



## FALLINGWATER

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Fallingwater or Kaufmann Residence is a house designed by American architect Frank Lloyd Wright in 1935 in rural southwestern Pennsylvania, 50 miles southeast of Pittsburgh. The home was built partly over a waterfall on Bear Run in the Mill Run section of Stewart Township, Fayette County, Pennsylvania, in the Laurel Highlands of the Allegheny Mountains.

Hailed by Time shortly after its completion as Wright's "most beautiful job", it is also listed among Smithsonian's Life List of 28 places "to visit before you die." It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1966. In 1991, members of the American Institute of Architects named the house the "best all-time work of American architecture" and in 2007, it was ranked twenty-ninth on the list of America's Favorite Architecture according to the AIA.

### HISTORY

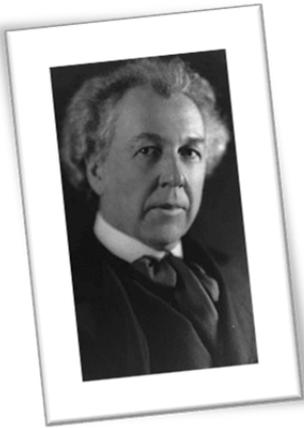
Edgar Kaufmann Sr. was a successful Pittsburgh businessman and president of Kaufmann's Department Store. His son, Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., studied architecture briefly under Wright.

Edgar Sr. had been prevailed upon by his son and Wright to itemize the cost of Wright's utopian model city. When completed, it was displayed at Kaufmann's Department Store and Wright was a guest in the Kaufmann home, "La Tourelle", a French Norman estate designed by celebrated Pittsburgh architect Benno Janssen (1874–1964) in the stylish Fox Chapel suburb in 1923 for Edgar J. Kaufmann.

The Kaufmanns and Wright were enjoying refreshments at La Tourelle when Wright, who never missed an opportunity to charm a potential client, said to Edgar Jr. in tones that the elder Kaufmanns were intended to overhear, "Edgar, this house is not worthy of your parents..." The remark spurred the Kaufmanns' interest in something worthier. Fallingwater would become the end result.

The Kaufmanns owned property outside Pittsburgh with a waterfall and cabins they used as a rural retreat. When the cabins deteriorated, Mr. Kaufmann contacted Wright.

In November 1934, Wright visited Bear Run and asked for a survey of the area around the waterfall. One was prepared by Fayette Engineering Company of Uniontown, Pennsylvania including all the site's boulders, trees and topography, and forwarded to Wright in March 1935. It took nine months for his ideas to crystallize into a design, quickly sketched up in time for a visit by Kaufmann to Taliesin in September 1935. It was then that Kaufmann first became aware that Wright intended to build the home above the falls, rather than below them to afford a view of the cascades as he had expected.



## FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

### **Personal information**

*Nationality:* American

*Born:* June 8, 1867 in Richland Center, Wisconsin

*Died:* April 9, 1959 in Phoenix, Arizona

An American architect, interior designer, writer and educator, who designed more than 1,000 projects, which resulted in more than 500 completed works. Wright promoted organic architecture (exemplified by Fallingwater), was a leader of the Prairie School movement of architecture (exemplified by the Robie House, the Westcott House, and the Darwin D. Martin House), and developed the concept of the Usonian home (exemplified by the Rosenbaum House). His work includes original and innovative examples of many different building types, including offices, churches, schools, skyscrapers, hotels, and museums. Wright also often designed many of the interior elements of his buildings, such as the furniture and stained glass.

Already well-known during his lifetime, Wright was recognized in 1991 by the American Institute of Architects as "the greatest American architect of all time".

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## STYLE

Fallingwater stands as one of Wright's greatest masterpieces both for its dynamism and for its integration with the striking natural surroundings. Wright's passion for Japanese architecture was strongly reflected in the design of Fallingwater, particularly in the importance of interpenetrating exterior and interior spaces and the strong emphasis placed on harmony between man and nature. Contemporary Japanese architect Tadao Ando has stated: "I think Wright learned the most important aspect of architecture, the treatment of space, from Japanese architecture. When I visited Fallingwater in Pennsylvania, I found that same sensibility of space. But there was the additional sounds of nature that appealed to me."

The extent of Wright's genius in integrating every detail of his design can only be hinted at in photographs. This organically designed private residence was intended to be a nature retreat for its owners. The house is well-known for its connection to the site; it is built on top of an active waterfall which flows beneath the house. The fireplace hearth in the living room integrates boulders found on the site and upon which the house was built — ledge rock which protrudes up to a foot through the living room floor was left in place to demonstrably link the outside with the inside. Wright had initially intended that the ledge be cut flush with the floor, but this had been one of the Kaufmann family's favorite sunning spots, so Mr. Kaufmann suggested that it be left as it was. The stone floors are waxed, while the hearth is left plain, giving the impression of dry rocks protruding from a stream.

Integration with the setting extends even to small details. For example, where glass meets stone walls there is no metal frame; rather, the glass and its horizontal dividers were run into a caulked recess in the stonework so that the stone walls appear uninterrupted by glazing. From the cantilevered living room, a stairway leads directly down to the stream below, and in a connecting space which connects the main house with the guest and servant level, a natural spring drips water inside, which is then channeled back out. Bedrooms are small, some with low ceilings to encourage people outward toward the open social areas, decks, and outdoors.

Bear Run and the sound of its water permeate the house, especially during the spring when the snow is melting, and locally quarried stone walls and cantilevered terraces resembling the nearby rock formations are meant to be in harmony. The design incorporates broad expanses of windows and balconies which reach out into their surroundings. The staircase leading down from the living room to the stream (mentioned above) is accessed via movable horizontal glass panes. In conformance with Wright's views, the main entry door is away from the falls.

On the hillside above the main house stands a three-bay carport, servants' quarters, and a guest house. These attached outbuildings were built two years later using the same quality of materials and attention to detail as the main house. The guest quarters feature a spring-fed swimming pool which overflows to the river below. After Fallingwater was deeded to the public, the carport was enclosed at the direction of Kaufmann, Jr., to be used by museum visitors to view a presentation at the end of their guided tours on the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (to which the home was entrusted). Kaufmann, Jr. designed its interior himself, to specifications found in other Fallingwater interiors by Wright.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## FALLINGWATER QUIZ

**Completion:** Complete the following questions by writing the missing information on the line.

1. Fallingwater is a famous landmark located in what county and state? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Fallingwater is most noted for the fact that the house was built over a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The fireplace is constructed of \_\_\_\_\_ from a local quarry.
4. Bedrooms were built with low ceilings so that people would be more likely to \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ was enclosed and now serves as an exhibit area for visitors to view a movie.

**Matching:** Draw a line between the name in Column A and the matching description in Column B.

**Column A**

**Column B**

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 6. Edgar Kaufman, Sr. | Fox Chapel estate of the Kaufman family of Pittsburgh       |
| 7. Fallingwater       | Name of a creek that runs through the Kaufman property      |
| 8. Frank Lloyd Wright | Architect who designed the Visitors Center at Fallingwater  |
| 9. Edgar Kaufman, Jr. | Leader of the Prairie School of architectural design        |
| 10. La Tourelle       | One of the best examples of organic architecture in America |
| 11. Bear Run          | President of a major Pittsburgh department store            |

**Multiple Choice:** Select the answer that best fits each statement below.

12. Fallingwater's owners originally wanted a house that had a view of their favorite \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Oak tree
  - b. Mountain
  - c. Waterfall
  - d. Prairie
13. Fallingwater has been entrusted to \_\_\_\_\_ and is now open to the public as a museum.
  - a. Tadao Ando
  - b. The American Institute of Architects
  - c. The Fayette Engineering Company
  - d. The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy