November 2012 - Restoration Updates:

So much has happened at the corner of Jewett Parkway and Summit Avenue in Buffalo. If you haven’t been to visit the Martin House in recent months, you need to come see all the progress that has been made. Visitors from all over the country and world can’t be wrong in their praise of this world-class restoration effort, which is being led by the architectural team at Hamilton Houston Lownie Architects, LLC.

**Furnishings:** For the first time since Darwin and Isabelle were in occupancy, the majority of the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed furniture and associated decorative objects have been returned to the Martin House. In an outstanding example of his comprehensive approach to design—a domestic *gesamtkunstwerk*—Frank Lloyd Wright created some fifty-five pieces of furniture for the Martin House commission. This collection of custom furnishings is among the most extensive produced in Wright’s Prairie period (c. 1900 – 1913) and includes quarter-sawn oak tables, chairs and couches, built-in cabinetry and massive bronze firewood boxes. From Wright’s famous barrel chairs to his custom design for a stand to house the Martin’s Encyclopedia Britannica, these pieces have been extensively conserved by the professionals at the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP), Bureau of Historic Sites. And with the assistance of the WNY Foundation, the Martin’s Steinway piano has been refurbished and returned from its generous caretakers at the Elmwood Franklin School. Adding a “grace note,” a replica of Wright’s piano bench design has been rebuilt by Martin House volunteer John McCampbell.

**Reception Room:** The reception room has been restored to its original grandeur including re-creating the detailed wood trim and plaster finishes. From light fixtures to Japanese ceramics, the reception room provides a welcome experience for visitors. Over twenty Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints, hand-selected by Wright, added a finishing touch to the décor in the reception room and throughout the Martin family home. Just east of the reception room, the pier cluster casements at the entry hall have been fitted with the multiple art glass units above the book cases permitting views to the exterior through both the reception and unit rooms as you enter the Martin House.

**Restoration Work in the Planning:**
The first of the restored and rebuilt *kitchen* cabinets are scheduled to be installed before Thanksgiving. Plan to visit over the holidays to see the gradual transformation of this domestic culinary space. The next built-in furnishings on the schedule will be the dining room buffet followed by the Bursar’s Office desk.

With construction documents in place but time frames dependent on funding, the restoration of the *interior wood*, comprised of nearly 8-1/2 miles of running trim, is the final major element of the interior work in the Martin House. First in priority is the lower level of the house, which houses the Junior League - Buffalo News Education Center, followed by work on the first floor and finally the second floor to bring the wood trim restoration to completion. Once this is complete, the layered finishes of opaque glazes on plaster will be reinstated in these areas.

Supplementing the fifty replicas of Wright’s custom *light fixtures* that have already been installed, the balance of our order for approximately another 110 fixtures is nearing completion for shipment from the factory.

The Martin House *driveway* and interior sidewalks will become a reality next spring. The drive will be a compacted gravel surface with a modern binder, supplemented by a snow and ice melt system, that will make the drive an accessible entry. The importance of this work for the convenience of our guests cannot be underestimated.
According to the famed architect’s principles of integrating buildings with nature, the gardens and grounds of the Martin House Complex were designed in harmony with architectural elements and were integral features of the site. In order to create an appropriate and authentic exterior context, the Martin House Restoration Corporation will soon solicit proposals for the Cultural Landscape Report. Sometimes known as a Historic Landscape Report, this document will include:

- Site History: Description of Historic Development of Resource
- Existing Conditions and Analysis
- Recommendation for Landscape Treatment Plan

This work has been supported by a Preserve NY Grant, made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. Additional funding for the landscape restoration work is being sought.