

WRITINGS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY

Vol. XIV, Issue 2

COTTAGE COMMENTS BY CLAIRE

Summer seemed to be more than one season this year, with drought and high temperatures followed by torrential rains and some localized flooding. The hot weather and humidity once again confirmed that air conditioning the cottage was a necessary choice for our guests' comfort. It was a busy summer, too, with a July presentation, winners of our two awards staying at the cottage, and some special tours and visits.

It feels appropriate to show the cottage entrance on the opening page of our newsletter. The gate was designed by First Vice President Bill Martinelli, one of two remaining members of the original Board that planned and oversaw the cottage rehabilitation. The significance of the two plaques on the stone piers is detailed in one of this issue's articles.



Cottage gates, designed by Bill Martinelli.

In addition to Ryan Hewson who was the winner of the Jill Vladick Scholarship Award, eight apprentices, four children, Jack Holzhueter, and Victor Sidy, Dean of the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, arrived from Taliesin for a special cottage tour before the regular July open house tours began. They brought a picnic lunch and then most of them spent the afternoon down by the lake, swimming and enjoying the cottage canoe. Thanks to Dean Sidy's suggestion, Ryan was able to arrange a reciprocal visit to Taliesin for me, a memorable experience that allowed me to experience briefly what it must be like to be an apprentice and stay at Taliesin. (Our cottage mission of enabling people to experience living in a FLW space invokes a similar feeling,



according to comments in our guest book). Later in August, a class from Taliesin visited both the cottage and the Arnold House in Columbus. The SPCC is always pleased to open the cottage to Taliesin and others for classes or tours. We value the connections among our organizations and our similar goals of preservation and educating people about Mr. Wright's legacy.

The promise in my last column of showing pictures of the scenery around the lake prompted me to venture out onto the lake for the first time in years. I had forgotten how impressive the fifty-foot-high sandstone cliffs were, just a short way up the Narrows from the cottage. My journey took me past the newly restored boathouse of the historic Wildwood estate (which also features a large log lodge hidden in the woods).

Leaving the Narrows, I entered the busier eastern end of the lake, opposite the Mirror Lake State Park boat

landing and fishing pier. Turning north, I passed the former summer home of Audrey Laatsch, the SPCC's founding president and the person most responsible for organizing the effort to save the cottage. Continuing, I came to Ishnala, the wonderful restaurant that overlooks the lake...one of the last remaining vestiges of the Wisconsin Dells of long ago. Further north, the lake again narrows into a steep-sided gorge, with a man-made surprise waiting just around a corner. Interstate Highway 90/94 crosses the narrow gorge on twin bridges high above the lake and people driving above are unaware of both the lake below and the graceful arches that support the bridge. Some of these features appear on our photo montage page in this newsletter.

If you are in the area this autumn, I hope that you can experience more of the lake by exploring the park, renting a boat, or perhaps enjoying a meal at Ishnala.

Claire Barnett
President, Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy

HISTORICAL DESIGNATION PLAQUES AT THE COTTAGE

There are three important plaques located at the cottage, two on the gateposts and one on the stonework of the cottage itself.



Part of the early effort to save the cottage included having it placed on both the National and State Registers of Historic Places. Such designation doesn't mean the structure can't be demolished, but it is an important first step to call attention to a threatened building. The Conservancy was able

to secure both the National and State designations during its early efforts. We later placed the plaques on the stone piers of the Bill Martinelli-designed gate at the entrance to the property.

The third plaque officially identifies the cottage as a Frank Lloyd Wright design. The Cottage does not have the characteristic red ceramic tile seen on many FLW buildings because Mr. Wright died before construction was completed, and traditionally, only he could specify the use of the unique tile and its placement. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation now uses a bronze plaque to identify buildings that were designed by Mr. Wright and completed after his death, and that plaque is mounted on the cottage entrance terrace wall. ■

JULY PROGRAM FEATURES BURIAL MOUNDS

Amy Rosebrough gave a presentation about Burial Mounds in Wisconsin at the July open house tour day. She brought both real and replica artifacts as well as a large fold-out display. Amy is currently working on a doctorate degree at UW-Madison, focusing on the Effigy Mounds culture, and is currently employed by the Wisconsin Historical Society in the State Archaeology and Maritime Preservation Program. She generously donated her cottage honorarium to the Wisconsin Historical Society. ■



WRITINGS

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For cottage reservations call the Sand County Service Company, Lake Delton, Wisconsin: 608 254-6551.

MIRROR LAKE FACTS

Mirror Lake was created in 1860 by the damming of the Dell Creek gorge, forming a 137-acre lake. The wooden dam provided waterpower for a flour mill, and was replaced by the present concrete dam in 1925. The mill operated with various owners for 97 years until a fire destroyed it in 1957. The Ishnala Dam Corporation then acquired the dam, but by 1970 it needed to be repaired or removed. Eventually, Sauk County assumed ownership and maintenance of the dam.

Fifty-foot-high cliffs surround parts of both the Narrows and the outlet gorge of Dell Creek. The Narrows is the name of a gorge, more than half a mile long, that divides the eastern and western halves of the lake. The Seth Peterson Cottage is located at the western end of this channel, and the main part of Mirror Lake State Park lies across from its eastern end. The park, which opened in 1966, has campgrounds, picnic areas, a boat landing, and a beach along the eastern shore of the lake, in addition to hiking and cross-country ski trails.

Further north towards the dam, Interstate 90/94 crosses the outlet gorge with two arched bridges that are spectacular when seen from the lake. The Dell Creek outlet gorge continues all the way to Lake Delton, with the Mirror Lake dam located about a third of the way along its length.

There is a canoe at the cottage for guest use. Rental boats are available near the Mirror Lake State Park boat landing. ■



FROM THE GUEST BOOK

“During this long weekend, we feel we have experienced the vision of simple organic living that FLW inspires. It has been a true retreat!”
--Tom and Josie

“What a pleasure to have stayed in this house after years of searching out Wright sites only to be advised, ‘Go Away’, ‘MAD DOG’, ‘Electric Fence’, and ‘PRIVATE ROAD’. (We’d likely have done one of the above had we been lucky enough to own one).”
--Barbara and Richard, Canada

“Living in this home, the intensity of my emotions struck me by surprise. The peaceful co-existence with nature; the way indoors and outdoors blur; how less is indeed more: all of these delight the senses and leave the visitor to this cottage changed by the experience.”
--Steve and Leeann, Illinois



JILL VLADICK SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

Ryan Hewson, a third-year student at the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, was this year’s recipient of the Jill Vladick Scholarship Award, and stayed at the cottage July 8th and 9th. When very young, he was interested in building and wanted to work in construction.

His grandfather insisted that he go to college, where he studied art and art history.

He visited Taliesin in Wisconsin before spending a year elsewhere as an Americorp volunteer. As a Taliesin student, he remains interested in the building side of architecture, and is currently working on a student shelter for a hands-on learning experience, as well as taking charge of the vegetable garden near Hillside. He also is studying the possibility of introducing the student shelter building program here in Wisconsin, based upon the established shelter program at Taliesin West.

In his entry in the cottage guest book, Ryan refers to his cottage stay as “. . . so relaxing and peaceful. As a student at Taliesin, this place really helped me understand the beauty of a Usonian House.”

HAIKU IN THE WOODS

Cottage guest Jeanne Kennedy was inspired to compose the following haiku, which we hereby present in their original and correct form. (The last issue offered a truncated and incorrect version, for which we apologize.)

**Oh, Jubilation
Joyful Anticipation
A New Year Begins**

**My love and I come
To reflect on nature’s gifts.
To renew love’s vows.**

**Trees, lichen and moss
Remove us from city life.
Peace descends on us.**

**My heart fills with love.
Joy and tranquility come
The mind relaxes.**

**It was a child’s dream,
A small cottage in the woods,
Twinkling stars above.**

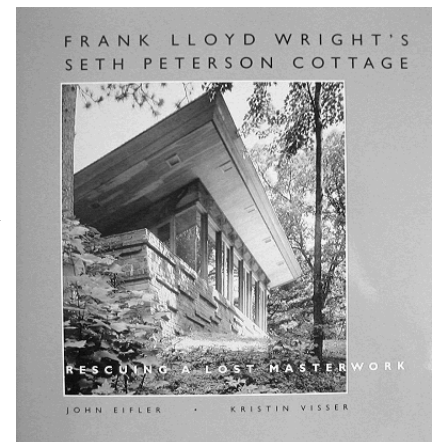
**Music soothes the soul.
Darkness descends upon us.
The fire warms the night.**

**Pine woods fall silent.
Mirror Lake reflects moonlight.
This is Paradise.**



RESCUING A LOST MASTERPIECE

This is the third in a series of excerpts from the book, Frank Lloyd Wright’s Seth Peterson Cottage: Rescuing a Lost Masterpiece, by John Eifler and Kristin Visser. It is the definitive story of the cottage. This excerpt answers the question, “Who was Seth Peterson?”



There is little documentary detail about the commission, design, and construction of the Seth Peterson Cottage. Many of the principal characters are deceased and others have

uncertain memories of the events surrounding the building of the cottage.

Seth Peterson (1936-1960) was born and grew up in Black Earth, Wisconsin, a small community located halfway between Madison and Spring Green. Even as a boy, Peterson was fascinated with the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. He and his best friend, Bert Goderstad, used to take the train to Oak Park, Illinois, to stroll through the town looking at Wright designs. After he graduated from high school in 1954, Peterson applied for admission to the Taliesin Fellowship as an apprentice, but couldn't afford the required \$1500 annual tuition. He applied again in 1956 and early 1957, but was again turned away with the explanation that he must have the \$1500 tuition and that the fellowship had no room for new apprentices.

After graduation from high school, Peterson took a job as an IBM computer operator for the state Department of Motor Vehicles. In 1957 he joined the Army because of his desire to gain more computer training. After basic and advanced training, he was posted to Belgium and France. Peterson suffered a severe asthma attack and was given a medical discharge after only about a year of Army service.

Upon his return, Peterson became friends with a woman who owned land on Mirror Lake in nearby Sauk County, about 50 miles north of Madison. In July 1958 he bought a small cottage and several lots totaling 1.18 acres on the lake along with a driveway easement for a total cost of \$7,500. He moved into the cottage and, having resumed his job with the state, commuted from Mirror Lake to Madison. This cottage was destroyed by a fire that was apparently caused by a faulty space heater or electrical connection only a few months after Peterson moved in.

Neither the Taliesin archives nor Peterson's personal correspondence indicates when Peterson first approached Frank Lloyd Wright for a cottage design, but family members believe it was after the original cottage on his Mirror Lake property burned down. However, then-apprentice Tom Casey, who was assigned to oversee cottage construction, recalled that Wright and apprentice John Howe worked on the design during the summer of 1958 while the fellowship was in Wisconsin.

... Seth Peterson took his own life on April 17, 1960, at his parents' home in Black Earth, only two months shy of his 24th birthday. He left no note or any indication as to why he took an action that was so unexpected by those around him. The cottage was essentially complete, lacking only a few interior details. Friends and relatives believe that he was distraught over financial problems stemming from the cottage. Because of the lack of records, the total cost of the cottage is unknown. If the liens reflect the overrun on the original \$15,000 estimate, the construction cost would total about \$24,000.

After Peterson's death, the cottage sat empty until April 1962 when it was purchased for \$15,000 by Lillian Pritchard, a Milwaukee widow, as a residence for her son, Owen. He moved in, erected a six-foot-high chain link fence around the property, and added several outbuildings, including a storage shed/guest cabin, and kennels for his pet Afghan hounds. He also toyed with the idea of enlarging the cottage and com-

missioned the Taliesin Fellowship to design a large bedroom/studio addition that would have extended behind the existing bedroom. The Taliesin proposal included a greatly enlarged terrace and a swimming pool. Pritchard was unable to finance the addition, however, and dropped the plans.

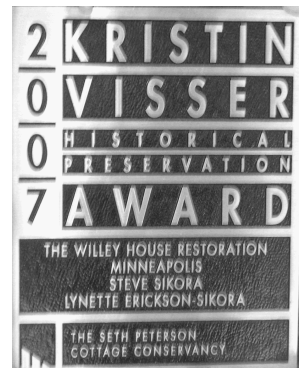
The cottage was offered for sale by the Pritchards a few years later, but no buyers surfaced. In September 1966 the state purchased the cottage from Lillian Pritchard for \$38,400 for inclusion in the newly created Mirror Lake State Park. ■

Next issue: The abandonment, gradual decay, and eventual rescue of the cottage.

SIKORAS ACCEPT VISSER HISTORICAL PRESERVATION AWARD

Steve Sikora and Lynette Erickson-Sikora were presented the first Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award at a short ceremony on June 10, 2007, at the cottage.

The award, which includes a cast bronze plaque and a cash honorarium of \$5,000, was given in appreciation of the recipients' work in restoring the 1934 Malcolm Willey House, in Minneapolis.



A second plaque, to honor this and future winners, will hang in the Education Room of the Mirror Lake State Park Office Building.



Jerry Minnich (left) presented the Visser Historical Preservation Award to Lynette Erickson-Sikora and Steve Sikora.

After the ceremony, Steve and Lynette drove to Spring Green for a musical performance at Taliesin, then returned to the cottage to stay the night, and spent the following day exploring Mirror Lake in the cottage canoe.

The couple acquired the Willey House in 2002. Much like the Seth Peterson Cottage, it had been abandoned and was in dire need of restoration, which Steve and Lynette lovingly applied over the next five years. Throughout the restoration, the owners have maintained a Restoration Journal, which is accessible on their web site www.thewilleyhouse.com.

The Visser Award will be given every other year by the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy to an individual or organization in recognition of past work in historical preservation of a Frank Lloyd Wright or Prairie School building in Wisconsin or a contiguous state. The next award will be given in 2009, for work done in 2007 and 2008. Requirements are available from award committee chairman Jerry Minnich, at jminnich7@charter.net. ■

NEWS FROM THE MIRROR LAKE ASSOCIATION

Mark Blakeslee

Another summer has come and gone, with a lot happening on the lake since spring. A late season snowstorm brought heavy snow and wind, causing a larger than normal number of trees to fall into the lake. Some cleanup was done by property owners and we hope to get the rest of the trees out this fall. We were lucky that more trees didn't fall during the record rains in August. These happenings are reminders that the area of Mirror Lake is a fragile environment that we all must protect for the future.

To further get a handle on that, a group of "stakeholders of the lake" was formed to come up with a list of strategies to help us monitor and improve Mirror Lake. The group includes people from the Mirror Lake Association, the lake management district, local governments, the DNR, and other concerned people who live, work, or visit Mirror Lake. After many meetings over an eight-month period, we came up with a comprehensive list of strategies and ideas to improve the lake. Some are just common sense ideas that can easily be completed. Others will take detailed planning over a long period of time. The common desire of everyone was to improve Mirror Lake so that it will be a pleasurable and desirable place to visit long into the future.

Anyone interested in knowing more about the plan or membership in the Mirror Lake Association can contact me at markblakeslee@uwalumni.com. ■

MIRROR LAKE STATE PARK REPORT

Paul Zajackowski

We are just over the halfway point of 2007 and the park has already received over 190,000 visitors before Labor Day. The park is still on pace to receive over 300,000 visitors for 2007.

During the month of August, despite record-setting rainfall, the park received no damage from the rain and all campsites and trails remained open.

Accomplishments this summer included sealing the park shop roof, re-roofing the Cliffwood shower building, trail work and vegetative invasive species control. The first gypsy moth caterpillars were documented on park property, and we will continue to monitor its populations and movement. The park staff has also been hoping to slow the spread of the Emerald Ash Borer by enforcing firewood restrictions on firewood coming into the park and by placing four traps throughout the park. To date the EAB has not been found in Wisconsin.

This past year has brought new staff to Mirror Lake State Park with Park Manager Becky Green and Park Ranger Bob Ramsey. Both are doing well and are a welcome addition to the park staff. Sherry Koepp will be retiring this coming October, after being a dedicated employee and friendly face at Mirror Lake State Park for over 25 years. We will miss her and, although we will fill the vacant position, we will never be able to replace Sherry.

The Ishnala Bridge project has an installation date for late October, creating an exciting new addition to the park. As summer comes to a close I would like to encourage all of you to come out to the park in the fall and winter as many visitors have found out these can be some of the best times to visit Mirror Lake. Hope to see you in the park. ■

FALL COLOR BOAT TOUR AND RECEPTION

The Fall Color Boat Tour will be held on October 14th at 4:15 PM, following the Sunday cottage open house tours. The \$20 fare will include a pontoon boat tour of Mirror Lake as well as wine and hors d'oeuvres in the cottage.

Attendance is limited to the first 24 paid reservations. You may call 608-393-7472 or send an email to crmrogan@yahoo.com to see if space is available. We regret that we can accept neither credit cards nor cancellations. The festivities in the cottage will take place rain or shine, as will the boat tour, unless there are dangerous conditions on the lake. ■

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy will be held on Sunday, December 9th, at 4:30 P.M. It will include annual and financial reports, and the election of board members and officers. Any member of the Conservancy whose annual dues have been paid may attend and vote on any motions made at the meeting.

The meeting will be approximately an hour long, followed by a private party for the cottage tour guide volunteers. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting should send an email to crmrogan@yahoo.com, with Annual Meeting as the subject. ■




Join us...
for a virtual tour
around Mirror
Lake as seen from
the Seth Peterson
Cottage canoe.
All you'll need is a
little imagination!
*(See tour notes in
Cottage Comments
by Claire)*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
Just one of the many 50' high sand-
stone cliffs, Wildwood Boathouse,
Mirror Lake State Park Fishing Pier,
Audrey's former cottage,
Ishnala, Ishnala up close,
Twin Interstate Bridges.
Inset: Close-up of bridge arch.

Membership Renewal and Merchandise Order Form

The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, Inc. for the Cottage by Frank Lloyd Wright in Mirror Lake State Park

<i>Item</i>	<i>Choices</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Unit Price</i>	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>Total</i>
Individual Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> Gift		\$15.00		
Household Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> Gift		\$25.00		
Preserver Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> Gift		\$100.00		
Life Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> Gift		\$250.00		
Membership subtotal					
Members receive 10% discount on merchandise.					
"Audrey's Star" unframed print, 6" x 8".			\$35.00		
"Audrey's Star" unframed print, with tri-color mat.			\$80.00		
"Audrey's Star" print, matted and framed.			\$100.00		
Unframed limited edition rendering print of the Cottage by Frank Lloyd Wright.			\$65.00		
Official SPCC visor cap. Forest Green or Tan w/bright red logo. One size fits all. <input type="checkbox"/> Forest Green <input type="checkbox"/> Tan Mark color.			\$15.00		
100% cotton pique polo shirt w/Cottage logo and name in red. <input type="checkbox"/> Forest Green <input type="checkbox"/> Natural Mark color & size. <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> XL <input type="checkbox"/> XXL			\$32.00		
Beige and rust T-shirt w/Cottage perspective by John Eifler. Mark size. <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> XL <input type="checkbox"/> XXL			\$15.00		
Sweatshirt w/red logo. Mark color & size. <input type="checkbox"/> Black <input type="checkbox"/> Tan <input type="checkbox"/> Red <input type="checkbox"/> Natural <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> XL <input type="checkbox"/> XXL			\$35.00		
Elegant silk tie. Black design based on the design in the clerestory panels. <input type="checkbox"/> Beige <input type="checkbox"/> Blue Mark background color.			\$25.00		
Cottage Jewelry of black, white and silver, based on design in the clerestory panels.					
Letter Opener			\$25.00		
Long Earrings			\$30.00		
Short Earrings			\$20.00		
Cuff Links			\$29.00		
Bar Pin			\$20.00		
Cottage Pin, red logo/black background			\$5.00		
Book: <i>Frank Lloyd Wright's Seth Peterson Cottage: Rescuing a Lost Masterwork</i> by John Eifler, AIA and Kristin Visser. Special Hardcover Edition \$90.00 Softcover Edition \$15.00			\$90.00 \$15.00		
Frank Lloyd Wright Quarterly Magazine with Seth Peterson Cottage articles <input type="checkbox"/> Summer 1993 B & W \$5.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Winter 2007 Color \$5.00			\$5.00 \$5.00		
Merchandise subtotal					
Member discount 10%				-	
Shipping & handling					
Under \$10			\$2.00		
\$10-\$30			\$3.00		
\$30-\$100			\$6.00		
Over \$100 -- free shipping					
Total (membership + merchandise - discount + shipping)					

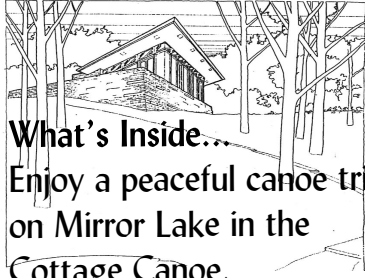
Checks payable to: Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, Inc. Send to: SPCC, c/o Smith Wegner LLP, Box 150, Baraboo, WI 53913

Name: _____ Telephone #: _____
Street Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

WRITINGS

THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY, INC.
P. O. Box 334
LAKE DELTON, WISCONSIN 53940

Forwarding Service Requested.



What's Inside...

Enjoy a peaceful canoe trip
on Mirror Lake in the
Cottage Canoe.

(Imagination required!)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, **October 14**, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2
Fall Color Boat Tour & Reception, 4:15-7:15 pm, \$20

Sunday, **November 11**, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2

Sunday, **December 9**, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2
Directors/Members Annual Meeting, 4:30-5:30 pm

Sunday, **January 13**, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2

Sunday, **February 10**, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2

Sunday, **March 9**, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2

Sunday, **April 13** 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2

April 14 – 18, Cottage Work Week

Sunday, **May 11**, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2



Visitors find touring the cottage to be a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon. Take a scenic drive and experience first hand this restored Frank Lloyd Wright-designed cottage during the cottage open house tours. (See schedule at left). The Seth Peterson Cottage is located at E9982 Fern Dell Road, Lake Delton, WI

