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# THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

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ON THE COVER: *Frank Lloyd Wright's Rocky Roost, a cottage on a small island in Lake Mendota, adjacent to the grounds of Mendota State Hospital, Madison. The building little resembles Wright's work because he evidently assembled it from three pre-existing structures as a commission from his boyhood friend Robert M. Lamp and Lamp's boating companion, Melville C. Clarke, a Madison banker. The site became a favorite subject of postcard companies, photographers, and artists, including Madison architect Robert L. Wright (no relation to FLW) who made this watercolor sketch in 1906. It provides the best evidence about the exterior colors Wright selected for the cottage, erected between 1901 and 1903. It burned in 1934 or 1935 as a result of arson by a hospital inmate. The watercolor is in the author's collection.*



*The Robert M. Lamp House (1903), 22 North Butler Street, Madison, as photographed in the early 1970's. Wright and Lamp placed the house at the center of the block with the knowledge that it would be secluded by surrounding dwellings. Lamp had intended to erect a second Wright-designed dwelling (1904–1905) where the house on the right was eventually built.*

Lance Neckar

# Frank Lloyd Wright's Designs for Robert Lamp

By John O. Holzhueter

WERE it not for Frank Lloyd Wright, the name of Robert Lamp would be nearly forgotten today. Like scores of others who commissioned a Wright design, he has achieved a measure of immortality by having a work by a world-renowned artist named for him. But Lamp differs from most in this throng. He stands out less for the house which bears his name than for the prominence Wright assigns to him in his autobiography. Robie, as Wright called him, was his "one intimate companion," "heart-to-heart comrade," and "inseparable" friend during their adolescence. And the two remained "fast friends" until, according to the architect, "[Robie], forty-four, died in a little cream-white brick house with a roof-garden filled with flowers" devised for him by Wright on Madison's isthmus.<sup>1</sup>

It will come as no surprise to those who are

AUTHOR'S NOTE: A generous grant from the Evjue Foundation enabled research at Taliesin West in December, 1974. I am also grateful to Mary Jane Hamilton, Paul Sprague, Christine Schelshorn, and Lance Neckar for assistance in finding research sources, and to my colleagues at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin for their indulgences. Paul Vanderbilt, the noted bibliographer of visual images and a friend of Henry-Russell Hitchcock, very kindly photographed both the Lamp House and the dwelling at 1157 Sherman Avenue many years ago, and never failed to encourage me in this research endeavor which began with a brief talk in the autumn of 1965 at the Lamp House. This article appears in substantially the same form in the catalog of the autumn, 1988, Elvehjem Museum of Art exhibition, "Frank Lloyd Wright and

even slightly familiar with Wright's architecture, his writings, and what has been written about both the architect's life and his work that much of what has been said about Robert Lamp is afflicted with some degree of error or misinterpretation. The dates assigned to the various Lamp projects and designs, their chronological sequence, and many of the notions about Lamp himself suffer from this common malady in works by and about Frank Lloyd Wright.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, careful scrutiny of the record reveals that Lamp was associated with more than just the executed house (often designated Lamp II) and a cottage called Rocky Roost on a Lake Mendota island of the same name. He had connections, in some cases slight, to all of Wright's Madison work from 1893 through 1904, therefore serving as a useful lens through which to examine the architect's ties to the city in that period.

Let it be said at the outset that there was likely no deliberate deception on Wright's part in creating most of the chronological problems. (The architect's description of his uni-

Madison: Eight Decades of Artistic and Social Interaction," forthcoming under the editorship of Paul E. Sprague.

<sup>1</sup>Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography* (New York, 1943), 31-32, 52.

<sup>2</sup>The generally accepted dates and chronology of Wright's work have been set forth by Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials: The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright 1887-1941* (1942; reprint, New York, 1973), 105-130. Historians' frustrations about the chronology and dates are too well known to document here.



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*Classroom with unidentified teacher in Madison's Second Ward School, 700 block of East Gorham Street, around the turn of the century. Frank Lloyd Wright was a pupil there from either 1878 or 1879 to 1881, and his aunt, Jenny Lloyd Jones, served as principal and teacher of the two "second grammar" classes during the 1879-1880 school year. The Wrights lived on Gorham Street a block east of the school.*

versity career with respect to Lamp is a separate issue.) Wright was a busy man, preoccupied with work and the necessity of meeting professional and financial obligations. He was not the sort who devoted hours to research before committing words to print. His chronologies and dates went askew, not because of some overall plot (though there may be exceptions), but simply because he and others forgot details or reshaped them along the lines of long-held impressions and faulty recollections.<sup>3</sup>

No matter what their origins, the errors in dating have caused historians and legions of Wright enthusiasts no end of trouble as they

have tried to establish a sequence for his work. Many, myself included, have spent years piecing together the histories and contexts of individual Wright buildings and projects; yet even searches like these have failed to uncover answers to basic questions about some of his work. A few Wright puzzles may never yield to sources other than his own recorded—and often incorrect—recollections. For example, no source except the Wright autobiography can be found to explain how he and Robie Lamp met. Others can supply the year (either the fall of 1878 shortly after the Wright family moved to Madison or the next fall when the family moved to Lamp's neighborhood) and the exact location (the grounds of what is now Madison's Lincoln School condominium development). But only Wright has described how he, a new schoolboy, rescued Robie (whose legs were "shriveled," to use Wright's adjective)

<sup>3</sup>Individual exceptions to this benign interpretation probably occurred. See, for example, my discussion of the date of the Yahara River Boathouse project in a forthcoming issue of this *Magazine*.



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*Second Ward School interior with chalk drawing of President Ulysses S. Grant. Wright related that his lifelong friendship with Robert Lamp began on the school's playground in the fall of either 1878 or 1879.*

from a gang of boys who “were burying him in . . . fallen leaves until he was all but smothered.” The two quickly became best friends, and Wright says that their relationship endured until he entered the University of Wisconsin. Wright wrote, referring to himself in the third person, “Robie Lamp and he were still ‘chums’ though other associations now drew the youth away from Robie, for Robert Lamp had not entered the University! It made such a difference in those days!”<sup>4</sup>

Up to the point where he mentions the uni-

<sup>4</sup>Wright, *An Autobiography*, 31–32, 52. For a discussion of the Wrights’ residences see the essay “Frank Lloyd Wright’s Madison Networks”, in the exhibition catalog cited in the author’s note at the beginning of this article. The author has asked numerous persons who knew Lamp whether he used crutches or canes, and the responses were inconclusive. He may well have used both, depending upon his age, health, strength, and the task at hand.

versity, Wright’s account withstands scrutiny; then it falters. How could it have been that Robie Lamp, who “had not entered the University” and whom Wright further portrays as tainted by an unsophisticated working-class background, managed to be involved in some way or another in all of Frank Lloyd Wright’s earliest Madison projects, which were middle-class undertakings simply because an architect designed them specifically? Why would an educated, successful architect remain close to a man who, owing to his social class and lack of education, would have been unable to accomplish much? Just who was Robie Lamp?

**I**N many respects, Lamp’s family was the German-American counterpart of Wright’s own Welsh and American family, and not the underprivileged or unso-

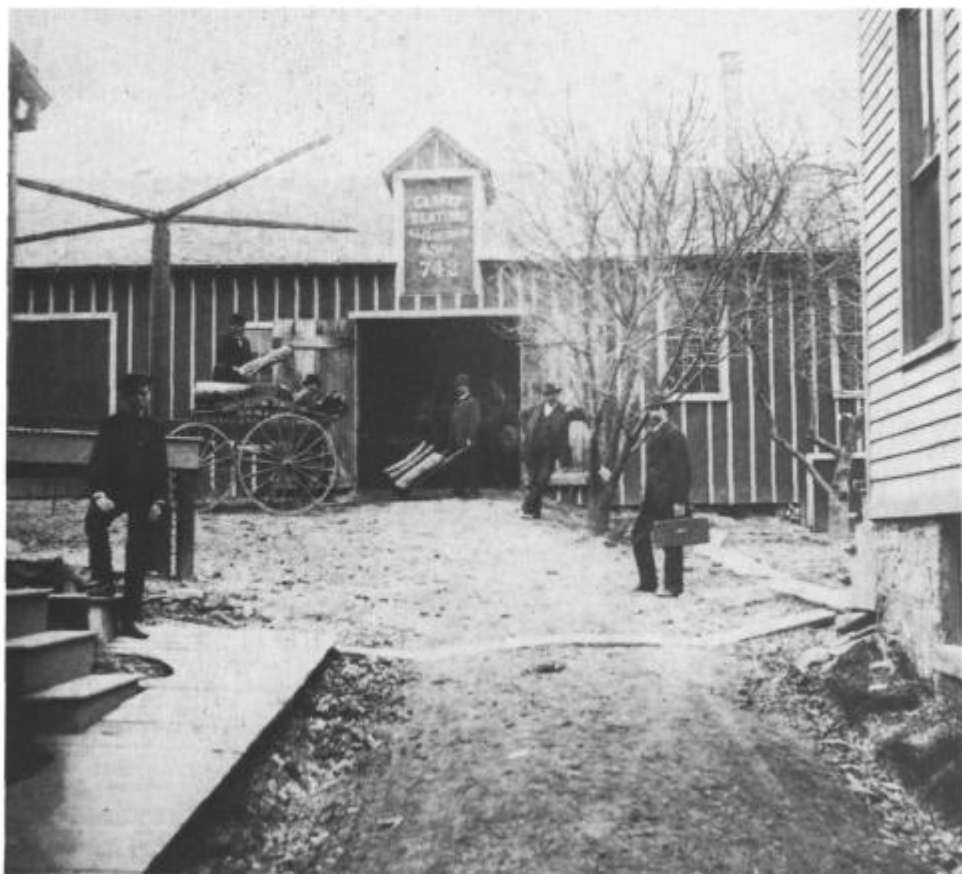


*The 700 block of Madison's East Johnson Street much as it would have appeared in the 1880's. Lamp's family lived on the corner out of view on the right; Wright's family lived a block away on the intersecting street to the right. From a negative in the Dorothy Park Estate Collection.*

phisticated immigrant clan that Wright suggests. The Lamps—Robie's grandparents, their seven sons, two daughters, and Rosalinde Marquart who was to become Robie's mother—came to the Madison area from the village of Heide in Holstein in 1851. They soon established themselves as upwardly mobile farmers and lower-middle-class and middle-class artisans and businessmen, some of whom acquired property in a Germanic enclave which arose in Madison's East Johnson Street neighborhood, a block from where Wright's parents settled nearly thirty years later. In addition to being at least as financially prosperous as many members of Frank Lloyd Wright's family, the Lamps even somewhat resembled the Wrights in their cultural interests. They joined German-speaking versions of some of the American middle-class institutions and clubs which proliferated in the nine-

teenth century—the kinds of activities in which William and Anna Lloyd Jones Wright, Frank's parents, firmly believed.

Neither the Lamps' financial nor social mobility was unusual at the time. In the late nineteenth century, American urban areas were becoming home to tens of thousands of German-speaking immigrants, whose presence generally is associated with larger, German-dominated cities like Milwaukee, St. Louis, and Cincinnati. But Madison, too, had its Germanic colony and its German-speaking versions of the standard middle-class American institutions. For example, Madison's German-speaking community founded Madison Engine Company No. 2, a fire-fighting organization (the city had no municipal fire department, but did supply volunteers with equipment) which paralleled Engine Company No. 1, founded in the late 1850's by the



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*Gustave Barckhan & Son, carpeting and upholstery works, rear of 742 East Johnson Street, 1880's. Robert Lamp then lived at 750 East Johnson, so he and his friend Frank Wright assuredly were familiar with the establishment. From a stereo view by A. C. Isaacs of Madison.*

sons of the "best" Yankee and English families in town. Robie's father, William Lamp, belonged to the German company.

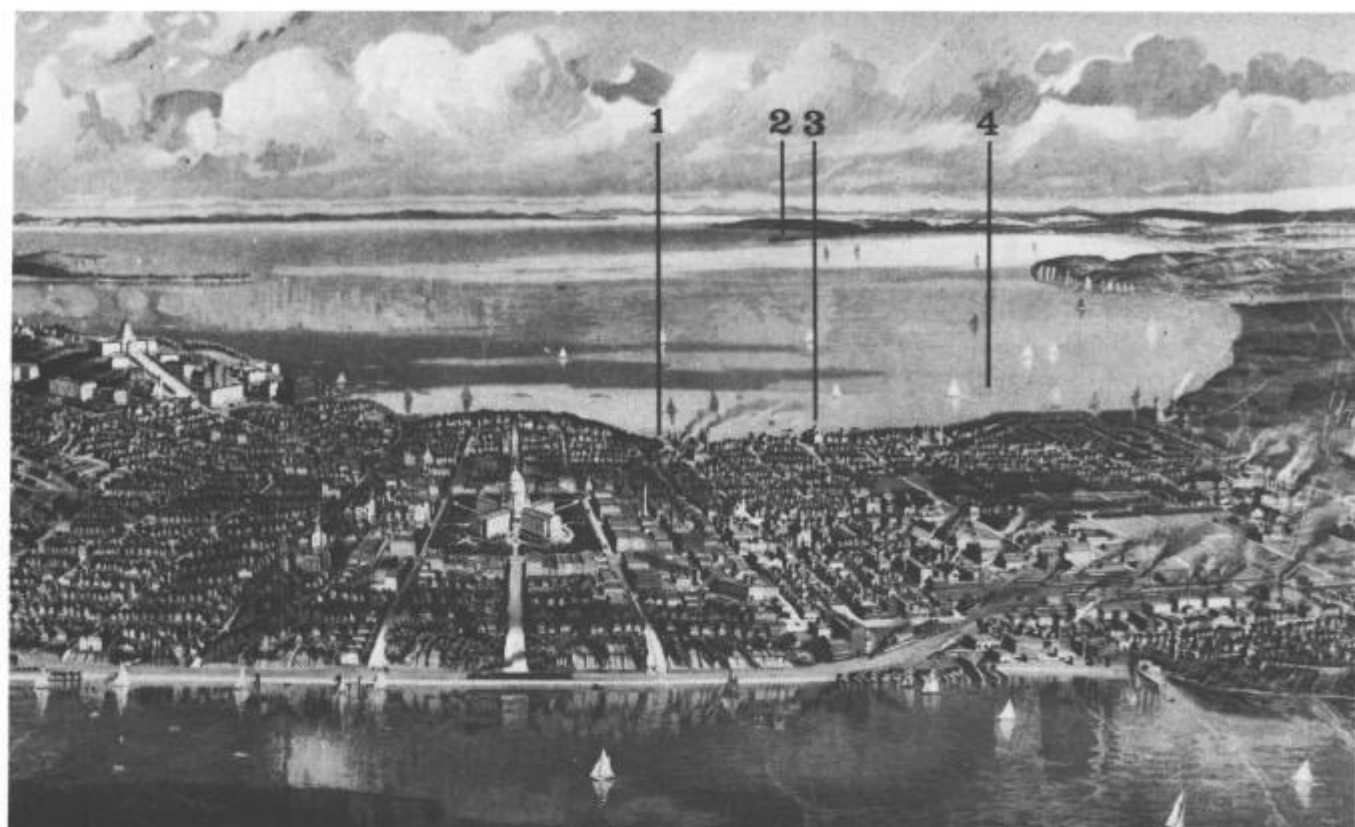
Musically, too, the Lamps had connections which were not unlike those which William Wright, Frank's father, must have enjoyed as a teacher of music and composer. William Lamp was a member of the Mozart Club, and somewhat later his niece's husband (that couple, too, lived in the Johnson Street neighborhood) taught violin and led the city's best brass band. Acquaintance with music, learning, and middle-class social institutions was probably nearly as routine for the Lamps as it was for the Wrights and Mrs. Wright's more noted family, the Lloyd Joneses.

The principal differences between the two families seem to have been that Wright's maternal and paternal relatives spoke English, not German, and that they emphasized the importance of moral and religious issues and or-

ganizations more than the Lamps. No similar interest in religious organizations and ethical problems has surfaced among the Lamps, although they seem to have been interested in politics.

Frank Lloyd Wright's impression that Robie occupied a social position a few notches below his own is perhaps forgivable. Millions of American-born persons in the post-Civil War era felt that immigrants in general lacked standing and attainment. Not until somewhat later in the nineteenth century were immigrants more readily accepted, even in such liberal circles as those frequented by Wright's parents. Wright was by no means a nativist or xenophobe, but his ridicule of the Lamp family's inelegant speech (Robie's legs "went out on him"—to use Robie's Pa's phrase") and cultural aspirations ("Robie, too, was taking violin lessons of the father. 'Ma' and 'Pa' would always sit and listen while their Robie practiced.





Relative locations of landmarks: (1) North Butler Street; (2) Rocky Roost; (3) Second Ward (Lincoln) School; (4) Sherman Avenue. From a 1908 panoramic view by H. Wellge of Milwaukee.

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They saw in it a career for him perhaps.”) leave no doubt that he harbored some of the prejudices of the day.<sup>5</sup>

Wright’s statements about Lamp’s failure to attend the University of Wisconsin are less easily explained. Despite widely known evidence to the contrary, Wright maintained for dec-

ades that he lacked only a few credits and a thesis for a bachelor’s degree in engineering from the University of Wisconsin. Stories abound in the university community to this day about Wright’s desire to receive not only an honorary doctorate in 1955, but also his bachelor’s degree. It was a point of obvious importance to him, and he returned to it again and again until the end of his life.

In fact, Wright attended the University for only two terms in 1886 and did not have enough credits to become a sophomore. On the other hand, Robert Lamp’s university career was astonishingly like that which Wright claimed for himself. Lamp was a student from 1885 through 1891; he majored in English; and he considered himself a member of the class of 1891, even though he never completed his senior year. His grades were good, and he lacked only a few credits for a bachelor’s degree. Except for his major, Lamp’s university career is the parallel of that which Wright

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, for Wright on the Lamps’ status. For background on the Lamp family, see William Lamp’s obituary in the *Madison Democrat*, January 16, 1913; Ray A. Lamp to the author, July 15, 1974; and Matilda Sweet (Mrs. Arno H.) Hesse to the author, February 4, 1974, and August 15 and September 9, 1977. For background about German institutions in America, see especially Bruce C. Levine, “Immigrant Workers, ‘Equal Rights,’ and Anti-Slavery: The Germans of Newark, New Jersey,” in *Labor History*, 25 (1984), 26–52. Levine’s article prompted the author to undertake some preliminary research into Madison’s middle-class German institutions, in which the Lamp name occurs frequently. See especially the records of Madison Engine Company No. 2, Archives, State Historical Society of Wisconsin (SHSW).

claimed; so it is tempting to speculate that Wright used it as his model.

Lamp's failure to complete his degree doubtless had some connection to his rapid rise in professional circles and in politics. While still a student in 1889, he was elected city treasurer. He served in that office through 1890, after which he worked for five years or so in the Wisconsin secretary of state's office and in the state land office, appointments which confirm his later remark that he "had no better friend" than "good old Ex-Governor [George] Peck." Then he started his own real estate, insurance, and travel agency. His energy and wide-ranging interests were not particularly exceptional among the Lamps. Several members of Robie's generation, especially cousins, attended the University of Wisconsin, and many of them became successful businessmen and professionals.<sup>6</sup>

WRIGHT'S adoption of Robie Lamp's university career perhaps can be explained as an amalgam of several personal and professional considerations which in his maturity would have helped make him feel considerably better about himself and some difficult times in his life.

Wright began to indicate in print as early as

<sup>6</sup>Lamp's attendance records and grades are in the University of Wisconsin registrar's office. See also "Disabled students having Dr. Favill's Medical Certificate" in Regents Minutes, June 22, 1886, series 1/1/2; and a leaflet, "Reunion of Class of '91," p. 3, both in the University of Wisconsin Archives. On his election as city treasurer see the *Wisconsin State Journal* (Madison), and the *Madison Democrat*, March 31, 1889. A Democrat, he was nominated by Mayor M. R. Doyon and ran unopposed. Doyon was his neighbor and the father of Charles Doyon, Lamp and Wright's partner in a youthful publishing venture. See Wright, *An Autobiography*, 35-36. The Ray H. Lamp and Matilda Hesse letters describe the careers of Lamp's cousins. For Lamp's political connections to Governor Peck, see Lamp to Robert M. La Follette, Sr., October 14, 1904, in the Robert Marion La Follette, Sr., Papers, SHSW. On Wright's university boasts see Frank Lloyd Wright, *A Testament* (New York, 1957), 17. On November 9, 1987, the author delivered a version of this paper to the Madison Literary Club; several members shared with him their recollections of the delicate situation Wright created among university administrators by proposing that he receive both his honorary degree and his bachelor's degree at the commencement in 1955.

1898 that he was a member of the University of Wisconsin class of 1892 (not 1889, as it logically should have been had he entered in the fall of 1885) and of Phi Delta Theta fraternity. It was customary at the time, and much later, for matriculated students who never were graduated to refer to themselves as members of a specific class; but by 1905 Wright also called the University of Wisconsin his alma mater, a term usually reserved to those who had earned degrees. Early in his career these statements would have been socially and professionally useful, especially in an upper-middle-class setting like suburban Oak Park, Illinois, where he lived and worked among persons who could afford an architect. His assertions, no matter how easily disproved, soon became fact both for him and his hearers—a psychological phenomenon by no means unique to Wright.<sup>7</sup>

Unpleasant events in his personal life around the time he entered the university also provided Wright some good reasons for developing a more palatable alternative. The first is that his parents divorced in the spring of 1885. Although his father was the uncontested plaintiff, Wright took his mother's side and said that he never again saw his father. These domestic troubles, his embarrassment over having to leave high school before graduation because of them, the necessity of finding work almost immediately, and the social taint which divorce lent to an entire family (including children) in that era certainly must have affected how he later chose to portray the years 1885-1886.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>For Wright's statements about his education other than those in his autobiography, see Will J. Maxwell, comp., *Fraternity Men of Chicago* (Chicago, 1898), 143; and Wright to Cudworth Beye, November 2, 1905, in the Cudworth Beye Collection, SHSW. For evidence that students who did not complete degrees were considered members of specific classes, see the records of any college's alumni office and its publications for the pre-World War II period. The author's mother, for example, attended Lawrence University, Appleton, Wisconsin, for her freshman year in 1926-1927, yet the university considered her a member of the class of 1930 and for decades solicited funds from her as a member of that class.

<sup>8</sup>A Second Ward School classmate of Wright's, Annie A. Nunns, who was the assistant superintendent of the State Historical Society for decades, had no recollection "that Frank Lloyd Wright went on to either high school or

But there was another, less obvious personal crisis in his life as well: the loss in 1885 of the Lamp family circle as a refuge from the troubles in his own household only a block away. Wright records that he and Robie drifted apart somewhat at this time, which is almost surely correct. Wright attributes this separation to the social distinction which his university matriculation conferred upon him. But it was Lamp, not Wright, who matriculated. (Although the two were classmates in grade school and high school, Lamp was exactly a year older—born June 8, 1866, in Madison—than Wright, who was born June 8, 1867, in Richland Center.) Instead, Wright went to work as a draftsman for Allan D. Conover, a professor of engineering who in the spring of 1885 and into 1886 was the supervising architect for four campus buildings which mark Wright's true initiation into architecture. So it was Wright, not Lamp, who was left behind.

Furthermore, it is quite likely that his parents' divorce interfered with Wright's relationship with the staid, Germanic Lamps, who would not have approved. This situation doubtless caused Wright some discomfort since he had been a constant visitor for years in various Lamp dwellings on East Johnson Street and he genuinely liked socializing, especially with ordinary, intelligent people. Losing a tie to the Lamps must have hurt. Robie's father William and at least two of his uncles, Henry and Fred Lamp, lived virtually next door to one another on Johnson near Livingston and Blount streets. Children of their families mingled freely, popping in and out of one another's homes; and Robie included his friend Frank in these comings and goings. Robie obviously made Frank feel at home in these households, where a mixture of German and English was spoken and where Frank would have been accepted merely because he was "Rob's" friend. (In the family, he was "Rob," pronounced with a long, German vowel;

Wright used an Americanized version.) It was a comfortable life, probably a good deal like the life on the Lloyd Jones family farms in Iowa County where young Frank Wright spent pleasant summers working for his mother's brothers.

Lamp family tradition supports Wright's frequent presence in their households, although he was not a favorite of Robie Lamp's younger relatives who bestowed upon him the tauntingly cruel nickname of "Quaker Oats," indicating that in the 1880's he was already affecting the bohemian dress like that worn by the figure on the popular oatmeal box. (Quaker Oats with its familiar trademark was marketed nationally by 1880.) Their nickname betrayed precisely how the younger Lamp children felt about the adolescent Frank Wright: a show-off who assumed airs.

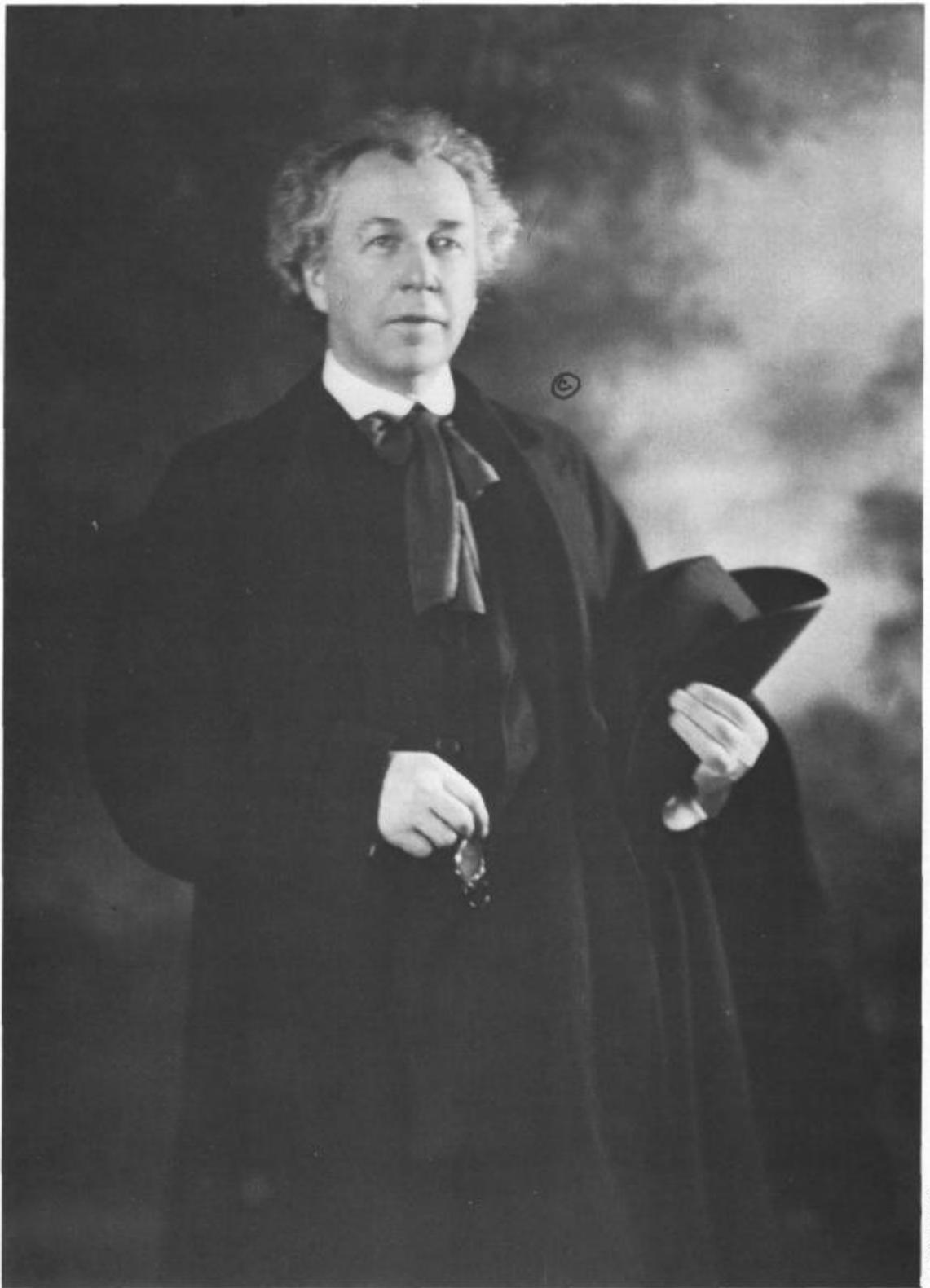
The Lamp children were not the only ones to notice the similarity between Wright's choice of costume and the figure on the oatmeal box. In 1910 W. E. Martin, an Oak Park client and friend, reported to his brother in Buffalo that Wright had returned from Europe "dressed to closely resemble the man on the Quaker Oats package. . . . Knee trousers, long stockings, broad-brimmed brown hat, cane and his lordly strut." Not much had changed in twenty-five years.<sup>9</sup>

**J**UST as Wright moved ahead quickly in architecture after 1886, so did Lamp in city and state government and

<sup>9</sup>For Lamp's birthday, see his death certificate, Dane County Register of Deeds office (DCD), death records, vol. 20, p. 450, which gives it incorrectly as June 8, 1868, and his death date correctly as March 6, 1916. For the correct year of his birth, see his grave marker in section 1 of Madison's Forest Hill Cemetery ("Robert M. Lamp, 1866-1916") and listings for Lamp in the Dane County, Wisconsin, population schedules of the U.S. censuses of 1870 (vol. 1, p. 568), 1880 (E.D. 74, p. 9), and 1900 (E.D. 54, sheet 8), and in the Wisconsin census of 1905 (Dane County, p. 527), which are fairly consistent for 1866 as the year of his birth. Census enumerators were notoriously inaccurate, and it is common to find inconsistencies from decade to decade. The 1900 schedule states specifically that Lamp was born in June, 1866.

For the divorce and Wright's birthday see Thomas S. Hines, Jr., "Frank Lloyd Wright—The Madison Years: Records versus Recollection," in the *Wisconsin Magazine of*

university with us. I think the family may have been out of town at that time." Nunns did recall that "his aunt, Miss Jennie Jones, happened to be our teacher." Nunns to Grant Manson, March 6, 1940, General Administrative Correspondence, 1900-1980, Series 934, Records of the SHSW, Archives, SHSW.



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*Frank Lloyd Wright around the turn of the century, still wearing the garb that prompted Robert  
Lamp's young cousins to call him "Quaker Oats" in the 1880's.*



WHI(X3)44397

*Rocky Roost before cottages were erected on it in 1892–1893. The circular format is a feature of the Kodak No. 1 camera—the first practical, flexible-film camera for amateur photographers, introduced in 1888. From the Dorothy Park Estate Collection.*

politics. Democrats did not have an easy time finding work in Wisconsin state offices during much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Lamp's timing could not have been better. He was young and getting started when George W. Peck served as governor (1891–1895), one of only two Democrats elected to the office in the years between the Civil War and the Franklin D. Roosevelt landslide of

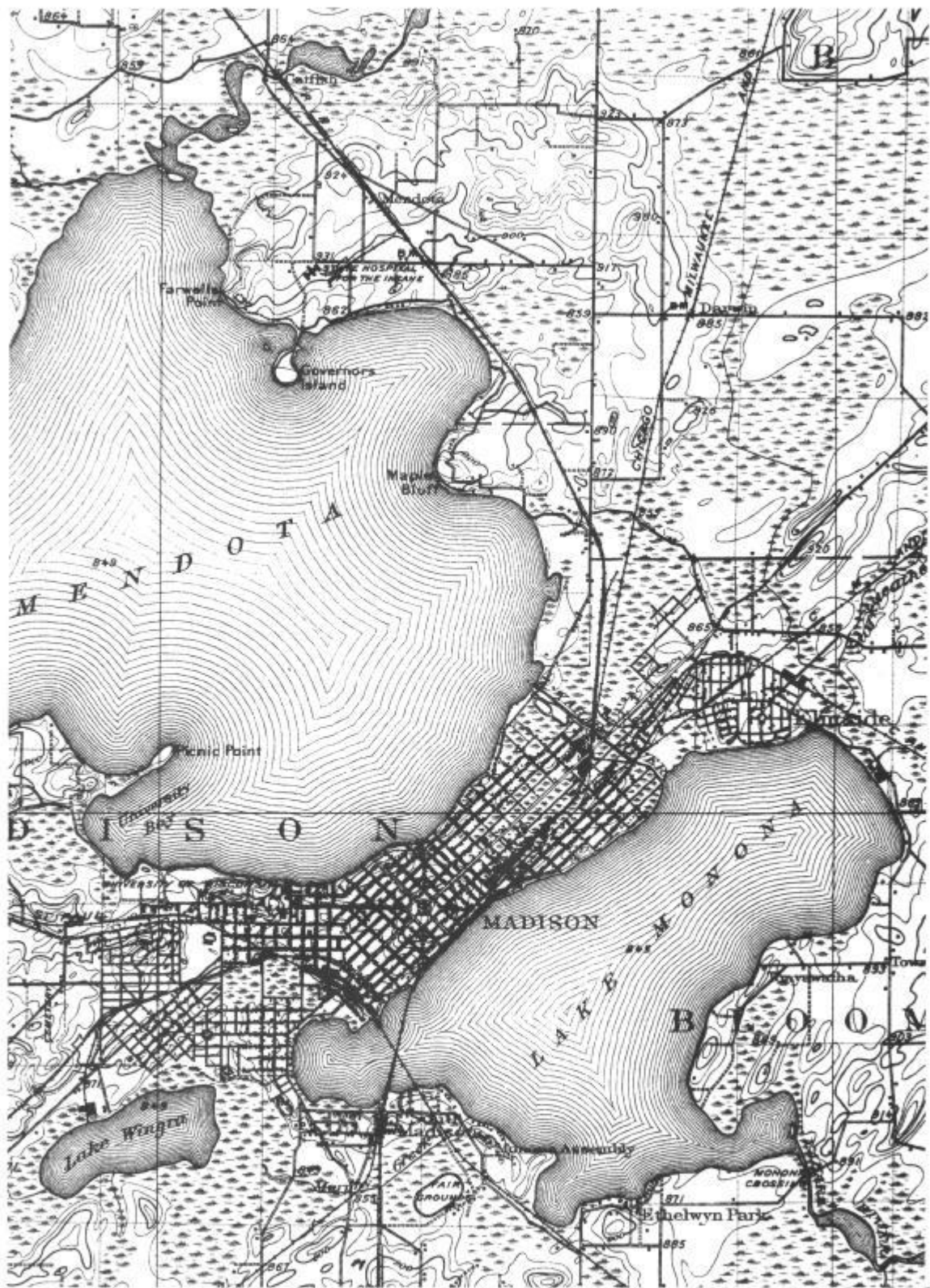
1932. Lamp admired Peck, credited him for his assistance, and never wholly deserted the Democratic party even when he voted for progressive Republican Governor Robert M. La Follette, "not personally, but for the principles which you represent."<sup>10</sup>

His employment in the state land office may have been what led to an apparently belated discovery that some of the land next to Lake Mendota's Governor's Island (really a spit of land on the south edge of the state mental hospital grounds opposite Madison proper) was not owned by the state, but was in fact parceled from the hospital's grounds by a section line. In 1892 this little island, which barely appears

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*History*, 50 (Winter, 1967), 109–119. See also Robert C. Twombly, *Frank Lloyd Wright: His Life and His Architecture* (New York, 1979), 10–16, 28. For Lamp family matters and Wright's ties to the Lamps I have relied on Matilda Sweet Hesse to the author, February 4, 1974, and subsequent conversations with Mrs. Hesse in 1974 and 1977, as well as Lamp family listings in the *Madison City Directory* for 1855, 1858, 1866, 1868, 1871–1872, 1873, 1875–1876, 1877–1878, 1880–1881, 1883, 1884, and 1885. For Quaker Oats' popularity by 1880 see Hanna Campbell, *Why Did They Name It . . . ?* (New York, 1964), 37–40. For the Martin quotation see Brendan Gill, *Many Masks: A Life of Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York, 1987), 212.

<sup>10</sup>Lamp to La Follette, October 14, 1904, in the La Follette Papers, SHSW; Richard C. Haney, "The Rise of Wisconsin's New Democrats: A Political Realignment in the Mid-Twentieth Century," in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 58 (Winter, 1974–1975), 91.



*Rocky Roast is the speck of land in Lake Mendota northwest of Governor's Island. From the 1906 U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey topographical map.*

above the level of the lake, was not listed in county tax records; but in 1893 it appeared as "unknown land, all of Lot 2 now overflowed with water of Fourth Lake" in section 34 of the Town of Westport.<sup>11</sup>

Together with Melville C. Clarke, a fellow boating enthusiast, cashier for the First National Bank, and something of a real estate entrepreneur, Lamp embarked on a plan to legitimize the island's status as private property so they could build small cottages on it, nearby rural retreats being fashionable in Madison at the time. (Many of these much later became year-round homes, and some now fall within the limits of incorporated communities around both lakes Mendota and Monona.) They evidently arranged for taxes to fall delinquent in 1894, so they could then buy the property at a tax sale in 1895. After dutifully paying the taxes in 1896, 1897, and 1898, they recorded this three-year-old tax deed with the register of deeds in 1898, apparently having delayed this step to give state and local authorities time to execute counter-maneuvers. Then in 1899 they repeated the whole sequence—tax delinquency, purchase for back taxes, and late recording—thus establishing this previously nonexistent piece of property adjacent to public lands as a prime bit of private real estate especially suitable for recreation.<sup>12</sup>

Their mutual interest in boating must have been what drew Lamp and Clarke into their real estate partnership, since Clarke, born in 1834, was more than thirty years Lamp's sen-



ior. He had been a sailor at least from the 1870's, the same period when Robie and Frank Lloyd Wright were indulging what Wright called their "real passion for invention. . . . A water-velocipede was started—to be called the 'Frankenrob.' Drawings made for a 'Catamaran' that cost too much to happen. . . . Another kind of ice-boat." Had they managed to construct one of these boats, it would have joined an equally strange-looking craft already on the lake: Melville Clarke's "Solid Comfort," a house-sailboat which he owned in concert with Lucien S. Hanks, who ran a rival bank to Clarke's, and at least one other man.<sup>13</sup>

Lamp's boat in the 1890's was a sail-canoe, about which he could not have been more enthusiastic. In July, 1894, he participated in the

<sup>11</sup>Dane County tax rolls, Town of Westport, 1892-1903, Dane County treasurer, Dane Series 90, Archives, SHSW; Lamp entries in *Madison City Directory*, 1892-1893, 1894-1895. The parcel was valued at \$100 and taxes were paid on it by John P. Woodward, who had extensive holdings on the north shore of Lake Mendota.

<sup>12</sup>Dane County tax rolls, as in note 11; DCD, tax deed 221716, M. C. Clarke and Robert M. Lamp, May 21, 1895, purchased for \$2.09 in unpaid taxes and recorded May 21, 1898, and tax deed 252282, M. C. Clarke and R. M. Lamp, May 15, 1900, purchased for \$2.30 in unpaid taxes and recorded May 20, 1903. For Clarke see the *Wisconsin State Journal*, May 23, 1927. Lucien S. Hanks, whose family played a small role in the Rocky Roost story and who headed an abstract office for decades, affirmed that these steps probably were intended to create private land from suspect land, especially since it is adjacent to state property. Hanks, conversation with the author, May 17, 1988.

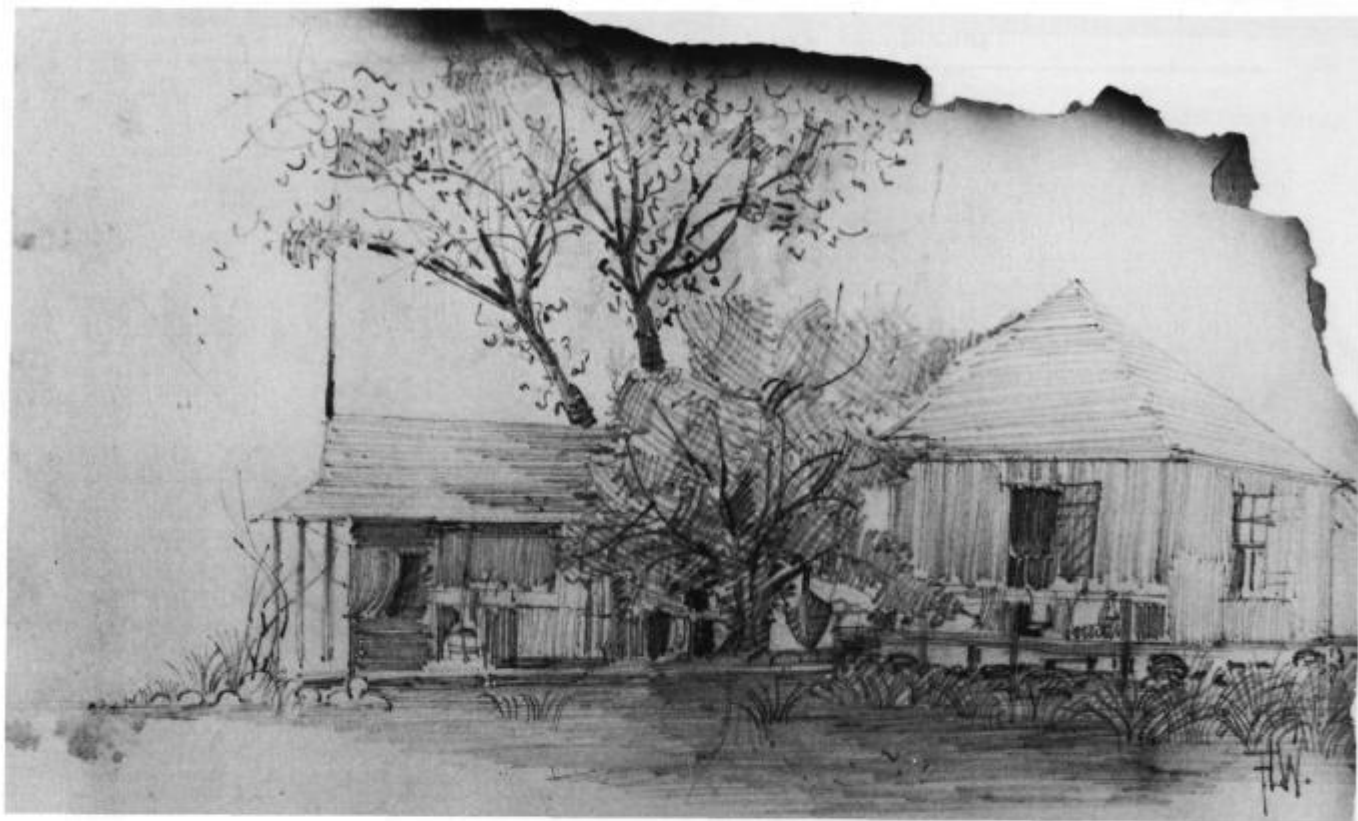
<sup>13</sup>Wright, *An Autobiography*, 35; *Wisconsin State Journal*, May 23, 1927; Hanks, conversation with the author, May 17, 1988; photograph of the "Solid Comfort," annotated by Lucien S. Hanks' grandfather for whom he was named, negative no. WHi(X3)44285, and a file of notes from Madison newspapers of the 1870's and 1880's about the boat and Clarke, both in the Hanks Collection, Visual and Sound Archives, SHSW.



*Two 1885 views of The Solid Comfort, an unusual sail-houseboat owned in part by Lamp's friend, Melville C. Clarke. It was beached in September, 1886, and the cabin likely was reused as one of the 1892–1893 cottages on Rocky Roost. Above, a cabinet view by Jones Studio, Madison; upper left, from an unnumbered copy negative, both from the Lucien S. and James J. Hanks Collection.*

WH(X3)44285





*Fire-damaged pencil sketch of Rocky Roost island and cottages, signed "FLW." at lower right, probably drawn in the early 1890's. Wright likely had a hand in designing this complex, which he called a "camp" in an early listing of his works. The leaf, reproduced at about the original size, is from a sketchbook no doubt damaged in one of the fires at Taliesin, Wright's Wisconsin home. The sketchbook is preserved in the collection given to the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, by Wright's son John Lloyd Wright, and the drawing is published courtesy of the library. The view was hitherto unidentified and unpublished.*

Western Canoe Association races held on Lake Mendota. He was an also-ran but loved every minute of it. "Did you see me out on the bay? I was right in it," he said to a writer for *Forest and Stream*. Lucien Hanks' son Stanley, an amateur photographer as well as a sailor, also entered and won several sail-canoe races. Both Hanks and Lamp represented the Taycho-pe-rah Club of Madison.<sup>14</sup>

**H**HEADQUARTERS for much of this activity was Rocky Roost, the name given both to Lamp and Clarke's small island and also to the eventual structures on it. The two wasted no time in developing their property. During the summer of 1892

<sup>14</sup>*Forest and Stream*, July 28, 1894, pp. 80–82. Lamp later was elected a member of the Western Canoe Association executive committee. See *Forest and Stream*, January 5 and 26, August 3 and 31, 1895, and August 1 and 8, 1896.

they erected at least one small cottage on the property, and by late fall of 1893 two more structures were in place.<sup>15</sup>

Among their visitors about this time was Frank Lloyd Wright, who created a souvenir of the occasion—a previously unidentified pencil sketch of two of the structures which survives in the papers of his son John Lloyd Wright.<sup>16</sup> This sketch and several other pieces of evidence (most notably pictures taken or

<sup>15</sup>See note 11 for proof of the construction dates. The apparent contradiction between the tax roll dates (1893) and the date by which buildings appeared (1892) is not actually inconsistent but rather confirms the sequence of events. Until recently, tax rolls for the year did not include property upon which "improvements" (buildings) had been erected after May 15.

<sup>16</sup>I am extremely grateful to Paul E. Sprague for bringing the Wright sketch to my attention. It appears as XIX/3 in the John Lloyd Wright Collection, Avery Architectural Library, Columbia University. I have not had an opportunity to examine the sketchbook for contextual evidence.



*Rocky Roost, January 7, 1894, from the side opposite from which Wright made his sketch. Governor's Island is in the background. A boathouse constitutes a third structure whose roof is barely visible at the left. The righthand cottage may have been adapted from the cabin of The Solid Comfort. From the Hanks Collection.*

WHI(X3)41616

saved by the Hankses) raise the interesting possibility that Wright was responsible for designing all or part of this early Rocky Roost complex.

First, there is the sketch itself. Scholars have noted that archival holdings of Wright material contain sketches only of buildings with which he had some association, so this sketch may record one of his works. Alternatively, it may merely have been a site sketch, since he later was concerned with a larger cottage on the island. Secondly, the chronology maintained by the Frank Lloyd Wright Memorial Foundation Archives in Scottsdale cites an 1893 cottage for Robert Lamp as Wright's first commission in his independent practice. The list is used to assign sequential numbers to drawings in the archives. Over the years both the archives staff and other scholars have discovered numerous errors in it, and this 1893 citation might be among them. The standard published list compiled by Henry-Russell Hitchcock in 1942 does not include an 1893

design for Lamp. Nevertheless, some slight memory or ephemeral record must have prompted its mention in the archives. Thirdly, in 1932 Wright provided Hitchcock a list of executed work and some unbuilt projects. Among the 1905 items is "R. M. Lamp House and Camp." The date is incorrect for both, but camp is an odd designation for a building as large as that which succeeded the three little buildings on Rocky Roost and which Hitchcock in 1942 identified among Wright's 1901 work as "Robert M. Lamp cottage," mistakenly placing it on Governor's Island. "Camp" is the same word Wright chose to describe the cluster of little buildings that he called "Ocatillo" and erected in 1928 at Chandler, Arizona, and in that respect seems just about the right word for the humble buildings in the pencil sketch.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>See "Frank Lloyd Wright—List of Work" in New York, Museum of Modern Art, *Modern Architecture* (New York, 1932), 41 and 47 (part of an appendix to Henry-



*Newly built cottage on Rocky Roost, photographed September 18, 1892. Left to right: A. B. Morris, W. A. P. Morris, A. J. Dodge, and Melville C. Clarke (co-owner of the island with Robert M. Lamp), all prominent Madison businessmen. The unusual overhanging roof suggests Wright's influence, as do the porch and flagpole on the other cottage.*

WHi(X21)19661

The principal photographic evidence consists of a photograph of "Solid Comfort" and three pictures of Rocky Roost dated September 18, 1892, January 7, 1894, and May 24, 1896.<sup>18</sup> (In the early days of amateur photography, it was not at all unusual for photographers to date negatives.) These make it possible to infer inclusive construction dates. In September, 1892, the cottage in the picture must have been new, since only a rickety board links its porch to the island and it appears to be

Russell Hitchcock's "Frank Lloyd Wright," 29-39); and Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials*, 111 and 126. The Arizona camp is dated 1929 in the former and 1927 in the latter. It was erected in 1928, used only one year, then was razed. See Gill, *Many Masks*, 309-311.

<sup>18</sup>Negative no. WHi(X3)34293 taken September 18, 1892, Classified File 904; WHi(X3)41616, January 7, 1894; and WHi(X3)41617, May 24, 1896, the latter two in the Hanks Collection and all in the Visual and Sound Archives, SHSW.

unpainted. Fifteen months later there are a decent deck, an improved porch, and what seems to be a coat of paint over what had been raw wood. This view discloses what one side of the buildings looked like, while the 1896 view shares the orientation from which Wright drew, thus providing excellent evidence about the architectural features of three sides of the buildings.

The question is which of these three buildings, if any, might have been designed by Wright. All three possess suggestive traits. The building on the left in his sketch actually may have begun as the Clarke-Hanks houseboat and have been moved to the island, since the houseboat's dimensions and fenestration resemble the little island cottage. There it acquired three Wrightian features: a new roof with a suggestive angle where it meets the porch; the two-sided porch itself; and an at-



*"The Roost" in its entirety, May 24, 1896, from the Hanks Collection. Camp mattresses and bedding are airing, indicating that the cottages were being opened for the season. The boathouse is at the right.*

WH(X3)41617

tached flagpole. Both the recycling and the porch roofline are consonant with what seems to have happened at the later development stage. The building on the right also betrays Wrightian features, such as an unusual roof on the opposite side, sloping over a deck. The same can be said for the roof on the structure to its right, probably the boathouse serving the two cottages. Besides being low, this roof is hipped, which is even more characteristic of Wright.

Virtually any permutation or combination of features could be used to argue that Wright's involvement ranged from none of the buildings to any or all of them. Because of their similarity, however, the two boxy structures on stilts or pilings were probably a unit; he either designed both or neither. Research in Wright's more personal papers and family photographs in his own and other archives

and in private hands may help settle the issue. For the moment these three little buildings on Rocky Roost can tantalize historians as possible new examples of his early work.

Lamp also may have played a role in Wright's far more important 1893 works for Madison—two boathouse commissions for the Madison Improvement Association. Although the latest published list of Wright's work states that Lamp "was responsible" for the commissions, only two pieces of circumstantial evidence substantiate that claim. The first is conjectural. Since Wright and Lamp were in touch at least socially in connection with Rocky Roost (which would date the sketch at 1892), that contact perhaps led to Wright's learning about the boathouse design competition. The second is that Lamp was a member of the Improvement Association, having pledged \$5 to its support. But he was not yet sufficiently



Paul Vanderbilt

*Robert Lamp's 1895–1896 home at 1157 Sherman Avenue, Madison, then in a newly platted subdivision at the edge of town. The second-story windows at that time provided an unobstructed view of Lake Mendota across the street.*

prominent or prosperous to have been a leader of the association, and two years later he still had failed to redeem his pledge, as had half of those who had subscribed due in large part to a disastrous economic depression in 1893. At most he could have notified Wright about the competition and encouraged him to enter. No more credit than that should accrue to Lamp for these important designs.<sup>19</sup>

The boathouses were only one of numerous public and private efforts to improve

Madison in the 1890's. A parallel organization to the Improvement Association, the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association, concentrated for the rest of the decade upon parks and roads, many of the latter linking the center of town to more distant areas along the lakeshores. Sherman Avenue was one such street, and private entrepreneurs quickly seized development opportunities along it. As an up-and-coming Madison businessman, Lamp joined the trend. In 1895 or 1896 he built a small house at 1157 Sherman Avenue and occupied it with his parents. From its second-story windows Lamp had a magnificent view of Lake Mendota, then unobstructed by buildings across the street.

In 1896 Lamp began his insurance and real estate business, a move prompted no doubt by the Democrats' loss of the governorship and

<sup>19</sup>Yukio Futagawa, ed. and photographer, and Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, text, *Frank Lloyd Wright Monograph 1887–1901* (Tokyo, 1986), 49; Madison Improvement Association, [Articles of Association, By-laws, List of Members, etc.] (Madison, 1893), photocopy, SHSW library; *Wisconsin State Journal*, October 22, 1895 (for nonpayment of the pledges).



*Rear of 1157 Sherman Avenue, a conventional house of the day, but a step up from the Lamps' Johnson Street neighborhood. Lamp shared the house with his parents and an aunt. The one-story projection at the left is a newer addition.*

Paul Vanderbilt

his removal from his job in the state land office. A year later he accepted an interim appointment as city treasurer after the incumbent died in office. He pledged his salary to his predecessor's widow and her family, and the city council elected him unanimously.<sup>20</sup>

The late 1890's were propitious for Lamp's real estate ventures, since Madison's population grew by 20 per cent to 20,000 persons in

the five years between 1895 and 1900. New neighborhoods had sprouted even earlier, especially in 1889 when developers platted six subdivisions. Such municipal growth must have encouraged Lamp to continue speculating on the city's future—and his own—with a May, 1897, purchase of another Sherman Avenue lot somewhat closer to the more thickly settled sections of Madison. The new neighborhood was filled with large houses, each possessing excellent frontage both on the street and Lake Mendota, and moving to it represented another leap upward for Lamp. He evidently was unable to undertake the investment without help, for he was joined in this venture by a partner, his uncle Fred (Fritz) Lamp, an experienced real estate entrepreneur with whom he would join again in other investments.

<sup>20</sup>"Lands not platted" in fractional sections 11 and 12, town 7, range 9, in Madison tax rolls for 1896, Dane Series 90, Archives, SHSW; *Madison City Directory*, 1896–1897; *Madison Democrat*, April 12, 1893; and Madison City Council, *Proceedings*, May 14, 1897. On the paving of Sherman Avenue see John M. Olin to an illegibly named correspondent, August 7, 1897, in the John M. Olin Papers, SHSW. The house was photographed for the author by Paul Vanderbilt; negatives and prints are in the Visual and Sound Archives, SHSW.



WHI(X3)27478

*Robert M. Lamp and Fred (Fritz) Lamp double house, 1024 and 1026 Sherman Avenue, Madison, built in 1899 or 1900—another step up the housing ladder for Robert. The deck atop the left side of the house provided an ample view of Lake Mendota and was the dwelling's most unconventional architectural feature. Robert and his parents lived on the left at 1024; Fritz, a successful real estate investor, occupied the larger quarters on the right at 1026.*

The two men expanded the wedge-shaped lot by buying a portion of another, creating a more realistic parcel than had been platted originally. On it they erected a rambling double house in 1899 or 1900, where Robert occu-

pied the left side and his uncle the right. The dwelling (now 1024 Sherman Avenue) had only one interesting feature: a flat roof on the left, surrounded by a porch railing. It resembled a widow's walk and offered a magnificent

view of Lake Mendota, just as the windows of the first Sherman Avenue house had.<sup>21</sup>

ONE of the features Lamp might have been able to see from the roof of his new house was, of course, Rocky Roost, to which he soon turned his attention. With Frank Lloyd Wright's help, a magical retreat arose, seemingly afloat on the lake. It beguiled amateur artists, photographers, and postcard salesmen alike until it burned in late 1934 or early 1935.<sup>22</sup> Beguiling though it was, Rocky Roost has proved a stumbling block for architectural historians because it so slightly resembles Wright's work of 1901, the date customarily assigned to it.

The evidence in support of Wright's connection with the building is, in fact, overwhelming. First, as noted earlier, it appears on both the 1932 and 1942 lists of his work. Second, the staff of the Frank Lloyd Wright Memorial Foundation Archives has examined some of the pictorial evidence and has no qualms about attributing the building to him. Third, according to Lamp family tradition Wright at the very least "built-in [*sic*] for Rob several features to meet his physical needs, esp. [*sic*] that he could get from boat to home easier."<sup>23</sup> The more important question in-

<sup>21</sup>On Madison's growth in the 1890's see David V. Moltenhoff, *Madison: A History of the Formative Years* (Dubuque, 1982), 195–201. Lamp bought all of lot 1 and part of lot 2 in the Willow Park Subdivision (1024 Sherman Avenue) in May, 1897, according to records in the Dane County Title Company office. For configuration and measurements see the *Derr Atlas of Dane County* (1976). Lamp later acquired part of lot 3. For the acquisition sequence see the Dane County tax rolls for Willow Park, 1897–1905, Dane Series 90, SHSW. For a photograph of the house see negative no. WHi(X3)27478, Visual and Sound Archives, SHSW.

<sup>22</sup>Numerous photographs and postcard views of Rocky Roost appear in Madison histories, guidebooks and collections. The author owns an amateur watercolor sketch of Rocky Roost by Robert L. Wright, a Madison architect who worked in the Prairie style but was no relation to Frank Lloyd Wright.

<sup>23</sup>New York, Museum of Modern Art, *Modern Architecture*, 41; Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials*, 111; Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, conversations with the author, especially in December, 1974; and Matilda Sweet Hesse to the author, February 4, 1974.



*Fred Lamp, Robert's uncle who was instrumental in developing the lots for which Frank Lloyd Wright designed houses in 1903 and 1904–1905.*

WHi(X3)26372

volves the extent of Wright's work on the building. No related correspondence or drawings appear in Wright's professional archives, so until it is possible to examine the more personal, family materials which might include some useful clues which would be obvious only to those familiar with details about Lamp and local Madison history, Rocky Roost's development must be pieced together from circumstantial, photographic, and official documentary evidence.

For whatever reason—desire for more space, more comfortable quarters, more room for entertainment, or social status, etc.—Lamp and Melville Clarke decided to improve Rocky Roost. The result appears to have been an assemblage. The cottage on the right in Wright's sketch remained in place; the narrow, rectangular cottage was moved from the original land to a newly filled section next to the first; and the third structure (the boat-house) was butted in turn against the second. These were then doubled in height and tied together with a wrap-around, second-story porch. Even the variations in the original cot-



tages' heights seem to have been retained, since the taller of the three (the island-most in the final structure) had a floor level eight or ten inches higher than the other two, shorter cottages.<sup>24</sup>

The idea for this expansion could have originated with the owners, with Wright, or with some third party, such as a contractor, who could have begun work independently, only to have Wright later pick up the pieces. Around the turn of the century Wright somewhat frequently undertook remodeling contracts, so such an assembly would not necessarily have offended his artistic sensibilities as it might have later. Furthermore, he designed at least one other exotic cottage at this time, a Swiss chalet-like affair for E. H. Pitkin on Sapper Island, near Desbarats, Ontario. The supports for its balcony bear some relationship to those of the second Rocky Roost.<sup>25</sup> Alternatively, the builders could have begun with new material, could have left some parts of the original structures in place, or could have merely recycled the old materials from the 1892-1893 cottages. In short, the extent of Wright's involvement in Rocky Roost cannot yet be determined, but at the very least he picked up the reins at one point or another and helped give the exterior some architectural unity.

The original "boxy" cottage at the right in the Wright sketch was constructed in board and batten using what appear to be twelve-inch wide boards. By counting boards it can be determined to have been twelve feet square. The island-most portion of the second Rocky Roost was also twelve feet square, if one calculates a standard sixteen-inch spacing of the two-by-four-inch balusters of the second-story

railing. From that deduction and the relationship of the original and subsequent structures to the trees on the island, the supposition about the assemblage follows rather neatly. Chimney placement shows that the narrow building became the kitchen, and window size and placement indicate that living quarters occupied the ground floor with sleeping quarters on the second.

Wright's artistic unification of this *mélange* required more than routine imagination. To tie the three buildings together esthetically he reversed the roofline of the center structure, creating an H-shaped roof overall. Then he wrapped the entire second story with a porch which seems to have been 4½ feet wide. Besides the supports which echo the Pitkin cottage, similar porches appeared on the University's 1892 Shingle Style boathouse directly across the lake and also on the Stick Style Lincoln Park boathouse in Chicago. The former certainly would have been familiar both to Wright and his pair of clients.<sup>26</sup> By using other elements of the Stick Style vocabulary on this porch, Wright established a rhythm based upon sixteen-inch units. The variations among the original buildings forced him, however, to assemble these sixteen-inch units sometimes in groups of three sometimes four and even five and seven. Parti-colored paints, in what a watercolorist recorded as grays and olives, emphasized the Stick-Style-like geometry and helped create a unified look, while blending the cottage with the greens and grays of the natural landscape and minimizing its eccentricities.

Judging from increments in real estate assessments and pictorial evidence, the second Rocky Roost was erected in two stages. The main building must have been built in 1901-1902, perhaps partly in the winter months for the convenience of transporting materials on ice. In the spring or summer of 1902 Lamp invited some members of his family to a party

<sup>24</sup>See SHSW negative nos. WHi(X2)14494, WHi(X3)21564, WHi(X3)23368, WHi(X3)26368, WHi(X3)26370, WHi(X3)41616, WHi(X3)41617, and WHi(X3)34293, Visual and Sound Archives, SHSW; and the Robert Wright watercolor (note 22).

<sup>25</sup>Other remodellings by Wright at the time included the 1894 H. W. Bassett dwelling in Oak Park, the 1898 Mozart Gardens in Chicago, the 1899 E. C. Waller house in River Forest, and the Arthur Heurtley cottage at the Les Cheneaux Club on Marquette Island, Michigan, in 1902. The Pitkin cottage appears in Futagawa and Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright Monograph 1887-1901*, pp. 162-163.

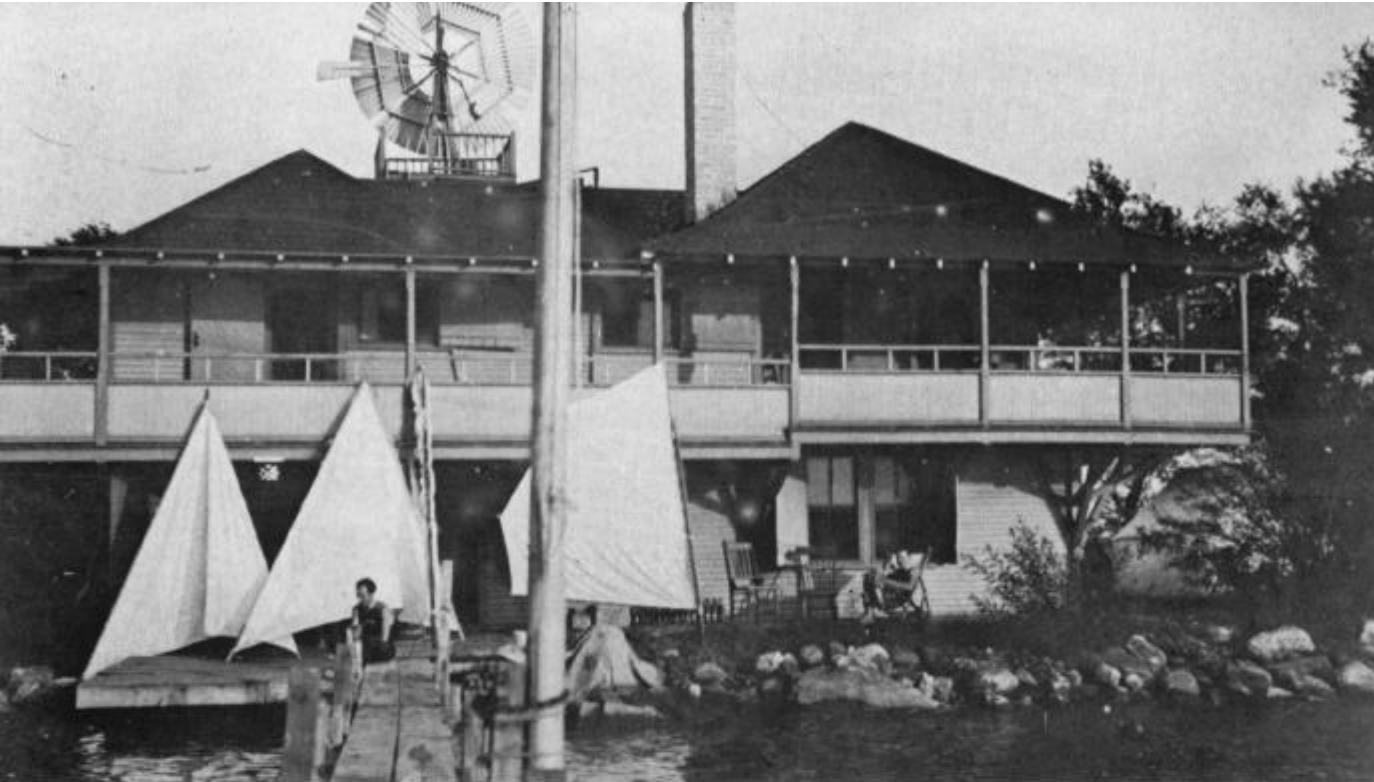
<sup>26</sup>For the relationship to the Stick Style see Vincent J. Scully, Jr., *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style: Architectural Theory and Design from Richardson to the Origins of Wright* (rev. ed., New Haven, 1971), fig. 161; and a postcard view of Chicago's Lincoln Park boathouse in classified file 882, Visual and Sound Archives, SHSW. For the University boathouse see the *Daily Cardinal*, April 20, 1892.



*Rocky Roost shortly after completion of the main body of the final cottage in the spring of 1902 (a windmill was yet to come at the center where the riprap is bridged by a timber). The section at the left is likely the original cottage on stilts, the middle section is likely the houseboat cabin, and the right section is likely the boathouse, all of them receiving a second story. Wright unified the assembly with the wrap-around second-story porch. The background in the top view (from a negative in the Dorothy Park Estate Collection) is the Lake Mendota shoreline from which a popular postcard view (see page 107) was taken. At bottom, members of Robert Lamp's family pose: (from left) Mathilda Lamp Lueders (Robert's cousin, daughter of Henry Lamp); Emma —; and Wilhelmina (Tutie) Lueders Sweet, daughter of Mathilda and John Lueders and one of those who called Wright "Quaker Outs." Unused lumber lies under the porch.*

WHi(X3)26370





*Closeup of Rocky Roost from the northwest after addition of the windmill. Robert Lamp is seated on the pier, with sails (he enjoyed sail-canoeing) drying in the background. The windmill pumped clean water from a deep well drilled into the rock below the lake's surface.*

WHI(X3)21564

for which he dressed up the place with Japanese lanterns, although his efforts were somewhat blunted by a pile of lumber which remained strewn beneath the porch. At the next stage, either later in the summer of 1902 or early in 1903, Rocky Roost acquired its distinctive windmill. It lifted pure water from what the president of Melville Clarke's bank called "a very deep well drilled in the rock."<sup>27</sup> (Wright's most famous windmill, Romeo and Juliet of 1896–1897 at Hillside Home School near Spring Green, is an obvious antecedent.)<sup>27</sup> The windmill very neatly masked the awkward middle section of the building and provided a splendid lookout besides pure water. Were Rocky Roost still standing, it would be possible to examine it for more signs of Wright's influence. But since it burned in 1934

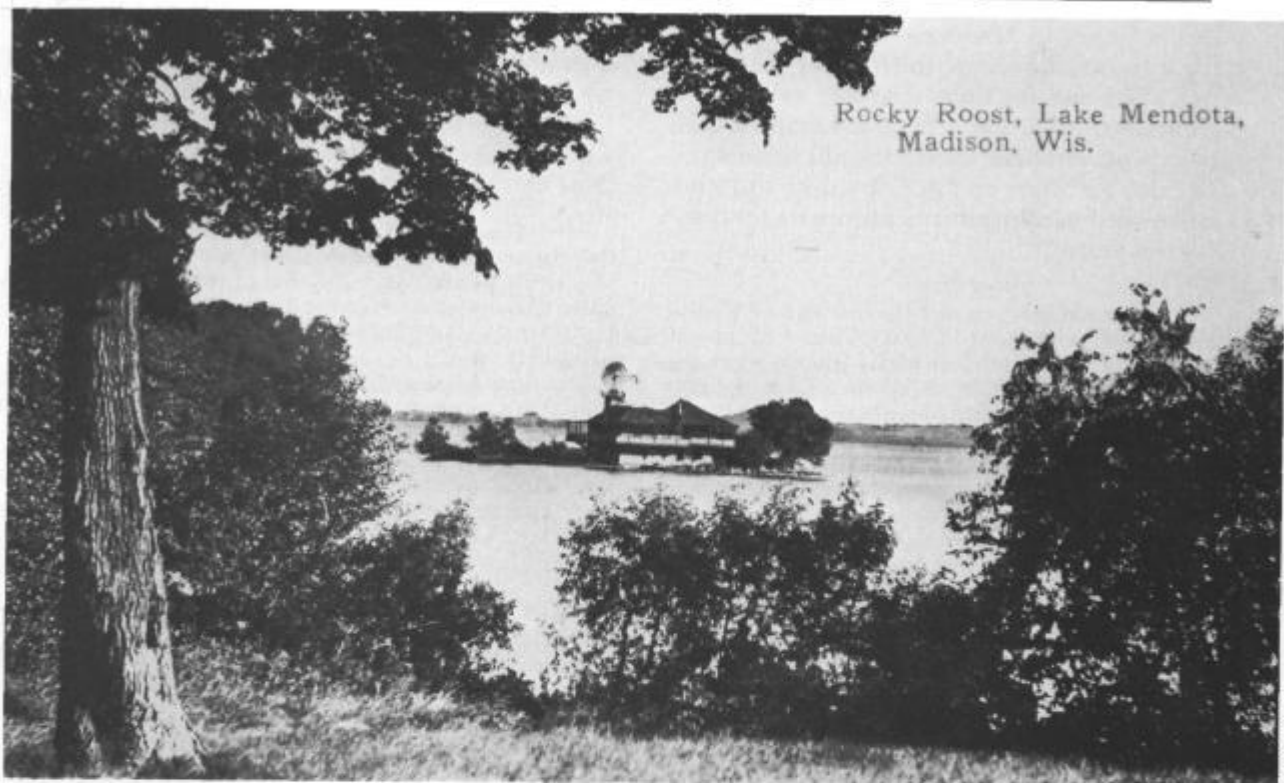
or 1935, what evidence may remain is strictly archeological.<sup>28</sup>

ON May 20, 1903, three years after the second tax sale, county officers officially conveyed Rocky Roost to Lamp and Clarke, putting the finishing touches on what turned out to have been a ten-year-long, two-stage development. That done,

tails about the well appear on a postcard view annotated by N. B. Van Slyke, president of the First National Bank and Clarke's employer, in unprocessed Van Slyke/Johnson Papers, SHSW. On Romeo and Juliet see William Allin Storrer, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright: A Complete Catalog* (2d ed., Cambridge, 1978; paperback ed., 1982), 37, which explains the date. For other windmill comparisons see H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwest Contemporaries* (1972; reprint, New York, 1976), 40 and 59; and Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials*, fig. 4.

<sup>28</sup>Twombly, *Frank Lloyd Wright*, 98 and 116 n. 1, provides citations which show that Wright often visited Spring Green in connection with the construction of Hillside Home School from late 1901 until 1903, the exact period of Rocky Roost's construction. The train route from Oak Park or Chicago would have taken Wright

<sup>27</sup>For the construction sequence see Dane County tax rolls, as in note 11, 1900–1903; and two views of the building without its windmill with various of Robert Lamp's female cousins or nieces on the porch and grounds, according to the donor of the pictures, Eunice Lamp Beck, a granddaughter of Robert Lamp's uncle, Fred (Fritz) Lamp (negative nos. 26368 and 36270, as in note 24). De-



WFLHX3J44717



*Popular postcard view of Rocky Roost at the top, and a panorama view (Hanks Collection) from the opposite side at the bottom. Over the years additional riprap enabled more trees and plants to grow.*

*The cottage burned in 1934 or 1935, but the island is still a privately owned recreation spot.*

Lamp wasted no time in embarking upon yet another real estate venture involving Frank Lloyd Wright. On June 9 he signed docu-

through Madison, offering him an opportunity to check on Rocky Roost during the inevitable layovers. Rail schedules in Madison newspapers of the period show no convenient connections to Spring Green without them.

ments which culminated in the Wright building with which Lamp has been most commonly associated—the dwelling at 22 North

Tradition has it that an inmate of the adjacent Mendota State Hospital set Rocky Roost on fire. At the time it burned it was owned by Dr. Arthur G. Sullivan. Mrs. Sullivan told the author in 1968 that it burned in the late

Butler Street in Madison—and also in plans for a second dwelling which never materialized. The site for both was only two blocks from the capitol. The seller was Lamp's Uncle Fritz, with whom he owned the Sherman Avenue double house on Lake Mendota and who had owned the Butler Street property for only eight months.<sup>29</sup>

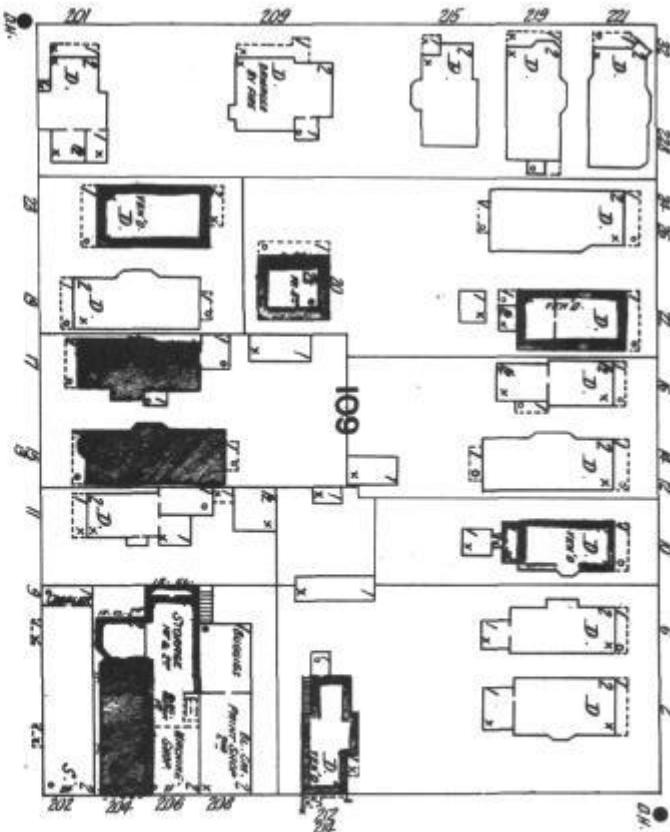
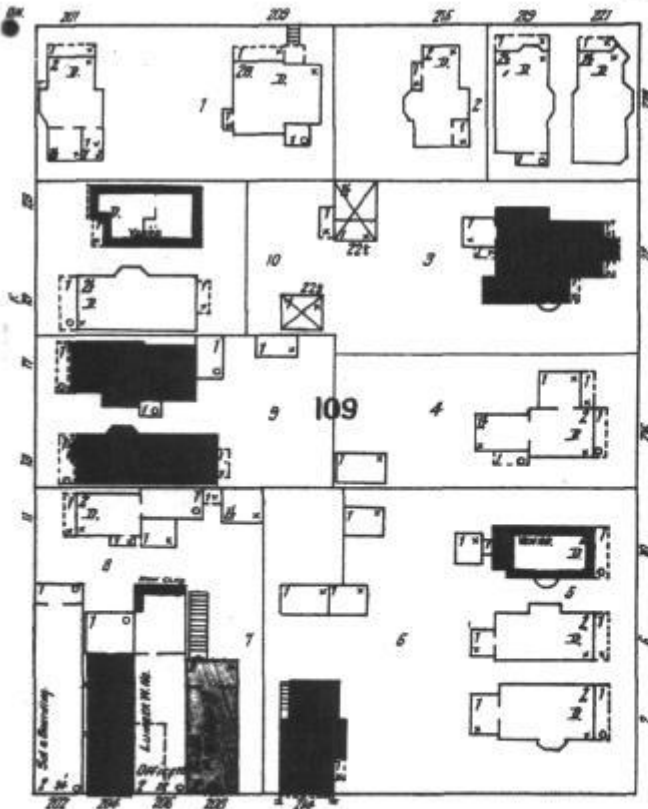
1920's; her son later reported the date as 1937 (*Capital Times* [Madison], January 13, 1982). A search of newspapers and fire department records for Waunakee (the department that technically should have taken the call) proved fruitless for establishing the date. According to Rudy Rhymer, an employee of the hospital in the 1930's and a fireman, the hospital's private fire department responded to the alarm. He recalled that the cottage burned in the spring. Conversation with Rhymer, November 11, 1985. Because no taxes were paid on the building for 1935, it can be deduced that the fire occurred after May 15, 1934, and before May 15, 1935. See Dane County tax rolls, as in note 11, 1934-1935.

A substantial brick house and two outbuildings stood on Fritz's parcel, which was somewhat oversized since it included a portion of the lot to the southeast along Butler Street and a third of the lot which adjoined it at the rear. This extra-large lot provided a timely devel-

<sup>29</sup>For the tax sale see DCD, miscellaneous records, vol. Z, p. 476. Lucien S. Hanks of the Dane County Title Company kindly provided access to abstract records for the Butler Street property. Fred Lamp purchased the property on October 17, 1902, for \$6,000, recording the transaction on October 24.

The dates and sequences of events invite two speculations. First, Lamp may have decided to leave the Sherman Avenue house with its Lake Mendota frontage only after completing a comfortable cottage on Rocky Roost. The new location was closer to his work, and his new cottage would have provided the same pleasures and recreational opportunities as his former residence. Secondly, the June 9 signing occurred only one day after his and Wright's joint birthday. One wonders if they met and hammered out a final agreement about the new house that day.

*Sanborn-Perris insurance maps (left, 1902; right, 1908) showing how the Lamp House and related construction transformed lots 3, 4, and 10 between 1903 and 1905. The Wright-designed house was erected on the back of lot 10. (Compass north is at an oblique angle from the upper right corner of the block.)*



opment opportunity, for by 1900 Madison was suffering a downtown housing shortage. Its population had swelled again, this time from 19,164 in 1900 to 24,301 in 1905, a 27 per cent increase; and persons of modest means, especially students and white-collar workers, were in need of center-city housing. Accordingly, developers halved literally hundreds of lots in the middle of Madison, each half measuring only about thirty-three feet across on the average. On these they erected two- and three-story apartment buildings, sometimes with houses in the rear, bestowing on Madison's downtown housing stock an architecturally distinctive character somewhat similar to parts of Milwaukee. Except for the size of the parcel, it was precisely this kind of transformation Robert Lamp undertook on North Butler Street.<sup>30</sup>

Lamp began with one brick house in 1903; by late 1905 or early 1906, three houses stood on the parcel and Fritz Lamp no longer owned any of them. In June, 1903, Robert purchased from his uncle the back part of the parcel and a half-lot southeast along Butler Street (roughly two-thirds of the property). By September he had nearly finished building what the *Madison Democrat* called a "new American type" house at the back of the parcel. In July, 1904, Robert purchased the remaining third from his uncle, including the existing brick house. Then in April, 1905, he sold only a thirty-three-foot-wide second half-lot to a developer, retaining the brick house and more than forty feet at the back of the lot. Later that year he removed the brick house's wings and moved the core structure about twenty-five feet southeast to the first narrow half-lot. (Each was thirty-three feet wide.) Also in late 1905 the developer to whom he had sold the second half-lot erected a new two-story apartment building on it. Between the developer's new building and the remodelled brick house, Robert constructed a driveway to his new house at the back. (On the adjoining, normally

sized parcel to the southeast, much the same kind of development occurred, but with no rear house.)<sup>31</sup>

The "new American type" house was, of course, Frank Lloyd Wright's design, which the *Democrat* described as a "substantial cottage of 7 rooms" with "a number of features . . . that are not found elsewhere in the city. Among these are the leaded casement windows throughout the house and the arrangement of brick so that the usual stone or wood window sills are avoided." The *Democrat* went on:

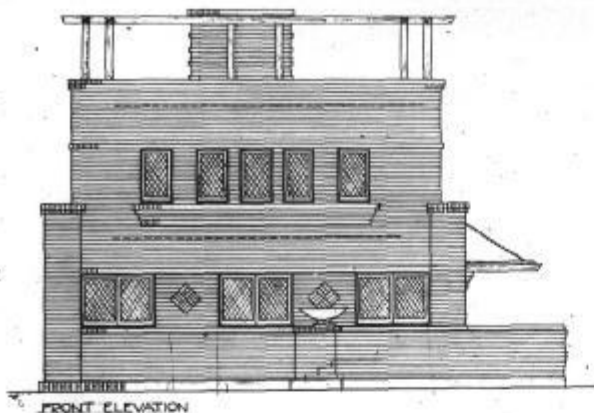
The cottage will be built of white brick, two stories and basement. Owing to the proximity of other buildings Mr. Lamp will put on a flat roof and parapet wall, thus giving him a chance to swing a hammock and obtain a fine view of both Lake Mendota and Monona. He will also have places for window boxes, potted plants, etc., thus really giving the appearance of a roof garden.<sup>32</sup>

Although there is no doubt that the designs emanated from Wright's studio, the finished exterior does not much resemble Wright's own work. It looks instead more like the work of Walter Burley Griffin, who was then employed by Wright. Griffin's touch seems apparent in the roof garden, corner piers, somewhat fussy brickwork, a fascination with diamond shapes, and asymmetrical fenestration. As for the interior, the floor plan, too, is asymmetrical. All of this indicates that other

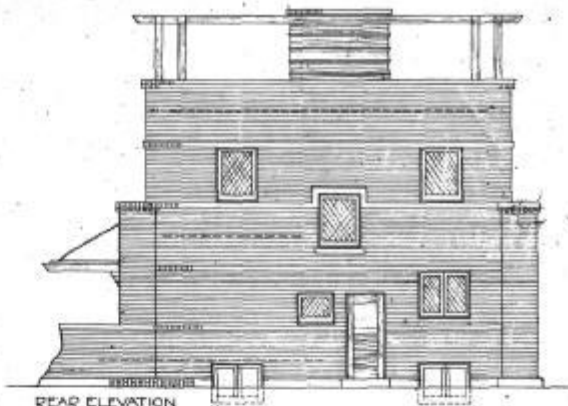
<sup>30</sup>For the type of housing on the lot see the Madison Sanborn-Perris maps for block 109, original plat of Madison, 1902, sheet 6, and 1908, sheet 25, Archives, SHSW. On Madison's development see Mollenhoff, *Madison*, 353-359, and the *Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1911, p. 60.

<sup>31</sup>The sequence of purchases and sales which led to this transformation is somewhat confusing. For the Lamp House and the southeast half-lot see DCD, vol. 193, p. 358, Fred Lamp to Robert Lamp, June 9, 1903, \$4,000; and deed number 281270A, Fritz Lamp to Robert Lamp, June 14, 1907, \$1,500. For the third property (Matt Stutz) see DCD, miscellaneous records, vol. 16, p. 415, land contract, Fred Lamp to Robert Lamp, July 30, 1904, \$4,800; deeds, vol. 201, p. 187, Fritz Lamp to Robert Lamp, April 19, 1905, \$2,500; and deeds, vol. 186, p. 410, Robert Lamp to Matt Stutz, April 19, 1905, \$2,500, which spells out easements for the driveway, landscaping for the Lamp House, and deadlines for moving the brick house. For verification that the new developer, Matt Stutz, had made improvements before May 15, 1906, see City of Madison, Treasurer, tax rolls, 1905 and 1906, for lot 3, block 109, in Dane series 89, Archives, SHSW. See also note 33.

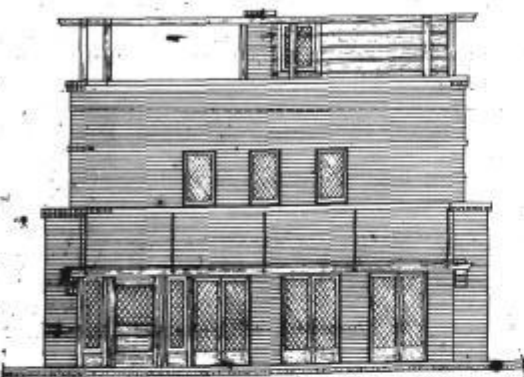
<sup>32</sup>*Madison Democrat*, September 6, 1903. I am indebted to Lance Neckar for this crucial citation.



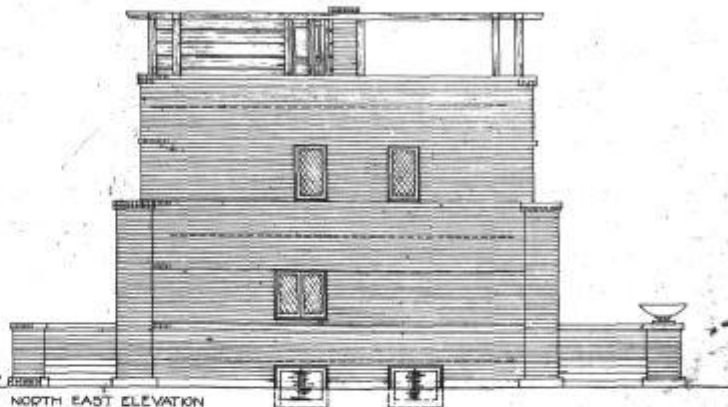
FRONT ELEVATION



REAR ELEVATION



SOUTH WEST ELEVATION

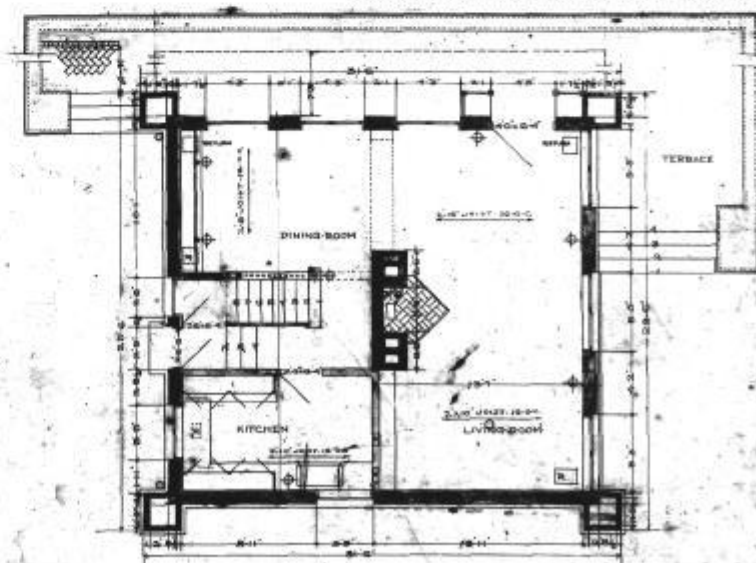
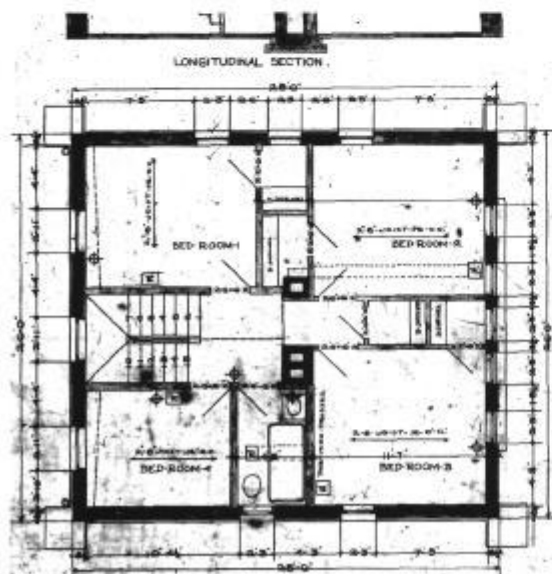


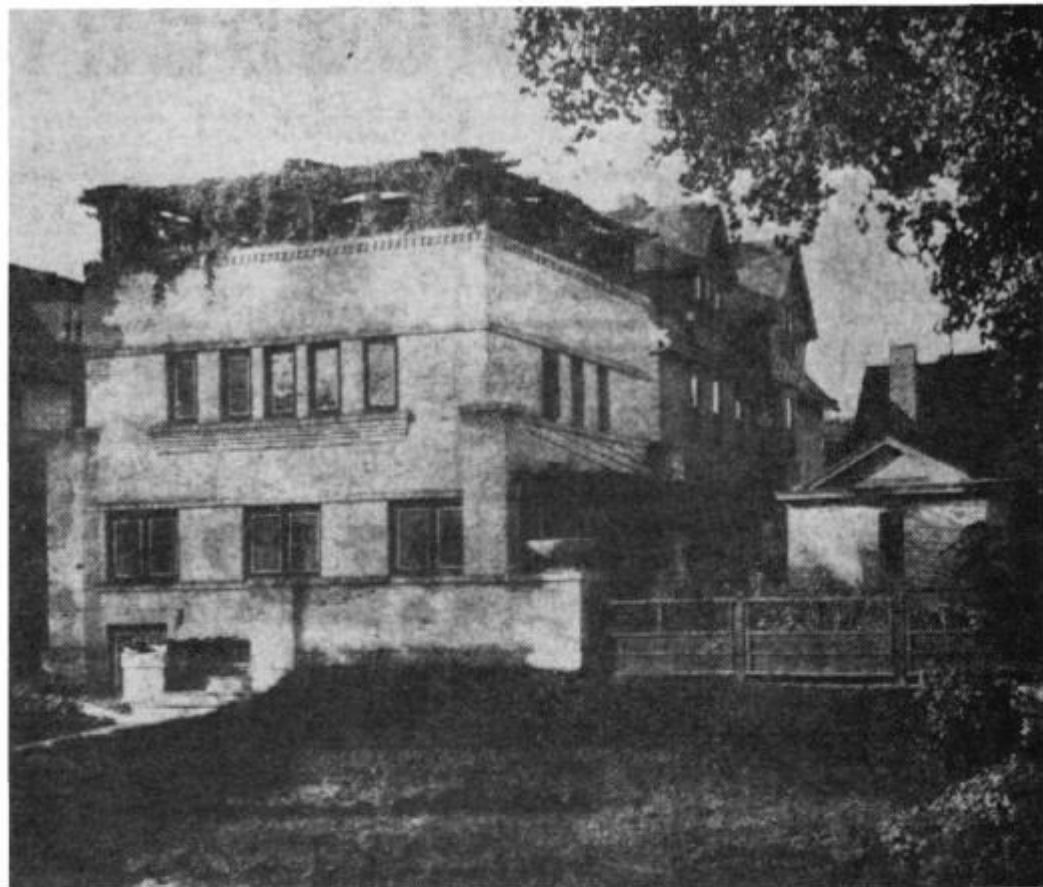
NORTH EAST ELEVATION

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*Elevations and floor plans of the Robert M. Lamp House, drawings 0402.005 and 0402.007 in the Frank Lloyd Wright Memorial Foundation Archives. Previously known as Lamp II and mis-dated as 1904, this 1903 dwelling actually predates an unbuilt 1904–1905 design formerly known as Lamp I and dated 1903. The house's asymmetry, full-canopy roof garden, and fussy brickwork betray the influence of Wright's assistant, Walter Burley Griffin, who evidently handled most of the details while Wright occupied himself with the Larkin Building and Martin family commissions in Buffalo, New York. The elevations labeled southwest and northeast should be northwest and southeast, respectively.*

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Author's Collection

*The Lamp House as it appeared between 1903 and 1913 with its original roof garden intact. No original print of this photograph, which appears in the April 30, 1933, Wisconsin State Journal of Madison, has been found.*

projects absorbed most of Wright's attention from June to September, 1903, when the plans were being developed and the house was gotten substantially underway. Indeed, that was the case, for Wright was laboring on several important Buffalo, New York, commissions at the time, including the famed Larkin Building and dwellings for members of the family that owned the Larkin firm. Accordingly, he turned over responsibility for some smaller jobs to his staff, in this case Walter Burley Griffin. It is therefore no coincidence that the Lamp House's massing, especially its corner piers, bears some relationship to the Larkin building—though the latter is a much more distinguished, finished, monumental design—for the two projects were on Wright's drafting tables at the same time.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup>*Spring Green Weekly Home News*, January 22, March 5 (reporting a Griffin visit on February 27), and April 9, 1903, detailing visits by Wright in connection with Hillside Home School construction. Conversations with Paul Spra-

THE standard lists of Wright's work designate the dwelling as

gue and Narciso Menocal in 1985 and 1986 formed the basis for the Griffin identification, which is readily verified by examining David T. Van Zanten, ed., *Walter Burley Griffin: Selected Designs* (Palos Park, Illinois, 1970), 29, 33, 43, 47, and 51.

Forest Middleton, a Madison man now in his nineties whose family stabled a horse across the street from the construction site when he was a boy, told the author some years ago that Wright was not on the scene during construction but that another Chicago architect was. Middleton and his late wife Leonore owned the Lamp House from the late 1940's through 1968. He and the author's late father-in-law, Ben Bergor, were best friends in the 1890's and 1900's, and Bergor lived only a block from the site. Bergor's daughter became the author's wife in 1963, and Middleton was her godfather. Since the author lived in the Lamp House from 1961 through 1968, before and after his marriage, many opportunities arose to discuss the house with both men. They remembered the house as less interesting than Lamp, whose handicap, red hair, and later purchase of an automobile impressed them unforgettably. They both recalled loitering around the construction site in the summer and early fall of 1903.



Lamp II and assign it a 1904 date. In reality Lamp I was erected and Lamp II was not, and the date is 1903, not 1904.<sup>34</sup> Wright conceived it as a square dwelling with a front entrance and piers at the front only, reaching part way to the roofline.<sup>35</sup> The orientation of the entrance to the front of the lot at this stage of development is deceiving, since Lamp did not buy the actual street frontage facing the dwelling until July, 1904. Instead, the property was served by a long driveway to the left of the brick house on the original site, so the original approach to the Lamp House entrance would have been oblique, not direct, with the front door almost the full length of the house from the driveway or walkway. In this respect the entrance placement does indeed resemble Wright's work. He violates the basic cube or square of the plan with a rear projection for the stairwell, but it terminates in a deck below the roofline. The first-story floor plan flows freely, borrowing somewhat from Wright's summer cottages of the era, which were among his smallest domestic projects to that time.<sup>36</sup> The stairwell, however, is placed a bit off center, making the dining room slightly larger than the kitchen, an asymmetrical feature uncharacteristic of Wright. The second-story plan is decidedly asymmetrical, and the absence of stairs leading from the second story to the roof indicates there was no roof garden at this stage. Since no elevation exists, it is impossible to determine what kind of roof or principal material Wright envisioned.

At the second preliminary stage significant changes occur.<sup>37</sup> The entrance gains a vestibule and moves to the side, reached by means of stairs at the front—an even more indirect

approach. Three unequally sized double windows extend across the front. Hollow piers mark all four corners, not just two, still halting below the roofline. Pencilled additions take the house out of square and make a 28½-foot-by-31½-foot rectangle of it, removing the rear projection. (As built it turned out 29½ feet by 31½ feet.) A terrace materializes on the front and right sides. The second floor acquires stairs to the roof, meaning that the roof garden has been added, and unevenly spaced mullions between the windows in the band along the front of the second story, both atypical features for Wright. As for the floor plans, a brick hearth for the central fireplace appears as a diamond configuration (a Griffin trait), and bookcases and other features are indicated on the first floor. The second-floor hallway becomes enlarged and closet arrangements changed, tidying the bedroom-bathroom configuration at the rear.

The working drawings came next, but they were not followed religiously.<sup>38</sup> Numerous changes occurred during construction in the summer and fall of 1903. A bay window was added on the southeast (incorrectly labeled on the drawing as northeast); the terrace was abbreviated and became an enclosed porch on the northwest (incorrectly labeled southwest). On the rear, an airing porch served all three stories and made it possible to hoist supplies to the roof garden with access to the street from a Webster Street driveway. The servant's bedroom acquired a window on the southeast and lost its window to the rear where a Webster Street house sits close by, thus creating an asymmetrical window pattern on both elevations. The front southeast bedroom received a wider window, and steam heat was installed rather than the indicated forced-air system. A double window also was inserted in the basement at the front.

The asymmetrical mullions, insertion of diamonds into the facade's brickwork, the fussy second-story sills which interrupt a belting course of brick, and a top-heaviness all mark the Lamp House as one of Wright's less successful projects. Much of the problem has to

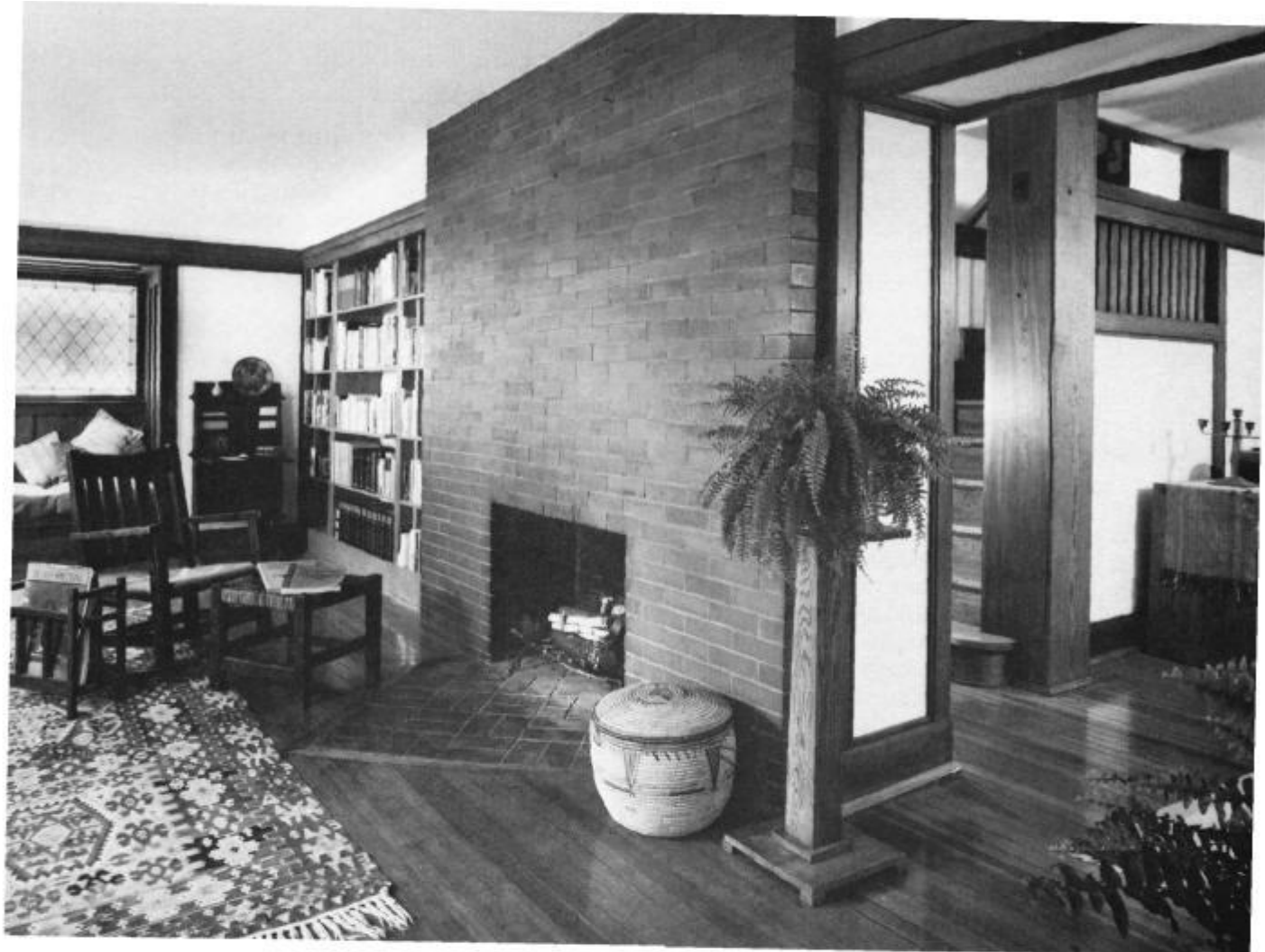
<sup>34</sup>Yuko Futagawa, ed. and photographer, and Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, text, *Frank Lloyd Wright Monograph 1902-1906* (Tokyo, 1987), 89-93 and pls. 155-167. Pfeiffer states that Lamp could view regattas on the lakes. That is not possible because of the distances involved. The roof does provide good views, however.

<sup>35</sup>Drawings 0402.01 and 0402.02, Frank Lloyd Wright Archives, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona (FLWA).

<sup>36</sup>See the first floor plan for the Summer Cottage for E. H. Pitkin, Sapper Island, Desbarats, Ontario (1900) in Futagawa and Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright Monograph 1902-1906*, pl. 67, 68, and 75.

<sup>37</sup>Drawings 0402.03 and 0402.04, FLWA.

<sup>38</sup>Drawings 0402.05 and 0402.07, FLWA.



*Lamp House living room with furnishings of the period. The bay window at the left was added during construction; the dining room is to the right. Woodwork is of red cypress; the upper band of woodwork originally ran across the fireplace as well. Bookcases are a reconstruction based upon the original drawings.*

Elvehjem Museum of Art

do with its pronounced verticality (from the floor of the terrace to the top of the parapet it is 20½ feet), which Wright attempted to minimize with the belting courses, the piers' capitals, and the parapet walls around the terrace. The roof plantings and pergola, too, originally blunted the top-heaviness, which now overwhelms the structure because the pergola has been removed and the roof garden enclosed. Had the terrace not been enclosed, its suspended roof would have countered the vertical effect. The siting emphasizes the dwelling's upward thrust, since the house stands at one of the highest points of Madison's isthmus. The most public views of it are from downhill to the northwest and northeast, so most who look at it see it from the worst vantage points.

Wright never repeated Griffin's full-canopy roof garden, although he certainly employed terraces, and his later Midway Gardens in Chicago was a confection of decks from ground to upper floor. Griffin, however, made frequent use of roof gardens, though usually with more protection and in a way which made the gardens look more like terraces, thus terminating his designs more successfully than he (and Wright) did in the Lamp House.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup>The most flattering view of the Lamp House appears in the *Wisconsin State Journal*, April 30, 1933. No original copy of this issue now exists on paper in a major research library, and a search for the original photograph in Lamp family hands has proved fruitless. The author had a photostat made of the SHSW paper copy before it was dis-

Unsuccessful though the exterior may be, the interior is another matter. It works both esthetically and practically. The broad front door, only 6'4" high by 4 feet wide, opens into a space approximately 24 feet by 13½ feet, yet it seems much larger. Even the dining space, set off by a bracketed continuation of the red cypress banding above the windows, seems bigger than its actual size. The bay window, built-in bookcases and dining room shelving, french doors and casement windows with diamond-shaped panes, and the open stairwell with its geometric baluster make the central living areas an inviting, comfortable space. Wright's bands of cypress above the windows expanded the ceilings, giving, as he said, "generous overhead even to small rooms," especially bedrooms. This banding, when used to frame furniture settings and wall decorations, enhances a room's decorations as well. The second-story floor plan also solves all of the closet and doorway problems which plagued the preliminary drawings.<sup>40</sup>

For furniture, Lamp acquired some ordinary Mission-style items of the day, a few of which survive. They do not bear Wright's stamp, but they were appropriate. Overall, the dwelling charmed Lamp's young relatives, who sixty years later remembered such amenities as a lemon tree in the roof garden, an aquarium with tropical fish, watching Robie operate a player piano, and seeing a parrot and canaries on the roof in the summer.<sup>41</sup>

Local tradition sometimes awards the house an elevator or other contrivances which were to have assisted Lamp. It had none. Like many persons handicapped from birth or in

their early years, Lamp fared nicely in a conventional dwelling. The wide doorway, however, and perhaps the stairwell landings (lighted with narrow, vertical windows not in the working drawings) may have been deliberate accommodations for his canes or crutches.<sup>42</sup>

The partially developed floor plan and the basic concept of the cube seem to have lodged in Wright's mind. He perfected them in a concrete house design for the April, 1907, *Ladies' Home Journal*, a project he had obviously conceived earlier as one of several important 1905-1906 abstract designs. In it the kitchen and dining room are of equal size, and the bedrooms are symmetrically organized, unlike those in the Lamp House. The cantilevered slab roof—easily the concrete building's most stunning trait—at first glance masks the similarity with the Lamp House; but the organizing principles of the earlier dwelling are very much apparent in the later. Like any fine artist, Wright tinkered with both his own ideas and those of others until he improved them to a point which satisfied him, then moved on, sometimes to return to earlier ideas years later for another attempt at perfection.<sup>43</sup>

LAMP let further development of the property lapse. Then in July he acquired the remainder of the parcel from

carded and replaced by a microfilm copy. On roof gardens and Griffin see Van Zanten, *Walter Burley Griffin*, 29, 33, 43, 47, and 51; on roof gardens and Wright see Brendan Gill, "The Sky Line," in the *New Yorker*, June 8, 1987, pp. 62-63.

<sup>40</sup>On the woodwork see Wright, *Autobiography*, 45.

<sup>41</sup>Characterizations are based on interviews with Eunice Lamp Beck, November 6 and 9, 1973; Loreen M. Jacobson, February 5, 1974; and Jennie Flink, February 5, 1974. Furniture from the house was inherited by Lamp's daughter-in-law who has given it to her sister's son, Phillip Starr of Madison. A clock and smoking stand with stained glass inserts were made by the Lakeside Furniture Company and have the label of a Madison furniture store.

<sup>42</sup>Some of the casement windows may have been made by Lamp's father, William Lamp, a glazier. See his obituary in the *Madison Democrat*, January 26, 1913; U.S. Works Progress Administration, Federal Writers Project, Wisconsin, "Madison History—Walking tour of Square Area," pp. 32-33 and 46, in Archives, SHSW; and Betty Cass, "Madison Day by Day," *Wisconsin State Journal*, April 30, 1933. While living in the house in the 1960's, the author heard many fanciful tales about the nonexistent elevator. Cass and others reported that the grounds of the house originally extended to Butler Street, some deploring what they falsely assumed to have been the subsequent erection of the dwellings along the street which mask the Lamp House and endow it with privacy.

<sup>43</sup>*Studies and Executed Buildings by Frank Lloyd Wright. Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright* (1910; reprint, Palos Park, Illinois, 1975), pls. XIV and XIVa. For Wright's tendency to perfect others' ideas see H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School*, 59. He also developed his architectural principles over a long period. *Idem*, 40.

his uncle and must have begun negotiating almost immediately with Wright to design an investment dwelling for it.<sup>44</sup> All along Lamp had plans both to screen his new "American" house from the street with two other houses and to preserve a relatively large yard to give his dwelling a sense of suburban isolation in the middle of the city. While his house was underway in September, 1903, he announced that he was planning a rental house on the first half-lot he had acquired; he said the brick house (still his uncle's property) would be moved northwest. At that point he may still have intended to reach the rear lot (Lamp House site) by way of the old driveway on the southeast. Somewhere along the way, but probably before Wright began working on the plans for the investment dwelling, Lamp changed his mind, deciding to reverse the two, moving the brick house to the southeast and building the new unit to the northwest—a decision made obvious by the orientation of the windows and entrances for all the investment dwelling schemes.

Lamp's change of mind may have affected more than placement of the brick house. It possibly occasioned redesigning the driveway and the landscaping for the Lamp House as well. Its front yard now is separated from the two houses on the street by a low concrete wall, with steps leading from the driveway. This may have been a design decision reached after the Lamp House was completed, and it might explain why the entrance to its front terrace is neither centered nor decisively indirect, both of which would have been more characteristic of Wright's work than the final product.<sup>45</sup>

The proposed investment dwelling has come to be known as Lamp I for at least two reasons: handwritten notes on several of the drawings, and the subsequent interpretation

of those drawings. Lamp's own dated signature appears on a first-floor plan dated December 6, 1904, and it appears without a date on a conceptual sketch, a second-floor plan, and a front elevation (0307.02, 0307.04, and 0307.05). On another elevation (0307.15), Wright wrote in his own hand: "Robie 1899 flw; Madison Wis."<sup>46</sup>

Superficially, these notes make it appear that Wright created some schemes for his friend's new 1897 Sherman Avenue lot, and that these were then revived in 1904, resulting in a different house. That interpretation, however, ignores the overwhelming evidence of the sequences of land purchases, Lamp's financial ties to his uncle, and the dimensions of the lots on Butler Street and Sherman Avenue. All of the designs clearly were meant for a long, narrow lot, in this case only thirty-three feet wide. The investment dwelling schemes are the wrong shape for the Sherman Avenue lot, and, in any case, that neighborhood was—and is—far too grand for a small investment dwelling. Wright's plan for this house was wholly urban, unlike anything else in Madison whose apartment houses for the newly subdivided lots universally had front entrances. Not for years to come did a Madison house on a narrow lot turn a relatively stark side elevation to the street as Wright's Lamp project did. In short, this design is a successor to, not a predecessor of, the Lamp House. The notations yield quickly when put into the context of Lamp's personal real estate transactions and local developments.

At least seventeen drawings exist for this project. They fairly readily sort themselves into three different sets of plans, with a few drawings left over which do not seem to fit unquestionably into any of the three sets. Assigning a sequence to the sets is troublesome, since internal evidence is inconsistent. The external evidence suggests, however, that four preliminary drawings that are signed and annotated

<sup>44</sup>Fritz Lamp to Robert Lamp, April 19, 1904, DCD, deeds, vol. 201, p. 1987. Financial instruments indicate that serious development would not have begun before July. See Mortgage DCD, mort., vol. 16, p. 415, for a land contract between the two, July 30, 1904.

<sup>45</sup>This discussion draws from the plans for the investment dwelling, the easements specified in the deed for the half-lot at the time it was purchased by Matt Statz, and knowledge of the site's geography. See Robert Lamp to Matt Statz, April 19, 1905, DCD, deeds, vol. 186, p. 410.

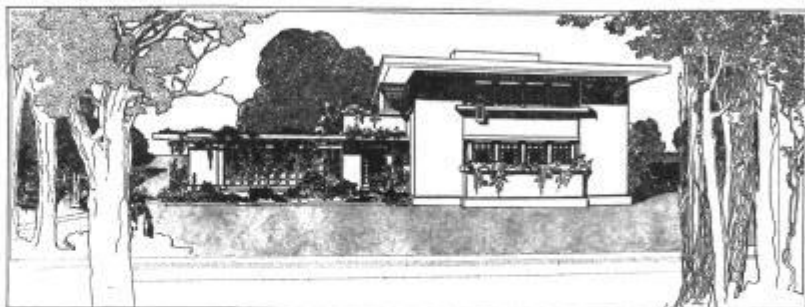
<sup>46</sup>Drawings are in the FLWA. For a comparison of Lamp's handwriting see his letter to William F. Vilas, January 30, 1896, in the William F. Vilas Papers, SHSW. The signature and inscription match unmistakably. Lamp's writing also survives in quantity in the records of the City of Madison treasurer.



# A Fireproof House for \$5000

Estimated to Cost That Amount in Chicago, and Designed Especially for The Journal

By Frank Lloyd Wright



One Side of the House, Showing the Tiled Extension

**T**HE cost of building has increased nearly forty per cent. in the past six years. The thirty-five-hundred-dollar wooden house of six years ago would cost nearly five thousand dollars now; so at the present time it would seem that five thousand dollars ought to represent a low enough cost standard, if the result be permanent and the cost of maintenance lessened.

Changing industrial conditions have brought reinforced concrete construction within the reach of the average home-maker. The maximum strength peculiar to the nature of both concrete and steel is in this system utilized with great economy. A structure of this type is now enduring than if carved intact from solid stone, for it is not only a masonry monolith but interlaced with steel fibres as well. Insulated with an impervious non-conducting inner coating it is damp-proof; it is, too, warmer than a wooden house in winter and cooler in summer.

The plan for a small house of this type, submitted here, is the result of a process of elimination due to much experience in planning the inexpensive house. What remains seems sufficiently complete and the ensemble an improvement over the usual cut-up, over-trimmed boxes doing duty in this class, wherein architecture is a matter of "millwork" and the "features" are apt to peel.

As an added grace in summer foliage and flowers are arranged for as a decorative feature of the design, the only ornamentation. In winter the building is well proportioned and complete without them.

**N**O ATTIC, no "bailer's pantry," no back stairway have been planned; they would be unnecessarily cumbersome in this scheme, which is trimmed to the last ounce of the superfluous. A closet on the level of the stair landing takes care of trunks and suit-cases, and a dry, well-lighted basement storeroom cares for whatever doesn't classify in the various closets. The open kitchen, with pantry conveniences built into it, is more pleasant and as useful as the complement of kitchen, kitchen pantry and "bailer's pantry." Access to the stairs from the kitchen is sufficiently private at all times, and the front door may be easily reached from the kitchen without passing through the living-room.

The walls, floors and roof of this house are a monolithic casting, formed in the usual manner by means of wooden false work, the chimney at the centre carrying, like a huge post, the central load of floor and roof construction. Floors and roof are reinforced concrete slabs approximately five inches thick if graded concrete is used. The roof slab overhangs to protect the walls from sun and the top is waterproofed with a tar and gravel roofing pitched to drain to a downspout located in the chimney-flue, where it is not likely to freeze. To afford further protection to the second-story rooms from the heat of the sun a false ceiling is provided of plastered metal lath hanging eight inches below the bottom of the roof slab, leaving a circulating air space above, exhausted to the large open space in the centre of the chimney. In summer this air space is fed by the openings noted beneath the eaves outside. These openings may be closed in winter by a simple device reached from the second-story windows.

All the interior partitions are of metal lath plastered both sides, or of three-inch tile set upon the floor slabs after the reinforced concrete construction is complete. After coating the inside surfaces of the outside concrete walls with a non-conducting paint, or lining them with a plaster-board, the whole is plastered two coats with a rough sand finish.

The floor surfaces are finished smooth with wooden strip inlaid for fastening floor coverings, or at additional cost noted they may be finished over a rough structural concrete with a half-inch thick dressing of magnesite mixed with sawdust, which renders them less hard

and cold to the touch, and when waxed presents a very agreeable surface in any color.

The interior is trimmed with light wood strips nailed to small, porous terra-cotta blocks, which are set into the forms at the proper points before the forms are filled with the concrete.

**I**N THE composition of the concrete for the outside walls only finely screened bird's-eye gravel is used with cement enough added to fill the voids. This mixture is put into the boxes quite dry and tamped. When the forms are removed the outside is washed with a solution of hydrochloric acid, which cuts the cement from the outer face of the pebbles, and the whole surface glistens like a piece of gray granite. This treatment insures uniformity of color, and if the wooden forms have been properly made of narrow flooring smoothed on the side toward the concrete and oiled, the surface throughout should be smooth and even without unsightly seams.

The house has been designed four sides alike in order to simplify the making of these forms, and so that, if necessary, forms made for one side may serve for all four.

The windows are casement type, swinging outward. The screens or storm sash are fitted within as a part of the window trim, swinging in when the windows need cleaning. All windows may be operated independently of screens by a mechanical device accessible from within at all times and closing beneath the windowsills. The outer sash might at no very great additional expense be made of metal. The trellis over the entrance might give place to a concrete roof slab similar to the roof of the house, should a covered porch be a necessity.

The house may be placed with either the living-room front or the terrace front to the street, as indicated in the exterior perspectives.

## Estimate of Cost

Concrete construction, masonry and plastering	\$3100
Carpentry, millwork, sash-doors and screens, labor and trimming	1100
Plumbing and furnace	400
Writing	70
Painting and glazing	100
Hardware	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4960</b>
If magnesite floors are used add	320
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5300</b>

**NOTE.**—The architect, Mr. Frank Lloyd Wright, Forest and Chicago Avenues, Oak Park, Illinois, has agreed to furnish plans, specifications, details and complete service for ten per cent. of the cost of the house. Where plans, specifications and details only are wanted his charge will be seven and a half per cent. of the cost, provided the purchaser agrees to employ a competent superintendent and to execute the drawings without changes, unless approved upon in advance with the architect. As the estimate is based on Chicago prices it is well to remember that in different parts of the country the figures will vary, according to local conditions.



Architectural View of the House and Grounds

One of the many advantages of Pantasote leather furniture.

**Better Than Real Leather**  
and sold for  
**One-Third the Price**

This material is absolutely true, as many thousand of men

**Pantasote LEATHER**

have testified. Pantasote is more durable, is lighter, softer, easily cleaned, does not crack, is fireproof, water-proof and more and more like leather in every respect. Unexcelled seat leather and cover material as such. Made in a variety of patterns and colorings.

### SEND FOR SAMPLE CHAIR SEAT

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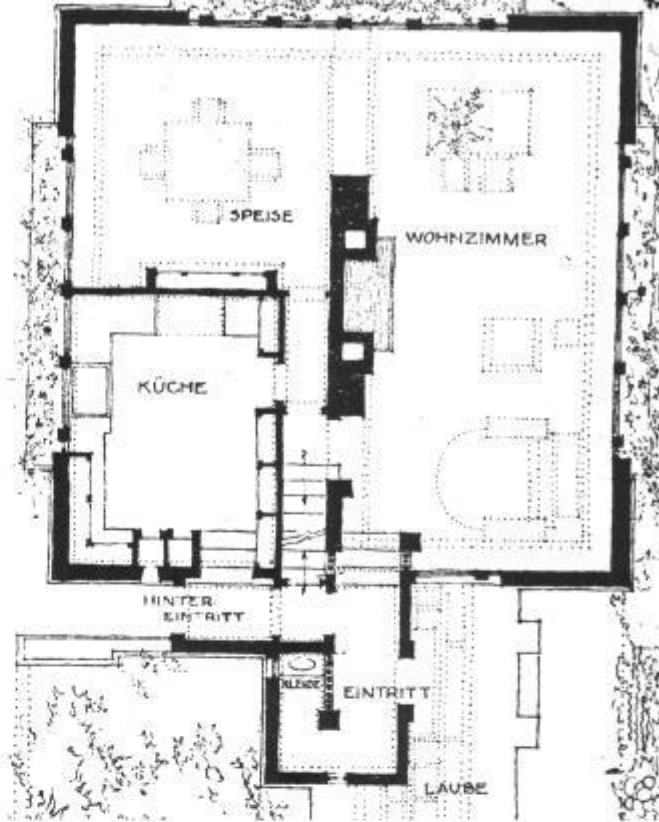
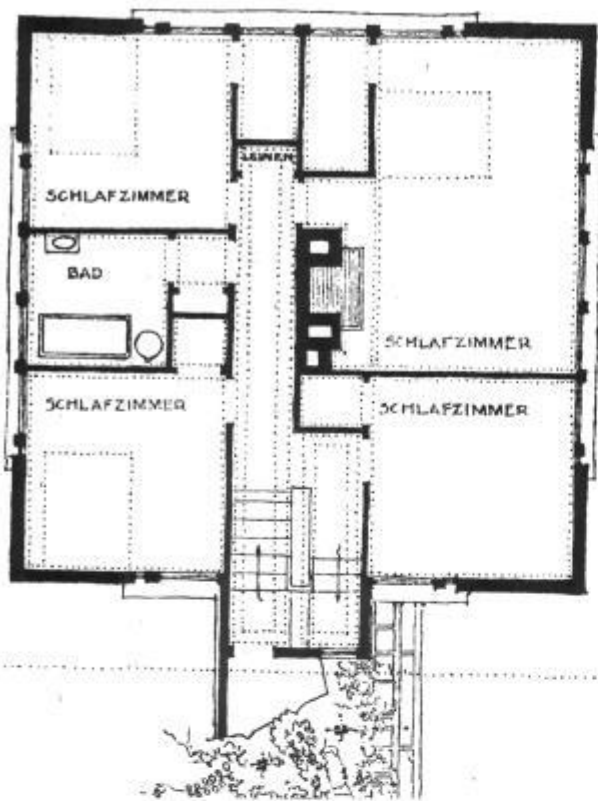
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*"A Fireproof House for \$5000" from the Ladies' Home Journal, April, 1907 (left), with floor plans (above) from Plate XIVa of the famed 1910 Wasmuth Portfolio published in Berlin. This well-known design obviously derives from the earlier Lamp House (page 110). Wright frequently returned to his own and others' partially developed ideas, carrying them to perfection. Here he made the plan symmetrical, replaced the esthetically unsuccessful roof with a distinctive slab, and substituted flat, unadorned concrete for the fussy brickwork. The basic shape and floor plan became a standard American house form.*


were the first of the three sequential sets. Even when working on modest projects, Wright usually started with plans for a larger building, then pared the size and special features at each successive stage. In terms of size, the signed drawings depict a 1,500-square-foot house, while the second sequential set (0307.09 and 0307.10) depicts a 1,250-square-foot house, and the third sequential set (0307.15, 0307.13, and 0307.14) depicts an 800-square-foot house.<sup>47</sup> The signed set depicts a house with a dining room, a basement, and perhaps a furnace, while the other two sets of plans lack these amenities, again suggesting that Wright designed this largest house first.

The three preliminary drawings for that house show fairly well developed plans and an

elevation. Assuming that the signed perspective sketch was first, it is logical to conclude that it led directly to the other signed drawings, and that these preliminary drawings then led to the two sequential sets. But the signatures on the four drawings vary. Lamp signed three preliminary drawings similarly, either using two initials or an abbreviation of his given name plus his middle initial. But he signed the perspective sketch with his first and last names. Persons who sign documents sequentially, as Lamp often did as city treasurer, may vary their signatures from set to set, but not within sets. It may be safe to conclude that the perspective sketch was indeed the first drawing; but it is not safe to conclude that it led directly to the other signed drawings.

<sup>47</sup>Drawings are in the FLWA.

THE question of sequence aside, for analysis of the three sets of



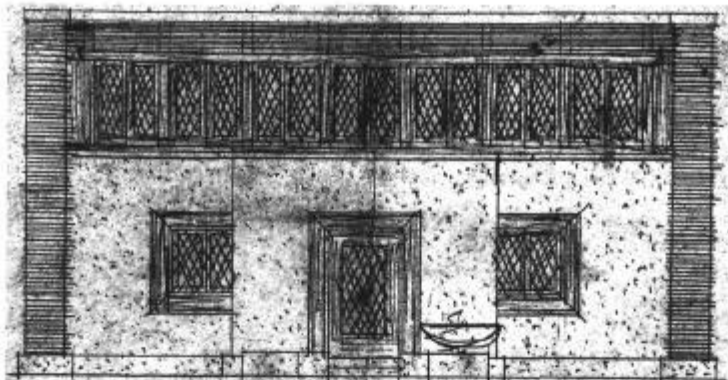
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*Drawings endorsed by Robert Lamp in December, 1904, for Wright to develop further. The project, never realized, was an investment dwelling for the narrow parcel (24 North Butler Street) directly in front of Lamp's 1903 house (see map on page 108). The perspective drawing above (drawing 0307.002 in the Wright archive) may not have preceded the drawings to the right (from top, 0307.005, 0307.004, and 0307.003); no positive sequence has been established for the drawings. The small house would have fronted on the alley, taking advantage of the southeast exposure. The second-floor overhang created an interesting shelf in the bedrooms, while the hallway was illuminated naturally by windows on both sides of a bedroom closet.*

plans it is easiest to begin with the perspective sketch and then go on to the three sequential sets. The preliminary perspective features a dwelling with a pergola on its roof, similar to that atop the Lamp House, and with overhanging second-story window bays which extend across the entire front and rear elevations. (Wright used a somewhat similar but a full-sized overhang in the 1901 Hillside Home School.) All of the subsequent drawings in all three sets include this feature; but only the floor plans in the second of the sequential sets show projections both at the front and back. There each bay contains an ample twelve windows. The front bay facing southeast would have caught the available natural light to good

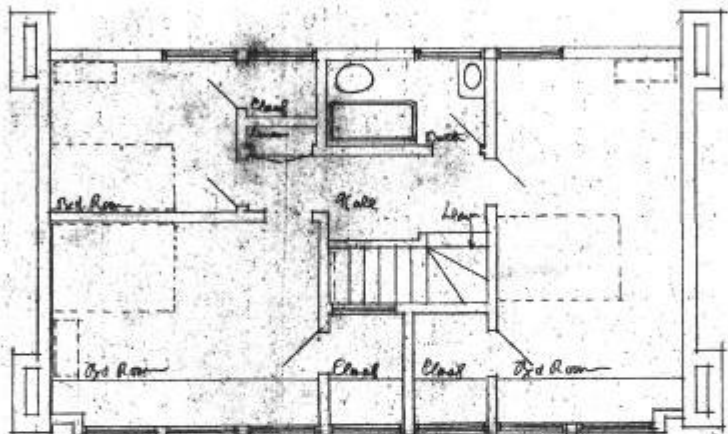
advantage for heat in the winter and breezes in the summer, but the rear bay would have faced the unattractive back wall of an adjoining apartment building. The overhangs would have begun 2'8" from the floor, deeply recessing the leaded casement windows in a pleasant, almost romantic manner, and creating a shelf at an interesting height for use as a desk, window seat, bookshelf, greenhouse, or workspace.

This first set of plans is for a rectangular structure, measuring 19 feet by 36 feet on the ground floor and 22 feet by 36 feet on the second floor. Its relatively simple facade contains seven double casement windows across the front of the projecting second story, two dou-



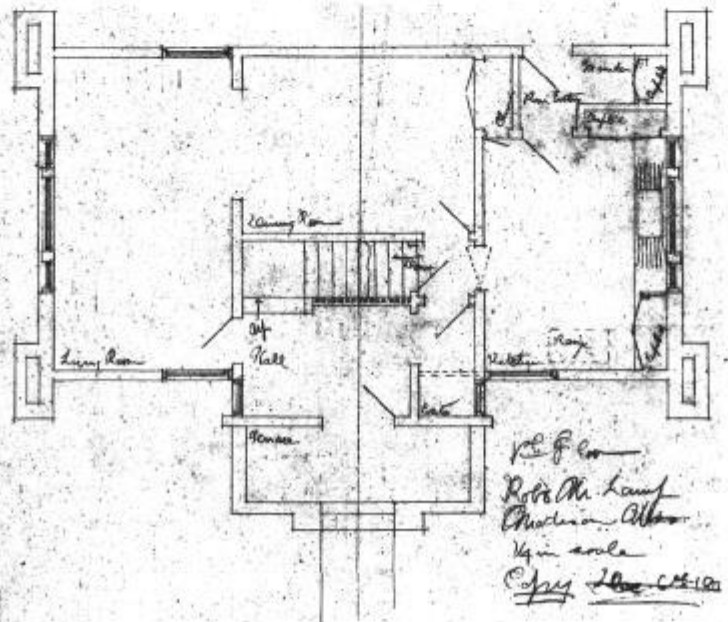
Grand Elevation  
 R. M. Lamp  
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Second Floor Plan  
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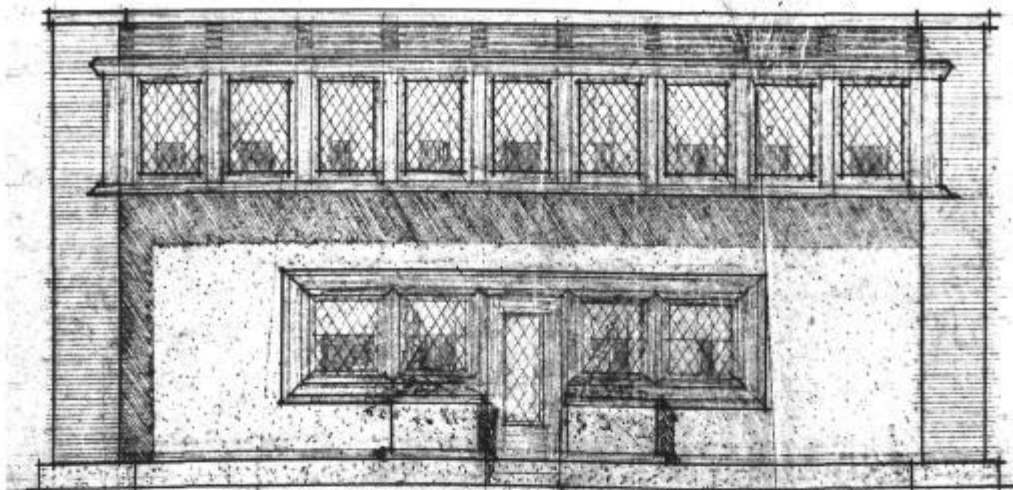
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1st Floor  
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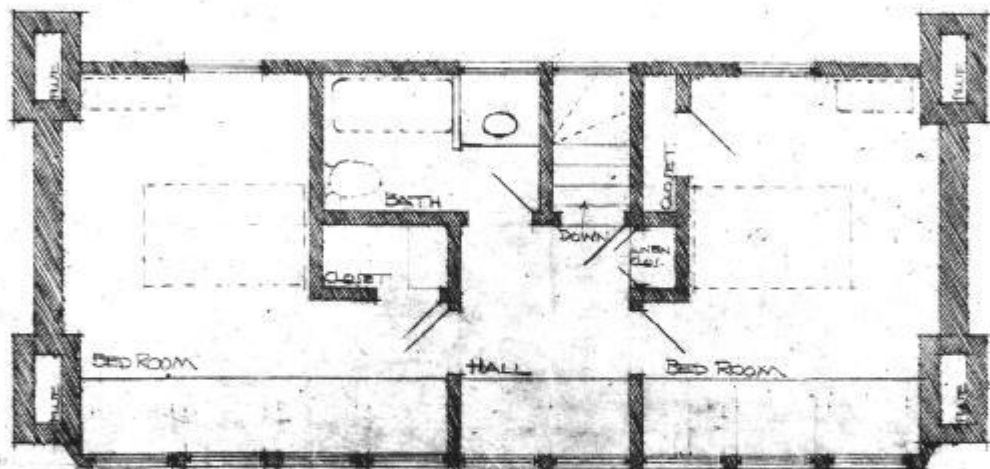
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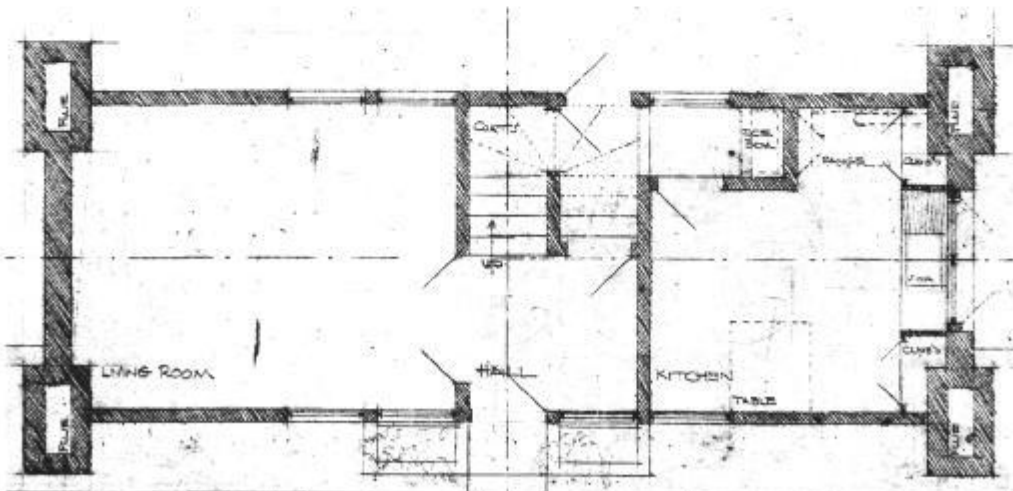
FRONT ELEVATION  
SCALE ONE INCH EQUALS FOUR FEET

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SECOND FLOOR PLAN

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FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE ONE FOOT EQUALS FOUR FEET

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*Probable last set of plans (left, from top, Wright archives number 0307.15, 0307.14, and 0307.13) for the unbuilt investment project. Wright simplified the entrance, hallway, and second-story windows, but provided no easy access to the kitchen. The side walls would have been brick, the facade plaster and wood. At the same time Wright was creating related row-house designs (above) for Larkin Company workers in Buffalo. (From Henry-Russell Hitchcock, In the Nature of Materials.) Finances and Wright's travels may have kept Lamp from building the dwelling.*

ble casement windows and broad door on the first story, with a small terrace. The side walls are relieved by centered windows, probably at eye-level at least in the kitchen above the sink. Provision seems to have been made for a furnace, since there are basement stairs and one of the piers could act as chimney. Although the first story has a windowless dining room, access to the kitchen is logical and direct. A countertop pass-through also links the dining room and kitchen. The stairwell appears to be open, with some sort of decorative screen indicated. The second story has three bedrooms, two with the delightful window shelf. All the closets have windows, and one has an opposing window to light the stairwell. The bathroom is very small, with a sink immediately adjacent to a window where it would receive excellent light. In short, this scheme is considerably more workable than the others. It is no wonder that Robert Lamp approved it.

The four small bedrooms and sewing alcove shown in the second set of drawings indicate that Wright intended this house for family use, not student rentals. The arrangement of the rooms both upstairs and down, however, leads to impractically large hallways for

so small a dwelling. Apparently to reduce costs, the building has neither a basement (there is no provision for basement stairs) nor a furnace; rather there are stoves in the centers of both side walls and a coal shed at the back. Judging from the other sets of drawings, Wright intended the side walls to be brick and the front and rear to be plaster and wood. Overall dimensions were 17 feet by 36 feet.

In the third set of preliminary plans the house is smaller, 12 feet by 31 feet on the ground floor, and 14 feet by 31 feet on the second. The facade looks tidier since the number of windows is reduced to nine along the front and only four at the rear. The rear second-story projection disappears, and the number of bedrooms is reduced to two. The window arrangement of the first floor is simplified, too. But there are still shortcomings. Getting to the kitchen from the front hall requires going down the back steps and up again, past the ice box, then through the kitchen door. (Was a doorway opposite the double doors to the living room mistakenly omitted?) The hallways are simpler, but still large for such a small house. There does not seem to be provision for central heating, only for four stoves, each



*The Lamp House as it appeared in the middle 1960's, when it was divided into three apartments. (The author lived on the second floor.) Photograph by Paul Vanderbilt, a college friend of Wright scholar Henry-Russell Hitchcock.*

WHI(X2)20121

of the piers at the corners becoming chimneys. The coal shed has vanished, leaving the perplexing problem of where to store coal or wood. The materials are clearly brick and plaster, with a gently sloped roof between the massive side walls.

Architecturally all the designs related to the housing for workers which Wright was designing about this time for the Larkin firm in Buffalo (or perhaps for Edward C. Waller in Chicago). Lamp's intention to erect an affordable, attractive rental unit for workers was the same as Larkin's or Waller's, though on a smaller scale. He envisioned one unit; they envisioned many. As a small-scale real estate venture in Madison, however, Lamp's proposed undertaking was wholly in tune with the city's housing needs of 1904.<sup>48</sup>

Why the dwelling was never erected is not known, but it is likely that Lamp failed to se-

cure the necessary financing. The terms of his land contract with his uncle were modest enough: payments of only ten dollars a month with 5 per cent interest on a balance of \$4,250.00, or only \$332.50 in the first year. But he had to raise the money to move and alter the brick house, plus the money to build a single-family investment dwelling on a lot which easily could accommodate a two-family apartment building. Such an arrangement

<sup>48</sup>For the workers' apartments see *Studies and Executed Buildings*, pl. XLa (assigned to E. C. Waller); Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials*, fig. 108 (who says the project was for the Larkin Company in Buffalo); and Futagawa and Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright Monograph 1902-1906*, pp. 86-87 (Workmen's Row Houses, Larkin Company, Buffalo, 1904). Pfeiffer notes the "worker" nature of what everyone until now has called Lamp I, and he juxtaposes it with the Larkin workers' apartments.



Late 1960's view from East Mifflin Street, the eastest angle from which to see the building. The fire escape was installed when the house was converted to apartments. WH(X3)35500

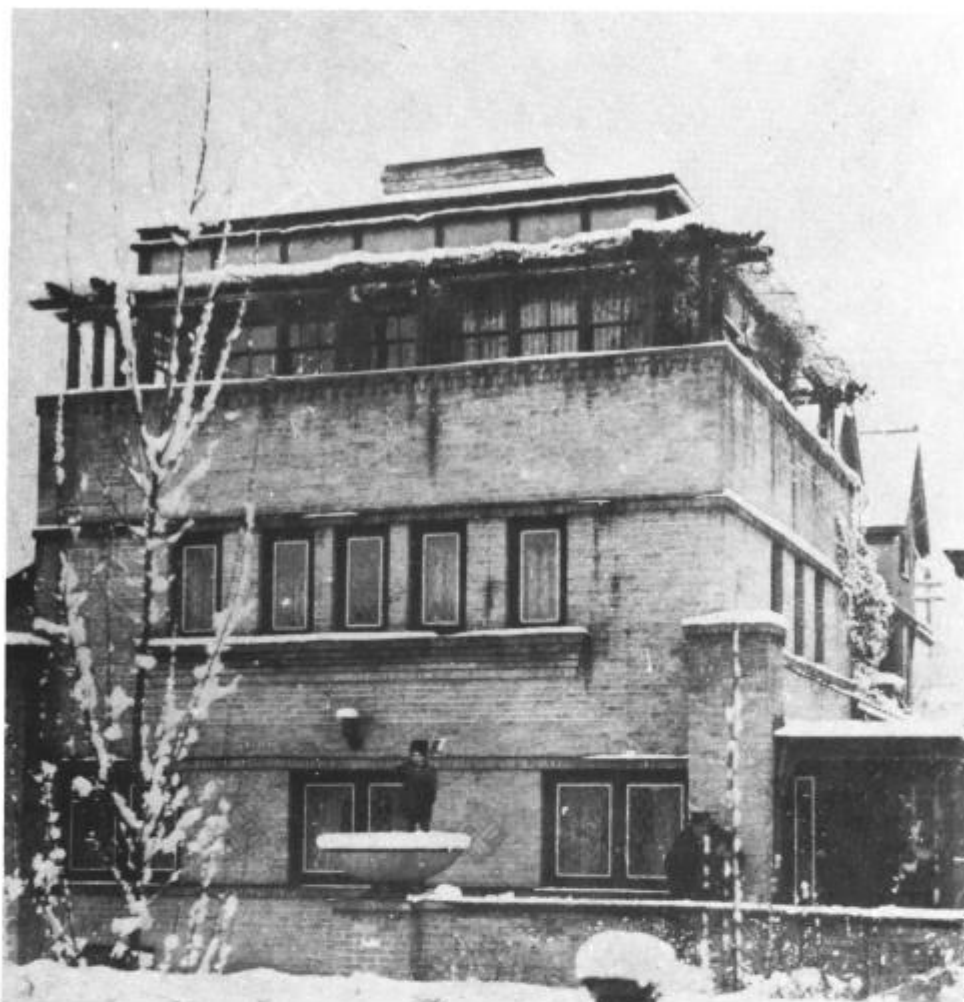
might not have attracted lenders. Furthermore, Lamp may have had trouble securing working drawings and specifications from Wright, who left for Japan in February, 1905, and did not return until April, the very month in which Lamp sold the lot. Whatever the reason, he did sell, spelling out in the deed his intentions to move the old brick house by June 1, reserving an eight-foot strip for a driveway or court, and informing the new owner that he would cut one foot of land from the slope at the front of the lot for the driveway and three feet from the rear of the lot for a parking court or terrace, which he promised to accomplish by November 1.<sup>49</sup>

The building that arose in place of a Frank Lloyd Wright design was prosaic indeed—one of the ubiquitous two-story apartment buildings in downtown Madison. Bad timing, Wright's trip to Japan, and Lamp's apparent

inability to find financing or wait for the project to come to a conclusion kept the city from acquiring a delightful urban complex of a town house and cified worker house just two blocks from the capitol.

From 1903 to 1911 Lamp and his father William and aunt Dora Lamp Gest appear to have lived contentedly at 22 North Butler Street in their Wright house. Robert acquired a car in 1905 or 1906, a Holsman, made in Chicago, for which he was granted Wisconsin license 2288. (The auto purchase, too, may

<sup>49</sup>Land contract between Robert Lamp and Fritz Lamp, July 30, 1904, DCD, miscellaneous records, vol. 16, p. 415; and Robert Lamp to Matt Stutz, warranty deed of April 19, 1905, DCD, deeds, vol. 186, p. 410. For Wright's activities see Twombly, *Frank Lloyd Wright*, 114–115 and 118.



WH6X321540

*Fay Shaw (standing in planter) and Robert Lamp, winter of 1913–1914. Lamp married the boy's mother, who had been his housekeeper, in July, 1913, and that fall had the roof garden enclosed as a playroom, retaining the pergola and some plantings. (The pergola was removed in 1962, owing to roof leaks.) Fay Shaw died April 8, 1914.*

have helped scotch the investment dwelling.) His travel agency and insurance business thrived, with illustrious clients like U.S. Senator William F. Vilas heading the list. And his friendship with Wright seems to have continued unabated, since the architect, his wife, and clients Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Cheney traveled to Madison by automobile—a feat worth noting in those days—in August, 1908, to spend a weekend with Lamp at Rocky Roost. (A year later Wright and Mrs. Cheney ran off together to Europe, an event which propelled Wright for the first time into the headlines.)

Then in 1910 or 1911 Dora Gest left the Lamp House, evidently moving to Washington to be with her son. In need of a house-

keeper for himself and his father, Lamp employed a young divorcee, Elizabeth Keller Shaw from Waupaca County, who brought with her a son, Fay, who was two or three years old. On January 25, 1913, William died at the age of eighty-seven. Six months later, Robert and Elizabeth were married in Chicago, he shaving a year from his age, giving it as forty-six, and she giving hers as twenty-three.

The marriage prompted many changes in Lamp's life. He adored his stepson just as he liked most children, and in September, 1913, he evidently had the roof garden enclosed as a playroom for him. Tragically, the little boy died of pneumonia on April 8, 1914, only five days after he had turned six years old. The

Lamps immediately sought to adopt a boy of about the same age, and in the process they must have discovered that Elizabeth's divorce decree never had been obtained. Final action came on December 12, 1914, in Waupaca County, and on June 1, 1915, Richard Lamp became their adopted son. Again, happiness reigned only briefly in the Lamp dwelling, for Robert grew ill by early 1916, suffering from kidney and heart disease. He spent the last

month of his life in the Madison Sanitarium, where he signed his will in a shaky hand on March 1. He died there five days later, three months and two days short of his fiftieth birthday, and not at the age of forty-four in the little cream-white brick house designed for him by his lifelong friend since 1878 or 1879, Frank Lloyd Wright, who erred in the details but not in reporting the depth of his affection for his "one intimate companion," Robie Lamp.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup>*Madison City Directory*, 1904, 1907, 1909, 1911, 1914, and 1916; Wisconsin Department of Motor Vehicles, *Register of Owners of Motor Vehicles*, 1906, license 2288; Lamp to Vilas, July 18, 1906, in the Vilas Papers; *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 18, 1908 (Rocky Roost visit); *Madison Democrat*, January 26, 1913; marriage license for Robert Lamp and Elizabeth Shaw, July 21, 1913, office of the register of deeds for Cook County, Chicago, Illinois; bills for roofing in Robert Lamp probate file, Dane County Probate Court

Files, box 488, old Dane Series 013/10/6, Archives, SHSW; Mrs. E. G. Heggen, sister of Elizabeth Shaw Lamp, interview with the author, summer, 1967; Orin A. Stevenson, clerk of Waupaca Circuit Court, to the author, October 19, 1967; Fay Shaw death certificate, DCD, death records, vol. 16, p. 427; Dane County Court guardianship and miscellaneous records, microfilm roll no. 171-C-36, consulted with permission of the court.



"Robie" Lamp sent this comic portrait of himself to young Fay Shaw while he was on a trip to Chicago in 1912 or 1913.