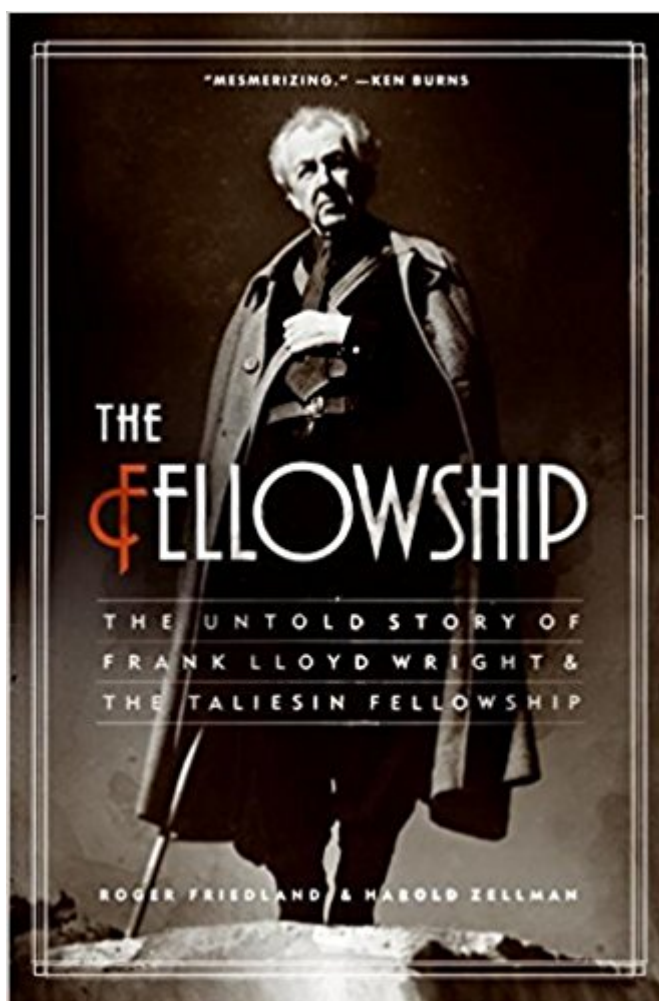


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# The Fellowship: The Untold Story Of Frank Lloyd Wright And The Taliesin Fellowship



## Synopsis

Frank Lloyd Wright was renowned during his life not only as an architectural genius but also as a subject of controversy—from his radical design innovations to his turbulent private life, including a notorious mass murder that occurred at his Wisconsin estate, Taliesin, in 1914. But the estate also gave rise to one of the most fascinating and provocative experiments in American cultural history: the Taliesin Fellowship, an extraordinary architectural colony where Wright trained hundreds of devoted apprentices and where all of his late masterpieces—Fallingwater, Johnson Wax, the Guggenheim Museum—were born. Drawing on hundreds of new and unpublished interviews and countless unseen documents from the Wright archives, *The Fellowship* is an unforgettable story of genius and ego, sex and violence, mysticism and utopianism. Epic in scope yet intimate in its detail, it is a stunning true account of how an idealistic community devolved into a kind of fiefdom where young apprentices were both inspired and manipulated, often at a staggering personal cost, by the architect and his imperious wife, Olgivanna Hinzenberg, along with her spiritual master, the legendary Greek-Armenian mystic Georgi Gurdjieff. A magisterial work of biography, it will forever change how we think about Frank Lloyd Wright and his world.

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## Customer Reviews

Few architects have gained the level of professional achievement and popular notoriety of Frank Lloyd Wright, who's as famed for his bullheadedness, abuse of underlings, condescension to his clients and his numerous wives as he is for his indisputable masterpieces of American architecture.

In their biography, Friedland and Zellman skim over the typical historiography and gleefully delve into Wright's secrets and scandals, focusing on the cultish atmosphere, the mystical teachings and especially, the sexual indiscretions at Taliesin, his studio-commune where he commanded a near-messianic following. There are no major revelations, but the narrative is riveting, endowing its historical characters with all the drama of contemporary tabloid celebrities. However, heavy reliance on the dusty and probably skewed memories of interviewees produces some anecdotes that sound more like exaggerated cocktail gossip than historic fact. Occasionally, the authors use awkward psychoanalysis to account for Wright's architectural practices, such as interpreting his prairie houses' lack of basements or attics as an attempt to erase the painful memories he suffered in those spaces as a child. While the book may appeal to those more curious about the man than his achievements, readers may find the focus on all the indiscretions at Taliesin underwhelming. (Sept. 1) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Whatever visionary brilliance Frank Lloyd Wright possessed as an architect did not extend to his talent for structural engineering, nor, as this often-searing account shows, did he succeed at engineering human lives and souls. Wright was famously individualistic, stubborn, and egotistical. But that's only the beginning of the epic soap opera that roiled around him as Wright extended his franchise to two cultlike, communal encampments, in Wisconsin and Arizona, known as Taliesin (Welsh for "shining brow"). Aspiring architects, designers, and cultural misfits flocked to Wright, apprenticing more often as manual laborers than as draftsmen or creators. Wright's imperious style was matched by that of his third wife, Olgivanna, a disciple of George Gurdjieff, the Russian mystic whose sense of the spiritual content of cosmic forces echoed Wright's belief in the transformative power of nature. Friedland and Zellman's long but absorbing book paints an uneasy history of Taliesin, involving problematic sexual relationships, tax collectors, prima donnas, draft resisters, dancing angels, long-suffering clients, parental malpractice, and, not least, in its role as training ground, an astounding record of failure. Steve Paul Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It's said that creative geniuses are seldom the easiest people to get along with. Frank Lloyd Wright was an archetype of that. This book details the history of the Taliesin Fellowship, the "apprentices" who flocked to Wright's studio to learn at the elbow of the Master but who largely supplied an unpaid workforce for Wright's schemes. Friedland makes a good argument that without the work of a

handful of talented apprentices, such as Wright masterpieces as Fallingwater, the Price headquarters, and the Guggenheim Museum, may never have been realized. But he also makes the point that the bulk of Fellowship members never amounted to much as architects, content to mimic Wright's buildings rather than apply his principles to their own designs. Underlying this is the tragic story of Wright's daughter, who was allowed to grow as a completely free spirit into a life marked by divorce, bipolarity, and eventual estrangement from the Wright group at assisted care facilities in California. Proof that creativity is often an ugly process and an important book for Wright aficionados.

First of all, this book had me reading like only few books can, and I'm not a very big reader. In fact, anything over 1 inch in thickness I usually don't attempt, knowing I won't make it through. There are exceptions, and this is one. It ranks at the top in 'grabbing factor', i.e. similar to Simon Schama's books on history; it won't let you go, and keeps the suspense going, picking up and keeping rhythm. Secondly, I'm very impressed with author's thorough research and attempt at making it available to us. Now, after having said this, I'm not sure if reading of the book will leave you with less questions, as it certainly didn't in my case, but I'm not sure how far that is related to the authors or the quality of the book itself, but rather the subject(s); i.e. why did it attract as many 'students' as it did, prepared to pay a huge sum of money? It certainly describes very well why many left, and it's easy to understand and sympathize with them. In the epilogue the authors compare the 'output' in terms of quality with institutions like MIT where the famous Germans taught (the 'enemies' according to Wright), and the Fellowship falls behind, according to them. Apart from missing some names of other famous Architects who came thru there (the Fellowship), and are still making their mark in the Architectural community, I'm wondering if fame can be a gage, or the only one (or whether there are more). Anyway, it seems we're looking at an enigma, while reading, and although we read the intimate stories, the 'behind the scenes', we're not getting much closer to understanding it. There are just so many paradoxes, so many bizarre facts that would make you want to turn around and get out asap, that you wonder; is it charisma? And not only Frank, but Olgianna as well? Maybe if there's something missing, it's the more personal motivating stories (assuming there must be).

Having read two biographies of FLW over the years I was left with an incomplete description of life as an apprentice under his wing, having to read between the lines of the strange events mentioned in the text. This book covers those topics with skill. No study of Wright, his work, and legacy would be complete without it. There's no sugarcoating this guy's reputation by seeing only what is

architecturally beautiful. He was also a wrecking ball to many around him.

This thoroughly researched biography of FLW and the Taliesin Fellowship is a real eye opener. He seems to have lacked a moral compass and had no problem manipulating his peers and apprentices who actually paid to work as serfs to build his two compounds. His last wife Olgivanna who worshipped Gurdjieff, a Rasputin-like character, prior to meeting Wright was every bit as controlling. They both managed to build the fellowship into a cult following which rivals Warren Jeffs and the Branch Davidians. His design genius lives on and belies Wright's disturbing personal history which must have haunted many of his apprentices as well. This detailed history by Friedland & Zellman may haunt you.

This is more a review of the Kindle edition than of the book itself, although the book is incredibly well researched and very entertaining. I have read a lot about Frank Lloyd Wright and this book keeps you turning the pages. My review, however, is more about HarperCollins and its conversion of the book to the e-book format. For a mainstream publisher, this conversion is absolutely horrendous. The formatting of the text is the worst of any current book I have read on the Kindle so far. There are more spaces left out after a period or a comma than I can count, there are more apostrophe- 's' that are a half inch apart from the rest of the word, when '[T]hen' or '[W]hen' is used in a quote, the formatting is incorrect, as there is an extra space within the []. All of these punctuation and formatting issues make for an uncomfortable read. In the future HarperCollins needs to do a better job of formatting their e-books.

The integrity of the authors in thoroughly researching and cataloguing references and sources with such care is deeply impressive. Their work exudes the passion they clearly feel for FLW, his architecture and unconventional fellowship. The result is a work of some depth, which remains deeply engaging and high paced for the lay reader. I really enjoyed this book!

I've read several books about Frank Lloyd Wright and the Taliesin Fellowship - and after reading THIS book, a lot of things that I previously thought "odd"...now make sense. Like why "architectural apprentices" spent so much time putting on plays and musicals; or why they spent so much time doing menial labor. I also appreciated the secondary story about Eugene Masselink, Wright's secretary and right-hand-man; few books pay him much heed. He was a brilliant artist who dedicated his life to Frank Lloyd Wright. After reading about his countless duties, it's no wonder he

died of a heart attack at the tender age of 52.

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