



ENNIS HOUSE FOUNDATION

2655 GLENDOWER AVENUE • LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90027-1114
TELEPHONE (323) 660-0607 • www.ennishouse.org

FACT SHEET

"You see, the final result is going to stand on that hill a hundred years or more. Long after we are gone it will be pointed out as the Ennis House and pilgrimages will be made to it b lovers of the beautiful - from everywhere".

-Frank Lloyd Wright in a letter to Mr. & Mrs. Charles Ennis 1924

Welcome to The Charles W. & Mabel Ennis House designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. The Ennis House dates from 1924 and is one of four concrete block houses designed by Wright in Los Angeles.

Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), was born in Richland Center, Wisconsin on June 8, 1867. He was the son of William Cary Wright and Anna Lloyd Jones. They were members of a large and extended family that immigrated from Wales to settle in the tiny Wisconsin River community of Richland Center. To supplement his income as a farmer, William Wright worked as a pastor of the local Unitarian Church. Young Frank attended school and worked summers on the Lloyd Jones farm. In his young adult years, Frank got a job in an architecture office and never looked back. He first worked in the offices of Allan Conover and then moved up the ladder to work for Joseph Lyman Silsbee. Soon after he was a draftsman in the prestigious Chicago based architectural firm of Louis Sullivan and Dankmar Adler. After breaking out on his own, Wright soon developed his own architectural style. In his early years projects like the Larkin Building in Buffalo and the Robie House in Chicago are among his masterpieces that commanded international attention and acclaim. His complete scope of work encompasses buildings unique to the American creative spirit. In his life Wright would design over 1,000 structures of which approximately 500 were actually constructed. Only about 400 of his buildings remain standing. In California his output ranges from his early Prairie period through some of his last completed works dating from his mature Usonian period.

While working in Chicago, Wright was introduced to Aline Barnsdall. Through Ms. Barnsdall Wright was able to extend his practice outward and into the Western United



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States. Wright called the Barnsdall Project his "California Romanza" due in part to his fascination with the Southland's dry climate and in addition to his now being able to build into his work a "freedom to make ones own form." The major element of the Barnsdall project was Wright's Hollyhock House built for Ms. Barnsdall as the centerpiece of a series of buildings built at Olive Hill in Los Angeles near Vermont Ave. and Hollywood Blvd. Many buildings were designed for Olive Hill, yet only a few of the buildings were actually realized. A major component of the Barnsdall project was the use of concrete. Wright was fascinated with what he called the 'plasticity' of poured in place concrete. At Hollyhock House and in the later block houses, Wright would make extensive use of concrete and site the buildings so as to work in conjunction with the topography of the exact site. This is a reaction to Wright's feeling that a house or building should be of the site, not on, or at the site. The home should rise organically from the land in working harmony with Nature.

The first of the four block houses was a commission for Mrs. Alice Millard. Known as "La Miniatura", this picturesque and romantic home is set in a ravine in the Prospect Park area of Pasadena. The home is constructed of 16 x 16 concrete blocks that make up the dominant building material used both inside and outside of the house. In all four of the concrete block houses the ornamentation that adorns the exterior of the house is extended inward into the interior of the house. Wright believed the flow of the exterior space into the interior should be a natural transition. Once again, this is a reaction to his being in such a temperate climate. Wright felt that the family should spend their time outdoors in nature. His California work is the culmination of that idea.

During the construction of La Miniatura, Wright was able to design and build three additional houses using the concrete block method. The Storer, Freeman and Ennis Houses were designed and built between 1923 and 1926. Of these, the Ennis house is the largest and most ambitious of the block Houses.

Charles W. Ennis was born in Indiana in 1858. Mabel Ennis was born in 1863. They lived in Indianapolis before moving to Pittsburgh. Like many people of that era, the Ennis' soon moved to Los Angeles around 1901. He ran a successful men's clothing business located in downtown Los Angeles. At the Ennis House the idea and scope of the concrete block method taken to its limits. This monumental structure paves the way for Modernism in the



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United States. There is extensive use of art glass in the house as well as a glass mosaic tile fireplace that is incidentally the last remaining glass tile fireplace remaining in any Wright structure. Charles Ennis only lived in the house a few years and he died in December 1928. Mabel Ennis remained in the house until 1936. In 1940 the House was sold to John Nesbitt. Frank Lloyd Wright was hired by Nesbitt to redesign parts of the house and furniture for the house. While drawings were executed, only a swimming pool and a billiard room were added. In time, Nesbitt sold the house and a series of owners lived in the House until the 1990's. Experienced moviegoers may remember the Ennis House as the location for The House on Haunted Hill, Blade Runner, Black Rain, Grand Canyon and The Day of The Locust, among many others.

In January 20, 1994 Southern California experienced the Northridge earthquake. The Ennis House was severely impacted by the quake. Large sections of the south retaining wall gave way.

Adding to the damage already done, in 2005 Los Angeles had an unprecedented amount of rainfall. After years of deferred maintenance, the Ennis House was in serious danger of collapse. Early last year the Ennis House was placed on the 11 Most Endangered List by the National Trust For Historic Preservation. A team of local and national representatives from major Preservation Organizations around the Country was formed to save the Ennis House from total collapse. The Ennis House Foundation came into being in August of 2005.

Through the expertise of The Los Angeles Conservancy, The Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy and the National Trust For Historic Preservation, a multi-year effort is underway to secure the funding to not only stabilize this National Landmark, but to bring the Ennis House back to the glory it so justly deserves.

So far \$6.5 million dollars has been secured to stabilize the southern retaining wall, secure the foundation of the property and reproduce missing concrete blocks.

For more information please go to: EnnisHouse.org