BROADACRE & SQUARE USONIANS

Jacobs 1936

Broadacre City, 1935

Typical Usonian Wall Section

Pope-Leihey, 1939

Rosenbaum, 1939
Tripartite arrangement of domestic spaces

BASICS OF
THE L-PLAN
USONIAN HOUSE

The L-plan Usonian design was Wright’s answer to the dilemma of Domestic America. It was a compact single-story plan that could be built cheaply, but could also be very beautiful. The Depression required cheap construction, but, since 1932 and the war were over, more expensive materials were employed for their beauty. The basic L-plan encloses part of its site by placing the living space at 90° to the quiet space.

The basic design principle that brought about the Usonian house is the same as that which Wright has established early in his career. The prime activity space, the living room, dominates the design, but even more so here than in its Prairie works. Secondary activities, the workspace (kitchen) in particular, are allotted minimal space, and the bedrooms, upstairs in early work and flame designs, are brought to ground level.

The drawings presented here, simplified, to make design principles as clear as possible.

In the plan at the upper left, similar to the first L-plan Usonian, the Jacobson First Residence (5:22), the living room, without doors to the other activities areas, is the room in all Wright’s designs, though a secondary entrance would lead to these areas and actually provide a common barrier for pedestrian traffic.

The living room of a Usonian home is its largest space. From the workspace, small enough to do all the work by turning, rather than walking, the housewife has a view down the gallery and can be in the dining or living areas quickly. Usually there is a fireplace in both the living room and master bedroom, as well as any additional guest bedroom. The utility space may be at level or located below ground. More than this, the house is designed to accommodate the needs of a large family, and how it is organized for human habitation, that is our prime concern.

In the drawings of Usonian structures here and in the plans, thin lines other than the grid lines represent walls, floor to ceiling or window, and windows are room portions, usually of sandstone, wood, or brick. Thick walls are exterior walls, perhaps with frame in between. Thick boards are the masonry masses with which the roofs are covered.

The attempt has been made throughout the Usonian drawings to keep each specific space the same size, wherever the unit module or configuration, though the nature of organic design encourages this being made as adaptable as possible. Throughout all variations, standard elements are kept as regular as possible, so that underlying design principles may be most easily observed.

Creative detail, so much a part of Wright’s genius, beyond the scope of these drawings of Usonian possibilities. How a simple 90° L can be turned into plan, other angles, or how it can be curved; and how the size and number of one space will affect the entire spatial control, is the creative aspect dealt with here.

In the classical 4 dimensions applied to the unit module for designs of the Usonian drawings, here and following, each module (except some rare changes) with 60° square feet, yielding the basic Usonian plan on the previous page, 1562 sq. ft. In the Hex Below, 1560.

80° Hexagonal plan
(Inside L-plan set on hexagonal module)

4 bedrooms, 3 baths

The 80° L-plan type house is capable of infinite variety. Wright started with an inside (80°) L-plan, then developed an intermediate (180°) version of the Usonian house. Further extension to a 270° gives an outside (270°) L-plan. The Prime Activity and Quiet spaces meet at the Workspace, keeping the tripartite arrangement of space intact. Wright would, however, try most any possibility; move the bedroom wing to the other side of the living room for instance, even though it would yield no tripartite spatial arrangement.

Outside (270°) L-plan (wing off)

Outside (270°) L-plan
Front gallery

Outside (270°) L-plan
(wing off), with back gallery
USONIAN ANALYSIS

Sergeant, John. FLW's Usonian Houses
Jacobs, Herbert. Building with FLW
Morton, Terry. The Pope-Kelley House
P. & S. Hanna. FLW's Hanna House
Reisely, Roland Usonia, New York
Rosenbaum, Alvin. Usonia, FLW's Designs...

McCarter, Robert. FLW, Ch. 9
MacKenzie, Archie. "Rewriting the Natural House," in
McCarter, A Primer on Arch'l Principles
Burns, John. "Usonian Houses," in Yesterday's Houses...
Handlin, David. The Modern Home
Wright, Gwendolyn. Building the Dream

THE USonian Vocabulary

USonian Vocabulary

MASER BED
CHILDREN'S BED
BATH
KITCHEN
DRIVING
LIVING
PUBLIC FACADE
PRIVATE FACADE

USonian AnalySis

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FLW CHRONOLOGY 1932-1959

1932
FLW **Autobiography** published, 1st ed. (also 1943, 1977)
FLW *The Disappearing City* published (decentralization advocated)
Malcolm Wiley Hse., Proj. #1, Minneapolis, MN (revised and built 1934)
Oct. Taliesin Fellowship formed, 32 apprentices, additions to Taliesin Bldgs.

1933
Jan. Hitler comes to power in Germany, diaspora to America: Gropius (Harvard, 1937), Mies v.d. Rohe (IIT, 1939), Mendelsohn (Berkeley, 1941), A. Aalto (MIT, 1942)

*Hillside Theater, Curtain, outbuildings, Taliesin, Spring Green, WI

1934
*Broadacre City* Masterplan (proj.), model begun
First issue of *Taliesin* magazine
Dec. FLW visits Pittsburgh, Bear Run site
First year of annual move to Arizona with entire fellowship, Chandler, AZ. Broadacre model made

1935
*Edgar J. Kaufmann Hse., (= Fallingwater), Mill Run, PA (1935-7)
*Lusk Hse., Huron, SD (proj.)
*Hoult Hse., Wichita, KS (proj., first Usonian)

Apr. Broadacre City model tours USA: New York, Pittsburgh, Washington DC, WI, MI
Apr.-June. “Second 100 Days.” W.P.A. (1935-43); R.A.; Social Security; Rural electrification

1936
Jan. Fellowship at Chandler
*Herbert Jacobs Hse., (Usonian) Madison, WI
*Paul & Jean Hanna Hse., Stanford, CA (= "Honeycomb", additions 1946, 1956)
*Johnson Wax Admin. Bldg., Racine, WI (1936-9; 1944-50)

China-Japan War; Spanish Civil War; Rome-Berlin Axis formed

1937
FLW sick with pneumonia, no trip to AZ in Winter 1936-7
*Herbert F. Johnson Hse., (= Wingspread) Wind Point, WI (vic. Racine)
*Kaufmann Dept. Store Office, Pittsburgh, PA

June. FLW travels to Russia to attend World Conference of Architects

Dec. Buys 800 acres of government land in Paradise Valley, AZ, becomes Taliesin West
Ministry of Education, L. Costa & O. Niemeyer, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

1938
Jan. FLW in Time, Architectural Forum
*T-West* begun with construction of “SunTrap”, Scottsdale, AZ (1938-present)
*Ardmore Suntop Homes, Ardmore, PA
*Florida Southern College Master Plan (& Pfeiffer Chapel), Lakeland, FL (1938-58)
*Fallingwater Guest Hse., Mill Run, PA
*Monona Terrace Civic Center, Madison, WI (proj., also 1954, constructed 1994)
*Midway Barns, Taliesin, Spring Green, WI
*Ben Rebuhn Hse., Great Neck, NY
*Ralph Jester Hse., Palos Verdes, CA (proj., plywood, circles)
*Usonia II Cooperative Settlement, Okemos, MI (proj. vic. Lancing)

Sept. "House for $5000" Life Magazine
Villa Mairea, A. Aalto, Noormarkku, Finland, (1938-41)

1939
*Loren Pope-Leighy Hse., Falls Church, VA (1939-40, moved to Mt. Vernon 1964)
*Leigh Stevens Hse. & Estate (= Aldbrass) Yemassee, SC
*Stanley Rosenbaum Hse., Florence, AL (additions 1946)
*Bernard Schwartz Hse., Two Rivers, WI (copy of Life Hse., Sept. 1938)
*Goetsch-Winkler Hse., Okemos, MI (also 1949 proj.)
*George Sturges Hse., Brentwood, CA (additions 1942)

Invited to lecture in London, later published as *An Organic Architecture* Gone with the Wind, Wizard of Oz. Grapes of Wrath published

1939-45 World War II in Europe (US joins 1941)

1940
FLW solo exhibit at MoMA, New York (includes model Usonian Hse.)
FLW Foundation established, tax-free educational organization
*John C. Pew Hse., Madison, WI
*Theodore Baird Hse., Amherst, MA
*Gregor Affleck Hse., Bloomfield Hills, MI (1940-1)
1941
*Arch Oboler Hse., (= Eaglefeather) Malibu, CA (proj.)
Anthology FLW: On Architecture ed. F. Gutheim, published
S. Giedion’s Space, Time and Architecture

1942
*Quadruple Housing (= Cloverleaf, for F.H.A.)
H.R. Hitchcock, In the Nature of Materials (first English FLW book)

1943
*Herbert Jacobs Hse. II, (= Solar Hemicycle) Middletown, WI (1943-8)
Ayn Rand, The Fountainhead published (movie with Gary Cooper, 1949)

1944
*Johnson Wax Research Tower, Racine, WI
"Glass House," Ladies Home Journal

1945
*V.C. Morris Hse. (= Seacliff), San Francisco, CA (proj.)
Aug. end of World War II
FLW, When Democracy Builds published (revision of "Disappearing City")

1946
*Calico Mills Dept. Store, Ahmedabad, India (proj. for Sarabhi)
*Ayn Rand Hse., (proj. Hollywood, or Redding, CT)
*Roger Lacy Hotel, Dallas, TX (proj.)
Edgar J. Kaufmann Desert Hse. by Richard Neutra, Palm Springs, CA (1946-7)

1947
*Point Park Community Ctr., Pittsburgh, PA (proj., scheme #2 1948)
*Unitarian Church, Madison, WI
*Usonia II Housing, Pleasantville, NY (incl. Sol Friedman Hse., 1948)

1948
Jan. FLW issue Architectural Forum
*Morris Gift Shop, San Francisco, CA
*Sol Friedman Hse., Pleasantville, NY
Equitable Bldg., by P. Belluschi, Portland, OR; GM Technical Center, by E. Saarinen, Warren, MI

1949
Feb. 26. FLW meets with Pres. Truman about Taliesin power lines; APS lines installed at T-West
*Usonian Automatic Hse. (proj., concrete blocks)
*San Francisco Bay Bridge (proj.)
Awarded AIA Gold Medal
FLW, Genius & Mobocracy published (on Louis Sullivan)
Glass House, by P. Johnson, New Canaan, CT

1950
*David Wright Hse., Phoenix, AZ
*Zimmerman Hse., Manchester, NH
Chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Haut, by Le Corbusier, Ronchamp, France (1950-4)
Bavinger Hse., by Bruce Goff, Norman, OK
UN Building in New York completed

1950-3 Korean War

1951
Jan. FLW issue Architectural Forum
*E.J. & Lilianne Kaufmann Hse. (= Boulder Hse.), Palm Springs, CA (proj.)
*Cabaret Theater added, dining room glassed in at T-West, Scottsdale, AZ
FLW Exhibit "60 Years of Living Architecture", Gimbels Dept. Store, Philadelphia. Travels to
Florence, Zurich, Munich, Rotterdam, NYC, LA, Mexico (1951-3)

1952
*Harold Price Tower, Bartlesville, OK (1952-6)
*Point View Apt. Tower, Pittsburgh, PA (1952, 1953)
*Hillside Playhouse burns, rebuilt, Spring Green, WI
Aaron Green Arch’l Office opened, San Francisco, CA

1953
*Riverview Terrace Restaurant, (= Visitor Center), Taliesin, Spring Green, WI
*Masieri Student Library & Residence, Venice, Italy (proj.)
*Point View Residences, Pgh., PA (proj.)
FLW, The Future of Architecture published
Hugh Downs interviews FLW on TV (cf Mike Wallace interviews, 1957)

1954
*Beth Sholom Synagogue, Elkins Park, PA
*Hagan Hse., (= Kentuck Knob) Uniontown, PA
*FLW Apt. in Plaza Hotel, New York City
*Harold Price Hse., Phoenix, AZ
FLW, The Natural House published
HEXAGONAL USONIANS

Richardson, 1940

Hanna, 1936

Auldbrass / Stevens, 1939

Bazett, 1939

Sundt, 1941

Dobkins, 1953

McCartney, 1949

Reisley, 1951
COMPARISON BUILDINGS for KENTUCK KNOB

HEXAGONS & 30/60°
Bay Windows on early homes
Martin House, Buffalo, NY, 1904 (windows)
Midway Gardens, Chicago, IL, 1914 (decoration)
Imperial Hotel, Tokyo, 1915-1923 (esp. furniture & decorative work)
Bogk House, Milwaukee, WI, 1916-17 (decoration)
A.M. Johnson Desert Compound, Death Valley, CA, 1922-25 (project)
Nakoma Country Club, Madison, WI, 1923-24 (project)
Kindergarten & Playhouse for Barnsdall, Los Angeles, 1923 (project)
Doheney Ranch, Los Angeles, 1923 (project)
Lake Tahoe Summer Resort, CA, 1922-1924 (project)
Freeman House, Los Angeles, 1923-1924 (concrete block pattern)
Taliesin III Apprentice Quarters & Chicken Coops, 1925
San Marcos in Desert Resort, Chandler, AZ, 1928-1929 (project)
Cudney House, Chandler, AZ 1929 (project)
Steel Cathedral, NYC, 1926 (project)
St. Marks Towers, NYC, 1927-31 (project)
Ocatilla Camp, AZ, 1928
Taliesin Drafting Studio, 1932 (hearth & structure)
Wiley House, Minneapolis, MI, 1933 (terrace)
Fallingwater, 1935-38 (30/60° used to lay out plans)
Kaufmann Office, Pittsburgh, 1937
Hannah House, Stanford, CA, 1936
Herbert Johnson House, Racine, WI, 1937 (playroom)
Manson House, Wausau, WI, 1938
Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL, 1938ff.
(Pfleiffer Chapel, Roux Library, Minor Chapel)
Sidney Bazett House, Hillsborough, CA, 1939
Armstrong House, Gary, IN, 1939
Auldbrass Plantation, Yemassee, SC, 1938
Stevens House, Yemassee, SC, 1940
Community Church, Kansas City, MO, 1940
Wall Residence, Plymouth, MI, 1941
Richardson house, Glen Ridge, NJ, 1940
Nesbitt House, Carmel, CA, 1941 (project)
Sundt House, Madison, WI, 1941 (project)
Guggenheim project, NYC, 1944
Friedman Vacation Lodge, Pecos, NM, 1945
Unitarian Church, Madison, WI, 1947
McCarrick Residence, Parkwyn Village, Kalamazoo, MI, 1949
Hughes House, Jackson, MS, 1948
Lamberson House, Oskaaloosa, IO, 1948
Walker Residency, Carmel, CA, 1948
Anthony House, Benton Harbor, MI, 1949
Reisley House, Pleasantville, NY, 1951
Davis House, Marion, IN, 1950
Berger House, San Anselmo, CA, 1950
Mathews House, Atherton, CA, 1950
Palmer House, Ann Arbor, MI, 1950
Smith House, Jefferson, WI, 1950
Gillin, House, Dallas, TX, 1950
Kraus Residence, Kirkwood, MO, 1951
Glore Residence, Lake Forest, IL, 1951
Kinney House, Lancaster, WI, 1951
Rubin House, Canton, OH, 1951
Edgar Kaufmann Chapel, Mill Run, PA, 1951-52 (project)
Chahroudi Cottage, Lake Mahopac, NY, 1951
Teater Studio, Bliss, ID, 1952
Price Tower, Bartlesville, OK, 1952
Andreron Court Shops, Beverly Hills, CA, 1952
Point View Residence, Pittsburgh, 1952-53 (project)
Boomer Residence, Phoenix, AZ, 1953
Cooke House, Virginia Beach, VA, 1953
Dobbins, Residence, Canton, OH, 1953
Beth Shalom, Synagogue, Elkins, Park, PA, 1954
Arnold House, Columbus, WI, 1954

Hagan House, Chalkhill, PA, 1954
Thaxton House, Bunker Hill, TX, 1954
Fawcett House, Los Banos, CA, 1955
Heritage-Herrredon Furniture Line, 1955
Friedman House, Bannockburn, IL, 1956
Arizona State Capitol, Phoenix, 1957 (project)
Offelt House, St. Louis Park, MN, 1958
Albin House, Bakersfield, CA, 1958
Stromquist House, Bountiful, UT, 1958
Pilgrim Congregational Church, Redding, CA, 1958

OCTOGONS & 45°:
FLW Home & Office, Oak Park, IL, 1898
Bagley House Library, Hinsdale, IL 1894
Chauncey Williams House, River Forest, IL 1895
Romeo & Juliet Windmill, Taliesin, 1896
Furbeck House, Oak Park, 1897
River Forest Golf Club, 1898
Husser House, Chicago, IL, 1900
Willis House, Highland Park, IL 1901 (ceiling, prow)
Glasser Residence, Glencoe, IL 1905
Robie House, Chicago, IL, 1909 (prow)
Beach Cottages, Dumyat, Egypt, 1927
T-West, Scottsdale, AZ, 1937
Guggenheim Scheme, NYC, 1944 (project)
Walter house, Quaqueton, IO, 1945
Elam House, Austin, MI, 1950
Lindholm Service Station, Cloquet, MI, 1956

OTHER
Fallingwater, 1935-38 (30/60° used to lay out plans)
Usonian Model House, “60 Years of Living Architecture” Exhibit, Guggenheim Site
Notz House, Brierly/Bernsdton
Douglas House, Ross, PA, P. Berndtson, 1962