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USONIAN HOUSES

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- Jacobs’ First House

- 1,500 sqft, built in 1936 for $5,500

- Usonians are studies of the economy of cost gained through economy of design

- Houses used a modular planning grid, in-floor radiant heating, board and batten construction

- There were no radiators no basements, no attics, no downspouts, gutters, plaster or paint, or garages

- Simplified construction process so people could build a large part of the house themselves

- Maximized use of prefabrication

- Small scale, not much space for many possessions

- Conservation of energy through passive ventilation and large overhangs, thermal mass of masonry and concrete to minimize extreme temperature changes

- Wright aspired to create a democratic, distinctly national style that was affordable to the “common people” of the United States

- However, construction ended up being more complicated than thought, and most people hired professionals to do the construction. The houses ended up being unique, custom homes for families of comfortable means

- Grew out of Wright’s earlier prairie houses

- Usoniam Automatics used concrete blocks, reducing the need for skilled labor

- Still relied on traditional form of the nuclear family, but demanded changes in lifestyle in other areas: keeping fewer possessions, wearing sweaters in winter and not relying on the thermostat, etc

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