

Dana-Thomas House

State Historic Site

Springfield, Illinois



301 East Lawrence Avenue • Springfield, IL 62703
217.782.6776

Managed by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

Dana-Thomas House

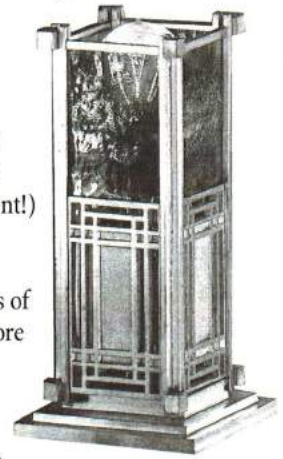
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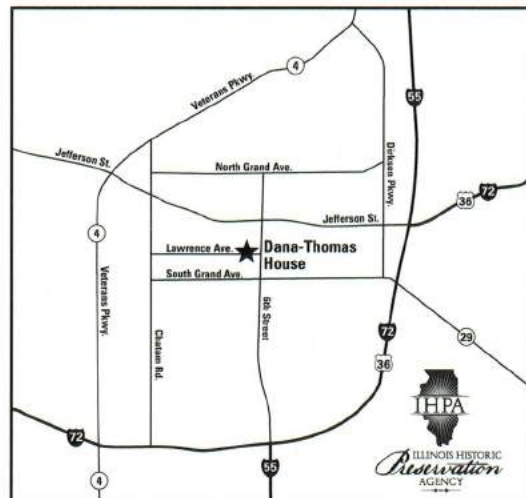
Hours: Hours are seasonal. Please contact the site.

Website: www.illinoishistory.org • www.dana-thomas.org

Explore an incredible Frank Lloyd Wright masterpiece. In 1902 socialite and activist Susan Lawrence Dana hired Wright to design a new home suited to entertaining. Wright used Dana's fortune to give free rein to his creative imagination. (Check out the duckpin bowling alley in the basement!) The 35-room house includes two entertaining areas with impressive barrel-vaulted ceilings, 250 examples of art-glass doors and windows and more than 100 art-glass lighting fixtures. Wright also designed much of the house's furniture. Other artists added their own touches, including a stunning indoor fountain. The house and its collection of original furnishings is one of the world's most complete packages of Wright's work.

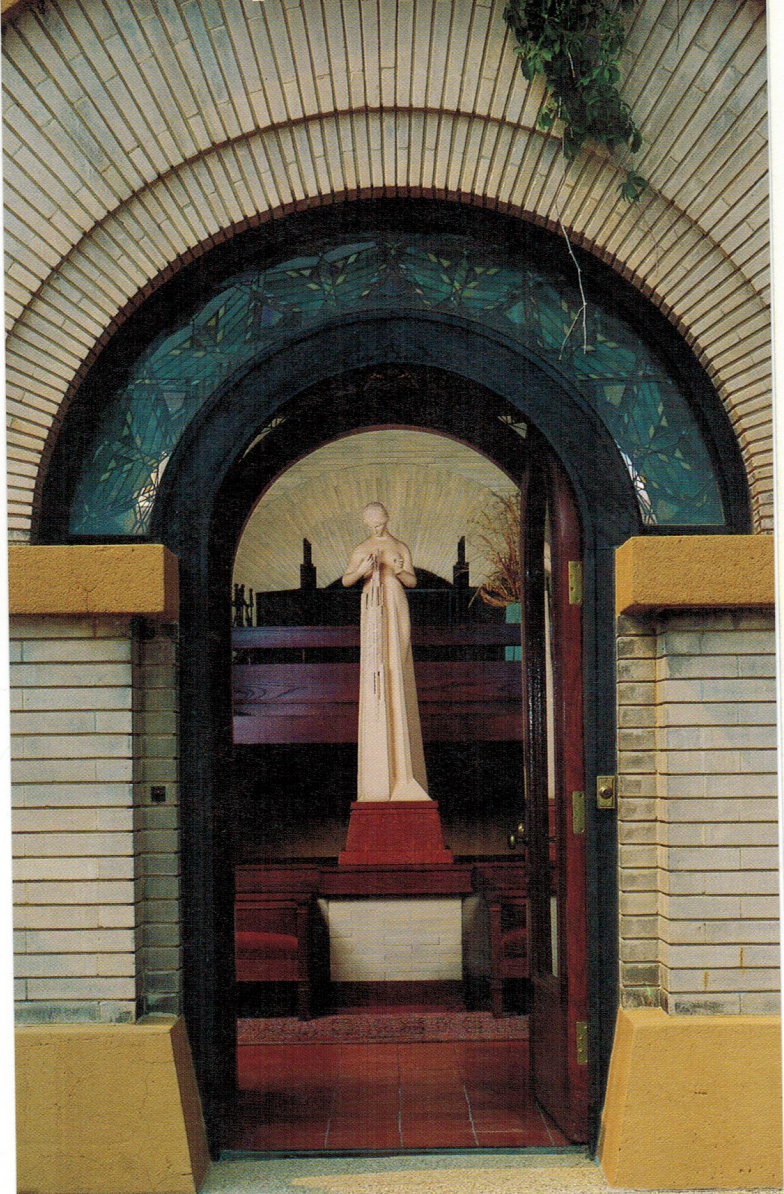


- Guided tours of the house and grounds reveal many features of Wright's early Prairie-style design and offer a glimpse into the fascinating world of Susan Lawrence Dana.
- The Sumac Shop offers many Wright-inspired gift items.
- Call the site to learn about concerts, readings and theatrical events in the gallery throughout the year.



Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois. 5M 6/13 IOC113-791

Visit the magnificent
Frank Lloyd Wright
designed
Dana-Thomas House
Springfield, IL



Administered by the
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

Tour information:

The Dana-Thomas House State Historic Site is open for tours, Wednesday through Sunday, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Your guided tour will last about 1 hour. The last tour begins each day at 4:00 p.m.

The site is closed Mondays, Tuesdays, and major holidays.

The admission fee is a suggested donation.

Reservations are required for groups of 10 or more.

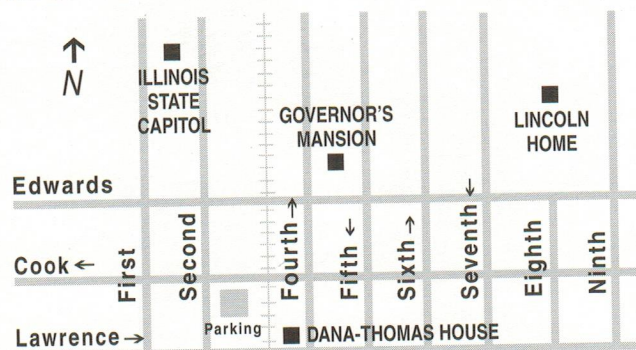
Call **217-782-6776** for more information.

Souvenirs and gifts can be purchased in the Sumac Shop - a wonderful gift shop located on site and operated by the Dana-Thomas House Foundation.

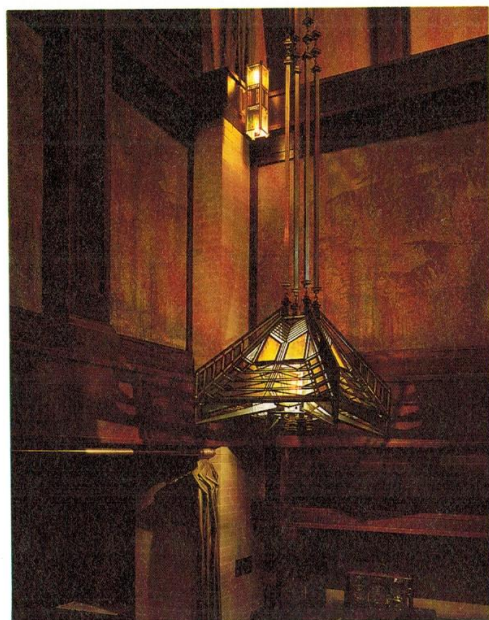
On the web visit www.sumacshop.com and www.dana-thomas.org

The Dana-Thomas House is located at 301 East Lawrence Avenue, Springfield, IL 62703 and is close to other historic sites.

Free parking is available in the site parking lot which is accessed from Cook Street, north-west of the Dana-Thomas House.



The Dana-Thomas House is owned and operated by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.



Detail of dining room, with butterfly light fixture and George Niedecken sumac mural.

families of all the laborers, artisans, and designers who had worked on the new House.

Just months after the House was completed, Susan's mother died in March 1905. Then in 1913, just a year after marrying a young Danish baritone concert artist, Lawrence Joergen-Dahl, Susan witnessed his unexpected death. A third marriage was an unhappy one that ended in divorce.

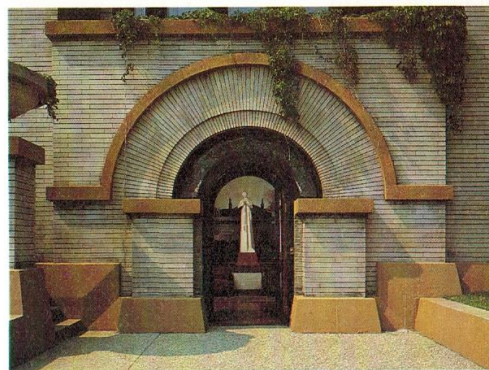
Susan entertained regularly and with great social distinction. In addition to benefit concerts for charitable causes, she hosted governors, state politicians, members of local society, and guests from all over the world.

Throughout the 1920's and 30's Susan increasingly opened her home to metaphysical and mystical religious groups, including her own group, the Lawrence Center for Constructive Thought. Elaborate society gatherings gave way to new emphasis on religious fulfillment. Finally, when a cousin who had lived with her for many years died, Susan was left alone in her Wright-designed house. A short time later, about 1928, Susan

clared incompetent by the courts in 1942, she was admitted to a local hospital, where she died in 1946. Her personal effects were inventoried in 1942 and auctioned at a public sale in July 1943. Her Frank Lloyd Wright House was sold the following year.

The Architect, Frank Lloyd Wright

Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) was thirty-five in 1902, the year he began work on the Dana House. Already well known for his innovative design, Wright was revolutionizing American domestic architecture in the Midwest. The Dana House commission was Wright's largest to date, and it provided him the opportunity to experiment with new design ideas and techniques; many were later incorporated into some of his most famous houses—the Darwin Martin House in Buffalo, New York (1904-05), the Avery Coonley House in



Lawrence Avenue front arched entry of the Dana House. The original terra cotta sculpture is by Richard W. Bock, friend and collaborator with Wright.

Riverside (1907-08), and the Frederick Robie House in Chicago (1908-09).

Mostly self-taught as an architect, Wright worked briefly in Chicago for architect Joseph Lyman Silsbee. For six years afterward—from 1887-1893—Wright assimilated the philosophies, ideas, and integrity of the renowned Louis Sullivan, of the Chicago firm of Adler and Sullivan. Wright was Sullivan's chief draftsman, and he worked on many of the most outstanding public architectural projects of the period, including Chicago's Auditorium Theater and Hotel, the Transportation Building for the Columbia Ex-

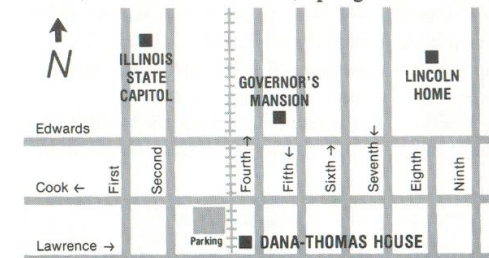
position, and St. Louis' Wainwright Building, which is considered the first skyscraper.

Wright established his own architectural office in 1893 after a series of disputes with Louis Sullivan over Wright's work outside the office. Wright and other young designers began attracting clients who agreed with their principles of new domestic architecture, soon to be known as the Prairie style. By 1898 Wright had added his Studio to his Oak Park home, and within two years he had gathered around him a team of sensitive young architects to coordinate the designs for the first of the Prairie houses.

Tour Information

The Dana-Thomas House State Historic Site is open for tours, Wednesday thru Sunday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; the last tour begins each day at 4. Reservations are required for groups of ten or more: 782-6773. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays.

SUGGESTED DONATION. For additional information, phone 217/782-6776, or write Dana-Thomas House, 301 E. Lawrence Ave., Springfield IL 62703.



The Dana-Thomas House Foundation Sumac Shop

301 East Lawrence, Springfield, IL 62703

Phone: 217/744-3598 Hours: Wed.-Sun. 9-4

Art Glass, Books, China, Frank Lloyd Wright

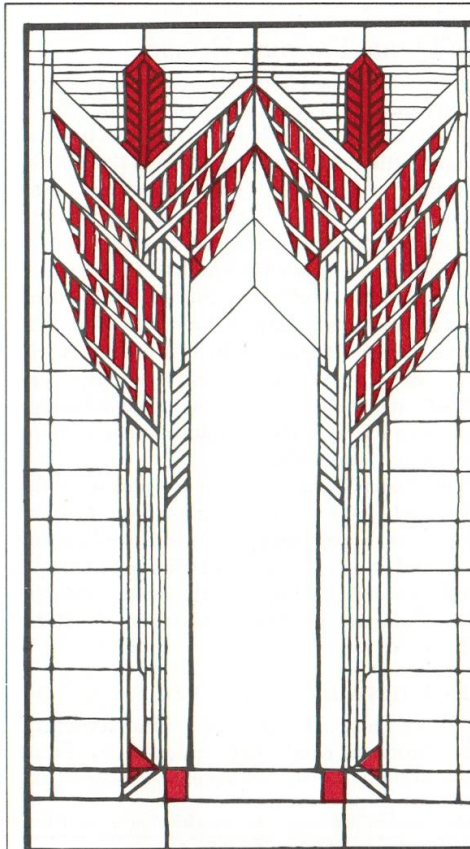
Related Gifts and Reproductions

No Admission Fee

This brochure has been funded by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. The Dana-Thomas House Foundation, a not-for-profit organization, works with the Agency to preserve, protect, and interpret the state-owned historic site and to promote citizen awareness of Frank Lloyd Wright and Susan Lawrence Dana through the development and presentation of educational programs and the acquisition of funds and artifacts to enhance interpretive programs.



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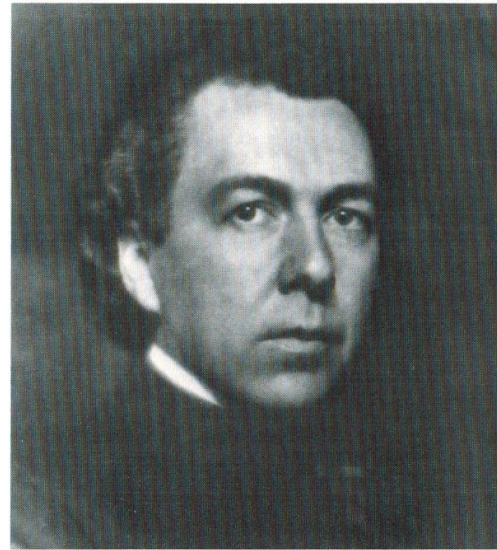
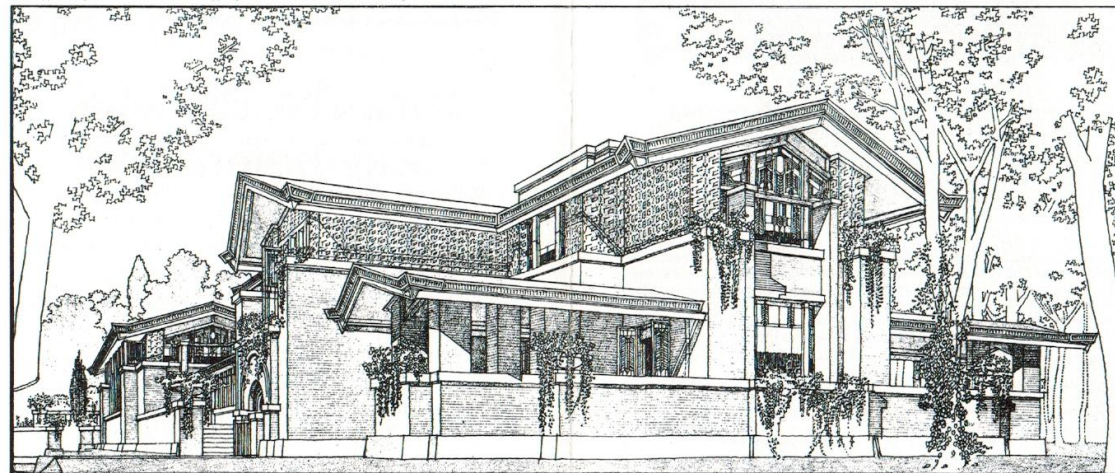
Springfield's Dana-Thomas House is the best preserved and most complete of Frank Lloyd Wright's early "Prairie" houses. The structure has changed little since its construction in 1902-04 for Springfield socialite and women's activist Susan Lawrence Dana. More than one hundred pieces of original Wright-designed white oak furniture is still in place along with two hundred fifty art glass doors, windows, and light panels. Two hundred original light fixtures and skylights illuminate the interior. Original sculptures in terra cotta by Richard W. Bock ornament the vestibule and reception hall, and the only surviving, original George Niedecken mural in any Wright house graces the four dining room walls.

The Dana-Thomas House is typical of the Prairie style, which is characterized on the exterior by low horizontal roofs, wide overhanging eaves, and rows of ribbon art glass windows. A raised main living level, open floor plan, and centralized fireplace and hearth are common features of the interior.

Construction and Design

The Dana-Thomas House is one of the largest and most elaborate residences designed by Frank Lloyd Wright during his seventy-year-long ca-

Wright's finished drawing of the east elevation of Susan Lawrence Dana's House.



Courtesy Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio

Frank Lloyd Wright in 1905, just after the Dana House project had been completed.

reer. Designs for the House were executed between mid-1902 and early 1903. Construction began in the late summer of 1902, and the House was completed before Christmas 1904.

Unlike most houses designed by Wright, the Dana House project involved the complete re-

structuring of the thirty-year-old Italianate brick house built by Susan's father, Rheuna Lawrence, a wealthy businessman and former mayor of Springfield who died in 1901. Wright was commissioned to incorporate the brick foundations and a portion of the original floor plan into the new House along with a Victorian sitting room and marble fireplace. Plans of the home, however, show that as construction progressed, the new Prairie house took precedence, the old house playing only a minor role.

Susan Lawrence Dana lived in the House until about 1928, when she took a more modest home just west across the railroad tracks. She owned the Wright-designed home until 1944 when the building was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Charles C. Thomas. For thirty-seven years the Thomases used the House as executive offices for their publishing firm. Although minor changes were made



Courtesy of Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

Susan Lawrence Dana, circa 1893. She was about 31 years old.

and a few original features removed, the Thomases maintained its original floor plan and intricate detail. The House was sold to the state of Illinois in 1981. It has been totally restored and is under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

The Patron, Susan Lawrence Dana

Born and raised in Springfield, Susan Lawrence Dana (1862-1946) was the only surviving child of Rheuna and Mary Agnes Maxcy Lawrence. Susan grew up in a refined atmosphere that accustomed



Courtesy of Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

1902 construction view showing the walls of the Wright-designed house encompassing the Italianate family home.

her to social parties, club activities, charity fundraisers, and grand entertainment. In 1883 she married Edwin Dana, a young man who worked in a real estate office. Having some interests in mining, he was supposed to take over Rheuna Lawrence's western mining properties in Oregon and Colorado. The Dana's marriage brought happiness and sadness. The young couple spent several years in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Susan bore two children who died in infancy. By the 1890's Susan and her husband had taken permanent residence in Springfield, where, in 1900, she received word that Edwin had been killed while inspecting an Oregon mine. A few months later her father died.

Named executor of her father's estate in 1902, Susan discussed with her mother the remodeling of the old family residence at Fourth Street and Lawrence Avenue. Passing over local architects and acquaintances of her father, Susan chose a young Oak Park architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, to design the new House. Completed in 1904, the residence was dedicated by Susan and her mother with a series of Christmas parties, the first for the