

Unique Architecture / Architects

The following is a speech presented by Wright to a group of Chicago businessmen discussing the American System of Housing, copied from the September 1916 issue of The Western Architect:

"I believe the world will find in the American System of house construction, the only instance in the world today of a work which has absolute individuality due to a central idea which is the organic integrity of the work.

If the whole organization of the plan by which the American models are to be merchandised is worked out in a broad, healthy way, great things will come out of it. Naturally, I do not want it exploited like a flash in the pan, nor do I want anything done that will make the plan seem an expedient of the moment.

The idea back of the American System has been in my head for years. I have guarded it carefully. I wanted time to think in quiet of how the idea might be brought to the public without injury to the integrity of my own art. Any student of design will know that the designs of these houses are not architectural attempts at reform. They are developed according to a principle. They grow from the inside out, just as trees or flowers grow. They have that integrity. The difference between my work and the work of other men is all a difference in grasp and treatment of old principles.

I do not want any mistake made about this new "System". These buildings are not in any sense the ready cuts buildings we have all heard of where a little package of material is sold to be stuck together in any fashion. The American System-Built House is not a ready cut house, but a house built by an organization, systematized in such a way that the result is guaranteed the fellow that buys the house. I want to deliver beautiful house to people at a certain price, key in hand. If I had made progress in the art of architecture, I want to be able to offer this to the people intact. I think the idea will appeal to the man in the street. Every man would love to have a beautiful house if he could pay for the tremendous amount of waste usually involved in building such a house. The American Plan you see, simply cuts out the tremendous waste that has in the past made house building on a beautiful scale possible only to the very rich, and any integrity in the result possible only to the especially enlightened individual. Unlimited money has failed there most loudly.

Somehow in America, architecture has never been appreciated. We are perhaps the greatest nation of house builders in the world, and the most slip-shod nation of home builders. Architecture has for the most part, been let go by the board, because we have had to have buildings, and have them quick."

The American System of Housing was advertised as "beauty of utility...an American feeling...an expression of national spirit...fresh, buoyant, vital."

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