The Prairie School

horizontal bands, integration with the landscape, solid construction, craftsmanship, and discipline in the use of ornament. Horizontal lines were thought to evoke and relate to the native prairie landscape. The term Prairie School was not actually used by these architects to describe themselves (for instance, Marion Mahony used the phrase The Chicago Group); the term was coined by H. Allen Brooks, one of the first architectural historians to write extensively about these architects and their work.[1]

The Prairie School developed in sympathy with the ideals and design aesthetics of the Arts and Crafts Movement begun in the late 19th century in England by John Ruskin, William Morris, and others. The Prairie School shared an embrace of handcrafting and craftsman guilds as a reaction against the new assembly line, mass production manufacturing techniques, which they felt created inferior products and dehumanized workers.

The Prairie School was also an attempt at developing an indigenous North American style of architecture that did not share design elements and aesthetic vocabulary with earlier styles of European classical architecture. Many talented and ambitious young architects had been attracted by building opportunities stemming from the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. The World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago World's Fair) of 1893 was supposed to be a heralding of the city of Chicago's rebirth. But many of the young Mid-western architects of what would become the Prairie School were offended by the Greek and Roman classicism of nearly every building erected for the fair. In reaction, they sought to create new work in and around Chicago that would display a uniquely modern and authentically American style, which came to be called Prairie.

The designation Prairie is due to the dominant horizontality of the majority of Prairie style buildings which echoes the wide, flat, treeless expanses of the mid-Western United States. The most famous proponent of the style, Frank Lloyd Wright, promoted an idea of "organic architecture", the primary tenet of which was that a structure should look as if it naturally grew from the site. Wright also felt that a horizontal orientation was a distinctly American design motif, in that the younger country had much more open, undeveloped land than found in most older, urbanized European nations.

Architects whose work is considered part of the movement

The Prairie School is mostly associated with a generation of architects employed or influenced by Louis Sullivan or Frank Lloyd Wright, but usually does not include Sullivan himself. Although the Prairie School originated in Chicago, some Prairie School architects moved away spreading the influence well beyond the Midwest. A partial list of Prairie School architects includes:

- Frank Lloyd Wright
- E. Fay Jones
- Percy Dwight Bentley
- John S. Van Bergen
- Lawrence Buck
- Barry Byrne
- Alfred Caldwell
- Alden B. Dow
- William Drummond
- George Grant Elmslie
- Marion Mahony Griffin
- Walter Burley Griffin
- Henry John Klutho
- George Washington Maher
- John Randal McDonald
- Dwight Heald Perkins
- Ransom Buffalow
- Edward Humrich
- William Gray Purcell
- Isabel Roberts
- Robert C. Spencer
- Francis Conroy Sullivan
- Claude and Starck
- William LaBarthe Steele
- Andrew Willatzen
- Trost & Trost
- Taylor Woolley

Prairie School influence

The Prairie School houses (characterized by open plans, horizontal lines, and indigenous materials) were related to the American Arts and Crafts movement (hand craftsmanship, simplicity, function), an alternative to the then-dominant Classical Revival Style (Greek forms with occasional Roman influences). Some firms, like Purcell & Elmslie, however, consciously rejected the term "Arts and Crafts" for their work, which accepted the honest presence of machine worked surfaces. The Prairie School was also heavily influenced by the Idealistic Romantics (better homes would create better people) and the
Transcendentalist philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson. In turn, the Prairie School architects influenced subsequent architectural idioms, particularly the Minimalists (less is more) and Bauhaus (form follows function), which was a mixture of De Stijl (grid-based design) and Constructivism (which emphasized the structure itself and the building materials).

Architectural historians have debated the reasons why the Prairie School went out of favor by the mid-1920s. Perhaps a serious consideration of one of its own members would be worth their serious attention. In her autobiography, Marion Mahony Griffin writes:

“The enthusiastic and able young men as proved in their later work were doubtless as influential in the office later as were these early ones but Wright's early concentration on publicity and his claims that everybody was his disciple had a deadening influence on the Chicago group and only after a quarter of a century do we find creative architecture conspicuously evident in the United States.”[2]

Other Prairie School buildings

An example of BYE Prairie School architecture is the aptly named “The Prairie School,” a private day school in Racine, Wisconsin, designed by Taliesin Associates (an architectural firm originated by Wright), and located almost adjacent to Wright's Wingspread Conference Center. Mahony's and Griffin's work in Australia and India, notably the collection of homes at Castlecrag, New South Wales, are fine examples of how the Prairie School spread far from its Chicago roots. Isabel Roberts' Veterans' Memorial Library in St. Cloud, Florida, is another. The House at 8 Berkley Drive at Lockport, New York was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009.[4]

The Oak Circle Historic District is a historic district in Wilmette, Illinois, United States. It primarily consists of fifteen single-family homes representative of the Prairie School and Craftsman styles of architecture constructed between 1917 and 1929. The Oak Circle Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places on June 21, 2001; it was the first historic district to be designated in Wilmette.[2]

Photo gallery

- Ward Willits House; Highland Park, Illinois, 1901 one of the first Prairie Houses by Frank Lloyd Wright

- The Darwin Martin House; Buffalo, NY built 1903-05 by Frank Lloyd Wright

- Robie House; Chicago, Illinois 1908 by Frank Lloyd Wright
Unity Temple; Oak Park, Illinois, 1905-08 by Frank Lloyd Wright

Larkin Administration Building; Buffalo, NY 1906 by Frank Lloyd Wright

Merchants National Bank; Winona, Minnesota, 1912 by Purcell and Elmslie

Purcell House; Minneapolis, Minnesota 1913 by Purcell and Elmslie

Henry Schultz House, Winnetka, Illinois, 1907 by George W. Maher

The Ernest J.
Magerstadt House, Chicago, Illinois, 1908 by George Maher

The Kenilworth Club entrance; Kenilworth, Illinois, built in 1907, George Maher architect

William H. Emery, Jr. House, 1903 by Walter Burley Griffin

Ralph Griffin House; Edwardsville, Illinois 1913 by Walter Burley Griffin

Frederick Carter House; Evanston, Illinois 1910 by Walter Burley Griffin

First Congregational Church; Chicago, Illinois 1908 by William Drummond
Modern interest

Interest in the ideas and designs of the Prairie School artists and architects has grown since the late 1980s, thanks in large part to celebrity collecting habits and high-profile auction results on many of the decorative designs from buildings of the era. In addition to numerous books, magazine articles, videos and merchandise promoting the movement, a number of original Prairie School building sites have become public museums, open for tours and special interactive events. Several not-for-profit organizations and on-line communities have been formed to educate people about the Prairie School movement and help preserve the designs associated with it. Some of these organizations and sites include:

- The Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy
- The Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust
- Wright In Wisconsin
- Taliesin Preservation Commission
- Walter Burley Griffin Society of America
- Unity Temple Restoration Foundation
- “George Washington Maher”; bio, photos of projects and career information
- Minneapolis Institute of Arts "Unified Vision - the Architecture and Design of the Prairie School"
- Pleasant Home Foundation for Maher's Farson House
- Prairie School Traveler weblog
- PrairieMod weblog
- Figge Art Museum's Frank Lloyd Wright gallery

See also

- St. John's African Methodist Episcopal Church
- The Villa District, Chicago
- Oak Park, Illinois
- Hartington City Hall and Auditorium
- The Menninger Clinic, Houston, Texas

Notes

References


External links

- Wikimedia Commons has media related to Prairie School. [Image]

Genres of modern architecture

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Louis Sullivan

- Martin Ryerson Tomb (1897) · Auditorium Building, Chicago (1899) [Auditorium Theatre] · Carrie Eliza Getty Tomb (1890) · Wainwright Building (1890) · Wainwright Tomb (1892) · Bellefontaine Cemetery (1892) · Prudential (Guaranty) Building (1894) · Chicago Stock Exchange Building (1894) · Bayard–Condict Building (1899) · Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company Building (1899)

Adler & Sullivan Works

Louis Sullivan's works include:

- Bradley House (1909)
- Charnley House (1892)
- Pilgrim Baptist Church (1890)
- Farmers and Merchants Union Bank (1919)
- Gage Group Buildings (1898)
- Halsted House (1883)
- Adams Building (1913)
- Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral (1903)
- Home Building Association Bank (1914)
- Jewelers Building (1882)
- Krause Music Store (1922)
- McVicker’s Theater (1891)
- Merchants' National Bank (1914)
- National Farmer’s Bank of Owatonna (1908)
- People's Federal Savings and Loan Association (1917)
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- Purdue State Bank (1914)
- St. Paul United Methodist Church (1914)
- Van Allen Building (1913)

Lost Buildings include:

- New Orleans Union Station (1892–1954)
- Dooly Block (1891–1965)
- Louis Sullivan Bungalow (1890s–2005)
- Garrick Theater (1891–1961, A&S)
- Pilgrim Baptist Church (1891–2006, A&S)
- Dexter Building (1887–2006, A&S)

Affiliations include:

- Adler & Sullivan
- Dankmar Adler

Other affiliations include:

- Prairie School
- Tall: The American Skyscraper and Louis Sullivan
- "Form follows function"

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Louis Sullivan was one of the needlework industry's leading designers of counted cross stitch and counted needlepoint patterns and designs since 1984. Look for our designs at your nearest Needlework Shop! Inventory List Schooler Santas Mini-Cards Limited Edition Santa Chart Packs Corrections Free Design. Get to know The Prairie School during our Primary School Open House on Nov. 7, from 9-11am. Prairie's faculty and youngest students are finding new and exceptional ways to connect this year, to learn in-person through exploration and discovery. You won't want to miss out! Fall 2020 Open House Join Us for Prairie's Open House Pre-K to 12th Grade This fall, in an effort to help you get to know Prairie – the people, the places, the programs – we are thrilled to offer our prospective families the option to tour campus with us. Prairie Schooler's designs are timeless. Even the books they first published years ago have charming designs! Enjoy browsing through some of our more recent favorites! Bump in the Night #201 This was the next to last pattern Pam and Nancy released before they retired and like just about everything else sold out for a few years already. 9 smaller designs - all the same size - they all say something creepy. Prairie School is a late 19th- and early 20th-century architectural style, most common in the Midwestern United States. The style is usually marked by horizontal lines, flat or hipped roofs with broad overhanging eaves, windows grouped in horizontal bands, integration with the landscape, solid construction, craftsmanship, and discipline in the use of ornament. Horizontal lines were thought to evoke and relate to the wide, flat, treeless expanses of America's native prairie landscape. The emergence of the Prairie School style was nourished by a small group of dedicated individuals obsessed with the idea of creating a new American architecture. They wanted to develop an architecture style suitable to the American Midwest and independent of historical and revivalist influence. The movement attracted young designers, the best known among them being Louis H. Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright.