



**Martin House Restoration Corporation**

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**MARTIN HOUSE IS GIVEN RARE CARRIAGE HOUSE WINDOW**  
*Gift from Mr. and Mrs. William M. E. Clarkson Helps Advance*  
*Art Glass Restoration*

**BUFFALO, NEW YORK** – The Martin House Restoration Corporation (MHRC) announces that it has been given a rare art glass window, originally designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for the Carriage House of the Darwin D. Martin House Complex. The Carriage House, once encompassing the garage / stable, chauffeur's apartment and hayloft, was demolished in 1962, along with most of its art glass windows. Only two rare examples of this window pattern are known to have survived – both now once again in the collection of the Martin House.

Saved from demolition by Chicago architect Arthur Carrara, who worked with former Frank Lloyd Wright draftsman John van Bergen, the window was acquired by Will and Nan Clarkson of Buffalo in 1985. The Clarksons preserved and displayed the window in their Delaware district home for more than 25 years. With the reconstruction of the Carriage House in Phase III of the Martin House restoration, they decided to return the piece to be displayed in its original context. "With this gift, the Clarksons continue their extraordinary support of architecture in Western New York, as well as their stature as philanthropic preservationists," said MHRC President John N. Walsh III. "This window has been like a friend to Will and Nan, and they've been so kind to part with it. We are grateful for their doing so."

"This window is a great example of how Wright lavished design detail on even the most utilitarian spaces such as a garage," said Martin House Restoration Architect Ted Lownie of Hamilton Houston Lownie Architects LLC. "It may be simpler than the more celebrated 'Tree of Life' pattern in the main house, but it's a gem that enhances this terrific building."

The first example of this same pattern was obtained by the MHRC in 1993 through the advocacy of the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D, NY). The window, along with seven

other pieces of original art glass from the Martin House, was offered by Christie's from the collection of Thomas S. Monaghan, founder of Domino's Pizza. Senator Moynihan worked to bring these valuable pieces of art glass off the auction block and back to the MHRC.

Originally, windows in the Carriage House art glass pattern wrapped the entire perimeter of the building's second floor. The relative simplicity and bold abstraction of their design reflects the utilitarian aspect of the Carriage House and its place in the domestic hierarchy of the Martin House complex. The window given by the Clarksons will be installed prominently next to its counterpart in the south-facing façade of the second floor. The Clarkson's donation of this Carriage House window marks a major contribution to the MHRC's ongoing efforts to replace the nearly 400 pieces of art glass original to the Martin House Complex, and will serve as inspiration to others who have art glass and other original elements from the Martin House in their possession.

### **ABOUT THE ART GLASS OF THE MARTIN HOUSE COMPLEX**

The MHRC currently owns 199 pieces of original art glass, either in storage or *in-situ* in the historic buildings of the Martin House Complex. The Barton House (1903), the smaller of the two houses in the complex, retains all of its original art glass windows, doors, cabinet doors and lighting fixtures. The Martin House, however, still lacks many pieces of its full complement of original glass. During the years that the Martin House was abandoned (1937-54), examples of art glass found their way into private and public collections around the globe. The MHRC Collections Committee has located some of these missing pieces and continuously works to repatriate them, that they may be enjoyed by the public *in their original context*. The MHRC welcomes contact from any parties in possession of original art glass from the Martin House Complex, and will gladly discuss the potential tax benefits of donating such pieces to the restoration effort.

The MHRC has made great strides in acquiring key pieces of art glass as part of its overall restoration effort. Recently, the MHRC has acquired, through the generosity of the Margaret L. Wendt Foundation, a rare cabinet door from the dining room of the Martin House, a "Tree of Life" window from the collection of the Grey Art Gallery of New York University, and an exceedingly rare skylight panel from an anonymous Western New York collector.

Some examples of Martin House art glass, such as those in the *Musée d'Orsay* in Paris, France, the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery in Glasgow, Scotland, and the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia, are not likely to be returned to the house; they will, however, act as high-profile ambassadors for the Martin House for international visitors to these institutions. Ultimately, such pieces will be replicated. The MHRC has already commissioned a number of

reproduction windows and doors from Oakbrook-Esser Studios of Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, which are highly faithful to the originals. Currently, Oakbrook-Esser is recreating the stunning skylight arrays for the Martin House living room and Bursar's office, funded by *Buffalo News* publisher, Stanford Lipsey and his wife, Judy.

Frank Lloyd Wright designed 394 individual art glass panels for the Martin House complex – more than for any other project during his celebrated career. The Martin House is unique among the early works for which Wright created intricate, abstract patterns for glass windows, doors, skylights, light fixtures and cabinet doors, in that he created 16 primary patterns for six buildings on the campus, each with multiple variations on individual themes. Wright drew these themes from site-specific, natural forms such as wisteria vines. The "Tree of Life" pattern, for example, has seven variations, some of which are composed of more than 750 pieces of glass.

Wright called his art glass panels "light screens," as he intended them to be artful filters of sunlight and views from indoors to outdoors and to create decorative patterns within the interior. Wright's light screens use both colored and clear glass, and one side of many panes has an iridized surface, while others have gold-leaf squares sandwiched between clear panes. The glass is assembled within brass or zinc comes that provide a sturdier structural frame than the lead comes of traditional stained-glass windows.

The extraordinary array of art glass from the Martin House Complex is cataloged and interpreted in the recent book *Frank Lloyd Wright Art Glass of the Martin House Complex* (Pomegranate, 2009), edited by Martin House curator Eric Jackson-Forsberg. The book is available at the Wisteria Shop at the Martin House Complex, or online at [www.darwinmartinhouse.org/shop\\_featured.cfm](http://www.darwinmartinhouse.org/shop_featured.cfm)

## **ABOUT THE MARTIN HOUSE COMPLEX**

The Martin House Complex, designed and built from 1903-05, is being restored to its condition as of 1907. Wright scholars consider it a significant turning point in the architect's evolution of the Prairie House. Wright called the Martin House his "opus," and had its plans tacked above his drafting board for decades. The original complex consisted of the main Martin House, a pergola, conservatory and carriage house, the Barton House and a gardener's cottage. Reconstruction of the pergola, conservatory and carriage house was completed in early 2007 in the most ambitious restoration of demolished Wright buildings ever undertaken. The Martin House Complex is the largest extant Wright Prairie structure, with six buildings totaling nearly 32,000 sq. feet.

The Martin House Restoration Corporation is a New York not-for-profit corporation founded in 1992. It has a 30-member board of directors and nearly 400 active volunteers. The historic Martin House site is open for tours on a year round basis. More information about this National Historic Landmark, including tour information, can be found at [www.darwinmartinhouse.org](http://www.darwinmartinhouse.org)

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