The Affleck House is the cramped passageway between the utility room/maid’s room suite and Gregor’s workroom, which has an awkward four-foot height. The origins of this base-ment tunnel are shrouded in mystery. It seems clear that the passage was not part of the original design since none of the surviving drawings by Wright and his apprentices show any connection between these two areas. Thus there is no verified explanation for its presence. Rumors blame an unskilled contractor who could not read Wright’s plans, but that story is suspect given that Harold Turner, a skilled builder by the time work began on the house, supervised construction. A more likely explanation is that some sort of accident occurred that could not be corrected before the concrete dried. This tunnel is the only indoor access to the laundry room, which can also be reached from an outside door.

Ironically, the servant’s quarters were never used as such since the Afflicks never employed a maid.

The Bedrooms

The family’s private area, consisting of three bedrooms and two bathrooms, is raised a half-level above the plane of the entrance hall and largely out of sight. This is a move Wright made in many of the Usonians to signal the hierarchy between the public and private zones. Rectangular in form, and the largest of the house’s three areas, the private wing features a narrow corridor along one side, four feet wide and illuminated by a continuous row of clerestory windows. As in most Usonians, there are no spaces in the house devoted strictly to circulation, so even this hallway is lined with shelves on one side and closets and drawers on the other.

The bedrooms are compact, in keeping with Wright’s desire for simplification. All three rooms are entered through a corner in an attempt to make their relatively small spaces seem a little larger, and in harmony with Wright’s affinity for diagonal axes.

Often Frank Lloyd Wright designed elements in his houses that personalized the home for the owners. For the Afflicks, Wright designed cutouts of a stylized “A” for Affleck, which are used in some windows and bedroom and bath light fixtures.

6 Study/Den/Third Bedroom -- Overlooking the entrance hall and living area, this room was planned as a study, but served as a den and child’s bedroom through the years. Items displayed in this area reflect Wright’s inspiration by nature and the Afflecks’ connection to Wright. See the copies of correspondence between Wright and Affleck between this room and the second bedroom is a skylit “Jack-and-Jill” bathroom.

Note the unusual shower-curtain arrangement in the bathrooms, which screens the tub and sink from the toilet area, but because the bracket swings out for a door-like screen, it does not prevent water from standing on the floor.

7 Bedroom -- This 12-foot-square bedroom was used by the Afflecks’ daughter, Mary Ann, and displays the classic Frobel blocks he might have used as a child, along with three-dimensional wood puzzles and toys.

8 Master Bedroom -- The 16-by-18-foot master bedroom is at the very end of the house and contains its own skylit bathroom and a specially-designated vanity. When the closest doors on each side of the vanity are opened at an angle, a three-way mirror is created. Also, the shelves in the bedroom have flip-down facades to protect privacy and create a neat appearance.

Windows in the bedrooms, and throughout the house, were designed to be open to the light and scenery beyond. No curtains were intended. The house is designed for complete privacy, the interior is invisible from the outside.

The master bedroom reflects Wright’s life-long interest in Japanese art and culture with Japanese artifacts, art, bonsai plants, and design elements. His first trip outside the United States was to Japan. Wright later designed Tokyo’s Imperial Hotel and took up temporary residence in Tokyo during the many years it took to build the structure.

9 Exterior -- The house’s appearance is distinctly horizontal in keeping with Wright’s belief that the horizontal line of the ground plane, reflected in a building, reinforced the building’s symbolic connection to its location. This horizontal emphasis can be seen in the extended, overhanging flat roofs of the house and carport, the lapped boards of tidewater cypress wood siding, the cantilevered terrace extending off the living room, the clerestory windows that run along the public face of the house, and even in the brickwork of the masonry sections, where the horizontal joints between the bricks were raked to a greater-than-average depth while the vertical joints were built up with mortar until they were flush with the wall’s surface – per Wright’s command. Natural materials were of course highlighted: except for the glass windows, viewers of the house saw only brick and wood.

Wright abhorred garages. Like basements, he felt they accumulated unnecessary clutter. So he designed the Usonians with garages instead of garages. Flat roofs, which could be built with less difficulty than standard pitched roofs, eliminated the need for “ugly” gutters.

Wright turned the opening under the cantilevered terrace into a rest area, attaching bench seats to the structural piers and paving a small brick terrace around the reflecting pool. This space could be used to escape the heat on summer days, or perhaps even as another place to contemplate the site’s natural beauty. In many of the designs for the house, Wright envisioned a small stream running down the hill, under the terrace, and into the pond at the ravine’s bottom, so he incorporated a Japanese-style footbridge and small boulders beneath the overhang to enhance the stream’s attractiveness. No existing photographs depict such a stream, however, and the site today gives no indication of running water.

For More Information

Tours
For more information about Lawrence Tech’s Affleck House, visit www.flw.ltu.edu. For information on tours or hosting events, call 248.204.2300 or email advancement@ltu.edu.

Donations
The Friends of Frank Lloyd Wright Affleck House, a nonprofit organization founded in 1982, works to support the renovation and continual improvement of the house. If you are interested in making a donation to help ensure the continued care and preservation of this Wright legacy, call 248.204.2300.
The interior arrangement of the Affleck House's rooms reveals typical Wrightian gestures. The house consists of three major areas: public – where guests might be allowed; intermediate (the entrance hall) – which serves as a transition between outside and indoors as well as between the two other areas of the house; and private – consisting of three bedrooms and two bathrooms. These three zones are distinguished by their size, shape, and relationship to each other.

1 Entrance Way -- The Affleck House, like Wright's other Usonians, turns its back to the public, offering a mostly windowless brick wall to arriving visitors. Wright viewed the home as a safe haven for the family, where privacy is paramount.

The entry way, which is tucked beneath a low-hanging windowless brick wall to arriving visitors. Wright viewed the home as a safe haven for the family, where privacy is paramount.

2 Entrance Hall -- The light-filled entrance hall features an entrance way is an extension of the skylights inside, using the same pattern of framed openings, which serves to extend space beyond the walls of the house and blur the distinction between inside and outside.

3 Living/Music Room and Terrace -- The public area heart of the Affleck House, the living room and terrace display many of Wright's salient concepts of domestic architecture. He oriented the house so that the living room faced southeast to guarantee abundant sunlight throughout the year. His design reflects his beliefs in the sanctity of family life and architecture. All other spaces in the Affleck house are secondary.

The light well that dominates the room at floor level consists of windows set flush with the floor, surrounded by a short wall of lapped boards that mimics the wooden walls found throughout the house. When opened, the windows allow cool air to circulate up and through the main rooms. Wright designed his houses without air conditioning in the belief that artificially controlled climates removed people from nature. Elizabeth Affleck called the light well "an organic air conditioning unit."

The entrance hall illustrated Wright's effort to unify interior and exterior spaces. It is the most transparent room in the house, with a wall and ceiling that present only a minimal barrier. Wright employed a trelis outside to enhance this connection. The trelis over the rear door into the entrance way is an extension of the skylights inside, using the same pattern of framed openings, which serves to extend space beyond the walls of the house and blur the distinction between inside and outside.

4 Dining Room -- The living room's northern end was for dining. Wright attached a row of shelves to the wall for the Afflecks to display their dinnerware and placed the dinner table next to the kitchen for ready access.

Displayed in the living and dining rooms are Frank Lloyd Wright artifacts and mementos, plates, china, books, candles, and drawings of projects. Also included are a number of items about the house since it was gifted to Lawrence Technological University in 1978.

5 Kitchen -- Wright began calling kitchens "work spaces" in the Usonian houses in recognition of the changing social circumstances that required more and more middle-class women to do their own cooking without the aid of full- or part-time servants. His designs were governed by efficiency. The Affleck kitchen is a 10-foot-by-10-foot brick-walled room tightly packed with appliances, counters, and storage compartments, with a stairway leading down to the lower level. Wright's Usonian kitchen's were strictly utilitarian rooms without embellishment and often not enjoying a direct connection to the outside as often rooms. Their purpose was to furnish the necessities for working in a streamlined space that was open to the living area, which was an innovative feature at that time.

Originally, there was no drawer space in the kitchen, only a narrow space beneath the stairs – drawer space that was added as the kitchen was modernized. Down the stairs to the lower level is an unique arrangement of drawers that pull out at every turn.

Lower Level (not open to the public) The Affleck House is unique in the Usonian world as one of the few examples with a lower level. Wright did not believe in basements and felt they were used to collect unnecessary clutter. Taking advantage of the hillside location, however, Wright placed the util-

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**Affleck House Tour Sequence**

**First Floor Plan**

- **Entry Hall**
- **Bedroom**
- **Living Room**
- **Dining Room**
- **Kitchen**
- **Bedroom**
- **Lower level pool**

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**Logos placed vertically to provide intense heat without smoke.**

The living room demonstrates another of Wright's design characteristics -- the use of a diagonal axis. Wright placed doorways or entries in the corner of a room to give the impression of greater interior depth, which was further emphasized by either partially or fully glazing the corner windows where the diagonal axis reaches the end of the room and continues outdoors. From the door of the Affleck living room, one can see through the corner, over the terrace, and out to the ravine in front of the house slightly below treetop level. This vista unites the house with its surroundings, giving the impression that the living room continues outside and into the trees and sky with only a minimal barrier between.

As was his custom, Frank Lloyd Wright designed furniture for the Afflecks to match their house. Several of the 13 pieces he created have survived and are displayed in this room. Simple and horizontally oriented, they fit with the house's design theme. Wright designed a dining table, end tables, and a set of wooden chairs with upholstered backs and seats, each chair could be used individually or combined with others to form a sofa. Other chairs for the house consisted of a Y-shaped plywood base supporting an L-shaped seat and back. All of the chairs and tables were handmade and made of cypress plywood to match the rest of the house.

The southern end of the living room once contained the Affleck's piano. On his first visit to the house, Wright observed that the space was too tight for the instrument and promptly sawed off a corner of the wall shelf to accommodate it. He used the truncated piece to create a phonograph cabinet that protruded into the room perpendicular from the wall to form a nook for the piano.