



## The Year in Review

Thank you **Jack Dennis, Linda Gill, Ann Horton, Cliff Johnson, Bonnie McGinnis, Al Nelson and Larry Ragle** for the inspired and educational programs this year. We know they take a lot of preparation and we are truly grateful. Club participation is what moves us forward. We hope to add some more new faces in 2009.

Our newsletter is the “face” of Aiseki Kai. We are so lucky to have a dedicated group of regular contributors who make our newsletter appreciated and praiseworthy. Thank you **Linda, GuyJim and Larry**. This editor would be lost without you. (And thank you “Secret Santa” for making all things possible.) 

## The Huntington Show

We do not have a meeting in November. If you haven't done so yet, contact **Linda** for docent/security duty and make sure you get your display information to **Bill** before Dec 13. Preparation is everything. See below:

### Huntington Show Schedule of Events

**Dec 22** - set up day. Tables and backdrops will be set up beginning at 9AM.

**Dec 23** - **Bring in your displays between 9-12**

**Dec 27 - 31** show opens at 10:30 and closes at 4:30.

**Jan 1** - closed for New Years Day.

**Jan 2** - open 10:30-4:30. Take down at 4:30.

Please do not forget to sign up for security / docent duty! **Linda** is waiting to hear from you. **See page 7 for that schedule**. Check your calendar, select times you will be available to help and call **Linda** with the dates and times.

**Bill** needs to know what you plan to display so he can make the labels. Make sure you tell him the classification (if you want that included) and place of origin for each of your stones. **Limit 5 per person**. He also needs to know if you are planning a 2 piece *sekikazari* (table display). The **deadline for Bill is Dec 13th**. 714.964.6973 or [hutch@aisekikai.com](mailto:hutch@aisekikai.com)

## Sand Preparation

We are just days away from our next show. If you are planning a *suiban* display, it's time to prepare the sand. The artistic suggestions below are directly from **Uhaku Sudo**, head master of Keido, and from me, based on my practical experience searching for sand similar to that used in Japan.

The ideal sand is, beige or light tan color over all, but not monotone. Don't use pure white (silica sand) or any tinted /colored or all black sand. The sand must be dust and sparkle free and of a similar particle size.

There are two approaches to capture ideal sand, the hard way or the easy way. I've done them both. The hard way is to collect sand or decomposed granite from the mountains or to buy sacks of so-called pre-washed sand that is beige in color and wash away all silt and fine dust. The “pre-wash” claim is in question. Trust me; the last time this sand was near water was when it was dredged out of some river. I have purchased several 60 lb bags of this stuff over the years (at Home Depot) and have eventually produced useable sand. It will take gallons of water to wash away the remaining silt so do the washing where the water can be drained to irrigate your lawn or flower garden. Flushing your



Mr Sudo washing sand

final product may take 50 or 60 cycles to produce fairly clean sand. But after all that work you can end up with some excellent sand. Out of 60 lbs you may capture 20 lbs of 2 or 3 particle sizes by using sieves. I have stopped using decomposed granite since it is usually too colorful (reddish) and often monotone.

The easy way is to buy *Lapus Lustre Monterey Sand* from a store like ‘White Cap’ that is already cleaner than the product of washing as I just described above. The small sizes are used in sand blasting so is nearly dust free. One washing will remove any dust or organic matter. If you have a very fine sieve you can eliminate some unnecessary particles. The only problem with *Monterey Sand* is that it usually comes in **50 or 100 lb** bags. Ouch!



# October Meeting Notes

by Linda Gill

ANNOUNCEMENTS: **Marge** has picked 6 volunteers for Monday, 12/22, at 9AM, to bring items to the hall, paint, pre-setup, etc. If you can help, please call Marge (626) 579 0420. Wait for her in Friends Hall.

➡ Set up will be completed Tuesday, 12/23, at 9AM. Please come help!

➡ **Stones & plants should come in 12/23, between 9-12.** Please remember to take your plants home that day and return them before we open on 12/27. Be sure **Jim** sees them before you go. You will be given an index card for each plant; please write the name and size of the plant and your name on the card. Leave it where you put your plant. This will remind **Jim** when he arranges stones and plants as he surely will.

➡ All exhibitors are expected to help set up, take down (not just remove your display) and docent for at least one day. Many hands make light work and many eyes make sure that no one loses a stone. So far our record is perfect and we all want to keep it that way. As a docent, educating the public is our second priority and our guests are truly interested in what is, to many, a new and fascinating tradition. You will be well rewarded for your efforts. And you get to be with your friends! Please see page 7, column 2, for the docent schedule.

STONE OF THE MONTH - Stones that suggest a safe haven: **Jack** brought a weather pattern stone - gray covered with white "clouds". He thought it was a suiseki but it was explained that pattern stones without a landscape shape are not suiseki. **Linda** showed a black Yuha mountain with a tunnel or a cave depending on how it sits in the sand and a baroque stone with a tunnel and a window. **Bruce** had a **Bob Watson** overhang stone that was a lovely ventifact. **Hanne** displayed several stones: a condo, a multi-level shelter, a cave and a stone with in & out windows. She tied in her stones to her homes since she came to the US. She also brought one of **Ralph's** stones that was a beautiful shelter stone of malachite. **Sharon** showed a priest in a cave, a shelter of petrified wood and a Chinese style stone from the Eel River. **Brent** also had a large green Eel River stone. **Tom Culton** had two shelter stones and a multicolored stone. **Lois** brought an island stone with an inlet from the Yuha, a shelter stone and a Halloween stone. **Nina's** island stones also had good harbors and **Larry** had a shelter stone from Japan given to him by **Kazuo Morita** in 1987. **Harley's** stone was given to him by **Harry**. **Al's** multi-colored stone was an offshore island from Northern California.



Nina Ragle



Larry Ragle, a gift from Kazuo Morita



Linda Gill



Bruce (Bob Watson's stone, Bruce's daiza)



Lois Hutchinson



Hanne Povlsen



Ralph Johnson



Linda Gill



Al Nelson

The 1 inch wide inner margins are designed for use with a 3 hole punch.



## October Program Notes

by Linda Gill

**Part 1]** We discussed our plans for our Huntington show, including the possibility of a Plexiglas fronted case for small stones that **Al Nelson** could build (he brought in his scale model of one potential show case). It was decided that we will inquire about display boxes that may be available from the Huntington and if not, delay the project until next year.

There will be one international table for a few stones. **Jim** will make the selection. We were reminded to bring only our best stones and displays. Bring a *jiita* (thin flat dark rectangle, oval or round board) or a *shoku* (Japanese style low table) for each stone.

**For our labels:** in a break from previous practices, you may decide not to use classifications on your label. Minimally, **Bill** will need your name and the source. You may add a poetic name, and/or a classification. All classifications are according to *Yoshimura/Covello* or the **Ei** chart. Please send your list of stones and information for labels to **Bill Hutchinson** by 12/13.

The outside rows of the room are for formal displays or grouped stone set ups. Each member may display a total of 5 stones/displays. (see column 2) →

**Part 2]** **Jack Dennis** talked to the group about our trip to the Yuha on Nov 15-16. By the time you read this, we will all have had a wonderful time and we may have some great new stones.

**Part 3]** **Jack** and **Sachiko's** Characterization of Decorative Viewing Stones started with what they learned in Aiseki Kai and with **Covello & Yoshimura's** book. After explaining his reasons for his theories and a disclaimer, **Jack** described his classification system in great detail. Within these classifications there can be unlimited categories. **Jack** feels most of the classification systems that we have been using are archaic, imprecise and/or too limited, and the chart is to help him meet his goals of (1) accurately characterizing stones to better enjoy them, and (2) to describe a stone concisely to relate the personal story that the stone suggests. **Jack** does not want to reinvent the art but to "collectively get it right in our own minds and to acknowledge that the art is undergoing tremendous change in Japan...". The ultimate goal is to carry the beauty within us and he feels it is unlikely that there will ever be a system that is universally accepted.

This was a very involved program so it is therefore suggested that you ask **Jack** for a copy of his handout if you were not able to attend the presentation. Email him at sachikonjack@cox.net or call: 619.659.1195



## Annual Huntington Show Advisory

At the October meeting members were told that they could submit up to 5 stones to the exhibition. Two points of clarification: 1) It is more correct to think in terms of 5 individual stones and/or 5 discrete units of display. The reason is that properly arranged multi-stone table displays, in fact, take no more space than a larger single stone. 2) Note that if you simply submit 5 individual stones with no organizing relationship to one another nor formal context, it is unlikely that we will be able to exhibit all your submitted stones.

The number of members wishing to show stones has increased dramatically over the past few years, while the number of members willing to create thoughtful, 'formal' displays has gradually diminished. Under our traditional and current format, the only spaces specifically designated for the display of random, individual stones are the three internal rows of tables (without backdrops). It is paramount that more experienced collectors make every effort to create 'formal' table displays for the perimeter tables so that the center tables may be reserved for the stones of our members, especially our newer members, with fewer options.

Creating table displays may seem daunting, but I believe you will find your efforts rewarding; in fact, the effort, itself, is almost guaranteed to increase your understanding of your stones and stone appreciation in general. I invite anyone who would like to review an idea or wants hands-on assistance to create or fine-tune a display to email or call. If practical, we can set a time for you to stop over – the sandbox will be available and we may be able to assist with some accessories!

*Jim Greaves, Show Curator*



The elements of this display include a properly filled *suiban*, a *jiita* under the *suiban*, an accent plant and a *jiita* under the accent plant. See page 8 for another style of table top display using one *jiita* for both the stone and accent plant. The elements are the same for a stone in a *daiza*. You might also use a *shoku* (low table).

[ED NOTE: **Jim** works tirelessly at our show each year trying to create something special from what we bring him. Let's lessen his load this time by bringing all the elements of a well thought out table display.]

Larry points out that the beauty is in the stone, not its classification.

# Ask GuyJim

Dear GuyJim,

As you and Alice have already collected a wide range of viewing stones, what special 'stone' do you want from Santa Claus?

*The Stone Elf*

Dear ~~Stoned~~ Stone Elf,

Ruling out the equivalent of the Hope Diamond (which I would immediately hock for a few gallons of gas to take a field trip to Northern California or, alternatively, to partially pay off my running debt to **Ken McLeod**) and, ruling out the not-to-be-denied seven peaked, snow-capped mountain range with waterfall, a rushing stream or two and, perhaps, a couple of lakes, ...I would ask Santa for a stone with a 'rain' pattern.

Rain is arguably the most common 'weather' phenomenon, but I have yet to find it well represented (or even poorly represented) in a stone. Predictably, it would likely be a *monyoshi* (embedded-image) having parallel, slanted lines reminiscent of the repetitive rain strokes in a Japanese woodblock print by **Hokusai** or **Hiroshige**. At the least, a few of the lines would have an intermittent quality of broken dashes, not all would be uniform. Ideally, the color would be muted, probably gray, although a really good picture image might 'hold up' with any background color. Further, the overall size of the stone in relationship to the rain pattern, itself, would have to be inherently balanced – too many parallel lines would become boring; too few, unconvincing.

An entirely different possibility for a rain pattern would be a flat stone having a credible pattern of small splashes caused by raindrops – I've come close, but none were natural enough to escape the sense of being shoehorned to fit my concept!

If you have any good reference to rain-pattern stones, especially the source of an image that is so believable that you feel the rain without having to intellectualize it, please contact me. At my age that information alone would make for a nice Christmas present ... of course, Santa, if you **are** listening, a real stone would be even better!



Hiroshige, Rain on a Bridge



Turkey-ish

Happy Thanksgiving and as always, let us give thanks to those who serve in harm's way that we may humbly pursue another year of stone appreciation,

GuyJim

The views expressed in this column are personal, perhaps irreverent, irrelevant or just plain wrong and do not reflect the consensual view of California Aiseki Kai. Send your viewing stone questions (or comments) for GuyJim to jimgreaves@roadrunner.com or 1018 Pacific Street, Unit D, Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 452-3680

Companion book to the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum Exhibit at the U.S. National Arboretum is now available:

### American Viewing Stones – Beyond the Black Mountain: Color, Pattern and Form

(Soft cover; 138 pages; 275 stone photos)

\$45.00 tax included, add \$5.00 s/h domestic or \$12.00 s/h international

Contact Jim Greaves at jimgreaves@roadrunner.com

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*"This beautifully photographed, skillfully written book bridges the gap between Japanese tradition and American innovation. It excites the senses. I highly recommend this book to all viewing stone collectors."* ~ Larry Ragle

#### AMERICAN VIEWING STONES

BEYOND THE BLACK MOUNTAIN:  
COLOR, PATTERN, AND FORM



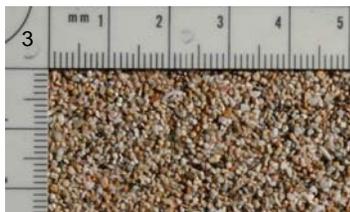
James L. Greaves

Illustration by the author and artist Graham Chapman  
Author: JAMES L. GREAVES  
Illustrator: GRAHAM CHAPMAN

## Sand Preparation

continued from page 1

I suggest you take 4 or 5 five-gallon plastic buckets and create light loads you can handle. To find a ‘White Cap’ store near you, Google ‘White Cap store location’ or



search for sand blasting supplies at a builder supply store. I have obtained 2 particle sizes of Monterey Sand (see photos one and two). The larger sand (photo one) can be used in *suiban* more than 20” in length. The third photo is what I call “Sudo sand”. It was a gift from Mr. **Sudo** in 1987 after he gave his talk on display at GSBF Convention X.

Mr. **Sudo** suggests if you are reusing sand that was washed for a prior event it should be rinsed again to remove any collected dust prior to filling your *suiban*.

There are two ways of filling and flattening sand in a *suiban*; using only dry sand or wetting the sand.



Wetting is superior to achieve total flatness. However, this can’t be done at the show location. The process must be done in time to allow some evaporation, solidifying the sand to a degree. The complete display is then transported to the show.



This method is practical if you can lift and transport the finished product without any disturbance.



**Jim and Alice Greaves** have perfected this technique. After adding and leveling the dry sand it is precisely leveled to about 1/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch from the top of the *suiban* using a gentle spray of water. Then the stone is placed. Any disturbed sand is flattened around the stone with a trowel and leveled

again, using a gentle spray. The *suiban* can be tilted slightly to drain excess water. This works best with smaller displays.



Large stones in large *suiban* or *doban*, such as the one pictured above/right, filled with wet sand are heavy. Adding the sand dry and the stone at the show location is suggested although it requires great patience and can only approach the total flatness as seen in the wet process; however, the process is essentially the same.

There are usually outside tables available on the patio at the Huntington to prepare your *suiban* display. Add the sand to within 1/8<sup>th</sup> inch of the rim and level it using a flat tool, a trowel, for example, and place the stone to the desired depth. It should be well seated and not just sitting on top of the sand. The newly disturbed sand is flattened and compressed around the stone and then the entire surface is leveled with a soft bristled paint brush or similar tool. There should not be any pattern in the sand, residual trowel marks or intentional waves.

### Additional display notes

For our show, ideally, *suiban* displays for the perimeter table top exhibits (on the outer walls) should be in the Keido style, that is, the stone/ *suiban*/ *jiita* or *shoku* should be accompanied by a small accent plant, not a bonsai nor another stone as an accent. Figures, *tenkei* or larger are OK, as long as they have a Japanese theme and appear “time honored”. It’s not a good idea to use any small item that is irreplaceable.

Members who display large bonsai on the perimeter tables should use an object stone or figure stone in a *daiza* as the accent. In any event two large items should not be displayed in the same space.



This stone was settled into dry sand and groomed.

This stone was placed in wet sand and sprayed. We saw it at the Nippon Suiseki Association Exhibition in June, 2005.



This will be our best show,

Larry Ragle

## The Making of a Japanese Dry Landscape Garden

by Ray Yeager

The Ryoanji (Peaceful Dragon Temple) Zen garden is 78 by 30 feet and the stones are arranged from left to right in groups of 5, 2, 3, 2, 3, with the group of 5 stones being the main point of interest and contains the master stone, usually the largest stone of the garden. The rules of 2, 3, and 5 are strictly adhered to in the placement of stones and are similar to *Keido*. The concept of space (*ma*) is also an important part of the design.

Another feature of importance to a *karesansui* is the relationship between the stones. You shall not place stones of the same height or shapes next to each other. Stones or groups of stones shall not be on the same line, and the stones of a 3 or more arrangement shall be of unequal distance from each other. The integrity of the stone is also very important and must be maintained. A stone found in an upright position shall be placed in the same position in the garden. The same holds true with a stone found lying horizontally. The spirit of the stones would be lost if these rules are not adhered to.

The Sky's The Limit Zen Garden will maintain the tradition and design principles of the Japanese *karesansui* but will embrace our southwestern deserts. The indication of water will not be present in our garden. The gravel will be used to indicate space. In actuality, in Zen, it can be said that the space between the stones is of more importance than the stones themselves.

The *Sakuteiki*, written in the 11<sup>th</sup> century states: "Think of the famous places of scenic beauty in the provinces and mentally absorb what is attractive about them. The general air of these places must be recreated by modeling their attractive features." In Japan stones are grey to black and often rugged in shape. Our stones will be remnants of 500 million year old monzogranite eroded into coarse, rounded shapes that are typical of Joshua Tree National Park's landscape.

Our Zen garden will be 60 by 22 feet and will be located at the south end of the property that abuts the National Park boundary. Japanese garden makers call the view beyond a garden "a borrowed view" and the view we will have will be the magnificent desolation that is Joshua Tree National Park. The garden will be bordered on three sides with a 4 foot stone wall and a viewing area will contain four stone benches.

Finding the proper stones (I am thinking nine or eleven stones at the moment) and transporting them without damaging the patina will be critical and a challenge. Locating a large master stone that will be approximately 4 feet in height will be the first priority and will determine the size and shape of the other stones.

As with a stone that's placed in a *suiban*, stones should have a solid base and buried firmly. The patina (desert varnish) that is found on monzogranite can vary. The natural sloughing off of material tends to lighten the color of the patina. On harder material the patina can be a rich brown that turns golden with a low sun. Colorful crustose lichen can also add a sense of age to a stone.



Ryoanji, Kyoto

What is it about a *karesansui* that can move one's emotions? The sight of nothing but a few stones and gravel bordered by a low wall can give you a feeling of openness and peacefulness and with the natural quiet of the desert and the ever present lonesome wind, your emotions might well be explored.

The garden at Ryoanji has been called the "garden of emptiness". This doesn't mean the garden is "empty of things", which may first come to mind. The Zen term of emptiness has a different meaning and is very difficult to understand, and which I do not presume to comprehend completely. In Zen, the meaning is equated to the impermanence of all things and the acceptance of things as they are. The *karesansui* just may be the visual equivalent of the enlightened state.

## Letter to the Editor

Recently, I have heard many people express the desire for “American Bonsai” and “American Suiseki”. I’ve been asked how I feel about it – here are my thoughts.

I am all for “American Bonsai” and “American Suiseki”. We should, by all means, have our own bonsai and suiseki with materials originating in America... with American native trees representing our own environment, and American stones that come from our own natural sources. However, as long as we call them *bonsai* and *suiseki*, art forms originating in Japan, we must respect their origin, the principle, and the essential guidelines.

All of the Japanese cultural arts that I have studied, have several hundreds of years of history. The teaching of all art forms and the guidelines we have today, are the result of many years of study by many devoted masters and students. I feel we are lucky to have such valuable guidance. We should completely understand the origin and the essence of bonsai and suiseki before developing “the new wind”.

**Often, the terms “American Bonsai” and “American Suiseki” are used as excuses for inadequate skills and for improper care, compromising the teaching of the essence of bonsai and suiseki for one’s own convenience.**

As I said, I am all for American Bonsai and American Suiseki, but, we should not compromise the concepts of *bonsai* and *suiseki*.

~ Hideko Metaxas

[ED NOTE: Thank you, **Hideko**. Aiseki Kai will strive to improve our understanding of suiseki. We know that we cannot use “but this is America” as an excuse for not learning the basics.]

## Security/Docent Schedule

Our show at the Huntington is just around the corner! **Linda** is looking for folks to sign up as docents/security for our show. Naturally, **anyone showing is expected to participate** but all members are welcome. Please let her know **all** the times you will be available.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Other</u>
Dec 27	10:30-1:30	1:30-4:30	
Dec 28	10:30-1:30	1:30-4:30	
Dec 29	10:30-1:30	1:30-4:30	
Dec 30	10:30-1:30	1:30-4:30	
Dec 31	10:30-1:30	1:30-4:30	
Jan 2	10:30-1:30	1:30-4:30	

**Linda can be reached at 818.833.9883 or email her at [bigredlinda@earthlink.net](mailto:bigredlinda@earthlink.net)**

**We need you.** Check your calendars and select your days and times. Tell **Linda** when you can work if the listed times are not convenient. Please arrive 5-10 minutes before your time slot. **Remember your purpose:** you are there to educate and to secure our displays. **Linda** said, “Please volunteer. It’s a great chance to see wonderful stones, get to know your fellow stone lovers better and maybe even learn something.”

## Refreshments



Thank you **Tom & Apinya Culton, Harley Newman, Phil Chang & Janet Shimizu, Harry Hirao and Hanne Povlsen** for the October treats.

Save up those recipes for 2009. We are about stones, certainly, but we also seem to be about snacks! Thank you break table volunteers for all the goodies this year! You have made our tummies very happy.

**California Aiseki Kai** meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Nakaoka Community Center located at 1700 162nd St, Gardena, CA. Second floor. We do not meet in Nov-Dec.

## Contact People

<b>Programs:</b> Larry Ragle	949.497.5626	cfsmail@cox.net
<b>Treasury/Membership:</b> Nina Ragle	949.497.5626	ragle@cox.net
<b>Annual Exhibit:</b> Jim Greaves	310.452.3680	jimgreaves@roadrunner.com
<b>Exhibit Set Up:</b> Marge Blasingame	626.579.0420	blasmrjr@aol.com
<b>Refreshments:</b> Lois Hutchinson	714.964.6973	whutch70@dslextreme.com
<b>Historian:</b> Ray Yeager	760.365.7897	ryeager890@aol.com
<b>Webmail:</b> Bill Hutchinson	714.964.6973	hutch@aisekikai.com
<b>Newsletter:</b> Larry and Nina Ragle	949.497.5626	ragle@cox.net



## Newsletter Committee

**November Contributors:** Linda Gill, Jim Greaves, Ray Yeager and Larry Ragle.  
**Mailing:** Flash Partch  
**Editor:** Nina Ragle

We hope you will participate. Please send any submissions to [ragle@cox.net](mailto:ragle@cox.net) no more than 10 days following our monthly meeting. Thank you!

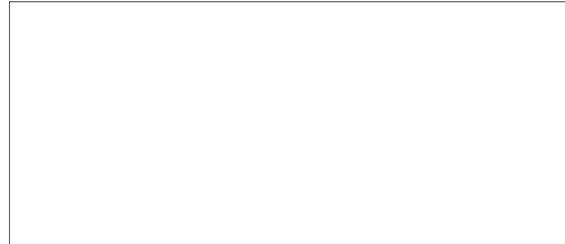
Ragle  
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Laguna Beach CA 92652

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



*Leaves no stone unturned*

See us on the web  
[aiseikikai.com](http://aiseikikai.com)



## Coming Events

**Happy Holidays**

### AMERICAN VIEWING STONE RESOURCE CENTER

Thematic Exhibit: *Eternal Rhythms: Seasons & Time*  
Melba Tucker Gallery at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, DC.  
October 13, 2008 – June 2009 (29 stones)

### BONSAI-A-THON XIII

GSBF Collection at the Huntington Fundraiser, Feb 28 - March 1, 2009. Huntington Botanical Center, 1151 Oxford Rd, San Marino. 7:30-4:30. Bring donations! Early bird specials, breakfast, lunch, auctions, raffles, vendors, children and adult novice workshops. Demos both days and demo material will be auctioned. Please continue to support the Southern California Bonsai and Viewing Stone Collection. Contact **Marge Blasingame** for information: call 626.579.0420 or email her at: [blasmrjr@aol.com](mailto:blasmrjr@aol.com)



The Aiseki Kai display at the GSBF Convention in Modesto. Rather than a classification name we went for a poetic name, “Bear Run” since this scene reminds us of the stream at Bear Run in Pennsylvania near the well known Frank Lloyd Wright designed home called Fallingwater (at right).

