

Minneapolis Institute of Art

# The Prairie School and The Purcell-Cutts House

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# Mia



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# Mia's Prairie School Collection

- One of the best collections in the country (and world!)
- Includes architecture and design
- Especially rich in the work of Purcell and Elmslie, who were based in Minnesota
- Gallery designed 1998; refined 2000 with funds from Bob Ulrich and Jill Dahlin; also funded *Progressive Design in the Midwest* book (2000)
- Installation features architectural elements alongside furniture and other decorative arts
- Some changes made in 2013/2014 after exhibition on George Elmslie, *The Progressive Pencil: George Elmslie's Prairie School Designs*

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# Mia's collection focus

- **Louis Sullivan (1856-1924)**
- **Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959)**
- **William Gray Purcell (1880-1965) and George Grant Elmslie (1869-1952)**
- **George Washington Maher (1864-1926)**



**Louis Sullivan  
(1856-1924)**

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# **Louis Sullivan and the “Chicago School”**

**Rebuilding after 1871 Chicago fire**

**Through new technologies, Chicago defines the  
“skyscraper” form**

Steel frame allows for non-load bearing walls and more  
window space

Development of elevator allows for new heights

**H.H. Richardson’s Romanesque Revival was a major  
early influence**



Burnham and Root,  
Monadnock  
Building, Chicago  
(north half),  
1892

Bottom floor walls  
6 feet thick (load-  
bearing)





H.H. Richardson, Marshall Field's Warehouse,  
Chicago, 1885-87 (demolished)



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William Le Baron  
Jenney, Home  
Insurance Bldg.,  
Chicago, 1885;  
Non-load-bearing  
walls, with steel &  
reinforced concrete;  
Demolished 1931



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# Sullivan's "organic" approach to architecture

Rejection of historicism & revivals

Looking for an indigenous American style to suit life in late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Building arises from a single idea, as a plant grows from a seed

Consideration of site and function of building ("form follows function")

Organic system of ornament derived from Midwestern landscape

Colors used reflect natural world



Adler & Sullivan's Scoville Building, Chicago,  
addition/remodeling, 1884-85 (dem. 1974)

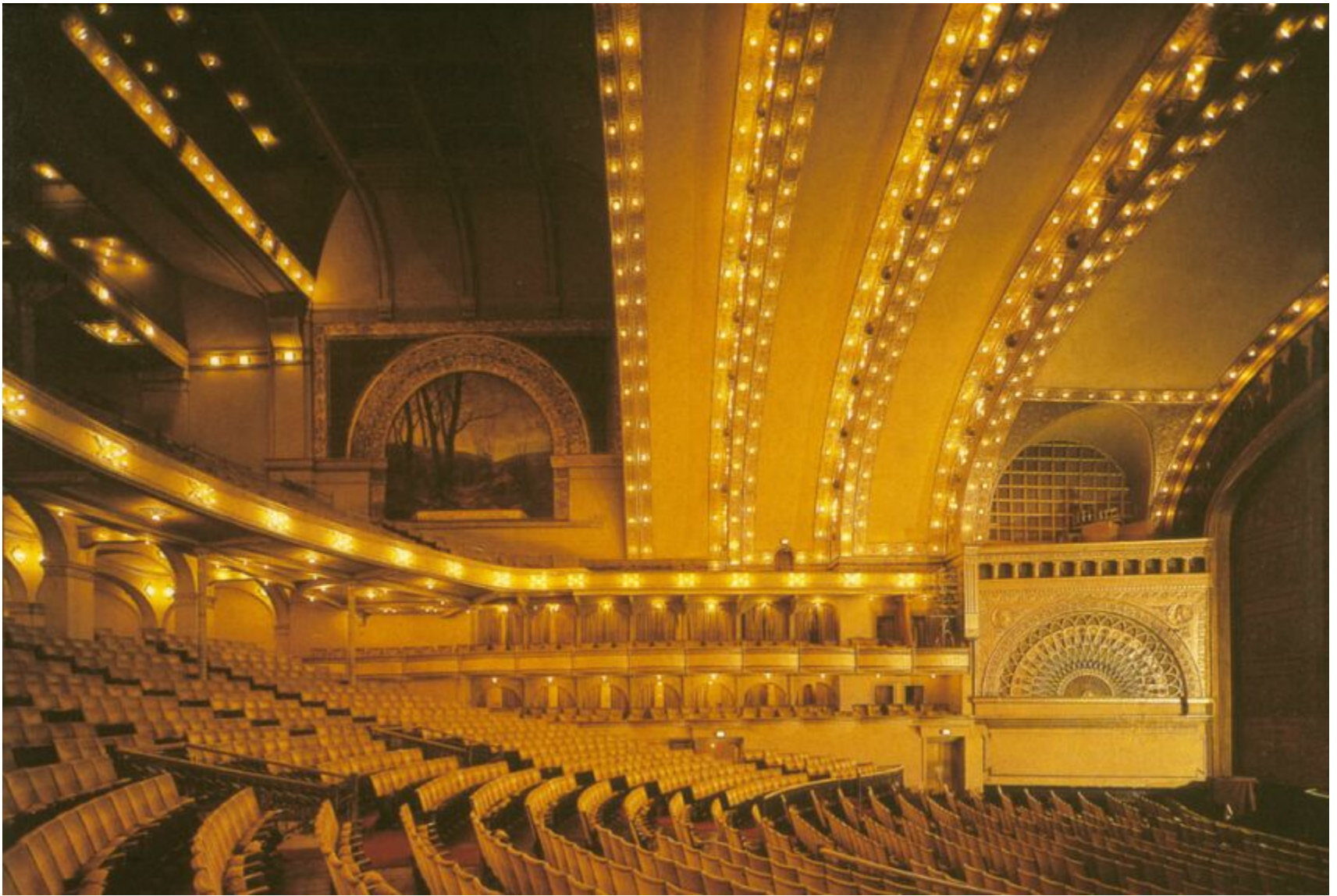




Adler & Sullivan, Auditorium Building, Chicago, 1887-90



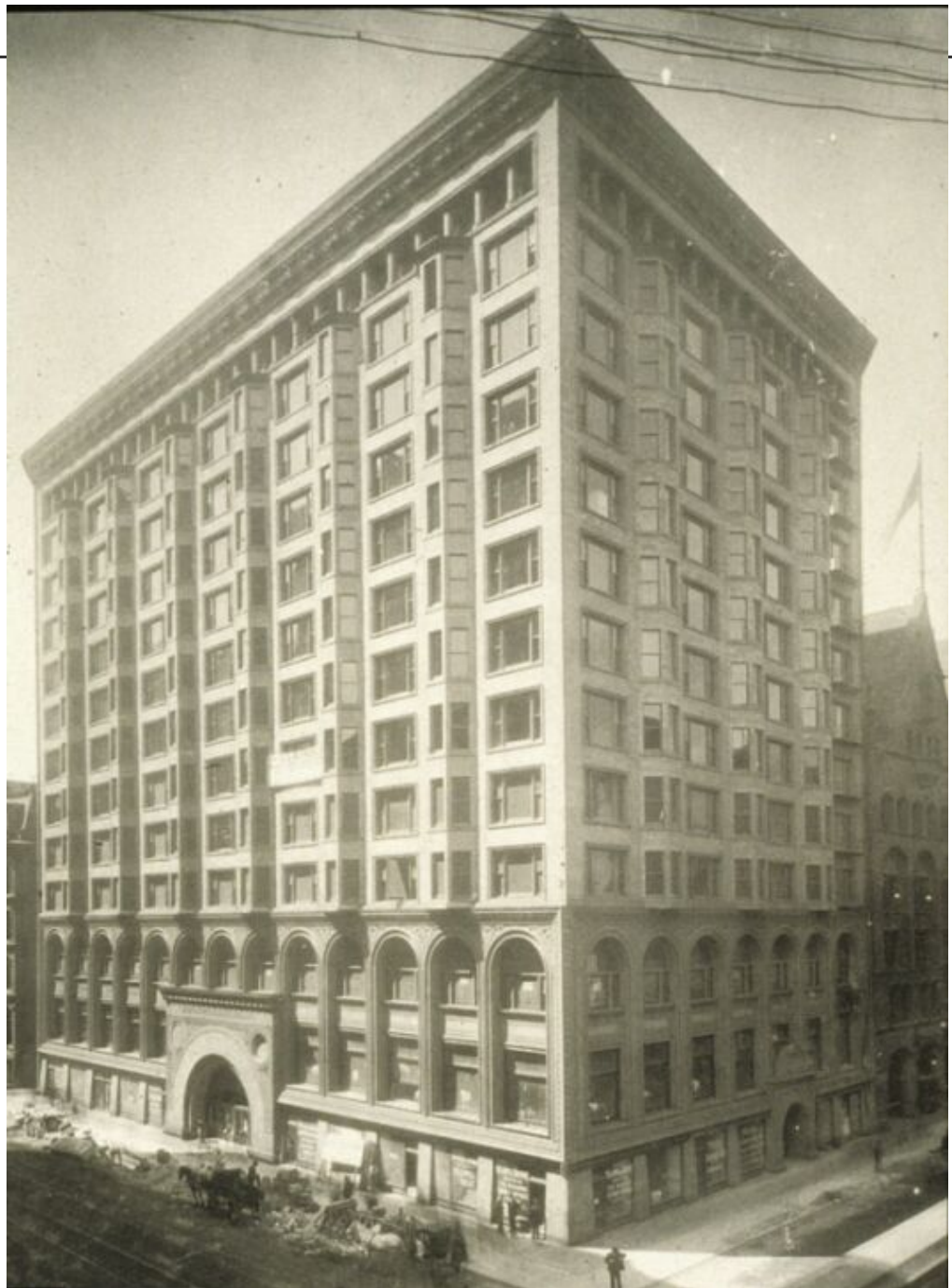
Foliate capital, Auditorium building



Auditorium theater, Auditorium Building

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Sullivan, Chicago  
Stock Exchange, 1893  
(demolished 1972)









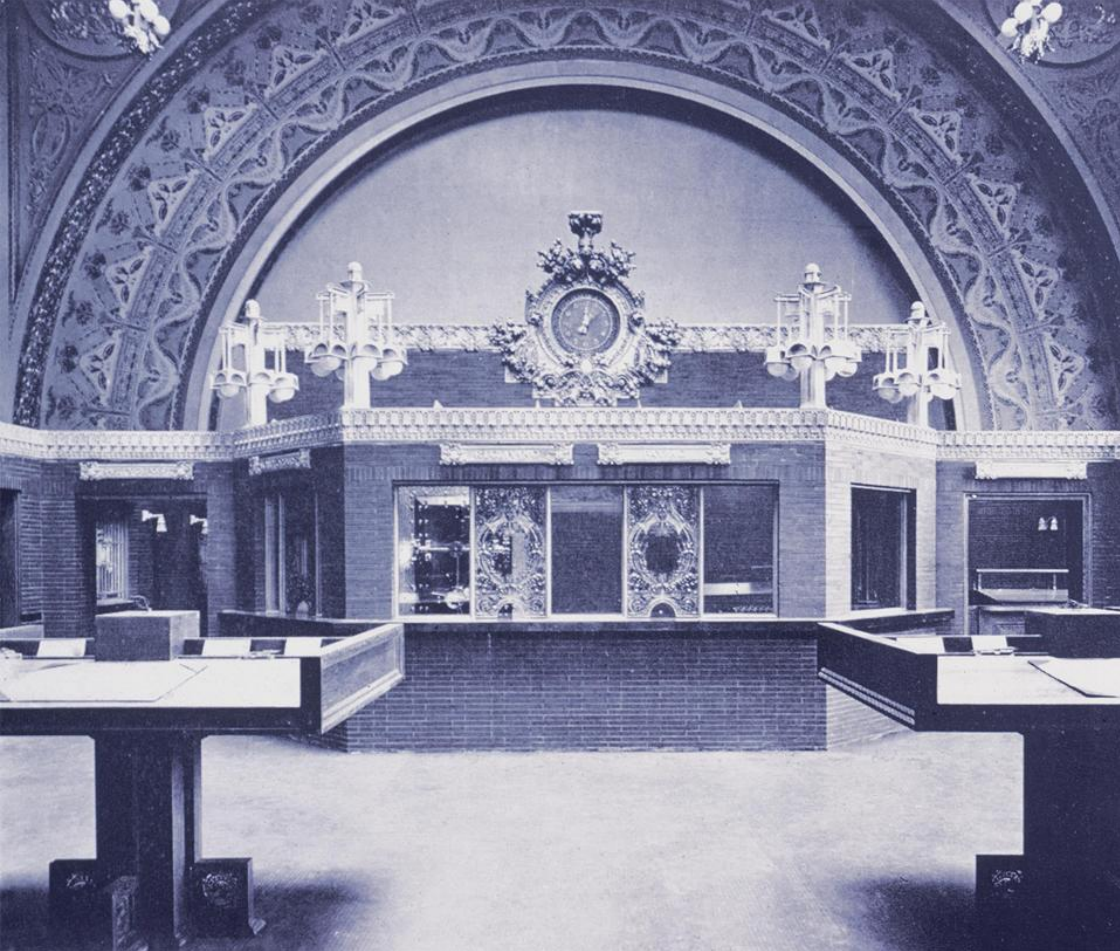
**Louis Sullivan, National Farmer's Bank,  
Owatonna, 1907-09**



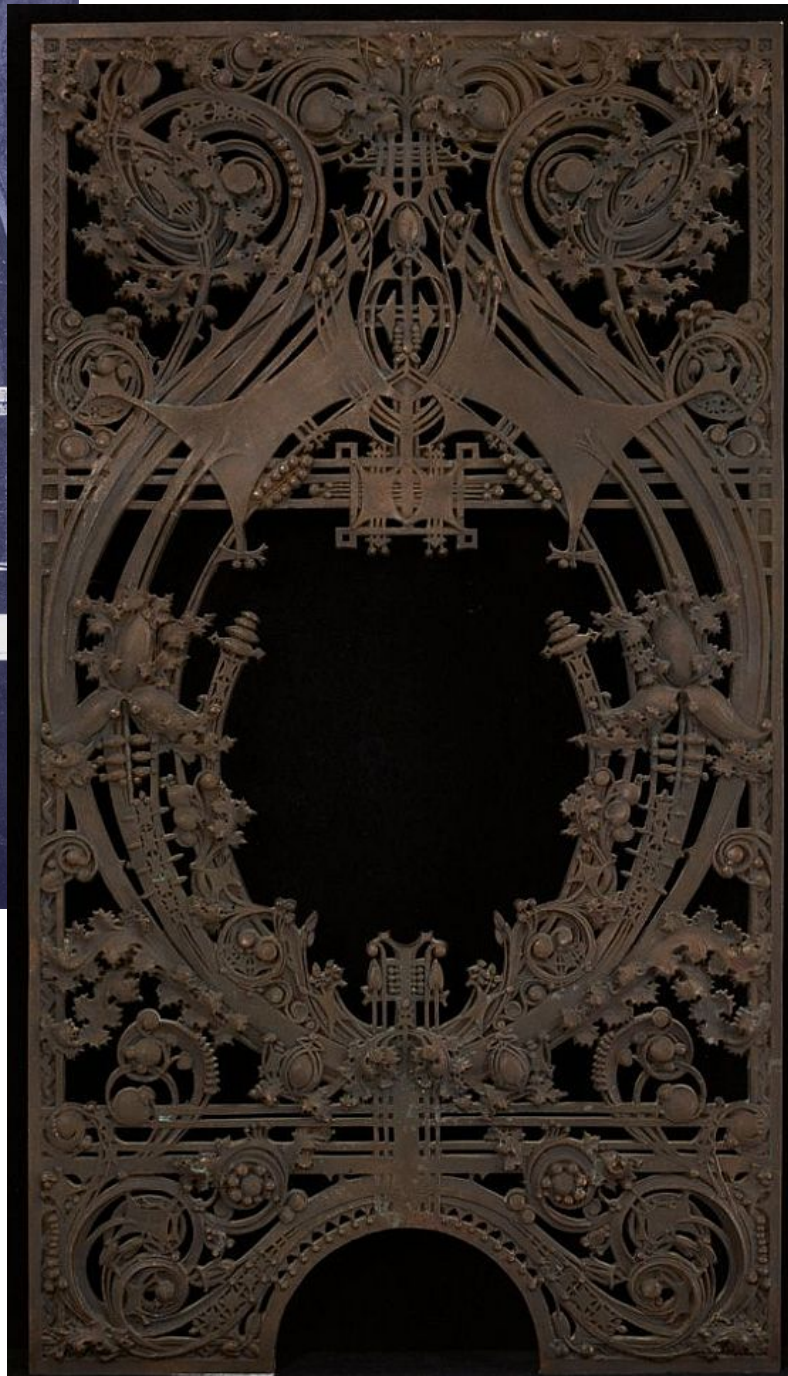
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**George Grant  
Elmslie  
(1869-1952)**



Interior of banking room  
and cast of teller's wicket,  
National Farmers' Bank,  
Owatonna,  
Mia 98.256.17





Interior of Banking room and detail of  
Electrolier, National Farmers' Bank,  
Owatonna



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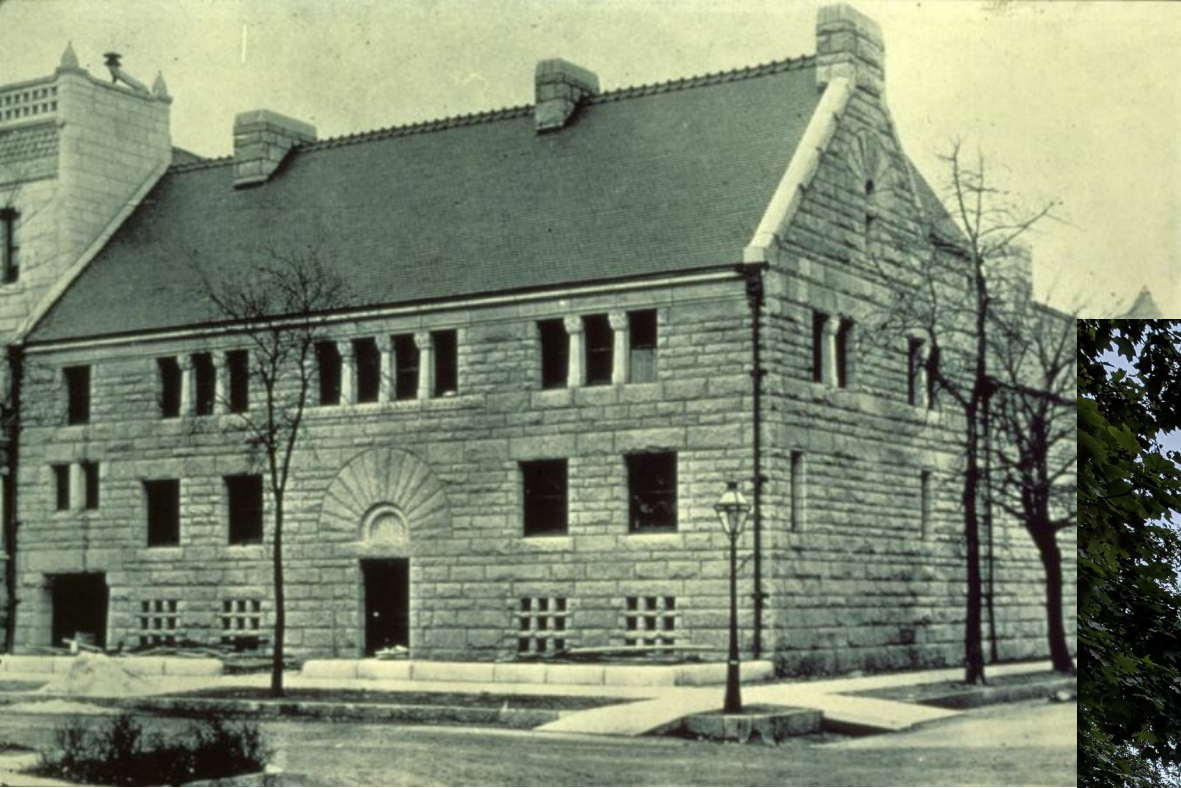
Skylight, National Farmers' Bank, Owatonna

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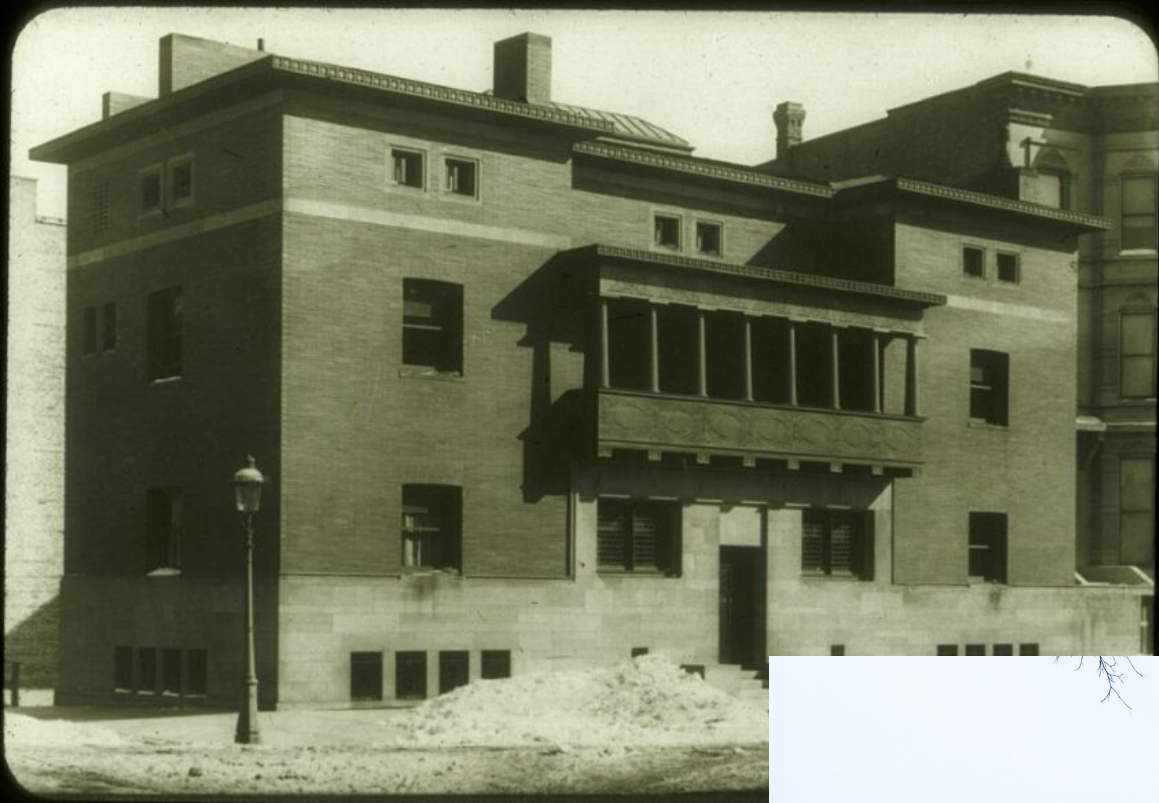
# Frank Lloyd Wright and the emergence of the Prairie School

- Part of a Chicago movement of young architects to apply Sullivan's ideas to new forms (focus on residential)
- Expressed these new ideas through Chicago Architectural Club exhibitions, trade publications
- Maher, Griffin, Spencer, Drummond, Wright all part of group
- Wright working for Sullivan 1887-1893
- Elmslie working for Sullivan 1889-1909
- "The Art and Craft of the Machine," 1901





H.H. Richardson,  
Glessner House,  
Chicago, 1885



Sullivan with Wright,  
Charnley  
(Now Charnely-Persky)  
House, Chicago, 1891-92



# Wright “breaking out of the box”

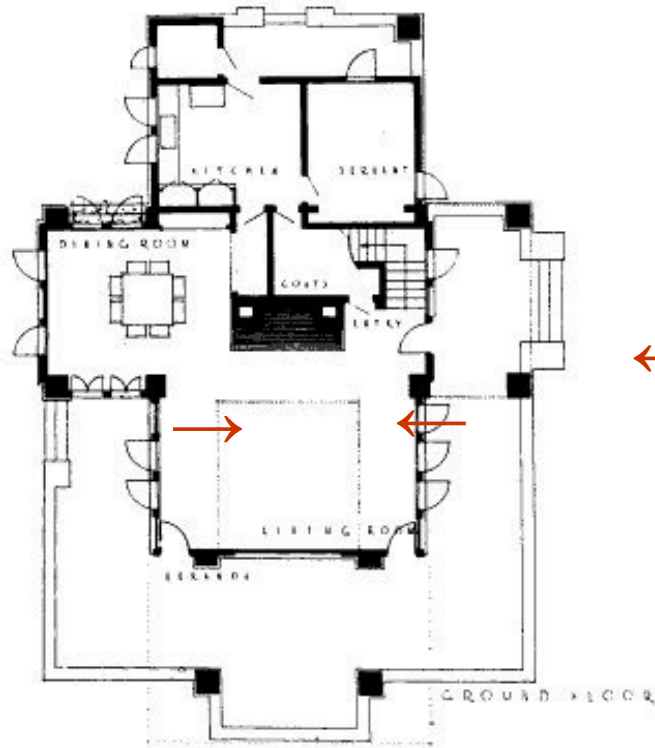


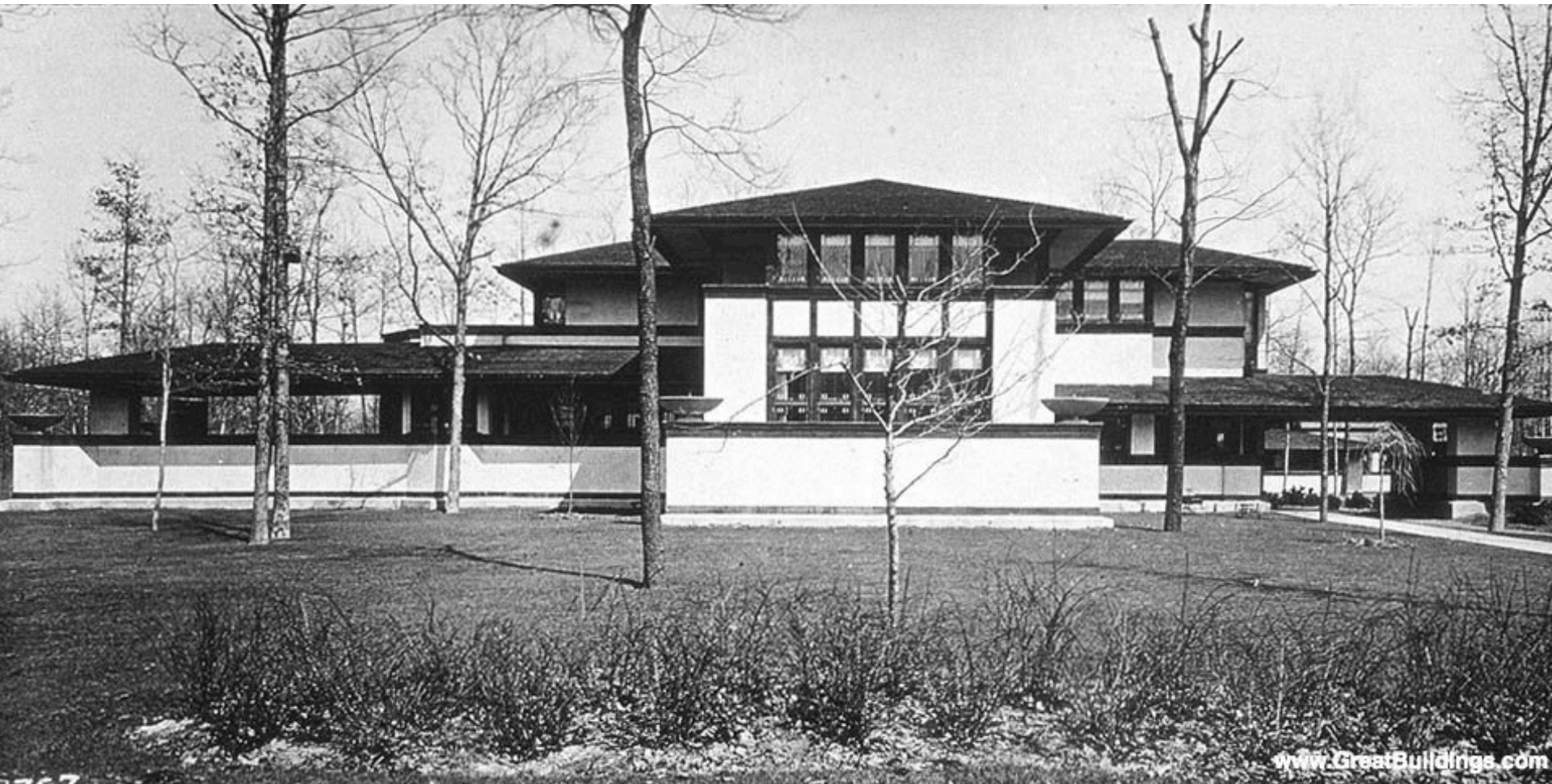
Fig. 1. Frank Lloyd Wright, Charles S. Ross house, Delavan Lake, WI, 1902, plan (Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials*).



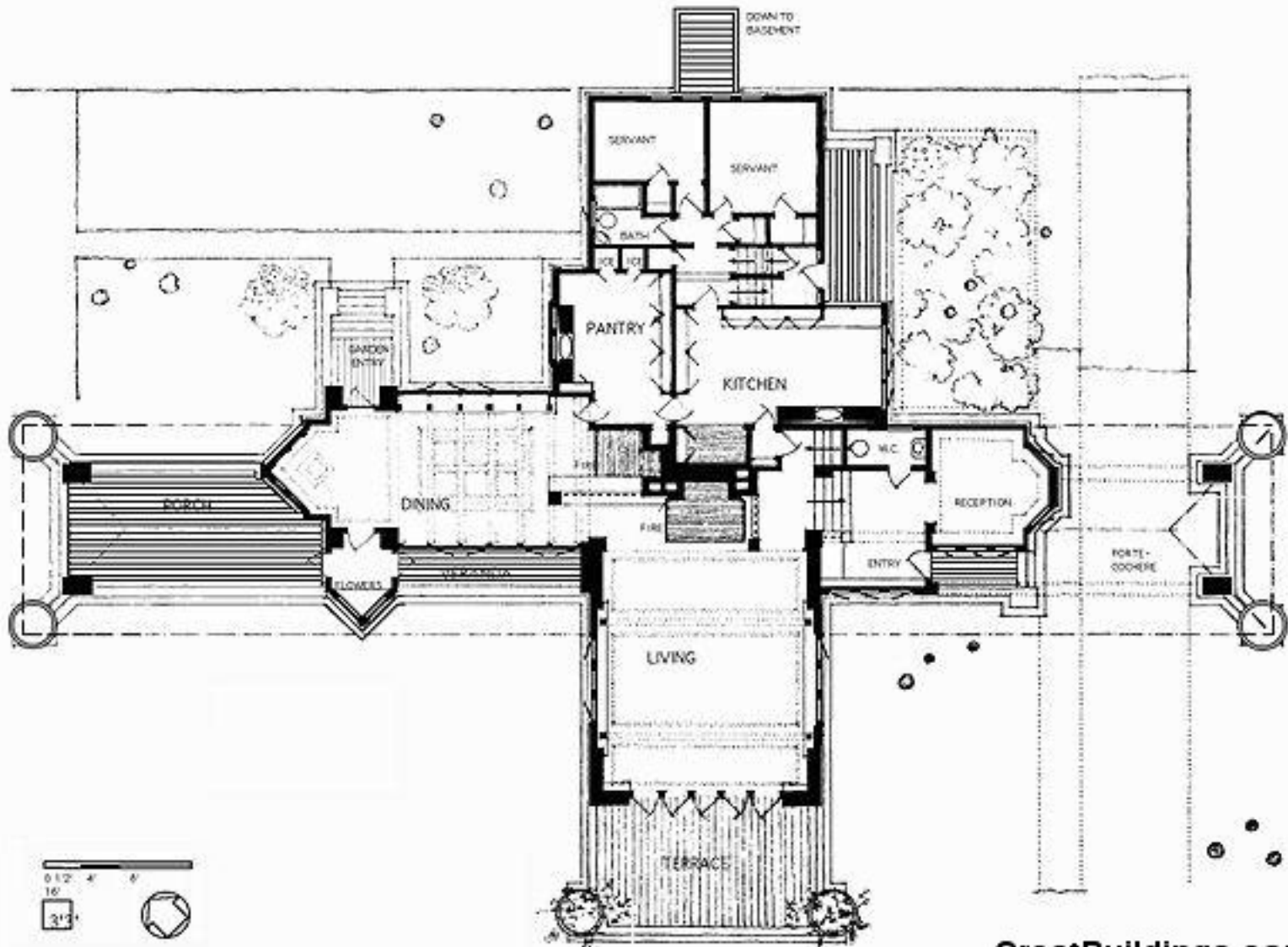
Fig. 2. Bruce Price, William Kent house, Tuxedo Park, NY, 1885, plan (Sheldon, *Artistic Country-Seats*, 1886-1887).

Wright, Charles S. Ross House, Delavan Lake, Wisconsin, 1902, vs. Bruce Price, William Kent House, Tuxedo Park, NY, 1885, from H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School*

# Wright, Ward Willits House, Highland Park, IL, 1902

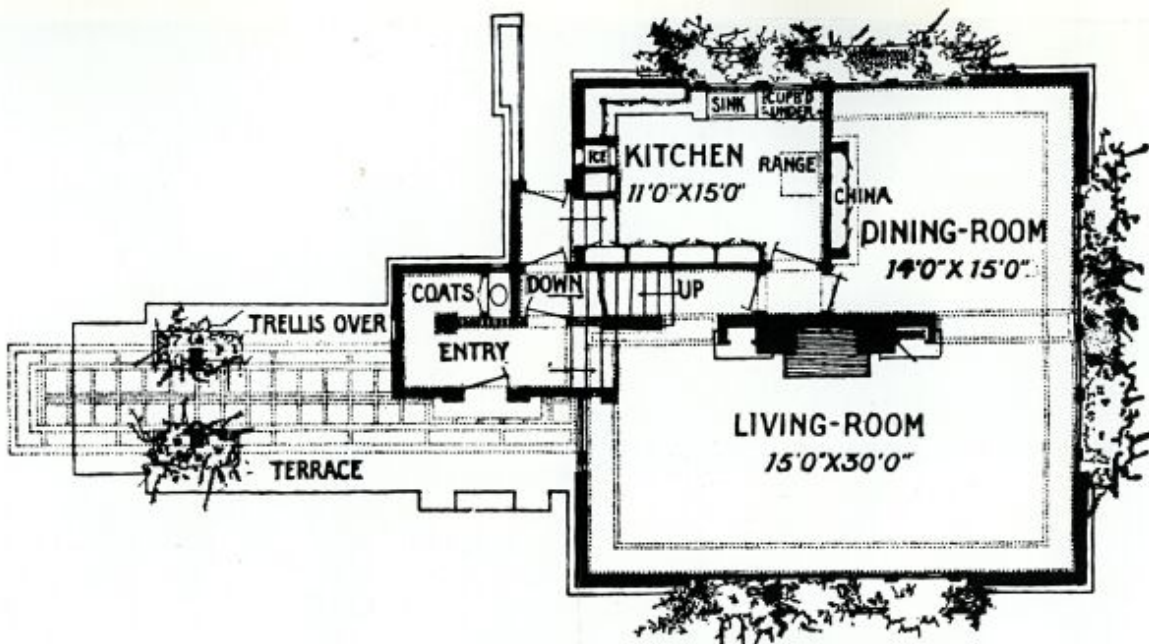


[www.GreatBuildings.com](http://www.GreatBuildings.com)

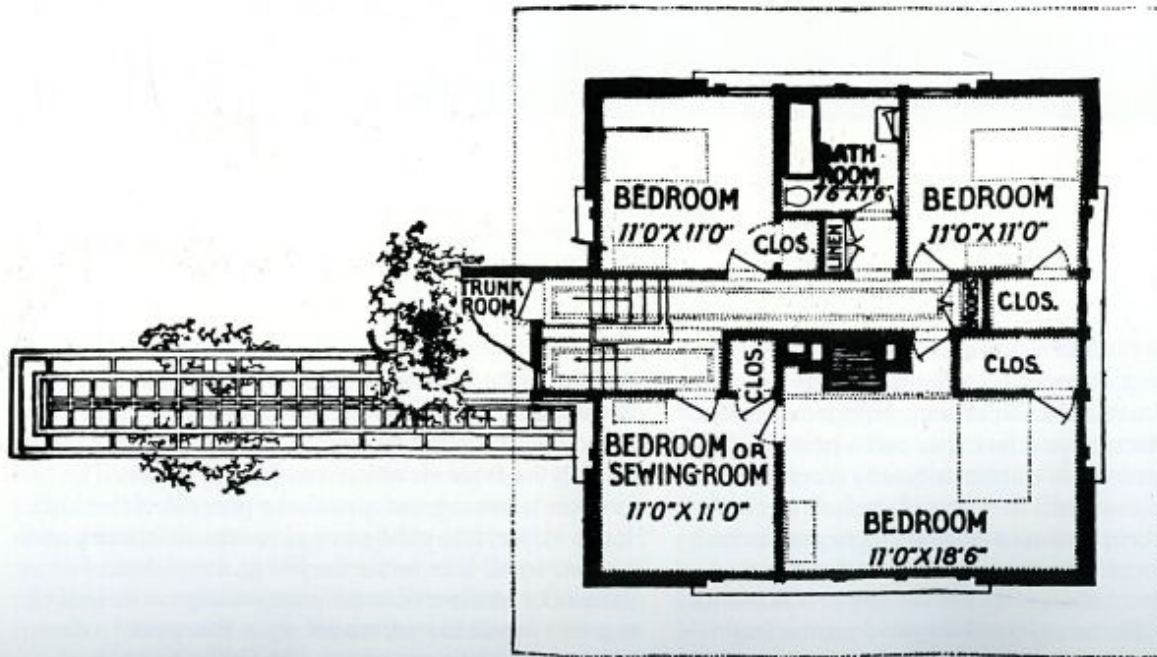


GreatBuildings.com

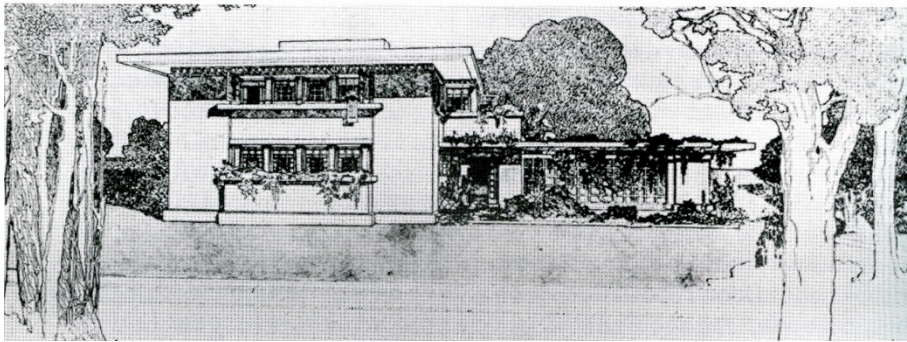
Wright, Ward Willits House, Highland Park, IL, plan



The First-Story Plan



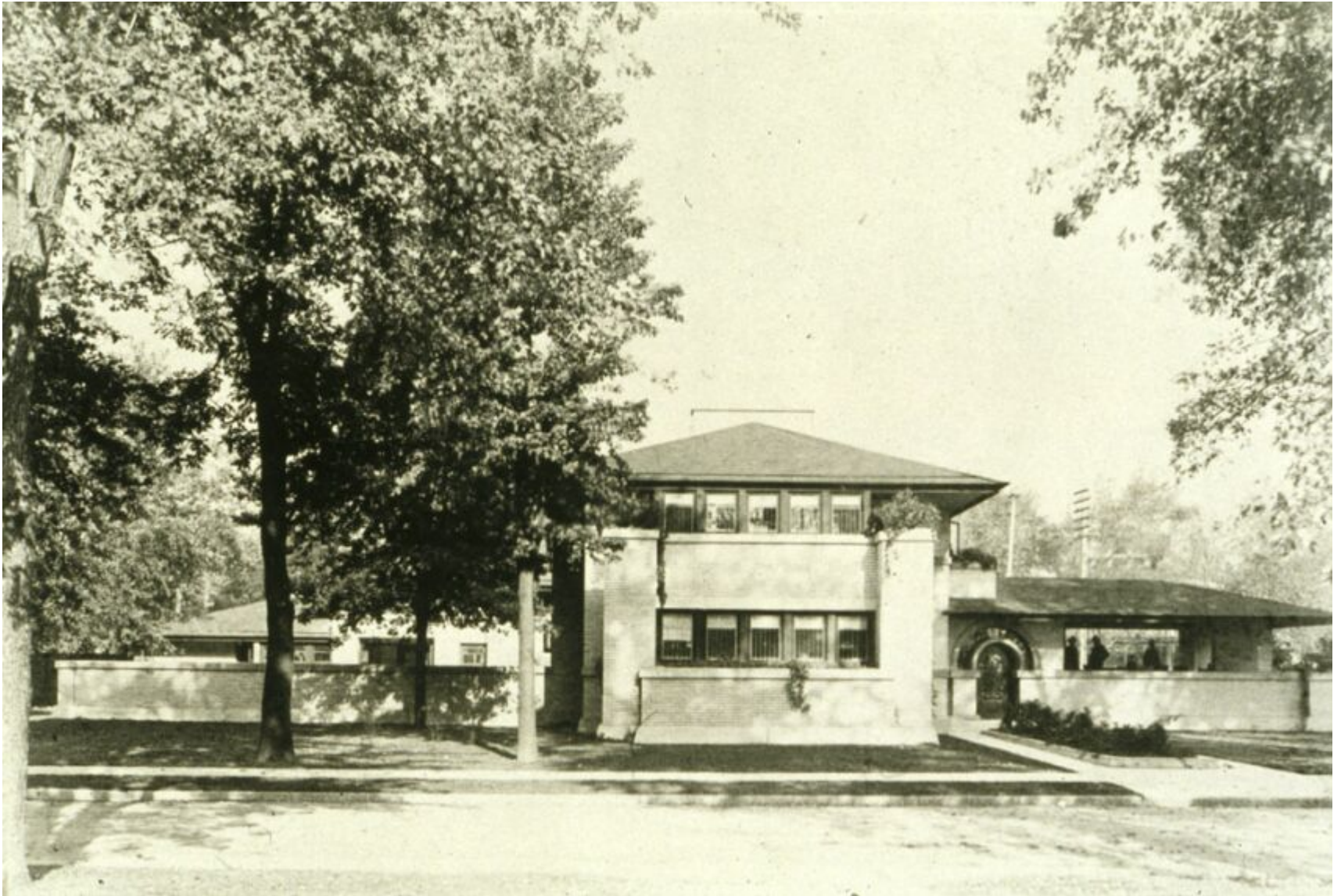
Frank Lloyd Wright, "A Fireproof House For \$5,000" for *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1907



Wright's "Fireproof House" and Stockman house,  
Mason City, IA, 1908

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# Wright's Francis Little House, Peoria, IL, 1902







Wright, side chair and lounge chair from Francis Little House, Peoria, IL, 1902, and side chair, designed for Hillside Home School, 1903, Mia 85.82, 85.39, 98.276.4





Delta Barton House, Darwin Martin  
Complex, Buffalo, NY, 1904



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# Wright, Frederick C. Robie House, Chicago, 1909





Wright, living room  
and dining room,  
Robie House





Francis and Mary Little, Francis Little House, Deephaven, MN,  
1912-14 (demolished 1972)



Wright, Francis Little House, Deephaven, MN, views from drive, c. 1914





Minneapolis Institute of Art Hallway from the Francis Little House, Mia 72.11