

University of Chicago Library

Guide to the Robie House Collection 1909-1993



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Table of Contents

Descriptive Summary	3
Information on Use	3
Access	3
Restrictions on Use	3
Citation	3
Historical Note	3
Scope Note	4
Related Resources	5
Subject Headings	5
INVENTORY	5
Series I: Construction Documents	5
Series II: Diary Clippings	6
Series III: Conservation Assessments	6
Series IV: Oversize Documents	6
Series V: Architectural Drawings	7

Descriptive Summary

Identifier ICU.SPCL.ROBIE

Title Robie House Collection

Date 1909-1993

Size 2.5 linear feet (2 boxes)

Repository Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center
University of Chicago Library
1100 East 57th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract Primarily account ledgers and specification books used by the H. B. Barnard Company for the construction of the Robie House. The collection is part of a 1978 donation which included blueprints with notes by architect Frank Lloyd Wright (now in the University of Chicago Architectural Drawings Collection) and photograph prints as well as the items listed here. To that initial collection a later transfer of 1912-1930 clippings from diary entries from a resident of the house was added. They were written by Isadora Wilber, who lived in the Robie House from 1912-1926. She very briefly described living in the house and Frank Lloyd Wright's continued interest in the building. In addition, two 1993 conservation reports, one for the entire structure and one focusing on the windows, have been added to the collection.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Restrictions on Use

Many of the items are very fragile. Most of the material has been photocopied for researcher use.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Robie House Collection, [Box #, Folder #], Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Historical Note

The Robie House, built in 1909, is an example of Prairie Style architecture developed by American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959). Frederick C. Robie, for whom the

home was built, met Wright while he was working out of his Oak Park home and studio and commissioned the house for himself and his wife Lora (Hieronymus) Robie. Lora was a 1900 alumna of the University of Chicago and the couple chose to build their new home next to the University campus.

The house remained a private residence for several residents until 1926 when it was sold with all of its furniture to the Chicago Theological Seminary who purchased it to use as a student residence. By 1957 the house was considered for demolition. On a visit to tour the building, however, Wright himself advocated for its preservation and it was purchased by the firm of Webb and Knapp as part of a Hyde Park urban renewal initiative.

In 1963 the building was designated as a National Historic Landmark and donated to the University of Chicago. In 1992 the University of Chicago partnered with the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust to complete restoration of the Robie House. This was the beginning of a decade long project to repair the building and place it under the management of the Trust. Through the work of the University of Chicago and the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust, the building has been restored and has opened to visitors.

Scope Note

The Robie House Collection is primarily part of a 1978 gift to the University of Chicago Library. The gift includes blueprints with notes and adjustments made by Wright, ledgers of expenses from the construction contractor, and Wright's specifications for the construction of the Robie House. When donating the collection to the University of Chicago Library, the donor also loaned the negatives for several construction photographs so the library could make prints for the collection. The photographs and blueprints have been stored separately but the ledgers and specification books have been kept together.

In 1993, clippings from the diary of Isadora Wilber, a resident of the Robie House from 1912-1926, were identified by a student working in the house and transferred to this collection from Office of Special Events at the University of Chicago.

Two conservation reports from 1993 are also part of the collection.

The collection is divided into series primarily based on the time and source of acquisition:

Series I: Construction Documents, is comprised of the 1909 ledgers and building construction specifications from the original gift.

Series II: Diary Clippings, is comprised of the 1912-1930 diary excerpts written by house resident Isadora Wilber and transferred to the collection in 1993.

Series III: Conservation Assessments, comprised of bound reports from 1993, donated in 2022.

Series IV: Oversize Documents, an expense ledger from the original gift, 1909-1910.

Series V: Architectural Drawings, used by the construction firm, H. B. Barnard Company, from the original gift, 1909-1910.

Related Resources

Archival Buildings File

The prints from the 1978 gift have been digitized and are available through the University of Chicago Photographic Archive:

<http://photoarchive.lib.uchicago.edu/db.xqy?show=browse2.xml|197>

Additional copies of the Robie House plans are also held at the Columbia University: https://findingaids.library.columbia.edu/ead/nnc-a/ldpd_12471376/dsc/3

Subject Headings

- Wright, Frank Lloyd, 1867-1959
- Robie, Frederick Carleton, 1879-1962
- Robie, Lora Hieronymus, 1878-1947
- Wilber, Isadora
- H. B. Barnard Company
- Robie House (Chicago, Ill.)
- Historic houses
- Building sites
- University of Chicago – Buildings
- Historic buildings--Conservation and restoration
- Prairie School (Architecture)
- Architecture, Domestic
- Architecture, Domestic – Middle West
-

INVENTORY

Series I: Construction Documents

Series I, Construction Documents, 1909-1910, is comprised of some loose ledger pages, three books of building construction specifications, and a folder of photocopies of the specifications.

Box 1

Folder 1

Ledger pages, 1909-1910

Box 1

Folder 2

Specifications for excavation, masonry, sheet metal, and carpentry, 1909

Box 1

Folder 3

Specifications for plumbing, sewage, and gas fittings, 1909

Box 1

Folder 4

General specifications, 1909

Box 1

Folder 5

Photocopies of the three 1909 specification books

Series II: Diary Clippings

Series II, Diary Clippings, is comprised of a single folder with the 1912-1930 diary excerpts written by house resident Isadora Wilber and photocopies made of all papers when transferred to the collection in 1993.

Box 1

Folder 6

Diary notes and photocopies of the notes, 1912-1930

Series III: Conservation Assessments

Series III, Conservation Assessments is comprised of two 1993 bound reports of conservation recommendations for the Robie House and its windows.

Box 1

Folder 7

The Robie House by Frank Lloyd Wright, Leaded Glass Window Condition Analysis written by Julie L. Sloan for McKernan Satterlee, Associates, Inc., 1993, plastic-bound, 45 page typescript with an additional 28 leaves of schematic illustrations of the individual windows

Box 1

Folder 8

The Frederick C. Robie House, A Comprehensive Conservation Plan written by the firm of Hasbrouck, Peterson, Zimoch, Sirirattumrong dated December 16, 1993, plastic-bound, 460 pages of typescript description, images, and schematic drawings.

Series IV: Oversize Documents

Series IV, Oversize Documents, is comprised of a quarter-bound leather expense ledger, 1909-1910

Box 2

Folder 1

Ledger, 1909-1910, supply and expense lists for construction of the Robie House, the Home for Aged and Disabled Railroad Employees (Highland Park), Ward Corby G.B. Swift & Co. (57th and LaSalle St.), Boarding House C.R.I. & P.R.R. (Hulbert, Ark.), Estate of John B. Jackson, property for Helen L. Carter (607-615 West 63rd St), F.R. Schofield (personal account), property at 410 West 62nd and 6154-6156 Stewart, property for J.W. Taylor (57th and Washington Ave), property for T.S. Leake (Armourdale, Kansas), University of Chicago, Murphysboro I.C.R.R., Iowa City C.R.I., St. Louis (Missouri) C.R.I & P.R.R., property for H.B. Osgood (99th-100th Street and Winchester), and property for R.W. Stevens

Series V: Architectural Drawings

Series V, Architectural Drawings, contains plans used by the construction firm, H. B. Barnard Company, from the original gift. Housed separately as part of the University of Chicago Architectural Drawings Collection.

Oversize folder 1

Plat of Survey, March 18, 1909

Oversize folder 1

Rear entrance, front porch and garage, no.1

Oversize folder 1

58th Woodlawn, no.1

Oversize folder 1

Detail 3

Oversize folder 1

Detail 3

Oversize folder 2

Ground plan, no.1, May 6, 1909

Oversize folder 2

58th Woodlawn, ground plan, no.1 (revised)

Oversize folder 2

58th Woodlawn, no.2

Oversize folder 2

58th Woodlawn, no.4

Oversize folder 2

58th Woodlawn, chimney, no.5

Oversize folder 3

A-H, no.1, (revised), May 6, 1909

Oversize folder 3

NE corner 58th Woodlawn, roof, no.6

Oversize folder 3

I-U, no.2, (copy 1)

- Oversize folder 3**
I-U, no.2, (copy 2)
- Oversize folder 3**
I-U, no.2, (revised)
- Oversize folder 4**
South elevation, no.6
- Oversize folder 4**
Second floor plan, no.4
- Oversize folder 4**
East and west elevation, no.5
- Oversize folder 4**
North elevation, no.7
- Oversize folder 4**
North elevation, no.7, (copy 2)
- Oversize folder 4**
South elevation (Copy 2)
- Oversize folder 5**
Cases-Fireplace, Living and Play Rooms No.10
- Oversize folder 5**
Kitchen and pantry cases, no.9
- Oversize folder 5**
First floor plan scale 1/4"=1'-0", no.3
- Oversize folder 5**
First Floor Plan Scale 1/4"=1'-0", no.3
- Oversize folder 5**
Ground floor plan-scale 1/4"=1'-0", no.2
- Oversize folder 5**
Cross section, no.8
- Oversize folder 5**
Cases-Fireplace, Living and Play Rooms No.10
- Oversize folder 5**
Kitchen and pantry cases, no.9
- Oversize folder 6**
Foundation plan, no.1, (revised), March 23, 1909
- Oversize folder 6**
Ground floor, no.2
- Oversize folder 6**
Cross section, no.8
- Oversize folder 6**
East and west elevations, no.5
- Oversize folder 6**
Foundation plan, (revised-copy 2)