

THE GRIFFIN NEWSLETTER

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THIRTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING SET FOR 23 JUNE IN MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

The thirteenth annual meeting of the Walter Burley Griffin Society of America will be held in Minneapolis on Saturday, 23 June 2012, with an optional tour on Sunday, 24 June. Because of the nature of this year's meeting, pre-registration and pre-payment are required by 15 May. The cost will be \$45 for the Saturday meeting and tour, and \$15 for the optional Sunday tour. As usual, registrants must also have paid their annual dues of \$25 to the Society. The meeting is being co-sponsored by the Northwest Architectural Archives.

Similar to last year, the meeting will be centered around the work of the Griffins' mentors and associates among the architects of the Prairie School, including most importantly Purcell & Elmslie. A special showing of the Griffin material held at the Northwest Architectural Archives (NAA) of the University of Minnesota has been arranged. The meeting is being coordinated by architectural historian Richard L. Kronick and Griffin Society member John Clouse.

The meeting will begin Saturday morning at the Elmer L. Andersen Library of the University of Minnesota, 222 21st Ave South, Minneapolis (located on the West bank campus and home to the NAA). The registration desk will open at 8:30am, with the meeting to begin at 9:00am. Morning lectures include a "show and tell" by archivist Barbara Bezat of material from the archives related to the Griffins; Paul Kruty's account of the relationship between Walter Burley Griffin and William Gray Purcell; and a discussion of the spiritual meaning and symbolism found in the architecture of Purcell & Elmslie presented by Richard Kronick, who will also introduce us to the buildings to be visited on the afternoon tour.



Purcell-Cutts house, designed by Purcell & Elmslie in 1913,
as published in *Western Architect* in 1915.

[Mpls. meeting, contd.]

Because we are meeting in a major urban area, we have organized the afternoon events in a more controlled manner than is our norm. Thus, we will be traveling to the sites in a single bus. To keep to our schedule, we will be providing a box lunch beforehand. There are also entrance fees to two of the sites. Thus, we will need to charge \$45 a person for the meeting. We will be limiting the number of attendees to 56 (the number of seats on the bus) and require that everyone planning to attend register by 15 May.

A box lunch will be delivered to each registrant at the Andersen Library at noon and at 12:45pm we will board a bus for the afternoon tour. Sites open to us will include three buildings by Purcell & Elmslie: the E. M. Powers house (1910), the Purcell-Cutts house (1913 & 1915), and the Stewart Memorial Church (1909); and a wonderful Prairie style house by local architect Kirby T. Snyder (1915). The tour will last from 1:00—5:00pm. Note: Richard Kronick, our tour guide, provided a good introduction to Prairie School and Arts & Crafts architecture in Minneapolis—including information and photos of all four buildings on the tour—in last fall's issue of *Style 1900* (v.24 no. 3), pp. 54-61.

Saturday evening is open.

The Sunday optional tour, the cost of which is \$15, will take us to Owatonna, some fifty miles south of Minneapolis. Taking your own cars this time (and leaving Minneapolis by 8:00am!), we will meet at 9:15am at Louis Sullivan's National Farmers' Bank (being opened specially for us on this Sunday, courtesy of John Clouse's winning charm and with pertinent remarks by Paul Sprague, who first wrote about the bank more than forty years ago); then visit Purcell & Elmslie's J. H. Adair house (1913), and two houses on the Gainey campus of the University of St. Thomas in Owatonna: the Gainey house (1953) by Edwin Lundie and Frank Gehry's Winton guest house (1982), originally built on Lake Minnetonka but, facing demolition, subsequently moved to Owatonna and opened last fall. The tour will be over by 1:00pm. Lunch is on your own (there are plenty of restaurants in Owatonna), but you are advised to bring a few munchies along.

While in Minneapolis, members might wish to visit the Minneapolis Institute of Arts at 2400 Third Avenue South, which has a wonderful permanent exhibit about the Prairie School era. The museum is open

only until 5:00pm on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, but has late hours on Thursday—until 9:00pm.

The nearest hotel to the Andersen library is the Holiday Inn Metrodome at 1500 Washington Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN 55454 (1-612-333-4646 or 1-800-593-5708).

To join in these exciting events—and we hope to see you all—please register on the attached form ASAP. Remember, we can only accept the first 56 people, and will have to close registration on 15 May.

GILBERT COOLEY HOUSE UPDATE

By Evelyn Pell Stewart, Director
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The Cooley House Foundation has already begun to present educational programming to the public at locations other than the Cooley House, where restorations must continue before opening to the public. In January 2011 the Cooley House Foundation partnered with the University of Louisiana at Monroe and the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities to present a public talk with John Stubbs, son of renowned local architect William King Stubbs. There was standing room only at this well received event. In October 2011 the Cooley House Foundation offered an architectural walking tour of Monroe's historic Garden District. This was led by architect Lestar Martin and was extremely well attended. In the past Martin has led similar tours of the Henry Bry Historic District in South Monroe. The Cooley House Foundation will continue to offer these popular programs twice a year.



Exterior perspective, 1908 version of the
Gilbert Cooley house, by Marion Mahony Griffin.

Following on this event, the Cooley House Foundation recently received a grant from the Louisiana Cultural Economy Foundation to reprint the book *The Louisiana Architecture of William King*

Stubbs, written by Lestar Martin. Proceeds from the sale of the book will support restoration efforts. The Foundation has already raised money through ticketed fundraising events, membership, and grants. Funding sources have included the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities; the Monroe-West Monroe Convention and Visitors Bureau; the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Division of Historic Preservation; and private and corporate donations.

Currently the Foundation is planning a Cooley House Lecture Series, which will begin in fall 2012 with distinguished New Orleans architect Errol Barron. In the coming year, in addition to Mr. Barron, the Foundation plans to offer public talks in historic preservation and in the decorative arts.

In 2011 the Cooley House Foundation received a grant to begin the electrical work on the house. Electricians removed all existing wiring from the building, which was no small task. The wiring was the original from 1926 and, because much of the structure is tile and concrete, this phase of restoration has been one of the most difficult, costly, and time consuming. New wiring has been installed on the first floor, while fire and security systems were added to allow the house to be constantly monitored. Electrical work on the second floor and carriage house have yet to be completed. The Foundation received a separate grant to restore the exterior fountain. We look forward to the completed fountain helping to generate interest in the project by providing the necessary “curb appeal” that has been missing from the exterior thus far.

NHL NOMINATION FOR STINSON

John Watkins and Lisa Livesay of the Stinson Memorial Library in Anna, IL, have sent a request to the National Park Service in Omaha, NE, that the Stinson Library be considered for designation as a National Historic Landmark. As of press time, material has been sent to Washington, DC, for preliminary review. If the proposal gets a green light, the work of preparing the full application will begin. Keep your fingers crossed!

PRAIRIE SCHOOL TILES, II

The second part of Richard Mohr’s series on “Art Tiles in the Prairie School” has appeared—again, with wonderful illustrations—in the *Journal of the American Art Pottery Association* 28 no.1 (Winter 2012): 16-23. Mohr devotes much of this issue to examining the Teco-tile installations in the Mess house in Winnetka and the Ricker house in Grinnell.

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NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA: THE IMPORTANT ANNIVERSARY

The latest “News Update” (issue 57, March 2012) of the Walter Burley Griffin Society, Incorporated, of Australia reminds us that “It is 100 Years Since the Griffins Won the Australian National Capital Competition.” The article following that banner headline continues:

On 23 May 1912, the Australian Minister for Home Affairs, King O’Malley, announced that the winner of the Australian National Capital Competition was entry 29, being that submitted by Mr. Walter Burley Griffin, architect and landscape artist, Steinway Hall, Chicago, Illinois. O’Malley pronounced “What we wanted was the best the world can give us and we have got it.”... To celebrate and commemorate this significant centenary of the Griffins’ achievement, the Society has applied for an Australian Government’s Your Community Heritage grant to fund, in part, a two-day program of talks and tours related to Canberra and the Griffins’ winning entry. We will keep you informed of the outcome of our application.

May they be successful in their application—and may Australia continue to safeguard its national treasure. Indeed, much of rest of this issue of the Griffin “News Update” details the continuing efforts to keep Canberra from being destroyed by various government proposals for its “improvement.”

WRIGHT CONSERVANCY TO MEET IN MASON CITY

This year’s annual meeting of the Frank Lloyd Wright Conservancy will be held in Mason City, IA, on 10-14 October. Although the conference will center around Wright’s newly restored Historic Park Inn Hotel and City National Bank—for which we are all so grateful to Griffin homeowners Bob and Bonnie McCoy for their incredible effort with that immense project—the Wright group will be hearing at least a bit about the Griffins’ great achievement at Rock Crest/Rock Glen, when, at the Friday morning session, Paul Kruty will make the case for its international significance.

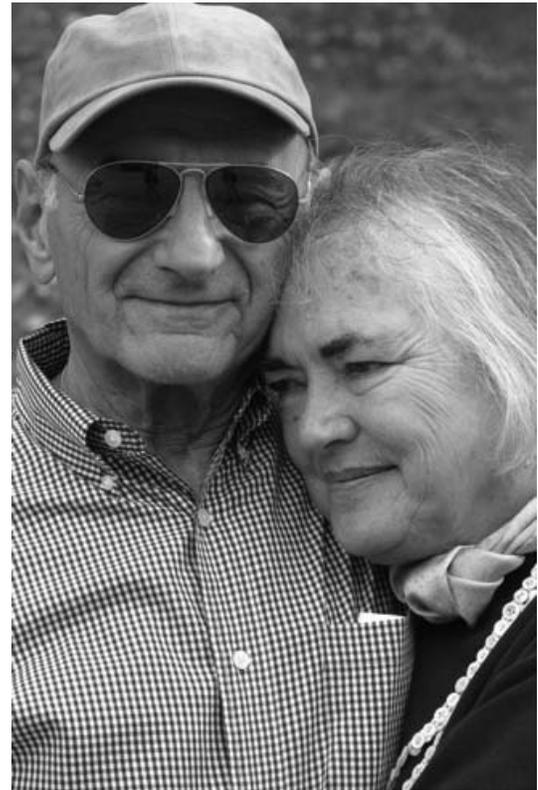
HANS & MAXINE FRIEDMAN: CUSTODIANS OF GRIFFIN'S FREDERICK & ELSIE CARTER HOUSE IN EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

By Jon S. Pohl

Editor's note: Last summer, friends and colleagues of Hans Friedman spent an evening celebrating his ninetieth birthday. Among them was Griffin board member Jon Pohl, a longtime Evanstonian and now, like Hans, a retired architect. Jon took the opportunity to interview Hans about his decades-long association with Griffin's Carter house, one of Griffin's best-known buildings as well as one of his most characteristic designs (and one on the Griffin Society tour in 2006).

Had it not been for architect Hans Friedman and his wife Maxine, the Frederick B. Carter house might not have survived. Hans and Maxine first visited the house in the summer of 1965 when one of the architects in Hans' office mentioned that a Prairie School house was for sale on Judson Street in Evanston. It was being offered by its eighty-two-year-old owner, "the kind and gentle" Alfred Tibbits. Although under Mr. Tibbits' ownership, the Carter house was recorded and drawn by the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) in 1964, little else had been done to preserve it. Hans could see at once that the house "was falling apart" and would require extensive and expensive repairs. Nonetheless he and Maxine were so taken with its aesthetic character, intriguing plan, and extensive gardens, that they decided to make an offer. The Friedmans discovered, however, that they were competing with three other architects who, like Hans, "should have known better," as he protests in retrospect. For years afterward, Hans and Maxine would hear "you know, we looked at that house, but...."

Hans had studied architecture at the Institute of Design in Chicago and graduated in 1950. As a result of his studies he had become aware of Prairie School architecture in general. With the prospect of purchasing the house, Hans set out to learn what he could about the work of Walter Burley Griffin, whose style and that of the Carter House, he began to realize, was derived from the ideas of Louis Sullivan and the early work of Frank Lloyd Wright. This contributed to his deep-seated feelings for the house and his subsequent dedication to its careful restoration and care.



Hans and Maxine Friedman

After moving in, Hans immediately began what he refers to as the "1965/1966 work," which included addressing the issues identified in a three-page list of code violations kindly sent by the City of Evanston soon after Hans and Maxine had closed on the property. This initial labor was followed by the "1967 and 1968 work," the "1970 work," and the "1973 work," all done to stabilize the building. In the fall of 1973, Hans prepared an individual National Register of Historic Places form, for which the Statement of Significance was written by our very own Paul Sprague. Today the Carter House stands in the center of the National Register's Evanston Lakeshore Historic District. The next phase, the "1979 work," addressed the major restoration issues. This effort, partially funded by a Federal Historic Preservation Grant, involved complete restoration of the roof; all exterior wood, including Griffin's specially designed and patterned windows; brick masonry and stucco repair; and the removal of asbestos. The cost of this restoration work alone was almost double what Hans and Maxine had paid for the house in 1965. Even so, Hans remembers that, in true Prairie School (or Modernist?) tradition, it was not until the "1985 work" was completed that their flat roofs stopped leaking.



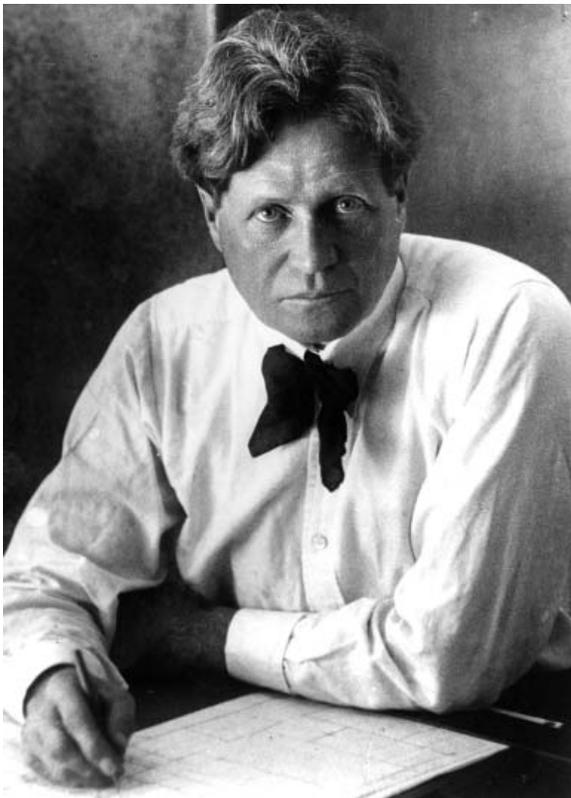
Photo of the Carter house taken by Jon S. Pohl in 2006.

Maxine took charge of planning the garden, all the while cognizant of Griffin's importance as a landscape architect. Mr. Tibbits, the former owner, had been a plant lover, too, and Maxine followed the existing garden layout. This included a rock garden and a densely shaded area harboring shooting stars, trillium, and may apples, as well as a large area receiving abundant sunlight, where Maxine nourished native plants, wild berries, and ancient peonies.



Springtime on Judson Avenue in Evanston, with the Carter house, center. Photo by Paul Sprague.

Restoration continued at a slower pace throughout the 1980s and into the '90s. In all, Hans' and Maxine's efforts to stabilize and restore the house to its original pristine character as finished in 1910 allowed them to enjoy the house for thirty-six years until they sold it in 2001. Here they raised four children and, while Griffin brilliantly shaped the architecture of the Carter house, the house itself played a significant role in shaping Hans' and Maxine's lives and the lives of their children. What more could one ask of architecture!



Walter Burley Griffin (1876-1937) and William Gray Purcell (1880-1965).

Join us in June to find out more about these two colleagues, allies, and friends.

SOCIETY'S TWO PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Everyone who is interested in the Griffins and in the Prairie School will want to own the Society's two original publications, available through the website and by ordering directly from the Society's headquarters in St. Louis.

Marion Mahony and Millikin Place presents for the first time the whole exciting story of the development of Millikin Place in Decatur, Illinois. As Paul Kruty explains, "The history of Millikin Place is the personal story of Marion Mahony and Walter Griffin. The chain of events set in motion in September 1909, when Mahony agreed to complete Wright's buildings while he was abroad for a year, not only brought Walter and Marion together in Decatur, but it soon led to their marriage, and later to the extraordinary Rock Crest/Rock Glen commission in Mason City, Iowa, and finally to Australia."

Walter Burley Griffin and the Stinson Memorial Library reveals the international significance of the Griffins' major public building in the United States, a work that H. Allen Brooks called "a brilliant design and a fitting climax to Griffin's American career." Drawing on the priceless collection of letters and documents surviving at the library, Paul Kruty recounts the story of the commission, design, construction, and reception of the building, as well as its contexts in Griffin's career, the public library in America, and the architect's intention to create a Modern representational public architecture.

Marion Mahony and Millikin Place sells for \$29.95, while *Walter Burley Griffin and the Stinson Memorial Library* sells for \$25, plus s & h. Griffin Society members receive a 20% discount on both publications.

MEMBERSHIP

The Walter Burley Griffin Society Of America is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt corporation under IRS Code 501 (c)(3). We invite you to become a "Friend" of the Society. For annual dues of \$25.00, you will receive a periodic newsletter keeping you abreast of the Society's activities, such as lectures, tours, exhibitions, and other events related to the Griffins' work. (\$20.00 for seniors 65 and older.)

The Society seeks comments, advice, suggestions, and news from you, its friends. The Society needs your financial support. All donations are tax-deductible.

If you wish to join the Society or renew your membership in the Society, please fill out the following form and mail it to us at the address below - or email us that you are attending the Annual Meeting and you can pay for both membership and meeting at that time.

Name: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

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