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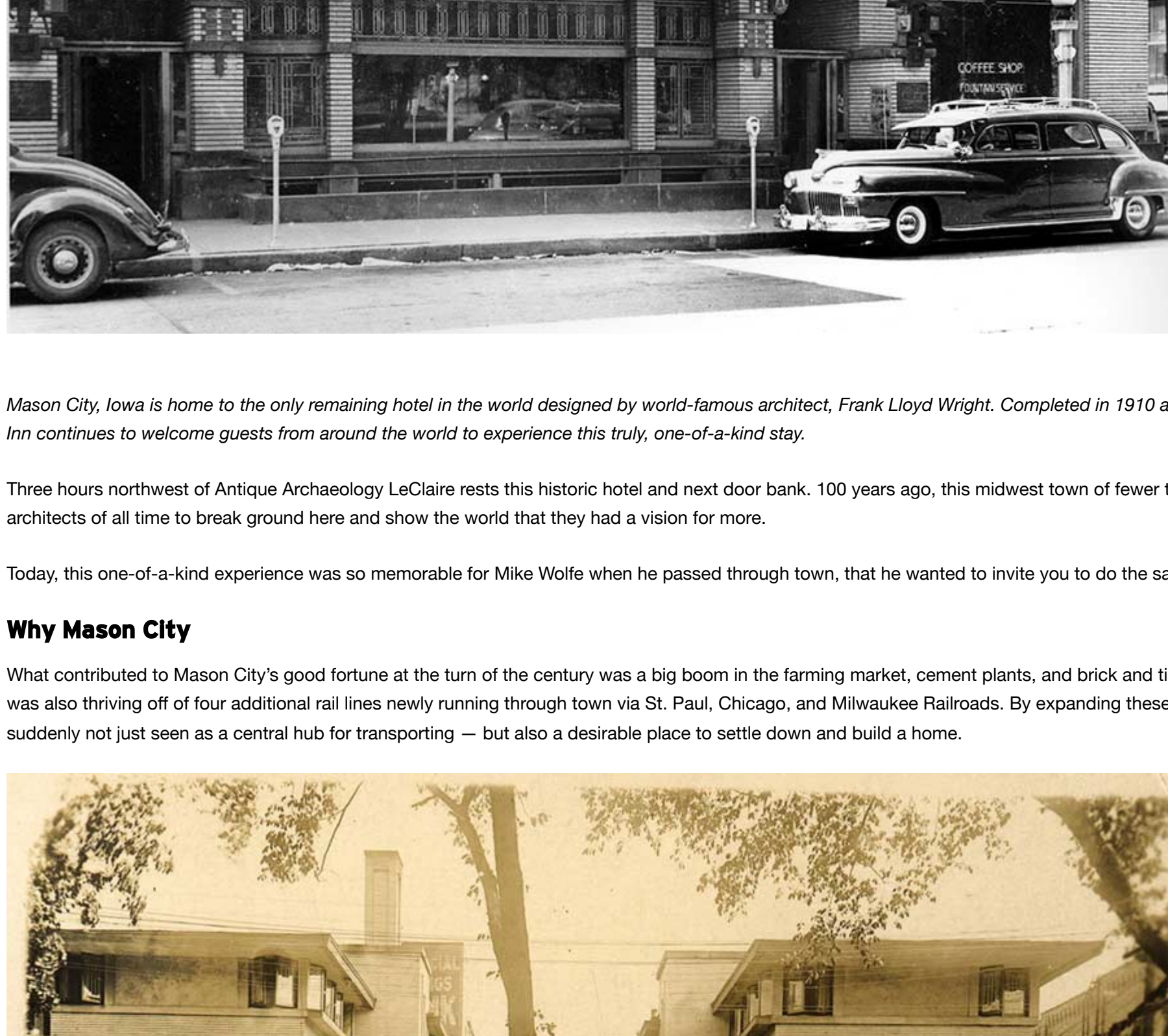
THE JOURNAL OF ANTIQUE ARCHAEOLOGY & MIKE WOLFE

(https://www.antiquearchaeology.com/blog)

CHECK IN TO THE LAST REMAINING HOTEL DESIGNED BY FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

AUGUST 5, 2021

POSTED IN: STORYTELLING (https://www.antiquearchaeology.com/blog/category/storytelling/) POSTED BY: SARAH BUCKHOLTZ (https://www.antiquearchaeology.com/blog/author/sarah-buckholtz/)



Mason City, Iowa is home to the only remaining hotel in the world designed by world-famous architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. Completed in 1910 and restored in 2011, The Historic Park Inn continues to welcome guests from around the world to experience this truly, one-of-a-kind stay.

Three hours northwest of Antique Archaeology LaCaire rests this historic hotel and next door bank. 100 years ago, this midwest town of fewer than 27K, brought one of the greatest architects of all time to break ground here and show the world that they had a vision for more.

Today, this one-of-a-kind experience was so memorable for Mike Wolfe when he passed through town, that he wanted to invite you to do the same. Here's the story.

Why Mason City

What contributed to Mason City's good fortune at the turn of the century was a big boom in the farming market, cement plants, and brick and tile factories. Not to mention, the community was also thriving off of four additional rail lines newly running through town via St. Paul, Chicago, and Milwaukee Railroads. By expanding these tracks westward, Mason City was suddenly not just seen as a central hub for transporting — but also a desirable place to settle down and build a home.



In fact, between 1870 and 1880, the city's population doubled bringing with it a need to create homes for citizens, their families, and an established downtown district. The era that quickly followed between 1910 and 1920 is often considered the "Golden Age of Building Construction". This brings us to Frank Lloyd Wright's arrival at Mason City.

The Wright Way

Frank Lloyd Wright was an American architect who designed more than 1,000 structures over a period of 70 years. His approach towards organic architecture helped challenge the world's perception about what a home could really be by incorporating a harmonious balance of the arts and crafts movement and nature into his work. (You may have heard of Falling Water just outside Pittsburgh that is partly built over a waterfall.)



Wright believed that a structure should reflect the climate, landforms, and lifestyle of the region. His attention to detail, hand-crafted design, and use of natural materials helped him create spaces to honor the native landscape of the project. Wright was also a fan of creating open, flowing spaces while directing your eye towards a central focal point using natural materials like wood, stone, brick, and terra cotta.

In 1908, Wright received the commission as the architect of The Historic Park Inn Hotel and City National Bank after receiving praise from Mason City developers for his work on an incredible stone structure he had built in Wisconsin using Prairie School style. This style emphasizes and celebrates horizontal lines rather than vertical.

The layout of Prairie School-style structures often stretched and spread across an entire lot, have flat or low hipped roofs featuring overhanging eaves made of brick, wood, and/or stone.

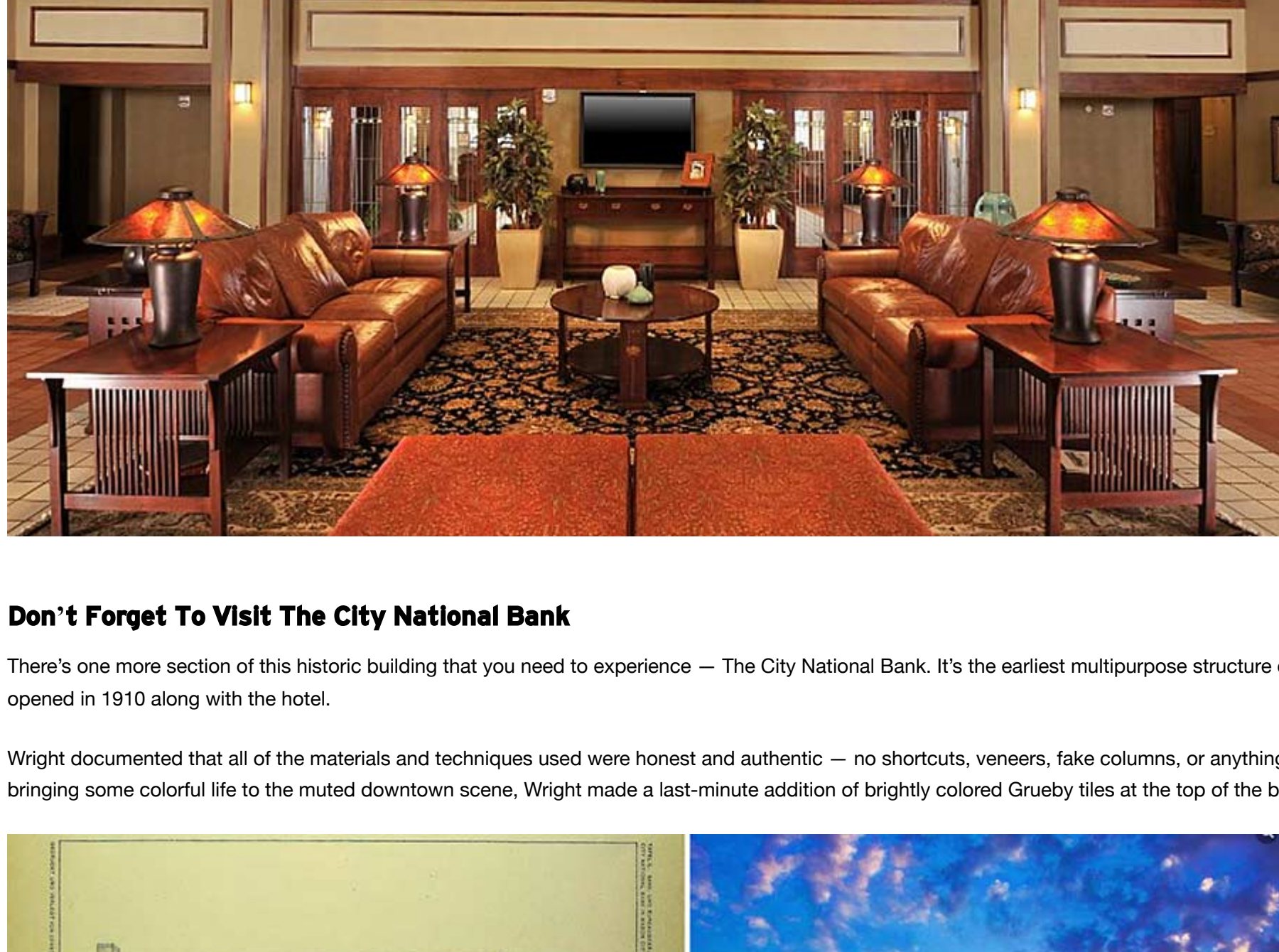
Today, The Historic Park Inn Hotel is the last standing example of five hotels Wright built.



Later in 1912, Wright's architectural influence would also lead to a new residential development in Mason City called Rock Crest-Rock Glen. Today the area is a National Historic District and recognized as the largest grouping of Prairie-style homes in The United States.

Walk Inside To Take A Journey Back In Time

After two years of construction, the Park Inn was ready to welcome guests. The hotel was ahead of its time when it first opened in 1910. It was revered for having luxuries that would have been rare for many to experience during that time, such as sinks with hot and cold running water, mahogany furniture, and brass beds.

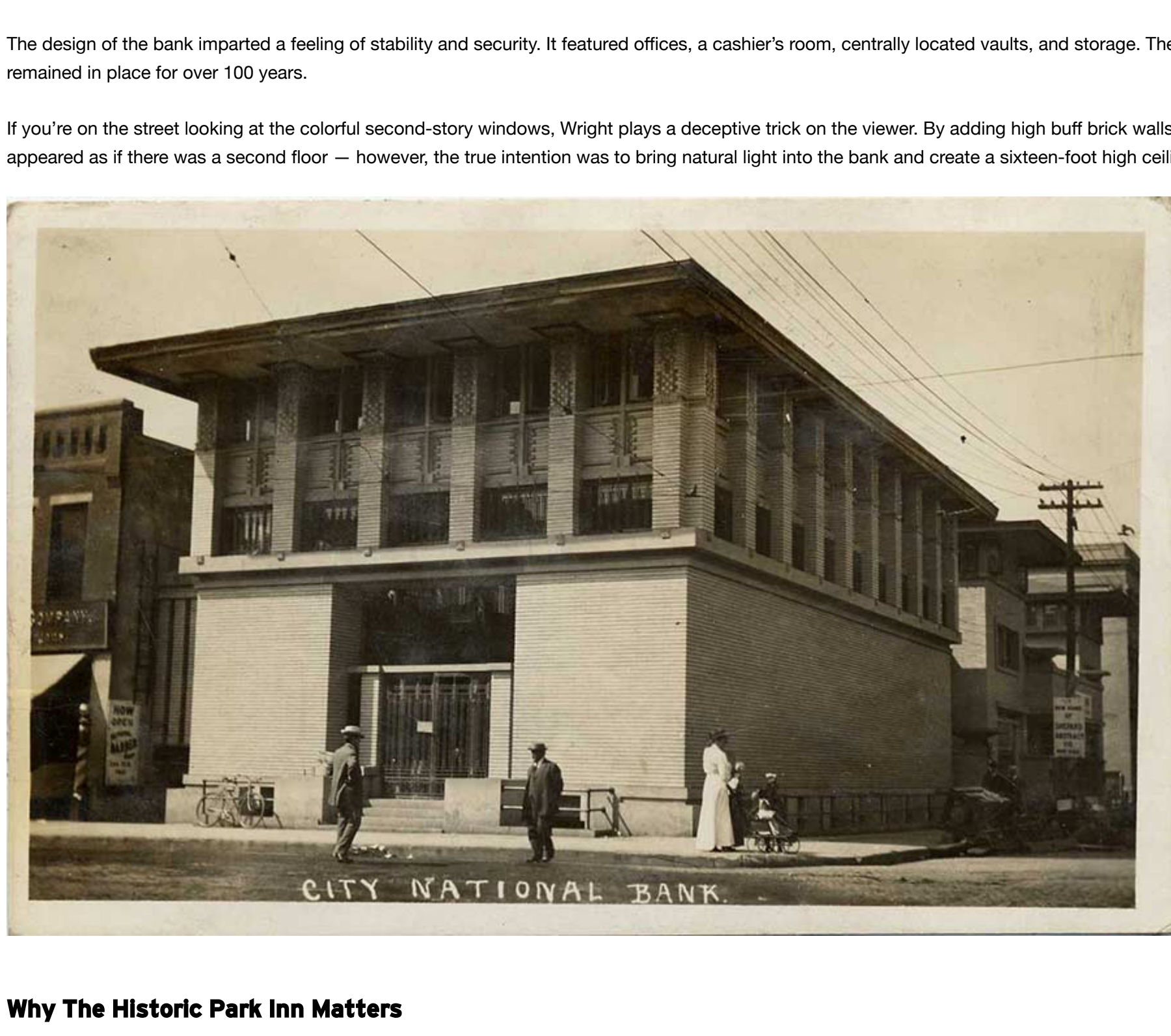


One reporter described their first impression of the hotel as having a "bungalo effect". Stating that the ventilated doors, quiet broad lines, harmonious proportions, and stained glass made them feel like they were living in a Craftsman home.

In 1914, The Park Inn Hotel became the prototype for the famous Imperial Hotel he built in Tokyo, which took six years to complete.

The Park Inn had a central lobby, dining room, kitchen, bakery, and pantry on the first floor, and guest rooms on the second and third. The law offices occupied the building's second floor and featured a waiting room and lobby.

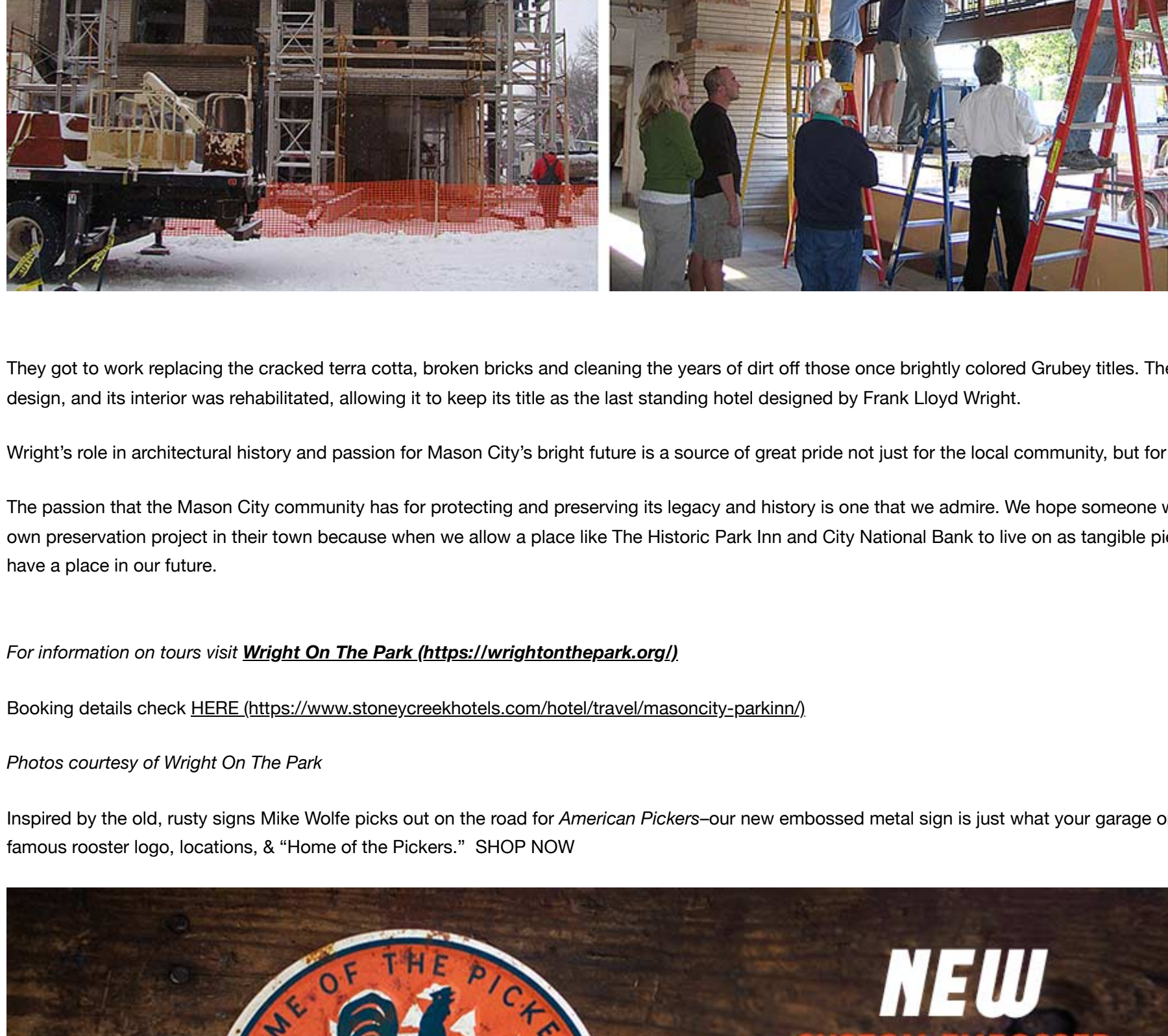
Today 27 rooms are available to guests, and many of the former amenities are still enjoyed by guests today. A popular activity at the hotel is playing pool on the 100-year-old billiard tables or enjoying cocktails at the hotel bar.



Don't Forget To Visit The City National Bank

There's one more section of this historic building that you need to experience — The City National Bank. It's the earliest multipurpose structure of the 20th century in Mason City and also opened in 1910 along with the hotel.

Wright documented that all of the materials and techniques used were honest and authentic — no shortcuts, veneers, fake columns, or anything artificial just for effect. In hopes of bringing some colorful life to the muted downtown scene, Wright made a last-minute addition of brightly colored Grueby tiles at the top of the bank.



The design of the bank imparted a feeling of stability and security. It featured offices, a cashier's room, centrally located vaults, and storage. The three skylights in the boardroom have remained in place for over 100 years.

Wright's role in architectural history and passion for Mason City's bright future is a source of great pride not just for the local community, but for Iowa and the world.

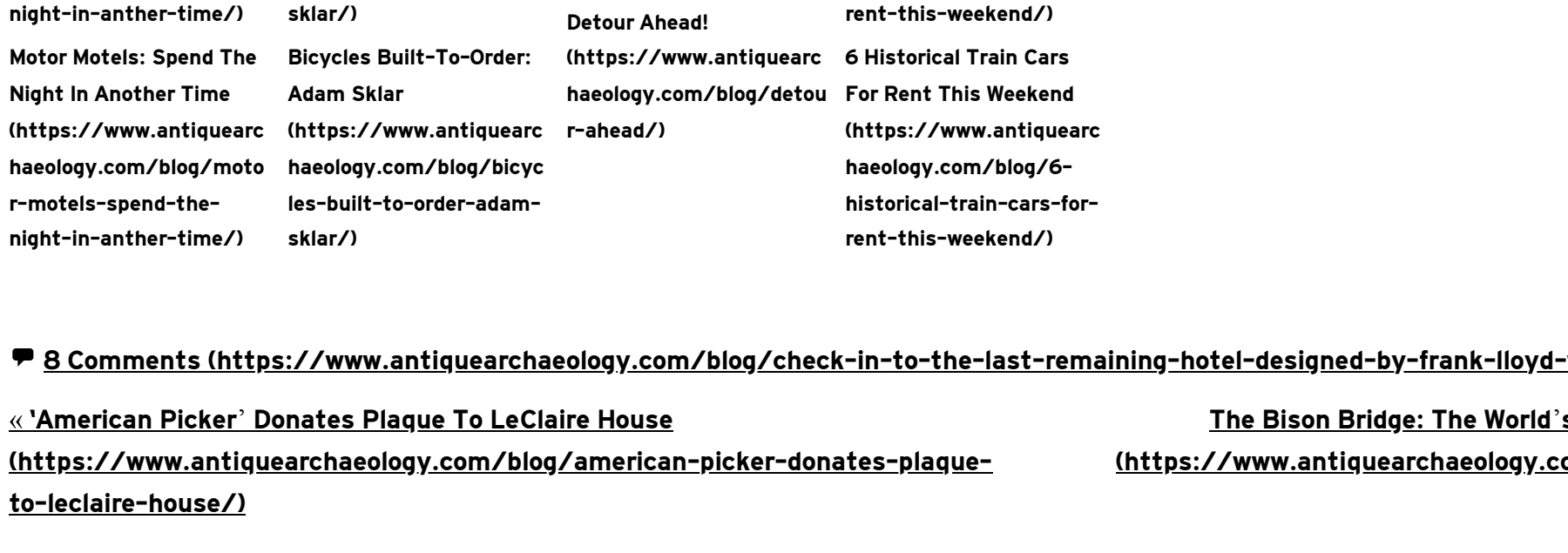
The passion that the Mason City community has for protecting and preserving its legacy and history is one that we admire. We hope someone who is reading this is inspired to start their own preservation project in their town because when we allow a place like The Historic Park Inn and City National Bank to live on as tangible pieces of our past, we can make sure they have a place in our future.

For information on tours visit Wright On The Park (https://wrightonthepark.org/)

Bookings details check HERE (https://www.stonycreekhotels.com/travel/masoncity-parkin/)

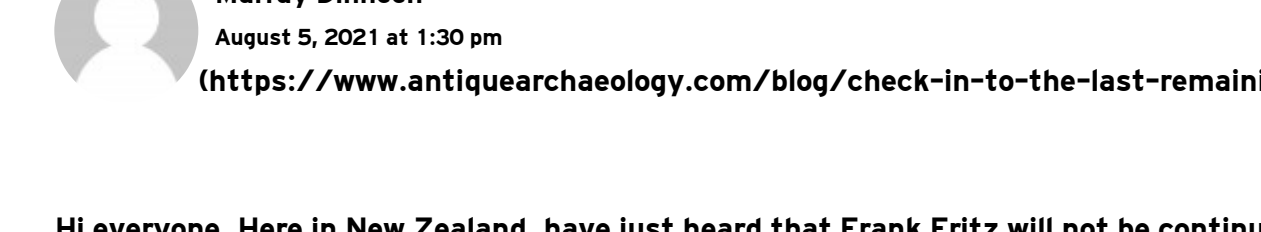
Photos courtesy of Wright On The Park

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8 thoughts on "Check In To The Last Remaining Hotel Designed By Frank Lloyd Wright"

Murray Dinneen August 5, 2021 at 1:30 pm (https://www.antiquearchaeology.com/blog/check-in-to-the-last-remaining-hotel-designed-by-frank-lloyd-wright/#comment-109534)

Hi everyone. Here in New Zealand, have just heard that Frank Fritz will not be continuing on the next journey with the next American Pickers Show. We will miss Frank's humor and wit. He WILL be sadly missed. We wish Frank all the best and hope to see him sometime soon. All the best... Murray in New Zealand

David W August 9, 2021 at 3:34 am (https://www.antiquearchaeology.com/blog/check-in-to-the-last-remaining-hotel-designed-by-frank-lloyd-wright/#comment-109687)

Hey Murray. Nice to meet another New Zealander that likes the pickers.

David from Tauranga.

Murray Dinneen August 9, 2021 at 3:49 am (https://www.antiquearchaeology.com/blog/check-in-to-the-last-remaining-hotel-designed-by-frank-lloyd-wright/#comment-109688)

The best show ever David. Watch every time it's on. Can't wait for the next series and see what happens and with who.

Enjoy Murray

Catherine E Martin August 6, 2021 at 1:37 pm (https://www.antiquearchaeology.com/blog/check-in-to-the-last-remaining-hotel-designed-by-frank-lloyd-wright/#comment-109570)

Thank you for the story of the Driskill Hotel. Lived in Austin as a kid and lunch at the Driskill with shopping at Buttericks after was a treat. Always dress, hat, gloves little bag and ankle socks with polished Mary Janes. Several years later, when visiting Austin, always stayed at the Driskill. So many memories. Love your show. Never miss an episode. Love history. Your show is a great way to learn it. Sweet Pickens!

David Pekrywka August 7, 2021 at 9:47 am (https://www.antiquearchaeology.com/blog/check-in-to-the-last-remaining-hotel-designed-by-frank-lloyd-wright/#comment-109606)

The one distinguishing part of all Frank Lloyd Wright's designs is the roof lines.

Cam Hufford August 7, 2021 at 9:24 am (https://www.antiquearchaeology.com/blog/check-in-to-the-last-remaining-hotel-designed-by-frank-lloyd-wright/#comment-109640)

Such a thought-provoking article and so respectful of Mr. Wright's unlimited talents. I'm amazed every time I become aware of yet another structure that he's been responsible for or been involved in it's development. Thanks to the people for amazing the buildings and memories alive.

Mary Anne (https://xoso888.com/) September 9, 2021 at 12:47 pm (https://www.antiquearchaeology.com/blog/check-in-to-the-last-remaining-hotel-designed-by-frank-lloyd-wright/#comment-110911)

Thank you for sharing such a beautiful and full of insight story. Another remarkable structure from talented Frank Lloyd Wright! can't wait for pandemic disappearing so that I could travel to there and contemplate the building

Martin Versteeg Knifchief (http://knifchief11@yahoo.com) (https://www.antiquearchaeology.com/blog/check-in-to-the-last-remaining-hotel-designed-by-frank-lloyd-wright/#comment-119547)

Love Frank Lloyd Wright's buildings! I wish we had some designers like that now. His Prairie style is beautiful, with the stained glass made with Native American designs.

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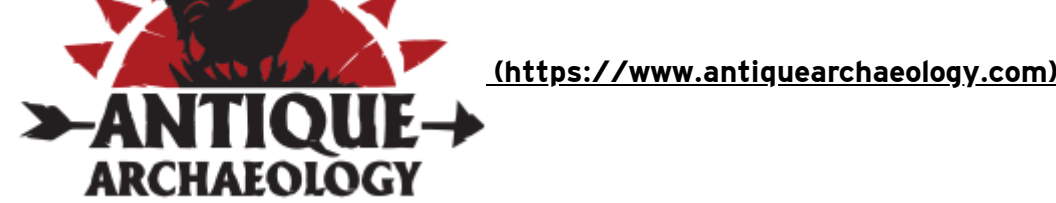
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