

# The Tracy House

—designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, 1955



*Bill and Elizabeth were admirers of Wright when they moved to Washington State in the early 1950's.* Bill had studied architecture, though he eventually became an engineer. Elizabeth, originally from Michigan, had taken art classes from Alma Goetsch and Katherine Winckler at Michigan State College. As a student she had visited the famous Wright designed Goetsch-Winckler House (1939), Okemos, Michigan. After establishing themselves in Washington the Tracys purchased a 100 foot wide high bank west facing waterfront lot on Puget Sound. The property had mature trees and featured magnificent views of Puget Sound and the snowcapped Olympic Mountains. They became acquainted with Seattle based former Wright apprentice Milton Stricker and initially considered having Stricker design their home. However (and much to his credit) after visiting the property Stricker told the Tracys that their property was so magnificent that it deserved a design by Wright himself. He wrote a letter of introduction to Wright which eventually led to Wright accepting the commission.

Early on the Tracys expressed interest in the specialized custom concrete block system Wright called Usonian Automatic. These houses were derived from his famous textile block houses built in the Los Angeles area in the early 1920's. The Tracy's liked the aesthetic qualities of the buildings and also appreciated the system for its structural integrity. The idea that they could cast the blocks themselves, thus reducing the ultimate cost of the building, appealed greatly. The preliminary plans arrived and they asked Wright to complete the technical drawing with only very minor modifications.

Wright had already constructed five "Usonian Automatics" so the Tracys felt comfortable that the system was well developed. They had the steel forms fabricated locally and set to work casting two sets of blocks each day working five days a week – in addition to their day jobs as engineer and physical therapist. They cast over 1,700 blocks!!! When telling the story it was always intriguing that they emphasized the "five days a week" as they made it clear to all that they reserved their weekends for getting to the mountains to ski, ride their trail bikes and generally enjoy nature! They hired local contractor Ray Brandes, who had built his own Wright Designed house in the Seattle area a few years earlier, to build their house. They were well served by this choice. Brandes built a sound and well-crafted building.

Bill and Elizabeth were also committed to maintaining the building in pristine condition. Due to the beauty and simplicity of the design, the magnificence of the site and buildings excellent condition it has been widely published and is a favorite among Wright fans. The building is placed at an angle across the property and is afforded excellent privacy from neighbors. The manner in which Wright nestled the building into the landscape brings the line of the landscape up to the bottom of the bedroom windows creating an intimacy that he was afforded in very few sites. The native fir trees often welcome eagles and other native birds. It is a tranquil setting that encourages peace and contemplation. Bill and Elizabeth enjoyed these qualities. They spent time every evening listening to music and/or reading to each other. They chose to entertain friends in small groups and valued intimate quality conversation.

The House is often described as a jewel box filled with books and music. This is true in the day time when the sun floods the living room and is softened by the tile-red integral color concrete floor, the redwood panels of many interior wall surfaces and the gold toned built-in seats. Evening brings new qualities when the colors of the setting sun are reflected in the full height pairs of doors that define the living and dining area and open to the spacious water side terrace. In summer the terrace, in effect, doubles the available area for entertaining. As the sun sets the coffered concrete ceiling seems to float on the illuminated pierced concrete and glass piers that support the roof. The perforated concrete corner blocks with mitered glass that make up these piers are repeated in other parts of the house. Three ceiling levels enliven the play between spaces and the over-all result is a compact house that causes the eye to explore and feels much larger than it is.

One has an experience approximating living in the wilderness while being only twenty-five minutes from downtown Seattle.

The Tracy house is listed on the National Register of Historic Houses.

[http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM2GPM\\_Tracy\\_House\\_Seattle\\_WA](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM2GPM_Tracy_House_Seattle_WA)

The House and its furniture are protected by the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy

<http://www.savewright.org/>

Articles on the house:

<http://www.steinerag.com/flw/Artifact%20Pages/PhRtS389.htm>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/dalydaly/215221822/>

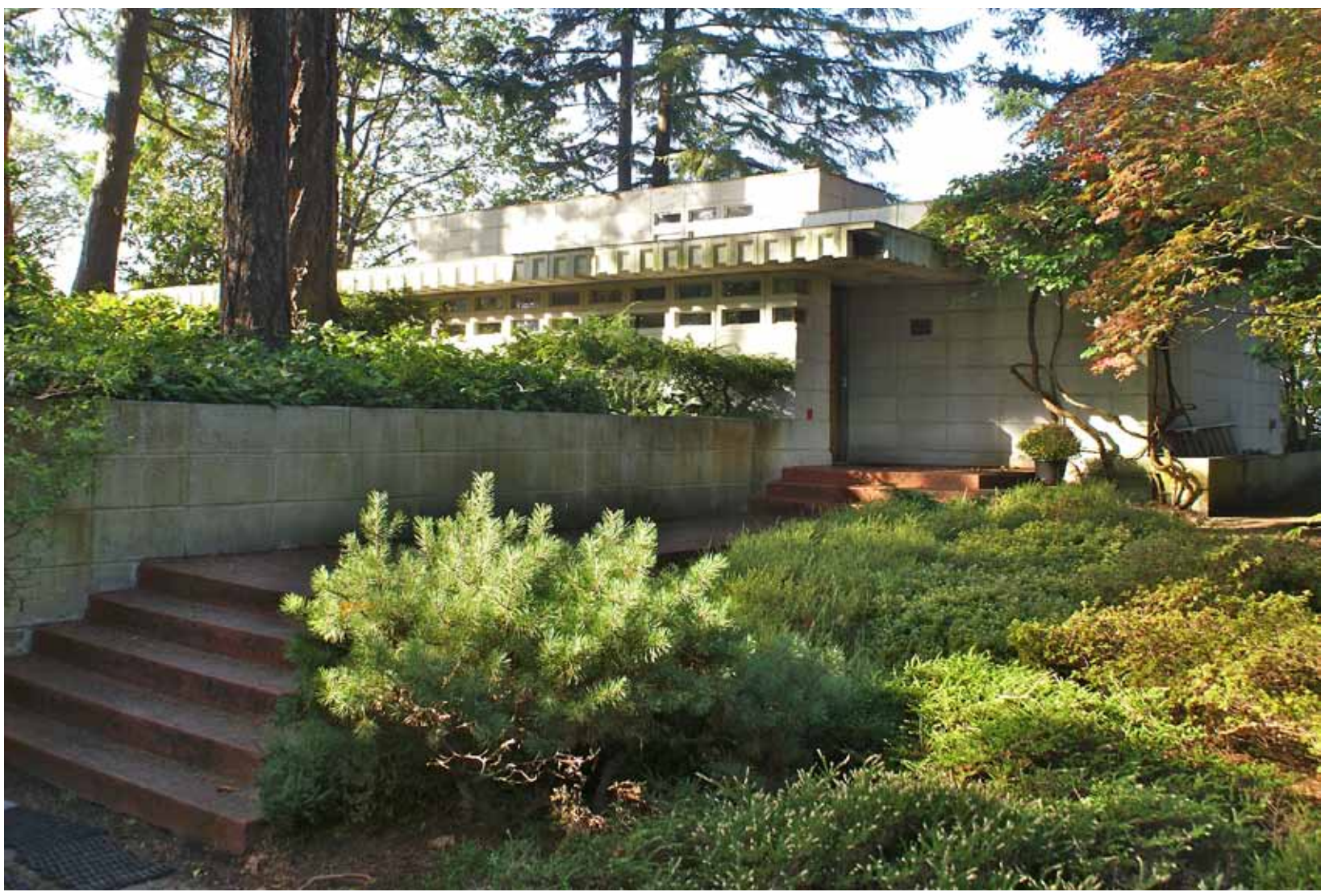
[Video tour of the house](#) given by Bill and Elizabeth

## House Basics:

The house will be sold with a complete set of archival documents including, original plans, bibliography, construction photos, plans for a later addition proposed by the Taliesin Associated architects (only the cascading pools were built), and copies of all Wright and Tracy correspondence relating to the house and a copy of the DVD of Bill and Elizabeth describing the house and its construction to visitors. Additional material including writings by Bill Tracy, family photos, and other ephemera will be available through the Tracy Family archives in Boise, ID.

- Approximately 1,150 sf. Plus a detached two car carport with storage.
- Three bedrooms and one bath, Living, Dining, Kitchen facing the water view, plus utility with laundry
- Principal materials: Concrete, redwood plywood panels and glass
- Lot: 100' Puget Sound waterfront, 31,000+ sf., located in a distinctive community on a quiet dead-end road.
- The Tracy site is part of the Normandy Park plat and thus includes membership in the beach club with access to the club house, swimming pool, tennis courts and secure access to the private beach.
- Price \$1,159,000.
- Shown by appointment only
- Contact: Larry A. Woodin, Executor 206.794.5276 Email [ecohome@mindspring.com](mailto:ecohome@mindspring.com)
- Buyers' agents welcome





[Go Home](#)

[Next Page](#)



[Go Home](#)

[Next Page](#)



Contact: Larry A. Woodin, Executor 206.794.5276 Email [ecohome@mindspring.com](mailto:ecohome@mindspring.com)

[Go Home](#)