



The Progressive City: Wright & his Chicago Contemporaries

Call for 2022 Conference Papers

Chicago around 1900 was a laboratory of progressive reforms and Wright, during these years, was part of group of designers and activists increasingly alarmed by crippling widespread social inequality, public health crises, and lack of access to education, nature and affordable housing. The United States, and the Midwest in particular, was experiencing explosive growth due to the rise of industrial capitalism following the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. The Progressive movement sought to provide better living conditions for all classes of society. The breadth of progressive reforms imagined often led to ambitious urban planning schemes. The 1893 Fair, for example, offered an alternative vision of modern cities that incorporated numerous infrastructural innovations, spaces for recreation and rationalized circulation patterns, among many improvements, later taken up by Daniel Burnham in his 1909 *Plan of Chicago*. Wright, together with his progressive peers, explored various planning schemes, from coordinated suburban blocks to neighborhood units, that countered the monumentality of the City Beautiful with a smaller-scale approach echoing the Garden City movement. Other interventions included the construction of playgrounds, parks, recreation centers and public schools across the city, while environmentalists founded conservation groups and designed landscapes sensitive to local ecologies.

Driving many of these interventions was the emerging field of sociology at the University of Chicago and the related settlement house movement. Many economists and sociologists at the university, such as Thorstein Veblen, John Dewey and Jenkin Lloyd Jones, advanced theories seeking to understand and overcome social inequality through education and economic reform. Similarly, settlement houses offered a range of free social programs, such as adult education, kindergarten, childcare, supervised recreation, legal counsel, job training and more. In this context, women especially—such as Jane Addams and Florence Kelley, founders of Hull House, but also many of Wright's clients, such as Susan Lawrence Dana, Mamah Borthwick Cheney and Queene Ferry Coonley—were at the heart of widespread concerns for social justice.

The 2022 annual conference of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, to be held in Chicago and online, October 19-23, proposes to engage Wright in this expanded context, focusing both on his contributions to progressive reforms and on those of his peers and collaborators. Examples of possible topics to examine are: suburb vs. city center; housing the poor; the middle-class domestic ideal; roles of the City Club, Hull House, and Commercial Club; development of public transportation; building of cultural institutions; rise of consumer culture; playgrounds, parks and recreation movements; and the preservation of period facilities bearing relation to these topics. Among other figures that might be considered are Dwight Perkins, Jens Jensen, Marion Mahony, Walter Burley Griffin, Ellen Key, Irving and Allen Pond, Charles Zueblin, Charles Mulford Robinson, Robert Spencer, Herbert Croly and George Hooker.

How to submit: Proposals should present fresh material and/or interpretations. They should be submitted as an abstract of no more than one page, single-spaced, with the author's name at the top. The text should concisely describe the focus and scope of a 20-minute presentation. The proposal should be accompanied by a one-page biography/curriculum vitae that includes: author's full name, affiliation (if applicable), mailing address, email address and telephone number. Please also note any extraordinary audio-visual needs. PDF files are preferred and filenames should include the author's name. **Proposals must be received no later than March 16, 2022. Notification will be sent in early April 2022. Please submit proposals online at savewright.org/proposals.**

About the Conservancy: *The Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy facilitates the preservation and stewardship of the remaining built works designed by Frank Lloyd Wright through advocacy, education, and technical services. Learn more about the Conservancy at savewright.org.*