



# Frank Lloyd Wright's SC Johnson Research Tower.

*Mark Hertzberg*

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Frank Lloyd Wright's SC Johnson Research Tower in Racine, Wisconsin, is one of modern architecture's most significant landmarks. Completed in 1950, the fifteen-story skyscraper is the only existing example of Wright's ambitious taproot design. Like limbs from a tree trunk, alternating square floors and round mezzanines branch out from the weight-bearing central core—a truly revolutionary idea at the time and an engineering marvel today.

In 1943 H. F. Johnson Jr., president of the SC Johnson & Son Company, commissioned Wright (1867-1959) to create a new laboratory space that would be as innovative as the research and development team working inside it. The architect eagerly accepted the challenge, envisioning a vertical complement to the firm's streamlined Administration Building, designed by Wright seven years prior. The result was a new kind of skyscraper, one with double-height spaces, windows made of Pyrex glass tubing, and stripes of Wright's signature Cherokee red brick, all balanced on a small pedestal base—the Tower's sinewy core. Although the Tower opened to great acclaim in 1950, it closed just thirty-one years later. Despite its ingenious structure, the building ultimately proved to be an impractical model of urban-industrial architecture.

*Frank Lloyd Wright's SC Johnson Research Tower* investigates the rise and fall of this remarkable building. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, director of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, provides an insightful Foreword, while Mark Hertzberg's text explores the design, the construction, and—through interviews with Johnson employees—the experience of working within Wright's iconic Tower. Hertzberg's artful photographs document the Tower—inside and out—as it appears today.

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