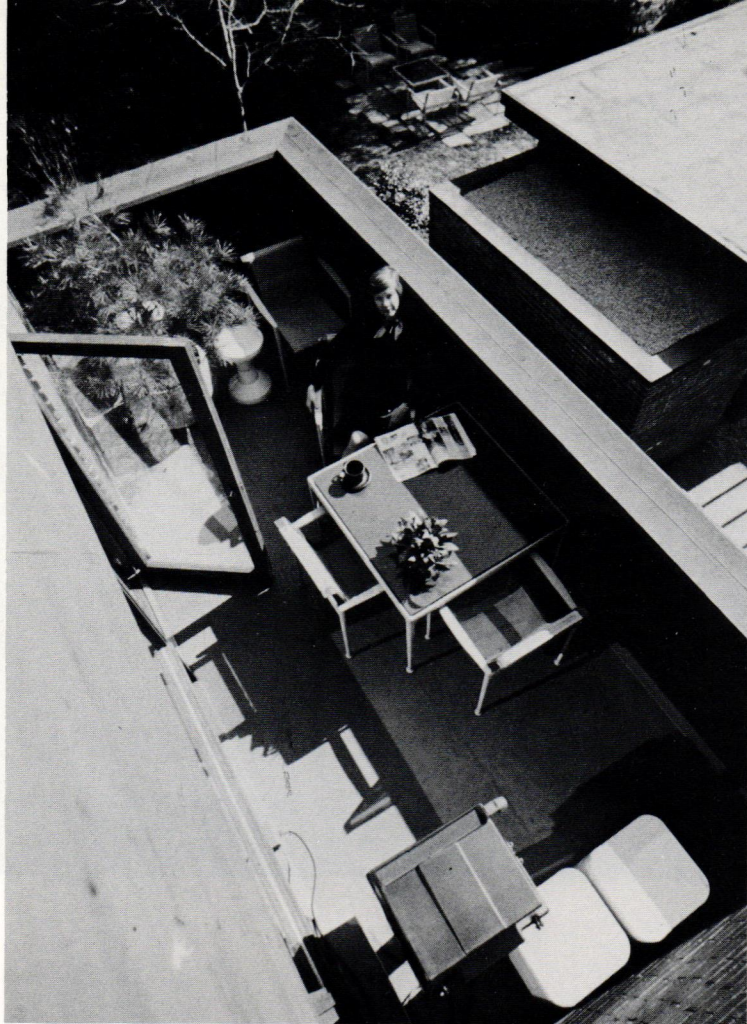
square feet, and there are no hallways. There are also very few closets and limited storage space.

The interior is typical Wright with its attention to detail and lack of decorative trim. The ground floor gives the appearance of tiles although it is actually concrete tinted with terra cotta and sectioned off in squares. The walls were cypress and the ceilings were uncovered pine decking.

Over the years the owners of the units have made minor changes and today each unit is different, although from the outside the house remains basically the same as when it was built.

In 1941 a fire destroyed one of the units. It is a credit to Wright's design that the other tenants were unaware the building was on fire until they heard glass breaking.

Although rebuilding the unit was discussed by The Todd Company, they were advised against submitting an application to the zoning board to rebuild because of neighborhood opposition.



The unit remained a burned-out shell. In the early 1950s The Todd Company sold the building. The units were sold separately at a cost of \$14,500 each, and the burned-out unit was sold as a package with one of the other units.

None of the owners of the burned-out unit did anything about rebuilding until 1957 when Dr. Morton Bitterman bought the two units and approached the Lower Merion Township Board of Adjustments for permission to rebuild. Because the zoning law was changed in 1951 to prohibit multi-family dwellings, Dr. Bitterman's request was denied on the basis that restoration of the unit would be a nonconforming use.

In 1959, Otto Risch and his wife Marguerite bought the two units. Mr. Risch, an architect from Switzerland, was an admirer of Wright and looked forward to restoring the unit. Having heard of the previous owner's experience, Mr. Risch went before the zoning board with a petition signed by 46 neighbors and the support of the Philadelphia Chapter, AIA. The zoning

board was unimpressed and once again denied permission to restore the unit. The matter was finally settled in the courts and the unit rebuilt.

Architect Ann Sutphin, AIA, and Derek Sutphin, a landscape architect, purchased one of the other units in 1971. On March 29, 1972, while the Sutphins were away, their unit was also destroyed by fire. The fire department listed the cause of the fire as "undetermined," but it is believed that the cause was sawdust and linseed-oil-soaked rags left by workmen who were redoing the interior wood paneling.

The Sutphins set about the task of rebuilding. Since the reconstruction took place immediately, they did not have the same problem with the zoning board encountered by Otto Risch. During reconstruction the Sutphins made several changes to the floor plan. The ceiling was raised in the master bedroom from its original 6'6" to 7'. The entrance to the kitchen and bath on the second level was rearranged to provide for a larger kitchen. A small nursery

adjacent to the master bedroom was eliminated to provide additional storage space. A bath was added to the third level and the two small bedrooms opened to make one large bedroom. The original carport was enclosed and made into an office, and a new carport was added. The cypress walls were replaced with Philippine mahogany. Mrs. Sutphin states that she likes to think that Wright would not have objected to the changes since he was always making changes to his own home.

Wright's purpose in designing the SunTop Houses was to provide middle-income families with the amenities of suburban living at a price they could afford. Perhaps the housing industry in looking to the future should look to the past. To quote Otto Risch, "This design has all of the advantages of a row home and practically none of the disadvantages. For example, on the land taken by a set of parallel streets containing six homes each, you could place 16 four-unit SunTop Homes giving everyone a private yard and driveway."



Kentuck Knob

Set high on a hill overlooking a magical panorama of Pennsylvania's westward mountains, Kentuck Knob stands as a masterful reminder of the achievements of Frank Lloyd Wright. Kentuck Knob is the least known of Wright's work in Pennsylvania, even though it is one of the best examples of his residential works.

Mr. Wright was commissioned to design the house in 1954 by Uniontown businessman I. N. Hagan and his artist wife. The house is at once dramatic and serene, reflecting the architect's genius at creating a commanding contemporary statement infused with his own interpretation of 19th-century Romanticism.

One of the most enduring memories of this past romantic spirit is a love for high places. Kentuck Knob is situated over 2,000 feet above sea level, a site chosen to assure views which

reach over a shadowy river gorge to the wooded mountainsides beyond.

Yet another vestige of 19th century architecture is its castle image, despite the overall modernity of design. The approach to the house is an adventure in itself. A secluded country road wends its way up from the river gorge, through wooded steeps, across Cucumber Falls, and emerges among upland pastures to meet Kentuck Knob's private drive, which introduces the 79-acre estate. Flanked by stands of conifers, the driveway swings onto a stone-balustraded causeway, resembling a narrow bridge, one which might approach a castle.

A landscaped courtyard fronts the impressive structure. Exceptional in concept and execution, the house is constructed of golden-brown fieldstone from the same quarry which supplied the stone for Fallingwater. It is compli-

mented by Tidewater red cypress woodwork and roof sheathed in copper which has oxidized to a silvery tone. The castle theme is again reiterated with a polygonal tower-light structure anchored in the center and podium wall supporting the living room wing.

The house is built on one level, on the brow of a hill overlooking forests and meadows. The hill crown itself rises above the bedroom wing. Viewing the house from one direction it appears to be a ship's prow; from another direction the house is part of the hill. The design of the house is hexagonal modules and contains no right angles.

Beautifully designed interiors benefit from the architect's celebrated hallmarks. A long, unbroken space, the living room provides the principal area for entertaining, with a great expanse of glass framing southern mountain views and glass doors opening to a spacious



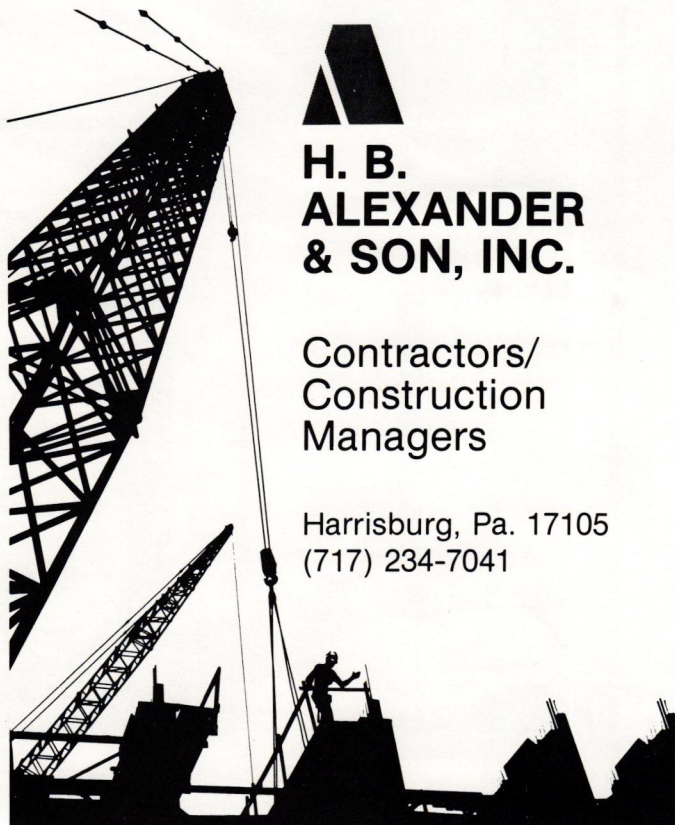
terrace, shielded by a cantilevered red cypress overhang. Outside, informal gardens stretch southward to quiet woodlands and rise to the west, above the roof and tower.

In April, 1964, *Charette* magazine printed the following:

Caught in a Hawk's Eye: The House of I. N. Hagan at Kentuck Knob — By day, the view of the sky and mountain caught in the hawk's eye seemingly stretches to infinity; by night the stars create a universe of patterned light above the sleeping hills . . . here, everything is open, everything serene. Kentuck Knob is a document of the mountains and the sky, as well as another profound and valid Wrightian statement of the life of man in nature.

United with the sky and mountain, Kentuck Knob is indeed a "profound and valid Wrightian statement of the life of man in nature."





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Concerning the Allentown Art Museum

The Frank Lloyd Wright Room

by Edgar Tafel, AIA

Most of us who worked closely with Frank Lloyd Wright have a great interest in preserving his work — ensuring that buildings he constructed remain as a continuing testament to his unique contributions to modern architecture.

Too few have had the opportunity to exert their efforts in this direction. Edgar Kaufmann was one of those who did. He donated Fallingwater to posterity after first persuading his family to build it and, on inheriting it, to donate this Wright masterwork.

My efforts have continued in another direction. Having worked on four of the 12 Wright houses now in public domain, I have kept them under constant sur-

veillance and acted when their existence was in jeopardy.

For example, in 1971, when it appeared that the Francis Little House of Minneapolis (1914) would be doomed, I prevailed upon the Metropolitan Museum of Art to purchase it and prevent its destruction.

At the same time, I was designing the Allentown Art Museum Extension and felt Pennsylvania's artistic climate would be definitely enriched by a room that was indigenous to the U.S.A. As a result, an arrangement was made to purchase the 16' x 17' room, its flooring, doors, trim, and 10 stained-glass windows. We emulated the sand float plaster with its integral color and red brick.

Almost simultaneously, I was altering the famed D. D. Martin House (1904) in Buffalo, and was able to borrow for the Allentown Museum a "barrel chair" for copying. So we merged the 1904 chairs with the 1914 room. The coffee table, which I designed on the back of a menu, in Wright style, was built by David Miller of the museum. And all woodwork has the same finish.

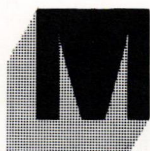
At Allentown we feel honored to have the first Wright Room in any museum. It is used constantly as a resting place, a reading room, an oasis-at-large, and is a focal point in the design of the building.

When I visit, it seems to me it was always meant to be there.

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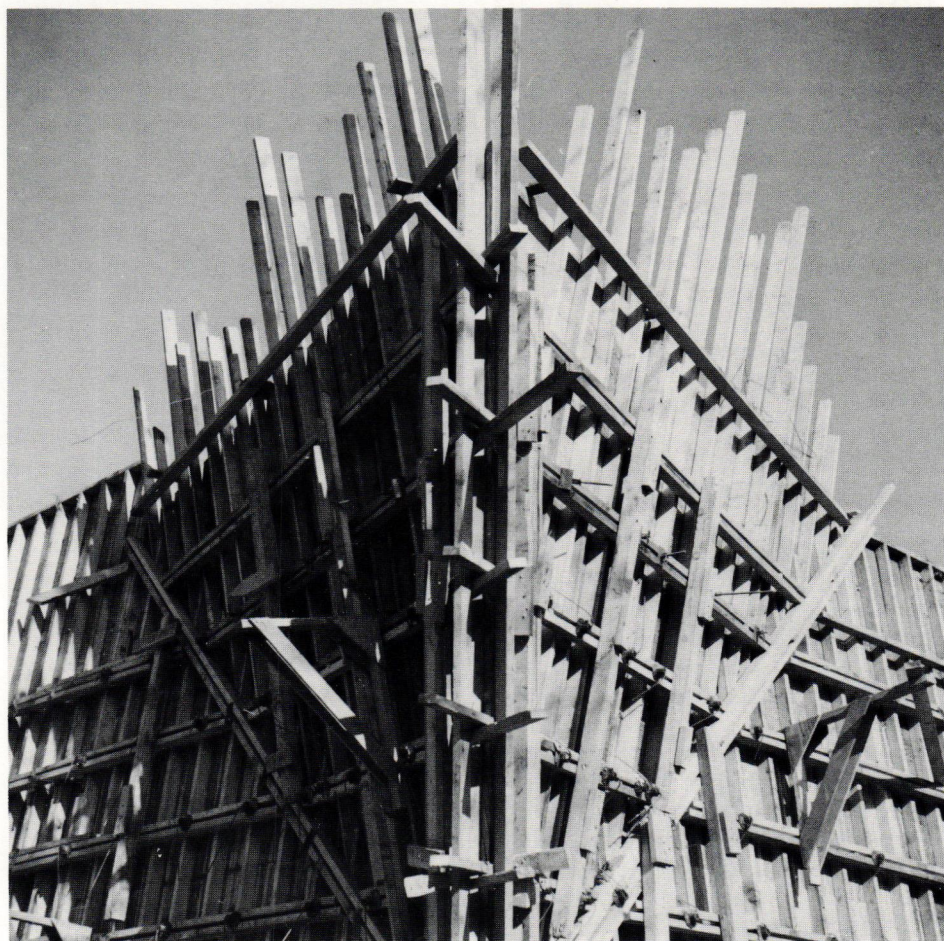
An American Synagogue

by Richard O. Warmkessel, AIA

Of the four Frank Lloyd Wright buildings in Pennsylvania, Beth Sholom Synagogue continues in world interest second only to Fallingwater. The Pennsylvania Society of Architects is indebted to the congregation of Beth Sholom for sharing some previously unpublished information with us. We are particularly grateful to the archivists, Miss Lillian Melgin and Mr. Robert Weil. Miss Melgin has worked for the congregation since 1929 and for many years was personal secretary to Rabbi Mortimer Cohen. We also credit the *Philadelphia Inquirer* for permission to reprint an article from their publication.

In addition to sharing their archives, Lillian Melgin and Bob Weil told us many anecdotes and unpublished stories about the history of Beth Sholom and Frank Lloyd Wright. We at P.S.A. would hope that these two dedicated archivists would collaborate in permanently recording some of this unwritten material.

While driving to the first meeting with the archivists, I thought back to reading about Beth Sholom and Frank Lloyd Wright, watching the synagogue under construction, and visiting it several times over the years. As an architect I admired it and I criticized it, but it still remained a major legacy from Frank Lloyd Wright. I wondered if the 1982 congregation of Beth Sholom recognized the goal of Rabbi Cohen and their heritage in Wright's creation of an American synagogue. Shortly after meeting the archivists I assumed, with their enthusiasm, that the present-day congregation remained aware of this heritage. I soon learned that the archivists are dedicated to renewing an appreciation of the synagogue in today's congregation, in addition to maintaining the history of the building. After nearly 30 years, the congregation tends to take the building for granted. The archivists maintain volumes of correspondence from world-famous architects, architectural schools, and architectural historians. This outside



Form for the pouring of the concrete base, December, 1956.

interest continues and tours are arranged for groups from all over the world. A recent request for a tour by 25 architects and designers from the Frank Lloyd Wright Association of Japan begins, "We are quite pleased to inform you of our delegation to the glorious land of Frank Lloyd Wright for the third successive year." Lillian Melgin and Bob Weil want very much for the congregation to recognize the continued world interest in their building. The following is a reprint of an article which appeared in a congregational newsletter in 1961 relating the visit of Dr. Bruno Zevi, Professor of Architectural History at the University of Rome. Many of us recognize this name as the co-author of an earlier publication on Fallingwater.

Lillian Melgin and Bob Weil plan to reprint this message from 1961 in an upcoming congregational bulletin.

BETH SHOLOM LETTER

"BETH SHOLOM SYNAGOGUE —
A BEAUTIFUL AND GREAT BUILDING"

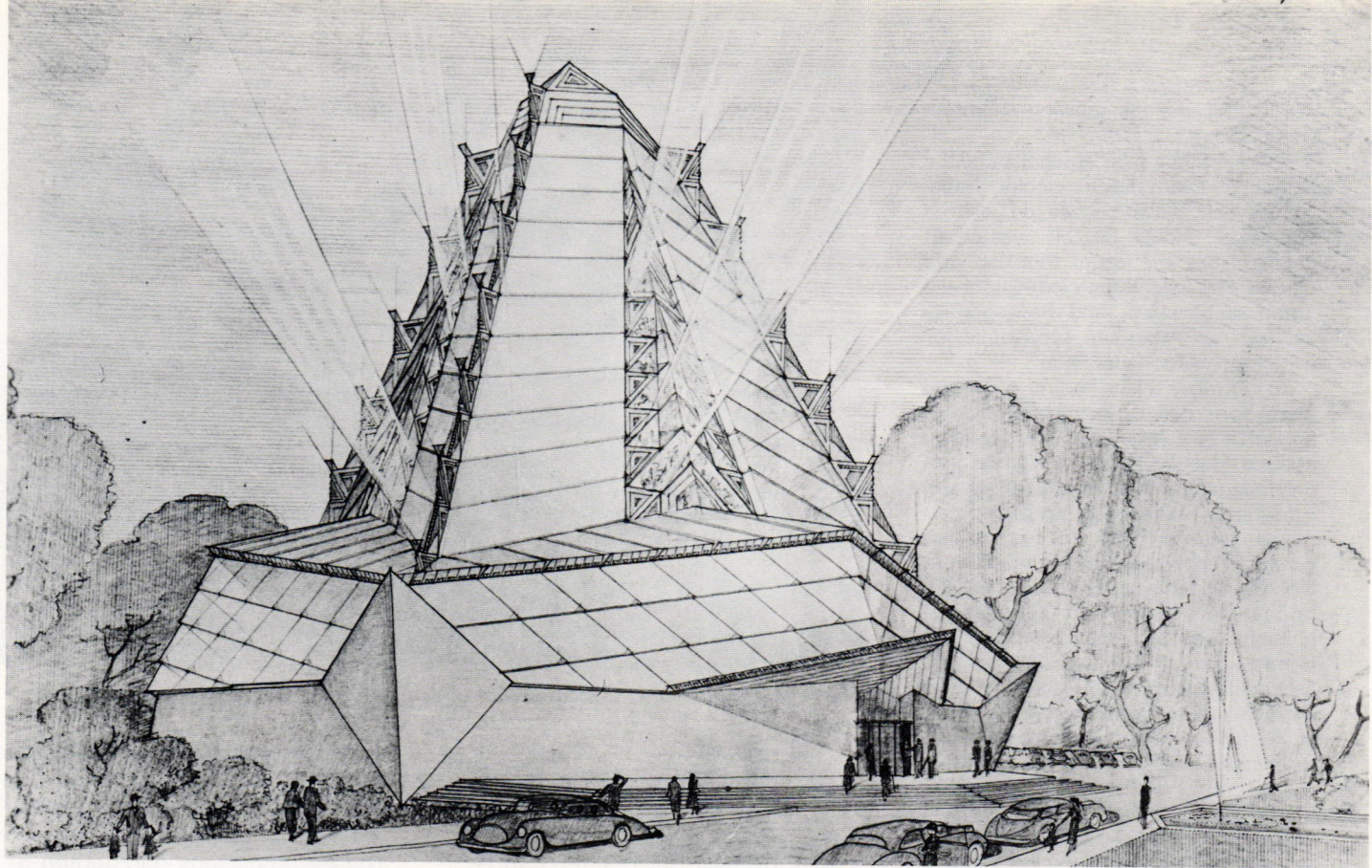
A Letter You Ought to Read
and Then Feel Proud

April 27, 1961

Mr. Sol Spiegel
President, Beth Sholom
Elkins Park, Pa.

Dear Mr. Spiegel:

I think you and other members of the Board of Directors may be interested in a visit to our synagogue by a most



Finished rendering of the American Synagogue.

distinguished professor — Dr. Bruno Zevi — who is Professor of Architectural History at the University of Rome, author of a number of works dealing with the history of art, and also a Roman Jew. Yesterday he gave the main address on “The Culture of Cities” before the Annual Convention of the American Institute of Architects.

He visited Beth Sholom because of his admiration for its architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. I think you and the members of our Congregation should know the reaction of Dr. Zevi and the other architects with him. Dr. Zevi spoke continuously to all of us, exclaiming emotionally and most enthusiastically all the time. First of all, we must appreciate that Dr. Zevi is an authority on art and architecture. Second, he is a Jew of ancient Roman lineage. Third, he is adviser to the Israel Government on city-planning and architecture and an outstanding authority.

As Dr. Zevi wandered through the synagogue, he made the following statements:

“This is God’s work. This is living Judaism. This is the most inspired religious building in 2000 years. This will live so long as there is religion and so long as man has inspiration. This is true genius. The greatest structure since Michelangelo. This is for the ages, it cannot be appreciated now. People may criticize it only because they envy genius and want to bring it down to their level.”

Dr. Zevi went on:

“This truly emancipates Jewry from the centuries of ghetto type thinking

about places of worship. This truly shows Judaism as a vital, progressive force. I tell you we could appreciate this synagogue as being the best that Judaism has produced since the Caesars.”

Dr. Zevi said that his visit was the single most inspirational hour he had experienced. He walked around in greatest animation, exclaiming from time to time in such phrases as: “unbelievable,” “for the ages,” “inspired religious genius,” “can your people understand this, can they feel this,” “this is the hope for the world,” “this is man seeking God.”

I could go on at greater length, but this will be sufficient to give you and our members the evaluation of this great authority of our synagogue. Evidently we have something here that should merit greater appreciation by ourselves . . . I think that the spirit of Dr. Zevi and his message about Beth Sholom ought to be made known to our Congregation.

Cordially,

Harry H. Shapiro

We are inspired by Wright’s solution of an American synagogue; however, the success of the solution must be shared with Rabbi Mortimer Cohen, who recognized that throughout history synagogues have been built in the style currently in vogue in whatever part of the world they were built. As stated in the reprinted article, “Synagogue by Wright” from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*

Magazine of 1954, he “wanted to depart from the usual Moorish and Gothic. He wanted the centrality of the Torah emphasized and he especially wanted an American synagogue for Jewish people to worship in. . . there was only one man in the world to design the synagogue: Frank Lloyd Wright.”

SYNAGOGUE BY WRIGHT

(Reprinted from *Today . . .*
The Philadelphia Inquirer Magazine
Section of May 23, 1954)

The countours of suburbia just north of Philadelphia soon will be punctuated in a startling way. An irregular mountain of glass and copper will rise more than 100 feet beside the Old York Road, as a temple of worship and a testimonial to a man who wasn’t afraid to try for the seemingly impossible.

In township records this structure will be listed as the synagogue of the Congregation Beth Sholom. But it probably will be far more widely known as the first public building created for Philadelphia by Frank Lloyd Wright.

In the beginning, which was last November, Rabbi Mortimer Cohen, of the Congregation Beth Sholom, dreamed of a truly American synagogue. His congregation at Broad and Courtland streets in Logan had largely shifted to the northern suburbs. To meet their immediate needs, a social and educational center had been built by Beth Sholom in Elkins Park; this is being used temporarily for worship. But a synagogue is

needed for the fast-growing suburban congregation.

As a long-time Biblical scholar and the author of two religious books, Rabbi Cohen had definite ideas on what a synagogue should be. He wanted to depart from the usual Moorish and Gothic. He wanted the centrality of the Torah emphasized, and he especially wanted "an American synagogue for Jewish people to worship in."

To get these things he first contacted Dean Boris Blai, of Temple University's School of Fine Arts. Dean Blai promptly assured Rabbi Cohen that there was only one man in the world to design the synagogue: Frank Lloyd Wright.

The great problem, of course, was getting Wright to accept the job. Early in life Wright said he had to choose between honest arrogance and hypocritical humility. The fact that he chose the former became more and more obvious as he grew to the well-deserved title, "world's greatest living architect." Now, at 84, he has hundreds more demands for his skill than he can meet.

Two other facts added to Rabbi Cohen's problem: Wright already had turned down numerous requests to design synagogues, and he had to have a sizable retaining fee before starting work. At that time the Congregation Beth Sholom not only had no money for building a synagogue, but also had made no formal move to approve its construction.

Despite these handicaps, Rabbi Cohen wrote to Frank Lloyd Wright explaining his need and desire. A meeting was arranged in New York in December. Rabbi Cohen talked persuasively, and Wright surprised everyone by accepting the commission. He was obviously swayed by the promise that he would be given a free hand, and by the fact — artfully stressed by Rabbi Cohen — that the Philadelphia area had no public building by Wright. In fact, he was so interested in the project he waived a down payment.

At the end of the New York meeting Wright said that Rabbi Cohen would hear from him in about six to eight months. Three months later the completed sketches of the new synagogue arrived with the following letter:

Dear Rabbi:

Herewith the promised "hosanna" — a temple that is truly a religious tribute to the living God. Judaism needs one in America. To do it for you has pleased me. The scheme in plan is capable of infinite variation, and could be expanded or diminished and made into different shapes as might be desired.

The scheme is truly simple. Construction is modern as can be. Stamped copper shells erected for structural members are filled with concrete in which the necessary steel rods are embedded for stresses. The tops of the shells are removable for this purpose, thus no forming is necessary.



June, 1954, from left to right: Rabbi M. J. Cohen, Frank Lloyd Wright, Mel Bricker.

The building is set up on an interior temporary scaffold. The outer walls are double: wire glass outside, a blue-tinted plastic inside — about an inch air space between. Heat rises at the walls from the floor. The stained glass windows could be composed from scenes from the Bible.

Here you have a coherent statement of worship. I hope it pleases you and your people.

Faithfully,

Frank Lloyd Wright
March 15, 1954

In replying to Wright and thanking him for the designs, Rabbi Cohen wrote in part:

"You have taken the supreme moment of Jewish history — the revelation of God to Israel through Moses at Mt. Sinai — and you have translated that moment with all it signifies into a design of beauty and reverence.

"In a word, your building is Mt. Sinai . . ."

The mountain-like aspect of the structure is easily seen from the architect's sketches. Yet despite its strikingly unusual contours, the synagogue will furnish an efficient meeting place.

The building, which will cost a half-million dollars, includes a first-floor chapel seating 268, and a second-floor synagogue seating 1214. Its entrance canopy has the general shape of two hands extended in blessing. Long curving ramps have replaced steps in its main areaways.

Rabbi Cohen hopes to have the cornerstone laid next September. It is, the newest and most truly American temple would be born on the 300th anniversary of the coming of the first group of Jewish people to the United States.

Ground was broken on Sunday, November 14, 1954, by Mr. Wright and

the congregation. Rabbi Cohen photographed the construction daily. These photographs were recently given to the synagogue by Rabbi Cohen's family. The accompanying photograph of the form work of one of the projecting piers of the concrete base was taken in December of 1956.

Anecdotes seem to have been associated with virtually all of Wright's buildings. Bob Weil related the story of one of Mr. Wright's visits to the construction site shortly after the main structural frames were erected. One of the congregation noted to Mr. Wright the lack of bolts and questioned him on "what really held the structure up?" Mr. Wright looked at the structure and responded, "The building is held up by hope and spit, and when the spit dries out, there is still hope."

A tour today of Beth Sholom with Lillian Melgin and Bob Weil reveals the success of Wright's solution to an American synagogue. It is easy to be impressed by this space and the overall form. One needs to be reminded that we are completely surrounded by both Jewish and American symbolism from the sand-colored carpet signifying the 40 years spent in the Sinai Desert by the Jews, to the repetitive designs cast in concrete, molded in metal and carved in wood. There is no doubt that the American Synagogue, completed in 1959, requires interpretation. It is a building that is rich in Jewish symbolism. Mr. Wright was guided in his work by the advice of religious experts who sought through Mr. Wright's genius to embody in the new building Jewish values that had been forgotten or bypassed.



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FALLINGWATER



Fall, 1935. Taliesin, Wisconsin: "Come along, E.J. We're ready for you," boomed Mr. Wright into the hand-cranked telephone. The call was from Pittsburgh and E.J. was Edgar J. Kaufmann, Sr., department store president. Mr. Wright was to show him the first sketches for his new house, "Fallingwater."

I looked across my drafting table at the apprentice in front of me, Bob Mosher, whose back had stiffened at the words. Ready? There wasn't one line drawn.

Kaufmann, an important client, coming to see plans for his house, and was Mr. Wright still carrying the design confidently around in his head?

Their relationship had started in a discussion one Sunday evening the year before when Mr. and Mrs. Kaufmann came out to visit their son, also an apprentice. Sunday evening in the living room at Taliesin was our weekly social event, all in formal dress. There was homemade wine, dinner cooked and served by apprentices, then music — piano, violin, solos, chorus. This evening ended with Mr. Wright's words of gratitude for our culinary labors and his general philosophical comments. Sitting back in his accustomed chair and addressing his remarks to the group, but his message to the potential client, he expanded his theory for the salvation of America — his vision of the future city based on the automobile, Broadacre City. Mr. Wright declared that if he could, he would create an exhibit of models and drawings of Broadacres and send the message all over the United States. E.J. asked, "What would it take to produce such an exhibit?" Mr. Wright replied without hesitation, "\$1000." E.J.: "Mr. Wright, you can start tomorrow." We started tomorrow.



The exhibit was made that winter, our first in Arizona. In the spring four of us apprentices trucked it across the country and through a Kansas dust storm to an exhibit in Rockefeller Center, which then toured the country. That summer Kaufmann commissioned Mr. Wright to design his country house.

Mr. Wright visited the site to help select the appropriate spot on a 2000-acre piece of family land 60 miles south of Pittsburgh — there were fields, gulches, ravines, hillslopes wooded and bare. After much walking, according to Mr. Wright, he asked, “E.J., where do you like to sit?” And E.J. pointed to a massive rock whose crest commanded a view over a waterfall and down into a glen. That spot, Mr. Kaufmann’s stone seat, was to become the heart and hearthstone of the most famous house of the 20th century.

So that morning in the drafting room, when we overheard him bellow, “Come along, E.J.,” we wondered what could happen. Kaufmann, calling from Pittsburgh, was planning to drive to Chicago, then to Milwaukee, and come to Taliesin.

It was the morning that Kaufmann called again from Milwaukee, 140 miles away from Spring Green, and only 140 minutes of driving at a mile a minute, that Mr. Wright was to start drawing. Kaufmann was en route.

He hung up the phone, briskly emerged from his office, some 12 steps from the drafting room, sat down at the table set with the plot plan, and started to draw. First-floor plan. Second floor. Section, elevation. Side sketches of details, talking *sotto voce* all the while. The design just poured out of him. “Liliane and E.J. will have tea on the balcony . . . they’ll cross the bridge to walk into the woods . . .” Pencils being used up as fast as we could sharpen them when broken — H’s, HB’s, colored Castell’s, again and again being worn down or broken. Erasures, overdrawing, modifying. Flipping sheets back and forth. Then, the bold title across the bottom: “Fallingwater.” A house has to have a name . . .

Just before noon Mr. Kaufmann arrived. As he walked up the outside stone steps, he was greeted graciously

by the master. They came straight to the drafting table. “E.J.,” said Mr. Wright, “we’ve been waiting for you.” The description of the house, its setting, philosophy, poured out. Poetry in form, line, color, textures and materials, all for a greater glory: a reality to live in! Mr. Wright at his eloquent and romantic best — he had done it before and would often do it again — genius through an organic growth along with nature. Kaufmann nodded in affirmation.

They went up to the hill garden dining room for lunch, and while they were away Bob Mosher and I drew up the two other elevations, naturally in Mr. Wright’s style. When they came back, Mr. Wright continued describing the house, using the added elevations to reinforce his presentation. Second thoughts? The basic design never changed — pure all the way.

Mr. Kaufmann soon left, drawing continued, and a few days later Mr. Wright went to Pittsburgh, this time carrying still more drawings under his arm, including perspectives marvelously done with colored pencils. More color

upon color, day after day — lastly, lavender for haze.

While he was designing, he kept up a running monologue, always with the client in mind. "The rock on which E.J. sits will be the hearth, coming right out of the floor, the fire burning just behind it. The warming kettle will fit into the wall here. It will swing into the fire, boiling the water. Steam will permeate the atmosphere. You'll hear the hiss . . ." His pencil broke. One of us handed him another.

And always so sure of materials. "The vertical stone walls will be on solid rock, the horizontal slabs of poured concrete, set in like concrete shelves." Then he visualized the approach. "You arrive at the rear, with the rock cliff on your right and the entrance door to the left. Concrete trellises above. Rhododendra and big old trees everywhere — save the trees, design around them. The sound of the waterfall as background." Design for people.

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