

Historic Wright home purchased for preservation

By Paul Gapp
Urban Affairs Editor

THE HISTORIC Oak Park house and studio where Frank Lloyd Wright lived and worked for almost 20 years have been purchased for restoration and preservation.

Avenue State Bank bought the connected structures at 423 Forest Av. for \$168,000 from Mrs. Clyde Nooker, who with her late husband had lived in the house designed by Wright for more than 30 years.

The property will be held in trust for the Oak Park Development Corp., a nonprofit organization formed earlier this year. Several Oak Park banks are expected to participate in long-term financing in behalf of the corporation, which is supported by local businesses and the village government.

RESTORATION will be undertaken by the newly organized Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation, a nonprofit citizen organization.

When the house is opened to the public, admission fees will help finance renovation. Contributions to pay off the mortgage will be sought from individuals, foundations, and state and federal agencies.

"It is unlikely that there exists in America a more hallowed shrine to the art of architecture than this home and studio of Frank Lloyd Wright," said Paul E. Sprague, an authority on the late architect and director of the Illinois Historic Buildings Survey.

The house is the oldest surviving residence known to have been designed by Wright alone. He began work on it in 1889, when he had just turned 22 and married Catherine Tobin.

WRIGHT borrowed \$5,000 for construction from the architectural firm of Adler and Sullivan, where he was employed. When Louis Sullivan found out Wright was violating his contract by designing "bootleg" houses on his own—and creating the "prairie" style—he fired the young architect.

The shingled Wright house is not itself of the land-hugging prairie design for which the architect later became famous. It is considered derivative of the work of several architects and is essentially of the "Queen Anne" style in its conception.

Restoring it to its original appearance will be complicated by the fact that Wright

changed the windows, fireplaces, roofs, and other details of materials and finish as he modified his own style over the years.

Assisting in the restoration will be the eldest of Wright's children, Lloyd, an architect who lives in Los Angeles. He and five other children were born in the Oak Park house. A seventh child was born later during the architect's third marriage.

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