



# Taliesin

Frank Lloyd Wright · Spring Green, WI · 1911

Overlooking his family land in southwest Wisconsin where the architect spent his childhood exploring and farming, Taliesin was Frank Lloyd Wright’s true home, not to mention a studio, laboratory, and garden sanctuary; a site of profound happiness and deep tragedy. Taliesin translates in Welsh to “shining brow,” suggesting how Wright placed the home *into* its site, rather than above it.

Wright escaped to the region’s Driftless Valley with his companion Mamah Borthwick Cheney (the two had both left their spouses, creating a national sensation) two years after closing his practice in Oak Park, Illinois. Taliesin I, as the site’s initial incarnation later became known, was built in 1911. Experimenting with his concept of organic architecture, Wright constructed it using rough cut local limestone, Wisconsin River sand, and plaster walls mixed with golden sienna. Indeed, from its courtyards to its gardens and interior, every corner of the site evokes and foregrounds the rolling landscape below.

This initial structure was destroyed in 1914 when a former employee set it ablaze, murdering seven people including Cheney. Wright persevered, immediately rebuilding the house and adding a stone floored room called the Loggia. “Taliesin should live to show something more for its mortal sacrifice than a charred and terrible ruin on a lonely hillside in the beloved valley,” he once wrote. In 1925, an electrical fire also destroyed Taliesin II’s living quarters, prompting the construction of Taliesin III.

The sprawling property contained numerous spaces for Wright’s apprentices to learn, work, and enjoy themselves. Aside from sleeping quarters, at the Hillside Drafting Studio, his students could study; at the Hillside Theater, they could perform; and on the farm, they could come to grips with the teacher’s passion for nature. Elsewhere on the property are other examples of Wright’s inimitable talent that predate Taliesin. These include the Romeo and Juliet Windmill, Tan-y-Deri, a residence for his sister, and the Unity Chapel, the interior of which is considered the architect’s first work.

Built into its hillside and forged from local materials, Taliesin overlooks an expansive valley. After the fire, Wright designed a long, cantilevered balcony he called the “Bird Walk.”