



Prairie Metropolis: Chicago and the Birth of a New American Home

Patrick F Cannon

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Louis H. Sullivan, one of America's most influential architects, strove to develop a purely American architectural vision, and his ideas led his student Frank Lloyd Wright, and Wright's contemporaries, to develop the Prairie School. Wright's strongly horizontal designs, with low-hipped or flat roofs, bands of art-glass windows, and open interior planning, now number among the most respected domestic buildings in the country. The designs of William Drummond, John Van Bergen, and Walter Burley Griffin had much in common with Wright's, but other architects, such as George W. Maher, Robert Spencer, and Tallmadge & Watson, developed their own interpretations of the Prairie house, adding such decorative elements as columns and mosaic fireplace surrounds, or favoring more conventional entrances with clearly defined rooms.

The Prairie style fell out of vogue largely before the onset of World War I, though John Van Bergen continued to build the houses into the 1920s, and Wright's famous Wingspread in Racine, Wisconsin, was built in 1937. Recently there has been a Prairie revival in keeping with a renewed interest in the Arts and Crafts aesthetic. But the houses conceived by these early-twentieth-century architects stand as icons of American ingenuity.

Prairie Metropolis: Chicago and the Birth of a New American Home offers brief biographies of a dozen architects, with vivid and inviting color photographs of exteriors and interiors designed by each. The 160 photographs by James Caulfield offer a multi-home tour of exquisite taste, while succinct captions by Patrick F. Cannon draw our attention to the details of each home's construction and design.

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