



PRESERVATION
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Prairie Places

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Our Mission

Preservation North Dakota is dedicated to preserving and celebrating the architecture, historic places, and communities in the varied landscapes of our prairie state.

1 A Small House with Lots of Significance
by John Stern

4 Storm Strikes Steeple: Emergency Preservation Work at the Old Stone Church
by Emily Sakariassen

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The Sanderson House, located on Photo courtesy of John and Sherri Stern.

A Small House with Lots of Significance

By John Stern

Frank Lloyd Wright is considered by many to be the greatest architect of the 20th century. His buildings, commercial and residential, are viewed today as artistic treasures. The Organic Architecture theory he originated guided his work throughout his life. Among his most famous works are the Unity Temple (Chicago Ill 1906), the Frederick Robie House (Chicago Ill 1909), Taliesin (Spring Green WI 1911), the Imperial Hotel (Tokyo Japan 1915-1968), the Johnson Wax Building (Racine WI 1936), Fallingwater (Mill Run PA 1936), the Pope-Leighy House (Woodlawn VA 1940), The Guggenheim Museum (New York NY 1956).

In 1936, observing the changes in American families, Wright developed what he called

Usonian houses, a term he used to describe buildings uniquely suitable to life in the United States. Smaller than his earlier Prairie Style homes, they were designed to be more affordable, with common themes that could be adapted to different sites and different clients. Typically built on inexpensive land far from crowded urban centers, they were usually single-story, flat-roofed structures with cantilevered overhangs, clerestory windows, radiant-floor heating, and included a carport (a term coined by Wright). They were often L-shaped, fitting around a garden patio.

“The Anderson House is the only house designed by Ingraham and Ingraham in North Dakota, and the only one remaining in the area.”

After his picture was on the cover of Time Magazine on January 17, 1938, Wright found his business exploding. In 1940, the Museum

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

of Modern Art in New York devoted the entire museum to Wright's work, including a full-size Usonian house built in the courtyard. The huge model for Broadacre City, his famous vision for Usonia, was also on display. At age 73, Frank Lloyd Wright, already a famous architect, was finally a commercial success. The Taliesin Fellowship he created in 1932 developed his designs into real homes, and his influence on future generations of architecture was assured. After WWII, with the trend toward larger homes, basic Usonian principles were adapted to fit the needs of the clients and the building sites, and these principles are considered to be the inspiration for ranch-style homes popular in the 1950s.

George and Beth Anderson contacted Frank Lloyd Wright in 1955 about designing a house for them on a river lot they owned just one mile from downtown Fargo, ND. Wright told them he had perhaps 10 years of life left and 20 years of commissioned work ahead of him. He recommended his granddaughter Elizabeth Wright Ingraham and her husband Gordon Ingraham, a former Taliesin apprentice, for the commission. The Ingrahams worked together to design this home in Fargo ND and two in Moorhead MN, all on wooded lots backing to the Red River. The Anderson House is the only house designed by Ingraham and Ingraham in North Dakota, and the only one remaining in the area, as the two Moorhead homes were demolished due to flood damage.

The Ingrahams designed 2 guest houses and 35 homes in 22 years together from their Colorado Springs, CO base, which followed a Wrightian vision of architecture. Their early work reflected the form of Usonian and Prairie Style houses that Wright designed at mid-century.

In an interview in 1996, Elizabeth Wright Ingraham described the Anderson House as "derivative of Wright's style. We used many of the forms Wright used."¹ The home manifests many signa-

"This home was designed specifically to fit in with the naturally wooded river lot...sited to take advantage of views and sun angles, with structural allowances for the unstable soils in the Red River Valley."

"The current City plans calls for the removal of the Anderson House...and the City is reluctant to make any deviations to the plan."

ture design themes of Frank Lloyd Wright: the very horizontal lines of the brickwork and flat-roof overhangs, the mysterious privacy evoked by the clerestory windows on three sides of the house, the use of natural light from those windows and skylights, the contrasting openness to the back of the house through extensive windows, and the custom built-in millwork cabinets, closets and storage areas. As with all "Wrightian" homes, this home was designed specifically to fit in with the naturally wooded river lot where it was constructed. Built into the elevated river bank, it was sited to take advantage of views and sun angles, with structural allowances for the unstable soils in the Red

River Valley. Since Frank Lloyd Wright recommended the Ingrahams to the Andersons, it is quite likely that the Ingrahams consulted with him on the design of the home. Many of the original finishes in the house, bathroom fixtures, kitchen counter coverings, 6x6 red clay tile, and 8x8 cork tile flooring, were identical to those used in Wright's Kentuck Knob house in Pennsylvania, constructed about the same time. The house is in excellent condition, with original masonry walls and woodwork throughout, but with updated kitchen, bathrooms, bedrooms, and external deck and patio areas. From the street and the back of the house, it looks nearly identical to its original appearance in 1959.

The City of Fargo, in its efforts to deal with the devastating flooding of the Red River, has directed its engineering department to devise a plan to protect the City through a system of levees and flood walls. While completion of the Red River Diversion Project would alleviate serious flooding through the City, the proximity of the Anderson house to the water treatment plant and the neighborhood's affordable housing complicates things. The current City plan calls for the removal of the Anderson house and the adjacent houses in the neighborhood to make way for a levee. This levee would provide

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

a back-up to the Diversion, or if the Diversion does not get built, be the primary protection for the area. Although a flood wall built behind the house is technically feasible, it would be more expensive than a clay levee, and the City is reluctant to make any deviations to the plan. A one year reprieve to the neighborhood was granted while all options are explored. We hope a solution is found to preserve this architecturally significant structure. The North Dakota State Historic Society has approved an application to have the house entered into the National Register of Historic Places.

Editor's note: It is a common misconception that listing a property on the National Register of Historic Places provides protection against demolition. In actuality, the National Register serves as an inventory of places important to our Nation's heritage and guarantees basic considerations in planning for Federal undertakings. The portion of the City's plans affecting Stern's neighborhood and the Anderson House do not currently constitute a Federal undertaking.



Top: Front view of the Anderson House. Note the recessed entrance and clerestory windows. Bottom: View of the garden space and patio, partly shaded by cantilevered overhangs.



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Storm Strikes Steeple

By Emily Sakariassen

On the morning of July 6th, a bolt of lightning struck the steeple of the Old Stone Church in Casselton, North Dakota, damaging the 131 year-old building that currently houses the Casselton Heritage Center. The timing was particularly upsetting, as the former Episcopal church had received a PND Grass-roots Grant in 2016 to replace the roof's wood shingles—work that had only recently been completed.

Initial concerns were that the structural integrity of the belltower may have been compromised. Architectural historian Steve Martens worked with the CHCI board and its president Julie Burgum to organize an architectural and engineering rapid response to assess the damage. Together, they were able to recommend a plan for rehabilitation within ten days of the strike.

According to Martens, the most visible damage was to the stonework on one corner of the pinnacle, the extent of which was approximately two feet wide on either side and 10-12 feet high. Fallen stones were observed, embedded in the ground some 60-feet below the steeple. Less visible damage included substantial degradation of the masonry mortar and the “core” of the stone pinnacle.

With quick and aggressive action by architects, engineers, stonemasons, and CHCI board members, repairs were completed in just seven weeks. “Preservationists can probably imagine the difficulties of trying to find qualified, specialty contracting expertise for such unusual work on extremely short notice,” Martens commented. “Let alone processing an insurance damage claim quickly enough to enable repairs before early winter weather.”

Martens is currently preparing a report for the North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office about the “best practices” rehabilitation measures that proved so effective in restoring the appearance aspects and material details while leaving the structure in a much more sound and durable condition. “In my 40 years of preservation experience,”



he says, “it’s almost inconceivable that this kind of rehabilitation could have been accomplished almost anywhere else in the US in such a short timeframe and with such a high degree of preservation integrity.”

Crow Wing Masonry completed repairs to the stone steeple and Michael Orchard is still working to rehabilitate a light post that was also damaged in the strike. A fitting finale to the emergency preservation work will be the replacement of an original ornamental piece with a beautiful recreation by P2 Industries previously scheduled to cap-off the 2016 roof repairs.



Top Right: Worker repairing the masonry exterior of the Old Stone Church. Center: Detail of damage to the stone pinnacle. Bottom Right: P2 Industries replica next to original roof ornament.



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PND members pose in front of the Gill School, near Wheatland, on the PND tour of southeastern North Dakota in May. Special thanks to all those who hosted us and helped to make it a memorable trip!