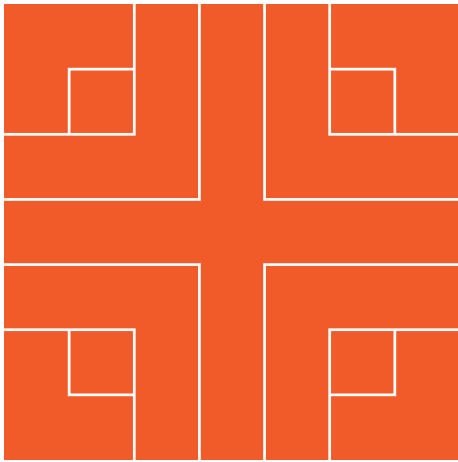


T H E G A R D E N W A L L



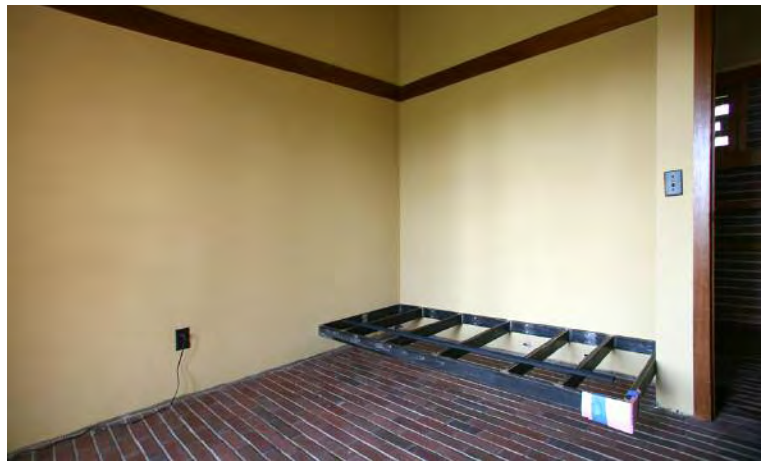
WILLEY HOUSE RESTORATION JOURNAL VOLUME 6 ■ ISSUE 2 ■ SPRING 2007 ■ ■ ■





THE STATE OF THE HOUSE SPRING 2007

Copyright 2007 Wright at Home, courtesy of the collection of Russell and Jane Burris



A built-in desk, file cabinets, cypress paneled walls, a cantilevered sleeping couch and ample shelf space for an academic's library. The garage door swings into operation. And a living garden blossoms.

THE STUDY

The room had been used as intended by Malcolm Willey as a study, albeit without shelves and in a bare plaster state. An early snap shot shows the tiny room filled with miscellaneous furniture. The second owners used it as a child's bedroom, a circumstance that made the lack of furnishings a benefit to them. When the Willey House was under construction, Nancy Willey was forced to make a number of difficult decisions while she was trying and largely succeeding to keep her dream home on budget. To do so required that many elements of Wright's design for the Willey House be sacrificed in order to archive the basics. Furnishings and built-ins were sometimes left incomplete with the assumption that they would be executed when affordable later on. As those dreams tend to go, much of the rich detailing of the Willey House was promptly forgotten once the Willeys moved in still in need of more elementary furniture.



Wright drew three schemes for the study. Each with the shelves and desk in a similar configuration but with subtle variations in shelving, cabinetry and drawers. One plan depicted the desk as a variation of the dining room table. The design we selected to build was the one that had been taken to the blueprint stage. We assume therefore it was also the most carefully considered of the three. The built scheme is faithful to the blueprints except for a slight modification of the center shelves which allows for the accommodation of our art and architectural library of oversized books.



Shelves are supported by welded metal brackets.



Study underway with doors and drawer fronts not yet in place.



Replacement radiators in primer and in place painted black.



Radiator covers have removable access panels.



Dado cut bracket caps are cut from solid stock.



Moveable shelves.




Showing all shelves in place waiting for doors and drawer fronts.



Drawer fronts and doors mounted.



The study is one of the most beautiful rooms in the house (my second favorite after the kitchen). It boasts a vast amount of shelf space and storage. Three sides of the room are now largely covered in wood. And the south walls have a characteristic found nowhere else in the house, wood paneled walls. Cypress plywood paneling covers the small spaces that frame the French doors and runs back behind the radiator enclosures. It is quite subtle in appearance but is an interesting nod to the traditional male enclave.

The sleeping couch, meant for cat naps is cantilevered off the wall and will be fitted with a futon cushion. A third dining chair will be used at the desk. 



Access door swings out to the left.



Main door swings out to the right.



Top of main door showing construction.

THE GARAGE DOOR

The Willey House garage door swings outward in two parts, requiring two steps; first the access door must be unlocked and swung outward before two spring bolts are released at the top and bottom of the large swinging door, allowing it to move freely. The length and substance of the car door caused it eventually to sag. It dragged across the face of the brick floor damaging both bricks and door. The door is built in the same way that interior solid core doors are constructed with sandwiched boards running cross directionally. Three men were required to carry it to the house, Nancy Willey reported to Wright in a letter during construction. The friction of the dragging door bottom created a levering action that eventually caused the door to crack. The door panels have been rejoined with some interior steel reinforcement and the hinges shimmed-up to a height that no longer causes it to snag on the bricks. In correspondence between Nancy and Wright there is mention of the door initially being installed improperly. Ample evidence demonstrates how it was originally hung. The access door swung in rather than out. Hinge ghosts are still visible and mismatched bricks appear in the wall where the original hinge blocks were fastened into the corner of the wall. 📐



Stop is suspended from the ceiling with a metal strap.



Access door is slightly recessed from main door.



Transition between indoors and out.



Binding hinge on main door damaged bricks.



Ghost of mistaken hinge placement.



Mismatched bricks where hinges formerly mounted to wall.



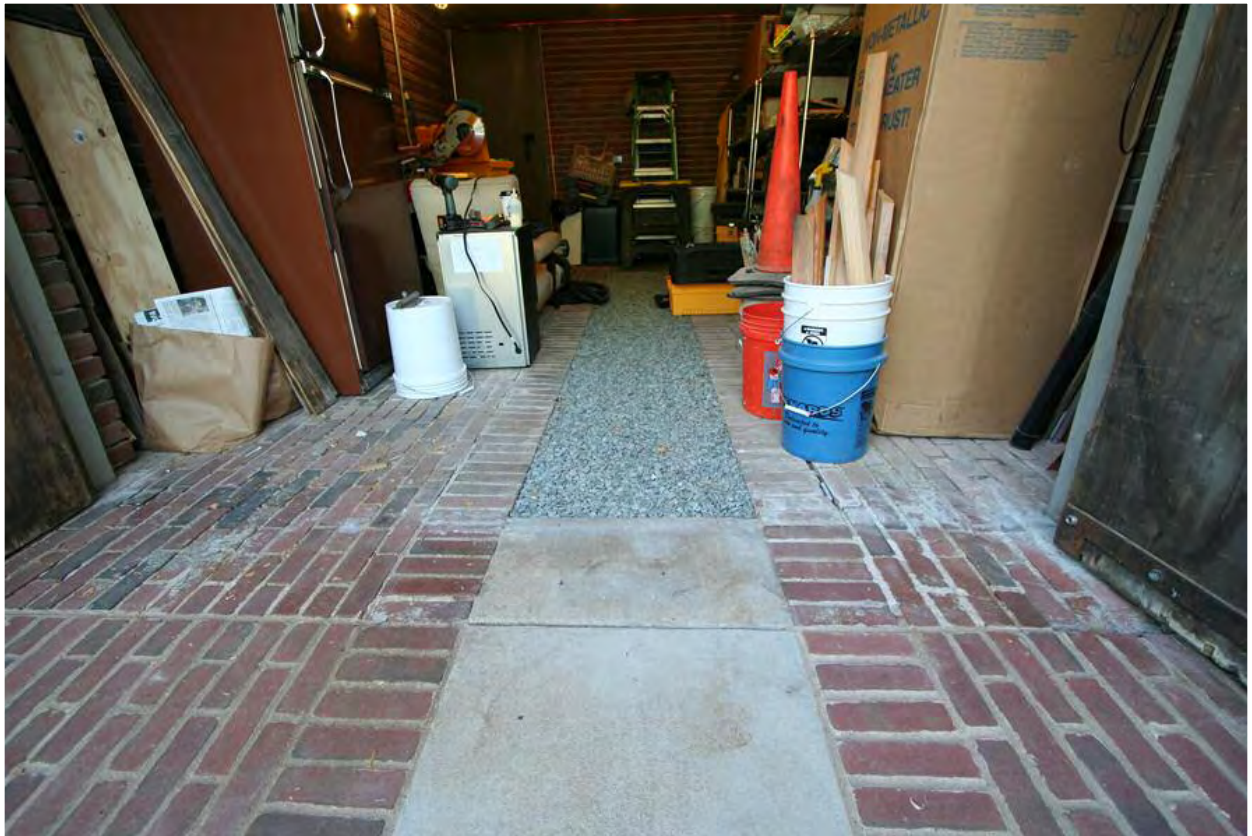
Latch position from mistake.



Door stop was improvised from Willey House indoor base shoe.



Top of door stop reconstructed after originally being installed backwards.



Cement driveway panel transitions to gravel under parked car.



Sprite and Scotch Pine.



Plants are assembled.



Garden in place.

THE GARDEN

The Willey House was named The Garden Wall by Frank Lloyd Wright. Nancy had some form of garden. There are photos in her photo album of Hollyhocks growing in profusion in front to the master bedroom wing. It is unclear exactly how much gardening had been done over the years, but when we acquired the house the garden, like every other corner of the yard was overgrown with weeds, Buckthorn, Sumac and grape vines. We kept the weeds down for a time and eventually rototilled, mulched and covered the garden along the inner wall awaiting a plan. In July (very late spring) we sprang into action and the garden has come back to life. A Hindu Pan Scotch Pine has been selected as year-round centerpiece. For the initial season an assortment of exotic Hostas, Japanese painted ferns and Ligularia have been planted, the sunnier areas are graced with clumps of Daylilies. It was a relief to get plants into the ground but we fully anticipate the garden evolving as the seasons teach us how to better plant this one time sunny location, now sheltered by towering oak trees. 🍷



View from master bedroom.



View from bottom of garden wall.



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
John Moes/Design
Jerry Stenback/Production
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. 