

# And Then There was the Catalog

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**Received** June 24, 2016; **Accepted** July 14, 2016; **Published** July 21, 2016

**Citation:** Storrer WA (2016) And Then There was the Catalog. J Archit Eng Tech 5: 168. doi: [10.4172/2168-9717.1000168](https://doi.org/10.4172/2168-9717.1000168)

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1. Several of the photographs I submitted were not acceptable. All were ones I had stated I was in the process of replacing. They had been submitted to prove I actually had been to those buildings.

2. After I published with someone other than Raeburn, the FLIWF would access my work against their records, and possibly publish their own "official" catalog.

From this rejection, I went to Praeger, who were doing books in color inexpensively. They informed me that a Wright catalog wouldn't sell 15 thousand copies, their minimum to justify publication. (Many decades ago, when sales went past 20 thousand, I dropped Praeger a "thank you" note).

MIT Press accepted the project without hesitation. As I was an unknown, it was agreed that we needed a Foreword by someone with clout in the business. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, dean of architectural historians and author of *In the Nature of Materials*<sup>3</sup>, was suggested. He agreed and opened his extensive files to me. Note; MIT offered a generous stipend, but Hitchcock asked only that I take him to dinner at a favorite seafood restaurant that could not be reached by the New York subway system, and to which a taxi fare would be prohibitive.

The text for the Catalog was sent to the MIT Press from Anchorage, Alaska, just before I continued my 1971 around-the-world flight that would take me to the Wright buildings in Japan. The photos from that trip were submitted on my return to the states two months later. The submitted text numbered each item from 1, Wright's own home, to 433, the Lykes residence, even giving separate numbers to some detached garages. Since this numbering was based upon both my country-wide search and the FLIWF's files, we felt safe in the subsequent

When Wright was driving me around Evanston, Oak Park and River Forest, and Hyde Park, he would point to a house and say, 'I did that but nobody'll know.'

So the quest continues beyond the Catalog.

Founded in 2000, the "Rediscovering Wright Project" was created to search out those houses to which Wright had pointed and said, "I did that but nobody'll ever know." Richard Johnson (deceased 1915), Daniel Dominique Watts and myself started searching the towns mentioned by Hitchcock. We found several works that seemed to fit Wright's developing style, but the biggest find was in River Forest.

Dominique Watts had read a section in the seminal book, *The Prairie School* by H. Allen Brooks and went looking in Glen Ellyn for a building described therein. When he found it, there was little doubt that it was by Wright. This was the William Heald house (S.177a), since proven a Wright design when the plan was found in Wright's son Lloyd Wright's archive. But there was another design for the family in River Forest, for Brother James. We went looking and found it. A Wright-like design, we had further research to do on its provenance. Our usual routine followed; we did a square eight on the blocks next to this house and one block west we discovered a whole block of Wright houses. Twenty-five houses previously assigned by the local historian to Harry Robinson, the low man on the totem pole in Wright's Chicago office. Clearly they were beyond Harry's design capabilities, but the plans which were in Harry's collection — we credited him with being the on-site supervisor — had been destroyed on his death. Naturally, because the designs were NOT Harry's. What we knew was that on one plan was penciled, "FLW Esq".

A restorm ensued by those claiming Harry Robinson was responsible, though Harry never claimed the project. No one has been able to come up with any other Wright buildings in River Forest to which Wright might have pointed a finger. Those who have championed Robinson have not been in the houses where they would find details by both Wright and son Lloyd in profusion.

So we move on with discoveries, big and small, for future revelation and publication.