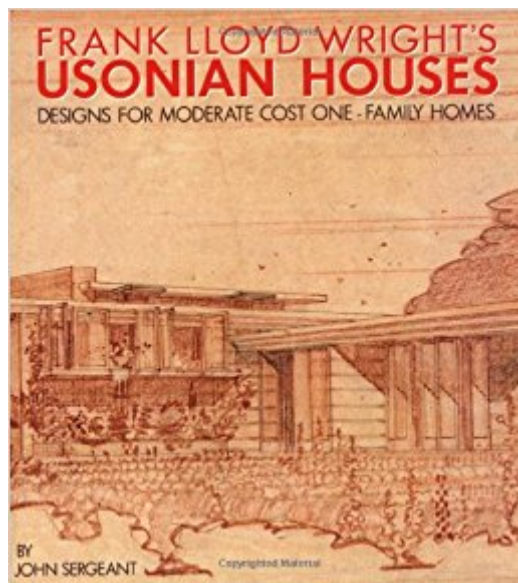




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# Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses: Designs For Moderate Cost One-Family Homes



## Synopsis

Looks at the last period in Wright's career, reassessing his Usonian houses, his Taliesin working communities, and his plan for Broadacre City. Wright's designs include a strong focus on energy conservation and the need for personalized lifestyle.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Looks at the last period in Wright's career, reassessing his Usonian houses, his Taliesin working communities, and his plan for Broadacre City. Wright's designs include a strong focus on energy conservation and the need for personalized lifestyle.

This is the book to get if you want to see most of the moderate cost one-family homes Frank Lloyd Wright designed call Usonian Houses. A good use copy cost under twenty and has as many images and floor plans of his major dwelling designs from the depression till his death in the fifties. The only way to get more info on Unsonians is to buy four books in an extremely expensive and now out of print collection of eighteen to twenty books series at a hundred dollars each. No I do not have the entire collection, but I bought the four books when they first came out. This book and the F.L.Wright Companion are the two books to get if you want to know about Usonian houses.

John Sergeant (now Professor Emeritus of Architecture at Cambridge University) wrote this book in the mid 1970's (published 1976) after visiting every Usonian, interviewing many of the homeowners

(most of whom were still occupying their homes in the early 1970's when Sergeant interviewed them), and conducting archival research at Taliesin and many other places. Sergeant also conducted first hand interviews with many others; of particular note are his interviews with Harold Turner, one of Wright's favorite master craftsmen who built many pre World War II Usonians and Stuart Richardson of the Richardson House in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, whose photographs and descriptions form the core of Sergeant's discussion of Wright's construction methods. Sergeant makes clear that many Usonians were built by their owners with assistance from Wright or his students. Does this mean that you can buy this book for plans? The answer is no, you cannot. The plans in the book are mostly accurate, but the originals and reproductions in this book are mostly for purposes of appreciation. Sergeant says you should not rely on this book for plans in his introduction. You can find more accurate reproductions of Wright's plans elsewhere, particularly the Storrer books. However even these are not going to be sufficient for those interested in building one of Wright's designs. My advice: hire a local licensed architect to help you out if you are interested in building a Usonian. While the book's description and history of Wright's Usonian houses contained in the first three chapters is solid, the best parts of the book are contained in the last three chapters, which furnish perceptive and subtle interpretations of Wright's Broadacre City precepts and their basis in Wright's philosophies of organic architecture. These chapters contain much food for thought, particularly for planners. Sergeant makes clear that Wright eschewed the architectural determinism of his time--which unfortunately continues in our present time, particularly in New Urbanist public housing schemes (where would New Urbanism be without the public housing petri dish?)--and understood the relationships between culture, democracy and architecture. Wright's philosophies of urban decentralization are found in his books "The Disappearing City" (1932), "Architecture and Modern Life" (1938), "When Democracy Builds" (1945), and finally in "The Living City" (1958). Students and practitioners of sustainability or neighborhood development will find much of value in Sergeant's insightful discussion of Wright's thoughts on these matters. I think one can say with some degree of assurance that Wright would find many things awry with current fads such as LEED-ND and aspects of New Urbanism. Read this book to find out what Wright's criticisms would probably have been.

It seems that this important phase in Wright's illustrious career has not been given the attention it deserves. As Frank Sergeant noted, Wright was most proud of his Usonian Homes and actively promoted his vision of a "Broadacre City." Unfortunately, Sergeant's book was the product of the 70's. He offers a good text, but poor photographs and mediocre illustrations that don't give the

reader a compelling vision of these homes. Wright started with the Jacobs House, built in the late 30's, which got the ball rolling. With a lot of sweat and material contributions by the owners, they were able to keep the cost near the \$5000 budget Wright had set. He wanted these homes to be affordable, clean, efficient dwellings that reflected his streamlined view of America. Wright abhorred the wasteful society America had become, and envisioned a "Broadacre City" that would satisfy Americans' insatiable appetite for detached homes, without destroying the landscape in the process. He incorporated many passive solar features into these homes, relied on natural materials, and as always created an open plan that characterized the democratic nature of society. More enticing books are now available on Usonian homes, but Sergeant's book is a good place to start in getting an impression of the quality of these homes, and how they came to shape America's suburban lifestyle.

Lots of writing, not very important. A bunch of cluttered, small blueprint plans that were reduced in size to fit the page. A few photos. Not much of a reference for anyone. Seems like a vanity book, probably published by the author to cash in on the Wright craze. doesn't present books well. doesn't tell you basic information. Things like number of illustrations is important. Color or black & white photos, number of pages etc.

Bought this book used. A little dirtier than expected and described. Contents are worth keeping. Great Book!

The author spent six years researching the book, which is ostensibly about the houses but quickly turns into a book about the man. And how could it not? How many famous architects built mostly houses? Or started a commune during the Depression? Or had elaborate, futuristic, monorail-equipped cities all planned out in complete detail? Profiles the iconoclastic artist a bit too sympathetically at times, though. For instance crediting him with setting the example for the Postwar ranch house, which would have undoubtedly emerged on its own. He also defends FLLW's writings as well as anyone could, but they're really too old fashioned to mean much today. The drawings--just small floor plans--are nice but no details are included. Otherwise, plenty of substance.

in process of planning on a Usonian style residence and wanted this resource. I've owned it in the past so I knew the contents. Well worth the investment for those interested in uniquely designed homes by FLW. (& associates)

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