



DANA-THOMAS HOUSE IMAGE NARRATION

TOUR OF THE DANA-THOMAS HOUSE (Elementary Script)

CONCEPT: The Dana-Thomas House is considered to be in the best condition of Frank Lloyd Wright's early Prairie School houses. It contains many of the features of Wright's designs from that period including low horizontal roofs, gently sloped gables, bands of windows, wide overhanging eaves, a large central fireplace, and an open floor plan. The Dana-Thomas House has an beautiful collection of Frank Lloyd Wright designed art glass in windows, interior doors, bookcases, and lamps. The house is filled with original Wright designed furniture. Frank Lloyd Wright tried hard in this house to make everything fit well together.

TO THE TEACHER: When Susan Dana decided to remodel the home she inherited from her father, she hired Frank Lloyd Wright, a leading architect of the era. It was her intention that this new residence would help to make Springfield, Illinois a place of culture and fine taste. The beautiful home Frank Lloyd Wright designed for Susan Dana in 1902 is considered to be one of the finest of his Prairie School designs. When Susan Dana could no longer maintain her home, it was purchased in 1944 by Charles Thomas, who used the home for the offices of the Thomas Publishing Company. Charles Thomas was careful to preserve the house and managed to retain most of the original Wright furniture. In 1981, the State of Illinois purchased the residence and began the careful restoration of the Dana-Thomas House to preserve its beauty for generations to come.

Image 1: Old Rheuna Lawrence House, (ca.1868), Springfield, IL. In 1901, Susan Dana inherited this house from her father, Rheuna Lawrence. [Mr. Lawrence was a very rich man who made a large fortune by investing in things like banking, stock-raising, coal mining, railroading, lumbering, and real estate. He also owned a gold and silver mine in the west.]

The original house was built of brick in the Italianate style and had a low pitched roof, long narrow windows, a porch, columns, and on top a cupola (lantern shaped). Brackets supported the overhanging roof. Susan Dana hired a rising young architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, to design and build a house that would include her father's old house.

Image 2: Exterior of Dana-Thomas House. This is the house Frank Lloyd Wright designed. You can't even see Susan Dana's father's house anymore. The new house is huge with 35 rooms. The house was not used as a family would usually use a home. The Dana house was designed to be used for entertaining large groups of people, and it was a beautiful place for Susan Dana to throw parties and entertain political figures.

Susan Dana gave Frank Lloyd Wright all the money he wanted to build the Dana House. The house cost approximately \$60,000.00 at a time when an eight-room house would have cost \$4,000.00 and a six-room frame house \$1,500.00.

Image 3: Courtyard of the Dana-Thomas House. The large Dana-Thomas House is built on a corner city lot. Six-foot high walls make the courtyard seem more private.

Susan Dana gave many lawn parties there. A thirty-foot long reflecting pool is located in the yard. Frank Lloyd Wright designed copper gutters for the roofs. The gutters turned upward like the ones in Japanese architecture. The outside of the house has a decorated green band on the top called a frieze.

Image 4: Entrance to Dana-Thomas House. As you approach the entrance to the house, you will notice the large Roman arch around the door and a band of windows above. Look carefully at the long, narrow brick used on the exterior of the house. Notice how the mortar between the bricks has been carefully "raked" so that the bricks seem to float in a horizontal line.

Image 5: Entryway. As you walk through the door, you are greeted by two colorful arched windows with butterfly designs on them.

Image 6: Bock Statue. Once inside, you will see a statue of a woman who seems to be building a tower. The statue was created by Frank Lloyd Wright's friend, Richard W. Bock, and is named "Flower in the Crannied Wall".

Image 7: Reception Area. This is the area where Susan Dana received her guests. Usually a group of musicians would play on the musician's balcony located above the entrance. When you first enter the reception area, you feel enclosed by the space, but this is really a very tall room. Wright changed the heights of his ceilings throughout the house. You may walk up or down three or four stairs and be in a tiny space with a height of just six feet and then enter an area where the ceiling gets very tall. Frank Lloyd Wright hated the small, box-like rooms of Victorian houses, so he designed wide open spaces in his homes. As you walk through the spaces, you change levels 16 times.

Image 8: Reception Area, Arched Fireplace. This is the large arched fireplace located in the reception area.

Image 9: Moonchildren Fountain. If you listen carefully, you might hear the sound of water running in "The Moonchildren" fountain, sculpted by Richard Bock and Marion Mahony, and can follow the sound to a small seating area.

Image 10: Hallway Glass and Lighting. Frank Lloyd Wright designed art glass for 250 windows, doors, and light panels in the house as well as more than 200 light fixtures. The Dana-Thomas House has one of the largest collections of art glass that can be seen in a Wright designed home.

Image 11: Dining Room. The ceiling of the dining room of the Dana-Thomas House is shaped like half of a barrel. It is a beautiful space. The room is symmetrical (exactly the same on each side), and has a huge table that seats 40 people when expanded. Four butterfly light fixtures hang from the corners of the main room and a musician's balcony is located just above where the photographer stood to take this picture. A mural around the wall is painted with designs of the plants of the Prairie.

Image 12: Butterfly Chandelier and Mural. The dining room mural was painted by

George Niedecken right in the plaster. It depicts the midwestern plants of sumac, golden-rod and purple asters, common to the Prairie. The chandeliers give off a reflection of butterflies in a certain light.

Image 13: Dining Room Breakfast Area with Sumac Windows. At the far end of the dining room, a small breakfast area is located where Susan Dana ate when not entertaining. Sumac windows provide a backdrop for this space.

Image 14: Sumac Window. This art glass window is located in the dining room of the Dana-Thomas House. The pattern is a design of a sumac plant changed into geometric shapes. Colored glass was added to the window which was made of lead or zinc strips.

Image 15: Conservatory Hall, Before Restoration. This picture of the Conservatory Hall shows the room before the State of Illinois decided to restore it. Restoration means to return the building to its original condition at a certain date. After careful research, it was decided to restore the building to the period of 1910. [They did add modern electricity, heating and air conditioning.]

Image 16: Conservatory Hall, After Restoration. This Image shows the Conservatory Hall after the State restored it. It is said that Susan Dana often removed the plants and replaced them with water and swimming goldfish to entertain the many children she invited to the house.

Image 17: Living Room with Glass Door. In this Image, we see the living room as it appears from the hallway. Notice the leaded glass door at the entrance. This is the room in which Susan Dana did her studying and held meetings. The windows of the living room provide a spectacular display of color when the light shines through. The chairs in the room were designed to lean back like a Lazyboy chair.

Image 18: Art Glass, Master Bedroom. Susan Dana's bedroom is graced by a huge art glass window. All of the furniture in Susan Dana's bedroom was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, and it matches the oak wood that surrounds the walls.

Image 19: Gallery Entry and Butterfly Lamp. At the entry to the Gallery, you see large art glass windows and an elegant butterfly glass chandelier. Notice the oak trim and cabinets.

Image 20: Gallery, After Restoration. The Gallery is one of three great spaces in the Dana-Thomas House. It consists of two levels. The upper level rises two stories to a great barrel-shaped, arched ceiling. Frank Lloyd Wright used steel to create this large soaring space.

Image 21: Musician's Balcony. A musician's balcony is located on one end above a raised stage. A great open space at the opposite end of the room overlooks the library on the lower level.

Image 22: Library. The lower level provides a library with bookcases and built-in

seating. A series of windows lets light in from the garden. Another lower level has a billiard table and a one lane duck-pin (bowling) alley.