

WRITINGS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY

Vol. XXV, Issue 1

COTTAGE COMMENTS BY CLAIRE

If you are visiting the cottage from mid-November to mid-January and the sun is shining, you will see an example of the planning skills of Frank Lloyd Wright. The late afternoon sun is low enough in the sky so that it shines through the clerestory panels above the big living room windows, casting a shadow of their cut-out shapes on the stone wall above the seating area. I have observed this phenomenon four times in twenty years, and have been able to photograph it each time. The picture below was taken during the November 11th open house. At first the day was overcast, but later the sun was out occasionally, and that is when I noticed the shadows. The sun was too bright at first but then it dimmed behind a lightly overcast sky and was just the right intensity.

The late E. Thomas Casey, the supervising apprentice from Taliesin during the cottage construction in 1959, told me that Mr. Wright never visited the site. But he had a topographic survey map done of the site, showing elevation contour lines and existing trees, and probably photographs were taken of the vegetation and the view. Mr. Wright's plans then oriented the cottage almost in its present location, although the construction

site had to be moved slightly when bedrock was encountered.

Mr. Wright loved the play of light and shadow in his structures, and he would have been aware that the shadow of the clerestories would be projected on the rear wall. It is another example of what I try to point out on tours. The cottage's small size makes it easy to find illustrations of Mr. Wright's design principles. If only four days during those three months were always sunny so that others could share the sight!

The winter has been mild with not much snow for winter newsletter pictures in November or January. Fortunately, one of our tour guides, Brandi Jo Jones, took some winter pictures that she was happy to share for this newsletter. I missed the Annual Meeting and Holiday Party, but Bill Martinelli kindly provided pictures of the festivities. His pictures of the cottage interior with the twilight visible outside give a good idea of how cozy the cottage felt during the party. They make a fitting illustration of a comment from our recent guests, Murray and KC: *"It has been a dream to come here. The house in the dusk presented itself in a magical way. To be here was a joy and delight."* ☐

Claire Barnett



FROM THE PRESIDENT - The Way It Was

Kermit Traska

My first view of the Seth Peterson Cottage was as if it were in prison. The previous owners had built a six-foot-high chain-link fence around the property with a locked gate across the driveway. The cottage was boarded up with plywood and looked dark, dingy, and in severe decay. We could not get through the gate because we didn't have a key for the lock.

The cottage was acquired by the State of Wisconsin in 1966 as part of a land purchase for the recently formed Mirror Lake State Park. The typical fate of a cottage purchased by the state is demolition and return of the site to its natural condition. Because the cottage was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, however, there was an effort to save it, although no specific use could be suggested for it. At the time of my visit, nearly twenty years after purchase, vandalism and decay had taken an extreme toll on the cottage.

The state, facing budget constraints, did not have the resources to care for the cottage. That is when a group of interested citizens from the area came forward to form the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy. The Conservancy took up the task of raising funds to restore the cottage to its earlier magnificent state. The entire story about the rehabilitation of the cottage can be found in the book: *Frank Lloyd Wright's Seth Peterson Cottage: Rescuing a Lost Masterwork*, by John Eifler, AIA and Kristin Visser. The book is available at the monthly open houses the second Sunday of each month and on our website at www.sethpeterson.org. The cost of the soft-cover book is \$15.

The best way to experience the cottage is to rent it for several days. The reservations fill quickly and far in advance. If renting the cottage isn't possible for you, then visit it on the monthly Open House day. We hope to see you there soon. ☐

MIRROR LAKE ASSOCIATION NEWS

Mark Blakeslee, President

For the past year the Mirror Lake Association has been working to come up with a long-range plan to maintain Mirror Lake. Part of our mission is to help the lake remain a recreational destination that people will want to visit. However, just as important (maybe more), the Mirror Lake area needs to be a place where nature, and the creatures who live there, thrive in their natural environment.

To do this, we get great support and help from many different people and organizations that have similar

desires and dreams for the area. It couldn't happen without this assistance.

Currently, we are in the process of studying the lake and shoreline to get a better understanding of what nature intended the Mirror Lake area to be, what invasive plants or animals have moved in that affect the native plants and animals, how human actions influence the ecosystem, and finally what we can do to encourage humans to co-exist in harmony with the natural world. These are all questions that couldn't be answered without the technical assistance of experts from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and from Onterra, LLC, a private company that specializes in lake planning management. Studies should be completed in the summer of 2013 when future planning and implementation will begin.

We appreciate the relationship and support we get from the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy. We hope when you visit the cottage that you take some time to appreciate the cottage's surroundings and are able to take advantage of this unique area.

If you have any questions about the work of the Mirror Lake Association, or would like membership information, please feel free to contact me at mblakeslee@uwalumni.com. ☐

MIRROR LAKE STATE PARK REPORT

Becky Green, Acting Park Superintendent

Deer Season has come and gone. Hunting is a good management tool that helps to maintain a healthy deer population. During the gun season we received a baiting complaint and report of a tree stand set up on park property, both illegal activities. On Thanksgiving night, a gun shot was heard in the park. The next day our ranger was able to catch the person collecting the deer. It turned out to be the same guy that had the bait pile and tree stand, not far from where he shot the deer from the road at night with a spotlight. Yes, he got himself into a lot of trouble.

At the end of November we took delivery of a donated interactive whiteboard. Our IT department came and installed and programmed the equipment. The whiteboard is a wonderful educational tool and will be used heavily for meetings and presentations.

With multiple snow events, the cross-country ski trails were heavily used and in excellent condition. The crews did a great job of getting the snow off the roads and the trail groomed before the skiers arrived. And they came in droves! This was wonderful for both the skiers and for our park attendance and revenue.

In mid-December the Natural Resources Board met and made a ruling on Act 168 in reference to hunting and trapping in state parks. The final outcome of the NRB ruling was just about the same as we have now. We will have two hunting and trapping time periods in the State Parks, one in the fall and one in the spring. There will be no trapping within a hundred yards of the shoreline or of the cottage property. We are moving forward to ask the NRB again to allow waterfowl hunting on the west end of Mirror Lake.

On Saturday, January 5th, the Friends group, along with park staff, hosted one of our annual Candlelight Ski, Hike, and Snowshoe events. It was a wonderful evening with a gentle breeze, temperatures in the 30s, and about 850 guests! The parking lots filled up, the Friends sold out of almost everything, and people had a great time.

The Mirror Lake Superintendent position is still vacant. There will be a new exam available soon to fill various positions, and the Mirror Lake position is one of them.

I hope you all have a wonderful winter and spring! ☐

ELECTION RESULTS

The Annual Meeting was held at the cottage in December, with four Conservancy board members, Tim Heggland, Jerry Minnich, Peter Rott, and Heather Sabin being re-elected to three-year terms. The current officers were re-elected at the January Quarterly Board Meeting. They are: President, Kermit Traska; First Vice-President, Bill Martinelli; Second Vice-President, Jim Booth; Secretary, Peter Rott and Treasurer, Paul Wagner.

2013 MUG DESIGN

Each year, a mug is made to give to our cottage guests. This year's design uses a dramatic graphic belonging to the SPCC that some of you may remember from when we sold black T-Shirts with this design. It was suggested last year that we try a different cup shape, so this year, Claire Barnett and Jerry Minnich chose a larger, tapering shape. The mug was designed this year by Alice Seeliger, the same person who does the design and layout for this newsletter. Our thanks go out to Caroline Beckett for her past mug design work. ☐



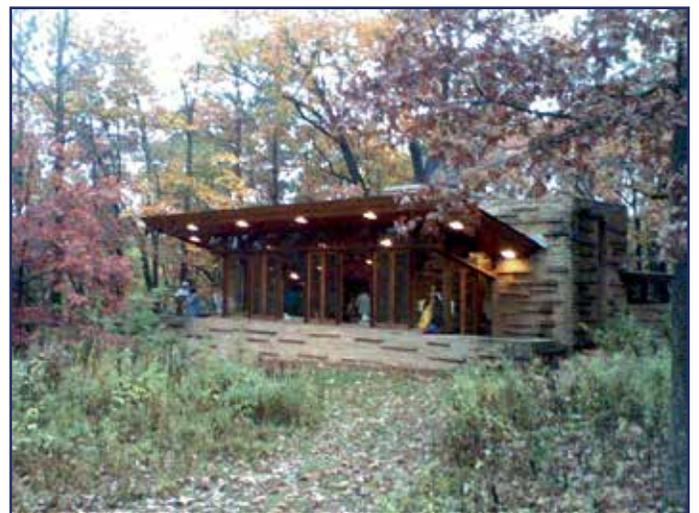
2012 FALL COLOR BOAT TOUR AND RECEPTION



WIND IN THE NARROWS CANCELS BOAT TOUR

The Fall Color Boat Tour event was held on October 10th, following the Sunday cottage open house tours. It is always promised that “The festivities in the cottage will take place rain or shine, as will the boat tour, unless there are dangerous conditions present on the lake.” This year in addition to rain, the latter came true. There was a strong wind blowing down the narrows, and the boat captains decided the boat trip was indeed dangerous under those conditions.

Participants gathered around the warm fireplace and enjoyed the usual delicious food prepared by Beth Traska. Claire Barnett and Kermit Traska answered questions and told stories about the cottage and the conservancy's early days. ☐



A RAINY DAY AT THE COTTAGE

A STUDY

AUTUMN



A COLORFUL ENTRANCE TO THE COTTAGE



AUTUMN LEAVES FROM THE LAKE TERRACE



COTTAGE FRONT WITH LIGHTS

FROM THE GUEST BOOK

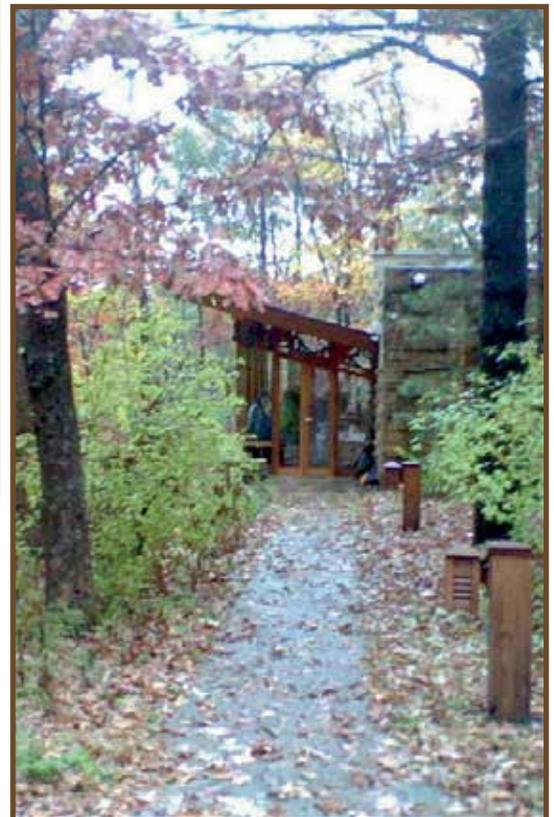
The genius of Mr. Wright is that we can be indoors and yet feel as if we are outdoors—one with nature. No other place has ever felt that way. It is our Walden Pond if for only one night. It is sublime.

We will remember the moon shadows at 4 AM.

- *Mike and Carol*

In my stay here, I've felt I have been given the gift to touch the soul and heart of both Seth and Frank Lloyd Wright, for in this "house" built not of stone and wood, but of soaring aspiration, tender unyielding faith and heartfelt inspiration, both Seth and FLW have joined together to create not just a house, but a refuge of peace.

- *Catherine*



SIDEWALK IN AUTUMN

IN CONTRASTS

WINTER



Photo by Brandi Jo Jones

VIEW FROM THE PATH TO A FROZEN MIRROR LAKE



ICE ENHANCES THE RAIN CHAIN



Photo by Brandi Jo Jones

A WINTRY VIEW FROM INSIDE THE COTTAGE



Photo by Brandi Jo Jones

SIDEWALK IN WINTER

Again we were taken by the light in this home—eyes wide-open light from the windows in the front room, eyes half-lidded light from the bedroom windows, and the welcome glow from the fireplace.

- Brent and Jane

I was treated to two eagles flying up the lake at treetop levels. The second one was first noticed by hearing it flap its wings. It was a beautiful moment of solitude.

- Jeff

Our wedding was the most beautiful and perfect event that we ever could have hoped for. We were married here. 30 of our closest friends and family were in attendance, and we became husband and wife while we overlooked Mirror Lake standing on the porch. It was more than anyone could have ever asked for.

- Lisa and Micah, WI

*Fire glowing
always snowing
skiing in the park
til well after dark
gala new years with close friends
the night went on and on
will it never end.*

*The Death Star via lego
even made a cameo
relax, breathe, ponder
time for mind to wander.
family friends laughter
food wine and platters
but mostly and
most importantly
love*

The Kincaid Family, WI



Holiday Party

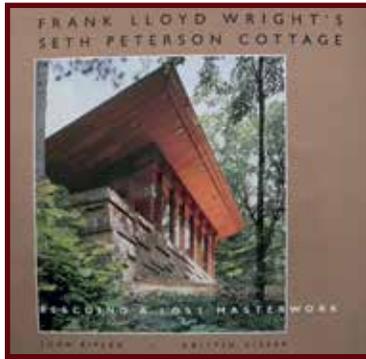
*LEFT TO RIGHT:
BRANDI JO JONES,
LARRY LAMAR,
PETER ROTT,
MARK BLAKESLEE,
PATRICK CLEARY*



Photos by Bill Martinelli

RESCUING A LOST MASTERWORK: MASONRY

This is the thirteenth 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 construction of the sloping roof.



The buff sandstone for the masonry walls, chimney, and flooring of the cottage was quarried in nearby Rock Springs and had stood up well through the years. Although sandstone is usually considered a soft stone, the local type has proven to be very durable. The stone was originally designed to be laid up as a masonry wall with a layer of board insulation separating the two faces, but for some unexplained reason the insulation was eliminated and replaced by an inner wythe of concrete block. This construction alteration had a significant impact on comfort, as the exterior masonry walls of the cottage were virtually uninsulated. Aside from mild cleaning inside and out, the stone walls were left intact. The cottage has only recently required selective tuckpointing maintenance.

The fireplace and chimney were problematic from the start. As designed by Wright, the chimney was integrated into the overall masonry mass surrounding the kitchen and bath. The terminus of the chimney was undifferentiated and was the same height as the adjacent masonry walls. At first, everyone wondered why the second owners had added a seven-foot-tall extension to the chimney. In the fall of 1989 the mystery was solved. On a cool clear Saturday, a group of volunteers descended on the cottage to remove the protective plywood panels and clean up the site. They decided it would be fun to start a fire in the fireplace as a symbolic gesture of the cottage reawakening. Within minutes after lighting the fire, the volunteers stumbled out of the cottage coughing and rubbing their eyes. Smoke billowed out of the doors and windows. The fire was pouring smoke back into the room despite the fact that the damper was fully open. It was obvious that the second owner had added the height to the chimney in an effort to eliminate a backdraft problem, obviously to no avail.

A local chimney company called Top Hat analyzed the problem and concluded that the chimney extension did little to rectify the problem and could therefore be removed. Top Hat also recommended that the large rectangular flue be converted to a circular shape, as smoke has a tendency to spiral its way up the chimney, and a circular flue, though smaller in area, would produce

a smoother and more effective draw. A new damper was added atop the chimney and the original damper left open to keep the flue warm, which would also increase chimney draw when a fire was first started. Finally, a pipe was run beneath the floor and outer wall to a remote exterior intake vent to supply fresh air at the front of the fire. These changes improved the fireplace draw immensely. Unfortunately, even with these changes the height of the chimney could be reduced to only 18 inches above the adjacent masonry due to building code and fire safety regulations. □

Next time: Doors and windows.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEBSITE

Check out our Seth Peterson Cottage website at: www.sethpeterson.org

COTTAGE MERCHANDISE

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.

FALL COLOR BOAT TOUR AND RECEPTION

The Fall Color Boat Tour will be held on October 13th. Please note that the fee has increased to \$30. See full details at: http://www.sethpeterson.org/about_events.html

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



What's Inside...

Cottage Comments by Claire
From the President
Mirror Lake Association News
Mirror Lake State Park Report
Election Results
2013 Mug Design
2012 Fall Color Boat Trip
& Reception
A Study in Contrasts
From the Guest Book
Holiday Party
Rescuing a Lost Masterwork Excerpt
Announcements

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, **April 14**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4

Annual Cottage Work Week is April 15 - 19. Call Bill Martinelli at 608-238-8355 to volunteer for raking, cleaning, and other chores.

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

Sunday, **June 2**, 1-3:30 pm, State Park Open House, Guided Tours, Free Admission

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

Sunday, **July 14**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4

Sunday, **August 11**, 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