

Martin House Fact Sheet

Frank Lloyd Wright in Buffalo

Each of the Frank Lloyd Wright structures built in Buffalo between 1903 and 1926 had a connection to Darwin Martin and the Larkin Soap Company. Darwin Martin was the chief financial officer for the Larkin Company. On a visit to Chicago in 1902, he saw some unique houses designed by a young, regional architect named Frank Lloyd Wright. Martin's subsequent patronage brought national and international acclaim to Wright's career.

Wright designed the Martin House Complex for Darwin D. Martin and his family beginning in 1903. In 1926, Wright designed "Graycliff," a summer home for the Martin family on the shore of Lake Erie in Derby, NY.

The Larkin Administration Building (1904-06), headquarters of the Larkin Soap Company, was Frank Lloyd Wright's first design for a commercial building. The demolition of the building in 1950 is regarded even today as a great architectural loss to the world.

Wright designed two other residences for Larkin Company executives in the city of Buffalo: the Heath House (1904) for William Heath, a lawyer for the Larkin Company, and the Davidson House (1908) for Alexander Davidson, the advertising director of the company.

Frank Lloyd Wright visited Buffalo many times during the construction of these buildings.

Today, many years after Frank Lloyd Wright's death (1959), Wright-designed structures are still being built in the city of Buffalo.

Blue Sky Mausoleum, a burial structure designed in 1928 by Wright for the Martin family, was constructed in Forest Lawn Cemetery in 2003. Darwin Martin and his wife, Isabelle, are buried nearby in another part of the cemetery.

Wright designed a boathouse for the University of Wisconsin (Madison) crew team, which was built in 2005 as the Fontana Boathouse on the Buffalo waterfront.

The presence of the great American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, is an ever-present ingredient in the architectural heritage of the city of Buffalo.