



Frank Lloyd Wright

One of the Frank Lloyd Wright homes that I appraised is known as the Isabel Roberts home in River Forest, Ill., named after Wright's secretary Isabel Roberts. Like many historic homes, it is typically known by the name of its original owner. What makes this home unique among the homes Wright was involved with was that he was involved with it both at the time of new construction and at the time it was later remodeled.

When I saw it roughly 15 years or so ago, it was one of less than a handful that had much of the built-in ornate interior intact and also had custom designed furniture by Wright still in place in the home. Many of the Wright-designed homes have ornamentation and furniture removed and sold separately.

Another unique characteristic was that this home, like Wright's studio in Oak Park, Ill., has a tree growing through it. As had been told to me, the hole through roof of the porch for the tree growing through had been widened every few years to accommodate growth. After many years, even the I-beam in the porch was shaved to accommodate the continual growth of the tree. At some point the I-beam could no longer be shaved off to accommodate the tree, so instead of cutting down the tree, the old roof and I-beam were removed with a new I-beam and roof installed around the existing tree. I may be a little bit in love with nature and all, but really there are limits.

When I saw the home the tree looked like it had been slowly dying over the last several years. I do not know how the tree is now, but the owner was obviously concerned about it and was contemplating the possible need for replacement of the tree.

Wright's Studio in Oak Park, Ill. has had the same problem, except that I did hear the tree died. The tree and the roof were both removed with a new somewhat mature tree planted and the roof rebuilt around it. Last I heard they had to do this three times with Wright's studio till they got one that survived. Seems like a little excessive in the expense category don't you think?

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