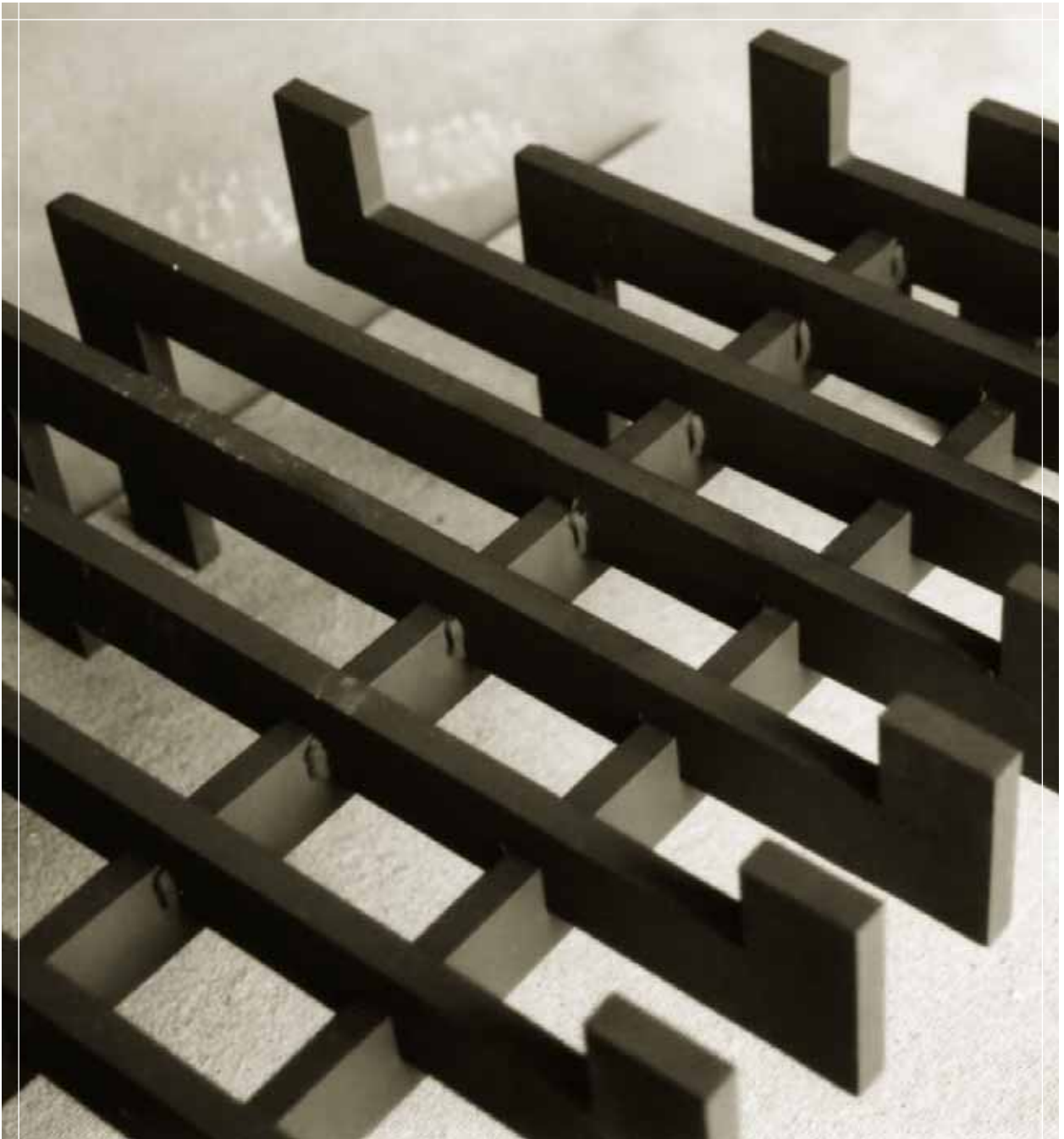
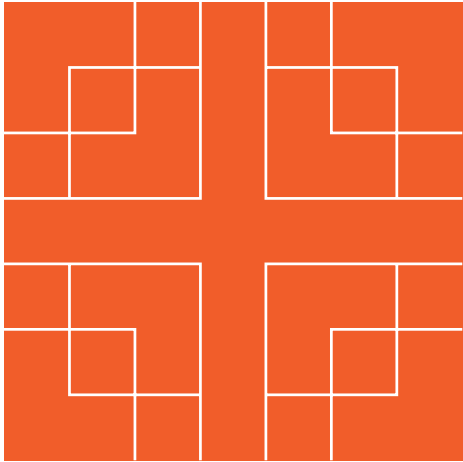


T H E G A R D E N W A L L




WILLEY HOUSE RESTORATION JOURNAL VOLUME 3 ■ ISSUE 1 ■ WINTER 2003-04 ■ ■ ■





THE STATE OF THE HOUSE WINTER 2003 - 04

A bathroom reborn, fiberboard insulation, unending challenges of tidewater cypress, a restored and functional fireplace, a brick threshold! Amen.

The bathroom, at best tired and dingy was not the sort of place you'd want to walk barefoot. The shower/tub surround was lined with brown 1970s tile in what we assumed was a non-original feature of the house. Mismatched valves and handles, a replacement stool (the original froze and cracked) and badly chipped and scratched porcelain sink and tub along with dim lighting and a single small window made this room darker than the basement and equally inviting. The space itself 9 foot x 6 foot 8 inches, small even by bathroom standards was not detailed in the way most other rooms in the house were. An elevation shows a shelf below the single east wall window and another that comes off the built-in vanity table and wraps around the tub. The vanity originates from a sketch provided by Nancy Willey drawn to scale by Wright but never executed for reasons unknown. Various plans for the house show different configurations of the sink and stool. There is little doubt of the arrangement finally settled on, as it is hard to argue with plumbing set below a concrete and brick floor. 




East bathroom wall. Notice the use of cement brick hidden inside the wall, punctuated by red tie bricks.



BATH FIXTURES

The bathroom “as built” features a second small sink that partially hung over the edge of the tub, a pedestal sink, a corner tub and a stool all made by Crane. Only the single East wall shelf was built. Probably because of the decision to include a shower. “Ghosts” on the original cement wall under the tile clearly show the shower curtain

rod to be original or at least very early. The definitive proof is in the plumbing for the shower inside a cement shower wall that had never been opened up since construction, the bracing for the shower was accomplished with a piece of scrap wood. 



South bathroom wall stripped of plaster.



West bathroom wall. Note plumbing for small sink next to tub on the right side of the photo.



Original sink and replacement stool.



Sink top crated to send off for recoating with porcelain. It is made of cast iron but the porcelain was chipped and worn through. The Bathtub, in a similar condition and was sent to be reporelained also.



INSULATION

Stafford located some ceiling banding strips in the garage, that they are a complete and matched set that fit directly into place on the bathroom ceiling. A match to the original "Insulite" fiberboard insulation was found and installed. Access panels were added behind the sink and tub. New plaster with integrated raw sienna tint and a sienna tinted cement shower surround are being applied as this is being written. 📷

A match to the original fiberboard used in the house. The original was called "Insulite" and was donated by the manufacturer.



BATHROOM REPAIRS

As winter turns to spring a re-porcelained tub is safely back in place, a vintage replacement Crane pedestal sink has been secured and all the bath hardware restored or replaced with matching vintage Crane parts.

Wright's cantilevered vanity, radiator cover and seat are being built along with the addition of a wrap-around mirror inspired by the Taliesin guest room bath to open up the cramped space and create the illusion of spaciousness.

Every element original to the bathroom is being re-incorporated including the light fixtures. The small second

sink was cracked and missing a drain seal and wall bracket and had been placed in an awkward spot to begin with. New plumbing for it was run before the decision to abort was made so it can be installed at some future point if determined worthwhile.

Since major roof repairs were underway, an inconspicuous vent fan has been added. The shelf around the tub perimeter was unworkable with a shower in the tub so small shelves were added on the South wall backed by cypress to enrich the materials mix of the room. 📷



Steel support brackets for the cantilevered vanity table.



The return of the restored bathtub.





Spawled and broken bricks in the fireplace were removed. Custom-made replacement bricks were cut to size and placed for fit. Custom brick being mortared into place. The fireplace with new brick in place. The joints have yet to be tinted to match the smoke stained originals.

FIREPLACE RESTORATION

New brick was custom made for the fireplace backing and floor. The old spawled and broken brick was removed and the new laid. All mortar joints were pointed and matched to the originals. The fireplace irons designed to pivot had been seized in position for at least 30 years. When questioned, Russell and Jane Burris the second

owners of the house did not remember the arm pivoting so perhaps they had been immobile for closer to 40 years! To fix the frozen arm the hob needed to be disassembled and the rusty pivot torched free. Today the arm swings freely once again. 📷



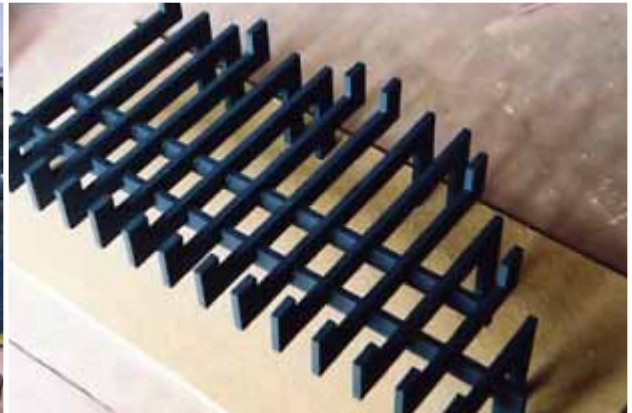
FIREPLACE GRATE

A steel fire grate designed in the grammar of the house was built. Josh cut the 1/2 inch steel on a CNC mill and welded it with body clamps and a square in his garage. The grate continues the musical rhythms of the irons and

shares in their proportions. The grate is designed to keep burning wood from resting directly against the “non-fire-brick back wall as well as to prevent errant logs from rolling onto the living room floor. [REDACTED]



Grate being built by Joshua.



The completed grate (detail)

CYPRESS CHALLENGES

The Willey house utilizes red tidewater cypress throughout. Although many sources have been found, the quality of the wood has presented challenges too complicated to discuss here. Particularly the more massive slab dimen-

sions 8/4 (2”), 10/4 (2 1/2”) are prone to checking and warping. If good quality cypress had been more readily available we might well be 6 to 12 months ahead of where we are today. [REDACTED]

THRESHOLDS REVISITED

At winter's end enough threshold brick has been made to complete the transitions between living room to terrace and study to terrace. The custom brick threshold is a simple idea, complicated and time-consuming to execute. Our intention was to satisfy Frank Lloyd Wright's desire for “no thresholds” thus creating a seamless floor blurring the

boundaries between interior and exterior when the French doors are open to the terrace. And in so doing also satisfy Nancy Willey's practical determination to keep the weather and “all the insect comedy” at bay. The house was fitted with aluminum thresholds at the time of completion. Somewhere right now Mr. Wright is smiling. [REDACTED]



C R E D I T S

Home Owners: Steve Sikora
Lynette Erickson-Sikora
Restoration/Supervision: Stafford Norris III
Apprentice: Joshua Norris
Website/Journal Design: Design Guys
Kelly Munson/Design and Programming

C O N T A C T S

Website: thewilleyhouse.com
E-mail: info@thewilleyhouse.com
All content © Wright at Home, LLC. 