

TO ANYONE, ANYWHERE: ISABEL ROBERTS & CRITICAL THINKING

GRADE: 6-8**TIME:** Two 45-minute sessions OR one 90-minute session

Frank Lloyd Wright's Oak Park Studio was a time of major growth in his career and a jumping off point for many well known architects. Isabel Roberts' role in the Oak Park Studio has long been debated—was she the office manager and administrator, or was she an architect herself? In this lesson, students will explore primary and secondary sources relating to Isabel Roberts and the Oak Park Studio before drawing their own conclusions using critical thinking.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Social Studies, Media Literacy, Language Arts**OBJECTIVES****MATERIALS | RESOURCES**

Printed primary and secondary sources

Source Information Sheet (Appendix A)

What Is Critical Thinking handout and 5 W's worksheet (Appendix B)

Device with access to the internet

Pencil

1. Learn about Isabel Roberts and her role at the Oak Park Studio.
2. Define primary and secondary sources.
3. Use critical thinking skills to examine each source and determine if they are primary or secondary.
4. Consider the historical context in which each source was created.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between primary and secondary sources? How are they connected?
2. How can we use both primary and secondary sources to think critically about the past?
3. What can both primary and secondary sources tell us about Isabel Roberts' role in the Oak Park Studio?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

Session One

- **Educators will introduce students to Frank Lloyd Wright's Oak Park Studio at <https://flwright.org/explore/oak-park-studio>.**
- **Educators will introduce students to Isabel Roberts:**
 - ◊ Isabel Roberts worked in the Oak Park Studio from 1901 until its closing in 1909. She moved to St. Cloud, Florida, in 1916, and established an architectural practice with Ida Annah Ryan. Isabel Roberts' role in the Oak Park studio has long been debated—some people claim she was a secretary or office manager, while others believe she was a drafter and architect who also managed the office. Look at these sources and come to your own conclusion as a class.
- **Educators will ask students:**
 - ◊ What is your initial understanding of primary and secondary sources? How are they similar, and how are they different?
 - ◊ Can you name a type of primary or secondary source?
 - ◊ What are the benefits of using one over the other?

ENGAGE

Session One

- **Students will review primary and secondary sources as a class using the information at <https://umb.libguides.com/PrimarySources/secondary>.**
- **The class will discuss each source (using the information provided below) and categorize them as either primary or secondary. Students should not fully read the source yet; this is just a cursory exploration.**
 - ◊ 1910 and 1920 Census records (Source 1)
 - Government-mandated report with information provided by Isabel Roberts.
 - ◊ Application to the American Institute of Architects (Source 2)
 - Application by Isabel Roberts that includes letters from Frank Lloyd Wright, Ida Annah Ryan, John Van Bergen, and E.A. Ehmann.
 - ◊ Excerpt from *My Father, Frank Lloyd Wright* by John Lloyd Wright (Source 3)
 - Account from John Lloyd Wright, who lived in the home attached to the Oak Park Studio during its active years.
 - ◊ Excerpt from *Many Masks: A Life of Frank Lloyd Wright* by Brendan Gill (Source 4)
 - Biography published in 1987 by American journalist Brendan Gill.
 - ◊ Excerpt from *The First American Women Architects* by Sarah Allaback (Source 5)
 - Non-fiction book about female architects of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
 - ◊ Excerpt from *Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910: The First Golden Age* by Grant Carpenter Manson (Source 6)
 - Biography published in 1958 by Grant Carpenter Mason, who knew Wright personally.
- **Students will discuss their conclusions as a class.**
 - ◊ Primary sources: Census records (Source 1), AIA application letters (Source 2), excerpt from John Wright's memoir (Source 3).
 - ◊ Secondary sources: Biographical accounts from Gill (Source 4), Allaback (Source 5), and Manson (Source 6).
- **Educators will ask students:**
 - ◊ What was the most difficult part of distinguishing between primary and secondary sources?
 - ◊ What ultimately influenced your decision about whether a source was primary or secondary?
 - ◊ How could bias impact secondary sources? Does bias matter in a primary source?

LESSON PROCEDURE

(continued)

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session One

- **Educators will introduce students to critical thinking using the first page of Appendix A. Educators may print or display this page for students.**
- **Educators will divide students into groups of 3-4, or pairs depending on class size, and give each group a source to investigate.**
 - ◊ Educators will pass out the source information sheet (Appendix A), the 5 W's sheet (Appendix B), and one source to each group.
- **Educators will give students 10-15 minutes to examine their source and fill out the 5 W's worksheet.**
- **Once students are finished, educators will bring the class back together for a group discussion. Each group will share information about their source.**
- **Educators will ask students:**
 - ◊ What conclusions can we come to about Isabel Roberts' role in the Oak Park Studio based on the sources we looked at today?
- **Students will be given time and access to a device with internet to read a short biography of Isabel Roberts found at <https://pioneeringwomen.bwaf.org/isabel-roberts/>.**
- **Finally, educators will ask students:**
 - ◊ Considering the primary sources we looked at, why might the secondary sources have drawn the conclusions they did? What evidence supports or contradicts their claims?
 - ◊ If someone was writing about you, what sources would you want them to use? Primary or secondary?
 - ◊ In today's world, what is considered a primary source? Is social media a primary source for our lives?

STATE Illinois
COUNTY Cook

TOWNSHIP OR OTHER DIVISION OF COUNTY

Proviso Township

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR-BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

THIRTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1910-POPULATION

NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE Kenosha, Village

SUPERVISOR'S DISTRICT NO. 1
ENUMERATION DISTRICT NO. 72

SHEET NO. 12 B

NAME OF INSTITUTION

(Insert proper name and, also, name of class, as township, town, precinct, district, hundred, tract, etc. See instructions.)

(Insert proper name and, also, name of class, as township, town, precinct, district, hundred, tract, etc. See instructions.)

ENUMERATED BY ME ON THE

DAY OF April 1910.

WARD OF CITY

9 J. T. Jones

ENUMERATOR

LOCATION.	NAME	RELATION.	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION.	NATIVITY.												CITIZENSHIP.	Whether naturalized.	Whether able to speak English; or, if not, give language spoken.	OCCUPATION.												EDUCATION.	OCCUPATION OF HUSBAND.				
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12																					
	of each person whose place of abode on April 1, 1910, was in this family.			Relationship of this person to the head of the family.												Place of birth of each person and parents of each person enumerated. If born in the United States, give the state or territory. If of foreign birth, give the country.																				
	Enter surname first, then the given name and middle initial, if any.			Number of children.												Number of children.																				
	Include every person living on April 1, 1910. Omit children born since April 1, 1910.			Number of children.												Number of children.																				
51	271 214 241	Porter Byron C	Head	M 24 39 M 13												Maine	Maine	Maine																		
52		Harriet G	Wife	F 24 35 M 13	2	2										New York	New York	New York																		
53		Autentia M	Daughter	F 26 11 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
54		Catharine H	Daughter	F 26 8 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
55	274 215 242	Tutwiler William H	Head	M 24 41 M 17												Virginia	Virginia	Virginia																		
56		Frances	Wife	F 24 35 M 17	3	3										Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
57		Morris	Daughter	F 26 16 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
58		Robert	Son	M 26 12 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
59		Virginia	Daughter	F 26 11 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
60		Elvina	Maid	F 26 53 S												England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England		
61		Patterson George	Brother	M 26 49 S												Alabama	Alabama	Alabama																		
62	274 216 243	Roberts Mary	Head	F 26 26 M 17												Canada	Canada	Canada																		
63		Charlotte	Daughter	F 26 5 S												Missouri	Missouri	Missouri																		
64		Carrie	Daughter	F 26 21 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
65	274 217 244	Fruta Walter J	Head	M 26 37 M 13												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
66		Ethel R	Wife	F 26 34 M 13	1	1										Michigan	Michigan	Michigan																		
67		Mary E	Daughter	F 26 12 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
68		Farmer Andrew	Servant	F 26 31 S												England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England	England		
69	30 218 245	Cullerton Harry H	Head	M 26 44 M 13												Ohio	Ohio	Ohio																		
70		Julia E	Wife	F 26 30 M 13												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
71		Edwards Lucy B	Daughter	F 26 61 M 12												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
72		Amelia Alice H	Servant	F 26 21 S												California	California	California																		
73	274 219 246	Barr Oliver M	Head	M 26 42 M 12												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
74		Carrie L	Wife	F 26 42 M 11	5	3										Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
75		Alice J	Sister	F 26 50 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
76		James L	Son	M 26 16 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
77		Edith A	Daughter	F 26 11 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
78		Olivia M	Sister	F 26 10 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
79		Zella Arthur T	Boarder	M 26 28 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
80		Johnson Eva	Boarder	F 26 11 S												Michigan	Michigan	Michigan																		
81	270 220 247	Day Justice	Head	F 26 31 S												New York	New York	New York																		
82		Catherine Ernest H	Boarder	M 26 24 S												Connecticut	Connecticut	Connecticut																		
83		Douglas M Gladys	Boarder	F 26 11 S												New York	New York	New York																		
84		Charles William M	Boarder	F 26 13 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
85	287 287 248	Edgeworth Fred M	Head	M 26 37 M 12												Massachusetts	Massachusetts	Massachusetts																		
86		Rose F	Wife	F 26 35 M 12	2	2										Michigan	Michigan	Michigan																		
87		Margaret L	Daughter	F 26 11 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
88		Edith M	Sister	F 26 13 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
89		Fayola Ruthie M	Daughter	F 26 19 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
90	295 282 249	Pirkart Robert J	Head	M 26 27 M 10	0											Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
91		Dorothy J	Wife	F 26 25 M 10	0	0										Connecticut	Connecticut	Connecticut																		
92		Agnes G	Mother	F 26 63 M 6	6	6										New York	New York	New York																		
93		Blanche G	Sister	F 26 26 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
94		Mary J	Servant	F 26 86 M 4	4	3										Massachusetts	Massachusetts	Massachusetts																		
95		Frances J	Aunt	F 26 63 S												Connecticut	Connecticut	Connecticut																		
96	303 222 250	Hull George H	Head	M 26 35 M 11												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
97		Mathilda E	Wife	F 26 35 M 11	2	2										Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
98		Frances G	Son	M 26 11 S												Illinois	Illinois	Illinois																		
99	309 222 251	John L	Son	M																																

State Florida
County Orange
Township or other
division of county
(Enter proper name and also name of class, as township, town, precinct, district, etc. See Instructions.)

Incorporated place Orlando City
(Enter proper name and also name of class, as city, village, town or borough. See Instructions.)
Ward of city Part of Ward 2 - Precinct 2
Block No. 1

Unincorporated place
(Enter name of any unincorporated place having approximately 500 inhabitants or more. See Instructions.)

Form 15-4
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE-BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
FIFTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1930
POPULATION SCHEDULE

Enumeration District No. 48-8
Supervisor's District No. Orlando
Sheet No. 4 A 66
5151

Enumerated by me on April 16, 1930, 1930, Laura L. Worcester, Enumerator.

PLACE OF ABOBE	NAME	RELATION	HOME DATA		PERSONAL DESCRIPTION		EDUCATION	PLACE OF BIRTH		MOTHER TONGUE (OR NATIVE LANGUAGE) OF FOREIGN BORN	CITIZENSHIP, ETC.	OCCUPATION AND INDUSTRY				EMPLOYMENT	VETERANS																												
			House number or name of place of residence or street	Number of rooms in order of resi- dence	Value of house, rent or value of rented place	Value of house, rent or value of rented place		Color or race	Age at last birthday			Code	Industry	Code	Industry																														
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	A	B	C	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32											
1	Daniels, Ida B.	Widow	8	4	1000	1000	1000	White	45	10	7	W	66	nd	21	W	60	yes	Indiana	Indiana	Indiana	60	None																						
2	8217180 Johnson, Eugene	Head	0	3000	1000	1000	1000	White	79	26	W	46	W	40	yes	Kentucky	Kentucky	Kentucky	Kentucky	Kentucky	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None									
3	Kate	Daughter																																											
4	8287281 Leblanc, George	Head	R	40	1000	1000	1000	White	30	30	M	30	W	26	yes	Massachusetts	United States	United States	United States	United States	59	None	59	None	59	None	59	None	59	None	59	None	59	None	59	None	59	None							
5	Ena	Wife-H																																											
6	8307382 Farbrough, James E.	Head	R	30	800	1000	1000	White	26	26	M	25	W	24	yes	South Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	53	None	53	None	53	None	53	None	53	None	53	None	53	None	53	None	53	None	53	None					
7	Azazel	Wife-H																																											
8	8347483 Ryan, Ida A.	Head-R	0	1500	1000	1000	1000	White	56	5	S	56	W	56	yes	Massachusetts	Massachusetts	Massachusetts	Massachusetts	Massachusetts	78	None	78	None	78	None	78	None	78	None	78	None	78	None	78	None	78	None	78	None					
9	Roberta, Isabell D.	Friend																																											
10	84 Miller, Donald K.	Head	R	25	1000	1000	1000	White	30	25	M	25	W	20	yes	Canada	English	Canada	English	Canada	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None					
11	Ellen	Wife-H																																											
12	1117585 Riddle, Robert	Head	R	6500	1000	1000	1000	White	38	26	M	26	W	30	yes	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	52	None	52	None	52	None	52	None	52	None	52	None	52	None	52	None	52	None	52	None					
13	Mamie	Wife-H																																											
14	Ruth	Daughter																																											
15	Mary E.	Daughter																																											
16	Robert Jr.	Son																																											
17	6167686 Kay, Alexander J.	Head	R	8000	1000	1000	1000	White	52	26	M	34	W	40	yes	Scotland	Scotland	Scotland	Scotland	Scotland	59	None	59	None	59	None	59	None	59	None	59	None	59	None	59	None	59	None	59	None					
18	Bessie M.	Wife-H																																											
19	Alexander Jr.	Son																																											
20	6287787 Jasper, Elmo B.	Head	0	8000	1000	1000	1000	White	58	26	M	26	W	58	yes	Virginia	Virginia	Virginia	Virginia	Virginia	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None	60	None					
21	Margaret A.	Wife-H																																											
22	Gilda P.	Daughter																																											
23	6307888 Clements, W. Lawrence	Head	R	45	1000	1000	1000	White	27	25	M	25	W	20	yes	South	United States	United States	United States	United States	65	None	65	None	65	None	65	None	65	None	65	None	65	None	65	None	65	None	65	None					
24	Alma	Wife-H																																											
25	6367989 Morris, Jr. C.	Head	0	10000	1000	1000	1000	White	57	27	M	27	W	57	yes	West Virginia	75	None	75	None	75	None	75	None	75	None	75	None	75	None	75	None	75	None	75	None									
26	Almeda	Wife-H																																											
27	6408090 Flanigan, Thomas C.	Head	0	5000	1000	1000	1000	White	47	26	M	26	W	47	yes	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	62	None	62	None	62	None	62	None	62	None	62	None	62	None	62	None	62	None	62	None					
28	Mary E.	Wife-H																																											
29	Minor A.	Daughter																																											
30	6448191 Baker, Horace M.	Head	0	6000	1000	1000	1000	White	11	38	M	22	W	11	yes	Massachusetts	Massachusetts	Massachusetts	Massachusetts	Massachusetts	62	None	62	None	62	None	62	None	62	None	62	None	62	None	62	None	62	None	62	None					
31	Nellie M.	Wife-H																																											
32	Muriel	Daughter																																											
33	Mary	Daughter																																											
34	6488292 Baldwin, Thomas Read	R	50	8	1000	1000	1000	White	22	27	M	27	W	21	yes	New Jersey	United States	United States	United States	United States	57	None	57	None	57	None	57	None	57	None	57	None	57	None	57	None	57	None	57	None					
35	Mary	Wife-H																																											
36	Theresa	Son																																											
37	6508393 Smith, Horace	Head	R	20	1000	1000	1000	White	21	20	M	18	W	19	yes	South Carolina	77	None	77	None	77	None	77	None	77	None	77	None	77	None	77	None	77	None	77	None									
38	Vivian	Wife-H																																											
39	6548494 Evans, Donald L.	Head	0	8000	1000	1000	1000	White	31	26	M	26	W	21	yes	Florida	United States	United States	United States	United States	72	None	72	None	72	None	72	None	72	None	72	None	72	None	72	None	72	None	72	None					
40	Clara	Wife-H																																											
41	Donna C.	Daughter																																											
42	6588593 Fort, George	Head	0	8000	1000	1000	1000	White	24	17	M	17	W	17	yes	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	71	None	71	None	71	None																			

Roberts, Isabel
Florida

PP. Reed
President
September 11, 1921

Application for Membership

To the Secretary of the American Institute of Architects,
The Octagon House, Washington, D. C.

SIR:

I hereby apply for Membership in the American Institute of Architects.

I hereby certify that the following statements are correct:

Name Isabel Roberts

Address 222 S. Orange Ave. [Number and Street.] Orlando - Florida [City.] [State.]

Place and date of birth Mexico, Mo. 17.9.9. - 1874 [If required in your case, attach evidence of birth date.]

Graduate in architecture Passed examinations in Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris, in May of 1894 [If required in your case, give name of institutions and year. Attach evidence of Diploma or Certificate of graduation.]

Holder of Scholarship in architecture St. Louis Exposition [If required in your case, attach evidence.]

Passed the qualifying examinations of the Royal Institute of British Architects, or the examinations for the first class of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. [If required in your case, state which, and attach evidence of Certificate.]

If an Associate of a Chapter of the Institute, give name of chapter.

If practicing architect, firm name Ryan & Roberts, Orlando - Fla.

Have been in practice for 12 years, independently, for several years.

If draughtsman, employed by From 1902 to 1914 I served as [State number of years.]

Collegiate and office training Draughtsman with Frank Lloyd Wright [Copy with] 1 year or less with Frank Lloyd Wright of Chicago, George F. Drummond, Wm. Drummond, Chicago

I have carefully examined the Constitution and By-Laws of the Institute and the "Circular of Advice Relative to Principles of Professional Practice and Canons of Ethics," and I agree, if elected, honorably to maintain them.

I further agree, if elected to membership in the American Institute of Architects, that if at any time my membership shall cease, either by my own resignation or by any action taken by the Institute, I will then, by that fact, relinquish all rights of any character that I may have acquired by reason of such membership in the property, real or personal, of the American Institute of Architects, and of the Chapter of the Institute of which I am then a member.

Isabel Roberts

[Signature of Applicant.]

I hereby certify that the signer of this application was duly elected an Associate of the
[For use when the applicant is an Associate.]

Chapter, A. I. A., on the following date

[Insert date of election to chapter.]

Secretary.

Chapter, A. I. A.

We, the undersigned members of the American Institute of Architects, have carefully examined the foregoing statement and believe it to be correct. We know the applicant personally, and consider that his work and practice warrant his admission to Membership.

(1) John H. M. Ryan (Illinois Chapter) A.I.A.
(2) Verrietta C. Dozier (Florida Chapter)
(3) H. V. ors. Holt (Illinois Chapter)

[The signatures of three Institute members are here required unless the applicant has the unanimous endorsement of his Chapter, in which case certification to that effect should be made above by the Secretary. Unanimous endorsement is that endorsement in which each Institute member of the Chapter had an opportunity to express himself by letter ballot either for or against the member proposed. No other form of unanimous endorsement will be accepted.]

To Anyone, Anywhere:

Miss Isabel Roberts was my assistant in the practice of Architecture for several years and I can recommend her without reservation to anyone requiring the services of an Architect.

Frank Lloyd Wright

Taliesin,
Spring Green,
Wisconsin.

August,
Sixth,
1920.

(Kindly Retain)

October 29-1921.

Mr. William Stanley Parker,
Secretary A.I.A.
The Octagon House,
Washington, D.C.



Your notice of Oct. 20/21 received.

Have worked with Miss Roberts for more than a year as partner and have found her to be an all-round designer and architect. Her good judgment, unerring taste and high ideals of architectural practice make her a more than ordinary credit to the profession.

Twelve years of practice and design in the office of Frank Lloyd Wright in every-day contact with his personality and standards have given purity, exactitude and inspiration to a type of work that is pleasing and original.

I consider Miss Roberts' eligibility unquestionable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ida Annah Ryan".

Ida Annah Ryan,
222 So. Orange Avenue,
Orlando - Florida.

E. A. EHMANN, A. I. A., F. A. A.
195 E. BAY STREET
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

October 26, 1921.

American Institute of Architects,
The Octagon House,
Washington,
D.C.

American Inst. of Architects
RECEIVED

18 1921

Gentlemen:-

Referring to the application of Miss Isabel Roberts, Orlando, Florida, as published in yours of October 26th.

I wish to protest against favorable action on this application for the reason that this applicant is not a registered or licensed architect of Florida. Her application was up before the board of architecture, but as it was found that her exhibits were not up to the standard set by the board, she was required to take the class examination. She had the opportunity to do so last June, but failed to make an appearance.

In her application to the board she stated that she lived in Chicago for several years next preceding coming to Florida and mentioned several buildings designed by her. But obviously she could not have practiced in the state of Illinois without registration and she admits that she was not registered by that state.

She has lived in Orlando for about two years and was until recently in the employ of an architect there. Several months ago her name as architect appeared on a letterhead together with Miss Ida Annah Ryan, a registered architect, also of Orlando. I as secretary of the board, protested against this, as she was holding herself out to the public as an architect, but without success, until I drew her attention to the fact that the board could no longer take her sex into consideration, but would be required to take the necessary steps to compel compliance with the law. She finally thru Miss Ryan agreed to change her designation so that it could not be said that she was an "architect".

I have absolutely no objection to her becoming a member of the Institute the moment she has been admitted to ~~practice in Florida~~, but I do object to her becoming an institute member first and then on the strength to make application to the board under section 11 of the act as an institute member.

E. A. EHMANN, A. I. A., F. A. A.
135 E. BAY STREET
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

AIA-2

As this contingency may arise again, I would ask that the Institute do not establish a precedent by admitting applicants not registered architects of Florida to membership in the Institute.

I am mailing copy of this letter to Mr. Murry S. King, A.I.A., Orlando, member of the board, and Miss H.C. Dezier, Secretary of the Florida chapter.

Yours truly,

EAE/e

Architect, A.I.A.

2-3 Roberts

JOHN S. VAN BERGEN
ARCHITECT

MAILED
MAY 22 1922

March
Eighteen,
1922

Mr. Edward C. Kemper, Executive Secretary,
The Octagon House,
Washington, D.C.

My dear Mr. Kemper:

Your letter of November 19th had been mislaid, due to the fact that I have been moving my office. Please pardon my delay in answering.

I have known Miss Isabel Roberts for a number of years and when I had the opportunity of endorsing her application for membership to the American Institute of Architects, I was very glad to do so. Miss Roberts is a woman of very high caliber and from her years of experience certainly ought to be able to qualify for membership. As to her qualifying under the Florida State Registration Law, that seems to me to be purely a local state affair, and not of Institute concern. Here in Illinois I have never known that a "license to practice" was a qualification for membership in the Institute. In fact, there are great numbers practicing here under our state law that would never be admitted. It has always been my understanding, and I hope I am right, that the Institute stands for the professional side of an architect's qualifications, and not merely the part as prescribed by law.

I would, without hesitation, endorse Miss Roberts' application, for I think that the A. I. A. needs members of her kind.

Thank you for your letter just received.

Sincerely yours,

John S. Van Bergen

William Drummond, Francis Berry Byrne, Walter Burley Griffin, Albert McArthur, Marion Mahony, Isabel Roberts and George Willis were the draftsmen. Five men, two women. They wore flowing ties and smocks suitable to the realm. The men wore their hair like Papa, all except Albert, he didn't have enough hair.

They worshiped Papa!

Papa liked them!

I know now that each one of them was then making valuable contributions to the pioneering of the modern American architecture for which my father gets the full glory, headaches and recognition today!

piano, provided them with a brief, vehemently improvised concert, and then walked them through the house, indicating with his cane a score of mistakes in its construction.

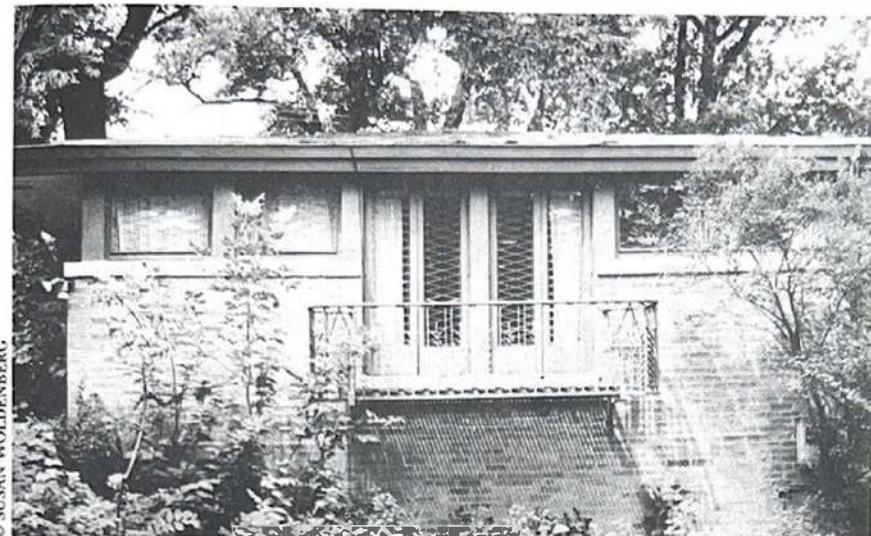
During that visit, Wright spoke candidly to the Scotts of Miss Roberts—"I couldn't bear to be without her"—and of the irritating economies he had been obliged to practice in building the house. Scott says, "Wright was overflowing with comments about what a mess he had made of it. I got the impression that he had done the job as cheaply as possible because it was a secret gift to Isabel. He must have had his usual hard time finding the money. When I bought the house, the beam holding up the balcony in the living room had come loose and was hanging almost free; Wright blamed its condition on the fact that he had let the carpenter use one-inch nails to fasten the beam to its adjacent supports instead of using the more expensive three-inch nails. Imagine remembering a thing like that after almost fifty years! The roof overhangs that are cantilevered out beyond the two-story-high bay window in the living room had sagged by as much as a foot; Wright was delighted to have me fit some long steel beams into the overhangs, in place of the failed wood. He also arranged for us to gain a sizable coat closet by the front door—in Isabel's day, he hadn't provided for any closet at all. More important to Isabel and him at the time, I suppose, was the pretty wrought-iron balcony that he placed outside



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The house that F.L.W. designed for Isabel Roberts in 1908. A big tree on the property was left untouched, to grow amiably up through the porch roof. This was a favorite architectural prank of Wright's.

To own a Wright house is a sufficient distinction anywhere in the United States; in Oak Park it is a form of aristocracy, the various levels of which are determined by what one's house contains—the possession of half a dozen pieces of furniture designed by Wright for the very rooms in which they stand is roughly equivalent to possessing a dukedom. A few fortunate people not only live in Wright houses but actually knew Wright as well. Warren Scott has lived in such a house for over thirty years: the enchanting little lattice-windowed cottage that Wright designed in 1908 for the office manager of the Oak Park studio, Isabel Roberts. (Half a dozen variations on the Roberts cottage were to come from Wright's hand in later years.) According to gossip still prevalent in River Forest, Wright's horse would be seen tethered on weekends outside Miss Roberts's house, to the scandal—and ill-concealed delight—of pious Sunday-morning churchgoers. Wright was then deeply involved with Mrs. Cheney and, despite his manic energy, is unlikely to have been carrying on two strenuous love-affairs at the same moment. Adding to the unlikelihood of the romance is the fact that the house was occupied not only by Miss Roberts but by her mother and sister, who would not have served as complaisant onlookers. Nevertheless, it is only fair to say that Scott favors the hypothesis of a romance, and he has reasons. In the nineteen-fifties, he and his wife asked Wright to redesign portions of the house and to make certain much-needed repairs. On arriving in River Forest, Wright seated himself at the Scotts'



The little wrought-iron "Romeo and Juliet" balcony of Miss Roberts' bedroom.

the French doors of her bedroom; on the balcony were two little iron seats—one for Romeo, surely, and one for Juliet?"

According to Scott, Wright had his "boys" at Taliesin prepare working drawings for the restoration of the house and rendered no charge for his services; Scott attributes this unexpected gesture to Wright's recalling, at eighty-eight, an amorous episode of his early middle age—one that, if it took place at all, may well have seemed to require expiation, having induced in him a triple guilt for betraying his wife Catherine, her already chosen successor Mrs. Cheney, and Isabel Roberts (who, for whatever the fact may be worth, never married).

Roberts, Isabel (b. 1874)

The application of Isabel Roberts to the AIA in 1921 caused considerable controversy, primarily because she was not a registered architect in Florida, the state in which she was applying. Although registration was not a requirement for AIA membership, Florida had enacted a state registration law in 1915 requiring registration for "persons claiming the title of architect." One architect who wrote a letter of endorsement for Roberts, John S. Van Bergen, pointed out that Illinois did not use registration as a criterion for institute membership and that he knew many registered architects practicing in that state who would never qualify for the AIA. Roberts's application was also heartily endorsed by H. V. von Holst, an architect for whom she had worked in Chicago. In terms of education and experience, Roberts appeared to fulfill AIA requirements: she had studied for three years at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (1899–1901) in the atelier of M. Masqueray; from 1902 to 1914 she had worked as a drafter for Frank Lloyd Wright; and she also had spent several years drafting for the Chicago architects H. V. von Holst and William Drummond. Her partner, Ida Annah Ryan (see entry), praised her highly

as a designer. Ryan commented that "twelve years of practice and design in the office of Frank Lloyd Wright in every-day contact with his personality and standards have given purity, exactitude and inspiration to a type of work that is pleasing and original."⁴⁶

For her 1921 AIA application, Roberts listed two buildings for which she had assisted Frank Lloyd Wright: "the house built for my mother," currently known as the Isabel Roberts House (1908) in River Forest, Illinois, and the De Rhodes House (1906) in South Bend, Indiana. She also listed "Unity Chapel," which, because it was said to be "now under construction," could not be mistaken for Wright's Unity Temple (1904) in Oak Park or the earlier Unity Chapel (1886) in Hillside, Wisconsin, which belonged to Wright's family.⁴⁷

Several AIA members sent letters expressing outrage at the fact that she might be admitted to the organization without a Florida license. Although it is unclear to what extent Roberts's gender was a factor in the discussion, she did receive one letter of recommendation that would seem to carry more weight than other, negative opinions. On August 6, 1920, Wright sent a letter from his studio, Taliesin, in Spring Green, Wisconsin. It was addressed to "Anyone, Anywhere," and attested that "Miss Isabel Roberts was my assistant in the practice of Architecture for several years and I can recommend her without reservation to anyone requiring the services of an Architect."⁴⁸ Some sources imply that Roberts was merely Wright's office manager, but his letter of recommendation suggests she had an integral role in design production.

Despite Wright's endorsement, or perhaps because of it, Roberts was denied admission to the AIA. Wright himself was never a member, a fact he noted with pride.

Ida Ryan and Isabel Roberts became partners about 1920 and worked together for at least a decade. Although Roberts did not share the title "architect" on the firm letterhead, she was an equal in the partnership. The firm contributed many buildings to the city of Orlando, including the Amherst Apartments, Veterans Memorial Library, the Old Unitarian Church, and many residences.

Partial List of Buildings

See Ida Annah Ryan entry.

LOCATION OF PAPERS. The American Institute of Architects Archives has a file on Roberts' unsuccessful AIA application and letters documenting the controversy over her membership. See membership files, Record Group 803, box 382, folder 54, American Institute of Architects Archives, Washington, D.C.

APPENDIX F

The active years of The Studio at Oak Park roughly corresponded with the first period of Wright's independent practice. It was built and equipped in 1895 and it was closed sometime in 1910. During these years, Wright employed many assistants at The Studio. An accurate and inclusive registry of these people, several of whom went on to independent careers of note, would be a valuable document, but it is unlikely that it will ever be compiled. Records were incomplete, and those that were saved from the debacle of 1909-1910 were destroyed in the Taliesin fire of 1914. Wright cannot remember all the facts. Certain former members of The Studio staff were interviewed by the author in 1939-1940; they cooperated as fully as they could, and much that had been mysterious was cleared up, but none of them had the whole story at his command. The chronicle of The Studio, although it was fresher in peoples' minds then, had already grown dim.

Fortunately, in 1908 Wright drew up a list of his assistants, as he could recall them, together with their terms of service at The Studio,¹ and this list is reproduced here:

Marion Mahony	11 years
William Drummond	7 years
Francis Byrne	5 years
Isabel Roberts	5 years
George Willis	4 years
Walter Griffin	4 years
Andrew Willatsen	3 years
Harry Robinson	2 years
Charles E. White, Jr.	1 year
Erwin Barglebaugh	1 year
Robert Hardin	1 year
Albert McArthur	new

This list is not exhaustive. We know, for example, of a woman named Anna Hicks who assisted Wright in the 1890's. Then, too, the list necessarily leaves unaccounted for the final eighteen months of operations. Sometime after 1908, we know, John van Bergen and Taylor Wooley joined the staff; and there may well have been others. The list, furthermore, is not entirely accurate in its figures if the

recollections of certain staff-members themselves are to be given credence. Lastly, the list does not take any cognizance of those independent artists and craftsmen who collaborated in Wright's work. This is most unfortunate, as there is a good deal of significance for the whole story in these rather shadowy names. We know something of Richard Bock, the sculptor, and of George M. Niedecken, the decorator. It would be very valuable to have a complete dossier on Orlando Giannini, the glassmaker; the author has gleaned a little knowledge of him through correspondence with Alfonso Ianelli of Park Ridge, Illinois (who enters the story most prominently in 1913 as the potter and glassmaker of Midway Gardens and the post-Oak Park era). Another collaborator who appears fitfully in the story is Blanche Ostertag, the potter-muralist; it would be interesting to know precisely what her contribution was before she transferred her center of activities to New York in 1911 and painted, among other things, the "Sailing of the Claremont" in the foyer of the New Amsterdam Theater.

But to return to the regular staff at Oak Park, Marion Mahony is certainly the key figure. If The Studio had been organized along more conventional lines, she would have held the rank of "head designer." In conversations with the author in Chicago in 1940 (she was then the widow of Walter Burley Griffin), she stipulated that she came to The Studio in time to help with the drawings for the Francis Apartments, which was erected in 1895; by this reckoning, she would have been on duty at The Studio some thirteen years in 1908 instead of the eleven which Wright gives her. Although there were brief intervals when she worked elsewhere, it can be said that she remained to the end and saw her name joined with von Holst's in 1910-11 as "co-designer" of the Decatur and Grand Rapids houses. She was not only a skilled designer but a gifted draftswoman; many of the fine pen perspectives turned out by The Studio were hers, as well as

most of the finished drawings for the Wasmuth monograph, and she may have designed some of the decorative murals of the Prairie Houses, such as that in the living room of the Coonley house.

There is good evidence that Walter Burley Griffin joined the staff of The Studio in 1901 rather than 1904. His special interest was landscape architecture, which he eventually broadened into town-planning. In 1914 he won the world-wide competition for the design of Canberra, the Australian Federal Capital; this took him and Mrs. Griffin to The Antipodes, where they remained until his death. William Drummond and John van Bergen were, for several years after The Studio closed, the chief imitators of the Wrightian style in domestic architecture; there are houses standing in the Chicago suburbs today which, although designed by them, are regularly taken by the uninitiated as Wright's. In later practice, each man developed an independent style. Barry Byrne (mentioned as "Francis" in Wright's list) entered after 1910 into partnership with an architect named Ryan and specialized in parochial buildings; his style was never pronouncedly Wrightian. Isabel Roberts, for whom one of the most celebrated Prairie Houses was built in River Forest in 1908, was not an architect; she was bookkeeper and general factotum at The Studio, but it is said that, caught up in the infectiously creative atmosphere of the place, she did occasionally try her hand at design and certainly worked on some of the detail-drawings of her own house. Albert McArthur was the son of that Warren McArthur for whom Wright built the most carefully detailed of the "bootlegged houses," and — many years later, — the Arizona Biltmore at Phoenix.

Note 1

Wright, Frank Lloyd: "In the Cause of Architecture," *Architectural Record*, Vol. 23, March 1908, pp. 155-221.

Source 1

Source 1 is the 1910 and 1930 censuses. The United States Census is a record of the population taken every ten years, and includes information like a person's location, age, and occupation. In the 1910 census, Isabel Roberts is listed alongside her mother Mary and sister Charlotte. It appears that Isabel and Charlotte's occupations were accidentally switched—Charlotte was a schoolteacher, not Isabel. This census was taken when Isabel Roberts was living in River Forest, IL, shortly after the Oak Park Studio closed. The second census is from 1930, taken when Roberts was living and working in Florida alongside her architectural partner Ida Annah Ryan.

Source 2

Source 2 is Isabel Roberts' 1921 application to the Florida Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Her application received letters of support from Frank Lloyd Wright, Ida Annah Ryan (her architectural partner), and John S. Van Bergen (her former coworker in the Oak Park Studio), among others. Objections to her application focus on her lack of licensure in the states of Florida and Illinois, as seen in the letter from architect E.A. Ehmann. Frank Lloyd Wright never had a license to practice architecture during his lifetime.

Source 3

Source 3 is an excerpt from John Lloyd Wright's 1946 memoir *My Father Who is On Earth*. John was born in Oak Park, IL, in 1892, the second of Frank Lloyd Wright's six children with Catherine Wright. He grew up during the most prolific years of the Oak Park Studio, which was attached to his home. He went on to become an architect and worked with his father during the early years of his career.

Source 4

Source 4 is an excerpt from the biography *Many Masks: A Life of Frank Lloyd Wright* by Brendan Gill. This biography was published 1987, 28 years after Frank Lloyd Wright's death in 1959. The author, Brendan Gill, was a columnist for *The New Yorker* who had a passion for architecture and became friends with Frank Lloyd Wright in the years before his death.

Source 5

Source 5 is a biographical entry about Isabel Roberts from *The First American Women Architects* by Sarah Allaback, published in 2008. The book is organized alphabetically and serves as a reference guide of female architects who may have been overlooked by history.

Sarah Allaback is an architectural historian.

Source 6

Source 6 is an excerpt from the biography *Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910: The First Golden Age* by architectural historian Grant Carpenter Manson. It was published in 1958. Manson met Wright in 1938 while writing his doctoral thesis at Harvard, which Wright was the subject of. The thesis was finished in 1941 and Manson later expanded it into this book.

What is Critical Thinking?

Critical Thinking is defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary as “the act or practice of thinking critically (as by applying reason and questioning assumptions) in order to solve problems, evaluate information, discern biases, etc.”

What does this mean?

The way we understand information is influenced by a variety of things, including the way the information is presented. For instance, when you are reading a book, you might not question what the author is writing. But what if the author did not check their facts? Or what if the author has a biased perspective? This is where critical thinking comes in.

One approach to thinking critically are the Five W's:

Who? What? When? Where? Why?

The Five W's allow us to gather more information about a source, which helps us to determine if it's primary or secondary and to understand why it was created.

Critical Thinking Worksheet

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

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