

## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

### Section 1, Pages 1 - 30

This series of sixteen letters to 21st Kansas Governor Henry J. and Elsie Jane Allen are sent from Frank Lloyd Wright and his third wife, Oligianna. In 1915, Allen hired Wright to design and build a house for him and his family on Roosevelt in Wichita, Kansas. Wright designed the building and relied on others to manage the construction of the house which was completed in 1918. Letters from 1916 to 1917 cover topics relating to the design and construction of the house, and the latter letters are correspondence between friends.

Creator: Wright, Frank Lloyd, 1867-1959

Date: 1916-1917

Callnumber: Allen-Holmes Coll. #883, Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

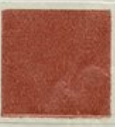
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## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence



Henry J. Allen Esq.  
Wichita  
Kansas.

My dear Mr. Allen:

Enclosed is amended bill for preliminary studies, based upon \$27000.00 as proposed cost of project. A check for this amount would be opportune just now.

Schuler writes me disturbing things regarding changes in the plans. I was somewhat dubious about entrusting them to anyone except myself, as I find that in that case schemes very easily go to pieces. While I want to do everything in reason to please you, -once a tearing up process is begun the proportions and relations that gave distinction and charm to the original are usually lost entirely in the working-out with no very decided practical advantage or compensation.

I feel sure, however, that you realize that our interests are mutual and my anxiety is therefore needless.

Sincerely,

*Frank Lloyd Wright*  
*signed by H.F.R.*

15 March 1916.





## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

ADDRESS REPLY TO CITY OFFICE FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT ARCHITECT 810 ORCHESTRA HALL CHICAGO

Mr. Henry Allen,

Wichita, Kans.

My dear Mr. Allen:

The figures on furniture have arrived. On the whole they are rather high. I should say about 20%. We would have the freight against us if made here, but I will see what can be done. I think we can save money.

Our cabinet-work friend is interesting. But loses sight of the fact, that heavy wood members are precisely not the thing to use in a climate that is hostile to wood.

The less wood there is,-- the less the shrinkage and warping,--and that is why your trim members are light and emphasis laid on the wall surfaces to which the wood is applied as a mere edging to outline them where openings occur. Elsewhere it is used as applied strips, surfaces, decorations,--frankly. Beams, panels and the other devices of a by-gone era are by-gones in this scheme. Making our woodwork heavier would only make the final result clumsy and exaggerate the tendencies of wood to misbehave, unless much money was spent upon it.

We are spending that money for broader and more effective results. "Plastic" is the word for these results.

In architecture--(good architecture) we proceed always from general to particulars and the struggle there is, as in life, to keep detail in place and scale on its relation to the "whole."

The precious sense of "Proportion" is involved that is so rare a thing in this present day mixup, <sup>and that</sup> has to be defended at every step, and gets itself quite generally disliked.

Sincerely yours,

FLW/EB

December 4, 1916.





[Feb 7, 1917]

THE IMPERIAL HOTEL, LTD.,  
AISAKU HAYASHI, MANAGING DIRECTOR.



TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS: "IMPEHO TOKIO."  
CODES-ABC 5TH EDITION, WESTERN UNION.

My dear Mr Allen -

This is just a line by courtesy of your friend Victor Munkacsy to say what I failed to say before leaving for Japan - that I had kept everything relating to your house in good hands - but that I would be back in the spring early enough to take care of Hardware and furniture contracts myself as well as the glass contract.

I think there had better say me little something is to be lost by waiting as you do not expect to get in to the new house before October -

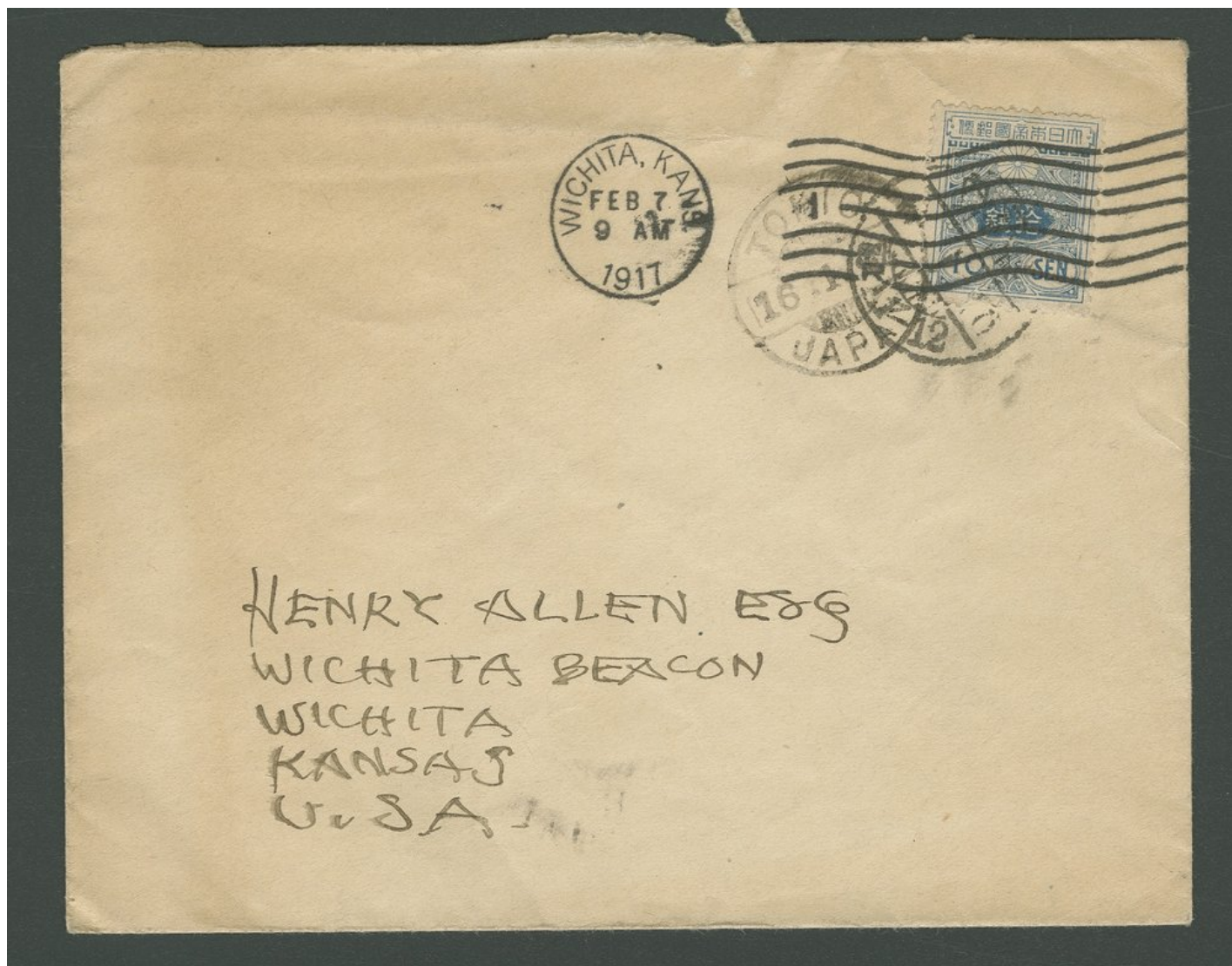
I had a spell of sickness a week or so before I left and it still hangs to me here in this wretched climate. This is no time of the year to be happy in Nippon.

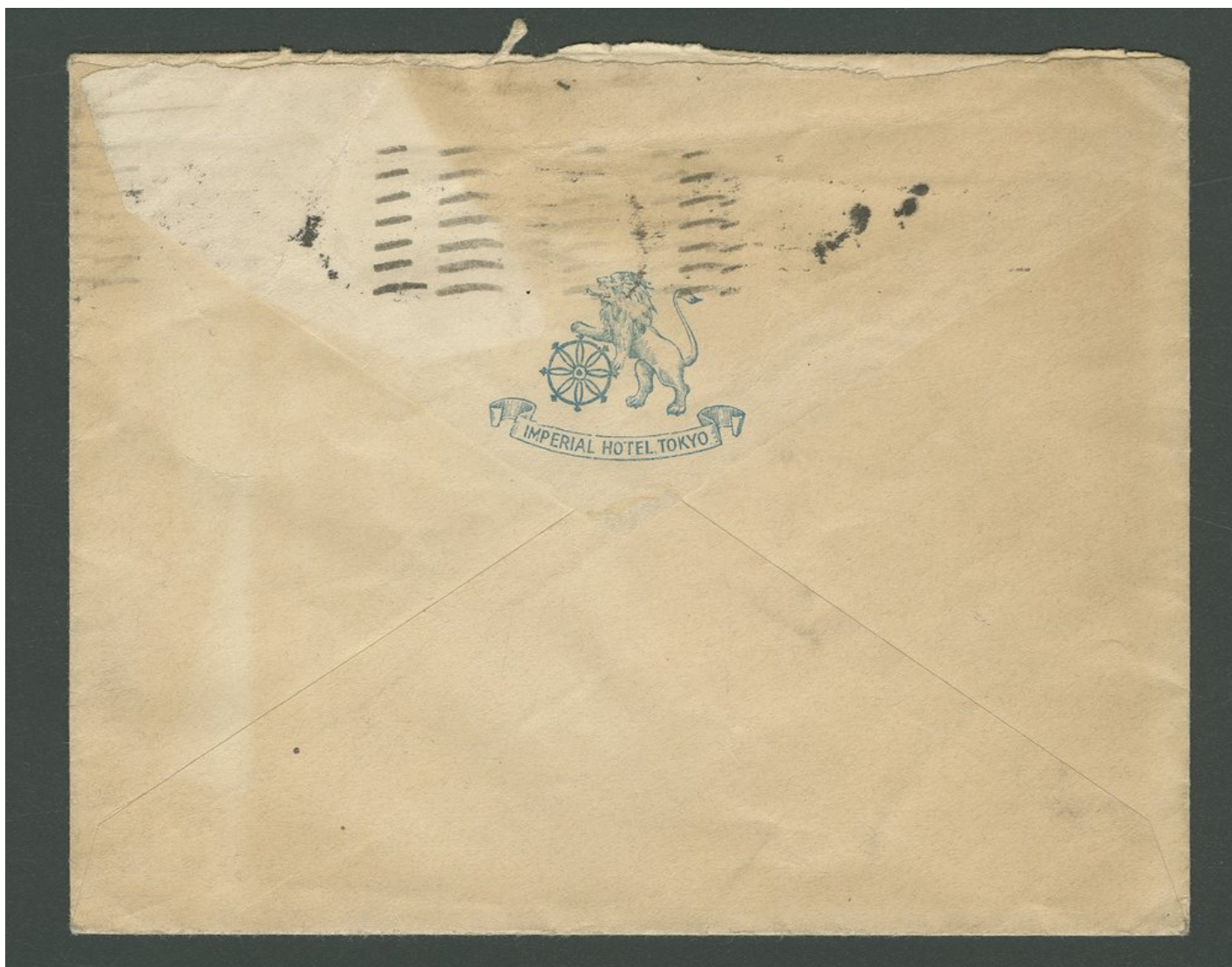
So many of the things I wanted to do and expected to do before leaving Chicago had to wait.

My regards to Mrs Allen and the daughter and with a hope that all goes well with the "Oases in Kansas".

Sincerely,  
Frank Lloyd Wright









## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

[Feb 7, 1917]

The Imperial Hotel.,Ltd.,  
Tokoyo

My Dear Mr Allen-

This is just a line by courtesy of your friend Victor Murdock to say what I failed to say before leaving for Japan-that I had left everything relating to your house in good hands-but that I would be back in the Spring early enough to take care of the Hardware and Furniture contracts myself as well as the glass contract.

I think there had better [xxx] [xxx] little or nothing is to be lost by waiting as you do not expect to get into the new house before October—

I had a spell of sickness a week or so before I left and it still hangs to me here in this wretched climate. This is no time of the year to be happy in Nippon.

So many of the things I wanted to do and expected to do before leaving Chicago had to wait.

My regards to Mrs. Allen and the daughter and with a hope that all goes well with the "Oases in Kansas"

Sincerely,  
Frank Lloyd Wright

## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

[March 27, 1917]

Mr Henry Allen,  
Wichita, Kansas.

My dear Mr Allen:

The plans have duly arrived and I have gone carefully over the revision much relieved. I confess to being badly scared by Schulers letters.

I see, I beleive, what Mrs Allen is aiming at and had I had ten minutes talk with her she would have had it easily in the first instance.

If you are perfectly satisfied with the arrangement as it stands I will incorporate it but I think it can be greatly improved without increasing the ~~house~~ in size as it is already large and I send herewith a revised revision.

The main objections <sup>to</sup> scheme as shown by your revised sketch are the awkward oversize <sup>and</sup> ill ~~in~~ proportion of the bed rooms, the dark, ill ventilated and ~~the~~ comparatively useless old fashioned closets instead of adequate " wardrobe" accommodation for them; - The Dining Room <sup>is</sup> badly hurt and the stairs dislocated in its relation to the Living Room, and the double doors to Bath rooms are always objectionable; - the lack of communication between Miss and Mrs Allen's rooms except through the Bath room and no connection between Mr and Mrs Allen's rooms except across the front stair hall; - The outside bath is less desirable than the better lit and ventilated more modern interior bathroom. The toilet accommodations in the study are tight and the necessity of using the study as a dressing room spoils it for a study it seems to me.



## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence




The general plan is now rather awkwardly out of scale and the bed rooms, while they have size, will ~~on that account~~ lack the charm that will characterize the rest of the house. I am sure with their cross ventilation, lifted ceilings and the sort of treatment they will receive they will feel as roomy and airy and even as large as the large rooms would with the ordinary treatment.

I have found it possible to decrease the size always with added convenience and no loss of spaciousness if treatment and arrangement are intelligently considered.

I suggest that Mrs Allen have a boudoir with low bed in it without head or foot board, to be used in the day time as a sitting room of her own 14'x16' with a small fireplace and projecting bay to the South located, between two sleeping rooms 12'x16' connecting with it on either side, each of the sleeping rooms with two beds. All beautifully proportioned rooms with lifted ceilings and separate access to a bath room. The wardroom space in the two sleeping rooms can go against the corridor wall leaving the ventilation opening above as they are now, conveniently adding to the beauty of the rooms and improving their proportion. The Study connects also with a full bath and may have a similar bed. Thus Mrs Allen has her sitting room or bed room near her daughters room and connecting with it. Mr Allen has his Study intact as a bed room. And Mr and Mrs Allen have a room between the Study and Boudoir.

A little sitting room is added at the far end of the corridor to suppress its length and makes the sleeping porch more interesting and convenient. The Guest bath room opens from it so that it may conveniently be used from the sleeping porch.

## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence



The first floor plan is arranged as Mrs Allen wants it with increased coat and toilet arrangement off the hall under the bath above and increased size of Fore hall. No increase in size of house. Stairs as good as before.

I would like to talk Mrs Allen out of the imperial Butlers pantry which will only spoil an otherwise beautiful kitchen. I have been fighting them for fifteen years and my best houses now have none. It is a long story and at long range it is easier to let the Butlers pantry stand until some time later when Mrs Allen can see the sort of Kitchen to which I refer and which has no "butlers" pantry.

This is all accomplished without adding more to care for and to heat and to pay for. At the same time there is the one additional room which can not fail to afford you a more flexible convenient living arrangement from any practical standpoint.

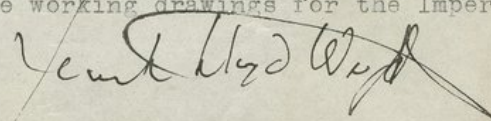
Besides it all "works out" with "charm", with better proportions inside and outside, consistent in style, saving about \$1000 in increased cost besides the extra upkeep is needed as the first cost is going to push us hard as it is.

I consider it vastly an improvement, thanks to Mrs Allen, over my original plan.

Please consider the restudy submitted as promptly as you can for I want to complete the drawings and specifications before commencing on the working drawings for the Imperial Hotel at Tokio.

Sincerely,

"Taliesin"  
Spring Green, Wis.  
March 27th.







Dear Henry Allen -

[June 5 1917]

You are a great man and a true man.  
I know what it costs you to keep your  
friendship for me above the peak of  
troubles that swarm about you in  
the circumstances.

To love you for just that great heartedness  
and with humility I have read  
your generous letter.

You know Henry - certain troubles  
are in the nature of the thing we  
have done - at best.

I don't want to apologize for  
myself - but there is something  
in the brain-full "artist" that will  
always lack the essential touch  
on the significant thing from the  
other fellows' point of view at the right time  
for him (I mean the right time for the  
other fellow of course)

The work I do is not easy when all  
the assistance is what it ought to be.

Other architects have it all over me  
from a business point of view - but  
their houses have no soul, no style  
no life in them.

I wish I could make mine "good  
business too - but I am not big  
enough to move the ground and conquer  
all the contradictory elements of an  
accursed industrial system out of  
joint and patience with the "unusual"



## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

thing for that is all they or it "sees" in my effort. [2]  
 We got started wrong through my poor faith in Schuler. He is no worse  
 than I think he is. He could not be - damn him!  
 The Rutledge is an honest fellow but not fitted to superintend a house  
 like ~~this~~ <sup>one</sup> of ours - You can't know how much of the best  
 of me without stint - I put into the designs and details and it is  
 all so far as compensation goes a labor of love on my part - I am  
 glad that it is. And if you feel my neglect has justified you in  
 not paying me another cent I won't complain.  
 I want this to be a real flower of free spirit out there in the Kansas  
 prairie. Do not let the sordid plaze of the struggle with the human  
 hell that stews around every creature efface of the sort spoil your  
 pride and happiness in it.  
 The center line was right. In course of time - although you would think  
 so now, the best is relatively unimportant.  
 I wish I might go to France with you - with all my heart  
 but I am an economic slave! Everything I have of self is in  
 jeopardy - The war is hitting some of us at home with blows as  
 trying as that of the trenches and no glory - no heroism - touches  
 the overtones with gold and colour.  
 Unless we have peace by mid-summer these internal disorders will  
 make bloodshed merely decorations and welcome.  
 I like your spirit in relation to the war and I am with you  
 when it comes to the men who are doing the fighting - but the  
 imposition of the whole political lie and its crew that keep them  
 there and that will make their sacrifice so largely in vain - is  
 too much for me to contemplate without a desire to rush into  
 conflict here that would land me in jail - by day after tomorrow.  
 Do not settle with the "bench" that is lined up at the "finch" of your  
 "muzzled" house until I can get there with you.  
 I am wanted in Los Angeles to build a theatre and expect to leave



## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

as I wired you within a week if nothing happens. Miriam  
has been ill a long time and it seems longer. I will be glad  
to get her out of this hard climate.  
Will wire you when we go through.  
I told Sudowick to write you about the new ridge and supposed they  
had done so. The details are O.K. and in the shop.  
I got this done against all the rules of the game - and the new  
ridge will add much to the appearance of the house.  
The neglect of the house in your absence is not one of my chief  
sins.  
I got Medekker up here from Milwaukee for a day with me  
to charge him as my representative and get him to Wichita  
as my <sup>representative</sup> ~~representative~~ - he has had much training from me in  
connection with my <sup>other</sup> work. Letters can do so little at that stage  
of the performance.  
Hoping to see you soon as always yours

Takewin Jan 5th 1917.

Frank

## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

[June ? 5, 1917]

Dear Henry Allen

You are a great man and a true man. I know what it costs you to keep your friendship for me above the peck of troubles that swarm about you in the circumstances.

I love you for just that great heartedness and with humility I have read your generous letter.

You know Henry-certain troubles are in the nature of the thing we have done-at best.

I don't want to apologise for myself-but there is something in the brim-full "artist" that will always lack the essential touch on the significant thing from the other fellow's point of view at the right time for him (I mean the right-time for the other fellow of course)

The work I do is not easy when all the assistance is what it ought to be-Other architects have it all over me from a business point of view-but their houses have no soul, no style, no life in them.

I wish I could make mine "good business too-but I am not big enough to cover the ground and conquer all the contradictory elements of our accused industrial system out of joint and patience with the "unusual"

[Page 2]

thing for that is all they or "it" sees in my effort.

We got started wrong through my fool faith in Schuler. He is no worse than I think he is. He couldn't be-damn him.

The Rutledge is an honest fellow but not fitted to superintend a house like this one of ours-You can't know how much of the best of me without stint- I put into the designs and details and it is all so far as compensation goes a labor of love on my part. I am glad that it is. And if you find my neglect has justified you in not paying me another cent I won't complain.

I want this to be a real flower of fine spirit out there in the Kansas prairie. Do not let the sordid plunge of the struggle with the human hell that stews around every creature effort of the sort spoil your pride and happiness in it.

The center line was right. In course of time-although you won't think so now, the rest is relatively unimportant.

I think I might go to France with you-with all my heart but I am an economic slave! Everything I have of "self" is in jeopardy-The war is hitting some of us at home with horror as trying as that of the trenches and no glory - no heroism touches the outlines with gold and colour.



## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

Unless we have peace by midsummer these internal disorders will make bloodshed merely decorative and welcome.

I like your spirit in relating to the war and I am with you when it comes to the men who are doing the fighting-but the imposition of the whole political lie and its crew that keeps them there and that will make their sacrifice so largely in vain-is too much for me to contemplate without a desire to rush into conflict there that would land me in jail- by day after tomorrow night.

Do not settle with the "bunch" that is lined up at the "finish" of your "unusual" house until I can get there with you.

I am wanted in Los Angeles to build a theatre and expect to leave

[Page 3]

as I wired you within a week if nothing happens. Miriam has been ill a long time and it seems longer. I will be glad to get her out of this hard climate.

Will wire you when we go through

I told [Sudowich?] to write you about the new ridge and supposed they had done so. The details are O.Kd and in the shop.

I got this done against all the rules of the game-and the new ridge will add much to the appearance of the house.

The neglect of the house in your absence is not one of my [xxx] sins.

I got Niedecken up here from Milwaukee for a day with me to charge him as my representative and get him to Wichita as my 'superintendent'-he has had much training from me in connection with my other work. Letters can do so little at that step of the performance.

Hoping to see you same as always yours

Frank

Taliesin

[June?] 5<sup>th</sup> 1917.



[June 23, 1917]

Dear Mr. Allen:

The leaded glass schedule, details and estimate were ordered forwarded to you from the Teweale Art Glass Co. Their bid was on all the leaded glass as listed and usually is complete but in this case they may have confined it to the leaded glass only. I have not seen the bid as it was sent directly to you.

I am sorry about the carpets as I personally would have preferred the loose gros grained weave.

The roofing tile is all right, I find and I wired you accordingly.

Rutledge sends a "different" detail of the reinforced concrete slab of terrace but it is O.K.

The photographs of the brick work shows an insufficiently raked joint, but it will pass.

Since the contract was made for stone instead of concrete I suppose the vases are all being cut out of stone instead of being cast in concrete?

Please tell Mrs. Allen in answer to her inquiry that the pool would be better not made shorter. The length of the thing gives a necessary depth to the Garden effect.

Seat in Hall is detailed and sent. We are working on the electric fixtures now. I want to change the ceiling lights for the Dining Room. A wood screen similar to Living Room, if the cost is not much more. (Detail enclosed)

The Gutter in the roof is a real trial to us and a threat to the durability of the house. If you must use it leave out only every other tile thus---





## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

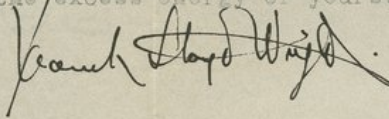
#2 H.J.A.

The only smooth plaster in the house is in the Kitchen and Bath Rooms. The other is rough sand finish.

Canvas on the floor of the Garden house is all right but tile would be better over concrete - if you are optimistic regarding the future!

We had a beautiful Sunday together, the sap in me was accelerated by the excess energy of yours.

Sincerely yours,



"Taliesin"  
Spring Green, Wis.  
June the 20th.



[July 24, 1917]

Dear Henry Allen

In your town, lines me; John  
Pruett and he is wondrous un-wise.  
Schuler wrote me he had agreed to  
my usual terms for tentative sketches  
2 1/2 of proposed cost. He had <sup>confirmatory</sup>  
~~agreed with the office in my absence~~  
they were made for him. He has  
them "on him" now. Until I  
returned from Japan and asked him  
for money I didn't know he wasn't  
going to use them and had gone to  
another architect.

He simply wrote back that he owed  
me nothing.

I then wrote him a letter for which  
I am really anxious to apologize  
if he will only give me a chance by  
proving <sup>me</sup> I am wrong.

Who, in your town can I ask to  
go into the matter with him for me.

I suppose this means a lawyer.

The amount at issue is \$250.00

not much of a case - but I hate

to be done by that most hated of

all men by architects - a "shopper"

for plans -

J.P. is a dry-goods man. Shopping

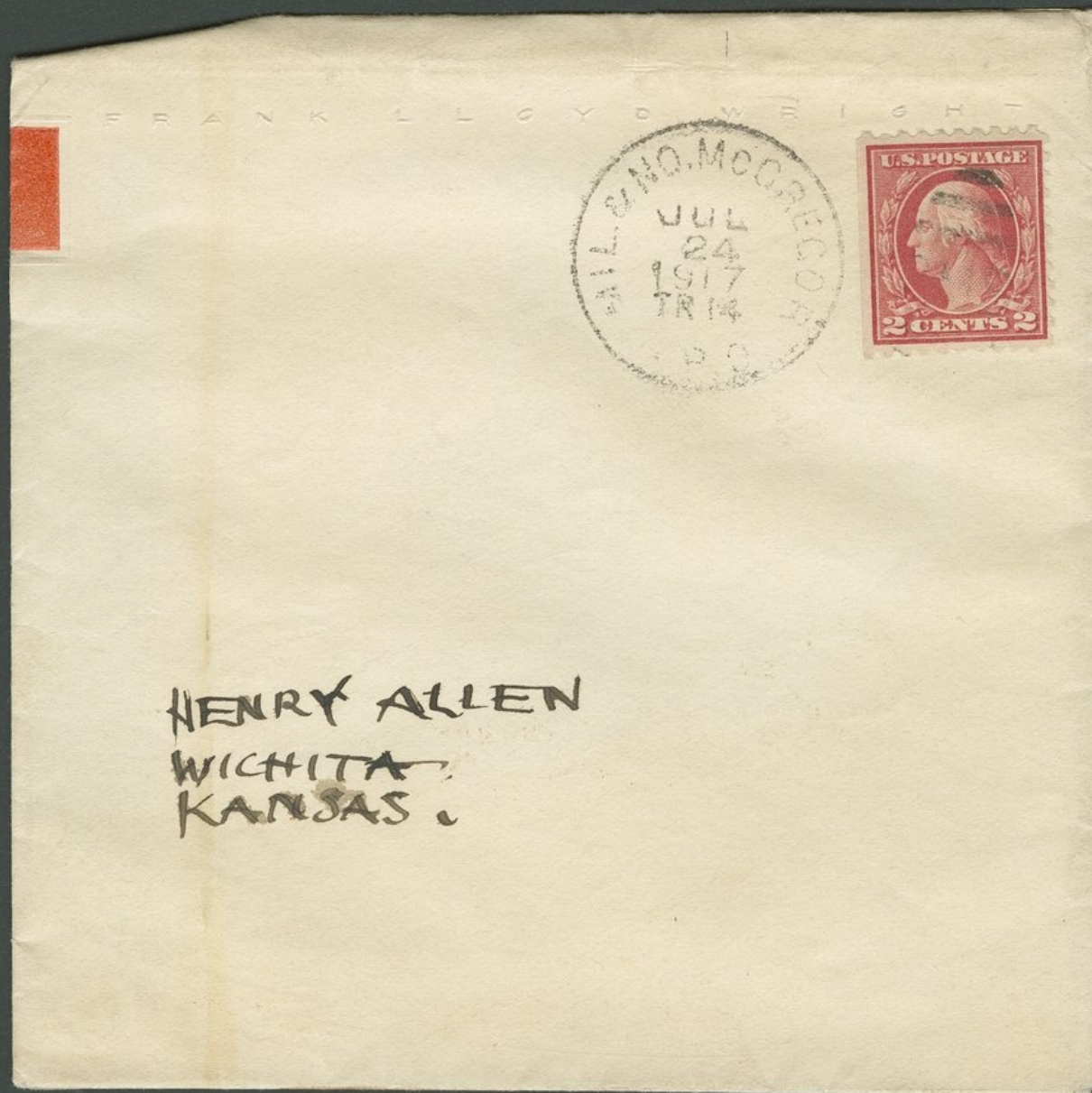
is sacred to him - but not to me!



## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

Let your secretary drop me a line on the subject.  
You have all you asked for "right" water" except the pictures and a  
have asked a Chicago firm to get in touch with you.  
I hope the work is getting back into shape again -  
My best to you and yours.  
Frank Lloyd Wright

P.S. Dear Henry -  
Do you know in Kansas City a man who would take hold of  
the American Homes System and be big enough in vision and efficiency  
to preside over it and organize it for national importance and usefulness?  
I think hard and well - I must find him soon.  
I feel sure to interest a big enough man who is  
looking for a great work with great rewards. This is a big question  
I am asking you - Help me if you can -  
Frank





## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

[July 24, 1917]

Dear Henry Allen

In your town lives one John Powell and he is wondrous un-wise. Schuler wrote me he had agreed to my usual terms for tentative sketches 2 ½ % of proposed cost. He had [complimentary relations?] with the office in my absence. They were made for him – he has them “on him” now. Until I returned from Japan and asked him for money I didn’t know he wasn’t going to use them and had gone to another architect.

He simply wrote back that he owed me nothing.

I than wrote him a letter for which I am really anxious to apologize if he will only give me a chance by proving me wrong.

Who, in your town can I ask to go into the matter with him for me. I suppose this means a lawyer. The amount at issue is \$250.00 not much of a case-but I hate to be done by that most hated of all men by architects – a “shopper” for plans.

“J. P.” is a dry goods man – Shopping is sacred to him. But not to me!

[Page 2]

Let your secretary drop me a line on the subject. You have all you asked for [xxx] [xxx] except the fixtures and I have asked a Chicago [xxx] to get in touch with you. I hope the work is getting back into shape again

My best to you and yours  
Frank Lloyd Wright

P.S. Dear Henry,

Do you know in Kansas City a man who would take hold of the American Homes System and be big [enough?] in vision and friends to president it and organize it for national importance and usefulness?

Think hard and well for I must find him soon.

I will come to Wichita to interest a big enough man who is looking for a great work with great rewards. This is a vital question I am asking you. Help me if you can.

Frank



FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

Mrs. Henry J. Allen  
Wichita Kansas

[Aug 25, 1917]

Dear Mrs. Allen :

I am sending to Mr. Rutledge the Detail of Dining Room Ceiling Light which will harmonize with the Interior Decoration, also samples of glass for it.

The Detail for the Leaded Glass in the Bookcases will go forward early next week.

The Roof Ridge is not satisfactory and will have to be changed; I am sending a Detail.

Any questions you may ask regarding the furniture or decoration I will gladly answer promptly. I hope the original scheme of furnishings can be adhered to especially on the Main Floor.

What am I to do about the furniture and contract? The drawings are here for full size details of the main pieces, which are about ready.

According to reports the work seems to be progressing satisfactorily and I hope that it will be far advanced toward completion by the time of Mr. Allen's return.

With best Regards to you both and wishes for a safe voyage;

Sincerely

*Frank Lloyd Wright*

Architect.

*Rev. Will. E. Smith*

"Taliesin"  
Spring Green  
Wis.

August  
Twenty fifth  
1917.





FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT  
[Sept<sup>W</sup> 22, 1917]

Dear Mrs Allen -

I have had George Needecker  
here and have gone over the  
matters connected with furnishing  
your home -

He will write you about coming  
on to see you -

He is acquainted with the color  
schemes and will instruct the  
painter and mix the colors for  
the walls while there -

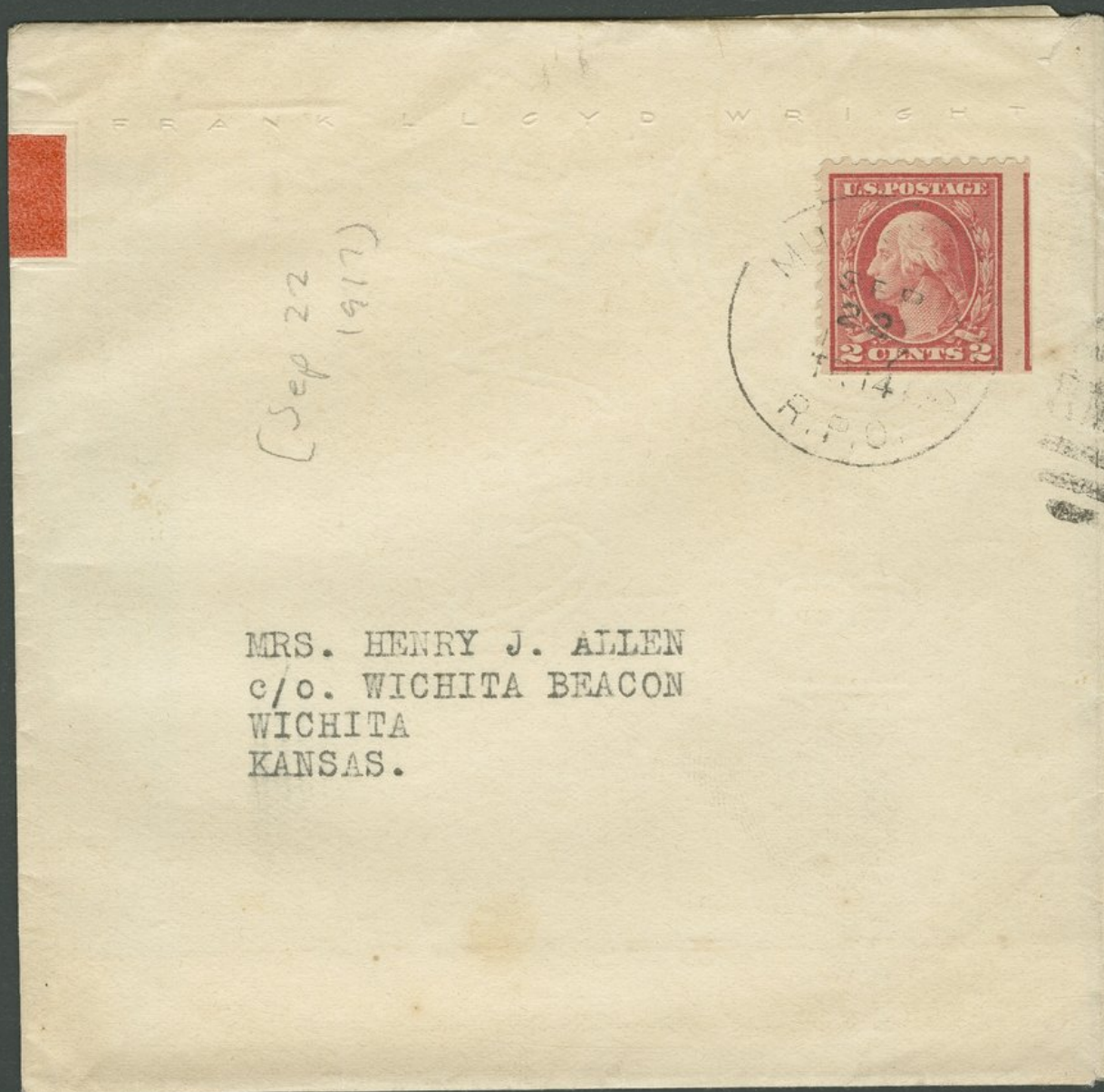
Something tells me Mr Allen  
is all right. He was not  
born to be taken off for a  
long time yet.  
Sincerely yours  
Frank Lloyd Wright.  
Taliesin Sept 22<sup>nd</sup> 1917





1230 N State -

Hanna left - this  
morning 11 o'clock  
Lambert - with in  
Chicago Wed AM.





## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

[Sept 22, 1917]

Dear Mrs. Allen

I have had George Niedecken here and have gone over the matters connected with finishing your home.

He will write you about coming on to see you.

He is acquainted with the color schemes and will instruct the painter and mix the colors for the walls while there.

[Page 2]

Something tells me Mr. Allen is all right. He was not born to be taken off for a long time yet.

Sincerely yours,  
Frank Lloyd Wright

Taliesin

Sept 22, 1917

## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

[Sept 26, 1917]

My dear Mrs Allen -

Mr Niedescher has forwarded to me a copy of your letter.

I think you do not quite understand the position he is able and willing to occupy in this case.

He would come as my representative as well as in a consulting capacity as a decorator and furnisher.

It is not so much that he has things to sell as that he is recommended by me to help you get the results you want to get.

George is an artist himself and imbued with understanding and respect for my work and his cooperation is the result we would expect. His traveling expenses would be paid by Mr Allen in any case as my representative - and any business you might do with him would be a business matter entirely apart from his advice.

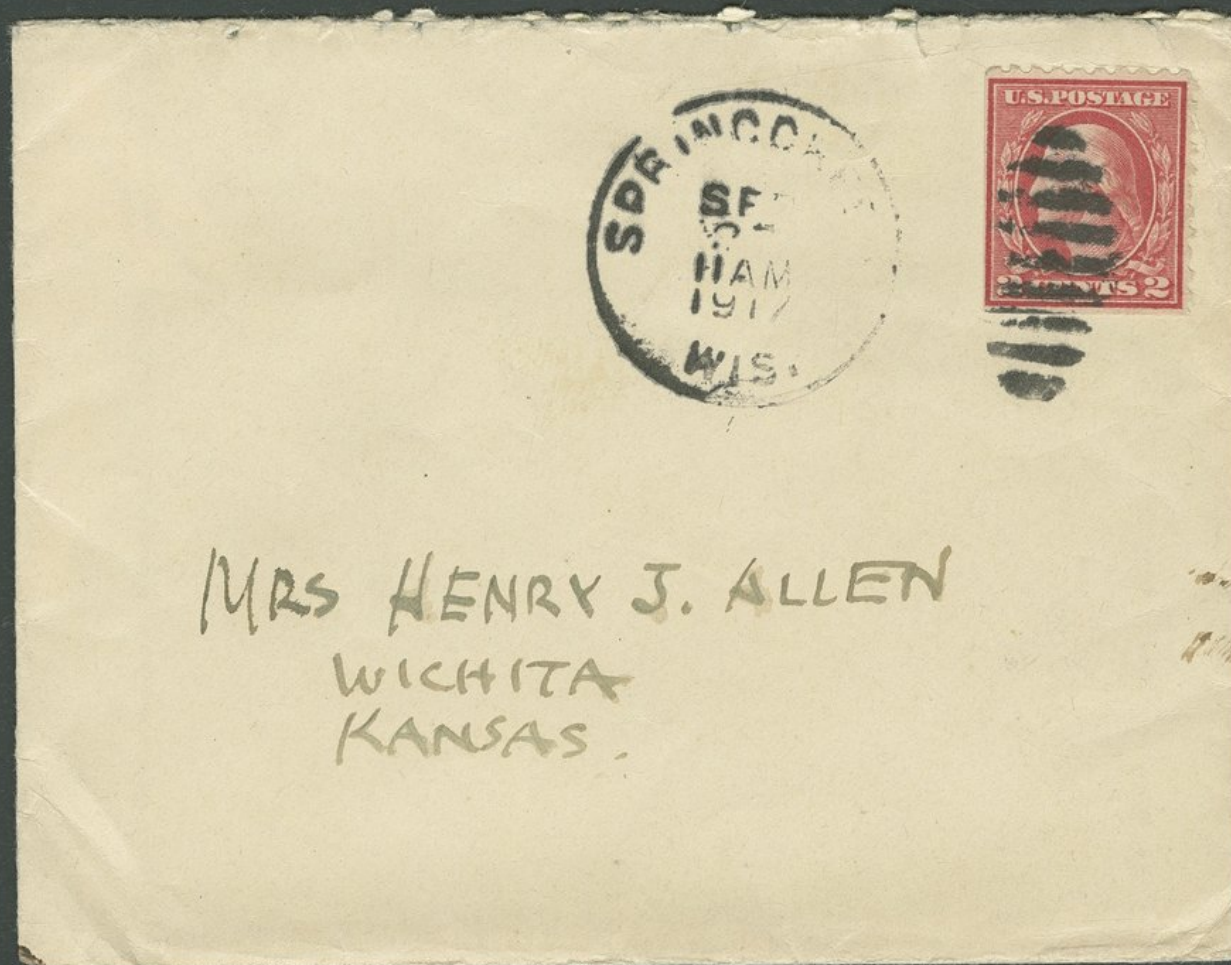
He can serve you in that capacity too better than anyone else - I am quite sure.





So I suggest you send for him to come on.  
If there is an objection as Mr. Allen's part to paying  
his expenses I will arrange that matter satisfactory  
to him - Sincerely yours

Jalisco - Sept 26. Frank Lloyd Wright.





## Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence

[Sept 26, 1917]

My Dear Mrs. Allen

Mr Niedecken has forwarded to me a copy of your letter.

I think you do not quite understand the position he is able and willing to occupy in this case.

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He can serve you in that capacity [to?] better than anyone else – I am quite sure.

[Page 2]

So I suggest you send for him to come on. If this is an objection on Mr. Allens part to paying his expenses I will manage that matter satisfactory to him.

Sincerely yours

Frank Lloyd Wright  
Taliesin  
Sept 26