

# WRITINGS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY

Vol. XXIV, Issue I

## COTTAGE COMMENTS BY CLAIRE

**U**nlike last year at this time, the area is experiencing a mild winter, with very little snow. Consequently, there will be fewer seasonal pictures than usual in this issue.

Our Fall Color Boat Tour did take place in the autumn, with beautiful weather and full attendance. A warm thank-you is extended to our guests for making that event a success, as well as to the Mirror Lake Association which as usual made the event possible through the generous volunteering of their members' time and pontoon boats. We plan to hold the event again on October 14<sup>th</sup>. Reservations will not be taken until later in the year. Details will eventually appear on our new website, which is still under construction.

The Annual Meeting was held at the cottage in December, with four Conservancy board members being re-elected to three-year terms. The current officers were re-elected at the January Quarterly Board Meeting. (See next page for the complete list of Board Officers and Members.)

Paul Zajackowski, Mirror Lake State Park Superintendent, has moved on to another position within the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. I want to take this opportunity to thank him for his support of, and friendship to the cottage, and to wish him well in his new assignment. He will be missed. (See the Mirror Lake State Park Update in this issue.)

The biggest news for this year is that the Conservancy is celebrating its twentieth anniversary of operating the cottage. A celebration will take place on June 10<sup>th</sup> during our monthly open house, and admission will be free that day. (See the news release inside this issue for details.) We opened the rehabilitated cottage for tours and rental in June of 1992, unsure of how well the cottage would be received and uncertain whether its popularity would last. It remains as popular as ever, a unique and continuing testament to the high regard with which the cottage has been held over the years and the peace and renewal that people find there. Our cottage guestbook continues to be a source of information and amusement, and that is why selections from the contents are shared in each *Writings* issue. Someone even did a detailed drawing in it a few months ago. As often happens, one anonymous person summed up the spirit of the place as well as our wish for our guests. They wrote, "I always love to come to Seth's and I always hate to leave. I'm instantly at peace upon arrival. A little cottage with a big heart and hearth, restoring humanity one visit at a time."

It is good to know that we have met our goals and dreams from over twenty years ago, so well. ☐

*Claire Barnett*  
President, Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy



*Mirror Lake lives up to its name during the Fall Color Boat Tour*

## MIRROR LAKE ASSOCIATION NEWS

Mark Blakeslee, President

**W**inter is a time when outside work is put on hold, but just as much work and time is spent indoors planning for the coming months.

The main goal of the Mirror Lake Association is to improve and maintain the quality of the lake and the surrounding area. We feel we have one of the best natural areas in Wisconsin, one well worth preserving. Currently, we are working with many local groups and officials of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to plan and implement ideas to keep the Mirror Lake area a place people will want to visit for many generations.

Educating the public is one of our most important goals. Our hope is that the greater understanding people have of how a lake works, the better they will be able to use the lake. Mirror Lake is a special place with many unique ecosystems. Each one of them contributes to the lake as a whole, which makes our issues different from those of most lakes. This uniqueness is what makes all of us look forward to the challenge of keeping Mirror Lake the special place it is.

We appreciate our relationship and the support we get from the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy for our many programs. It's great to partner with an organization that has the same passion to preserve a treasured landmark in the cottage and its surroundings.

### WRITINGS

is a publication of The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, Inc. for the Cottage by Frank Lloyd Wright in Mirror Lake State Park.  
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Visit us on the web at: [www.sethpeterson.org](http://www.sethpeterson.org)  
Cottage Voice Mail: 877 466-2358

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

President: Claire Barnett  
First Vice President: Bill Martinelli  
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James Booth, Jim Draeger, Bill Dupuy, Tim Heggland,  
Carolyne Kotchi, Raymond Matlosz, Jerry Minnich,  
John Muchow, Heather Sabin

#### 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.

If you have any questions about the Mirror Lake Association or would like membership information, please feel free to contact me at [mblakeslee@uwalumni.com](mailto:mblakeslee@uwalumni.com). ☐

## MIRROR LAKE STATE PARK REPORT

Becky Green

**F**or the past two years the Superintendent position for the South Central Region Parks has been vacant. During this time the Bureau of Parks and Recreation has gone through some changes, re-aligning its organizational structure from five regions to four districts, which now report to the Director of State Parks.

In the late summer/early fall of 2011, the newly titled position of the Southwest District Parks and Recreation Supervisor was approved to be filled. In mid November, the position was offered to Mirror Lake State Park Superintendent Paul Zajackowski, and he accepted. He now works out of the South Central Regional Headquarters in Fitchburg. Paul has been very busy learning his new position duties, assisting with interviews and hiring for vacant positions, and visiting as many properties as he can.

In the interim, I have been appointed Acting Superintendent for the park. I am happy to say that our Superintendent position was immediately approved to be filled as well as our Park Ranger/Enforcement position. Both positions are in the hiring process and we hope to have someone in them by spring.

January brought us some wonderful snow for skiing. Our staff has spent many hours grooming the trails, and our attendance shows it. Many people have also been enjoying hiking and snowshoeing on designated trails and also in the Fern Dell Gorge. Fishing has been on and off, but they keep on trying! We had our first ice anglers on December 10<sup>th</sup> and they haven't quit yet. Late January brought the first vehicles driven on the ice for the season.

The Friends Group and Park Staff hosted the January Candlelight Event. We did not have any snow, but that did not stop approximately 700 people from joining us for a beautiful hike under a clear sky lit by the full moon!

The Annual Delton Sportsmen's Club's Mirror Lake Fisheree was held on January 15<sup>th</sup>. Attendance was down, because of thinner-than-normal ice conditions. But that did not stop fishermen from catching fish! ☐

## COTTAGE WEBSITE NEWS

**T**he new cottage website is scheduled to be up and running in April. The URL will be the same as before—[www.sethpeterson.org](http://www.sethpeterson.org). Our old website currently at that address is out of date and we have been unable to change the incorrect information on it. Therefore, it is suggested that it be referred to **only** for the first link, *Rental Info/Reservations*, and the last—*Contact Information*. Reservations for the Fall Color Boat Tour will not be taken until later in the year. Information will be available on the new website after April. ☐



*Last September, for the third year, Darryl Booker of the North Dakota State University Department of Architecture & Landscape Architecture, brought his class to see the cottage and other Wright sites in the Madison and Spring Green area.*



*Left: Refreshments await boat tour participants.*



*Center: Our colorful banner greets guests as they arrive.*



*Right: Guests enjoy the cottage terrace on a very warm boat tour day.*

## FROM THE GUEST BOOK

“Photos of this cottage served as inspiration for the home we built, and it has been an amazing experience to “live in” the Seth Peterson cottage, if only for a very short time. I always thought I was a city girl, but what a peaceful and interesting place.” *Katie and Chris, WI*

“This morning I sit and watch the sun come up and the birds and squirrels play in unison but mostly I feel the spirit of this place overwhelm my heart. This cottage of Frank’s reminds us of how simple life could really be. His love for nature wraps its arms around you.” *Bill and Nancy, IL*

“When my son stirred this morning, the first thing he said was ‘Mom, I don’t want to leave today’. My boys had read a number of the books on FLW so it was an educational experience as well. Thank you for making this wonderful cottage available for us to enjoy.” *Cheryl, Matthew, and Marcus, IL*

“Amazing how something so simple can be so perfect. Or is it something so perfect can be so simple? Never been so comfortable doing not much at all. We loved our time here!” *Dale and Tina, WI*

“Winter solstice... The first thing we said when we came in was WOW! The windows give such a great sense of space and closeness to outside. Build a fire, feed the birds, sit back and enjoy.” *Ed and Nancy, WI*

“One of the most magical places we have ever stayed. Unusual January—no snow—makes for great exploring. We will be back.” *Matt and Julie, WI*

“What a beautiful time. This gem of a cottage is inspirational. I couldn’t possibly imagine a more glorious place to do my yoga than on the warm stone floors overlooking the beauty of the lake.” *Mike and Betsy Grim, IL*

*“Wow! Words fail. Such a lovely place to spend time with my beautiful family. What a blessing. What a life.” The Sanders, WI*



Over 800 people attended the Cottage Dedication on July 7, 1992

## 20 YEARS LIVING WRIGHT: A CELEBRATION OF THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE

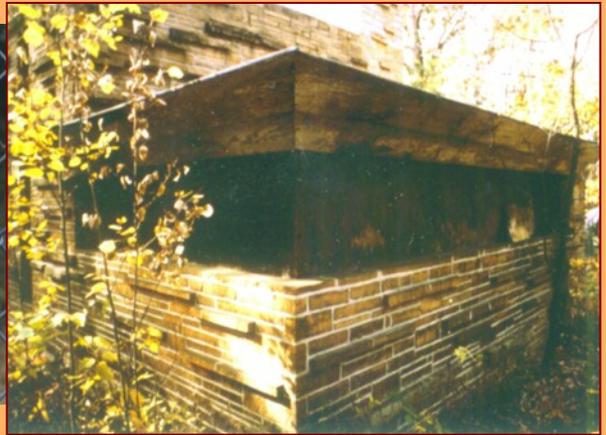
Gail Kohl

**T**he Seth Peterson Cottage on Mirror Lake will celebrate the Twentieth Anniversary of its restoration on Sunday, June 10<sup>th</sup>, from 1-3:30 PM. The fun begins with a free open house, guided tours, music, and cake, with a special program at 2:30 PM. There will be a drawing for a free night's stay at the cottage.

The Seth Peterson Cottage was the first Wright building made available for vacation rental. In the past twenty years, the cottage has welcomed more than 15,000 overnight guests, coming from most U.S. states and many foreign countries, with the most distant visitor from Perth, Australia. Overnight rental and open houses on the second Sunday of each month attract more than a thousand visitors annually. The cottage continues to draw attention with feature articles in *The New York Times*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Architectural Digest*, and *The Chicago Tribune*.

Seth Peterson was a Wisconsin native with a lifelong interest in Wright. In 1958 he convinced the 90-year-old master architect to design the cottage, but Peterson suffered an untimely death before it was finished. The cottage was then bought and completed by others. In 1966, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources acquired the property when the land was added to Mirror Lake State Park. The cottage sat boarded and abandoned until 1989 when concerned Mirror Lake residents and Wright devotees formed a non-profit organization, The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, to save and restore the cottage as Frank Lloyd Wright envisioned it, and to give it a new and useful life. The award-winning three-year, \$300,000 rehabilitation project was completed in 1992.

For more information on the cottage, see the new website [www.sethpeterson.org](http://www.sethpeterson.org) after April of this year. □



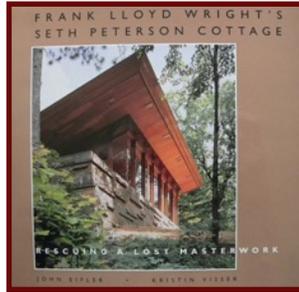
*The Cottage  
in 1989.  
Boarded up,  
vandalized  
and  
abandoned.*



*The cottage today...*

## RESCUING A LOST MASTERWORK: THE REHABILITATION

*This is the eleventh 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 first steps in rescue—the “deconstruction” of the cottage, which necessarily preceded its reconstruction. In today's excerpt, we begin with the roof.*



**W**right always attached significance to the type of roof chosen for his houses. As the cottage was a small commission, Wright probably tried to keep costs down by using forms that had proven less costly in the past. In *The Natural House* he states:

“Now the shape of roof—whether a shed roof, a hip roof or a flat roof—depends in part on expediency and in part on your personal taste or knowledge as to what is appropriate in the circumstances. One of the advantages of the sloping roof is that it gives you a sense of spaciousness inside, a sense of overhead uplift which I often feel to be very good. The flat roof also has advantages in construction. It is easy to do, of course. . . . The cheapest roof, however, is the shed roof—the roof sloping one way, more or less. There you get more for your money than you can get from any other form of roof. . . . But the type of roof you choose must not only deal with the elements in your region but be appropriate to the circumstances, according to your personal preference. . . .”

Though the cottage has been described as a “building all under one roof,” the roof is, in fact, very complex. It is comprised of a large sloping shed roof and two levels of flat roof, an upper one above the kitchen and bathroom/storage loft, and another over the bedroom and the rear of the living room. The flat roof over the kitchen has parapet walls, while the roof over the living room and bedroom has large overhangs in some areas and parapet walls in others.

. . . The roof was designed to allow water to flow off the living room shed roof and onto the flat roof segment that extends over the bedroom and the rear of the living room. John [Eifler] found that the flat roof was installed perfectly level, and over time the structure had deflected, creating depressions in which water pooled, and which eventually leaked. This lack of proper drainage was inconsistent with Wright's intentions.

. . . The rehabilitation plan called for two improvements to correct this problem. First, a scupper was added at the living room parapet wall to provide a direct path for water to flow off the roof. Second, the plywood sheathing for the flat roof areas was placed on a series of tapered furring strips attached directly to the flat roof framing to ensure a very slight pitch as Wright recommended. Water drains from the bedroom flat roof through three copper-pipe roof drains that allow the water to fall clear of the exterior wall. Bronze drip chains were added to reduce splashing when the water hits the ground and to encourage the formation of icicles. □

*Next time: Completion of the roof reconstruction.*



*Carolyn (rt) directs a group around the cottage.*

## PETERSON PASSION—THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A TOUR GUIDE

*Carolyn Kotchi*

**I**magine a group of people listening with rapt attention as you describe the reason for the “destruction of the box.” I was amazed and pleased the first time it actually happened to me. Who knew I could be a tour guide? Before that moment, I certainly had no idea.

As a social worker for twenty-some years, I had plenty of practice talking to people individually or in small family groups. But to describe the historical importance of the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright seemed a bit out of my realm.

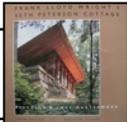
After shadowing experienced guides and reading the outline and notes prepared for the tour guides, I felt I was comfortable with the material. I was ready to give it a whirl. I found that most of the people who visit the cottage are interested in the architecture and the history of the building. They are engaged in the tour and often bring Frank Lloyd Wright stories of their own.

Over time I gained more knowledge from listening to the insights and experiences of other members involved from the beginning in the Cottage Conservancy. My comfort level and enjoyment has grown through my years as a tour guide. The investment of my time is not large, as the cottage offers tours only one Sunday a month. I can choose which months I want to volunteer. The ability to help people understand a piece of history is well worth the investment of a Sunday afternoon in the woods. I feel privileged to learn and share my knowledge with people eager to understand Mr. Wright's Architecture.

What about you? Is it time for you to step out of your comfort zone and try something new in 2012? If you are interested in becoming a volunteer tour guide, leave a message for Ron at our voice mail, 877 466-2358. I hope to see you in the future at the little gem in the woods. □

Membership Renewal and Merchandise Order Form 2012

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

Item	Choices	Quantity	Unit Price	Subtotal	Total
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		
Friend Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> Gift		\$50.00		
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		
<b>Membership subtotal</b>					
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		
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Unframed limited edition rendering print of the Cottage by Frank Lloyd Wright.			\$70.00		
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<b>NEW!</b> Women's V-neck Brown & Tan T-shirt w/Cottage perspective. <b>Circle size.</b> S M L XL			\$15.00		
Sweatshirt w/red logo. <b>Circle color &amp; size.</b> Black Tan Red Natural M L XL XXL			\$35.00		
Elegant Blue Silk Tie. Black design based on clerestory panel design.			\$25.00		
Cottage Jewelry of black, white and silver, based on design in the clerestory panels.					
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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. <b>Softcover Edition</b>			\$15.00		
Frank Lloyd Wright Quarterly Magazine with Seth Peterson Cottage articles <input type="checkbox"/> Summer 1993 B & W <input type="checkbox"/> Winter 2007 Color <input type="checkbox"/> Summer 2011 Color			\$5.00 \$5.00 \$5.00		
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# WRITINGS

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

## Address Service Requested



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, **March 11**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4

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

*Annual Cottage Work Week is April 8-13. Call Bill Martinelli at 608-238-8355 to volunteer for raking, cleaning, and other chores.*

Sunday, **May 13**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4

Sunday, **June 3**, 1-3:30 pm, Annual Mirror Lake State Park Open House, Guided Tours

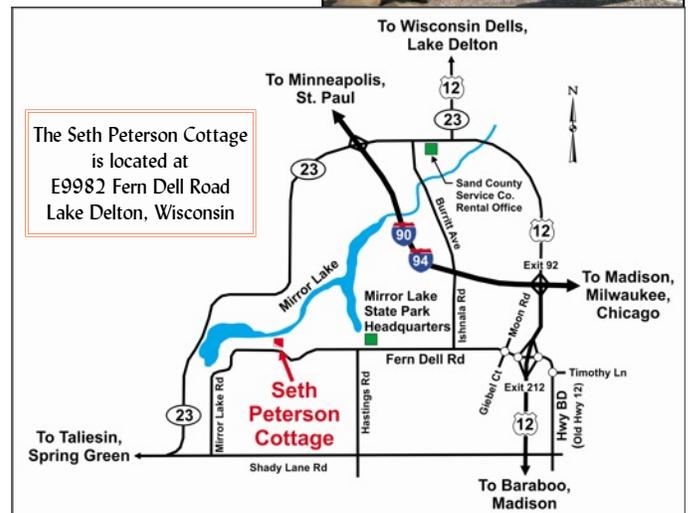
Sunday, **June 10**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House and *Cottage 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, Guided Tours, FREE Admission*

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

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

Join us at one of our monthly open houses.

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).



[www.sethpeterson.org](http://www.sethpeterson.org)