



## MEYER HOUSE WINS 2019 VISSER AWARD



*Doug LaBreque, left, accepts the 2019 Visser Award from Bill Martinelli, first vice president of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy.*

**T**he restoration of the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Curtis and Lillian Meyer House has won the 2019 Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award.

“It has been a long and challenging process but very rewarding in its outcome,” owner Doug LaBreque said.

“I feel fortunate to have had this opportunity, and I am immensely grateful to the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy to be recognized for this work.”

LaBreque, a professional singer, became the property’s fifth owner when he purchased it in 2003. While restoration work didn’t begin in earnest

until 2015, he tackled several major projects right away:

- A full rehab of the kitchen.
- Removing the indoor/outdoor carpet that had been affixed throughout the home with mastic glue and the brown paint that coated the exterior, Honduras mahogany trim.
- Refinishing the original oak flooring upstairs.
- Installing the half-bathroom Wright originally specified for the basement.
- Restoring banquette seating in the living room.

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# WRITINGS

WRITINGS is a semi-annual publication of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy Inc.

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## SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY INC.

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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- First Vice President: Bill Martinelli
- Second Vice President: James Booth
- Treasurer: Catherine Sperrl
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### MEMBERS

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### EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

- Mark Blakeslee, President Mirror Lake Association
- Ryder Will, Superintendent Mirror Lake State Park

### CONSERVANCY STAFF

- Office Manager: Ron Dakter
- Marketing Coordinator: Gail Kohl

### RESERVATIONS

Sand County Service Co.: (800) 822-7768

### CONTACT US

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## 2019 WORK WEEK REPORT

By Bill Martinelli

The 27th annual Seth Peterson Cottage work week was held this year in mid-April.

While the work week began a few days later than usual, we still had a couple of inches of snow on the ground when the work week started on the morning of April 14. By late afternoon the weather was warmer, the snow was melting and our crew of volunteers was able to get a good start on cleaning the grounds around the cottage.

Major projects this year included finishing the tuckpointing of the masonry above the kitchen and bathroom that was started two years ago.

We also had our fireplace mason replace a dozen firebrick that had loosened in the back of the fireplace.

Our painting contractor also got a good start on refinishing the cottage's exterior wood by cleaning all of the exterior. He'll now work on applying the new finish between guest visits during the next few weeks.

A new center section for the

fireplace grate, which burns out every four to five years, was welded and is ready for the next winter season.

The landscaping was cleaned after a very long winter, and wood chips were spread on the path down to the lake to repair erosion of the path after the torrential rains of last August.

With the use of the Mirror Lake State Park wood splitter, two to three cords of wood were cut, split and stacked.

Other yearly maintenance projects included cleaning the upholstery, scrubbing and mopping the flagstone floor, cleaning the kitchen cabinets, installing a new bedroom mattress and box spring, cleaning the gravel drive and parking lot, purchasing a new gas grill for our guests to use and having the heating and air conditioning systems checked.

Many volunteers helped this year with our annual maintenance projects, with approximately 150 volunteer hours donated.

On behalf of the board and the guests who'll visit us in 2019: Thanks to all those who helped! ☐

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Kermit Traska

The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy board of directors oversees the operation of the Seth Peterson Cottage. The organization bylaws allow for a 15-member board and *ex-officio* members from the Mirror Lake Association and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Additional members include our marketing director and office manager. The board meets quarterly and has its annual meeting following the monthly open house in December.

There have been some recent changes to the board. Sadly, long-time board member Raymond Matlosz passed away. Raymond was in charge of scheduling the guides for the open house tours. Please keep Raymond's family and friends in your thoughts and prayers.

Two long-time board members, Jerry Minnich and Peter Rott, retired when their terms expired at the end of 2018. Peter Rott, a Taliesin fellow, recently served as the board secretary. Jerry Minnich has served as the editor of the conservancy newsletter, "Writings," and created the Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award. We want to thank both Peter and Jerry for their many years of service.

New board members include: Marc Londo, Cathy Sperrl and Beth Zondag-Traska. Marc joined the conservancy a few years ago and began leading cottage tours at approximately the same time. Cathy joined the board in 2018 and was elected treasurer at our board meeting in January. She takes over this role from Paul Wagner, who has served as treasurer for almost 20 years. Beth has been associated with the Seth Peterson Cottage since before the conservancy was formed. She has prepared and served the delicious food for many of our meetings and special programs.

We express our sincere thank you to all of our board members and volunteers who continue to make the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy a positive force in preserving the Seth Peterson Cottage and making it available to the public. ☐

## MIRROR LAKE STATE PARK REPORT

By Ryder Will, Park Supervisor

Another spring has turning into summer here at Mirror Lake State Park. As in most years, we moved from the cool and wet spring to a warmer and drier summer (okay, maybe not so much the drier).

The summer brings many day visitors and campers to the park. This year they will be greeted by several changes.

This year the Wisconsin state park system moved to a new program vendor for our camping reservation system. Camis is a company based in Canada, and it manages reservations for most of the Canadian provincial parks as well as Canada's national parks.

Wisconsin joins several U.S. states using Camis for reservation management. While we continue to work through

the kinks found in any new system, things are going well for staff and campers.

Another change that occurred as part of the new system was making all our electric sites reservable. In the past, approximately a dozen electric sites were available on a first-come, first-served basis. Those have all now become reservable.

Changes continued in the campgrounds over the fall and winter with the addition of electricity to 14 campsites in the Cliffwood and Sandstone Ridge campgrounds. This brought our electric campsite total to 61 sites. We are already seeing increased use and reservations on those sites — meeting the needs of more and more campers looking for electricity as part of their camping experience.

The Bluewater Bay campground continues to offer only non-electric sites.

We were also able to begin development of a new nature trail. The Pulpit Rock trail will travel primarily on the old road through the Fern Dell neighborhood — just to the east of the Seth Peterson Cottage.

In fact, the cottage was once part of that neighborhood of cottages and vacation homes. The trail is laid out and can be used at this time.

We are working with the Friends of Mirror Lake and local historians and naturalists to develop a system of interpretive signs and materials for the area. The trail can be accessed from the small parking lot on Fern Dell Road east of the cottage.

Another great project that was just wrapped up is the new storage building that was built via a partnership of the Mirror Lake Management District, Mirror Lake Association, and the Friends of Mirror Lake State Park. Sauk County provided funding to the management district for the project as well.

This building will be used primarily to house the management district's lake weed harvester. It also will be used for storage of park equipment, Friends of Mirror Lake supplies and other miscellaneous supplies of the district and neighborhood association. The harvester is a significant investment for the district, and their work with it helps keep the lake the amazing place it is for all of us.

I am proud to have been part of this process. While not a glamorous building, it serves as a fantastic example of what can be done when various groups come together on a project.

These examples of the ongoing changes and improvements to the park are just a small piece of all the hard work that staff and volunteers put in each year. I continue to be amazed and impressed by the variety of organizations and individuals who put so much time, energy and resources into Mirror Lake and its surroundings.

Thanks to all of you reading this for your support and interest in the Seth Peterson Cottage. You make it possible for this valuable cultural resource to continue to be part of the story of this place. ☐



**VISSER AWARD**  
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“My initial focus,” LaBreque said, “was to get it back to looking like a Wright house.”  
When a water pipe burst in 2015, he decided to finish work on the house. LaBreque hired an architect and a general contractor with experience rehabilitating

Wright-designed houses, including the neighboring David and Christine Weisblat House. Together, they:

- Removed everything from the house, including the cement flooring, so the plumbing and wiring, as well as the lath-and-plaster ceilings could be replaced.
- Installed open-cell insulation.
- Added steel re-enforcement to correct second-story deflection.
- Sanded and refinished the window

frames and doors, installing new Thermopane glass.

- Restored the radiant floor heating system, using PEX tubing to replace the original metal pipes, and adding the north/south expansion joints specified in Wright’s plans.
- Replaced the roof, using white thermoplastic polyolefin.
- Refinished the original dining room table.



Designed by Wright in 1948 and built in 1950-51, the Usonian, solar hemisphere house is assembled from Honduras mahogany and custom-made, commercial-grade concrete block. Notable exterior features include the central tower that encloses a two-story staircase and a cantilevered balcony off the master bedroom. The

crescent-shaped wall of 14-foot-tall windows on the home’s eastern elevation affords striking views of the garden and the myriad bird species that congregate there.  
“It’s an artistic experience every day,” LaBreque said.  
“I feel at home here. I feel at peace here.”

**MEET KRISTIN VISSER**

The Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award is named in honor of Kristin Visser, who was instrumental in the restoration of the Seth Peterson Cottage and a tireless worker on its behalf.



She is the author of “Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School in Wisconsin” and, with John Eifler, A.I.A., “Frank Lloyd Wright’s Seth Peterson Cottage: Rescuing a Lost Masterwork.”  
Visser, a planner for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, died in 1998 at the age of 48.  
The award, given by the directors of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, is presented every other year 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.  
In general, buildings constructed between 1900 and 1925 are given preference, and the restoration work shall have been substantially completed within the two calendar years prior to the year of application. The 2019 award was given for work done during 2017 and 2018.

The award is in the amount of \$5,000.  
The Seth Peterson Cottage is Wright’s final Wisconsin commission (1958) and, at only 880 square feet, one of his smallest. It was rescued from ruin by the concerted efforts of a local group of lakeshore property owners, spearheaded by Audrey Laatsch, and restored through a public/private partnership.  
The inaugural Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award was given in 2007 to Steve Sikora and Lynette Erickson-Sikora for their work in restoring the Willey House in Minneapolis.

## FROM THE GUESTBOOK

"A week with nature and Mr. Wright's building. Thank you, Seth, for commissioning this cottage. I have no doubt that it will be enjoyed by countless others for years to come. It is really amazing how quiet things are here away from the sights, sounds and activities of the city. The architecture helps. It soothes my soul." — Linda and David

"...What a privilege to spend time living in this glorious cottage. As I spent time here, I read all the great material and articles about Frank Lloyd Wright and the Seth Peterson Cottage. I couldn't help but appreciate Seth's story.... He has given us all the privilege of experiencing his dream for a little slice of time. I wonder if Seth Peterson could have imagined the joy his dream has brought to so many." — Dan and Janet

"Stepping foot in this cottage feels like stepping back in time. Experiencing this piece of history and the stories that it holds is priceless. Thanks to all who are responsible for maintaining this gem of a cottage. Your efforts are greatly appreciated." — Eric and Julie, Wisconsin

"What a stunning experience! A true jewel not only for the Midwest but the entire country. A perfect blend of design, nature and tranquility. It feels like an honor to be able to experience this and definitely a highlight in our travel history. Kudos to all who make the upkeep and sharing of this special place with the general public their passion." — Kevin and Jerri, Iowa

"...We've learned this weekend that solitude can be spectacular. We are grateful for all the countless hours of love that have been poured into this place." — Dave and Anne

"...Thank you for re-creating such a wonderful spot for just enjoying time with each other and with nature. I just wish that more in this world could get/take these opportunities to slow down and reconnect with nature." — Tim and Mary Ellen

## MEETING FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

By Brad Anderson

**T**his story was told to me by my father, Chester Anderson, when I was a young man. My father was raised on a small farm north of Dodgeville, Wisconsin, in the early 1900s. He was the oldest boy of seven children.

The story went like this: Like most families at the time, the effects of the Great Depression hit my dad's family quickly and hard. There was little money to begin with, and soon, there was not enough food to go around.

Arrangements were made with Charlie Jones, a nearby farmer, for my dad to go work on the Jones farm for room and board. It was a win-win arrangement as Jones and his wife were unable to have children and needed extra help running the farm.

The Anderson family would have one fewer mouth to feed.

At the Jones farm, the barnyard was on the opposite side of the barn from the house.

One day, *circa* 1930, my dad was in the barnyard cleaning and grooming some feeder calves to show with his 4-H club at the Iowa County Fair.

To my dad's great surprise a stranger walked into the barnyard.

He was wearing a full, black dress suit but was barefoot, and his pants were rolled up above his knees. He also had on a black cape coat and a pork pie hat.

Quite an imposing figure.

You guessed it. It was Frank Lloyd Wright who had stopped by the farm to pick up some eggs\* on his way back to Taliesin from his travels.

Apparently, Jones told Wright about the calves, and he wanted to see them — but did not want to get his shoes dirty. Upon inspection, he deemed the calves worthy of showing.

Footnote: Finding him worthy, the Joneses loaned my dad the money to




**He was wearing a full, black dress suit but was barefoot, and his pants were rolled up above his knees.**

attend the University of Wisconsin.

Can you imagine a kid from a dirt-poor farm getting the chance to go to college in the heart of the Great Depression? In 1935 he received a degree in agriculture and went on into a successful career of 40 years with the Carnation Company.

The loan was quickly paid back after graduation and "paid forward," allowing two of my dad's sisters to also attend the University of Wisconsin. Amazing.

\*According to Charlie Jones: "Get the money first."

Editor's Note: Brad Anderson and his wife, Connie, recently won a night's stay at the cottage from a drawing at the Reedsburg (Wisconsin) Harvest Park fundraising event. 

## MIRROR LAKE ASSOCIATION REPORT

By Mark Blakeslee, President

**A** cool and wet June made it feel like summer would be delayed. But the activity has picked up considerably in the hotter days of July. On weekends, the lake has a constant stream of kayakers, canoers and paddle-boarders!

It's always good to see the thousands of people who visit Mirror Lake appreciate all the work we do to keep Mirror Lake a place they want to come back year after year.

In mid-June, the Mirror Lake Association held its annual meeting of the membership. The association has a membership of 154 people. Property owners and any friend of the lake can join our group.

As in past years, we have a good number of people attend. Our meetings are at Ishnala. Bob Prosser, Ishnala's owner, is always a gracious host for our meetings and is a great friend of Mirror Lake, Mirror Lake State Park and the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy.

The highlight of our meeting was a presentation from our guest speaker, Lance Tallmadge. Lance is with the HoChunk Nation and gave a great talk on the history of the nation in the Dells area.

Of course, the HoChunk Nation's history in the Dells predates the first European settlers. Knowing and understanding their history is important for everyone.

At our meeting we also tweaked our bylaws to form a new list of standing board committees to help us operate better. Those committees are: Community Relations — engages with government and corporate relations; Event/Fundraising — oversees events and engages with donors for sponsorships and grants; Membership — oversees membership mailings and acquisition; Communications — oversees newsletters, notices,




Ishnala Supper Club, Lake Delton

save-the-date alerts, newspaper articles and social events.

By organizing these committees, we hope we will operate more effectively and be able to involve members from outside the board to help in our process.

This summer marks the end of construction on our shed to store our lake weed harvester during the winter. This is a major step in making sure our harvester will last us many years without having to endure the brutal winter weather. This shed will also be used by the Mirror Lake State Park staff and the Mirror Lake Friends group for storage. It is a major project that will payback large dividends for many years.

As always, I'd love to hear your feedback. If you have any thoughts, comments or concerns, please give me a call or send me an email. My cell phone number is (608) 575-4652, and my email is markblakeslee57@gmail.com. 



## NEW SOUVENIR MUG

**G**uests of the Seth Peterson Cottage receive a complimentary mug to remind them of their stay.

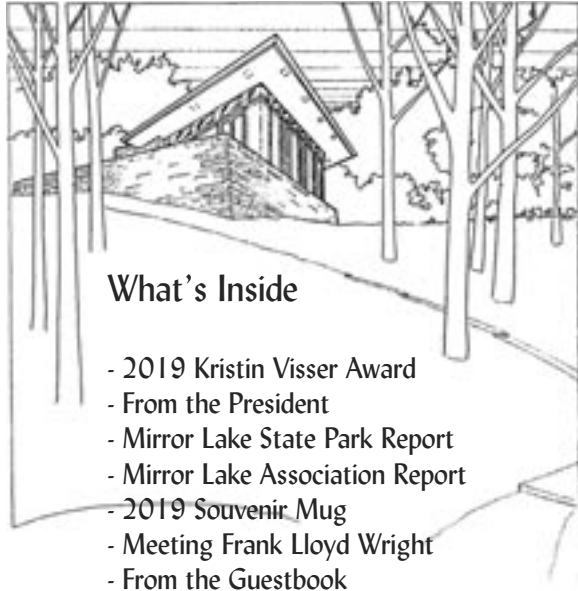
The quote for this year's mug was submitted by Jim Booth, second vice president of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy. Bill Martinelli, first vice president, designed the mug.

**'The region of the soul of humanity which takes delight in music is the same that takes delight in architecture.'**

# WRITINGS

The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy Inc.  
400 Viking Drive  
Reedsburg, WI 53959-1466

## Address Service Requested



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Want to learn more about Frank Lloyd Wright's work in Wisconsin? Visit [WrightInWisconsin.org](http://WrightInWisconsin.org).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Seth Peterson Cottage Open House and Guided Tour

- Aug. 11 1 to 3:30 p.m. \$5
- Sept. 8 1 to 3:30 p.m. \$5
- Oct. 13 1 to 3:30 p.m. \$5
- Nov. 10 1 to 3:30 p.m. \$5
- Dec. 8 1 to 3:30 p.m. \$5

Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy members receive free admission and a discount of 10 percent off cottage merchandise.

### Annual Meeting & Volunteer Recognition

- 4 p.m. Dec. 8. RSVP by sending an e-mail to [sethpetersoncottage@gmail.com](mailto:sethpetersoncottage@gmail.com).

The meeting will last approximately one hour. After, we'll have social time and dinner — and decorate the Christmas tree.

✓ Visitors find touring the cottage a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon. Take a scenic drive and experience firsthand this restored Frank Lloyd Wright-designed home

during the open house tours held each month.

For more information about the cottage, visit us online at [SethPeterson.org](http://SethPeterson.org).

### Seth Peterson Cottage

E9982 Fern Dell Road  
Lake Delton, Wisconsin

