



### Text Version of Audio Story: Frank Lloyd Wright

The thing about it was that, well, he just wasn't very likeable. Well, he was, and he wasn't. He was a very charming, very charismatic gentleman, but at the same time, he was arrogant and boastful, controlling, manipulative. He was kind of, I hate to speak poorly of the man, but he was a self-centered jerk. Some people hated him. Others loved him. When he boasted, he would say things like, *"I am the greatest architect who has ever lived."*

But probably the thing that made people dislike him the most was that it was true. He was the greatest architect who ever lived. Frank Lloyd Wright was the original think-outside-the-box guy.

He was born in Richland Center, Wisconsin, in the late 1860s. From the very start, his mother told him he would grow up to be an architect. She encouraged him in that direction in every way imaginable.

In his early 20s, he leaves Wisconsin for Chicago, goes to work for a well-known architectural firm, marries a young woman and starts a family. Things were going well and not so well, all at the same time. Frank, of course, is producing brilliant architecture; but, at the same time, there are personality conflicts and differences with his boss. Frank is fired. Although, if you ask him, he would say he quit.

Frank starts his own firm. Things at home are not going well. Frank and his wife are growing apart. The relationship is distant and strained. Frank engages in an open and very public affair with the wife of a client. The beautiful Mrs. Mamah Cheney. He was intoxicated by his feelings for her. He abandons his family and his business and leaves for Europe with Mamah.

After a year or so abroad, Mamah and Frank returned to America and built a home together in Wisconsin. Mamah's two children would live there with them. They would call the home, Taliesin.

While Frank was away on business one evening, a butler at Taliesin lost his mind. He doused the property with gasoline and set it ablaze with Mamah, her children and four workers inside. He bolted all the doors and windows shut except for one. When the occupants came running out, he hacked them to death with an axe.

Frank was devastated. He would not allow authorities or anyone else to touch Mamah's body. He built a very simple casket and buried her himself. Within one month, he started to rebuild Taliesin.

Frank's life would continue to be controversial, tumultuous and filled with contradiction. His career and his love life would continue to go through highs and lows. Soon, Frank had been written off by the world as an eccentric kook.

Architectural jobs were few and far between. Money was a constant problem. There was another wife and then another. By his 60s and 70s, Frank Lloyd Wright was thought to be a has-been architect.

By 80, he was back on top of his game with no thoughts of ever retiring. He had staged one of the greatest comebacks in American history. Frank Lloyd Wright was again highly sought after and, again, considered the greatest architect of all times.

He lived into his late 80s and never stopped working. If he would have lived only six months longer, he would have been able to see the completion of one of his greatest works, the Guggenheim Museum in New York City.

Upon his death, much to the disappointment of his current and last wife, of course, he had his remains buried next to Mamah, the woman he had loved and lost many years later. But, many more years later, upon the death of the last wife, and now widow, she had made arrangements to have his body secretly exhumed, cremated and the ashes mixed with hers.

I'm the American Storyteller.