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Frank Lloyd Wright and Japanese homes: The Japanese house dissected

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Frank Lloyd Wright and *Japanese Homes*: the Japanese house dissected

KEVIN H. NUTE

The American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959) is justly remembered as one of the most creative designers of the modern era. An enthusiastic collector of Japanese art from the early 1890s, in his day Wright was noted as one of the leading American authorities on *ukiyo-e* prints. Yet, while he freely acknowledged the many important aesthetic lessons which he derived from the woodblock print, Wright consistently rejected suggestions that Japanese architecture might have had a more direct impact on his own work.¹ In fact, although many critics have pointed out various formal similarities between some of Wright's Midwestern 'Prairie Houses' dating from the early part of this century and certain traditional Japanese buildings, the fact that several of these characteristics were present in Wright's work well before he had ever set foot in Japan has tended to cast doubt on the likelihood of any significant influence from this source.² Indeed, Wright himself found this point helpful in fending off such suggestions. However, it seems that Wright had in fact had ample opportunity to become familiar with Japanese domestic architecture for up to 20 years prior to his first visit to Japan itself in March 1905.

Through his personal link with the leading turn-of-the-century American advocate of Japanese art, the philosopher and art historian Ernest Fenollosa (Figure 1), it seems certain that Wright was also well aware of Fenollosa's equally well known colleague from Salem and the Imperial University of Tokyo, the prominent natural scientist and collector of Far Eastern artefacts, Edward Morse (Figure 2).³ In fact, if anything, Morse would have been of even greater interest to an architect, since he was the author of what at the turn of the century was widely regarded as the most authoritative English account of Japanese domestic architecture.

Morse's pioneering book *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings* was praised by architects and Japan specialists alike following its publication in early 1886.⁴ And significantly one of Wright's own Japanese art collecting friends from Chicago, Frederick Gookin (Figure 3), had been sufficiently impressed to write and congratulate Morse personally, having enthused in a letter of April 1886:

The sense of personal obligation that comes to me in reading 'Japanese Homes and

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Figure 1. Ernest Francisco Fenollosa (1853–1908). (Courtesy of Yamaguchi Seiichi.)



Figure 2. Edward Sylvester Morse (1838–1925). (Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Salem.)

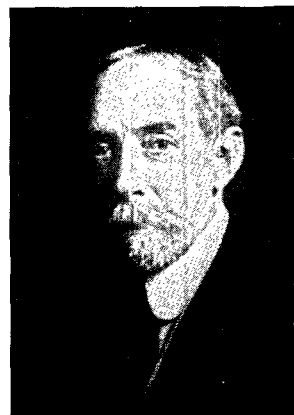


Figure 3. Frederick William Gookin (1853–1936). (Courtesy of William Green.)

Their Surroundings' is so strong that I cannot refrain from writing to thank you for the pleasure and profit I have derived from your truly valuable book. I found it a continual fascination from beginning to end. Indeed I never met with any work so full of suggestions for anyone to whom an 'artistic home' is not – like the 'art furniture' of the tradesman – a mere high sounding phrase. . . .

Such books as yours, however, cannot fail to have a considerable influence in the right direction; and I regard it as a hopeful sign that it finds readers and attracts attention outside of the architectural profession.⁵

Frederick Gookin's letter marked the beginning of a personal friendship with Edward Morse. Later that year Gookin visited Morse in Massachusetts, and on returning to Chicago he began attempting to arrange lectures for the Orientalist in the Midwest. Initially, at least, these efforts came to nothing. However, there was evidently a more positive response soon after, since Morse subsequently became a regular speaker at the Art Institute of Chicago, where he lectured on a range of Japanese topics over the following 20 years.⁶ Through his own close links with the Art Institute,⁷ it seems more than likely that Wright was aware of these lectures – and therefore of *Japanese Homes* – from an early stage. And in this single volume he had access to a meticulously observed analysis of the Japanese dwelling, which in several respects may have been even greater value to him than direct experience of the real thing.

For Edward Morse, one of the most impressive features of the Japanese house was the fact that while it was clearly composed according to a strictly defined aesthetic, it was very far from a mere affectation. In fact, he specifically praised its straightforward appropriateness to the particular way of life which it served, having commented in the early pages of *Japanese Homes* that 'Whether the Japanese house is right or wrong in its plan and construction, it answers admirably the purpose for which it was intended'.⁸ Although this idea of the honest use of materials toward appropriate ends had become a common theme in Western architectural theory by

the end of the nineteenth century, interestingly, in his own description of the Japanese house Wright similarly focused on its 'truthfulness', which he directly contrasted with the typical American home of the time by declaring that 'the Japanese dwelling is in every bone and fibre of its structure honest and our dwellings are not honest'.⁹

There are actually a number of such parallels between Wright's descriptions of the Japanese house and those given by Edward Morse, at least some of which seem more than merely coincidental (Figure 4). Indeed, as well as specific observations concerning the Japanese house itself, Wright appears to have echoed several of Morse's more general views on Japanese domestic life. Concerning the tea ceremony, for example, Morse had suggested that 'The making of tea, watched by one knowing nothing about the ceremony, seems as grotesque a performance as one can well imagine'.¹⁰ Although, like Morse, Wright himself was actually reasonably well informed concerning the ideals underlying the tea ceremony, he later commented similarly on its inscrutability to the uninitiated, having suggested in his autobiography that 'Such reverent concentrations as this "tea" ceremonial carries the ideal of "be clean" to such heights – and lengths – as weary us. We have not the spirit of it and we cannot stand it – very long'.¹¹ True, this kind of perception of the tea ceremony, and indeed several of Morse's general observations, had of course

EDWARD MORSE'S DESCRIPTIONS OF THE JAPANESE HOUSE *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings* (1886). **WRIGHT'S DESCRIPTIONS OF THE JAPANESE HOUSE** *An Autobiography* (1932 ed. unless otherwise stated).

The cleanliness of the Japanese is one of his most commendable qualities. It is apparent in his body, in his house, in his workshop, and no less in the great carefulness and exemplary exactness with which he looks after his fields.' [Morse quoting the German writer Rein] (p. 201, n.1.)

Upon these [*tatami*] mats the people eat, sleep, and die; they represent the bed, chair, lounge, and sometimes table, combined. (p. 124).

A curious superstition among many is attached to the position of the privy in its relation to the house, – a trace possibly of the Chinese *Fung-shui*. (p. 228)

... these people do not wash in the baths, but boil or soak in them for a while. ... (p. 202)

I found the Japanese house in winter extremely cold and uncomfortable. ... (p. 12).

The Japanese do not suffer from the cold as we do. Moreover, when in the house they clothe themselves much more warmly. ... (p. 119)

The sitting posture on the floor is painful until one gets accustomed to it. ... (p.12)

This position is so painful to a foreigner that it is only with a great deal of practice he can become accustomed to it. (p. 124)

Be clean! 'Be clean' was the soul of Shinto, the ancient religion of Japan. Shinto spoke, not of a good man or a moral man – but of a clean man. Spoke of clean hands -- of a clean heart. (p. 196)

The floors of these Japanese homes are all made to live on – to sleep on, to kneel and eat from, to kneel upon soft silken mats and meditate upon. On which to play the flute, or to make love. (1945 ed., p. 175).

The 'benjo' or earth-closet is made in the garden and set well away from the 'devil's corner,' and as if to prove to me that nearly every superstition has a basis of sense, that corner I found to be the one from which the prevailing breezes blow. (p. 197)

I have often been soaped and scrubbed before I was allowed to be tubbed. And then I might step in and cook the germs off me. ... (p. 197)

It is desperately cold in Tokio in winter ... I marvelled at Japanese fortitude until I caught sight of the typical underwear – heavy woollens, long sleeves, long legs, which they wear beneath the series of padded flowing kimono. But as they are acclimated and toughened to this native condition they suffer far less than we do. (1945 ed., p. 428)

On tortured knees I have tried to learn some of these lessons from the Japanese. ... I became painfully aware of our crudity in the cultured Japanese environment. ... Their legs quietly fold up beneath them, where – when off our feet -- ours must stick out and sprawl. (p. 199)

Figure 4. The descriptions of the Japanese house given by Edward Morse and Wright.

**MORSE'S DESCRIPTIONS OF
THE JAPANESE HOME**
Japanese Homes (1886).

As a substitute for windows, the outside screens, or *shoji*, are covered with white paper, allowing the light to be diffused through the house. (p. 7)

The absence of all paint, varnish, oil, or filling, which too often defaces our rooms at home, is at once remarked. . . . On the contrary, the wood is left in just the condition in which it leaves the cabinet-maker's plane. . . . (p. 111)

**WRIGHT'S DESCRIPTIONS OF
THE JAPANESE HOUSE**
An Autobiography (1932).

The sliding paper *shoji*, or outside screens that serve in place of windows and enclose the interior room spaces – they are actually the outside walls. All slide back into a recess in the walls and they are removable too. (pp. 196-7)

. . . all 'ornament,' as we call it, they get out of the way the necessary things are done or by bringing out and polishing the beauty of the simple materials used in making the building. (p. 196)

**WRIGHT'S DESCRIPTIONS OF
THE PRAIRIE HOUSE**
An Autobiography (1932).

In this sense I was working toward the elimination of the wall as a wall to reach the function of a screen, as a means of opening up space. . . . (p. 139)

. . . eliminate combinations of different materials in favour of mono-material so far as possible, and . . . use no ornament that did not come out of the nature of materials or construction. . . . (p. 143)

Figure 5. Edward Morse's descriptions of the Japanese home together with Wright's descriptions of the Japanese dwelling and the Prairie House.

become commonplace among foreign writers on Japan by the time Wright wrote his account in the late 1920s. More importantly, however, a number of the positive advantages of the Japanese dwelling specifically highlighted by Morse were to reappear in Wright's descriptions of his new American 'Prairie House' (Figure 5). In fact Edward Morse had not only recorded the Japanese dwelling in minute detail, but he also provided a revealing comparison of the relative merits of the Japanese and American home, even pointing out several characteristics of the Japanese house which could be usefully applied in the United States. Perhaps most significantly, Morse laid particular emphasis on the many familiar features which were entirely absent from the Japanese home, and in the process he identified what would seem to have been one of the primary reasons for most previous Western accounts of Japanese architecture having tended to neglect the ordinary house.

An American finds it difficult indeed to consider such a structure as a dwelling, when so many features are absent that go to make up a dwelling at home – no doors or windows such as he had been familiar with; no attic or cellar; no chimneys, and within no fire-place, and of course no customary mantle; no permanently enclosed rooms; and as for furniture, no beds or tables, chairs or similar articles, – at least, so it appears at first sight.¹²

Wright's description of the Japanese house similarly emphasised its apparent 'elimination' of many common Western features, and it was a characteristic of which he whole-heartedly approved, having recalled in his autobiography how he saw the ordinary Japanese home as 'a supreme study in elimination – not only of dirt but the elimination, too, of the insignificant'.¹³ It may have been more than coincidental, then, that the Prairie House also differed from the more typical American home of the time primarily through its *elimination* of many familiar elements (Figure 6). Wright's fellow Prairie School architect Thomas Tallmadge (1876–1940), for one, was certainly of the view that this characteristic of Wright's domestic work derived originally from Japan, as he explained in 1927:

One further aspect of his [Wright's] art should receive attention – namely, his debt to the Japanese. From them he received inspiration and encouragement to reduce the requirements for a house – as, for instance the number of rooms – to the

EDWARD MORSE'S DESCRIPTIONS OF THE JAPANESE HOUSE *Japanese Homes* (1886). **WRIGHT'S DESCRIPTIONS OF THE NEW PRAIRIE HOUSE** *An Autobiography* (1932).

One of the surprising features that strikes a foreigner as he becomes acquainted with the Japanese house is the entire absence of so many things that with us clutter the closets, or make squirrel-nests of the attic. . . . (pp. 195-6)

The first thing to do in building the new house was to get rid of the attic. . . . (p. 138)

The almost entire absence of swinging doors is at once noticeable. . . . (p. 111)

Scores of unnecessary doors disappeared and no end of partition. . . . Thus an end to the cluttered house. Fewer doors; fewer window holes (p. 141)

There is no cellar or excavation beneath the house . . . the inmates are never troubled by the noisome air of the cellar, which . . . too often infects our houses at home. (pp. 15-16)

Next, get rid of the unwholesome basement, entirely, yes absolutely. . . . (p. 138)

The first thing that impresses one on entering a Japanese house is the small size and low stud of the rooms. (p. 108)

Taking a human being for my 'scale' I brought the whole house down in height to fit a normal one — ergo, 5' 8" tall, say. (p. 139)

Figure 6. Edward Morse's descriptions of the Japanese dwelling and Wright's account of the 'elimination' of familiar features from the Prairie House.

simplest terms, and to eliminate as far as possible such appurtenances as furniture, pictures, and so forth. From the Japanese, too, he learned to make doors and windows an integral part of the design, not floating on its surfaces.¹⁴

Edward Morse had noted how the traditional Japanese post-and-beam system of construction had all but dispensed with load-bearing partitions, and he was enthusiastic over the freedom which is permitted in allowing the main living areas of the house to be converted into a single large space if required, having explained how the sliding screens could be completely removed 'throwing a number of rooms into one great apartment'.¹⁵ Although, as several historians have suggested, Japanese buildings may well have influenced the development of open planning in late-nineteenth-century American domestic architecture generally,¹⁶ an idea very similar to Morse's characterisation of the Japanese home as essentially one large space divided only by non-structural screens was to become a central feature in Wright's account of 'Building the New House', in which he explained how he had 'declared the whole floor as one room,' only 'screening off' a few selected areas for special functions.¹⁷ Indeed, later in his career Wright seems to have taken Morse's suggestion quite literally, having apparently removed the *fusuma* from one of the Japanese house plans illustrated in *Japanese Homes* to create the single 'big room' of the 1938 *Life* house project (Figures 7 and 8).¹⁸

Morse himself had directly contrasted the openness of the Japanese house with its Western counterpart, having commented that 'If there is no attempt at architectural display in the dwelling houses of Japan the traveller is at least spared those miserable experiences he so often encounters in his own country, where to a few houses of good taste he is sure to pass hundreds of perforated wooden boxes . . .'.¹⁹ This could, perhaps, have been the source of Wright's similar characterisation of the typical American home of the time as a 'box in which only a limited number of holes were to be punched'.²⁰ More importantly, it may have encouraged Wright's subsequent 'destruction' of that box in the form of the Prairie House,²¹ in which it was his declared aim to 'eliminate the rooms as boxes and the house itself as another boxing of boxes'.²²

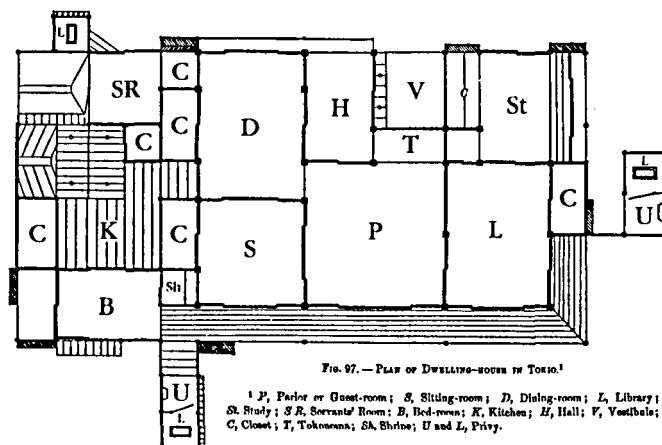


Figure 7. Japanese house plan illustrated in Morse's *Japanese Homes* and their surroundings, 1886 (Figure 97). (Courtesy of Cambridge University Library.)

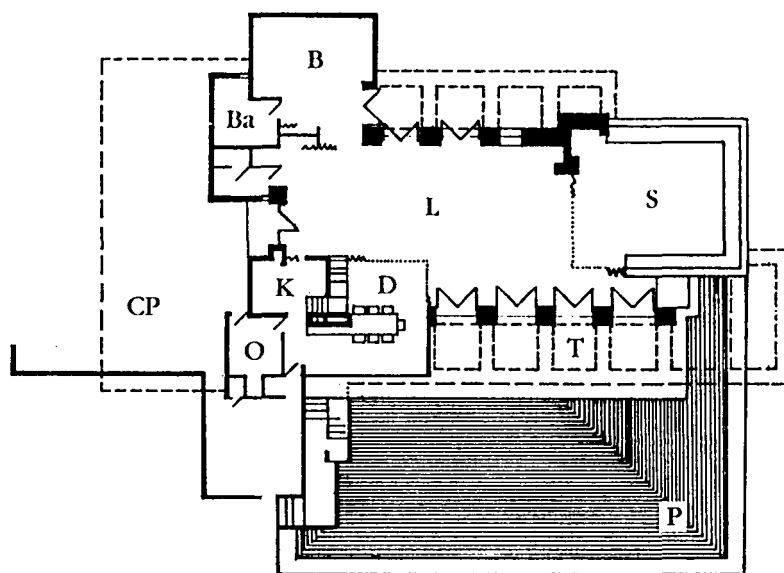


Figure 8. Frank Lloyd Wright: 'House for a Family of \$5000-\$6000 Income', *Life* magazine, September 1938.

Morse had also described how, when in an urban setting, the Japanese home generally turned its back to the public, allowing the main living spaces to open on to a secluded private garden, having explained that 'whatever is commonplace in the appearance of the house is towards the street, while the artistic and picturesque face is turned towards the garden . . . usually in the rear'.²³ This characteristic was also to become a distinctive feature of Wright's mature 'Usonian' houses. In the 1936

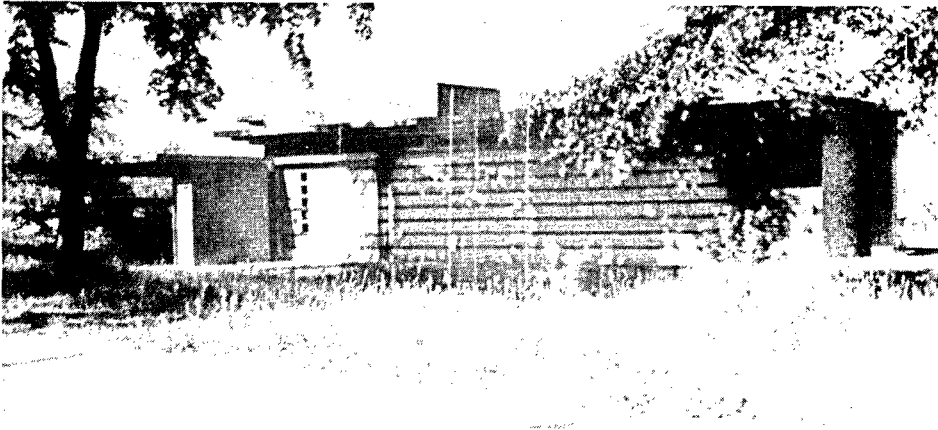


Figure 9. The closed public facade of Wright's Herbert Jacobs House, near Madison, Wisconsin, 1936. (Courtesy of Ms. Mosette Broderick.)

Herbert Jacobs house, for example, the public street front is virtually closed, while the rear opens to a private south-facing garden (Figures 9 and 10). And this contrast was taken to its logical conclusion in the second Jacobs home of 8 years later, in which the north aspect was formed by an earth bank, and the south by uninterrupted floor-to-ceiling glazing.

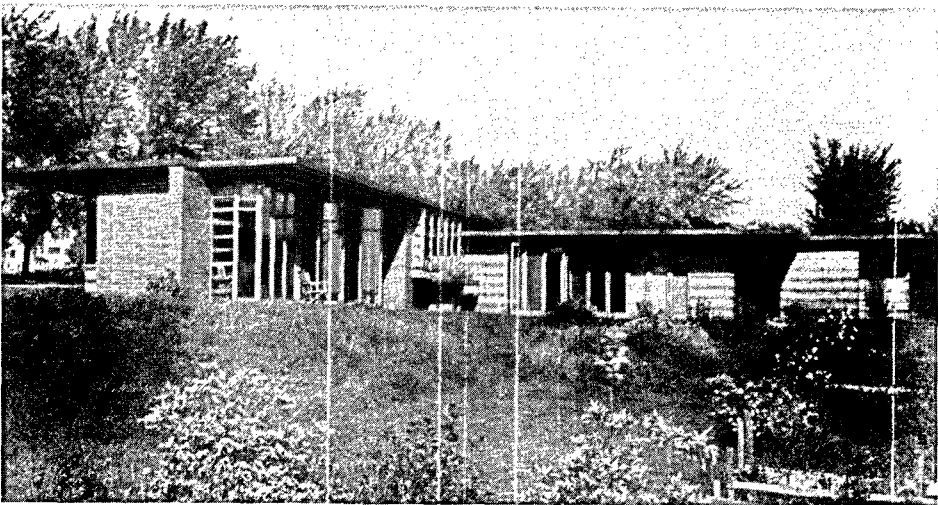


Figure 10. The open private aspect of the Herbert Jacob's house. (Photograph courtesy of Pedro Guerrero.)

In several of his sketches Morse had illustrated how, by withdrawing the *shoji*, the Japanese house and its associated garden could be made to seem almost continuous (Figure 11). Wright too openly admired this particular characteristic of the Japanese dwelling, having delighted in the fact that it was impossible to tell precisely 'where

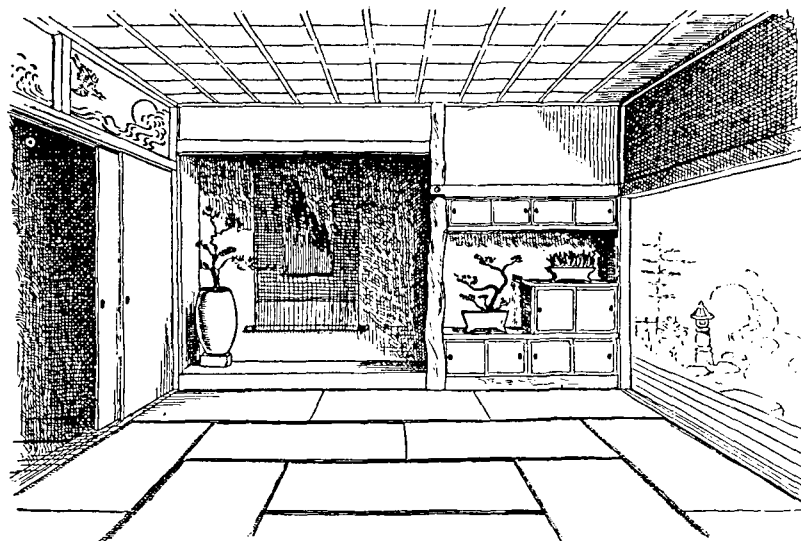


Figure 11. The intimate relationship between the Japanese house and its garden as illustrated in *Japanese Homes*, 1886 (Figure 119). (Courtesy of Cambridge University Library.)

the garden leaves off and the garden begins'.²⁴ It seems significant, then, that Wright later described a similar merging of interior and exterior as one of his primary objectives in the design of the Prairie House, having explained in his account of 'Building the New House' that his 'sense of wall was not a side of a box. It was enclosure to afford protection against storm or heat when this was needed. But it was also increasingly to bring the outside world into the house, and let the inside of the house go outside'.²⁵

Although generally appreciative in his comments, Morse felt that one of the great drawbacks of the Japanese dwelling – from a purely foreign perspective at least – was its lack of any 'fireplace' in the Western sense of the word. He explained, for example, that 'an American misses in Japan the cheerful open fireplaces around which the family in his own country is wont to gather', and how, given this essential characteristic of family life in the United States, for the average American the Japanese house in winter would be 'comfortless to the last degree'.²⁶ Perhaps here, in Morse's melancholic vision, then, we have the inspiration for Wright's apparent translation of the *tokonoma* alcove of the Japanese domestic interior into the 'integral fireplace' of the Prairie House.²⁷ If this was actually the case, then it would certainly have been poetic, since this new fireplace was presented by Wright as a distinct improvement on the more conventional arrangement of the time. As he later explained:

A real fireplace at that time was extraordinary. There were mantels instead. A 'mantel' was a marble frame for a few coals. Or it was a piece of wooden furniture with tile stuck in it around a 'grate', the whole set slam up against the wall. An insult to comfort. So the *integral* fireplace became an important part of the building itself in the houses I was allowed to build out there on the prairie.

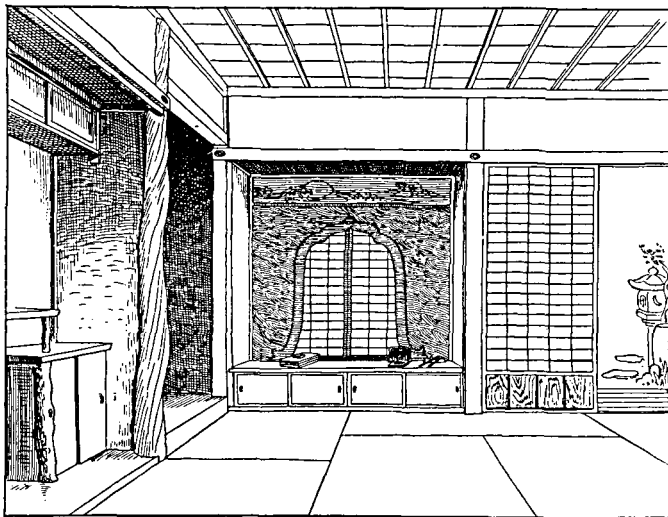


Figure 12. The head-height frieze rail (*kamoi*) of the Japanese domestic interior as illustrated in *Japanese Homes*, 1886 (Figure 122).
(Courtesy of Cambridge University Library.)

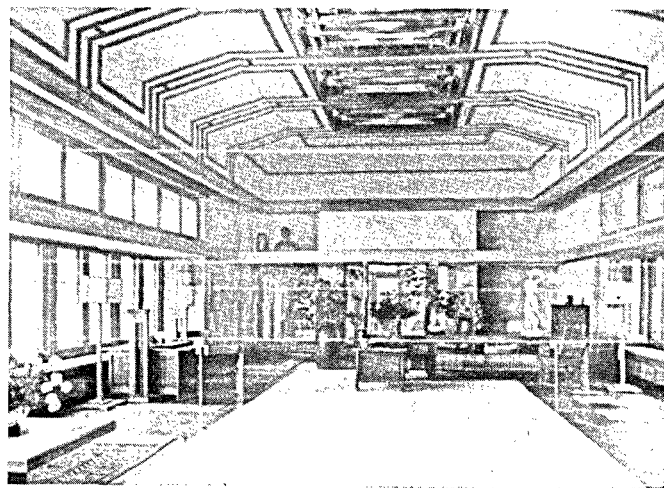


Figure 13. Living room, the Francis W. Little House, 'Northome', Deephaven, Minnesota, 1913. (Courtesy of Ms. Mosette Broderick.)

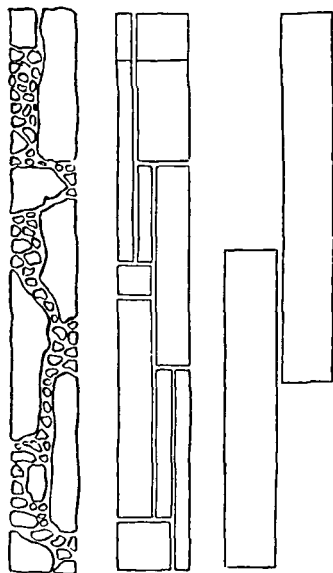


Figure 14. Staggered garden path, *Japanese Homes*, 1886 (Figure 275). (Courtesy of Cambridge University Library.)

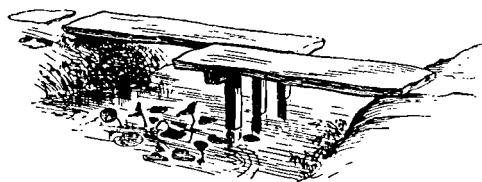


Figure 15. Staggered footbridge, *Japanese Homes*, 1886 (Figure 268). (Courtesy of Cambridge University Library.)

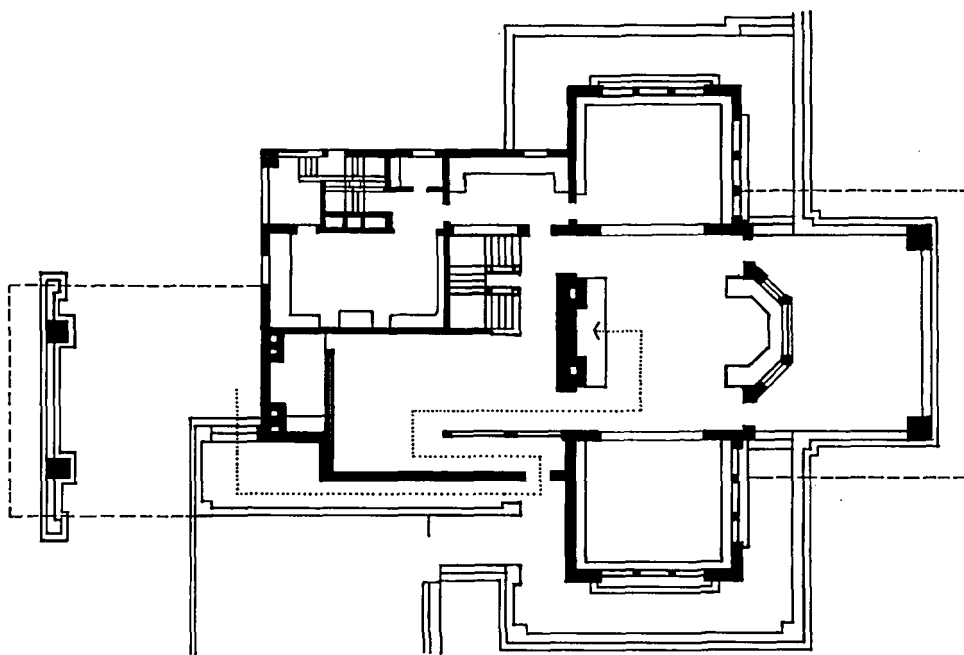


Figure 16. The route to the hearth in Wright's 'Home in a Prairie Town' Project, the *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1901.

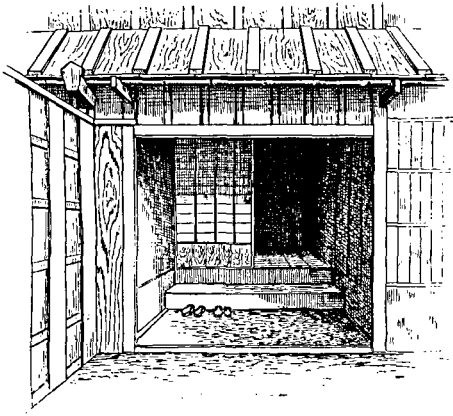


Figure 17. Domestic *genkan*, *Japanese Homes*, 1886 (Figure 221).

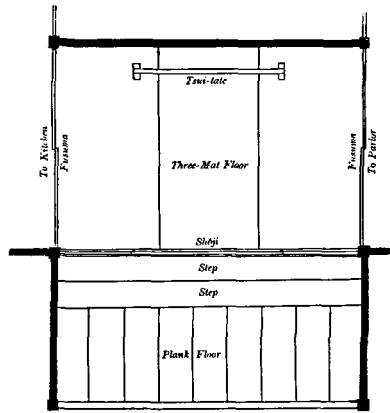


Figure 18. Plan of domestic *genkan*, *Japanese Homes*, 1886 (Figure 222).

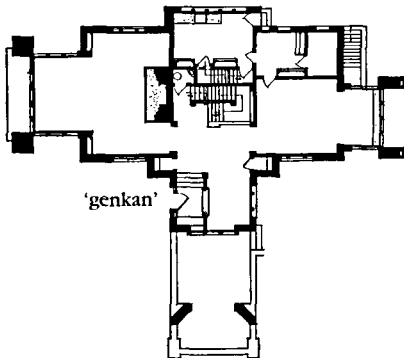


Figure 19. Recessed entrance, the first Francis W. Little house, Peoria, Illinois, 1903.

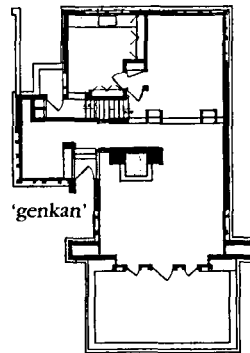


Figure 20. Recessed entrance, the Mrs. Thomas H. Gale house, Oak Park, Illinois, 1909.

Comforting to see the fire burning deep in the masonry of the house itself.²⁸

In several of his drawings, Morse illustrated the horizontal timber rail which runs at door-head level throughout the Japanese domestic interior (Figure 12), and he drew particular attention to its height, having explained that 'The *kamoi*, or lintel, . . . is a beam that runs entirely across the side of the room at the height of nearly six feet from the floor . . . The height of the beam itself from the floor . . . is always lower than are our doorways, because the average height of the Japanese people is less than ours. . . .'²⁹ As the historian Vincent Scully has shown, a similar continuous rail, at the same low level, had become a characteristic of Wright's domestic interiors long before he had set foot in Japan, the living room of the Francis Little house having been a later but particularly clear example of how this idea was assimilated into Wright's own aesthetic vocabulary (Figure 13). There were actually a number of

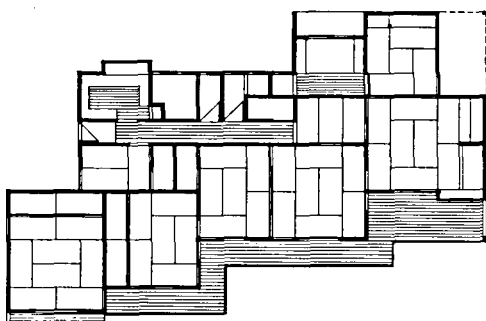


Figure 21. Middle-class Japanese house plan; mats are approximately 6 × 3ft. (After Heinrich Engel.)

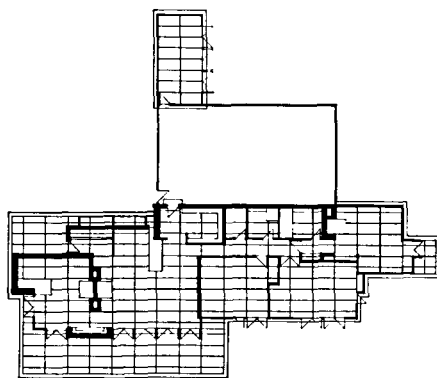


Figure 22. Wright's use of a planning module epitomised in the Theodore Baird house, Amherst, Massachusetts, 1940; the units are 4 × 2ft.

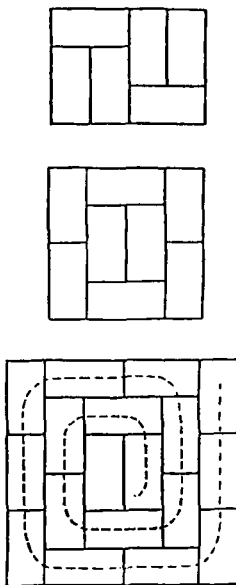


Figure 23. Edward Morse's illustration of *tatami* arrangements for different-sized rooms, *Japanese Homes*, 1886 (Figure 101). (Courtesy of Cambridge University Library.)

places where Wright could have seen this feature before 1905, not least in several of the well-to-do weekend homes on America's eastern seaboard.³⁰ However, it seems significant that Wright's interiors are noted for their intimate vertical scale – although he himself actually implied that this characteristic derived from his *own* height, having remarked somewhat enigmatically: 'It has been said that were I three inches taller (I am 5'8½" tall) all my houses would have been quite different in proportion. Perhaps'.³¹

According to Morse, it was primarily through its roof that the Japanese house derived its distinctive character,³² and he explained that the Japanese word for roof, *yane*, could be translated as meaning house-root or 'house-origin'.³³ While the idea of the home as primarily a shelter is clearly common to most cultures, the roof is especially prominent in traditional Japanese architecture. And in combination with Morse's interpretation, this might perhaps have influenced Wright's perception of the dwelling as essentially 'a roof'; as exemplified in his suggestion that 'Man soon came to feel that if he had no roof . . . he had no house. Later he came to speak of his house as "his roof" . . . His roof was not only his shelter, it was his dignity, as well as his sense of home'.³⁴

One of the later chapters of *Japanese Homes* was given over a description of gardens, in which Morse illustrated several examples of staggered pathways and bridges (Figures 14 and 15). Although this zigzag pattern of movement stems originally from a belief that sudden changes of direction throw evil spirits off one's path, it also has the effect of increasing the apparent separation of the domains on either side of the stagger; and the convoluted route from the entrance to the hearth in several of Wright's Prairie Houses would seem to have been based on a series of similarly abrupt changes of direction, as in the 'Home in a Prairie Town' project for example (Figure 16).³⁵

Morse actually devoted a complete chapter of his book to a detailed description of the entrances and approaches to Japanese dwellings, in which he gave considerable attention to the *genkan*, or entrance lobby (Figures 17 and 18). As well as the obvious advantage of increased hygiene, the *genkan* also provides an effective buffer between public and private space, where casual callers can be met in reasonable comfort without disturbing the privacy of the main living spaces. It may be significant, then, that although the entrances to many of Wright's early houses consisted of external steps, in several of the mature Prairie Houses the transition between ground level and the main floor of the house similarly took place *inside* the threshold, as in the Francis Little and Thomas Gale plans for instance (Figures 19 and 20).

In his description of his first direct encounter with the Japanese house, Wright emphasised that it merely served to *confirm* several principles which he had already been applying in his own work for some years. This included the idea of planning according to a simple geometric unit, which was later to be exemplified in the Usonian Houses (Figures 21 and 22). Wright explained in his autobiography, for example, ' . . . strangely enough, I found this ancient Japanese dwelling to be a perfect example of the modern standardizing I had myself been working with. The floor mats . . . are all three feet by six feet. The size and shape of all the houses are determined by the mats'.³⁶ In fact, this too had been clearly set out in *Japanese Homes* some 40 years earlier, Morse having both described and illustrated how, in the Japanese house, 'the rooms are either square or rectangular, and are made with absolute reference to the number of mats they are to contain' (Figure 23).³⁷

As the most detailed source of information on Japanese domestic architecture available to Wright prior to his first visit to Japan, then, it seems that *Japanese Homes* may well have exercised a significant influence on his early perception of the Japanese house, to the extent that by the time he finally saw the real thing in 1905 many of his

formative views on the subject would seem to have already been firmly established. And this appears to have had important implications, several of the positive characteristics of the Japanese dwelling highlighted by Morse having apparently become central elements in the new Prairie House; most notably the idea of the dwelling as essentially a single large 'screened' space, and its effective 'elimination' of several familiar features of the more typical American home of the time.

It would appear, then, that Wright may actually have been less influenced by his own direct experiences of the Japanese house, than by Edward Morse's perceptive analysis of it; which might go some way towards explaining why several of its characteristics seem to have been present in his work long before his first visit to Japan in 1905.

Notes

This paper is based on a chapter from the author's recently published book, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan: The Role of Traditional Japanese Art and Architecture in the Work of Frank Lloyd Wright*. London and New York, 1993. I should like to thank John Koza of the Phillips Library at the Peabody Museum of Salem for his kind assistance with research on the Museum's Edward Morse Papers.

1. The most detailed accounts of Wright's print-collecting activities are to be found in J. Meech-Pekarik, 'Frank Lloyd Wright and Japanese Prints', *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* Vol. 40, No. 2, Fall 1982, pp. 48–57, and *idem*, 'Frank Lloyd Wright's Other Passion', *The Nature of Frank Lloyd Wright*, eds C. Bolon, R. Nelson, and L. Seidel, Chicago 1988, pp. 125–153. On the impact of the prints on Wright's own work, see K. Nute, 'Frank Lloyd Wright and the Woodblock Print: the Geometric Abstraction of Natural, Man-made, and Social Forms', *Andon: Journal of the Society for Japanese Arts and Crafts* Vol. 12, No. 5, 1993, pp. 3–14. On the subject of Wright's debt to Japanese art and architecture generally, see *idem*, 'Frank Lloyd Wright and the Arts of Japan: A Study in How to Borrow Property', *Architectur and Urbanism*, No. 233, 1990, pp. 26–33, and *idem*, 'Frank Lloyd Wright in Japan: Giving and Receiving in "Yedo"', *Scroope: The Cambridge Architecture Journal* Vol. 5, June 1993, pp. 64–71.
2. In fact there were a number of places where Wright could have gained a general knowledge of Japanese architecture before 1905, not least via the Ho-o-den or 'Phoenix Hall', the Japanese pavilion erected for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, which actually remained on its site in south Chicago until 1946. See for example G. C. Manson, 'Frank Lloyd Wright and the Fair of '93', *Art Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 1953, pp. 115–123, and C. Lancaster, 'Japanese Buildings in the United States before 1900: Their Influence upon American Domestic Architecture', *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 1953, pp. 220–222.
3. Ernest Fenollosa was the cousin of Wright's first employer in Chicago, Joseph L. Silsbee (1848–1913), and he occasionally stayed at Silsbee's home in Edgewater just north of the city. For more on this connection, see K. Nute, 'Frank Lloyd Wright and Japanese Art: Ernest Fenollosa: The Missing Link', *Architectural History: Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain*, Vol. 34, 1991, pp. 224–230.
4. E. S. Morse, *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings* Boston, 1886. The influence of Morse's book on late-nineteenth-century American domestic architecture generally is discussed in C. Lancaster, *The Japanese Influence in America*. New York, 1963, pp. 66–75, and V. J. Scully, *The Shingle Style: Architectural Theory and Design from Richardson to the Origins of Wright*. Yale, 1955, pp. 1 note 1, 21 note 4, 161 note 18.
5. Gookin to Morse, 4 April 1886, the Edward S. Morse Papers, the Phillips Library, Peabody Museum of Salem, Massachusetts.
6. Later in the year Gookin wrote to Morse mentioning his visit to Massachusetts and reporting the results of his initial efforts to arrange lectures for him in Chicago, thus: 'I have not forgotten your desire to lecture in Chicago, but I am very sorry to say that I met with scant success in imparting my

own interest to others.' Gookin to Morse, 26 December 1886, the Edward S. Morse Papers, the Phillips Library, Peabody Museum of Salem. However, Morse is recorded as having given the following lectures at the Art Institute of Chicago during subsequent years: 4 February 1890, 'Household Art of Japan'; 11 February 1890, 'Art Handworks of Japan'; 27 January 1891, 'Japanese Pottery'; 27 February 1900, 'Industrial Arts of Japan'; 25 February 1905, lecture of unknown title. As recorded in *The Art Institute of Chicago Annual Reports 1884–1908*, the Burnham Library, the Art Institute of Chicago. Correspondence between Morse and the director of the Art Institute, William French, concerning lecture dates continued right up until 1915, when Morse was approaching 80 years of age.

7. As well as Gookin and Wright himself, Wright's uncle the Revd Jenkin Lloyd Jones and his erstwhile employers Joseph Silsbee, Dankmar Adler, and Louis Sullivan, were all members and occasional speakers at the Art Institute.
8. Morse, *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings* (1886), reprinted edn. New York, 1972, p. 12. Henceforth I shall be referring to this reprinted edition.
9. F. L. Wright, *An Autobiography* (1932) rev. and enl. ed. New York, 1945, p. 179. Wright's appreciation of the honesty of the Japanese house was in accord with the Kansas–City–based architect Henry Van Brunt's review of Morse's book, in which Van Brunt had suggested similarly that 'These details will prove useful to us . . . because they show very clearly what may result when an industrious and ingenious people unconsciously develop . . . indigenous arts absolutely free from affectation or masquerade.' H. Van Brunt, 'Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings', *American Architect and Building News*, Vol. 19, No. 523, 1886, p. 3.
10. Morse, *Japanese Homes*, p. 150.
11. F. L. Wright, *An Autobiography* (1932), reprinted edn, London, 1938, p. 198.
12. Morse, *Japanese Homes*, p. 7.
13. F. L. Wright, *An Autobiography* (1938 edn.) p. 196.
14. T. E. Tallmadge, *The Story of Architecture in America* (1927), reprinted edn. London, 1928, p. 229.
15. Morse, *Japanese Homes*, p. 7. Interestingly, 10 years before Morse's book appeared, an article in the *American Architect* had described the same characteristics of the Japanese domestic interior in almost identical terms, and might perhaps have influenced his account, if not Wright, who was still rather young to be reading architectural journals in 1876. The unnamed author had suggested similarly that 'at any moment any partition can be taken down, and two or more rooms, or the whole house, be thrown into one large apartment, broken only by the posts which marked the corners of the rooms. Doors and windows, as we use them, there are none.' Anon., 'Japanese Houses', *American Architect and Building News*, Vol. 1, January 1876, p. 27.
16. See for example, V. Scully, *The Shingle Style*, pp. 21–22, 135. However, it has also been suggested that Wright may have been responsible for introducing the open plan to Japan itself. See C. Y. Chang, 'Japanese Spatial Conception – 10', *Japan Architect*, No. 334, 1985, pp. 68–69.
17. Wright, *An Autobiography* (1945 edn.), p. 129. 'Building the New House' was Wright's account of the designing of the Prairie House, written in the late 1920s for his autobiography. See for example *An Autobiography* (1938 edn.), pp. 138–144.
18. Morse, who had stayed in this particular house, actually commented that 'The absence of nearly all furniture gives one an uninterrupted sweep of the floor, so that the entire floor can be covered with sleepers if necessary, – a great convenience certainly when one has to entertain unexpectedly a crowd of guests over-night.' *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings*, p. 112. Also see Wright's 'House for a Family of \$5000–\$6000 Income,' *Life*, Vol. 5, September 1938, pp. 60–61.
19. Morse, *Japanese Homes*, p. 48.
20. Wright, *An Autobiography* (1938 edn.), p. 139.
21. See for example Wright's talk 'The Destruction of the Box', reprinted in E. Kaufmann, ed., *An American Architecture: Frank Lloyd Wright*. New York, 1955, pp. 75–78.
22. Wright, *An Autobiography* (1938 edn.), p. 142.

23. Morse, *Japanese Homes*, p. 9.
24. Wright, *An Autobiography* (1938 edn.), p. 197.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
26. Morse, *Japanese Homes*, p. 119.
27. The parallel between the *tokonoma* and the free-standing hearth of the Prairie House was first suggested by Grant Manson in relation to the Japanese pavilion in Jackson Park, south Chicago. See G. C. Manson, 'Frank Lloyd Wright and the Fair of '93', *Art Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 1953, p. 121.
28. Wright, *An Autobiography* (1938 edn.), p. 139.
29. Morse, *Japanese Homes*, pp. 168–169. Although Morse himself did not use the term, the deep timber frieze-rail which runs across the face of the exposed posts in the typical Japanese domestic interior is actually a bracing member known as the *nageshi*. This is distinct from the *kamoi*, which is the flat lintel plate which runs within the depth of the wall at a level immediately beneath the *nageshi*.
30. See Scully, *The Shingle Style*, p. 159, where the author compares Wright's use of a continuous timber rail to achieve an effect of spatial flow with McKim, Mean and White's use of a similar element towards the same end in the interior of the Victor Newcomb house at Elberon, New Jersey (ca. 1880).
31. Wright, *An Autobiography* (1938 edn.), p. 139. Vincent Scully specifically related the low ceilings of Wright's interiors to Morse's description of this feature in *Japanese Homes*, see *The Shingle Style*, p. 161 note 18.
32. Morse suggested: '... it is mainly to the roof that the Japanese house owes its picturesque appearance; it is the roof which gives to the houses that novelty and variety which is so noticeable among them in different parts of the country.' *Japanese Homes*, p. 77.
33. Morse commented: 'In Japan the roof of a house is called *yane*. Now, *yane* literally means *house-root*; but how such a term could be applied to the roof is a mystery . . . A Korean friend . . . told me that the Chinese character *ne* meant origin.' *Ibid.*, p. 107.
34. F. L. Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (1953), reprinted edn, Scarborough, Ontario, 1970, p. 47. In similar vein, Wright suggested: '... I saw a house primarily as livable interior space under ample shelter. I liked the sense of 'shelter' in the look of the building. I still like it.' *An Autobiography* (1938 edn), p. 139.
35. The almost choreographic organisation of movement in traditional Japanese garden design, and its similarity to stage directions in Noh drama, is perceptively described by Arthur Drexler in *The Architecture of Japan*. New York, 1955, pp. 122–123. See also F. L. Wright, 'A Home in a Prairie Town,' *Ladies' Home Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1901, p. 17.
36. Wright, *An Autobiography* (1938 edn.), p. 196. Although Wright may well have perceived it as such, the *tatami* mat was not of course employed as a planning module in the modern architectural sense of the term. The module generally used was the linear distance between column centres, known as the *ken*, although in most contemporary buildings this measure does relate to the *tatami* mat.
37. Morse, *Japanese Homes*, p. 8. Morse actually devoted several pages to a detailed description of the *tatami* mat, see *ibid.*, pp. 120–224. A decade earlier the *American Architect* had also described the role of the *tatami* mat in very similar terms, having explained: 'The unit of measure of the house, curiously enough, is the floor-mat. . . . Every room, and therefore of course every house, is planned to be floored or carpeted with a definite number of these mats.' Anon., 'Japanese Houses', *American Architect and Building News*, Vol. 1, January 1876, p. 27. And as Margaret Williams Norton has pointed out, in April 1893 Wright's own local paper the *Oak Park Reporter* also devoted a page-long article to a description of the practical uses of 'Japanese House Mats', including their role as a modular unit. See M. Williams Norton, 'Japanese Themes and the Early Work of Frank Lloyd Wright', *Prairie School Review*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1981, p. 4 note 17.