

WRITINGS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY

Vol. XXV, Issue 2

COTTAGE COMMENTS BY CLAIRE


This issue which is labeled “Summer” is a Spring/Summer issue. And after last year’s drought, it really is one. Instead of spring coming early and then drying out like last year, here in the cottage area we had a very late spring with cool temperatures and lots of rain. (One of this issue’s guest book comments describes the experience of being in the cottage during a thunderstorm.) As late as June 10th, SPCC President Kermit Traska and I were still taking photos of spring wildflowers. (See his illustrated article inside.)

The exciting news this season is that filming for the longer Seth Peterson Cottage film is nearly complete. I hope that you have had a chance to see the two short cottage history and architecture films that are available to view at the Mirror Lake State Park office and visitors center. They can be considered a preview of the upcoming longer film. In this issue, I will share some of the still photography provided by Bill Kult, the producer of the film. There is still script work to be finished and then massive amounts of editing, so I cannot say at this time when the film will be finished. In the words of the producer, “I wanted to do a film different from the usual format about Frank Lloyd Wright and his architecture.” We will have to wait to see what that is. In the photo below, the cottage is *not* being attacked, but it *is* being

filmed. There will be more photos inside, taken by the method that you see here.

You will also find news of our two award recipients, information about the upcoming Fall Color Boat Tour and another excerpt from the cottage rehabilitation book.

Erik Flesch, this year’s Jill Vladick Award recipient, left a rather poignant comment in the guest book. Knowing that Seth Peterson had been unable to become an apprentice, Erik wrote; “Taliesin, the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, is still a sanctuary of ideas for those with a love of nature and a spirit of adventure. Today Seth Peterson would have been able to achieve his dream there with others passionate about organic architecture.”

What a happy thought that is! I have never before imagined what life might have been like for Seth had he been able to become an apprentice back in the 1950s, or even if he had attended now when he was older, as our last year’s Jill Vladick Award winner, Sam Wharton, did. Seth now would have been only a little older than Sam. I suppose that if that was the case, I would not be writing this, because there probably would not be a publicly available Seth Peterson Cottage. Or if there was, perhaps Seth would have designed it himself and might still be living there! How different so many of our lives would have been. 

Claire Barnett



FROM THE PRESIDENT- Exploring the Cottage

Kermit Traska

Next time you visit the Seth Peterson Cottage—take a hike! Certainly, the cottage is the focal point for most people who visit. But the cottage, set in beautiful Mirror Lake State Park, also offers opportunities to see many wonderful creations of nature.

This past June, while helping with the Open House, I took a hike in the woods adjacent to the cottage. I really prefer earlier in spring when more of the wildflowers are in bloom because the new leaves of the tree canopy have not yet obstructed sunlight to the forest floor. However, on this day in June, there still were a number of wildflowers in bloom, including two native berries. The first was the upland blueberry. This low-growing bush is plentiful in the hills around the cottage.



Upland Blueberry

The second was the native strawberry. Both produce rather small berries compared to the store-bought varieties. But the search will provide the finder with rich natural flavors not found elsewhere.




Native Strawberry

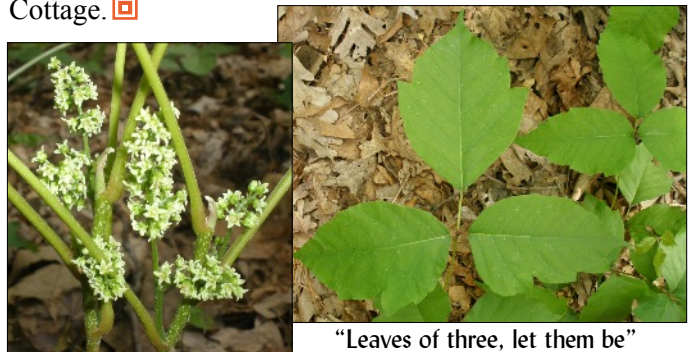
Another flower was the star flower which derives its name from its star-shaped blossom.



Star Flower

While hiking in the woods, one should be aware of the good and the bad plants. One of the “bad” plants was in bloom on this day in June. The white flowered stem of the poison ivy plant will turn to red berries later in summer and into the fall. The mantra, “leaves of three, let them be” is true for poison ivy. Most people think of poison ivy as a low-growing plant, but it can also be a vine that grows up trees to great heights. Become familiar with poison ivy in order to avoid it in the woods and along the trails.

Take some time to explore the natural environment around the cottage. You might spy beaver cuttings along the lake, hear the deep longitudinal drilling of a pileated woodpecker, or just view the most spectacular sunset you have ever seen from the cottage terrace. Explore and enjoy during your visit to the Seth Peterson Cottage. 



“Leaves of three, let them be”

Poison Ivy grows low to the ground but can also reach great heights as a tree-climbing vine.

MIRROR LAKE ASSOCIATION NEWS

Mark Blakeslee, President

The Mirror Lake Association has been working for the past year on a long-range plan to improve the water and land quality of Mirror Lake. The total planning process will take about two years to complete.

For most of the past year we have been fact-gathering by taking water and soil samples for analysis to show us issues we need to address, and to determine whether the problems are ongoing or are a one-time happening. Analysis will continue for many years. Currently we are compiling the information to help us understand the issues and formulate solutions. A comprehensive plan will then be drafted and presented to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for their approval for implementation.

Plans such as this are vital for lakes like Mirror Lake to keep them in a natural state. Our mission is to keep Mirror Lake as natural as possible while minimizing commercialism.

Earlier this spring we took a major step in our improvement strategy as the Mirror Lake Management District purchased an aquatic plant harvester. Being a shallow warm-water lake, Mirror Lake has always had problems with excessive aquatic plant growth. This harvester will dramatically help us control these plants. We'll improve water quality and the recreational opportunities of the lake and the area.

We'll be holding our annual summer picnic on August 17th at the State Park picnic grounds. On August 31st we will hold our third annual flotilla in front of the park boat launch. Our events are open for anyone to attend. Feel free to stop in if you are in the area. The Mirror Lake area is a great place to visit and explore. We hope you will take some time to come see us.

If you have any questions about the Mirror Lake Association and its work, or would like membership information, please feel free to contact us at mirrorlakeassocwidells@gmail.com. ☐

MIRROR LAKE STATE PARK REPORT

Becky Green, Acting Park Superintendent

For the last five years the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources have used insect-luring traps at Mirror Lake State Park to watch for the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). These are the purple towers with the sticky lures near the office and at the beach. In mid-July, our DNR Forest Health Specialists were out in the park checking the EAB traps. They found a couple of bugs on the trap at the office. They then shaved the bark on a couple of ash trees by the office after finding the classic D-shaped holes and

found a few years' worth of "galleries," the channels that the bug larvae bore under the bark. They also found a live beetle on one of the trees, providing further confirmation. Both the beetles from the trap and the live specimen were confirmed to be Emerald Ash Borers by both Wisconsin DATCP and the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.

Working with the DNR Forest Health Specialists, we cut 18 ash trees by our office and across the street at the LTE house. All but two have been confirmed to be infested trees. This was not an eradication effort, but a population reduction effort. At this time there is no good treatment for killing the bug and keeping the trees. The specialists found beetles that hadn't emerged from the trees and larvae under the bark in their initial tree-checking, so the decision was made to cut down the trees and chip them up to kill the bugs and larvae.

DNR Forest Health Specialists estimate that the Emerald Ash Borer has been in the trees for about three to four years based on the galleries. We are unsure where the EAB came from, but the good thing is that we can rule out that it came from the firewood that the Friends group has purchased, because we have been buying certified wood from Green Thumb Farms for about six years.

People can still bring in firewood from within 25 miles for their use and the wood that is sold or provided on Park property has to be from the property or from a certified vendor. The big change for firewood moving is that Sauk County is now in the quarantine area, so no firewood can leave the county unless it is from Green Thumb Farms' certified operation.

We continue to monitor the remaining ash trees in the park for signs of EAB. Thankfully we don't have many; the highest concentration was near the office. Most of those trees were planted when the new office was built with only a few of them estimated at about twenty years old. So they were still relatively small. We will replant a few white oak trees next spring to fill in the gaps; these are the most resistant to oak wilt. ☐

FALL COLOR BOAT TOUR

The Fall Color Boat Tour follows the Sunday, October 13 cottage Open House tours. The \$30/person fare includes a pontoon boat tour of Mirror Lake and hors d'oeuvres around the cottage fireplace. Call now for reservations at the toll-free cottage voice mailbox at 877-466-2358. Leave your name, phone number and reservation request for the fall tour. Reservations are limited to 4/person. Attendance is limited to the first 24 paid reservations. Festivities in the cottage take place rain or shine. Adverse weather conditions on the lake may affect the boat tour. The path down to the lake and boat dock is steep and not handicapped-accessible. We regret we cannot accept credit cards or cancellations. ☐



Photo by Bill Martinelli

THIS YEAR'S WORK WEEK INCLUDED REPLACING THE COTTAGE ENTRANCE SIGN, CLEANING THE FLOORS AND CUSHIONS, AND ALL THE OTHER USUAL INDOOR/OUTDOOR SPRING PROJECTS.

IN THE EVENING, THE BIRD FEEDER BECOMES THE RACCOON FEEDER



Guest Photo

Photo by Bill Kult

FROM THE GUEST BOOK

Three of my dearest friends and I enjoyed the most beautiful weekend of 2013 by exploring Mirror Lake and the surrounding woods, drinking wine on the terrace and staying up late talking hopes and dreams. Experiencing Wright's use of light and space has been truly inspirational. *Elyse*

We saw many birds, including two hummingbirds. Butterflies, bees, and squirrels. Early one morning, we saw a doe and two fawns approach down the drive. *Jon and Karen*

Our stay was everything we had hoped for... Beauty, serenity, nature, time for reflection, canoeing and hiking. I loved exploring the house and marveled how so much was put in such a small house. We endured a terrific storm on our last night. The lightning lit up the cottage through the wall of glass. It was a magical mini-vacation that we will treasure forever. *Kathy and Scott, WI*

All of the plants are so green and lush. The peace and quiet, with birds calling in the background. Thanks to all who restored this piece of history. *Steve and Patrice*

It rained the whole night—no sitting on the porch or walking about much. But it was so relaxing to hear the rain on the roof all night. *Pam and Kim, Michigan*

As we prepare for the trip and drive the four hours, we always ask ourselves, "Is it really worth it?" And when we get here it always is. *John and Pamela*



THE COTTAGE AS YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE!

- Top:* ABOVE THE ROOF
- Below Right:* BIRD'S EYE VIEW
- Below Left:* HIGH ABOVE THE TREETOPS
- Left:* SIX MOTORS AND PROPELLERS, BATTERIES AND ONE CAMERA

These aerial photos were taken by Bill Kult for the future cottage documentary using a remote aerial camera 'copter. The camera shoots both still pictures and video. Note the white chimney cap, hidden air conditioner on the tallest roof, and the circular walkway around the cottage.

Photo by Claire Barnett





KRISTEN VISSER AWARD

The 2013 Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award was presented in June to the Frank Lloyd Wright Wisconsin Heritage Tourism Organization for their outstanding work on the Model B-1 American System-Built Home, on West Burnham Street in Milwaukee. The award, in the amount of \$5,000, was accepted by Terry Boyd on behalf of the Organization.

The B-1 House, built in 1915-16, is one of a cluster of six Burnham Street houses that Wright designed for average Americans of modest means. The home was purchased in deteriorated condition and, since 2008, has been undergoing extensive restoration. The American System-Built Homes remain a remarkable and important project in Wright's career.



The next Visser Award will be presented in 2015 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. □

JILL VLADICK AWARD

The 2013 Jill Vladick Memorial Scholarship Award of two nights at the cottage and dinner at Ishnala was presented to Erik Flesch. Erik's interest in FLW began with a visit to Taliesin West in the early 1990s. He did undergraduate work in

geology at the University of Arizona in Tucson and, as someone interested in structure, he decided to be an organic architect. He started giving tours at Taliesin West and studying about Wright on his own while waiting to become an apprentice.



Jill Vladick Award Recipient, Erik Flesch, with his wife, Sara.

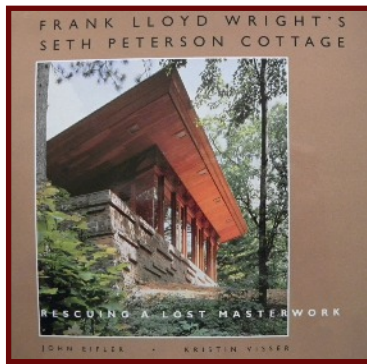
Erik will graduate with a Masters Degree in October. He may set up an independent architectural practice in the Spring Green area or work in Madison. His wife, Sara, is currently the Human Resources Director at Taliesin in addition to publishing the local monthly news magazine, *Voice of the River Valley*. □



Students and staff visiting from Taliesin. Front row left to right: two artists in residence and Effie Casey, whose late husband, Tom Casey, was the supervising apprentice when the cottage was built.

RESCUING A LOST MASTERWORK: DOORS AND WINDOWS

This is the fourteenth in a series of excerpts from the book, Frank Lloyd Wright's Seth Peterson Cottage: Rescuing a Lost Masterwork, by John Eifler, AIA, and Kristin Visser. It is the definitive story of the cottage. The previous excerpt described the masonry of the cottage.



One of Frank Lloyd Wright's special talents was to use the relative proportions of building components for drama and effect. Much has been written about the use of contrasting ceiling heights to create dramatic entrances and give the effect of large open rooms. But his genius lies in the thoroughness with which he used proportion and scale to achieve these effects. In the case of the cottage, the relatively small building is made to feel larger by the use of a dramatically sloped roof supported by an extremely light, almost fragile, wall of glass. The building also appears larger because of Wright's insistence on wooden supports that were designed to be as narrow as possible. In typical wood frame construction, the vertical supports or studs are installed at regular intervals. Window frames and sash are placed between the supports. The space between the window frame and the stud is usually covered with a length of window trim, or casing, about four inches wide. When one considers that the window sash is an additional two inches wide, a conventional window wall would be regularly interrupted by sash and trim in excess of eight inches. In the Seth Peterson Cottage, the casement window sash is attached directly to the stud and the adjacent fixed glass is held in place with a narrow 3/4-inch glazing stop. In this manner, Wright reduces the amount of trim required and creates a delicate window wall interrupted by sash and vertical supports that are only four inches wide. This sophisticated support and glazing system creates an effect of larger windows due to the narrow relative size of the supporting elements and creates a roof that seems to float over the enclosed space below.

When inspecting the condition of the original windows and terrace doors, John surmised that they had probably been fabricated on site with a table saw. The joinery had separated due to abuse and the shrinking of the soft yellow pine. A number of glass panels were either cracked or broken. Although Wright had designed screens, it was clear that the screens originally installed on the cottage were not designed in accordance with the original drawings. As mentioned previously, the decorative clerestory panels protected by the roof overhang were found to be in good condition and were ultimately incorporated into the preserved cottage.

Before any work was planned for the cottage, John completed an energy study to assess the overall insulation

abilities of the building shell. Built during a period of cheap energy, everyone assumed the cottage would require some remedial energy conservation measures to reduce maintenance costs. John was surprised when the energy study showed that the structure would be virtually impossible to heat during the coldest winter days. The low insulation value of the masonry walls, combined with large areas of single-pane glass, resulted in a building that on the coldest days would be difficult to maintain at a temperature of 50 degrees—obviously unsuitable for a winter vacation rental. □

Next time: *Doors and windows Part II: Upgrading insulation while preserving architectural integrity.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

COTTAGE MERCHANDISE ON COTTAGE WEB SITE

The cottage merchandise order form has been moved to The Gift Shop, on our website: www.sethpeterson.org Photos of our merchandise will be added soon.

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy will be held on Sunday December 8th at 4:30 pm. It will include annual and financial reports and the election of board members. 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 about an hour long and will be followed by a private party for the cottage tour guide volunteers. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting should send an email to sethpetersoncottage@gmail.com with *Annual Meeting* as the subject.

WRITINGS

is a publication of The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, Inc. for the Cottage by Frank Lloyd Wright in Mirror Lake State Park.
 Editor: Jerry Minnich, Madison, WI
 Coordinator and Photography: Claire Barnett, Baraboo, WI
 Design & Production: Alice J. Seeliger, AJS Creative, Brooklyn, WI
 Submit articles/photos to Claire Barnett at: crmrogan@yahoo.com
 Visit us on the web at: www.sethpeterson.org
 Cottage Voice Mail: 877 466-2358

The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, Inc. Board of Directors Executive Committee

President: Kermit Traska
 First Vice President: Bill Martinelli
 Second Vice President: James Booth
 Treasurer: Paul Wagner
 Secretary: Peter Rott

Members

Claire Barnett, Jim Draeger, Bill Dupuy, Tim Heggland, Carolyne Kotchi, Raymond Matlosz, Jerry Minnich, John Muchow, Heather Sabin, Cheryl Weston

Ex-officio members

Mark Blakeslee, President, Mirror Lake Association
 Becky Green, Acting Superintendent, Mirror Lake State Park

Conservancy Staff

Office Manager: Ron Dakter
 Marketing Coordinator: Gail Kohl

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

WRITINGS

THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY, INC.
400 VIKING DRIVE
REEDSBURG, WI 53959

Address Service Requested



UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, **Sept. 8**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4

Sunday, **Oct. 13**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4
Fall Color Boat Tour at 4:15 pm.
\$30 fare includes a boat tour and hors d'oeuvres.
See details inside on page 3.

Sunday, **Nov. 10**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4

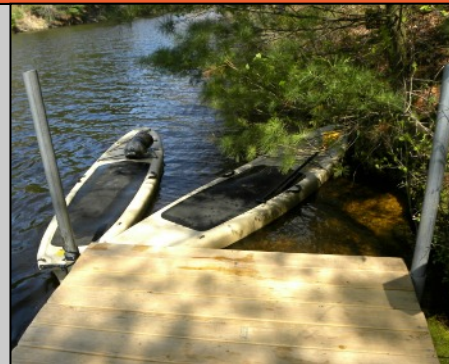
Sunday, **Dec. 8**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4
The Annual Meeting of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy will be held at 4:30 pm.

Sunday, **Jan. 12**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4

Sunday, **Feb. 9**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4

Sunday, **March 9**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4

Join us at one of our monthly open houses.



The Seth Peterson Cottage is located at
E9982 Fern Dell Road
Lake Delton, Wisconsin

Visitors coming to tour the cottage on a Sunday afternoon arrive in many different ways. Experience first hand this restored Frank Lloyd Wright-designed cottage during the cottage open house tours.
(See schedule at left).



www.sethpeterson.org