

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater®

Voted the most important building of the 20th century in a poll conducted by the American Institute of Architects, Fallingwater is Frank Lloyd Wright's masterwork. The "house over the waterfall" was entrusted to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy by Edgar Kaufmann jr. (sic) in October, 1963. Included with this generous gift were 500 acres surrounding the beautiful Bear Run Valley.

Fallingwater was built in 1936 by Edgar Kaufmann, Sr., and used as a family weekend retreat. The Kaufmanns became acquainted with the Conservancy when they were involved with the establishment of Ohiopyle State Park. Edgar Kaufmann jr. entrusted the house and land to the Conservancy because:

"Such a place cannot be possessed. It is a work of man for man; not by a man for a man. Over the years since it was built, Fallingwater has grown ever more famous and admired, a textbook example of modern architecture at its best. By its very intensity it is a public resource, not a private indulgence."

Fallingwater came to the Conservancy with its specially built furniture, furnishings and art collection. The gift was received under a deed of trust which requires the Conservancy to maintain the buildings and grounds, to not build new structures visible from Fallingwater, and to operate the "Kaufmann Conservation on Bear Run" as a cultural center open to public visitation.

In its 1964 opening season, more than 20,000 people found their way to Mill Run, a remote southwestern Pennsylvania location. Visitation has grown steadily from there. In 2006, more than 136,000 people visited the house and grounds of Fallingwater. That same year, Fallingwater's total visitation since 1964 surpassed four million guests.

The Bear Run Nature Reserve grew tenfold from its original 500 acres. Today, the reserve encompasses nearly the entire Bear Run watershed with its 5,061 acres. The reserve is a place where habitat is protected for native plants and animals, and sustains important ecological connections in a landscape patchwork of farmland, development and commercial forest in Fayette County.

As a symbol of living in harmony with nature, Fallingwater offers a wide variety of education programs for students of all ages and adults.

As the steward of Fallingwater, the Conservancy's relationship with Fallingwater can best be summed up in the words of Mr. Kaufmann when he conveyed the house in 1963:

"Why are these acres and this house given as a conservation, in the care of Western Pennsylvania Conservancy? Because conservation is not preservation: preservation is stopping life to serve a future contingency; conservation is keep life going. The union of powerful art and powerful nature into something beyond the sum of their separate powers deserves to be kept living. As the waterfall of Bear Run needed the house to enter the realm of art, so the joint work of art, Fallingwater in its setting, needed Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to enter a new life of public service. I believe the happy coincidences that have marked this enterprise from the start will continue to favor its new existence in the hands of the Conservancy. I believe the Conservancy will give nature, the source, full due, and art, the human response to nature, full respect. For this confidence I am most grateful to Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and to the community that supports it so well."