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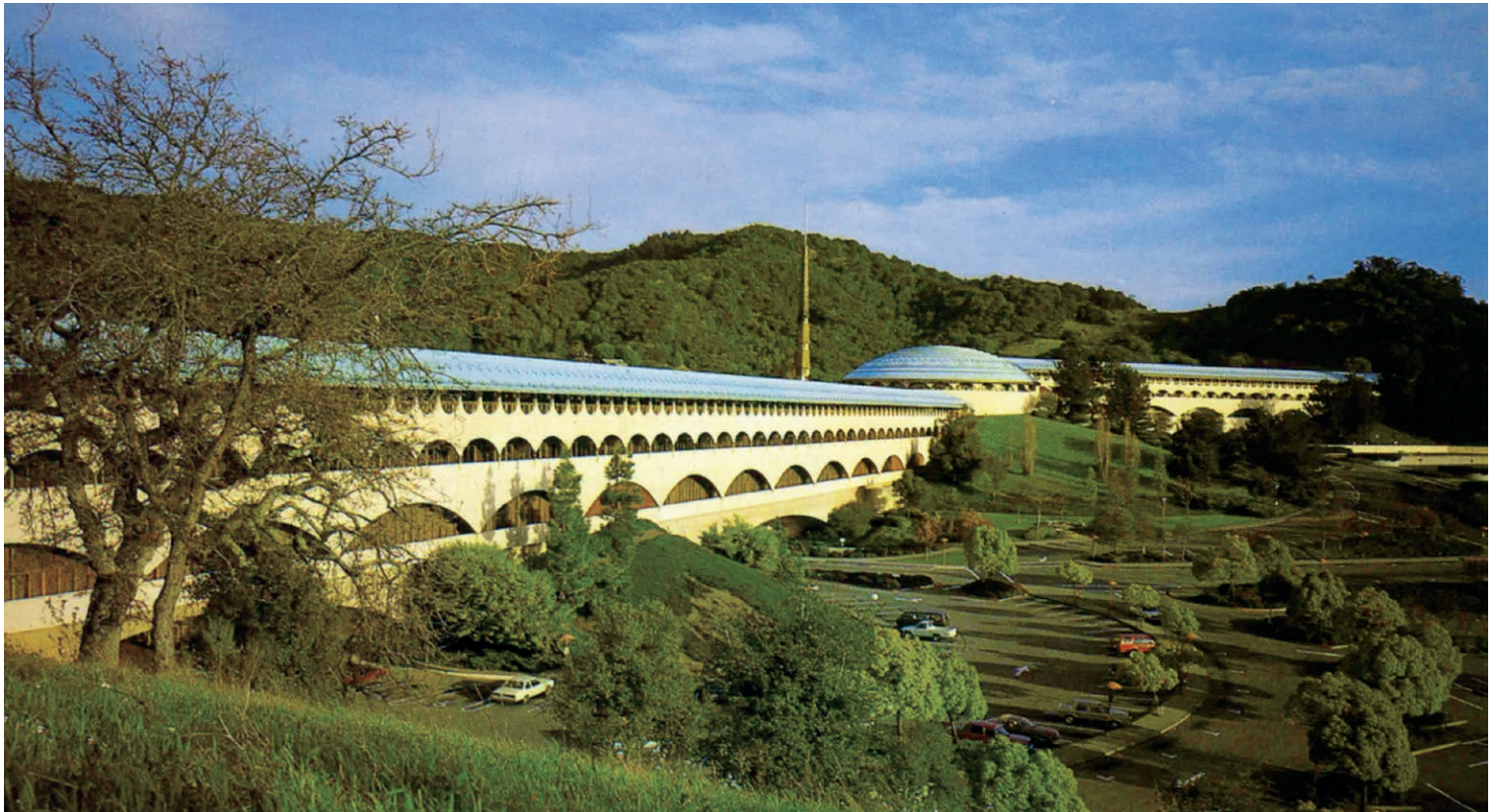
Building as Bridge: Frank Lloyd Wright's Marin County Civic Center

JOSEPH M. SIRY

The Marin County Civic Center in San Rafael, California, has long held a canonical place in Frank Lloyd Wright's oeuvre. It was his largest realized building and among the last whose design was essentially complete before his death in April 1959 (Fig. 1). Its associate architect, Aaron G. Green, discussed it in a detailed monograph, and later historians Neil Levine and Paul Turner have written searching analyses of Wright's intentions for this project in relation to its landscape and its civic purposes. By all accounts, Wright proposed this building as a bridge between its site's hills. The lineage of the Marin County Civic Center can be found in Wright's earlier works, notably, his designs for modern bridges of steel-reinforced concrete as an architectural problem on which he had worked for more than two decades before he created his project for Marin in late 1957. Its bridge metaphor entailed a link not only to the historical type of the aqueduct, as Levine explored, but also to modern bridges, including a major project that Wright had designed in 1949 for a new bridge over San Francisco Bay. The idea of the building as bridge was the key to the Marin County Civic Center as the architectural centerpiece of its public landscape.¹

As a condensation of earlier ideas, the Marin County Civic Center has an autobiographical quality, even as it is intimately tied to the specifics of its political and topographic situation. When seen as rooted partly in Wright's earlier bridge proposals and other projects, the Marin building's history provides perspective on the broader question of how long-lived

1 Frank Lloyd Wright, Marin County Civic Center, San Rafael, California, 1957–70, view from the northwest, showing the Hall of Justice in the foreground and the Administration Building south of the library dome. Marin County Free Library, San Rafael, CA, Anne T. Kent California Room, 336.001.0560 (photograph provided by the Marin County Free Library, Anne T. Kent California Room, Marin County Civic Center)



artists invent late in their careers. Especially since the mid-nineteenth century, artistic lateness has had a central place in historical studies premised on the concept of an individual or period style. The study of late style was based on the assumption that an artist's biography was a viable frame of reference for analysis of his life's work as an evolution from one phase to the next. Late work was often associated with a transcendence of conventions, a greater depth of exploration, a concentration on essential themes, and a revisiting of ideas only partly developed earlier in a career. Yet more recent critical theory, grounded in a Marxist perspective, emphasizes that even as artists grow older, they continue to respond to changing social conditions, so that their late work relates continually to its historical and cultural situation, with all that situation's flaws and contradictions. As Karen Painter writes, paraphrasing Theodor Adorno, "the mature artist cannot escape the historical era in which he or she lives; what remains to decide is stance and aesthetic means."² This latter perspective is especially applicable to architecture because of its inescapable and direct relation to structures of power.

Both of these approaches to artistic lateness—the older biographical framework premised on assumptions of stylistic change and the more recent critical alertness to issues of engagement with historical context—are helpful for studies of the later buildings of a long-lived and highly inventive architect like Frank Lloyd Wright. On the one hand, Wright's late works synthesized ideas from his lifetime's visual experience, including contemporaneous sources near and far, but he adapted their inspirations to new problems in changed contexts.³ As one English observer of the 1930s wrote of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City concept, "Creative work always arises by the synthesis in one man's mind of material from otherwise unrelated sources."⁴ Wright's Marin County buildings were original, but their innovative force came from a familiarity with many past models and multiple styles. Their creativity depended on the storehouse of the architect's memory. In this light, modernist originality implies not only an artist's rejection of sources, or how distant new work is from its predecessors, but also an artist's ability to integrate a number of previous ideas into new work. As Vincent Scully wrote of Wright, "His own career clearly shows something he tended to conceal from [apprentices]: that his work represented what Freud would have called a continual 'condensation' of multiple sources into 'new unities' with a special richness of their own."⁵ So instead of Louis Sullivan's dictum that "form follows function," forms come out of other forms. As Scully wrote, "Alas, art does in fact come out of art to a perhaps surprising degree in human history."⁶ An account of Marin County's lineage in Wright's past experience broadens our understanding of this modernist architect's potential to deepen the richness of his late work by linking to his own history.

On the other hand, as a major building for its regional government, the Marin County Civic Center resonated with local concerns for appropriate development of a landscape that was highly valued in the face of rapid suburban change. For Marin County, Wright drew on a particular line of invention, but he integrated it into a solution that was specific to its site and regional culture. It was a project that resonated deeply and directly with his political vision of how American society should govern itself in relation to the midcentury decline of its cities and the burgeoning of their peripheries. Because his buildings were part of a larger urban design, they were intended as lessons in how architecture could accommodate and represent public authority. In this way, as a late work, the Marin County Civic Center marks a convergence of issues internal to the development of Wright's style with the external concerns of his client. It is architecture that is inextricable from its context, but also irreducible to that context.⁷

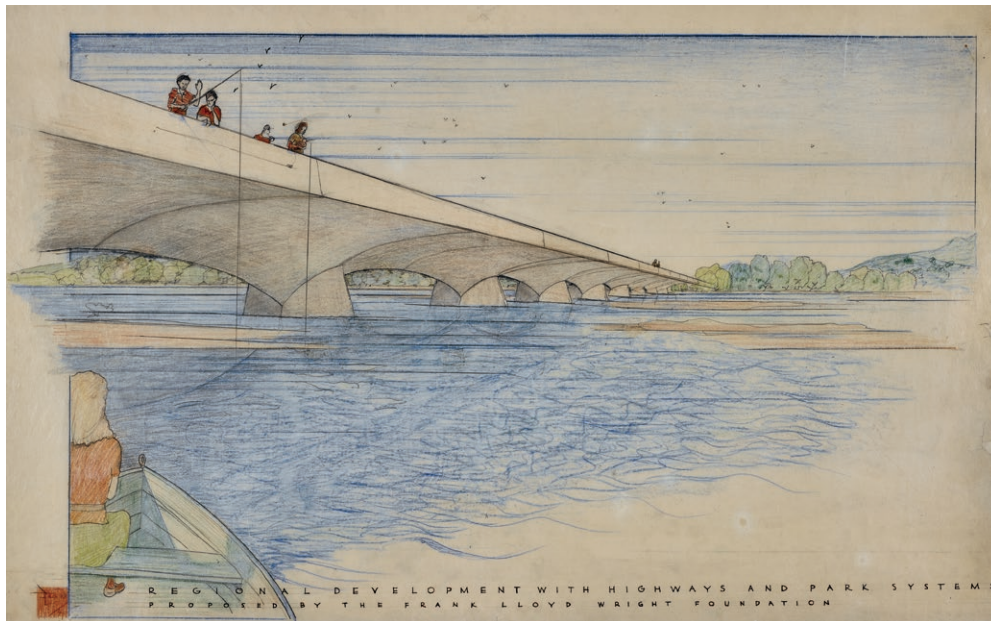
WRIGHT'S UNBUILT BUTTERFLY-WING BRIDGE OVER THE WISCONSIN RIVER, 1947–52

Wright first spoke about his commission for the Marin County Civic Center on the day he signed the contract, July 31, 1957, addressing a large audience at San Rafael High School, in the town of San Rafael, the historic county seat. In his remarks Wright invoked his comprehensive idea of Broadacre City. There were many parallels between his earlier utopian scheme and the postwar civic center. Among the most striking of these links must have been that, in introducing Broadacre City with the exhibition of the original model and related publication of its precepts in the spring of 1935, Wright proposed the elimination of cities and towns, with authority “reduced to one minor government for each county.”⁸ In his view, “its buildings would contribute to the harmony of the whole within broad limits fixed by the county architect, an architect chosen by the county itself. Each county would thus naturally develop an individuality of its own.”⁹ In designing for Marin County, for the first and only time in his seventy-plus-year career, Wright was working with what he had earlier seen as an ideal public client.

In the model of a four-mile-square section of Broadacre City that Wright and his apprentices first made in 1934–35, and that was modified up to his death in 1959, the scale is such that actual buildings are tiny, and it is the land itself, and its grid of farms, residential gardens, industrial sites, and roadways, that is a form of architecture. He wrote, “Here architecture is landscape and landscape takes on the character of architecture by way of the simple process of cultivation.”¹⁰ In this context Wright explored the design of automobile bridges and overpasses as architectural forms in the landscape. In addition to the main model, there were models of highways, crossovers, and underpasses. These were studied in drawings

that show elevated segments of roadways as unusual forms of suspension bridges.¹¹ Clearly, Wright examined bridges as an architectural problem subordinated to the larger visual continuity and uninterrupted sweep of Broadacre City’s landscape. The bridge’s superstructure was to be a sculptural enhancement of the terrain whether one looked toward or away from the roadway.

Bridgelike highway structures for Broadacre City were presumably sources for Wright’s unbuilt project for the concrete Butterfly-Wing Bridge (1947) across the Wisconsin River at Spring Green, near his home at Taliesin south of the river. Wright had been thinking about the possibility of a new bridge there as early as July 1945,



2 Frank Lloyd Wright, Butterfly-Wing Bridge, “Regional Development with Highways and Park Systems Proposed by the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation,” September 5, 1947, colored pencil on tracing paper, 23¼ × 37 in. (59.1 × 94 cm). The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York), drawing no. 4723.001 (artwork © 2019 Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, AZ. All rights reserved. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

when he requested from the State Highway Commission aerial photographs of the existing bridge and nearby roads.¹² In May 1946 he wrote a memorandum and visited the commission in Madison to discuss construction of a second bridge at a nearby location.¹³ The Butterfly-Wing Bridge was part of a larger plan, titled “Regional Development with Highways and Park Systems Proposed by the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation.”¹⁴ Wright’s perspective of a Butterfly-Wing Bridge was published in October 1947 as part of this larger plan (Fig. 2). He offered the Butterfly-Wing Bridge as a prototypical alternative to the spanning of rivers with overhead trussed steel girders. Wright opposed such bridges as aesthetically intrusive in the landscape and as hazardous because of the need to continually repaint them to prevent rust

from causing them to fail. Relative to existing and proposed trussed steel bridges, Wright claimed, his concrete spans would require no paint and minimal repair, and would “do no violence to the landscape.”¹⁵ Soon after he made his design, a trussed steel bridge across the Wisconsin at Spring Green had collapsed because its supports had weakened after years of exposure to rain, snow, and frost. Wright presumed that concrete, with its encased steel reinforcing, was less prone to corrosion, could carry a much heavier traffic load, and would outlast steel structures.¹⁶

Wright described the design for the Butterfly-Wing Bridge as follows: “We prepared a standardized unit system cantilever bridge, staunch and easy to repeat any number of times anywhere—either independent of shop fabrication or employing it. The type is called Butterfly because the wingspread of the spans concentrates the load upon a deep central girder economical up to spans of 200 feet. The low sweeping arches become an asset to any landscape.”¹⁷ Wright had worked with unit systems in his architecture for almost his whole career. As he explained, “the unit system is the essential basis for any pattern or plan because it establishes a harmonious and integral unity throughout—insures consistent scale.”¹⁸ In Wright’s design, the arched cast-concrete units would be internally reinforced with steel: “The outer shell is no inert surface, but a ‘stressed skin’ that works as one with the light stiffening ribs. Structure becomes continuous, flowering out of the plastic nature of the material,” a key theme in Wright’s concept of organic architecture.¹⁹ If the bridge could embody plasticity as a quality found in living forms, then its architecture would itself be a representation of nature, in addition to being in harmony with the landscape. He proposed the cantilever principle lengthwise as well as crosswise. Bridge sections from pier to pier are not continuous arches but, rather, “a series of standardized self-supporting units, each cantilevered out from its central pier to meet the arms of adjacent units at mid-span.”²⁰ At mid-spans are vertical joints where adjacent cantilevered sections meet, as seen in the perspective (Fig. 2). These through joints allowed for thermal expansion. The two cantilevers meeting at the midpoint of each bay form a “suspended span” that looks like an arch. European precedents for longitudinally cantilevered spans existed, but in steel rather than concrete.²¹ In Wright’s proposal, long stiffening beams are embedded within the concrete underside of the bridge, which reads externally as a smooth surface.

Each part of Wright’s description is significant, both technically and aesthetically. The repetition of a standardized unit refers to the idea that the wood or metal formwork for casting each section of the bridge and its piers could be used over and over again, thus reducing the cost per unit for longer bridges. He contended that this method of building would cut construction time in half, “as the concrete forms would be built at the site, with very little time required for shop fabrication of steel.”²² Because the piers supported cantilevered sections along the bridge’s length in both directions, each unit could be cast separately. Wright’s reference to either using “shop fabrication” or not means that he imagined that sections or parts of sections could be precast under controlled conditions in a factory, or, if their size made factory fabrication and transportation unwieldy and expensive, they could then be cast on-site sequentially, moving the same formwork from unit to unit. The vertical expansion joints at mid-span mark lengths that correspond to each span between pier centers up to a maximum of 200 feet. The design of the bridge as a cantilever extending in cross section to both sides of its central, deep, internal girder was intended to minimize the mass of supporting piers, which could be limited to the area underneath the centers of the spans. Beyond 200 feet, the amount of steel needed for reinforcing each spanning beam would be so great, and the beam would be so deep, that its weight and cost would negate the savings on the fewer number of piers required for the bridge’s total crossing. The cantilever would also have the laterally projecting weight of the two sides of each span balancing each other, so that the

outer sides of the spans could taper to minimal dimensions, thus saving weight, material, and cost. Most important, Wright presented his bridge as an aesthetic enhancement of its bucolic site rather than a detraction. He saw it as “a noble expression of architecture, a feature developing our native landscape—beautifying it, not crucifying it.”²³

Wright’s design for a Butterfly-Wing Bridge has no close precedent in his work, so one wonders what its inspiration might have been. A possible clue is his list of tributes to earlier architects, engineers, and inventors that he included on the main presentation drawing for his unbuilt Mile-High Illinois skyscraper project, presented in Chicago in October 1956. Wright wrote that this was a “memorial to” several historical figures: the architect Louis Sullivan, his mentor; Elisha Otis, the inventor of the elevator; John Roebling, the engineer of the Brooklyn Bridge; Lidgerwood, the American engineering company whose constructional devices had helped to build the Panama Canal; and François Coignet and Joseph Monier of France, who developed modern reinforced concrete in the mid-nineteenth century. To this list Wright added “salutations” to engineers who had assisted him, either directly or indirectly: Eduardo Torroja of Spain, the late professor George E. Beggs of Princeton University and then professor emeritus Hardy Cross of Yale University, Pier Luigi Nervi of Italy, Jaroslav Joseph Polivka of the University of California at Berkeley, and Robert Maillart of Switzerland.²⁴

Among the engineers whom Wright named and who might have influenced his thinking, it was Maillart (1872–1940) whose later bridges anticipate Wright’s, both in their fabrication in steel-reinforced concrete and in their shape as either beams and rigid frames or roadbeds supported by broad, sweeping arches. Maillart’s bridges had been discussed in relation to modernist art and architecture since 1930, culminating in Sigfried Giedion’s treatment in his influential *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941).²⁵ Maillart’s built and Wright’s unbuilt designs for reinforced concrete bridges were featured in an exhibition of 1949 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, curated by Wright’s former apprentice Elizabeth Bauer Mock. She included his drawings of the Butterfly-Wing Bridge for Spring Green, Wisconsin, and its later variant for San Francisco Bay as the culminating projects to end the exhibition’s catalogue.²⁶ This featured numerous examples of Maillart’s work and concrete arch bridges by other engineers in Switzerland, among several countries. Wright received Mock’s catalogue by March 1950, and in June he alluded to this modern tradition when he advocated that Wisconsin “outlaw high steel-truss bridges across streams and outlaw all poles and wires above ground.” To rid his state of such “ugly scaffolding . . . this violation of the beauty of some of the most beautiful landscape in the world,” he advocated “ferro-concrete bridges as good as Switzerland’s across streams and all wires down safe underground just as they are in all the more civilized countries of the world today.”²⁷ In Europe in 1950 for his exhibition touring there, Wright visited Zurich.²⁸ In 1951 he told a Wisconsin audience that no one this side of Switzerland designed beautiful bridges.²⁹

Maillart developed different structural types of ferroconcrete bridges, but among these the closest in their form (but not quite in their structure) to Wright’s Butterfly-Wing Bridge was Maillart’s series of three-hinged arch bridges with integrated road slabs. As David Billington, a leading scholar of Maillart’s work, explains, “These were single-span bridges wherein an arch was built in two halves, connected at the crown by a hinge, with each half joined to its support at the abutments also by a hinge. These hinges (literally made like door hinges) allowed the arches to rotate slightly up or down and thus prevented high stresses at those three locations.”³⁰ The arch halves tapering to a high point at mid-span made three-hinged arch bridges visually similar to Wright’s Butterfly-Wing Bridge. Yet Wright’s “arches” were made as cantilevered structures that touched without hinges. In Maillart’s oeuvre, a prominent example illustrated in Mock’s catalogue was the three-hinged arched bridge over

the Thur River near Felsegg (1932–33), in Canton Saint Gall, Switzerland, on the recently reconstructed main road between Zurich and Saint Gall to the east (Fig. 3).³¹ This bridge featured two parallel three-hinged arches with a 226-foot span. Maillart emphasized the crown



3 Robert Maillart, engineer, Bridge over Thur River near Felsegg, Canton Saint Gall, Switzerland, 1932–33, with the main span designed as a three-hinged arch. ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, Image Archive/Hs_1085-1933-3-13 /CCBY-SA 4.0 (photograph provided by ETH-Bibliothek Zürich)

hinge by creating an arch broken at its top midpoint. The horizontal bridge deck is also an active structural element integrated with the three-hinged arch, rather than simply being supported by it. As a Swiss art historian in Zurich who knew Maillart's national oeuvre firsthand, Giedion praised this bridge, concluding: "There are few contemporary buildings in which the solution of the structural problem approaches so closely to pure plastic expression."³² Though Wright and his contemporaries like Maillart imagined structurally different bridges, they clearly shared an aesthetic ideal for modern reinforced concrete bridges set poetically in their landscapes. Presumably, that shared ideal was in part Wright's reason for including Maillart among his salutations to engineering contemporaries. In his 1947 design for a Butterfly-Wing Bridge, Wright was cognizant of modernist forms for ferroconcrete bridges before the war. Yet his response to these was an

original concept. Wright was unable to persuade his native and home state of the value of his approach, though it was in Wisconsin that he formulated arguments he would soon use in California.³³

THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY BRIDGE PROJECT, 1949–57

When Wright was pushing to build his bridge in Wisconsin, he was, of course, working on many other projects, both realized and unbuilt. Of these, the largest in size of any structure that he ever imagined was his design, with the Czech-born and -educated bridge engineer Jaroslav Joseph Polivka (1886–1960), for a bridge across San Francisco Bay south of the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge, which opened in 1936. Their span was to be not only a bridge but also a recreational site over the water, as Wright had imagined the Butterfly-Wing Bridge would be. Polivka was among the most accomplished engineers with whom Wright ever collaborated. After his studies at Prague Technical University and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich, Polivka had built major concrete bridges in Switzerland and Czechoslovakia, including the Podolsko Bridge over the Vltava River, whose main central span of 492 feet was the world's sixth largest when it opened in 1949. In Europe, Polivka recalled having had personal and professional contact with major modernist architects and engineers, including Le Corbusier, Maillart, Torroja, and many others.³⁴ Polivka was deeply interested in the aesthetics as well as the engineering of bridges. Partly as a criticism of the steel Richmond–San Rafael Bridge across northern San Francisco Bay, opened in 1956, Polivka wrote soon after: "Most of the bridges, as a substantial part of communications, highways and freeways, are built within the cities or in their outskirts and should be designed in conformity with their environment and as essential contribution to the beauty and attractiveness of these places. The aesthetics of a bridge is therefore very important, sometimes more than its economy, especially in such cases where the beauty of a bridge creates conditions which compensate for higher costs."³⁵

After immigrating to the United States in 1939, Polivka served as a lecturer on modern concrete design at the University of California at Berkeley, and he also practiced as a consulting engineer. He later recalled that from the time he arrived at Berkeley, he was following the alternative plans for crossing San Francisco Bay "and was anxious to make his contribution to the solution [of] many difficult problems connected with these structures."³⁶ Wright's relationship

with Polivka began in 1946, when he asked him to consult on the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, for which Polivka made structural analyses of the spiral ramp in models; the S. C. Johnson Co. Research Tower, for which he did analyses of its deep taproot concrete foundation; and the unbuilt Rogers Lacy Hotel in Dallas, for which he studied systems of enclosing glass. In July 1947 Polivka proposed to Wright that they discuss Polivka's idea for a new San Francisco Bay crossing linking San Bruno (west) at the airport to San Leandro (east), sited south of the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge but north of the San Mateo Bridge (1929; replaced 1967).³⁷ As early as August 1944, in a hearing on postwar problems of the San Francisco Bay Area, there was a proposal for a new Bay Bridge parallel to the first one.³⁸ From 1947 to 1953 the cities of San Francisco and Oakland and the State of California debated the merits of a twin next to the first bridge or a more southerly second crossing between San Francisco and Alameda County, which had been considered as a route for the first bridge. Whichever site was chosen, it was assumed that a second bridge would be a steel suspension span like the Bay Bridge of 1936, and like the Golden Gate Bridge, which had opened in May 1937.

In February 1947 Polivka wrote to C. H. Purcell, the chief engineer of the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge, and his colleague F. W. Panhorst, its designer, to propose a new southerly crossing that would have a single concrete arch spanning 3,200 feet. Not only



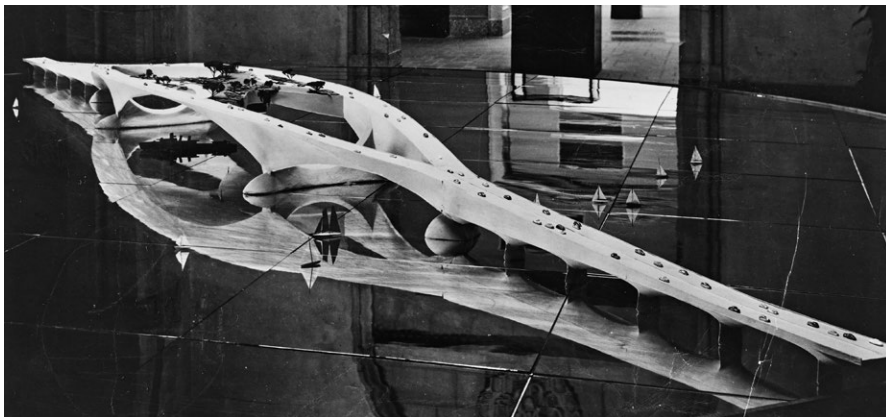
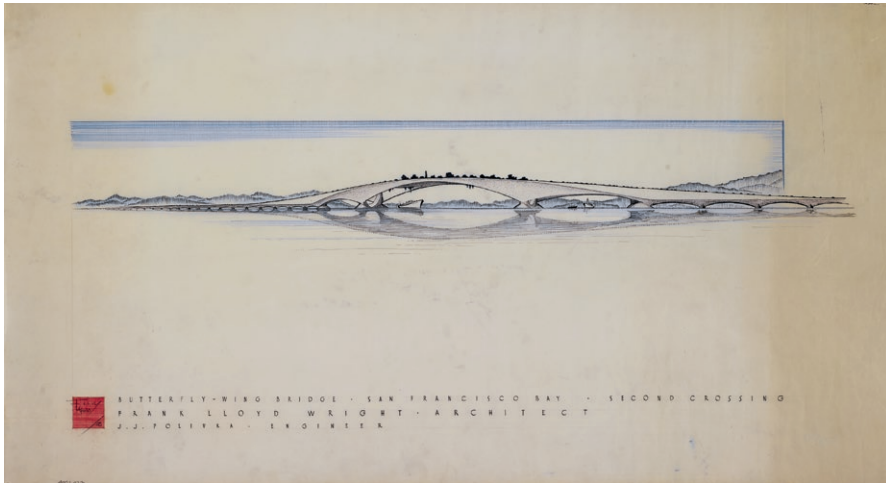
4 S. Höggbom, chief engineer, Skånska Cement Co., Sandöbron (Sandö Bridge) spanning 866 feet over the Ångerman River, Sweden, 1937–43. Skånska Co. Archives of the Centre for Business History [Centrum för Näringslivshistoria], Bromma, Sweden (photograph provided by the Skånska Co. Archives of the Centre for Business History [Centrum för Näringslivshistoria])

was this nearly 900 feet longer than the central spans of the existing Bay Bridge, it was nearly four times the 866-foot span of the world's then largest concrete-arch bridge, the Sandöbron (Sandö Bridge) (1937–43) over the Ångerman River in Sweden (Fig. 4). Polivka likely sought Wright as a collaborator because Wright's renown would enhance the proposal for a public and governmental audience, whose support would be essential. As Polivka wrote to Wright: "I feel the new crossing would need your creative genius to become the apotheosis of democratic architecture and engineering."³⁹ Wright saw the project as an extension of his Butterfly-Wing Bridge for Wisconsin.

By May 1949 Polivka and Wright had developed four alternative schemes for a second crossing. These were documented in drawings from Wright's studio and in a jointly signed "Brief Concerning a Concept Bridge for Southern Crossing of San Francisco Bay—Schemes One, Two, Three, and Four," intended for newspapers.⁴⁰ Polivka later wrote to Wright of this text as "the BRIEF you wrote in my presence in Taliesin West, signed by you and myself."⁴¹ The proposal went to Richard Dolwig, a California state assemblyman and chair of the Assembly Committee for San Francisco Bay Crossing Problems, which held hearings regarding a second bridge across the bay in preparation for a final report to the legislature on May 31.⁴² Three of Wright and Polivka's schemes proposed a bridge ten miles (52,800 feet) long and 81 feet wide with six traffic lanes. They also estimated the cost of a fourth double-deck alternative of the same length but 108 feet wide with eight traffic lanes and two railroad tracks. Polivka prepared drawings showing structural details and costs of the different schemes.⁴³ Wright and his group made the presentation drawings, mainly for one of the schemes. Asked to testify, he telegraphed that he was "too busy to make long trip on speculative matter," noting, "Drawings speak for themselves."⁴⁴ Polivka testified before the committee on May 21, and his and Wright's proposal was among those noted in press coverage of the hearing.⁴⁵

The brief that Polivka read to the committee revisits themes that Wright earlier announced in Wisconsin and would later invoke in Marin County. The text argued that modern reinforced concrete "has now made the rampant exposed construction of the upturned steel-truss bridges extravagant and obsolete, like 'corporation' service poles and wire they remain a devastating blemish on our landscape. . . . The new concrete forms, more

5 Frank Lloyd Wright and Jaroslav J. Polivka, “Butterfly-Wing Bridge, San Francisco Bay, Second Crossing,” view from the south, April 30, 1949, colored pencil on tracing paper, 23 × 42 in. (58.4 × 106.7 cm). The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York), drawing no. 4921.027 (artwork © 2019 Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, AZ. All rights reserved. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])



6 Frank Lloyd Wright and Jaroslav J. Polivka, Butterfly-Wing Bridge, San Francisco Bay, second crossing, model, 1953, length 16 ft. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York), photograph no. 4921.0001 (artwork © 2019 Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, AZ. All rights reserved. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

simple and sympathetic to nature have arrived to take the place of the older ones.” In France, Switzerland, and later Spain, “the new, more scientific and artistic forms grew fast,” but in the United States, given the influence of the big steel companies, “the bridging of wide spans was slow to take advantage of the great economy in performance and beauty of scheme made possible by the new science of ferro-concrete.”⁴⁶ Wright and Polivka proposed “a more simple, coherent form of concrete bridge than most of those offered in the United States. Those plans are for a great bridge that, befitting the landscape, would distinguish and beautify the San Francisco bay-region instead of blighting it with strident struts upraised to hold perishable exposed steel members. This new type of construction is called the Butterfly-wing Bridge on account of its lightness in weight and greater simplicity of construction natural to steel in tension and concrete in compression when both are scientifically combined in appropriate forms.”⁴⁷ They argued that the foundations would be more earthquake-resistant, so they would be more dura-

ble over centuries. Polivka referred to “pre-Christian concrete bridges which still stand in Italy.” The aesthetic advantage would be the “quiet beauty of the concrete bridge, as compared with the harsh outline of a cantilever span,” as in a steel suspension bridge.⁴⁸

As in Wisconsin, most of the bridge would be composed of a single standardized unit, many times repeated, of a supporting pier with a longitudinally and laterally cantilevered deck. Of the drawings made to accompany the brief, the most compelling is a perspective of Scheme Three, which has a central span 1,000 feet long, rising 175 feet or more above the mean waterline to permit passage of warships (Fig. 5). The elevated span over the main ship channel is only a small section of the bridge’s curving projected ten-mile length. This central span is flanked by two smaller spans 500 feet long, high enough to accommodate other ships. These spans “are designed as an organic feature of the entire arc-shaped length of the whole bridge.”⁴⁹ The high, broad central span recalls earlier concrete arch bridges like the Sandö Bridge (Fig. 4). But, unlike these, Wright and Polivka’s bridge would have no vertical piers between the arches and the road. Their expansive Butterfly-Wing Bridge would be arched through its entire length.

Wright and Polivka presented their proposal in the model completed in 1953 for the central longest and flanking spans (Fig. 6). As Mock described:

The body of the bridge is composed of a single repeated cantilever unit similar to that of the Wisconsin project. . . . The soaring double arc of the roadway as it splits and swells outward and upward over the main channel is a brilliant variation and expansion of the established, oft-repeated theme. It is not a true arch, nor does it simulate one. Instead, it is formed by the out-reaching of cantilever arms from the two great U-shaped piers to meet at mid-span, 175 feet above the water. Here the two lightly flying, out-curved halves of the roadway are joined and braced by a landscaped park, fabulous hanging gardens for the delight of citizen and sightseer.⁵⁰

The bridge's lower highways would have "moderate grades with . . . road-beds visible ahead 1000 feet or more."⁵¹ Wright noted: "No obstruction to the view or to the flight of aeroplanes is offered by this bridge. The reflections in the water counter-balancing the arches greatly enhance its general effect."⁵²

Polivka continued to advocate for such a bridge with local, state, and federal authorities until his death in 1960. Debate as to whether and where to build a second bridge across San Francisco Bay continued long after.⁵³ In 1957 Wright proposed Butterfly-Wing bridges across the Tigris River as part of his project for Baghdad, and soon Polivka cited this project to spur fellow San Franciscans to have Wright's concept built in their city so it would not lose priority to Iraq as the Butterfly's premiere venue.⁵⁴ No built structures came of either the San Francisco or Baghdad proposals. Yet Wright clearly wanted to realize this bridge as architecture, and its modernist form would become embedded in his ideas for the Marin County Civic Center.

THE DESIGN FOR THE MARIN COUNTY CIVIC CENTER, 1957–59

In 1951, while working with Polivka on the design and promotion of the Butterfly-Wing Bridge, Wright established an office in San Francisco headed by a former apprentice, the architect Aaron Green, who was developing his own practice but also serving as Wright's West Coast representative. Green assisted Polivka in making and exhibiting the drawings and model of the San Francisco Bay Bridge. He would also play a pivotal role as the local intermediary between Wright and the Marin County Board of Supervisors, who in 1957 commissioned Wright to design its new civic center. The origins of this project go back to the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937, which links Marin County to San Francisco by automobile rather than ferry. This momentous change initiated a new phase in the county's development from a rural area dominated by large landholders to a network of suburban towns that served as homes for large numbers of daily commuters. From its population of 27,342 in 1920, Marin County grew rapidly through midcentury: by 52 percent in the 1920s to 41,648 by 1930; 27 percent more (1930s) to 52,907 by 1940; 62 percent more (1940s) to 85,619 by 1950; and 71 percent more (1950s) to 146,820 by 1960. By 1960 it was California's wealthiest county, with the highest per capita income and highest level of education for its population.⁵⁵

Since the early twentieth century, Marin County had a strong local conservation movement that resisted excessive commercial exploitation of its landscape, which many citizens, both longtime landowners and later arrivals, wanted to remain in a pristine state. They embraced conservation as the county's most important priority. Foreseeing great change with the building of the Golden Gate Bridge, citizens advocated for land use planning. For this purpose, in 1935 they formed the Marin Conservation League, which grew to be the county's most popular and powerful organization. Among its founders, Caroline Livermore, appointed by the supervisors to a citizens' committee to select the grounds for the county fair, later led in advocating for Wright, as did the Marin County Planning Commission's first director, Mary Summers, who served from 1941 to 1961.⁵⁶ Largely through this commission, conservationists tried to limit the development of tract housing in the county, which burgeoned immediately after World War II ended in 1945.⁵⁷

The accelerated postwar accessibility of Marin County by automobile was one part of the larger regional trend toward suburban decentralization. But the process also helped to unify the eleven towns in the 529-square-mile county, which since 1879 had been governed by a board of supervisors. Each supervisor had authority over one of five districts, including the power to locate and maintain roadways, a number of which were built in the 1930s as the Golden Gate Bridge progressed.⁵⁸ This system of government was served by a physical arrangement of offices in the county courthouse plus a mix of spaces that were rented and

two buildings that were owned in the county seat of San Rafael.⁵⁹ These became increasingly overcrowded through the decades of rapid growth, and in 1952 the Planning Commission was charged with studying the county's future spatial needs. In the context of a reform movement that sought stronger central county government, it recommended that a new site be chosen for the civic center outside central San Rafael. After preliminary efforts, in 1953 the board of supervisors appointed a Site Committee for the Civic Center, which was charged to find land for both a civic center and new county fairgrounds combined in one landscape.⁶⁰

There was much political resistance to leaving San Rafael, but by June 1953 the board of supervisors offered to buy the 140-acre Scettrini family dairy ranch at Santa Venetia, northeast of San Rafael and east of Highway 101 (Fig. 7). Although it was technically about



7 Marin County Civic Center, site looking southeast from Highway 101, showing the Scettrini ranch, acquired in 1956. The central barn stood atop the hill that would be at the south end of Wright's Administration Building. Appraisal Report and Valuation Analysis of the Scettrini Ranch, October 3, 1955, Marin County Free Library, San Rafael, CA, Anne T. Kent California Room, Marin County Civic Center—Original Document Collection, Box M9: Land Purchase 1954–59 (photograph provided by the Marin County Free Library, Anne T. Kent California Room, Marin County Civic Center)

300 yards north of the San Rafael city limits, this available site was convenient to the traditional county seat and was large enough to accommodate a sizable new facility. The Scettrini property was also linked by water on its northeast edge to Gallinas Creek, which emptied into San Pablo Bay to the east (Fig. 8). As Caroline Livermore, a member of the site selection committee, recalled, "Besides being centrally located, it is a beautiful combination of hills and marshes going down to the water so that people could even come by boat to the fair." The committee was concerned that the site "would be properly developed in a fresh and imaginative spirit; that it would be a practicable, workable and coordinated building scheme symbolizing the dignity of our gov-

ernment and the culture of our people."⁶¹ The sale was concluded in April 1956. The southern sixty acres included three knolls planned for the government buildings, and the northern eighty acres of marshland were to be dredged and landscaped as a site for the county fair.⁶² At the center of these efforts was Vera Schultz, who served as supervisor from the third district between 1952 and 1960. By all accounts she was exceptional in her commitment to improve the county government's efficiency and accountability.⁶³

With the acquisition of the Scettrini property, the Site Committee was dissolved, and the board of supervisors appointed a Civic Center Committee, chaired by Mary Summers of the Planning Commission and made up of the heads of four other county departments. Their main charge was to select an architect, and through 1956 and early 1957 the supervisors interviewed some twenty-six architects and the committee visited nearby government buildings. Opinions differed as to whether the new facility should be a single large office building or a group of buildings like a campus, as favored by Summers and as proposed in one plan for the site by her.⁶⁴ Accounts vary as to who first thought of contacting Wright, although Schultz was said to have been inspired by an article on his work she had read in *House Beautiful* of January 1957.⁶⁵ On April 26 the committee and four supervisors first met with Wright at his San Francisco office with Aaron Green, and they heard Wright speak that evening as the Bernard Maybeck Lecturer at the University of California at Berkeley. Important for the committee was Wright's belief that the civic center should reflect the character of Marin County. It recommended that Wright be hired, and on June 27, on Schultz's motion, the board voted to open negotiations with him.⁶⁶ On July 30, facing controversy over the idea of a civic center and the choice of Wright, the committee voiced its rationale: "Most Marinites would agree that Marin County was endowed by Nature with special physical features and

characteristics which has made it a special attraction for over a century for a rural-type of urban life, unmatched in the San Francisco Bay Region.” Specifically, “We recognized that the site selected for the Center was itself representative of Marin’s physical characteristics and that the character of the site and the County should be amplified in the architecture of its public buildings.” The committee “found that Mr. Wright starts with the *land* and this was important to Marin County for this is our natural resource.”⁶⁷ Wright had a public client whose own

values predisposed it to his approach.

On July 31 Wright spoke to Marin citizens at a public meeting at San Rafael High School. Although it was not a formal hearing, as normally required before the signing of a contract, the board of supervisors called the meeting as a means of introducing the architect to the county, and Wright did sign the contract that evening. His transcribed remarks at that meeting were wide ranging, but he stressed certain ideas that linked to his earlier bridge projects. Among these, he began by asserting that “a good building is not one that hurts the landscape, but one that makes the landscape more beautiful than it was before that building was built. Now in Marin County you have one of the most beautiful landscapes that I have seen. I haven’t seen Marin County before. And I’m very proud to be in here, to . . . make the buildings of this county characteristic of the beauty of this county.”⁶⁸ Wright said: “Now, I think it would be foolish for Marin County to join in the procession that they will find, calling itself ‘civic centers’ all over the country. Now, what is a civic center? In Marin County it would be something commensurate with the beauty of the county, wouldn’t it?”⁶⁹



8 Marin County Civic Center, aerial view of the vicinity looking northeast, March 4, 1969, showing (a) Highway 101, (b) Wright’s Civic Center in the middle distance at right (south); (c) the lagoon at the north end of the Civic Center; and (d) Gallinas Creek, south branch, linking to (e) San Pablo Bay in the distance to the east. Marin History Museum, San Rafael, CA, Brady Photo Collection, photograph no. 14157 (photograph provided by the Marin History Museum, Brady Photo Collection; lettering added by the author)

Marin County is identified with its hills as its most distinctive topographic features. The hills became especially meaningful as development progressed after the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge and accelerated after World War II. Conservationists saw tract housing on a large scale as a danger, because commercial developers considered leveling and/or terracing of hills the normal approach to the county’s distinctive terrain. Summers later recalled that most of the approximately two dozen architects who were interviewed had proposed leveling the undeveloped site and building something akin to a shopping mall or a high-rise structure.⁷⁰ Wright’s civic center as a bridge between hills stood out by contrast. One resident of Mill Valley wrote: “Why not keep Wright’s design for a county civic center? He at least respects our hills. Note the present ‘desecration’—bulldozing of the prettiest knoll on Highway 101 just south of Greenbrae.”⁷¹

On August 1, 1957, the day after he signed the contract, Wright, with Summers, Green, Martin Brigham as the head of the Public Works Department, all but one of the supervisors, and other county officials were driven to see the hills of the former Scettrini property for the first time. Just over ninety years old, Wright quickly and easily climbed



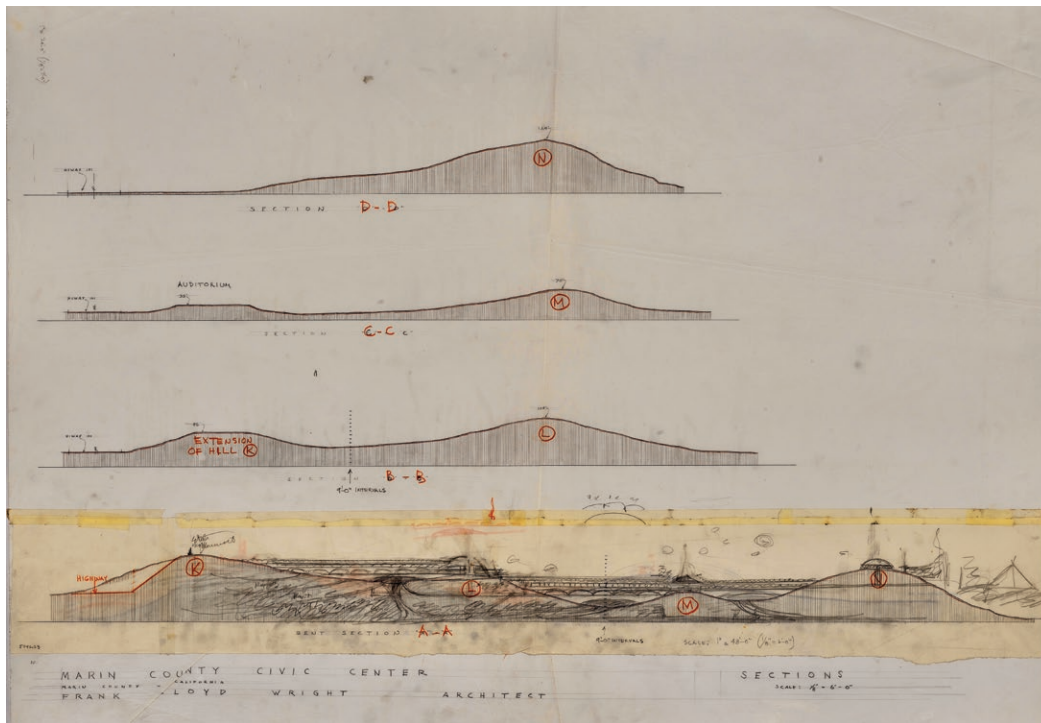
9 Marin County Civic Center, topographic site map overlaid with Wright's modular grid and handwritten notations, December 1957?, pencil on diazo print paper, 45 x 36 in. (114.3 x 91.4 cm). The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York), drawing no. 5746.002 (artwork © 2019 Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, AZ. All rights reserved. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

to the top of the highest of the three knolls, at the site's south end. One account recorded: "The spry old man explored the terrain with the eagerness of a child at a picnic. He ducked between the strands of one barbed wire fence and climbed over another one, jumped across several ditches and fought his way through knee high grass and thistles." Wright observed: "Splendid. It's as beautiful as California can have." Two teenage girls asked him to pose for snapshots, and one asked: "Are you going to knock down all these hills?" To which he replied with enthusiasm: "Not a single hill."⁷² He declared that the site is "wonderfully beautiful and is ideally adaptable to my organic architecture. . . . Some architects might want to level these seven beautiful hills, but I'll tell you, I'm not going to build on the flat."⁷³ Green remembered that Wright, from the top of one hill, seeing the property, paused a few moments,

then said to him, “I know exactly what I’m going to do.”⁷⁴ Later, Green recalled that after a twenty-minute review of the terrain, “Wright turned to me and, making wave-like motions with his hands, declared: ‘I know what to do here. We will bridge these hills with graceful arches.’”⁷⁵ An apprentice later wrote: “When he was first taken out to see the site, some of the county officials told Mr. Wright, ‘If the hills are a problem, we can easily flatten them out, and give you a more suitable building ground that way.’ Mr. Wright looked at the three predominant hills on the site, and replied, ‘To the contrary, those hills will be the features of the design; the building will be a bridge between them.’”⁷⁶

Following Wright’s contract signing, Green soon clarified that the building would be in two parts, a first one for the county administration, and a second for the county courts and jail.⁷⁷ Among the most revealing drawings is a topographic map with notations overlaid in Wright’s hand (Fig. 9). Presumably this was the map that the county agreed to supply Wright in his contract.⁷⁸ On November 27 Green wired Wright that he now had the county requirements, site maps, and other materials, and could take them to Wright’s winter home and studio at Taliesin West in Scottsdale, near Phoenix, Arizona, the next week.⁷⁹ The overlaid marks can thus be plausibly dated to December 1957, before Wright had made the presentation drawings, most of which he initialed and dated December 24. Contour lines show intervals of five feet. The drawing’s scale is 1 inch = 48 feet. Wright had typically

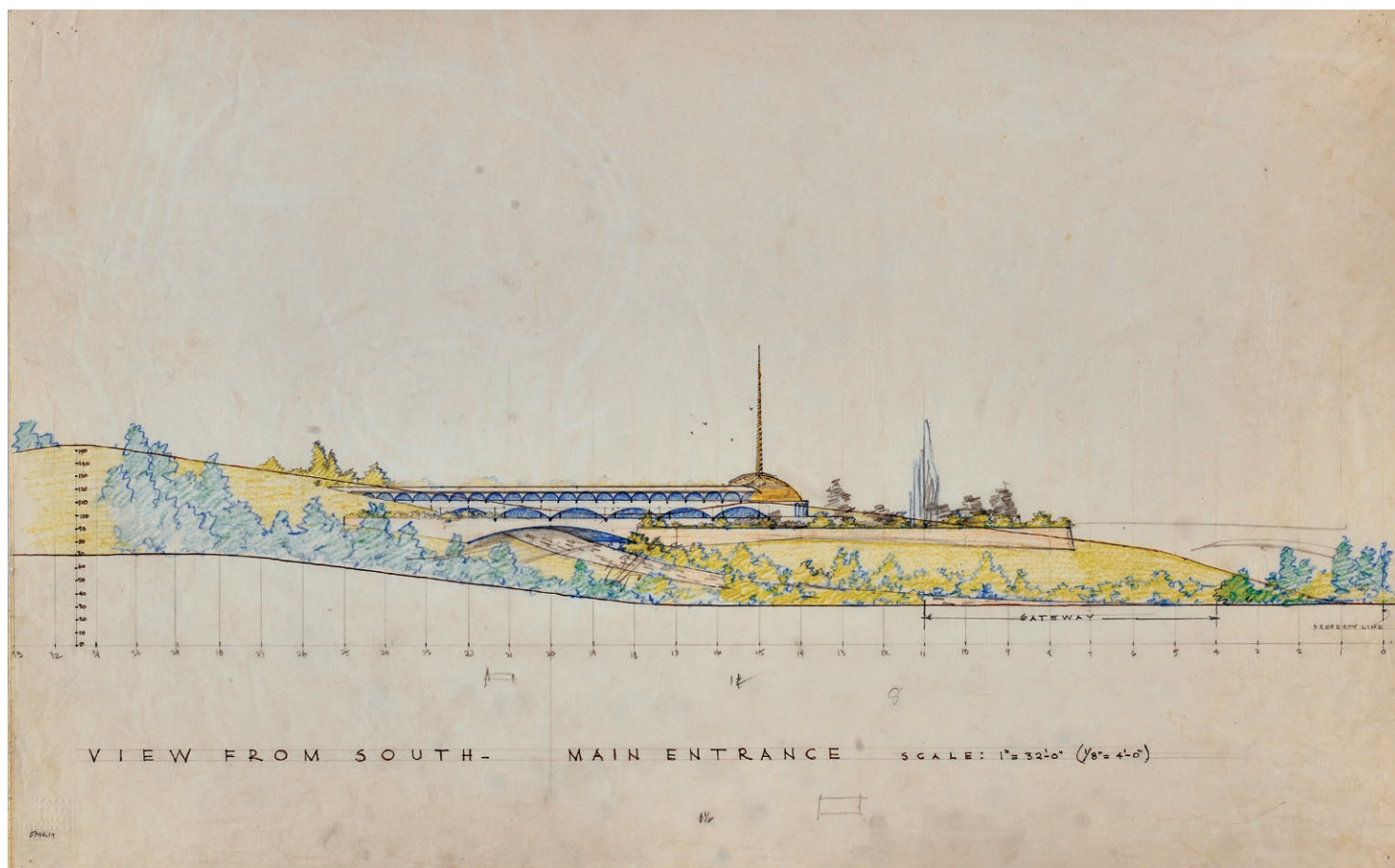
worked with a unit dimension when planning, and he drew a small-scaled grid for the Administration Building extending from the southernmost hill northeast to a central hill, where the domed rotunda and tower would mark its terminus. From this central hill the gridded outline of the Hall of Justice runs north–northwest over a third hill before terminating on the south side of a fourth hill at the site’s north end. The new county fair pavilion is north of a lagoon, and an amphitheater is west of the Civic Center. Both the Administration Building and Hall of Justice are grids with a unit of twelve feet square, and each building is projected as five such units wide. (As built, the unit dimension was sixteen feet square.) But neither building grid has a



10 Frank Lloyd Wright, Marin County Civic Center, early site sections A–A, B–B, C–C, and D–D corresponding to sectional lines noted on Fig. 9, December 1957?, pencil on tracing paper, 36 × 45 in. (91.4 × 114.3 cm). The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York), drawing no. 5746.023 (artwork © 2019 Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, AZ. All rights reserved. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

clear end point; both extend indeterminately into the hills at the south and north. There the ruled grid merges variably into the rounded contours. The drawing shows the grid extended as an ordering device over the hilly site. As Wright later said, the scheme “had to grow, had to be flexible and was almost impossible at first thought, until we got this idea of making one unit out of it, a growing unit, that could proceed from hill to hill.”⁸⁰ Repeating a spatial unit through an elongated civic center was like repeating a structural unit along the length of Wright’s projected Butterfly-Wing Bridge.

The topographic map shows lines marking sections through the site (A–A, B–B, C–C, and D–D), which correspond to site sections (A–A, B–B, C–C, and D–D) on another drawing (Fig. 10), which Green identified as Wright’s “first design sketches.”⁸¹ Presumably,

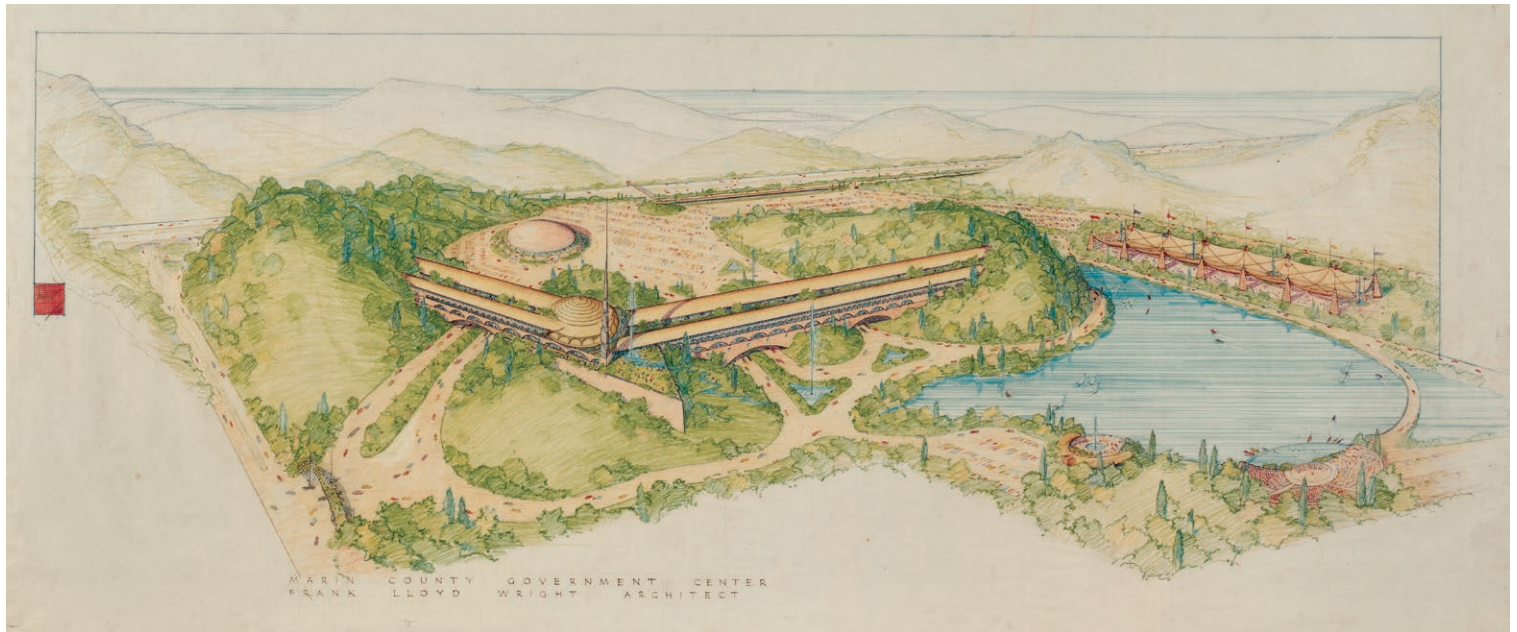


11 Frank Lloyd Wright, Marin County Government Center, elevational view of the Administration Building from the south, showing grid at a scale of 1" = 32'0", December 1957?, colored pencil on tracing paper, 21 x 34 in. (53.3 x 86.4 cm). The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York), drawing no. 5746.019 (artwork © 2019 Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, AZ. All rights reserved. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

these site sections also date from December 1957. The sections use the scale that Wright drew on the topographic plan (1 inch = 48 feet; 1 square inch = 2,304 square feet). Of the four site sections, only "Bent Section A-A" at the bottom of the sheet shows the Civic Center, along its east side, including the Administration Building and the Hall of Justice at an angle to the north at the right. The three arched underpasses are shown as they were eventually built. As marked in section B-B, Wright extended the idea of the grid vertically, marking 9'0" intervals up from a reference plane that is the site's lowest level, at the north end of the lagoon. The buildings' vertical dimensions apparently relate to the nine-foot interval, so that there is a consistency in their elevations.

An elevation view from the south, also presumably from late 1957, shows the Administration Building projected through two stories above its arched base that spans the main entrance (Fig. 11). The whole building appears like a bridge between the hills, with its southern terminus extending into the ground on the left and its northern terrace with its retaining wall equally set into the earth on the right. This drawing, at a scale of 1 inch = 32 feet, shows a variant of the planning grid adapted from the topographic map, with thirty-three one-inch (32-foot) units numbered from the property line at right. The "gateway" over the drive is seven units, or 224 feet wide. Ten-foot height intervals are marked vertically from the lagoon as a datum up to the 150-plus-foot crown of the southernmost hill. The future Hall of Justice's southernmost arch is drawn at an angle in the background on the right. As in Wright's bridges, controlling modular units, both horizontally and vertically, give scalar consistency to the whole building in its context.

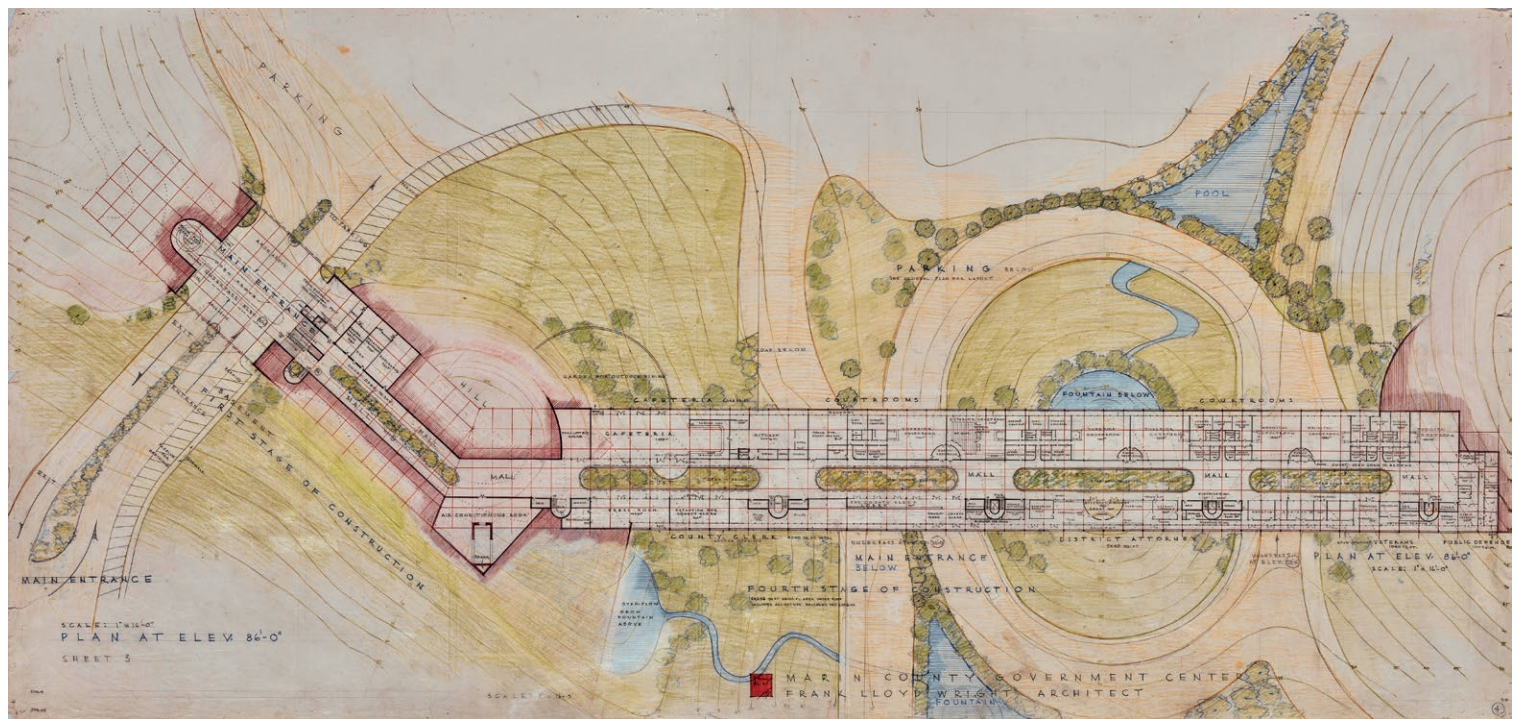
Drawn in ink and colored pencil on white tracing paper, the presentation drawings of December 24, 1957, are labeled "Marin County Government Center" rather than "Civic Center."⁸² They include an aerial perspective of the master plan from the southeast,



12 Frank Lloyd Wright, Marin County Government Center, aerial view from the southeast, December 24, 1957, pencil, ink, and colored pencil on tracing paper, 34½ × 74¾ in. (87.6 × 188.9 cm). The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York), drawing no. 5746.01 (artwork © 2019 Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, AZ. All rights reserved. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

attributed to John H. Howe and A. Louis Wiehle (Fig. 12), which shows the central linear mall as open to the sky through both the southerly Administration Building (left) and the northerly Hall of Justice (right). This view shows an imagined construction for the Administration Building and Hall of Justice as each having just two occupied office floors above their arched base. Both sections would have four stories in all as built. In the lower left a ceremonial arch functions as a gateway to the site off San Pedro Road on the site's south side. Also shown is the pavilion for the county fair north of the lagoon, a domed circular auditorium west of the civic center, and other structures. The three arched underpasses enable movement beneath the building through the overall site, so the continuity of the landscape remains. This drawing of the civic center is more than 6 feet long and 34 inches high, so the sheet's proportions accentuate the building as horizontally extended across the landscape. The supervisors had the drawings exhibited first at San Rafael High School, where Wright again spoke at a public meeting on March 25, 1958.⁸³

Appointed by the board to act as a liaison with the architect, Summers noted that Wright had said: "the character of the site is the beginning of the building which aspires to architecture."⁸⁴ Wright spoke mainly on this relationship of the building to landscape: "I believe that we've brought to you a solution of your building covenant that preserves the beauty of the site, which is extreme, the simplicity of it, because we haven't shoveled anywhere dirt except to catch the brows of the hills, the little range of hills and incorporate with them a simple, straightforward solution of the building problem that was presented to us."⁸⁵ A large and varied program had been brought into a single structure, so that "in no more simple or direct way would the ordinary group of buildings devoted to a civic center of which there would usually be 10 or 15 over the course of time, be so simplified in one stroke and so flexible as the scheme we've laid before you." The scheme mediated between program



13 Frank Lloyd Wright, Marin County Government Center, plan at the level of the main entrance to the Administration Building, elevation 86'0", showing grid at a scale of 1" = 16'0", December 24, 1957, colored pencil on tracing paper, 36 × 76 in. (91.4 × 193 cm). The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York), drawing no. 5746.003 (artwork © 2019 Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, AZ. All rights reserved. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

and landscape so that “we have saved the beauty of the site and initiated a flexible, practical way of taking advantage of that site, cooperating with it and coming out at the end with a complete synthesis of ground and building, which is really what organic architecture should mean.”⁸⁶ The drawings exhibited “a great concordance with the nature of the beautiful setting of the hills of Marin.”⁸⁷

Although the exterior forms of the arches, dome, and spired tower dominated the reception of Wright’s design, the core concept was the plan, which he described to reporters as “so flexible and simple as to be almost unbelievable.” To his audience of seven hundred or more in the high school, he said: “Simplicity is often expensive, you know; but in this case, I think, you will find it is economical.”⁸⁸ These remarks were offered in the context of intense local debate about the building’s cost, especially the total expense for all its future stages of construction, which would be difficult to estimate for any scheme. Simplicity meant not only economical constructive methods but also future flexibility in the planning of the office floors. The floor plans from December 1957 demonstrated how this concept would develop. Figure 13 shows the plan of the Administration Building at its entrance level with its arched driveway (elevation 86'0") The grid from the site map is here applied to a drawing of larger scale (1 inch = 16 feet). Wright spaced supporting columns at the unit dimension of sixteen feet north–south along the building’s axis. The central space was to be a 32-foot-wide mall with a linear well open between floors and open to the sky above, with planting along the ground level as seen on this floor plan. As in the topographic plan, curved contour lines indicating height increments of five feet correspond graphically with the building’s squared units, as if building and site were one. The idea of the building as an elongated grid bridging the hills is a variant of the concept of the repeated structural unit that Wright had proposed for the Butterfly-Wing Bridge.

Of the initial presentation drawings, several displayed the Administration Building’s first stage of construction, as the supervisors had requested. Wright’s studies for this first stage include only one enclosed floor of offices above the arched base, rather than the three that were eventually built (Fig. 14). To space outlays of funds, in 1957–58 it was proposed that a second stage add another office floor and the dome at the north end. Yet as construction

proceeded from 1959 to 1962, the Administration Building's four total floors and its dome were built in a single campaign. If the building had been partly built in a first stage, as Figure 14 shows, above the one enclosed office floor would be open roof terraces, which could be enclosed later to form a second office story above the arched base. If this first stage had been built, then the roofs would have been continuous open-air bridges more than 500 feet long

above an enclosed office floor on either side of the central mall or "court," which would be filled with plants and open to the sky. Offices would have glass walls facing the inner mall and the outer balconies, where, as shown in the elevation, crescent-shaped arches would screen the glass from the sun. The image of the mall as a bridge would have been heightened had it been left unroofed, to retain the feeling of remaining outdoors as one walked through the building.

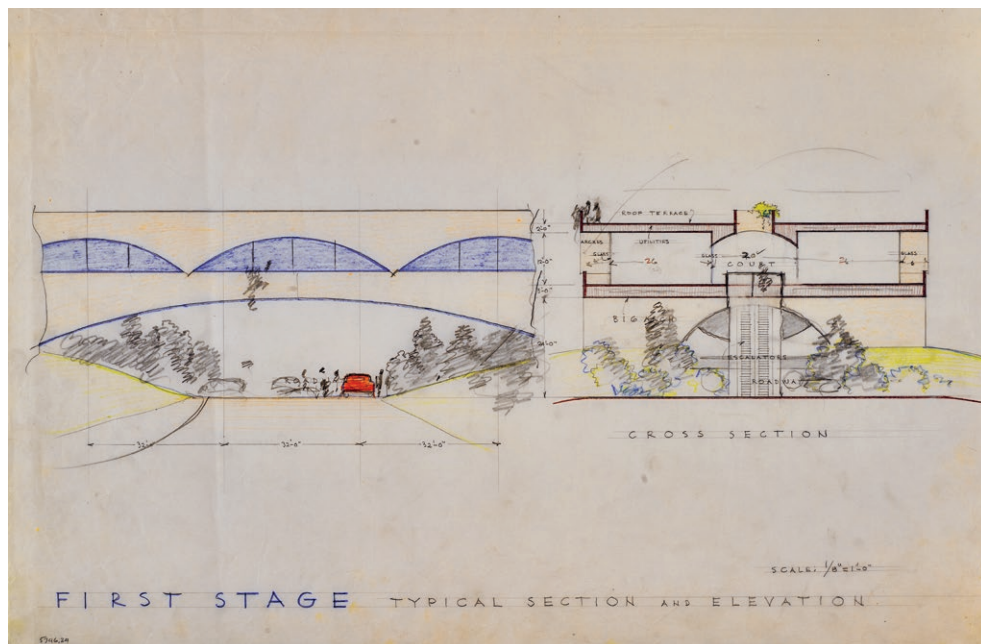
CONSTRUCTION OF THE MARIN COUNTY CIVIC CENTER, 1959–62

On April 28, 1958, after Wright's plans had been on display in various places in the county following their presentation to the supervisors in March, and after much local

controversy as to their cost, the board voted to accept them and to authorize Wright to proceed with working drawings and specifications, which went ahead under his personal supervision. He was also to prepare a more detailed precise master plan.⁸⁹ On August 29, 1958, a model about six by eight feet arrived in Marin showing the whole site encompassed by the master plan at a scale of 1 inch = 32 feet. This model (with the roof color changed from gold as designed to blue as built) is still on display on the first floor of the civic center.⁹⁰

After Wright died on April 9, 1959, the board voted to continue the project with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation as his successors. In June, Green estimated that the working drawings for the Administration Building (including architectural, structural, mechanical, and electrical plans) were about 90 percent complete.⁹¹ William Wesley Peters was the architect in charge, and Green continued as the associate architect and on-site representative. Working drawings were received in September 1959, and bids were solicited in November, with the San Francisco firm of Rothschild, Raffin and Weirick chosen as general contractors in December. Ground was broken for the Administration Building on February 15, 1960, and it was dedicated on October 13, 1962. Based on Wright's scheme of 1958, drawings for the second building, the Hall of Justice, were ready by September 1964, and final plans were accepted in November 1965. Construction began in May 1966, and the building was dedicated in December 1969.⁹²

Both the Administration Building and the Hall of Justice are anchored to solid rock on the knolls that they span. Wright had described his Butterfly-Wing Bridge "as a solid masonry rainbow-bridge. The type I propose is a bridge naturally leaping the stream from rockledge to rockledge—a noble arc in elevation and plan reflected in the water beneath."⁹³ Elsewhere he wrote: "I still believe a quiet stability to be one of the chief elements of Architecture in a bridge."⁹⁴ At Marin County,



14 Frank Lloyd Wright, Marin County Government Center, first stage, typical section and elevation, showing one enclosed story of offices below open roof terraces on either side of the light well open to the sky, December 1957?, colored pencil and pencil on tracing paper, 22 × 29 in. (55.9 × 73.7 cm). The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York), drawing no. 5746.024 (artwork © 2019 Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, AZ. All rights reserved. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

The natural knolls on the plot have been utilized for the main building, providing the most solid foundation conditions available on the property for multistory construction to minimize foundation costs and to leave more level areas of the site available for parking and incidental requirements. Of prime importance is this “natural” preservation and enhancing of the interesting topographical features of the site.⁹⁵

Foundation walls and the 109-foot underpass arches were cast in place up to the first floor (Fig. 15). As a segment of a circle, the Administration Building’s main arch, like the two within the later Hall of Justice, has a curvature like Wright’s San Francisco Bay Bridge (Fig. 5). Yet the Marin County arches are structurally not like the extended cantilevers from supports that he had envisioned meeting at mid-spans for his Butterfly-Wing Bridge. One enters the Administration Building within and beneath the arches as vaults over the roads that pass through the building’s site (Fig. 16). Dual arches rise to either side of the gated but otherwise open entrance, and the central multistory mall above, open to the outdoors. The arches frame views of landscape to either side, so that the architecture presents the site (Fig. 17).

The projected third stage of construction included the three office floors above the arched base, as in the civic center as built, but still with an open central mall, rather than the skylit mall eventually built (Fig. 18). Within the central mall, the bridge metaphor obtains because one sees no vertical columns, only the continuous horizontal lines of the concrete railings. These mark the inner edges of the floors that are cantilevered inward from structural columns set behind the glass walls of the offices to either side, as seen in the cross section (Fig. 19). The central well grows wider up through the building to admit maximal light and air to floors below the topmost level. Hence, the walkways on either side grow narrower toward the top. The space creates the architectural illusion of the floors as bridges that span a long distance between the visible ends of the wells. But the image of openness is created by the inward cantilevering of the walkways. The railings look like long concrete beams between end supports, so that when one moves along the walkways, one feels as if one is crossing a long-spanning bridge.

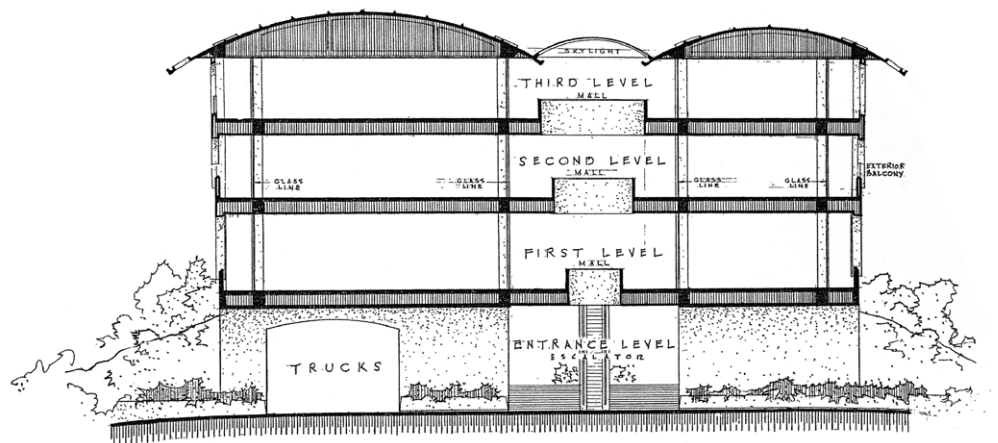
The impression of moving along the free span of a bridge inside the civic center derives from an overall system of construction that one does not easily see, but it is based on the bridgelike spanning arches that uphold the building. We do not think of buildings as bridges, but the image of the central multilevel mall as a long-spanning bridge would have been heightened had it been left unroofed, so that one would have the experience of remaining outdoors while walking through the building. The Administration Building was at first designed so that its “central public corridors, open to the sky, provide light, ventilation, and efficient circulation and access to all departments.”⁹⁶ As a symbol of democratic government, the building was open to the environment. There was no door, just a light, airy gate that stands open as a sign of welcome in the entry arch (Fig. 16).⁹⁷ This openness was tolerable, but the lack of skylights over the malls would necessitate rethinking of the floors below so they would resist water penetration and provide interior drainage. Thus, Green reported that after Wright’s death, it was deemed necessary to cover the 384-foot-long mall with a skylight. Yet air still circulates through the central mall between its floors, and, as built, the skylights are open at intervals above concrete bridges to allow air out but block rain from coming in (Fig. 18). As built, the Civic Center’s offices are mechanically heated and air-conditioned, but there is still no direct heating or cooling of the central mall.⁹⁸

The inventiveness, effectiveness, and difficulties of the central mall invite the question of sources for its form, and to what extent Wright was working from earlier models.⁹⁹ The Civic Center’s mall recalls the administration wing in the Rathaus (Town Hall) for Aarhus in

15 Frank Lloyd Wright, Marin County Civic Center, Administration Building, construction of poured-in-place concrete underpass arch supporting steel pipe columns (not yet encased in concrete fireproofing) extending up three stories to the roof, ca. 1960. Marin County Free Library, San Rafael, CA, Anne T. Kent California Room, csrl-482 (photograph by John T. Trimble, provided by the Marin County Free Library, Anne T. Kent California Room, Marin County Civic Center)

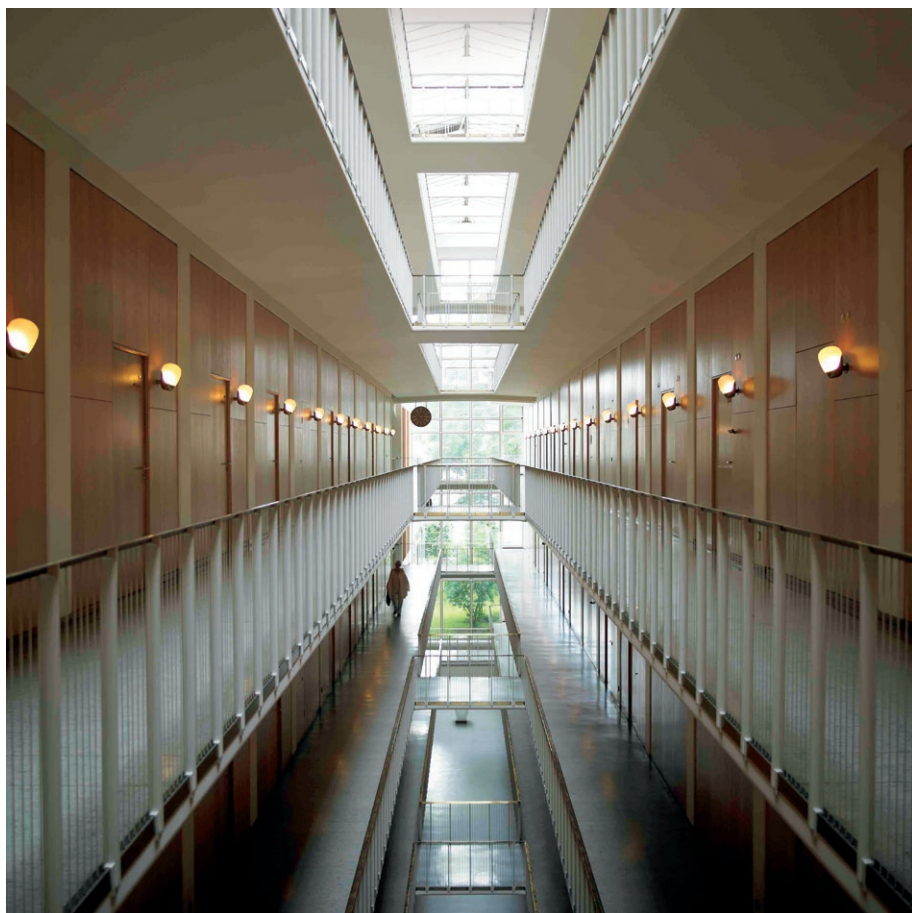
16 Frank Lloyd Wright, Marin County Civic Center, Administration Building, entrance arches facing the gateway below a multilevel skylit mall, open to the outside, 2014 (photograph by the author)

17 Frank Lloyd Wright, Marin County Civic Center, Administration Building, entrance arch, looking east, 2014 (photograph by the author)



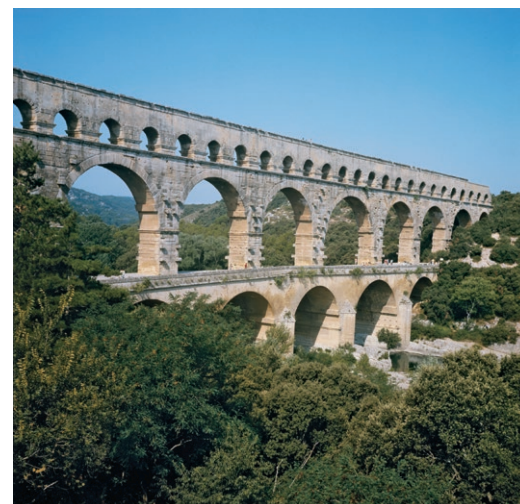
18 Frank Lloyd Wright, Marin County Civic Center, Administration Building, central mall that grows wider toward the top, looking south, showing ventilation openings in the skylight above concrete bridges (photograph by Andrew Pielage, provided by the Marin County Civic Center)

19 Frank Lloyd Wright, Marin County Civic Center, cross section through the Administration Building, showing the central mall with the light well widening toward the top, cantilevered balcony floors narrowing toward the top, and outer crescent screens widening toward the top, from *Frank Lloyd Wright: Marin County Civic Center*, San Rafael, CA: Marin County Board of Supervisors, 1965 (Drawings © 2019 Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, AZ. All rights reserved. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])



20 Arne Jacobsen and Erik Møller, Rathaus, Aarhus, Denmark, 1937–41, the central light well in the Administrative Block (photograph by Helen Høyer Mikkelsen, arkitekturfotografi)

21 Pont du Gard, Nîmes, France, mid-1st century CE (photograph provided by SEF/Art Resource, NY)



Denmark, designed by Arne Jacobsen and Erik Møller for a competition of 1937, and inaugurated on June 2, 1941, after the German occupation.¹⁰⁰ Straight ahead on axis with the main entrance is a five-story office block that houses all the administrative offices. These are accessible from indoor galleries along a glass-roofed inner court with a linear central light well, bridged at intervals through its length on each floor (Fig. 20). The similarity to the structure in Marin County raises the question of whether or not Wright knew of Jacobsen and Møller's building and, if so, how. Wright is not known to have corresponded with Jacobsen or to have referred in speech or writings to his work. He is not known to have visited Denmark, and none of the Taliesin apprentices in his lifetime were from Scandinavian countries.¹⁰¹ The Aarhus Town Hall was minimally published before Wright died, and those articles that did appear lacked interior views of the administration block's light well, although one included sections as well as plans.¹⁰² Two major modernist architects created governmental buildings in Aarhus and at Marin about two decades apart, and yet their works shared a core spatial concept.

MARIN CIVIC CENTER, THE PONT DU GARD AT NÎMES, AND SULLIVAN'S TRANSPORTATION BUILDING

On first seeing Wright's drawings in March 1958, contemporaries described his approach: "Instead of slicing away the hills with a bulldozer, the distinguished architect envisioned buildings bridging the knolls with graceful arches reminiscent of old Roman aqueducts."¹⁰³ The canonical example is the Pont du Gard at Nîmes, recently dated to the mid-first century CE (Fig. 21). Perhaps no earlier structures more closely approximated the overall form of Wright's building, but his civic center is also distinctly modern. Its arches are not semicircular stone arches like those in the ancient Pont du Gard but, rather, are segmental arcs adapted from concrete bridge construction. Limestone



22 Frank Lloyd Wright, Marin County Civic Center, Administration Building, in construction, ca. 1960, viewed from the west with the library rotunda at left, showing the steel framework for plaster crescent arcs in front of columns on the second and third floors above the concrete arched base. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York), photograph no. 5746.0022 (photograph provided by The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

arches on the first and second tiers at Nîmes vary slightly in their span, but their average dimension of 24.52 meters (76 feet 3 inches) was the largest known to have been attempted by Roman engineers. Wright's low crescent-shaped arches at Marin each span 109 feet, a dimension that approached the announced span of his Butterfly-Wing Bridge (about 130 feet between piers). The Civic Center does evoke the historical memory of the aqueduct as an ancient type. Yet Wright presented the Marin scheme as "undeniably, the best expression of modern architecture available." To him the design was not an exercise in historicism, but instead, "what we call modern architecture, because architecture must be modern now. We can't go on by way of taste, littering the country with all sorts of instances of eclecticism."¹⁰⁴ Writing of the Marin Center decades later, one Italian critic observed: "Some people have compared it to a Roman aqueduct; but, with these three tiers of segmental arches and the top row of arches ending in large oculi, only the lower row is the load-bearing part of the structure, while the others are simply cut away from the thin facing set in front of the openings. Nothing, therefore, could differ more substantially from a Roman aqueduct."¹⁰⁵

Marin's elevation above the base arches features arcs that echo them, but these shapes on the second and third floors are not structural arches. Rather, they are made of a light steel frame covered with metal lath and cement plaster.¹⁰⁶ The steel frame for each level is hung from the balcony parapets on the level above, so the arched plaster surfaces are literally pendant (Fig. 22). The outwardly cantilevered beams behind the crescents hold their steel framework. Arches on the second floor (48 feet wide) are less than half the span of the true concrete arches below. Those on the third floor (16 feet wide) match the plan's unit dimension as built. On the top fourth floor, the arch motif becomes circular, with each unit eight feet wide, beneath the overhanging semicircular precast concrete arches of the cornice, each more

than five feet wide (Fig. 23). Crescent screens for balconies project outward slightly more at the second floor and again at the third floor, as seen in section (Fig. 19). This helps to shed rainwater on each floor clear of those below. Vertical joints between sections of plaster also signal that the crescents are nonstructural.



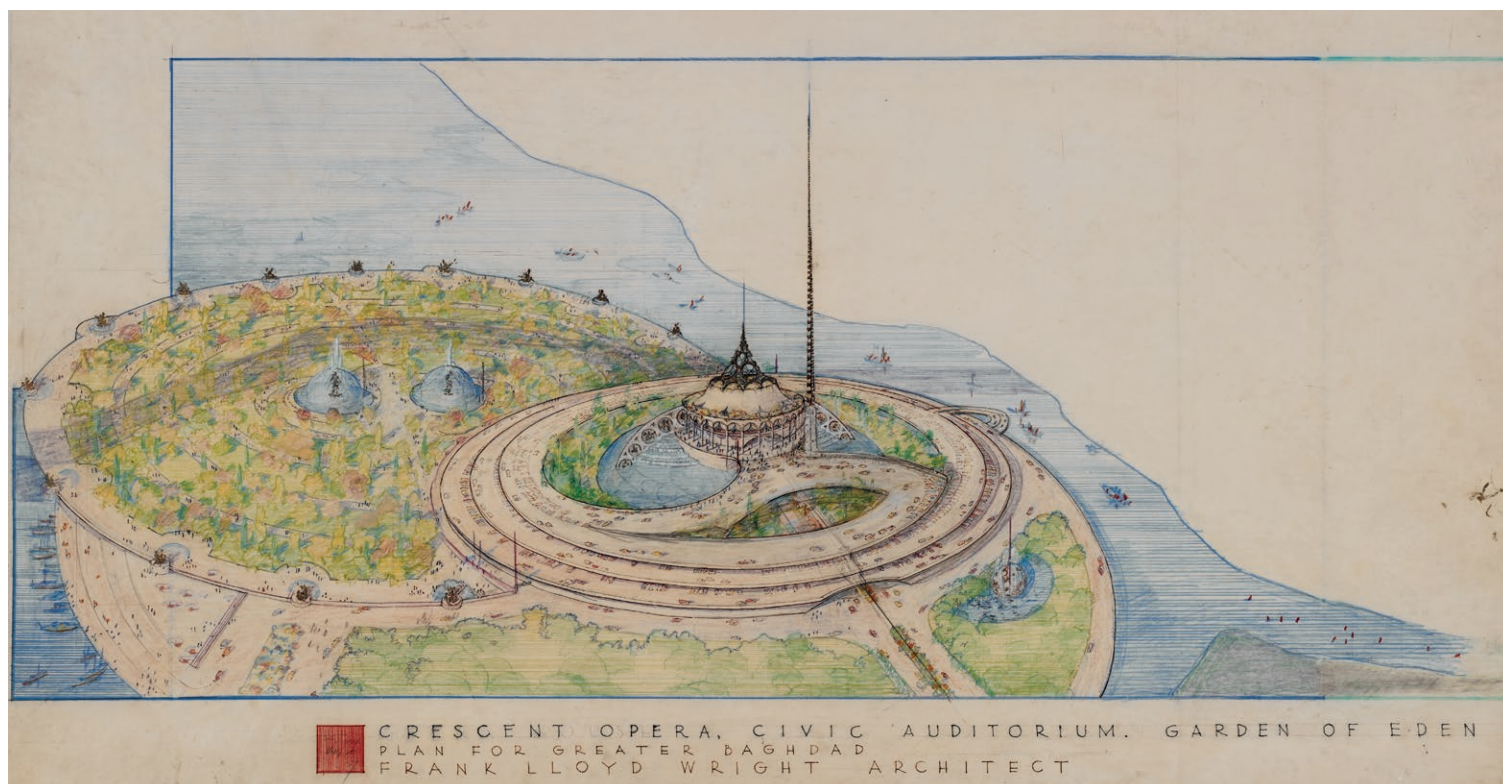
23 Frank Lloyd Wright, Marin County Civic Center, Administration Building, west side showing concrete base arches, second-floor 48-foot crescents, third-floor 16-foot crescents, and fourth-floor 8-foot circles, with vertical control joints between plaster panels on the floors above the base arches, 2014 (photograph by the author)

24 Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan, Transportation Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1891-93. The Art Institute of Chicago, Sullivaniana Collection, Ryerson and Burnham Archives (photograph provided by the Art Institute of Chicago, Sullivaniana Collection, Ryerson and Burnham Archives, Digital File #193101.080612-04)

The nonstructural nature of the crescents on the upper floors was not obvious in the presentation drawings of March 1958, where these arches echo the form of the true arches in the base. One account noted that “the main building would feature a full-length succession of arch-like ‘pendant crescents’ giving it the appearance of an ancient Roman aqueduct.”¹⁰⁷ Wright later recalled: “The thing looked, to most people, I think, like a Roman aqueduct, but I had to tell them that they were not arches, they were pendant crescents.”¹⁰⁸ When he presented the design in 1958, “he seemed particularly struck by his own idea of ‘pendant crescents’—scalloped arches dropping like curtain folds across the front of the structure to shield the largely glass façade from the sun.”¹⁰⁹ The “curtain-like ‘pendant crescents’ would serve to protect the glassed-in offices from the glare of direct sunlight. They would be suspended in each case by the steel structure of the floor above. Through these non-self-supporting crescents, the county offices, almost without exception, would have vistas of the bay or the rolling hills.”¹¹⁰ Thus, part of the crescents’ rationale was their framing views of landscape, like the base arches.

Although not a precise precedent, the tiers of arched forms along the flanks of the Marin County Civic Center recall Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan’s Transportation Building at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago of 1893, on which Wright had worked (Fig. 24).¹¹¹ This building housed a full range of exhibits devoted to transportation, along the lagoon that

was the center of the exposition’s northern expanse. The main frontal section was a giant train shed, 960 feet wide and 256 feet deep, fronting a 900-by-425-foot rear annex. Perhaps more than any other building in Wright’s past, its length approximated the 700-foot-long Administration Building (including its main terrace) that links to the 880-foot-long Hall of Justice for Marin County. The Transportation Building’s frontal mass was a long red wall centered on a projecting Golden Door, 100 feet wide and 70 feet high, whose arched surfaces were overlaid with Sullivan’s characteristic style of ornament wrought in plaster. Along the wall on either side stretched thirteen arched bays, each repeating a modular width of 32 feet on centers. The upper and lower window panels within these arches were recessed, accentuating the arches’ depth. Above, in a setback clerestory, the rhythm of arched windows doubled, with each opening 16 feet wide. More than sixty years later, Wright would use a similar technique of subdividing a 32-foot modular dimension to create the successive tiers of arches on Marin County’s elevations. Like Sullivan’s arched fronts, Wright’s were plaster on a metal framework. In addition to red, the Transportation Building’s architecture of plaster was elaborately layered and colored in brilliant blue, green, and, especially, gold. Wright had initially



25 Frank Lloyd Wright, Plan for Greater Baghdad, Crescent Opera House or Civic Auditorium, signed "FLLW," June 20, 1957. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York), drawing no. 5733.007 (artwork © 2019 Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, AZ. All rights reserved. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

preferred this latter color for the Marin buildings' roofs, and it was used for the anodized aluminum ornament along the roofline's fascia.¹¹²

Sullivan designed the Transportation Building himself between mid-January and early February 1891, and Wright later recalled that "the Transportation Building at the Columbian Fair had been the last important work in which I served as 'apprentice.'" ¹¹³ Wright left Sullivan in 1893, "just after the Transportation Building brought him fame."¹¹⁴ He recalled: "How eventually successful that beautiful intrusion into a pseudo-classic collection of picture building was, shows how little cause [Sullivan] had for anxiety." It "too was a picture building. But a picture building with rhyme and reason, above all with individuality, not a mere pose of the picturesque. It was itself a remarkable circumstance and entertainment as scene painting. That is all it was intended to be. It was a thing created for exterior alone."¹¹⁵ Earlier Wright wrote: "It was no masterful solution of a practical problem. It was a holiday circumstance and superb entertainment, which is what it was intended to be."¹¹⁶ The similarity between the Transportation Building and the Civic Center corresponds to Wright's emphasis on the Marin County site as a civic, festive place, with its lagoon, amphitheater, auditorium, and fairgrounds complementing the government buildings. At first the project was also to include, around the lagoon, a senior citizens' building, a children's zoo, a restaurant, and, in the lagoon, a children's island, analogous on a small scale to the wooded island in the lagoon at the Columbian Exposition. This vision of a celebratory public realm for Marin County echoes the aims of the City Beautiful movement that had its origins in the Columbian Exposition.¹¹⁷

THE MARIN COUNTY CIVIC CENTER, WRIGHT'S PROJECT FOR BAGHDAD, AND ANNUNCIATION CHURCH

Sources condensed in Wright's solution for Marin County included those not only from his distant past but also from his concurrent work. In July 1957 he compared his task at Marin to his designs for Iraq, to which he had traveled in May.¹¹⁸ The drawings for Baghdad are dated June 20, 1957, so it was fresh in his mind (Fig. 25). This expansive scheme, no part of which

was realized in Iraq, focused on an island in the Tigris River south of central Baghdad, where Wright proposed an Opera House and other cultural buildings, including a campus for the University of Baghdad on a circular platform in a bend in the river. Wright sought to counter the international tendency toward steel-and-glass structures. As he said of Iraq to the citizens of Marin County: “They’ve got a lot of Western architects in who are building them skyscrapers already all over the place, and they’re going to meet the destruction that is waiting, not waiting but barging in on all our Western cities.” Instead, Wright invoked the “circular city built by Haroun-as Rashid [r. 786–809 CE]. . . . I am trying to bring to Iraq the glory and beauty of that old Sumerian civilization.”¹¹⁹ The Baghdad project was about cultural identity specific to a regional place. In Marin County, as at the Wisconsin River or San Francisco Bay, that identity was rooted less in history than in landscape. As Wright said: “The only beauty that Iraq has is the Tigris River and the Euphrates, and that’s very muddy, and the whole place is flat as a pancake. If they could only see Marin County, I think they’d all come over here from Iraq and settle.”¹²⁰

While the arch brought to mind comparisons with ancient Rome, the crescent, representing the waxing moon, was a key Islamic symbol to which Wright had referred in his design for an Opera House at Baghdad. This building also was to serve as a civic auditorium for different kinds of events. Above the Opera House’s main circular hall, he proposed an enormous crescent-shaped structure that extended to either side into the surrounding pool (Fig. 25). This he labeled on the plans as a “crescent rainbow.” The crescent arch served inside the building as a structural span supporting its roof, but as it continued through to the exterior, it had a representational function. For Iraqis the crescent specifically recalled the Fertile Crescent. Then Prime Minister Nuri al-Said had proposed a future for regional Arab independence and unity known as the Fertile Crescent Plan.¹²¹ Wright noted in his drawings that the “crescent rainbow” would have roundels in “cast beaten metal” openwork containing “sculptured scenes” taken from *The Thousand and One Nights*, his source of fantasy about Baghdad in its early Islamic period.¹²² The spirelike tower to one side of the auditorium Wright labeled the “Sword of Mahommet.” This recalled the ruling Hashimite dynasty’s claim to be descendants of one of the daughters of the Prophet. As a device for powerful television transmission, the tower signified the dynasty’s effort to counter propaganda from Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser’s Radio Cairo. It signaled that Iraq was the first Middle Eastern country to have broadcast television.¹²³

While these associations would not have been meaningful in Marin County, for Wright the Marin and Baghdad projects were both to be symbols of their respective civilizations. In July 1957 he said the Civic Center was a new “cornerstone of the culture of the Nation,” which will “outlive the civilization it was built in.” In the same vein, he was at that time “doing a cultural center for the place where civilization was invented, that is, Iraq.”¹²⁴ Though very different, the projects in both Marin County and Baghdad were Wright’s protests against contemporaneous steel-and-glass modernist architecture. At Marin’s Administration Building, the dome (under which was the county library and, below that, rooms for the board of supervisors) and adjacent tower recall a mosque and its minaret, as if Wright were adapting older sacred forms to enshrine the democratic ideal. At Marin, Wright similarly envisioned a 300-foot-high communications and observation tower. He said it would signify the “unity between the office life and the daily life of the citizens . . . when related to a dome or a long line horizontally, there is something very satisfactory about it.”¹²⁵ As built, the tower of gold-anodized aluminum plates on a steel frame rises 172 feet and encases a smokestack for the boilers in the basement below. It was not equipped for broadcasting but was crowned by a 45-foot-high spire.¹²⁶ The vertical élan of the spired tower

countering the dome and the center's horizontal expanse is critical to the overall effect. The long retaining wall north of the Administration Building's dome looked like "the prow of a ship . . . the high reaching pylon its mast."¹²⁷ As Wright predicted, over decades, the site's trees matured and partly obscured the building's mass, including the dome. As it would "melt into the terrain," the tower ensured "the building would not be lost to sight completely."¹²⁸

One other important parallel between the original and built design for the Marin County Civic Center and the unbuilt project for an Opera House in Baghdad is how the automobile is accommodated. The site plan for Baghdad locates the Opera House on what Wright called the "Isle of Edena" in the Tigris River between the Botanical Garden on the west bank, with its twin "water domes" behind the Opera House (Fig. 25), and the University Campus on the bend in the river to the east (not visible in Fig. 25). Linking these three sites are a "low bridge" and causeway, including a "Great Bridge" between the island and the University Campus, which seems a variant on Wright's design for the high span of the San Francisco Bay Bridge. At both Baghdad and Marin, Wright composed site plans that combined angled linear elements (the causeways in Baghdad and the bridgelike buildings at Marin) with domed circular forms (the opera house at Baghdad and the Administration Building and Auditorium at Marin). In 1957 King Faisal II and his representatives had inaugurated numerous projects, including major streets to cut through the central quarters of historic Baghdad. There, the management of automobiles in terms of new roads and public education was then a major urban problem, one that Wright addressed in his design. In December 1958 he said to his apprentices, "you should start with the parking, not do the building and then try to find the parking—but get the parking and then do the building. This was true of everything I did for Baghdad."¹²⁹ For the Opera House, the low bridge would cross the river and lead into the lowest level of a three-tiered circular drive as a giant ziggurat-like stepped base for the building, with its main pedestrian and vehicular entrance at its front. Below its roadway levels, the circular ziggurat was a vast multilevel garage to provide parking for 1,920 cars, and an arched tunnel, like the arches in the Marin County Civic Center's base, ran beneath the lowest level of the circular drive on axis with the entrance to the Opera House (Fig. 25). Thus, both the Marin and Baghdad projects were part of Wright's agenda in his late work to wholly integrate the automobile into the siting and form of architecture.

Among Wright's contemporaneous realized works, the closest stylistic model for the central dome of the Marin County Civic Center was his Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, designed from the summer of 1956 and dedicated in 1961. The Milwaukee Hellenic Community, which commissioned the project of Wright in January 1956, had been drawn to him not only because of his fame but also because of his sympathetic knowledge of Byzantine architecture and the fact that his wife Olgivanna had been raised in the Serbian Orthodox Church.¹³⁰ The building committee chairman told Wright that "our traditions are exemplified in the Church of St. Sophia in Constantinople and St. Mark's in Venice, which have a cruciform plan, barreled vaults and domes characterizing the Byzantine style of architecture."¹³¹ What Wright created for this church was a circular sanctuary with a balcony ringed by low-arched clerestory windows, all cast in concrete, as was the shallow dome above. As at Marin County, the church's overhangs all around have semicircular openings that decrease the eaves' weight and allow more light to reach the windows. Presenting the design in December 1956, Wright described it as a "little St. Sophia" that would "bring the romance of the old down to the present," with the circle signifying "the eternity of God."¹³² The shallow dome has a span of 94 feet, yet a rise of only 11 feet. It is a huge, reinforced concrete shell poured in a single day to ensure structural cohesion. Its interior is lit by a ring of

daylight around its base, analogous to the ring of forty arched windows around the base of Hagia Sophia's dome.

Following the blue-and-gold color scheme typical of Orthodox churches, Wright and, after he died in April 1959, his successors, including his wife Olgivanna, favored a Persian blue tile for the roof. Its color was meant to blend with the sky.¹³³ As she recalled, "I personally studied the tile in daylight, on cloudy days, in all kinds of weather to make sure that it would reflect the sky, that it would blend with the sky as closely as possible. It never changed its color. It always remained implacably blue."¹³⁴ This was the material that originally clad the dome's exterior. Eventually, however, the tile was removed, the dome's exterior was insulated (which it had not been originally), and the roof was covered with a granular synthetic plastic resin called Neolon. This was done in 1975, although the Neolon's color was less bright, and its color faded over time.¹³⁵ For the roofs of his Marin County Civic Center, as recorded in his model, Wright originally wanted a gold color to match the surrounding hills. As building went forward after he died, it was determined that, to protect the shell from moisture penetration due to thermal expansion, a rubberized paint was needed. No paint could be found that retained a gold color. Such paints would fade to a dull brown. Olgivanna Lloyd Wright decided to use the blue of Annunciation's dome, which was Wright's only other concrete shell roof, at Marin County, including Civic Center's shallow circular dome, similar in size to Annunciation's (Fig. 26).¹³⁶

Under the dome of the Marin County Civic Center, as the northern terminus of the Administration Building, the main space is the County Library on the fourth floor. On the floor below is the suite of rooms for the board of supervisors, ringed with arched windows that open out on a circular terrace from which panoramic views extend to the landscape. A library and board meeting rooms are not religious spaces, but the dome and its spired tower confer associations of sacrality on the county's democratic government. Given Wright's emphasis on "an architecture of democracy" and the county's renewed commitment to effective governance that motivated the civic center project, the adaptation of traditional religious motifs—the dome and the spired tower—was meaningful. Wright's building signified the triumph of its supporters' reformist agenda for a stronger central county government. Thus, the transference of symbols from traditions of religious architecture to the civic center conveyed a governmental ideal that was meant to transcend the county's political past. Such adaptation of symbols may seem incongruous, yet borrowing the form of the dome from religious monuments had been a convention of American governmental architecture going back to the US Capitol.

Wright's design for Marin County was partly linked to different traditions of historic architecture, with references to Roman, Islamic, and Byzantine forms. Yet its scheme of construction was wholly modern and related to his early unbuilt projects for bridges. On another level, however, this building, like his other works of the 1950s, appeared to his contemporaries as futuristic. Part of Marin County's futurism was programmatic, in that Wright's first contractual task was "to review again the space requirements for all of our county departments, to think about them as to their needs today and to think about them as to their needs way up to 1990."¹³⁷ When Wright presented his drawings in March 1958, uppermost in mind was the project's total cost and the staging of the construction. Perhaps to deflect criticism, Summers told fellow citizens: "I think it is important for us all to stop and realize that these are plans not only for the present, but for the future. It is not the intent, as I understand it, of the County to try to build this whole thing overnight, but to have an overall plan so that over the years, the next 20, 30, 40 years, we will go systematically ahead in building our requirements."¹³⁸



26 Frank Lloyd Wright, Marin County Civic Center, Administration Building, aerial view from the west with the concrete dome and roofs covered in Eothene and the spired tower clad in anodized aluminum (photograph © Herb/Ling/aerialarchives.com, file name: aerial-photo-Marin-Civic-Center-AHLB3723.jpg)

This focus on future spatial planning may have inspired what contemporaries saw as the futuristic quality of Wright's architecture. A local editor reacted to its presentation as a case of "Futurism from Antiquity," explaining that "Frank Lloyd Wright, an architect whose designs are keyed from the future, appeared to have accomplished the paradox of delving into antiquity for a strikingly futuristic design." The aerial perspective of the whole project (Fig. 12) "shows how the creek-straddling structure would suggest an ancient Roman aqueduct while at the same time presenting a look so futuristic it might have come out of a piece of 'Life on Mars' fiction."¹³⁹ Wright's late works, such as the Guggenheim Museum, had a futuristic aura associated with science fiction.¹⁴⁰ But there has been little study of substantive links between Wright's works and the rich tradition of science fiction as both literature and illustration that developed especially between the world wars and through what at the time was called "the atomic age" of the early postwar decades.¹⁴¹ He did not speak of science fiction, yet its themes recur in his late drawings for Broadacre City, which include shallow-arched, wide-spanning concrete bridges beneath level roadways. Meant to illustrate his last book, *The Living City* (1958), these depict a utopia of futuristic automobiles and individual helicopters or aerotors, which he had discussed in relation to the original account of Broadacre City in 1935.¹⁴² Wright reportedly enthused over his first flight in a helicopter on April 27, 1957, which took him from the Claremont Hotel to San Francisco's airport, the day after he had first met with the Marin County Board of Supervisors.¹⁴³

AN ARTIST'S LATE WORK: STYLE AND IDEOLOGY

Conceived near the end of Wright's seventy-plus years of intense creativity in architecture, the Marin County Civic Center was partly a statement of how he saw his work in relation to architecture's history. For Wright that history encompassed multiple earlier periods. But it also included the modernist tradition in which bridges designed in steel-reinforced concrete had figured prominently in defining the style's potential, in both Europe and the United States. His Marin County buildings resonate with both those kinds of pasts, some remote in time and culture, and others that had flowered in his life's long span. These recent works were about the poetic potential of new materials, which Wright had been exploring in built and unbuilt designs for nearly the whole of his career. From this perspective, Marin's historical resonance is partly with Wright's own oeuvre. As one Italian critic wrote on the Civic Center's twenty-fifth anniversary in 1987, when postmodernism was a leading direction, Marin "proves strikingly original and this clearly stems from the rather rare aspect that the designer is far from being a passive unearther of past forms, but more of an artist whose long-lasting genius allowed him to successfully extend his themes gradually lending fresh lifeblood to his approach without ever turning his back on his initial style."¹⁴⁴ At the same time, this late work was about the larger question of how to house and signify local government in a place and time when its functions, especially in relation to landscape and development, were central to the concerns of Marin County as a client. Wright's architecture brought lifelong preoccupations about built form to the solution of a problem that was poignant for his building's users and audiences in their new historical situation.

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NOTES

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1. Evelyn Morris Radford, *The Bridge and the Building*, rev. ed. (New York: Carlton Press, 1974); Richard S. Cave, "The Marin County Civic Center," *Pacific Historian* 19 (1975): 242–52; George Rand, "A Civic Center and Its Civitas," *AIA Journal* 69, no. 4 (April 1980): 46–57; Aaron G. Green and Donald P. DeNevi, *An Architecture for Democracy: The Marin County Civic Center; A Narrative by the Associated Architect* (San Francisco: Grendon, 1990); Neil Levine, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 404–17; and Paul V. Turner, *Frank Lloyd Wright and San Francisco* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 165–90.

2. Karen Painter, "On Creativity and Lateness," in *Late Thoughts: Reflections on Artists and Composers at Work*, ed. Painter and Thomas Crow (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006), 5. See Theodor W. Adorno, "On the Social Situation of Music" (1932), in Adorno, *Essays on*

Music, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 391–436.

3. Major late works include the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City (designed from 1943; built 1956–59), derived partly from Wright's Automobile Objective for Sugarloaf Mountain, Maryland (1924–25); Beth Sholom Synagogue, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania (designed and built 1954–59), from his Steel Cathedral project of 1927; the H. C. Price Company Tower in Bartlesville, Oklahoma (1952–56), from his towers for Saint Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie (1928–30); and his Kalita Humphreys Theater for the Dallas Theater Center (1955–59), from his project for a New Theatre, Woodstock, New York (1931–32), and Hartford, Connecticut (1948–49).
4. Frederick J. Osborn, preface (1946) to Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (1902; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1965), 20.
5. Vincent J. Scully Jr., introduction to *The Nature of Frank Lloyd Wright*, ed. Carol R. Bolon, Robert S. Nelson, and Linda Seidel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), xiv.
6. *Ibid.*, xviii.
7. Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), xvii, wrote that critical history requires art historians "to see how the products of art sustain purposes and interests which are both *irreducible* to the conditions of their emergence as well as *inextricable* from them."

8. Frank Lloyd Wright, "Broadacre City: A New Community Plan," *Architectural Record* 77, no. 4 (April 1935): 245. See Anthony Alofsin, "Broadacre City: Visions and Revisions," *Center* (University of Texas at Austin) 5 (1989): 5–43; and Neil Levine, chap. 6 in *The Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 157–82.
9. Wright, "Broadacre City: A New Community Plan," 247.
10. *Ibid.*, 246.
11. *Ibid.* See Richard Cleary, "Lessons in Tenuity: Frank Lloyd Wright's Bridges," in *Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Construction History, Queen's College, Cambridge University, March 19–April 2, 2006*, ed. Malcolm Dunkeld et al., 4 vols. (Ascot, UK: Construction History Society, 2006), 1:741–58. In 1915 Wright designed a concrete arched bridge at Ravine Bluffs, near Glencoe, Illinois (Frank Lloyd Wright Archives, Avery Library, Columbia University [hereafter FLWA], project no. 1505). See William A. Storrer, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright: A Complete Catalogue*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 184. In 1947 he designed two unbuilt schemes for bridges for Pittsburgh Point Civic Center (FLWA, project nos. 4821, 4836). See Levine, chap. 9 in *Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 261–333.
12. Eugene Masselink to James Law, chairman, Highway Commission, State of Wisconsin, July 23, 1945, fiche id. no. L090A06, FLWA. Masselink assisted Wright with his correspondence.
13. James R. Law to Frank Lloyd Wright, June 10, 1946, fiche id. no. W166Bo8, FLWA.
14. Wright's plan was discussed in "Wright Foundation Proposes Changes in Highway Plans," *Spring Green (WI) Weekly Home News*, October 2, 1947, 1, and was published in "Frank Lloyd Wright to Address People of Spring Green," *ibid.*, October 9, 1947, 1. See also "'Let's Have More Public Meetings,' Architect Urges Record-Breaking Crowd in First Address," *ibid.*, October 16, 1947, 1. On Wright's Butterfly-Wing Bridge, see *Architectural Forum* 88, no. 1 (January 1948): 88; and Cleary, "Lessons in Tenuity."
15. "Bridges for Wisconsin River Designed by World-Famed Frank Lloyd Wright to Be Discussed by Him Tuesday," *Madison Capital Times*, October 12, 1947, 10.
16. "Wright Foundation Proposes Changes in Highway Plans," 1. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, *Treasures of Taliesin: Twenty-Six Unbuilt Designs* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), pls. 45a, 45b.
17. Wright, in *Architectural Forum* 88, no. 1 (January 1948): 88, quoted in Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, ed., *Frank Lloyd Wright Drawings: Masterworks from the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), 256. See also Elizabeth B. Mock, *The Architecture of Bridges* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1949), 120–21.
18. Wright to Elizabeth B. Mock, October 14, 1949, fiche id. no. M194Do3, FLWA. On his unit system, see Joseph M. Siry, *Unity Temple: Frank Lloyd Wright and Architecture for Liberal Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 120–21.
19. Mock, *Architecture of Bridges*, 120.
20. *Ibid.*, 121.
21. Longitudinally cantilevered steel bridges included the Firth of Forth Bridge, Scotland, 1883–89, John Flower and Benjamin Baker, engineers; and Viaur Viaduct, France, the first large steel bridge built in France, completed in 1902 by the Société de Construction des Batignolles, under the direction of Paul-Joseph Bodin. Mock, *Architecture of Bridges*, 77, 78.
22. "Wright Foundation Proposes Changes in Highway Plans," 1.
23. Frank Lloyd Wright to James R. Law, September 6, 1951, fiche id. no. B152Co2, FLWA, reprinted in "Wright Asks US Build Truck Routes along Rail Lines as Safety Measure," *Madison Capital Times*, September 10, 1951, 1–2.
24. Pfeiffer, *Treasures of Taliesin*, pl. 64-b; Brendan Gill, *Many Masks: A Life of Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1987), 477–78; and Brigitte Raschke, *Frank Lloyd Wright: The Mile-High Illinois; Utopie oder Architekturrkritik?* (Munich: Scaneg, 1996), 13–14. See Leonard K. Eaton, *Hardy Cross: American Engineer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).
25. Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition*, 5th ed., rev. and enl. (1941; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); George C. Collins, "The Discovery of Maillart as Artist," in *The Maillart Papers from the Second National Conference on Civil Engineering: History, Heritage and the Humanities*, ed. David P. Billington, Robert Mark, and John F. Abel (Princeton: Dept. of Civil and Geological Engineering, Princeton University, 1973), 35–60; and David P. Billington, *Robert Maillart: Builder, Designer, and Artist* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 155–58, 224–25.
26. Mock, *Architecture of Bridges*, 120–23.
27. Frank Lloyd Wright, "A Birthday Message," *Madison Capital Times*, June 10, 1950.
28. Wright noted his time in Zurich in an undated handwritten reply to Eduardo Torroja to Wright, November 25, 1950, fiche id. no. To48Do8, FLWA.
29. Wright, quoted in Robert Twombly, *Frank Lloyd Wright: His Life and His Architecture* (New York: John Wiley, 1979), 378. Objecting that a steel bridge would obstruct views of the landscape around the Wisconsin Dells for travelers over the bridge, and likely alluding to Maillart, Wright wrote: "No professional bridge-engineer I ever heard of this side of Switzerland has built such a bridge as is needed at the Dells if their complete beauty is to be revealed to the traveler." Wright to Herman Breitenbach, November 9, 1946, fiche id. no. B108Do4, FLWA. See "Wright Offers to Design Dells Bridge," *Spring Green (WI) Weekly Home News*, August 2, 1951, 1. On this effort, see n. 33 below.
30. Billington, *Robert Maillart*, 14.
31. Mock, *Architecture of Bridges*, 108–9; Max Bill, *Robert Maillart*, 3rd ed. (Zurich: Verlag für Architektur, 1969), 92–96; and Billington, *Robert Maillart*, 170–74.
32. Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, 460–61.
33. Wright kept advocating for the realization of his design. From 1946 to 1952 he continued his efforts as a response to the state's commitment to build another new bridge over the Wisconsin River at the city of Wisconsin Dells, in Columbia County. Eli Waldron, "Frank Lloyd Wright and a Bridge in Wisconsin," *Reporter* (New York) 6, no. 2 (January 22, 1952): 37–38; and Twombly, *Frank Lloyd Wright: His Life and His Architecture*, 376–77.
34. J. J. Polivka, "Are Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesins Educational Institutions?," November 1954?, fiche id. no. P139Bo1, FLWA. See Victor di Suvero, "L'ingegnere Jaro Joseph Polivka, collaboratore di F. L. Wright," *L'Architettura* 45 (July 1989): 203–9; and Susan Tejada, ed., *Engineering the Organic: The Partnership of Jaroslav J. Polivka and Frank Lloyd Wright* (Buffalo: State University of New York at Buffalo, 2000). On the San Francisco Bay Bridge project, see Cleary, "Lessons in Tenuity"; and Turner, *Wright and San Francisco*, 87–96.
35. J. J. Polivka, "Aesthetics of Bridges," 1, undated (1956 or later), box 1, folder 8, J. J. Polivka Papers, 1945–59, University of Buffalo, the State University of New York, Archives.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Jaroslav J. Polivka, "What It's Like to Work with Wright" (1958?), in Tejada, *Engineering the Organic*, 38.
38. Mel Scott, *The San Francisco Bay Area: A Metropolis in Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 213, 234–36, 261.
39. J. J. Polivka to Wright, July 21, 1947, fiche id. no. P089Co4, FLWA. On the Sandö Bridge, see Mock, *Architecture of Bridges*, 90. The largest concrete arch in the United States, and by then the world's tenth longest, was the 418-foot-long George Westinghouse Bridge in Pittsburgh (1932). In 1931 California had built three concrete arch bridges. The longest, over Bixby Creek in Monterey County, on the Pacific Coast 120 miles south of San Francisco, spanned 320 feet, and the other two, 310 feet. Panhorst had designed all three of these.
40. Polivka to Wright, April 30, 1949, fiche id. no. P101C10, FLWA.
41. Polivka to Wright, March 18, 1952, fiche id. no. P120Bo2, FLWA.
42. Polivka to Wright, May 5, 1949, fiche id. no. P101Do4, FLWA.
43. Polivka to Wright, May 10, 1949, fiche id. no. P101Do8, FLWA.
44. Wright to Polivka, June 1, 1949, fiche id. no. P102B10, FLWA.
45. Polivka to Wright, May 24, 1949, fiche id. no. P102Bo1, FLWA; Polivka to Wright, May 24, 1949, fiche id. no. P102Bo2, FLWA; "SF Opposition to Twin Bay Span Presented at Hearing," *San Francisco Examiner*, May 10, 1949; "Span Testimony," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 23, 1949, 2; and Luther Meyer, "Frank Lloyd Wright Offers S.F. Quake Proof Span," *San Francisco Call Bulletin*, June 1, 1949, 1, 1-G.
46. Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect, and J. J. Polivka, Engineer, "Brief of Testimony to Be Introduced before the Assembly Interim Committee on Tidelands and

- Related Traffic Problems at Its Hearing on May 20, 1949 Concerning a Concrete Bridge for Southern Crossing of San Francisco Bay; Schemes One, Two, Three, and Four," 1, 2, fiche id. no. Pr6Bo8, FLWA. One local citizen wrote: "In Wright's design the gentle rise and curves conform perfectly with the coastal hills." D. Mershon, Mill Valley, letter to the editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 15, 1953, 18.
47. Wright and Polivka, "Brief of Testimony," 2.
48. "Wright's Plan for Concrete Southern Span," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 2, 1953.
49. Wright and Polivka, "Brief of Testimony," 4.
50. Mock, *Architecture of Bridges*, 123.
51. "Proposed 'Butterfly-Wing' Bridge for San Francisco Bay," June 1953?, fiche id. no. G138Do4, FLWA.
52. Wright and Polivka, "Brief of Testimony," 1, 2.
53. In 1972 Bay Area citizens voted to not build a new bridge, but the Dumbarton Bridge as a southern crossing (1927) was rebuilt in 1982 with prestressed concrete approaches. Aaron G. Green, "Organic Architecture: The Principles of Frank Lloyd Wright," *Frank Lloyd Wright Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 15–16. Interest in Wright's Butterfly Bridge revived fifty years later. Tyche Hendricks, "Bridge Design with Wright Stuff," *San Francisco Examiner*, March 7, 1999, 12; Zahid Sardar, "Burning Bridges," *Architecture* 88, no. 4 (April 1999): 27; and Adam Mornement, "Bridge Has the Wright Stuff . . . but Wright May Have Been Wrong," *World Architecture* 76 (May 1999): 24–25.
54. J. J. Polivka, letter to the editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 13, 1958, 24, responding to John Clifford, letter to the editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 7, 1954.
56. Polivka alerted Wright to these citations in letters of May 8, 1958, fiche id. no. P160Eo4, and July 17, 1958, fiche id. no. P161Co, FWLA.
55. US Census data from 1960 is cited in Radford, *Bridge and the Building*, 18.
56. Radford, *Bridge and the Building*, 47–48.
57. *Ibid.*, 70.
58. *Ibid.*, 54. See also William Chapin, "Marin County," in *The Suburbs of San Francisco* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1969), 122–25.
59. Editorial, "Your Taxes Pay \$46,380 in Rent for County Offices," *Marin Independent Journal*, March 6, 1959.
60. Marin County Civic Center, fact sheet, April 28, 1958, Marin County Free Library, Frank Lloyd Wright & Marin County Civic Center (hereafter MCFL, FLW & MCCC), Clipping File, 9 vols., 1:1951–59. On reform, see Radford, *Bridge and the Building*, chaps. 3, 4.
61. Caroline S. Livermore, "Civic Center Good Government," letter to the editor, *Marin Independent Journal*, April 25, 1958.
62. Radford, *Bridge and the Building*, 89–91.
63. Evelyn M. Radford, *Vera, "First Lady of Marin": A Biography of Vera Lucille Smith Schultz* (Sonoma, CA: Hilltop Publishing, 1998).
64. Radford, *Bridge and the Building*, 91–92.
65. Radford, *Vera*, 169–70. The article was "Our Strongest Influence to Enrichment," *House Beautiful* 99 (January 1957): 40–47, 99, 105–6.
66. "Board to Talk Civic Center with Wright," *Marin Independent Journal*, June 27, 1957, 1, 10. See Radford, *Bridge and the Building*, 91–92; Green and DeNevi, *Architecture for Democracy*, 21–23; Levine, *Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 405–6; and Turner, *Wright and San Francisco*, 167–68.
67. Memorandum, Civic Center Committee to Marin County Board of Supervisors, July 30, 1957, MCFL, FLW & MCCC, Clipping File, 1:1951–59.
68. "Frank Lloyd Wright, Speaking at San Rafael High School, July 31, 1957," 2, Oral History Project of the Marin County Free Library, Anne T. Kent California Room, <http://www.marinlibrary.org/research-and-learning/california-room>. This talk was published in Patrick J. Meehan, ed., chap. 29 in *Truth against the World: Frank Lloyd Wright Speaks for an Organic Architecture* (New York: John Wiley, 1987), 381–411.
69. "Wright, Speaking at San Rafael High School, July 31, 1957," 3.
70. Mary Leydecker, "Civic Center Praised as It Turns 25," *Marin Independent Journal*, October 14, 1987, A3.
71. E. M. Curtis, letter to the editor, *Marin Independent Journal*, April 18, 1958.
72. "Red Charge Stirs Wright to a Boil," *San Francisco Examiner*, August 3, 1957, sec. 1, 3.
73. "Wright Sees Site, Likes It," *Marin Independent Journal*, August 2, 1957.
74. Green and DeNevi, *Architecture for Democracy*, 24.
75. Green, "Organic Architecture," 9. Another version of Green's memory is that Wright "decided on the design of the Marin County Civic Center after some thirty minutes of hiking over the hills," saying, "I'll bridge these hills with a series of graceful arches," quoted in "Arched Civic Center Blends into the Hills," *Engineering News-Record* 169, no. 9 (August 30, 1962): 62.
76. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, "Marin County Civic Center, San Rafael, California, 1957," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Monograph*, vol. 8, 1951–1959, ed. Yukio Futagawa (Tokyo: A.D.A. EDITA, 1988), 643.
77. "Wright Gives First Report on Civic Center," *Marin Independent Journal*, November 19, 1957.
78. D. A. Jensen, county administrator, to Board of Supervisors, July 8, 1957, MCFL, Marin County Civic Center—Original Document Collection (hereafter MCFL, MCCC-ODC), Box M5: Correspondence of Information to deLisle (County Auditor), 1956–58.
79. Green to Wright, November 27, 1957, fiche id. no. G186Bo2, FLWA.
80. Frank Lloyd Wright, "At Marin County California" (talk, Taliesin Fellowship, March 30, 1958), in *Frank Lloyd Wright: His Living Voice*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (Fresno: Press at California State University, Fresno, 1987), 55.
81. Green and DeNevi, *Architecture for Democracy*, 64.
82. "Fifteen large sketches, many of which are five to six feet square," were noted in "Wright Shows Center Plans on March 25," *Marin Independent Journal*, March 11, 1958. Alternatively, a "List of Preliminary Drawings" displayed at the College of Marin, Kentfield, CA, March 27–April 3, 1958, notes eighteen drawings. "Marin County Government Center," April 1958, MCFL, FLW & MCCC, Clipping File, 1:1951–59.
83. "Amazing Frank Lloyd Wright Does It Again—for Marin" and "Frank Lloyd Wright Unveils Marin Civic Center Plans," *Marin Independent Journal*, March 26, 1958. Draftsmen for Figure 12 (FLWA, drawing no. 5746.01) are noted in *Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect*, ed. Terence Riley (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), 380, pl. 387.
84. Mary Summers, quoting Wright, in "Frank Lloyd Wright, Speaking at San Rafael High School, Presentation of Civic Center Plans, March 25, 1958," 3. Oral History Project of the Marin County Free Library.
85. "Wright, Speaking at San Rafael High School, Presentation of Civic Center Plans, March 25, 1958," 3.
86. *Ibid.*, 3–4. Green and DeNevi, *Architecture for Democracy*, 66, recalled Wright saying: "My designs are in great conformance with the beautiful nature of Marin. Instead of slicing away the hills with bulldozers, the buildings will bridge the knolls with graceful arches."
87. "Wright Sweeps in with Plan for a Marin Center," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 26, 1958, 4.
88. "Frank Lloyd Wright Unveils Marin Civic Center Plans." See also Green and DeNevi, *Architecture for Democracy*, 66.
89. "Board Approves First 2 Stages of Wright Plan," *Marin Independent Journal*, April 29, 1958; and Green and DeNevi, *Architecture for Democracy*, 67.
90. "Re: Model—Marin County Center," news release, August 29, 1958, MCFL, MCCC-ODC, Box M5: Correspondence of Information to deLisle (County Auditor), 1956–58.
91. Aaron G. Green to Board of Supervisors of Marin County, June 15, 1959, MCFL, MCCC-ODC, Box M5: Correspondence of Information to deLisle (County Auditor), 1956–58.
92. Chronology, MCFL, FLW & MCCC, Clipping File, 1:1951–59.
93. Wright to James R. Law, September 6, 1951, fiche id. no. B152Co2, FLWA. Reprinted in "Wright Asks US Build Truck Routes along Rail Lines as Safety Measure."
94. Wright to Elizabeth Mock, March 1, 1950, fiche id. no. M199Eo4, FLWA.
95. "Preliminary Design Summary, Marin County Government Center, Marin County, California: Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect," typescript, n.d., March 1958?, 1, MCFL. See also "Arched Civic Center Blends into the Hills," 64.
96. "Preliminary Design Summary, Marin County Government Center," 3. See also "Architect Wright Unveils Drawing of Marin Center," *San Francisco Examiner*, March 26, 1958.

97. Howard Frank Itzkowitz, letter to the editor, *San Rafael News Pointer*, October 28–November 3, 1987, 5.
98. Richard Wallace, conversation with the author, June 10, 2014. I am most grateful to Mr. Wallace for a complete tour of the building's mechanical systems.
99. Wright's two-story Science and Cosmography Building for Florida Southern College (now the Polk County Science Building), designed from 1948 and completed in 1953, has a central mall-like hall with a linear light well on the second floor open to the main floor below. A high clerestory lights this long hall. William Allin Storrer, *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion*, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 265.
100. I thank Professor Nicholas Adams, Vassar College, for alerting me to the similarities between the Aarhus Town Hall and the Marin County Civic Center.
101. Elizabeth B. Kassler, *The Taliesin Fellowship: A Directory of Members, 1932–1982* (Princeton: E. B. Kassler, 1981).
102. Before Wright's death in 1959, the Rathaus at Aarhus was published in "Hôtel de ville Aarhus," *Architecture Française* 8 (April 1947): 32–35; "Rathaus in Aarhus," *Werk* 35 (March 1948): 144–45; and "Het nieuwe raadhuis te Aarhus," *Bouwkundig Weekblad* 66 (November 1948): 448–53. It was later included in Tobias Farber, *Arne Jacobsen* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 86–87.
103. "Wright Sweeps in with Plan for a Marin Center."
104. "Wright, Speaking at San Rafael High School, Presentation of Civic Center Plans, March 25, 1958," 4.
105. Agnoldomenico Pica, "Il Marin County di Frank Lloyd Wright," *LARCA*, January–February 1987, 5–6.
106. *Frank Lloyd Wright: Marin County Civic Center* (San Rafael, CA: Marin County, Board of Supervisors, 1965), 8.
107. "Frank Lloyd Wright Unveils Marin Civic Center Plans."
108. Wright, "At Marin County California," in Pfeiffer, *Wright: His Living Voice*, 55.
109. "Architect Wright Unveils Drawing of Marin Center."
110. "Frank Lloyd Wright Unveils Marin Civic Center Plans," A2.
111. Robert Twombly, *Louis Sullivan: His Life and Work* (New York: Elizabeth Sifton Books, Viking, 1986), 259–69; David Van Zanten, *Sullivan's City: The Meaning of Ornament for Louis Sullivan* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 52–55; Robert Twombly and Narcisco G. Menocal, *Louis Sullivan: The Poetry of Ornament* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 118–21; Lauren Weingarden, *Louis H. Sullivan and a 19th Century Poetics of Naturalized Architecture* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 290–96; and Jonathan Hall, "The Allegorical Program of Louis Sullivan's Transportation Building at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893," *Nineteenth Century* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 14–19.
112. Green and DeNevi, *Architecture for Democracy*, 89, 94.
113. Wright, *An Autobiography* (1932), in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, 5 vols. (New York: Rizzoli International Publications in association with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1992), 2:176.
114. Wright, "Louis Henry Sullivan: Beloved Master" (1924), in *ibid.*, 1:194.
115. Wright, *An Autobiography* (1932), in *ibid.*, 2:300.
116. Wright, "Louis Henry Sullivan: His Work" (1924), in *ibid.*, 1:198.
117. The full program for the site is noted in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Marin County Civic Center*, 17.
118. "Wright, Speaking at San Rafael High School, July 31, 1957," 3. See Levine, *Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 383–404; Mina Marefat, "Wright's Baghdad," in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Europe and Beyond*, ed. Anthony Alofsin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 184–213; Joseph M. Siry, "Wright's Baghdad Opera House and Gammage Auditorium: In Search of Regional Modernity," *Art Bulletin* 87, no. 2 (June 2005): 265–311; and Levine, chap. 10 in *Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 334–84.
119. "Wright, Speaking at San Rafael High School, July 31, 1957," 3.
120. *Ibid.*, 4.
121. Levine, *Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 401, 497–98n11; and Siry, "Wright's Baghdad Opera House and Gammage Auditorium," 276–77, 304n55.
122. Wright, "Frank Lloyd Wright Designs for Baghdad," *Architectural Forum* 108, no. 5 (May 1958): 95.
123. Siry, "Wright's Baghdad Opera House and Gammage Auditorium," 279–80, 305n63. On the crescent arch, see recently Levine, *Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 371–84.
124. "Wright, Speaking at San Rafael High School, July 31, 1957," 3.
125. Wright, quoted in "Frank Lloyd Wright Unveils Marin Civic Center Plans," A2.
126. Brad Breithaupt, "Gold Spire a Chimney," *Marin Independent Journal*, September 28, 1991, 12.
127. "Frank Lloyd Wright Unveils Marin Civic Center Plans," A3.
128. "Architect Wright Unveils Drawing of Marin Center."
129. Wright, "Gammage Auditorium and Greek Orthodox Church" (talk to Taliesin Fellows, Taliesin West, December 14, 1958), in Pfeiffer, *Wright: His Living Voice*, 53.
130. John Gurda, *New World Odyssey: Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church and Frank Lloyd Wright* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Hellenic Community, 1986); Joseph M. Siry, *Beth Shalom Synagogue: Frank Lloyd Wright and Modern Religious Architecture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 505–18; and Dean G. Lampros, "Critiquing Modernism: The Unorthodox Orthodox, 1950s–60s," chap. 9 in *Modernism and American Mid-20th Century Sacred Architecture*, ed. Anat Geva (New York: Routledge, 2019), 175–93.
131. Alexander Georges, list of specifications appended to contract with Wright, quoted in Gurda, *New World Odyssey*, 56.
132. Frank Lloyd Wright, quoted in "Church Designed for Milwaukee by Wright Is His Adaptation of Byzantine Form," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 21, 1956.
133. Gurda, *New World Odyssey*, 106.
134. Olgivanna Lloyd Wright, quoted in *ibid.*, 101.
135. Gurda, *New World Odyssey*, 115–16. In 2009 the dome's roof was resurfaced with the acrylic resin Neoguard. James Maholias, interview with the author, August 5, 2012.
136. Green and DeNevi, *Architecture for Democracy*, 94; and Peter Firmite, "Turning Blue: At Marin County Civic Center, All That Glitters Isn't Gold," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 9, 2000.
137. Mary Summers, in "Wright, Speaking at San Rafael High School, Presentation of Civic Center Plans, March 25, 1958," 2.
138. *Ibid.* Since 1970 Wright's Marin County Civic Center, in addition to recoatings of its roofs, has undergone modifications, the most important being a seismic retrofit in 2000–2002. Alison Shaw and Kristen Bouma, "Seismic Retrofit of the Marin County Hall of Justice Using Steel Buckling-Restraining Braced Frames," in *Building on the Past: Securing the Future, Proceedings of the 2004 Structures Congress*, ed. George E. Blandford (Reston, VA: American Society of Civil Engineers, 2004), Track 4, Restoration and Repair of Existing Structures. In 1994 an underground hexagonal county jail (nearly invisible in the landscape except in aerial views) was completed in the hill north of the Hall of Justice. Its architects were Daniel Mann Johnson Mendenhall, with Aaron Green consulting. David B. Rosenbaum, "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Marin County Jail in Calif. Built Underground," *Engineering News-Record* 233 (September 21, 1994): 18–19; and "Going to Jail," *Marin Independent Journal*, November 14, 1994, A6. In 2014 the Sheriff's Office moved out of the Hall of Justice into a facility across Highway 101.
139. "Frank Lloyd Wright Unveils Marin Civic Center Plans," 2.
140. One work of science fiction that, according to Loren Eiseley, "received the devoted attention of such gifted men as Frank Lloyd Wright," was *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920), by the Scottish author David Lindsay (1876–1945). Eiseley, afterword to Lindsay, *A Voyage to Arcturus* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 269. It narrates a journey through fantastic landscapes set on a fictional planet, Tormance, orbiting the real star Arcturus. I thank Professor Brian Lukacher, Vassar College, for this reference.
141. For Wright on atomic weapons, see R. M. Hagan, "Lively Arts: A Bravura Performance by the Venerable Wright," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 20, 1953, 16; Frank Lloyd Wright, "Starched Churches" (1946), review of John R. Scotford, *The Church Beautiful: A Practical Discussion of Church Architecture* (1945), in Wright, *Wright: Collected Writings*, 4:298; and Siry, *Beth Shalom Synagogue*, 337.
142. Alofsin, "Broadacre City," 28–34; and Levine, *Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 405.
143. Turner, *Wright and San Francisco*, 164, 167.
144. Pica, "Il Marin County di Frank Lloyd Wright," 6.