

[ANGLES ON ARCHITECTURE]

The House of the Hill

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"No house should ever be on a hill or on anything. Belonging to it. Hill and house should live together each the happier for the other."—Frank Lloyd Wright

Hidden high in the hills of Los Feliz, just south of Griffith Park, sits one of the most important examples of American architectural history—the "Ennis House."

The house is a monumental architectural wonder that was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1923 for Charles and Mabel Ennis, who owned a clothing store in Downtown L.A. The home was completed in 1924.

If you drive up Vermont Avenue and look up toward the hills you will view a home inspired by Pre-Columbian Mayan temples and an example of Wright's "California Romanza" period where he sought to create a style unique to southern California.

The largest and the last of



"The Ennis House," designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1923

four "textile block" houses designed by Wright in the 1920s, the Ennis House is considered by many to be Wright's masterpiece in Los Angeles. At 6,900 sq. ft., the house was originally constructed entirely of 16-inch textured concrete blocks without mortar and instead with steel reinforcing rod inside to connect them.

"Aesthetically concrete has neither song nor any story," Wright has said of his use of the materials. "Nor is it easy to see in this conglomerate, in this mud pie, a high aesthetic property, because in itself it is amalgam, aggregate compound. And cement, the binding medium, is characterless. Concrete is a plastic material—susceptible to the impress of imagination. I saw a kind of weaving coming out of it—lightness and strength! Steel the spider spinning a web within the cheap, molded material and

wedded to it by pouring an inner core of cement after the blocks were set up.

The block construction repeated throughout the house is seen on the interior walls, in the columns and surrounding the windows. Using concrete, a common industrial material, which is elevated to a work of art, the architect makes a dramatic impression.

Wright's signature Art Glass used on the windows and doors emphasizes the overall geometric motif.

The house has had many owners through the years. The two most prominent were the Ennis family and Augustus Brown, who bought the house in the late 1960s.

Currently, there is a desire to rename the house only for its original owner. The house is now owned by The Ennis House Foundation and they are

overseeing the massive restoration project, which will repair the damage to the home incurred by the 1994 Northridge Earthquake and the record rains of 2005.

The house has been used as a setting in numerous films including "House on Haunted Hill" with Vincent Price, "Blade Runner," "Rocketeer" and "Black Rain."

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