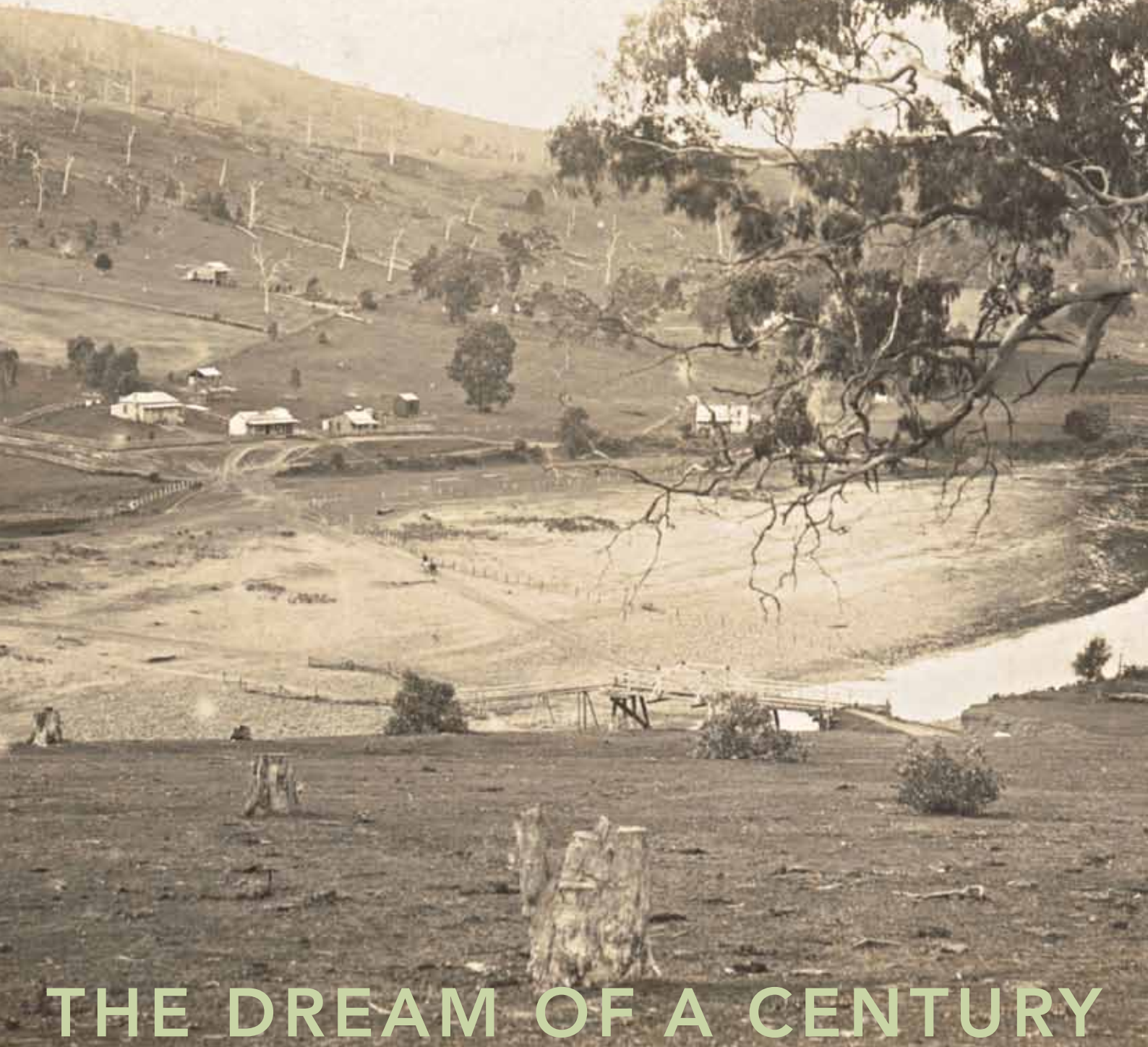


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## THE DREAM OF A CENTURY

THE GRIFFINS IN AUSTRALIA'S CAPITAL







cover images

VIEW OF MOLONGLO RIVER, CANBERRA SITE ■ between 1910 and 1927 ■

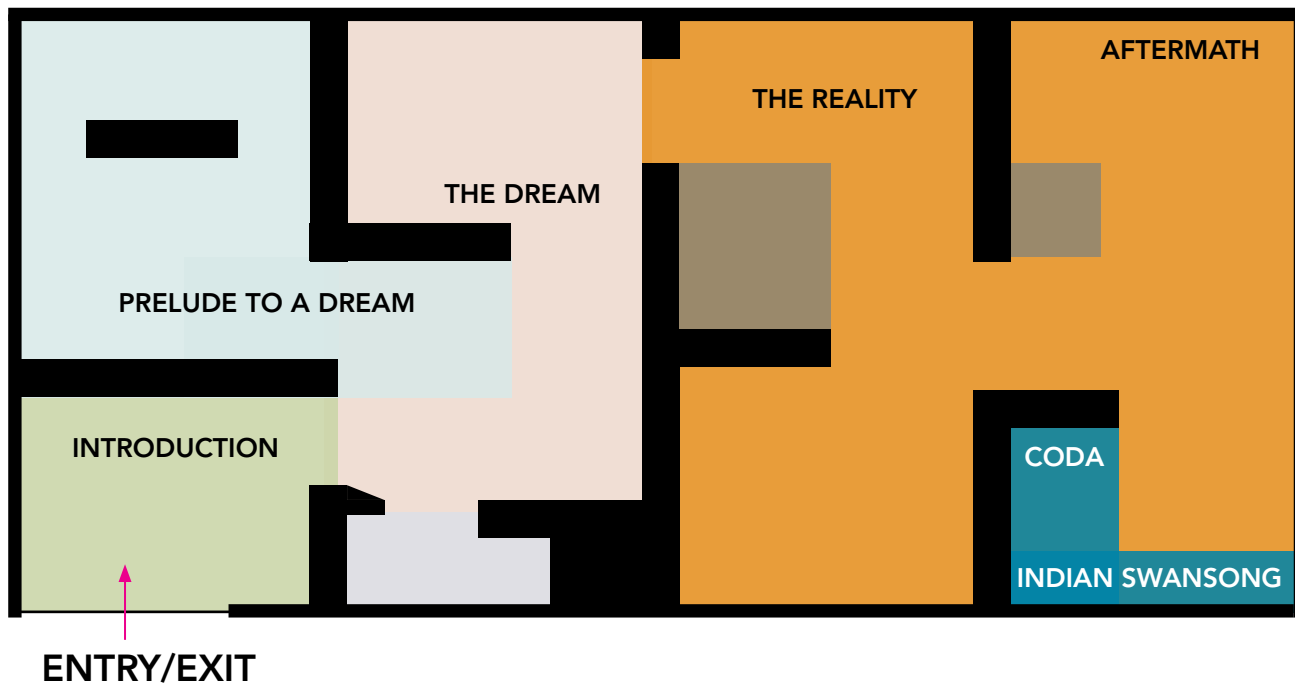
gelatin silver print ■ (detail) ■ nla.pic-vn3603884-s4

WALTER BURLEY GRIFFIN (1876–1937) ■ CANBERRA, FEDERAL CAPITAL OF AUSTRALIA, PRELIMINARY PLAN, 1913 ■  
(detail) ■ lithograph ■ nla.map-gmod34

inside cover image

WALTER BURLEY GRIFFIN (1876–1937) ■ CANBERRA, FEDERAL CAPITAL OF AUSTRALIA, PRELIMINARY PLAN, 1913 ■  
lithograph ■ nla.map-gmod34

# EXHIBITION MAP



## KEY

- INTRODUCTION ■
- PRELUDE TO A DREAM ■
- THE DREAM ■
- THE REALITY ■
- AFTERMATH ■
- INDIAN SWANSONG ■
- CODA ■

**Andrew Ellicott** (surveyor, 1754–1820)

**Plan of the city of Washington  
in the territory of Columbia** c. 1910

digital reproduction from glass lantern slide

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn4195822

Emulating Washington and its District of Columbia surrounds, the new Australian capital would be similarly positioned within a larger Federal (later Australian) Capital Territory. This map, first published in 1792, depicts the original layout for Washington, DC, designed by Pierre Charles L'Enfant (1754–1825) in 1791.

**Charles Coulter** (1864–1956)

**An ideal federal city, Lake George,  
New South Wales** 1901

watercolour

Pictures Collection, nla.pic-an5263460

Coulter's view of 'an ideal federal city' was published as the frontispiece to the proceedings of the Congress of Engineers, Architects, Surveyors and Others Interested in the Building of the Federal Capital of Australia.



## ■ EARLY FOUNDATIONS ■

Walter and Marion Griffin were raised in the bucolic, garden-filled suburbs of Chicago's hinterland; she in Hubbard Woods to the north and he to the west in Maywood, Oak Park and Elmhurst.

In 1890, Marion left Chicago to study architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Returning home in 1894, she was only the second woman in the United States to have been awarded an architecture degree.

Walter, too, decided to pursue architecture. He had hoped to study landscape architecture but discovered that no such degree existed in America. In 1895, Walter began studying at the University of Illinois, some 200 kilometres south of Chicago, where he complemented his architecture classes with ones in landscape gardening. Graduating in 1899, Walter, like Marion, returned to Chicago to start his career.

## **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

### **Landscape study** 1889

watercolour

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884a-s390

In an early display of his landscape sensibilities, Walter painted this landscape study as a 13-year-old secondary school student.

## **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

### **Landscape studies** between 1895 and 1899

pencil on tracing paper

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884a-s298

Walter drew these vegetation studies probably as a student at the University of Illinois.

## ■ INNOVATIVE CHICAGO ■

The Chicago to which Walter and Marion returned after their studies had already gained prominence as a centre of architectural innovation—most visibly and dramatically signalled by its skyscrapers. In 1893, the city had hosted the World's Columbian Exposition, which not only marked Chicago's cultural maturity but also put the city on a global stage. Walter and Marion both visited the exposition, an ideal city in miniature. They were not alone. On one particular day, more than 700,000 people flocked to the 'White City' poised at Lake Michigan's edge. Walter later claimed that the exposition—an overwhelming experience for the 17 year old—inspired him to become a landscape architect. In particular, he would later refer to the work of the exposition's designer, Daniel Burnham, when conceptualising Canberra.

### **World's Columbian Exposition** 1893

glass lantern slide

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn4190358

### **World's Columbian Exposition** 1893

glass lantern slide

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn4190356

**Louis H. Sullivan, Chicago, IL** c.1900  
digital reproduction of gelatin silver print

Richard Nickel Archive  
Ryerson and Burnham Archives  
The Art Institute of Chicago  
Digital file #201006\_110711-23  
© The Art Institute of Chicago

Attributed to **John W. Taylor** (c. 1846–1918)

**Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company Building,  
Madison and State Streets, Chicago** c. 1905  
gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s900

Louis Sullivan's Schlesinger and Mayer Department Store was under construction when Walter returned to Chicago. The building opened in 1903. The next year, it was sold and renamed Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company.

Attributed to **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Main entry, Schlesinger and Mayer Department  
Store, Madison and State streets, Chicago** c. 1903  
gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s876



**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Sullivan-esque ornament stencils relating to the church at Elmhurst, Illinois** c. 1900

pencil on tracing paper

Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3703893 and nla.pic-vn3703579

Around 1900, Walter designed an interior frieze for Christ Church, located opposite his parent's Elmhurst home. As one of his sisters later explained, he 'cut elaborate stencils' which displayed the influence of Louis Sullivan's ornament, 'such as the elaborate metal work around the entrance of Carson, Pirie, Scott & Co. ... The stencils were painted in gold on a dull green background'.

**Frank Lloyd Wright** (1867–1959)

**Winslow House, River Forest, Illinois, 1893**

from *Architectural Review*

Boston: Bates and Guild Company, June 1900  
offset lithograph

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3724237

Wright's William H. Winslow house, built in 1894, marked a dramatic departure from aesthetic convention. The architect's detailed rendering of the landscape would later inspire Marion's graphic technique.

## **Portrait of Frank Lloyd Wright** 1895

gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s866

This portrait of Frank Lloyd Wright was taken in the same year that Marion began working for the legendary architect.

## **Exterior view of Frank Lloyd Wright's Frank Thomas House, Forest Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois** 1901

gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884a-s663

According to Marion, Walter made a substantial contribution to this design, an early example of what came to be known as Wright's 'prairie style'.

## **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

## **General plan study of the grounds, Eastern Illinois State Normal School, Charleston, Illinois** 1901

photographic reproduction of drawing

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s248

Wright permitted Walter to take up independent work while in his employ. This was Walter's first substantial landscape architecture commission.

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Perspective of Frank Lloyd Wright's  
H.J. Ullman House, Oak Park, Illinois** c. 1908  
pencil on tracing paper

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3701685

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**General plan of plantings, Northern Illinois State  
Normal School, DeKalb, Illinois** c. 1906  
photographic reproduction of drawing

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3703966

This extensive job financially facilitated Walter's departure from Wright's office in 1906.

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Plan of plantings, portion of terraces, Northern  
Illinois State Normal School, DeKalb, Illinois**  
c. 1906  
digital reproduction of drawing

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884a-s282

In this plan, Walter recorded the tree, shrub and flower species to be planted in the school's



garden terraces. The crystalline, geometric configuration of the terraces, together with Walter's creation of an ornamental lagoon, presages Canberra's layout.

**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)

**Residence of Mr C.H. Wills, the hall and dining room showing fountain and conservatory, Detroit, Michigan** 1910

photographic reproduction of drawing

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884a-s266

Working for Chicago architect Hermann von Holst (1874–1955), Marion completed projects initiated by Frank Lloyd Wright, who had closed his Chicago firm in 1909. As this project for automobile manufacturer Childe Harold Wills reminds us, Marion was a qualified architect in her own right.

Attributed to **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**View of Harry E. Gunn House, Tracy, Chicago, from driveway** c. 1910

gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s247

Attributed to **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**View of Harry E. Gunn House, Tracy, Chicago,  
from garden** c. 1906  
gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s246

Walter designed the house and garden for Harry E. Gunn as a collective ensemble. On the eve of his departure for Australia, Walter told a landscape critic that he believed the Gunn project to be the most representative of his domestic American work.

**Views of Northern Illinois State Normal School,  
DeKalb, Illinois** c. 1906  
gelatin silver prints

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3701027 and nla.pic-vn3701029

**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Plan and perspective of Harry E. Gunn House,  
Tracy, Chicago, 1909** 1911  
photographic reproduction of drawing

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884a-s214

Joining Walter's office in 1911, Marion formulated a new presentation format, which she described as 'uniform size, 18 by 36 inches (46 x 91 cm), on coloured satin with the careful outline work of an etching and finished in transparent watercolours mixed with glue and a complete exposition of the building—plan, perspective, section (and) decorative details, worked together into a unified mural panel'.

**Harry Franklin Robinson** (1883–1959)  
after **Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961) and  
**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**William F. Tempel House, Kenilworth, Illinois** 1910  
lithograph, ink, watercolour, gouache and pencil  
on linen

Pictures Collection, nla.pic-an23594267

This rendering, prepared for display in architectural exhibitions, is another example of Marion's 'unified mural panel' graphic technique. According to the label on the reverse, the Griffins insured the document for \$25—more than \$600 in today's money. First working for Frank Lloyd Wright, Robinson entered Griffin's employ in 1908. He returned to Wright in 1911.



**Harry Franklin Robinson** (1883–1959)  
after **Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961) and  
**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Niles Club Company Club House, Niles,  
Michigan** c. 1911  
lithograph, ink, watercolour and gouache on linen

Pictures Collection, nla.pic-an23594250

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Townsite Idalia, Lee County, Florida** 1911  
photographic reproduction of drawing

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s222

Around 1911, Chicago real estate developer E. J. Staten commissioned Walter to lay out a new town—Idalia—in comparatively ‘tropical’ Florida. This rendering, dated 15 May, is the only known town plan Walter designed prior to entering the Australian capital competition. Idalia, with its thoroughfare adorned with eucalypts, would remain only a vision on paper.

## **Walter Burley Griffin (1876–1937)**

### **The North Shore wins 1915**

offset lithograph

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3702972

Also around 1911, developer William Tempel formed the Community Development Company, in which the Griffins invested. Under the company's auspices, Walter was commissioned to subdivide Tempel's farm at Winnetka, north of Chicago. He planned three discrete neighbourhoods, the focal point known as Trier Center. This brochure was prepared to attract investors and home builders.

### **Community Development Company draughting rooms and sales office, Trier Center Neighborhood, Winnetka, Illinois c. 1913**

gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s223

### **Model of Trier Center Neighborhood, Winnetka, Illinois c. 1913**

gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s225

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Trier Center Neighborhood, Winnetka, Illinois**

c. 1913

lithograph on silk

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3660281

**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)

after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Own House, Winnetka, Illinois** c. 1911

lithograph on silk

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3660276

The Griffins planned to reside in the Trier Center Neighborhood in a home overlooking a circular fountain within the main thoroughfare's cul-de-sac. The couple's Canberra victory, however, intervened and the house was never built.



**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Rock Crest–Rock Glen site plan, Mason City, Iowa**

c. 1912

heliographic print of drawing

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3701697

After the announcement of the Griffins' Canberra victory, the couple received a plethora of town planning commissions, including this design for the Rock Crest–Rock Glen community at Mason City, Iowa. The project entailed the design of 20 dwellings and saw the Griffins transform a derelict creek valley site, formerly home to a quarry and rubbish tip, into an expansive garden.

## ■ ASTONISHING CHICAGO ■

Walter and Marion Griffin were both natives of Chicago, Illinois. In 1837, when Chicago was incorporated as a city, around 4,000 people called it home. Some ten years later, the population had swelled to nearly 30,000 people. In 1848, water transport routes expanded and, with them, the city's role as a major trading centre. Over the next decade, Chicago would also become America's rail hub, thereby establishing the city's industrial and manufacturing dominance.

In 1871, the legendary Great Fire destroyed roughly a third of Chicago's centre. But the city rose from the ashes like a phoenix, the disaster becoming a catalyst for rebirth and further growth. Chicago now experienced changes faster than most cities in the American East and Europe. By the early 1880s, the city's population had jumped to over half a million and, by the time Walter graduated from university in 1899, the figure had more than tripled.

**Arno B. Reincke**

**Chicago, central business section** 1916  
digital reproduction of lithograph

Library of Congress, [loc.gov/item/75693213](https://loc.gov/item/75693213)

In the late 1700s, Chicago's genesis came with the founding of a trading post at the mouth of the Chicago River. The site for the future city was an inhospitable stretch of marshy terrain on the

south-western shores of Lake Michigan. The area was first used as a portage between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River and would enable the city's growth as a continental transportation hub. From its lakeshore environs, Chicago—and soon the nation—would expand westward. By the time of the Griffins' childhoods, Chicago was known as the 'Shock City'. Author Robert Bruegmann describes the city as having been a place 'where travellers went to view the future'.

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**A view from the north, Melson House,  
Mason City, Iowa** c. 1912  
gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884a-s365

Of all the houses the Griffins designed at Rock Crest–Rock Glen, the Joshua G. Melson residence was the most remarkable. This photograph shows the daunting site for Melson's future house, a limestone bluff overlooking the creek.



**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Perspective view of Melson House, Mason City,  
Iowa** 1912

photographic reproduction of drawing

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884a-s706

Walter responded to Melson's property by constructing the house atop of and into the bluff, not unlike an American indigenous cliff dwelling. Here, a party enjoys tea on an outdoor 'secret terrace' (upper left) and the garden is shaped like a lotus (lower left).

**Exterior view of Melson House, Mason City,  
Iowa** c. 1914

gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884a-s707

**Melson House, Mason City, Iowa** c. 1914  
gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884a-s203

As Marion recollected, the irregular, battered 'stone treatment made it possible for Griffin to climb the whole precipice'.

Attributed to **Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)  
or **Roy Alstan Lippincott** (1885–1961)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Melson House, Mason City, Iowa** 1912  
ink and pencil on buff paper

Pictures Collection, nla.pic-an23594277

**Chinese carpet** c 1920  
wool

Private collection

**Stella Miles Franklin** 1900s  
gelatin silver print

Papers of Miles Franklin  
Manuscripts Collection, nla.ms-ms681-0-1

In 1906, the year Walter opened his independent practice, Australian novelist Miles Franklin (1879–1954) and fellow Australian Alice Henry (1857–1943) travelled to Chicago to work for the National Women's Trade Union League of America.

**Miles Franklin** (1879–1954)

**'Elizabeth Martini, Architect:  
A Pioneer in an Old Profession'**  
in *Life and Labor*, February 1914

Overseas Serials, S 331.05 LIF

Upon learning of the Griffins' Canberra win, Franklin and Henry sought the couple out. Marion's work later appeared in this article in the league's national journal *Life and Labor*, co-edited by Franklin and Henry. The Griffins soon developed a friendship with Franklin that would span the next 20 years.

## **Department of Home Affairs**

### **Container for 'Competition Design of Federal Capital City, Commonwealth of Australia: Information for Competitors' 1911**

wood, paper, wire

Maps Collection, MAP RM 3095/13

One of the original timber boxes posted to competitors, containing the competition brief, a variety of maps and other information on the future capital's site.

**Walter Liberty Vernon** (1846–1914) and  
**Robert Charles Coulter** (1864–1956)

**Cycloramic view of Canberra capital site, view looking from Vernon** 1911  
photomechanical reproduction

Maps Collection, nla.pic-an7746418

This view of Canberra was among the documents supplied to competitors. It was originally painted by Charles Coulter, an architect for the NSW Government Architect's Office, who also entered the competition in a consortium with two other designers.

## **Government House ballroom, Melbourne** 1912

gelatin silver print

Pictures Collection, nla.pic-an24381832

By the close of the competition in mid-February 1912, the Commonwealth had received 137 submissions, all displayed for adjudication in the Government House ballroom in Melbourne.

## **The birth of a continent's capitol** 1912

gelatin silver print

Pictures Collection, nla.pic-an24381787

At a gathering on 23 May 1912, King O'Malley opened the sealed envelope and divulged the winner's name.

## ■ **THE WINNING DESIGN** ■

Most competitors considered the future capital's site to be a blank page, distorting it to conform with various aesthetic principles. Alternatively, the Griffins' plan was distinguished by its sensitive response to the site's physical features. Composed on a cross-axial scheme, the Griffins fused the geometric with the naturalistic.

The couple venerated landforms and responded to a linear connection—or 'land axis'—between the inner hill summits of the area and the distant mountains.

Anchored by Mount Ainslie at one end, this land axis extended some 52 kilometres to its other terminus, Mount Bimberi.



The Molonglo River valley posed no less a design opportunity than did landforms. Accordingly, the couple identified a 'water axis', which crossed the land axis at a right angle and extended the Molonglo River into a continuous chain of basins and lakes.

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Commonwealth of Australia Federal Capital  
Competition: City and environs** 1911 or 1912  
glass lantern slide

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn4195964

The future capital of what was then the twentieth century's newest nation lacked the cultural artefacts and monuments of human creation typical of other capital cities. To compensate, the Griffins turned to the natural world, appropriating the landscape as Australia's primal, enduring monument.

**Topographic map of Washington, DC** c. 1901  
glass lantern slide

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn4195831

Of all the precedents the Griffins' studied when conceptualising their plan, Washington, D.C. was the most essential. Walter used this slide of the North American capital city to illustrate his lectures on the winning design.

Attributed to **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**View of Canberra** c. 1913

glass lantern slide

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn4189463

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Winning design**

Sydney: Department of Lands, 1913  
lithograph

Maps Collection, nla.map-gmod30

**Daniel H. Burnham** (1846–1912)

**City of Baguio: General plan of improvements** 1905  
digital reproduction

Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University

Emulating the British Raj's Simla in India, Burnham also planned a new summer capital city for the Philippines. The Griffins studied this plan carefully, which relies upon rugged landforms to determine the city's axial alignments.

**Daniel H. Burnham** (1846–1912)

**Proposed improvements at Manila, 28 June 1905**

Washington, DC: Bureau of Insular Affairs,  
War Department, 1906  
digital reproduction

Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University

After victory in the Spanish–American War in 1898, the United States took possession of an array of Pacific and Caribbean islands, including the Philippines. Daniel Burnham, who had orchestrated the World’s Columbian Exposition, was commissioned by the US government to modernise Manila. Griffin studied Burnham’s proposed plan for the ancient capital when conceptualising his Canberra design.

■ **A NIGHTMARISH INTERLUDE** ■

With the Griffins’ victory, Walter’s dream had come true—or so he thought. In January 1913, less than nine months after winning the competition, Walter received distressing, if not heart-breaking, news. King O’Malley had replaced the Griffins’ plan with the government’s Departmental Board plan, a tortured amalgam of features from the Griffins’ and other contestants’ submissions. When Canberra’s construction began in March, it was to the board’s, not the Griffins’, layout. In July, determined to persuade the government to restore the couple’s design, Walter voyaged alone to Australia. His campaign ultimately met with success and he departed in October as Australia’s Federal

Capital Director of Design and Construction, due to return to Australia in six months.

**Departmental Board, Australian Department of Home Affairs**

**Design of the lay out of the Federal Capital City of Australia as projected by the Departmental Board**  
Sydney: W.A. Gullick, Government Printer, 1912  
photolithograph

Maps Collection, nla.map-gmod92

**Walter Burley Griffin (1876–1937)**

**Canberra elevation: Section through the city, water axis looking north** c. 1911  
lithograph and ink on silk satin

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3659962

**Andrew Fisher, Lord and Lady Denman and King O'Malley acknowledge the crowd from the 'Foundation Stones' at the naming of Canberra ceremony, 12 March 1913**  
gelatin silver print

Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn4503893

The commencement column on which the Foundation Stones were laid was never completed and was later relocated to the lawn in front of Parliament House.

**View of Molonglo River, Canberra site**

between 1910 and 1927

gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s4

**Fairfax & Roberts** (est. 1858)

**Trowel used by King O'Malley in laying one of the foundation stones of the commencement column of the federal capital city** 1913

copper, gold and ivory

Pictures Collection, nla.pic-an7754326

At the ceremony, Lord Denman proudly announced that the Viceroy of India had requested reproductions of Canberra's plan: 'It is interesting to note ... that those engaged in the building of the capital of one of the oldest of civilised countries are apparently not above accepting ideas from this, one of the youngest countries in the world'.



**Sargents Limited** (est. 1883)

**Presentation box of a cigar, cigarettes and matches  
inscribed 'Federal Capital of Australia,  
March 12th 1913'** 1913  
tobacco, paper and wood

Pictures Collection, nla.pic-an7852943

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Canberra Federal Capital of Australia  
preliminary plan, 1913**

Melbourne: Department of Home Affairs, 1914  
lithograph

Maps Collection, nla.map-gmod34

On his first Australian visit, Walter prepared this revised plan in response to the Departmental Board's criticisms of his original winning design and to his firsthand experience of the capital's site.

## ■ LANDSCAPE PASSIONS ■

On his first trip to Australia, Walter quickly grew enraptured with its landscape. Only weeks after his arrival, he judged in a newspaper interview that 'no tree equals the eucalyptus for embellishing the landscape ... [The] planting of foreign trees in place of the indigenous eucalypt is, to my way of thinking, a great mistake'. With this newfound conviction that eucalypts are fundamental to Australia's sense of place, Walter resolved to adorn Canberra with the genus and other native flora. Marion quickly came to share her husband's esteem for the native landscape.

Attributed to **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

### **The Grampians, Victoria** 1918

gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s555

Marion recorded that she and Walter took 'every possible opportunity for learning the points of the wonderfully rich native flora', routinely keeping 'Saturdays free for walks in the outlying districts'. Botanists such as Constance LePlastrier (1864–1938) and Edwin Cheel (1872–1951) often accompanied the couple on their excursions.

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937) and  
**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)

***Casuarina cunninghamiana* (River Oak),  
Canberra** 1917

gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s574

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937) and  
**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)

***Eucalyptus polyanthemos* (Red Box), Canberra** 1917  
gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s573

**Euphemia Eleanor (Effie) Baker** (1880–1968)

***Australian Wild Flowers***

Melbourne: T. & H. Hunter, 1914

Australian Collection, nla.aus-vn570125

The couple's botanical interest was also reflected in the contents of their library. One such-related volume was Effie Baker's *Australian Wild Flowers*, published the year the Griffins moved to Australia. Baker was a photographer living in Melbourne whom Walter and Marion likely knew personally.

## **Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)

### **Botanical catalogues** c. 1916

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Manuscripts Collection, MS 9957 Box 12 (Folio 1)

Seeking to embellish Canberra with native plants, the Griffins discovered that 'information about Australian flora' was 'almost impossible to get'. In remedy, Marion compiled her own lists of native plants, indexed according to habitat, height, shape and colour. These lists would form a series of hand-bound horticultural catalogues, each titled by colour.

## **Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)

### ***Eucalyptus urnigera*, Tasmania, Scarlet Bark, sunset, December 1918** c. 1919

lithograph and charcoal on buff silk

Private collection

Between 1918 and the 1920s, Marion made 24 botanical studies of Australian native trees and shrubs, representing them in their natural habitat. She wrote: 'In Tasmania where color runs riot in everything ... we find the barks putting on an equally amazing show. The *Eucalyptus urnigera* is so fiery that paint cannot reproduce it'. This lithograph is the only known example still in its original Griffin-designed frame.

## ■ MAKING CANBERRA ■

Marion created her exquisite final presentation renderings of the capital to persuasively 'sell' the couple's design. Indeed, the visual allure of Marion's work is no less potent today than it was for the adjudicators in 1912. By contrast, Walter's staff at the Federal Capital Office recorded his road and planting schemes in comprehensive working drawings. Compared to the finished elegance of Marion's renderings, such drawings are comparatively gritty, detailed and by no means beautiful. They are, however, the sort of documentation required to construct the city.

**Algernon Darge** (1878–1941)

**Federal Capital Office,  
84 William Street, Melbourne** c.1913  
gelatin silver print

Simon Reeves collection, Melbourne

The Queensland Insurance Building, located at 84 Collins Street, Melbourne, was completed in 1913 and would soon accommodate Griffin's Federal Capital Office.



**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Plan of proposed layout of the city of Canberra and environs showing streets** between 1911 and 1920  
photostat

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s58

It is unclear whether this drawing is a preliminary study made prior to the final competition design or a working drawing made later in Australia. Walter has annotated the verso '480 employees, duplication, pop. 4000'.

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Canberra contours and layout** c. 1915  
photostat and graphite

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3662438

This working drawing documents Walter's efforts to resolve the city's thoroughfare layout.

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Map of parkways and roadways planned for the city of Canberra** 1916  
sepia diazotype, blue media, graphite and ink

Eric Milton Nicholls Special Map Collection  
Maps Collection, nla.map-nic13

On this plan, Walter has colour-shaded the proposed parkland areas and also continued to revise the street layout. The national arboretum is located in the upper-left corner, near where King O'Malley has initialled and approved the drawing.

### **Walter Burley Griffin (1876–1937)**

#### **Arboretum and eventual botanical reserves, Canberra 1915**

hand-coloured diazotype with ink annotations

National Archives of Australia, AA1966/33, Folder 1

Walter's decision to divide the national arboretum into continents was made at the suggestion of his bushwalking companion, botanist Edwin Cheel (1872–1951). The design reflects an understanding that, in prehistoric times, the continents were joined in a larger landmass, Gondwanaland. By evoking this antique connectedness, Walter symbolically imbued Canberra with a sense of permanence.

### **Walter Burley Griffin (1876–1937)**

#### **Lake parklands study c 1915**

hand-coloured gelatin silver print on linen

National Archives of Australia, CP 209-1

Here, Walter has shaded the areas to be planted within the city green. The annotation 'Cypresses' is in keeping with his scheme to chromatically punctuate the city's inner hilltops with dark evergreen trees.

## **Walter Burley Griffin (1876–1937)**

### **Canberra: Plan of city and environs 1916**

photostat

Eric Milton Nicholls Special Map Collection  
Maps Collection, nla.map-nic11

This plan similarly records the areas to be planted, shown in green tint. Its reverse is rubber-stamped and hand-annotated 'Federal Capital Office Melbourne / Plan Received from Mrs Griffin, 13/9/1916'.

## **Walter Burley Griffin (1876–1937) and Marion Mahony Griffin (1871–1961)**

### **Combination desk and plan cabinet, drafting table, stool, adjustable stool and open-shelf bookcase**

c. 1920

Japanese oak

### **Desk lamp, inkpot, blotter, blotting paper, paintbrushes, set squares, magnifying glass and T-square 1920s**

### **Framed windows c. 1920**

Japanese oak and leaded glass

These windows were possibly made as mock-ups for a commercial commission.

Private collection

## ■ DESIGNING FURNITURE ■

When a client's budget allowed, the Griffins also designed furniture to complement their architecture and create harmonious interior environments. Their concern for harmony also extended to their work environment. Combining utility with beauty, the Griffins designed this ensemble of furniture for their own office.

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Canberra: Mugga Mugga Heights** 1917  
blueprint on linen

National Archives of Australia, A192, FCL1918/1155

Resolving the capital's overall plan, Walter prepared this detailed road layout for one of the suburbs he envisaged for the city. It was never realised.

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Canberra subdivision plan 1—city district:  
Neighborhood 1, Neighbourhood 2; Civic Centre,  
19 March 1918**  
diazotype with ink

National Archives of Australia, A192, FCL1921/490

This highly detailed, block-by-block subdivision plan registers Walter's decision to begin the city's

development to the north of his envisaged 'ornamental waters' or lake.

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Civic Centre tree planting plan—amended copy,  
29 April 1919**

blueprint

National Archives of Australia, A192, FCL1923/57

In what would prove to be one of his last landscape initiatives for Canberra, Walter prepared a detailed tree-planting plan for the Civic Centre. The thoroughfares were to be embellished with Australian flora—a controversial decision that attracted criticism from botanical authorities. The plan also confirms Walter's decision to abandon Civic Centre at the City Hall site.

**Calder E. Oliver** (sewerage engineer, 1855–1930) and  
**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Canberra water supply and sewerage** 1919 or 1920  
photolithograph and ink

Eric Milton Nicholls Special Map Collection  
Maps Collection, [nla.map-nic7](http://nla.map-nic7)

## **Walter Burley Griffin (1876–1937)**

### **City centre detail** c. 1916

photographic reproduction of drawing

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s215

This map is a detail from the Griffins' design for 'Arsenal Town', a part of Canberra which Marion captioned 'Tuggernong'. Today, the area is referred to as Tuggeranong.

### **Walter Burley Griffin with his father, George, Canberra** c. 1920

gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884a-s254

Near the end of his Canberra tenure, Walter took his father to visit the capital's site. In this view by an unknown photographer, Walter is seated at the base of large River Oak, with George Griffin to the left of the tree and Marion in profile almost behind it.



**Walter Bergelin** (draughtsman) for **Department of Lands, Sydney** and **Henry Sheaffe** (surveyor) based on the design of **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

### **Advertising for the auction of Jervis Bay City Estate**

Sydney: John Andrew and Co., 1918  
hand-coloured lithograph

Eric Milton Nicholls Special Map Collection  
Maps Collection, nla.map-nic20

Jervis Bay was intended to become the capital's seaport and the location of a naval college. Griffin was privately commissioned to extend an earlier subdivision.

### **Aerial view of Canberra** 1929

digital reproduction from gelatin silver print

Private collection

## ■ PRIVATE AUSTRALIAN WORK ■

Walter's work as Federal Capital Director of Design and Construction was, in fact, a part-time job, requiring him to allocate only half of his time, but undoubtedly all of his heart, to the capital. The remainder of his time was devoted to private practice, working from offices in Sydney and Melbourne. Together, Walter and Marion would go on to design more than 250 projects across Australia.

## **Sales brochure for Glenard Estate, Mount Eagle, Victoria**

Melbourne: Farrow Falcon Press, 1916  
offset lithograph

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3701541

## **Mount Eagle Estate views**

Melbourne: C.E. Scott Print, 1914  
lithograph

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s219

Walter's design for Mount Eagle Estate, Melbourne, was one of his early private Australian landscape architecture commissions.

**Roy Alstan Lippincott** (1885–1969)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Design of township, Griffith, New South Wales:  
Murrumbidgee irrigation areas** between 1915 and 1925  
offset lithograph

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3660675

Walter derived his layout for Griffith from Canberra's crystalline geometry. That year, he also designed a town plan for Leeton, in the same irrigation district.

Walter was commissioned to undertake these projects in 1913, during his first visit to Australia. Lippincott was married to Walter's sister Genevieve and, in 1914, came to work as the Griffins' junior partner.

**Roy Alstan Lippincott** (1885–1969)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Original facade plan for Café Australia, Melbourne,  
15 November 1915**  
blueprint

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3661926

In 1915, Melbourne restaurateur A.J.J. Lucas commissioned the Griffins to remodel his Vienna Café, one of the city's longest-established restaurants. The café occupied a portion of a Victorian-era commercial building that the Griffins would soon reconfigure into a linear, episodic sequence of three main rooms. Each room was furnished with tables, chairs, china and menus of the couple's design.

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Front elevation for revised entry to Vienna Café,  
Melbourne, 26 July 1916**  
pencil on tracing paper

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3662218

In their initial scheme for Café Australia, the Griffins ambitiously envisaged a two-storey structure. By July 1916, as shown in this front elevation, the Griffins had scaled back the design to one storey.

**Roy Alstan Lippincott** (1885–1969)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Elevation and plan, revised entrance and bar,  
Vienna Café, Melbourne, 2 August 1916**  
blueprint

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3661892

In August 1916, the design of the café's front elevation and entry was complete. The electroliers (pendant light fixtures), however, were never realised

**Advertisement for *The Australia*, Melbourne**  
from *Punch* (Melbourne), 2 November 1916

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3662480

Café Australia offered diners an ethereal atmosphere, far removed from Melbourne's urban reality. Unfortunately, the café's aesthetic was in advance of public taste and the structure was demolished in 1938.

**Exterior view of entry to The Australia,  
Collins Street, Melbourne** between 1919 and 1939  
offset lithograph

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3698616-s1

Departing the noise and heat of Collins Street, visitors stepped down into the Fountain Court. From here, 'invited by the glow of sunlight' that filtered through the multi-tinted, amber-ceiling glass, visitors entered the Fern Room.

**Interior view of Fern Room, Café Australia,  
Melbourne** between 1916 and 1936  
gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s150

In the Fern Room, the overhead art glass was executed in a pattern derived from tree fern fronds. The room also featured four fountains replete with goldfish, 'whose graceful spray is played upon by coloured lights beneath the water'. Ornamental foliage, including namesake ferns, surrounded the fountains. The abundance of greenery led one reviewer to liken the café to a huge conservatory.

**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)

**Opening night menu for *The Australia*, Melbourne,**  
8 November 1916

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3660541

**Lengthwise view of the sculptural detail in  
Fountain Court, Café Australia, Melbourne** 1916  
digital reproduction of gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3698616-s11

The Fern Room was partitioned from the Fountain Court by three pier-like columns. Each pier was adorned with a single figure modelled by Melbourne sculptor Margaret Baskerville (1861–1930) after Marion's sketches. Drawing upon Greek mythology, Baskerville's life-sized figures represented Persephone, Daphne and Echo positioned among waist-high sheaves of rye, barley and wheat.

**Interior view of the Fountain Court showing sculptural details, Café Australia, Melbourne** 1916  
digital reproduction of gelatin silver print

The opposite sides of these columns feature full reliefs of individual trees. Each tree was labelled not by variety but by three of the seasons: spring, summer and autumn.

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3698616-s12

**Interior view of the Banquet Hall with balcony and mural, Café Australia, Melbourne** 1916  
digital reproduction of gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3698616-s5

The café's spatial sequence culminated in the Banquet Hall, enclosed by a balcony. Beneath its vaulted ceiling, the room featured *Dawn in the Australian Bush*, a mural by Melbourne artist Bertha Merfield (1869–1921). A contemporary account described the mural as depicting 'the sky stretched with the grey of dawn, with the sun breaking through in patches of golden light ... the peace and calm of Nature make harmony'.



**Bertha Merfield** (1869–1921)

**Catalogue of an Exhibition of Decorative Panels**

Sydney: Anthony Hordern and Sons, 1920  
offset lithograph

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3696907

Like the Griffins, Merfield recognised that 'the Australian Bush contains the elements of decorative design, ready-made. The artist emphasised 'patterns she found in Nature half concealed under the rank growth of unnecessary details, discovering the essential character of Australian scenery'.

**Interior view of the Fountain Court showing sculptural details, Café Australia, Melbourne** 1916

digital reproduction of gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3698616-s7

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937) and  
**H. Goldman Manufacturing Company, Melbourne**  
(1911–1927)

**Café Australia, table** 1916

pine (*Pinus radiata*) and blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Mr Nigel Morgan, Founder Benefactor, 2000  
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne 2000.53

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937),  
**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961) and  
**H. Goldman Manufacturing Company, Melbourne**  
(1911–1927)

**Café Australia, chair** 1916  
blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*), plywood and leather

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Purchased 2003 2003.449

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Full-size detail of panel from plaster ceiling ornament  
for Café Australia, Melbourne** c. 1916  
pencil on tracing paper

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3661286

Ornament featuring 'triangular fillet, circle and thorny vine' wove throughout the café, linking its three main spaces. This decorative element—especially in the ceiling plasterwork and stairway balustrades—drew its inspiration from Louis Sullivan.

**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Newman College, The University of Melbourne**

between 1915 and 1917

lithograph on silk

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3660084

In 1915, Walter was commissioned to design Newman College at The University of Melbourne. Along with his architectural proposals, he conceived a landscape plan for the larger campus, in which he urged the planting of native flora. The design delineated plantings in irregular masses organised by individual floral colours and combinations thereof, such as 'salmon and copper' and 'silver pink and blue'.

**Exterior view of Newman College,  
The University of Melbourne** 1916

gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s125

Marion explained that Walter's 'method of planting together according to colour gave his plantings a splendour one rarely sees. . Although much altered today, the Newman College garden was one of the first examples of an Australian flora garden designed by a landscape architect.

**Front view of bison sculptures outside the American Pavilion for 'Our Boys Day', Collins Street, Melbourne**

c. 1918

gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3721647

In 1918, the Griffins designed, gratis, a temporary American Pavilion for 'Our Boys Day', held in Melbourne on 15 March 1918. The purpose of the event was to raise money for Victoria's State War Council Fund for Australian Returned Sailors and Soldiers.

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1939) (designer) and  
**N. Redding** and **H. Goldman Manufacturing** (makers)

**Casket and ceremonial mallet used by the Prince of Wales when laying the foundation stone for Capitol Building, Capitol Hill, Canberra, 21 June 1920**

Australian timbers, gold and velvet

Courtesy of the Gifts Collection, Parliament House Art Collection  
Department of Parliamentary Services, Canberra, ACT

On 21 June 1920, the Prince of Wales—later King Edward VII—ceremoniously laid the foundation stone for Walter’s Capitol Building atop its namesake hill. The ziggurat-capped edifice was to house the Commonwealth’s archives. Walter, in what would prove to be one of his last official projects for Canberra, designed the casket and mallet the Prince used on the day. The stone was positioned so as to also mark the centre of Canberra. The Prince, seeing the foundation stone for the still unfinished (even today) commencement column nearby, famously jested that ‘Canberra consists chiefly of foundation stones’. Although the Capitol Building, too, was never realised, its foundation stone can be found set within the pavement of Queen’s Terrace at Parliament House.

## ■ CASTLECRAAG ■

Walter and Marion were undoubtedly demoralised that their long-standing dream for Australia's capital had ended prematurely. The couple might have been expected to return home. They chose, however, to remain in Australia.

Devoting themselves to private practice, Walter and Marion remained undaunted in their belief that development and conservation could go hand-in-hand. This was best achieved in their Australian masterwork, Castlecrag, a suburban community near Sydney. From 1920 to 1935, the Griffins rehabilitated a bushland site, folding roadways and dwellings into the contours of a rocky waterside promontory. At Castlecrag, architecture gave deference to the natural world and the landscape was awarded landscape primacy. At last the Griffins realised the ideals they had first envisaged for Canberra.

### **Greater Sydney Development Association Limited**

#### **Scenic harbour suburb, Castlecrag (Edinburgh Castle, Middle Harbour), Sydney**

between 1925 and 1928

lithograph

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3662898

**Castlecrag: Before deciding, be sure to see the finest harbour views offering in Sydney**

Sydney: Greater Sydney Development Association Limited, 1921  
offset lithograph

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3702591

**Plan of the subdivision of the Castlecrag Estate, Parish of Willoughby, County of Cumberland**

Sydney: Greater Sydney Development Association Limited, 1921  
offset lithograph

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3699449

**Walter Burley Griffin (1876–1937)**

**Castlecrag topographic model** c. 1921  
digital reproduction of glass lantern slide

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn4184682

**Oblique view of Greater Sydney Development Association Office, 35 Bligh Street, Sydney** 1920s  
gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s337



In 1920, perhaps aware that the 'handwriting was on the wall' at Canberra, the Griffins formed the Greater Sydney Development Association (GSDA) to finance Castlecrag's development. The GSDA operated from a main office in Sydney. In this image, the renderings are displayed in the windows, almost as advertisements.

**View of Castlecrag houses under construction,  
Sydney** c. 1922

digital reproduction of glass lantern slide

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn4180454

Reminiscent of the original Canberra landscape, the Castlecrag site was not pristine; portions of it had been cut and denuded for firewood.

**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Reverend Cheok Hong Cheong dwelling,  
Castlecrag, Sydney** c. 1921

lithograph, ink, watercolour and gouache on silk

Pictures Collection, nla.pic-an23594241

The Griffins' design for the Cheong house was also used to promote land sales. 'Castlecrag' was among the opaque text that appeared across the office's streetfront glazing. Across the bottom of the Cheong print, the letters 'CRAG' (a fragment of the word 'Castlecrag') are faintly legible.

Attributed to **Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Greater Sydney Development Association dwellings  
no. 1 and no. 2, plans of residences, Edinburgh Road,  
Castlecrag, Sydney 1922**

lithograph, ink, watercolour and gouache on silk

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3660155

In 1921, the GSDA built a pair of stone houses at  
Castlecrag, which served as display homes and  
object-lessons for potential builders.

**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Presentation drawing Lot 218, The Palisade,  
Castlecrag, Sydney 1925**

digital reproduction of drawing

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884a-s464

Reflecting the Griffins' esteem for the natural world,  
an Angophora tree is the central focus of this  
rendering—even the floor plan of the house is  
diminutive and almost hidden at the lower-left corner.

**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Capitol Theatre, Swanston Street, Melbourne**

between 1921 and 1924  
lithograph and ink on silk

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3660142

Although preoccupied with Castlecrag, the Griffins continued to win substantial commissions, including Melbourne's Capitol Theatre.

**Exterior view of Moon House at Castlecrag, Sydney**

between 1921 and 1930  
gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s944

**Louise Lightfoot, Marion Mahony Griffin,  
Walter Burley Griffin and George Walter Griffin  
in the Griffins' garden at Castlecrag, Sydney**

between 1925 and 1935  
gelatin silver print

Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3295970

Louise Lightfoot (1902–1979) was an architectural apprentice with the Griffins and later went on to establish a ballet school and company.

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**View of the ceiling and stage area of theatre,  
Capitol Theatre, Swanston Street, Melbourne** 1924  
gelatin silver print

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s298

In 1926, celebrated architect and critic Robin Boyd attended a production at the Capitol Theatre. Reclining in his chair, he looked upward: 'high overhead hung a ceiling like the roof of a giant geometrical limestone cave where the stalactites spread perversely in horizontal layers and the luminous colours were continuously in flux'.

Attributed to **Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)

**Government Savings Bank of New South Wales**  
c. 1927  
lithograph on silk

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3660262

For unknown reasons, the Sydney architectural practice of H.E. Ross and Rowe modified Walter's design and completed the construction of the Savings Bank building.

## ■ THE GRIFFINS AND CANBERRA ■ AFTER WALTER ■

After Walter's official association with Canberra ended, he and Marion monitored the capital's progress from a distance. Walter's outrage over his forced departure apparently mellowed over time. When interviewed in Canberra in 1926, he gave the 'impression of an artist, who takes a true artist's pride in the work which is being carried out even if it is not, in every detail, in accordance with his own ideas'. The next year, Walter and Marion travelled to Canberra for the opening of Provisional (now Old) Parliament House. Walter visited again in 1934. Although 14 years had elapsed since Walter's exit, much of the couple's design remained only on paper. He cautioned that the 'longitudinal water axis' would 'have little significance so long as the formal basins remain un-demarcated'. A variant 'water axis'—Lake Burley Griffin—would not appear for another three decades. Walter never saw Canberra again.

**Edward William Searle** (1887–1955)

**Provisional Parliament House opening ceremony,  
Canberra** 1927

gelatin silver print

E.W. Searle Collection of Photographs  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn4655983

On 9 May 1927, at the Commonwealth's invitation, Walter and Marion attended the opening of Provisional (now Old) Parliament House.

**William James Mildenhall** (1891–1962)

**Hotel Ainslie** 1926 or 1927

gelatin silver print

Mildenhall Collection of Photographs of Canberra  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-an11030057-65

When visiting Canberra for the opening, Walter and Marion lodged at the newly completed Hotel Ainslie, now Mercure Canberra.

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Half-front elevation, Lucknow University Library,  
Lucknow, India** 1935 or 1936

pencil

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3673657

**Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Section C-D, Lucknow University Library,  
Lucknow, India** 1935 or 1936

pencil

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3673622



**Edwin Lutyens** (1869–1944)

**Plan of New Delhi** 1912

digital reproduction from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,  
11th edition, 1910–1912

Asian Collection, BRA 1507

En route to Lucknow, Walter visited the new imperial capital in 1935, recording his impression in a letter to Marion: 'The long wide walk with reflecting canals and many fountains and the governmental terrace with vast stone buildings and several domes and extensive colonnades effectively massed is essentially Roman, even to the togas of the statues of the viceroys, despite the efforts to supply local color in all the details'.

**Eric Milton Nicholls** (1902–1966)

and **Mary Adeline Nicholls** (1901–1975)

**Perspective view of Walter Burley's Griffin's design  
for Lucknow University Library, Lucknow, India** 1936

digital reproduction from glass negative

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3942589

Marion distinguished this scheme as 'one which looks and feels quite Indian and yet is the last word in modernism'. Walter died before the library could be constructed and, ultimately, it was erected to another architect's design.

**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Perspective view of Pioneer Press building,  
Lucknow, India** 1936

photographic reproduction of drawing

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s463

The office and printing works for the Pioneer Press newspaper was the largest and most substantial of the Griffins' Indian projects. Completed shortly after Walter's death, the building was demolished in the 1990s.

**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**United Provinces Exhibition, Industry and Agriculture,  
Lucknow, India** 1936

photographic reproduction of drawing

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884-s470

This project entailed the design of around 50 temporary exhibition pavilions, harking back to the Griffins' memories of the World's Columbian Exposition they visited more than four decades earlier.

**Marion Mahony Griffin** (1871–1961)  
after **Walter Burley Griffin** (1876–1937)

**Elevation of Lucknow Exhibition, India** 1936  
photographic reproduction of drawing

Eric Milton Nicholls Collection  
Pictures Collection, nla.pic-vn3603884a-s233

Here, Marion has depicted the exposition in a continuous elevation, a graphic technique she first used in 1911 to portray Canberra.

**Walter Burley Griffin, designer of Canberra** c. 1912  
gelatin silver print

Pictures Collection, nla.pic-an23137769

Upon learning of Walter's death in 1937, Alice Henry donated this portrait to the National Library of Australia. In May 1937, it was hanging in 'the basement at [Old] Parliament House alongside the original plan by him at the time of the competition'. At some point afterwards and for reasons unknown, the decision was made to remove both. The 'original plan' is now held by the National Archives of Australia.

**Portrait of Marion Mahony Griffin** c. 1935  
gelatin silver print

Pictures Collection, nla.pic-an23379384

This photograph was taken around the time Marion departed Australia. By January 1939, after a 25-year absence, Marion was back in her native Chicago. She now devoted herself to writing her voluminous memoirs, *The Magic of America*, which she finished about a decade later.

## **43 Melbourne Avenue, Forrest, Canberra 1937**

digital reproduction of gelatin silver print

Private collection

One day in 1937, Canberra architect Malcolm Moir (1903–1971) noticed a woman at the kerb photographing his recently completed house, which he had designed himself. The mystery photographer proved to be none other than Marion, who told Moir that her late husband would have liked the place.