

Cypress summoned for Frank Lloyd Wright home

DESIGNED BY Frank Lloyd Wright in 1939, the newly constructed Usonian House at Florida Southern College, Lakeland, Fl., highlights the famed architect's affinity for cypress—which was one of his favorite building materials.

The 1,700-sq. ft. residence was part of a 20-building master plan that Wright developed for the college.

Originally designed as a modest faculty residence, the new center showcases displays related to his relationship with the college. It also acts as a home for visiting exhibits on loan from other Wright sites.

Architect M. Jeffrey Baker of Mesick, Cohen, Wilson, Baker

Architects in Albany, N.Y., who oversaw construction, said Wright's 75-year-old blueprints did not directly specify building materials, but he believes cypress was the only logical wood choice for the project.

"The only finished wood Wright used on the FSC campus was cypress," Baker said. "He specified the material in many projects throughout his lifetime, and it was a signature trademark of his Usonian homes throughout the country. We simply followed the materials and details he used in the other homes and across the FSC campus, and applied them to this project. Without question, cypress was the historically accurate material

to use."

After working with the cypress, Baker and his team grew to understand Wright's enthusiasm for how the wood looks and performs. "Cypress is readily available in various sizes and lengths, it mills easily, and accepts a variety of finishes," he explained. "It also is resistant to insect infestation, which, of course, is very important in Florida."

Tom Sharrett, a woodworker at Demoss Cabinetry, Lakeland, Fl., whose shop custom-milled 10,000 bd. ft. of cypress for the project, is an advocate as well. "Cypress is an easy wood to shape and sand," he said. "We used it anywhere a finished



USONIAN HOUSE, newly constructed at Florida Southern College, Lakeland, Fl., showcases Frank Lloyd Wright's affinity for cypress and other locally sourced materials, such as handmade bricks and other natural materials. (Photos by Michael Maguire, www.buildingtheusonianhouse.com)

wood product was required, including all of the interior ceilings, plank walls, built-in cabinets, tables, benches, trim, and even light fixtures. The exterior features cypress soffit and fascia, window and door frames, pergolas, and doors.”

Wright envisioned the Usonian style at the height of the Great Depression as a way to construct simple, affordable homes for American families, by emphasizing the use of locally sourced wood, brick, and other natural materials. Although 60 Wright-designed Usonian homes can be found across the U.S., the new one at FSC is the first example of this particular home plan to be built.

“When we constructed the Usonian House, we expected it to be remembered for the exquisite use of Wright’s signature ‘textile’ blocks, which are indeed remarkable,” Baker said, “but we were unprepared for the warmth the cypress added to the feeling of the spaces. We have noticed that when people comment on the beauty of the house, they never fail to mention the cypress.”

The FSC campus has the largest concentration of Wright-designed buildings in the world, including the



CYPRESS is heavily featured in the interiors, used anywhere a finished wood product was required, including all interior ceilings, plank walls, built-in cabinets, light fixtures, and furniture.

new Usonian House and 12 other projects that were completed during his lifetime.

For more information on cypress,

please visit the Southern Cypress Manufacturers Association’s website at www.cypressinfo.org.

IT'S ALL ABOUT TURNAROUND



FASTER SHIPPING. FASTER DELIVERY. THE ULTIMATE FASTENERS

From the industry's deepest Star Drives to our patented DeckLok advanced lateral anchor, nobody delivers quality products as quickly or reliably. Now with a new East Coast warehouse, over a quarter of a million dollars in inventory is waiting to ship to you even faster. Depending on your location, it could arrive as soon as tomorrow.

To become an authorized dealer or distributor call us direct at 1-888-888-9661. Shop our online catalog. Prepaid freight available, orders ship same day.

SCREW-PRODUCTS.COM

