

WRITINGS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY, INC.
FOR THE COTTAGE BY FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT IN MIRROR LAKE STATE PARK

Volume XVII

Issue 1

Have You Heard?

By Claire Barnett

Spring was only an occasional hint in the slightly warmer damp air when I started this newsletter. Since then, we have had episodes of warm weather, the ice broke up on Mirror Lake in front of the cottage, and finally the soft hues of multi-colored buds began to show on the trees. Workweek in early April seemed distant, but due to the time required for layout, printing and mailing, it too will have passed by the time that you read this, and the cottage woods will have turned green again as the wheel of the seasons continues to turn.

Speaking of workweek, there will be a full report in the summer newsletter, but I want to give you a special preview of a really exciting development for the comfort of our guests. Look for the *Cooling the Cottage* article inside.

There were too many good entries in the cottage guest book to fit inside, so I decided to summarize a few of them here. One couple reported their tenth stay at the cottage, which is surely a record! Another reported five turkeys under the bird feeder and eight deer along the driveway. We also had an entry in French from Quebec visitors.

Each season, I remove about half of the current guest entries to our archives, so a very special account now begins the current guest book. It concerns some young teenage girls, obviously from the city, who stayed at the cottage with their father. They felt uneasy with the open feeling of the cottage with its big windows, and their entry stressed the need to add drapes, and perhaps an upstairs bedroom. When it got dark, they feared that someone would look in at them or even shoot at them, so they covered up all the

bedroom windows with pillows, towels, and blankets! I want to thank them for what is probably the most entertaining and unique entry in our guest book, and for reminding all of us of the joys and fears of being young.

During tours, I often tell our guests about the wonderful play of light and shadows inside the cottage during the winter months, created by the lowered angle of sunlight. I finally had the opportunity to get a photograph of the shadows of our clerestory panels during a wonderfully bright day when I was giving a special tour to a visitor from England.

Inside you will also find an account of the annual meeting and some new Board members. Individual Board members will be profiled in future newsletters so that those of you living at a distance can get better acquainted with your Board of Directors. We will also follow the lead of other organizations and start listing the Board members in each issue.

Our new office space has had an unforeseen effect on our Board meetings. Our office rent includes the use of the Vierbicher Board room. We held our first meeting there in July so that the Board could see our new office and be introduced to Tara Fuhrman, our new office manager. Tara had arranged to

have dinner catered, and it was such a success that the Board decided to forgo noisy restaurant meetings for the foreseeable future. Since about half of the Board members are from the Dells area and half from the Madison area, we have been alternating Board meeting locations so that travel distance burdens are shared. We have also met twice at the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Jacobs I Usonian House in Madison, owned and restored by former SPCC member Jim Dennis. Jim has graciously opened his home to us, and we have a catered dinner there as well. The Board enjoys private meetings now in "our" boardroom or in another FLW masterpiece, no longer interrupted by background music, noisy adjacent rooms, or even play rehearsals, as often happened at our other locations.

In addition to workweek photos and stories, our summer issue may also have a new format. Look for it sometime in July. In the meantime, I hope to meet some of you during cottage tours.



October 2004 Contract Event

On a beautiful October day following our open house tours, an important event took place at the cottage. Our fifteen-year lease to operate the cottage was coming to an end, and it was time to sign a new contract.

Kermit Traska, current SPCC Board member and our former DNR liaison, had worked with Bruce Chevis of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the owners of the cottage, to revise our original contract now that the rehabilitation of the cottage was accomplished. Their efforts culminated in a lease signing ceremony at the cottage on October 10.

The lease was signed by Bill Smith, Deputy Secretary of the DNR; Claire Barnett, Acting President of the SPCC; and Chris Wontor, Secretary of the SPCC. We felt honored to have the number two person in the DNR administration at our signing. Also attending from the DNR were Bill Morrissey, Parks and Recreation Bureau Director; Bruce Chevis, Concessions Program Manager; and Paul Zajackowski, Park Manager for Mirror Lake State Park. They all joined us for the annual fall color boat trip after the signing. The weather was beautiful and Waldo Peterson, SPCC Board member and



Front: Bill Smith, Claire Barnett. Middle: Carolyne Kotchi, Chris Wontor. Back: Bill DuPuy, Bruce Chevis, Bill Morrissey, Paul Zajackowski.

President of the Mirror Lake Association, had once again brought his pontoon boat and two others to make the tour possible. Afterwards, we returned to the cottage for refreshments and more conversation. Everyone there enjoyed the event, and Mr. Smith said that he looked forward to another fifteen years of our partnership.

Annual Meeting and New Board Members

The 2004 Annual Meeting was held on November 24, 2004. Board members Claire Barnett, John Muchow, Kermit Traska, and Chris Wontor, whose terms had expired, were elected to new terms. The elections of officers followed: Claire Barnett, acting President since last April, was elected President; Bill Martinelli replaced her as First Vice President; and Peter Rott became Second Vice President. Paul Wagner was re-elected Treasurer, and Chris Wontor was re-elected Secretary.

Jeff Hagen, author, illustrator and donator of the "Audrey's Star" print, has moved to Indiana and regrettably declined re-election to the Board. He will be missed.

Two Board vacancies were filled at the January

Board meeting with the addition of new members James Booth and David Chen.

Cooling the Cottage

The spring workweek will bring an exciting new development to the cottage! It came about this way . . . The cottage, being a thick-walled stone building, is very comfortable year-round when one understands and follows the principles of using thermal mass. The stone causes the temperature inside the cottage to be slow to change, maintaining a fairly constant level of heat or coolness, since masonry buildings can be wonderfully cool in summer, too. But to work properly, the inhabitants need to understand *how* it works and *how* to maintain it, and we average about seven different guests over a two-week period of time. Our guests love the cottage and we want their experience to be everything that Mr. Wright and our Conservancy intended for them, but the summer season could sometimes become uncomfortable.

Opening up a house at night provides natural cooling of the structure, but not if the outside air contains high humidity, or the cottage has been open too long on a hot day. I experienced the result myself when I stayed at the cottage one hot August night almost two years ago, after the doors and windows had been open all afternoon for our monthly tour. I found that the cottage thermal mass still provided some cooling, but the atmosphere resembled a slightly damp, warm basement. We had provided fans in the summertime, and last year added a dehumidifier to the bathroom to help dry the extra moisture from use of the shower. But something more needed to be done.

Fortunately, when we replaced the boiler and heat exchanger a couple of years ago, the Facilities Committee, led by Vice President Bill Martinelli, had the foresight to install air conditioning coils within the furnace heat exchanger for future use. We began to discuss the possibility of air condition-



Waldo and Ann Peterson, Bill Smith, Paul Zajackowski enjoy the pontoon boat tour.

ing the cottage, resigned to the fact that with numerous summertime guests, it was impossible to keep a comfortable indoor environment at all times. Before anyone has time to imagine a huge ugly air conditioning unit either next to the cottage or squatting on the roof in plain sight, let me assure you that the Facilities Committee has taken every precaution. They looked for a short, compact condenser unit and then even took a box of similar proportions up to the top of the two-story roof. Then they walked around to see whether it was visible from most of the places from which one normally views the cottage. It wasn't, since the upper roof is recessed about a foot below the stone parapet.

So to our future summer guests, your experience will be enhanced without the distraction of unpleasant humidity. And to past summer guests, thank you for your expressions of enjoyment in the Guest Book, even though you may have been less than fully comfortable in the cottage during warm and humid weather.

The summer newsletter will provide pictures of the installation and reactions from our guests. It will also explain how the air conditioning works in a cottage heated with radiant floor heat.

Tara Fuhrman and the SPCC Office

Two of the highlights of the last year were the hiring (finally!) of an office administrator and creation of a permanent office space for the Conservancy. Our office is located in the Vierbicher Building, home of the well-known regional architectural



firm of the same name, in Reedsburg Wisconsin. By a fortuitous coincidence, Tara Fuhrman, our new office manager, already worked in the building as an administrative assistant, and she now works for the Conservancy on evenings and weekends as necessary. She also drives to Lake Delton once a week during her lunch hour to pick up mail and drop off anything

needed for the cottage or by Sand County Services, our property manager. She spent a lot of time arranging the office, getting our files in order, and artistically displaying artifacts and awards bequeathed to us by our founding President, the late Audrey Laatsch. Tara's presence has made life much easier for the President and Treasurer and Secretary, and we look forward to her continuing presence.

The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy Board of Directors

Executive Committee

President:	Claire Barnett
First Vice President:	Bill Martinelli
Second Vice President:	Peter Rott
Treasurer:	Paul Wagner
Secretary:	Chris Wontor

Board of Directors

James Booth	David Chen
Bill Dupuy	Tim Heggland
Carolyn Kotchi	Raymond Matlosz
Jerry Minnich	John Muchow
Kermit Traska	

Ex-officio members

Waldo Peterson, Mirror Lake Association
Paul Zajackowski, Mirror Lake State Park

Conservancy Staff

Office Manager:	Tara Fuhrman
Marketing Coordinator:	Gail Kohl

From the Guest Book

"We return to reality rested and refreshed--and happy in the knowledge that the cottage will be here again for us." --Dan Cornwall, and Lois, Lori, and Nancy Burch

"We have toured many Frank Lloyd Wright homes, yet only through the wonderful experience of living in a FLW creation have we truly understood his passion for integrating architecture and nature." --Steve Jojeun

"The learning lesson--time is precious and once lost will never be recovered. Thus, share this priceless treasure with the ones you love." --Pamela and Kevin

A getaway,
A walk in the woods,
A roaring fire,
The hint of spring,
A delicious dinner,
Two bottles of champagne,
Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue",
"True Stories", circa 1940's,

A game of Scrabble,
Quiet time with your mate,
A comfy bed,
A starry night,
Blue skies,
The smell of coffee,
A hearty breakfast,

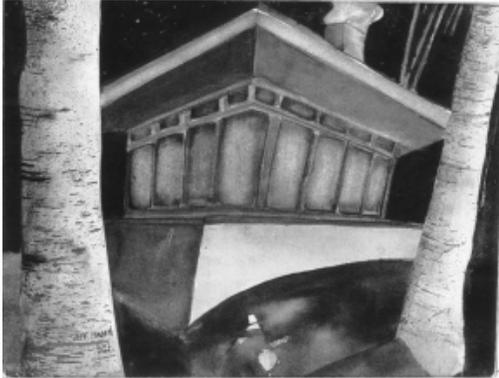
And Frank Lloyd Wright.
It doesn't get any better than that -- Anne and Kurt Frohna

Writings

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Lake Delton, Wisconsin 53940

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“Audrey’s Star” by Jeff Hagen

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, May 8, 1-4 pm

Monthly Open House, Guided Tours, \$2.00, Mothers Day Gift Drawing

Sunday, June 5, 1-4 pm

Annual Mirror Lake State Park Open House, Guided Tours, FREE Admission

Sunday, June 12, 1-4 pm

Monthly Open House, Guided Tours, \$2.00

Sunday, July 10, 1-4 pm

Monthly Open House, Guided Tours, \$2.00. Guest Speaker to be Announced

Sunday, August 14, 1-4 pm

Monthly Open House, Guided Tours, \$2.00 Tour Guide Training at 4 pm

Sunday, September 11, 1-4 pm

Monthly Open House, Guided Tours, \$2.00

Sunday, October 9, 1-4 pm

Monthly Open House, Guided Tours, \$2.00
Fall Color Boat Tour & Reception 4-7 pm, \$20.00

Sunday, November 13, 1-4 pm

Monthly Open House, Guided Tours, \$2.00

Sunday, December 11, 1-4 pm

Monthly Open House, Guided Tours, \$2.00

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Help Wanted!

The SPCC is currently seeking someone to do the layout for this newsletter, organizing already written articles and pictures using a desktop publishing program and then forwarding the files to our printer.

Alice Seeliger, who has donated her time to the Conservancy for the last 13 years will help her replacement through this transition. If you are interested, please contact Claire Barnett at crmrogan@yahoo.com or write to her in care of The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, Box 334, Lake Delton, WI 53941.

We wish to extend a special “Thank You” to Alice for making it possible to keep our members informed about the SPCC for so many years.