



WRITINGS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY

Vol. XXVI, Issue I

COTTAGE COMMENTS BY CLAIRE

Welcome to an historic issue of *Writings*! This page has had pictures of the Seth Peterson Cottage and its surroundings, but never one of Seth himself. Even our Cottage book only shows Seth's high school graduation picture. I am pleased to remedy this with a photo of Seth as an adult, courtesy of his sister Caroline.

Inside you will find the usual news reports, *From the Guestbook* entries, a Cottage book excerpt and seasonal pictures. There is information about new interviews with two people who knew Seth Peterson best—Seth's sister Caroline Royster and his boyhood friend Bert Goderstad. A third interview was planned, but sadly, that was not to be. However, you will learn about a person instrumental in the rescue of the Cottage who is little known outside of the original SPCC board but whose work predated Audrey Laatsch's Cottage involvement.

It was in February of 1989 that a public meeting was held in Wisconsin Dells to discuss how to save the Cottage. Memories fade and the Conservancy has already lost many of the people associated with those early days including Audrey Laatsch, Lois Majerus, Jill Vladick and Kristin Visser. Other early board members moved on or away and we have lost touch with them. It is becoming more important to preserve records and stories from those early days before they are lost.

Time does pass quickly. I have been coordinating *Writings* for almost 11 years, beginning three years before starting my multiple terms as SPCC president. After the death of Audrey Laatsch in August of 2002, there was no newsletter until May of 2003. I brought up its absence at the April board meeting, and when no one volunteered to do it, I assumed the responsibility. My first column was *We Haven't Told You*, a parody of Audrey's column title of *Have I Told You?* noting the long gap between newsletters. I later called my column *Have You Heard?* but finally settled on its present title.

Alice Seeliger, Jerry Minnich and I met in Madison that year. The board of directors had decided to hire Alice to do the layout of the newsletter after her years of doing it on a voluntary basis. The three of us redesigned it and it received the now-familiar masthead and red/orange highlights. We printed that new edition on beige/tan paper but the photographs were still in black and white. We later changed it again when the board of directors approved printing it in full color.

This will be the final newsletter that I produce since it is time for me to move on to concentrate on other writing commitments and to work on my house. I am sure that the newsletter will be a topic of discussion at the April board meeting and I look forward with the rest of you to seeing what changes may occur with a new coordinator in place. I do hope that you have enjoyed my efforts over the years to make you feel involved with the Cottage that you support and that we all love. 

Claire Barnett



Seth Peterson

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kermit Traska

One of the regular discussions at our Board of Directors meetings is the financial status of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy. Thanks to the opportunity of charging rent for overnight stays at the Cottage, fundraising does not occupy much of our time. More time is spent on caring for the Cottage, its guests, Mirror Lake State Park, and Mirror Lake itself.

Thousands of dollars have gone for maintenance of the Cottage. However, the intent of this article is to show ways in which the Conservancy supports other areas of related concern. Since opening in 1992, we have been able to make contributions to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Mirror Lake State Park, the Friends of Mirror Lake State Park, and the Mirror Lake Association. We pay 5% of rental fees to the DNR as part of the lease arrangement for the Cottage. Through the end of 2013, this has amounted to nearly \$80,300. Additionally, we contributed \$25,000 toward the educational wing of the new Mirror Lake State Park office, and another \$1,244 to help control gypsy moths in the park.

The Friends of Mirror Lake State Park provide funds for projects and programming throughout the park. Over the past five years, we have annually donated \$1,000 for their naturalist programs. The Mirror Lake Association consists mostly of residents around Mirror Lake and is concerned with the care of the lake itself. The Conservancy provides \$1,000 annually for their projects such as planning and engineering for dredging the lake, shoreline erosion control, and lake planning study costs. The Conservancy has also donated \$1,000 to the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy.

In all, our donations have amounted to over \$122,500 provided to the DNR, Mirror Lake State Park, and Mirror Lake. Individually, we are limited as to what we might be able to do. However, working together, we are able to accomplish much, much more for the natural environment surrounding the Cottage.

You can help us by continuing to renew your membership in the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, visiting with us on Open House days, and perhaps revisiting the Cottage for a night or two. We look forward to seeing you! ☐

MIRROR LAKE ASSOCIATION NEWS

Mark Blakeslee, President

The temperatures of this winter have certainly curbed many of the traditional outdoor activities in the park. However, we're still hot on the trail in planning for the spring and summer events.

This May we will have our annual clean-up day where we pick up litter along the roadways and on the lake's shoreline. This is one of our most attended work days. We usually have more than thirty volunteers for this event. Afterward we all enjoy a fabulous lunch featuring barbecued ribs and a lot of great conversation.

This June at our association's annual meeting, we will be releasing our Lake Management Plan that we have been working on for almost two years. This plan will help guide us to maintain the lake and area for future generations. We'll be soliciting a lot of volunteer help for the coming years, but our membership has always come through, doing what is best for the greater cause.

In August we will be holding our annual picnic at the park and, once again, we'll be wrapping up the summer with our annual boat flotilla.

If you'd like to get more information on these and other activities, or would like membership information about the Mirror Lake Association, please contact us via e-mail at mirrorlakeassocwidells@gmail.com ☐

MIRROR LAKE STATE PARK REPORT

Ryder Will, Park Superintendent

I have joined the park's team as Superintendent, filling the big shoes left by Paul Zajackowski. I came to Mirror Lake from Devil's Lake where I was a Park Manager in charge of facilities and maintenance operations and I have over a decade of service with the DNR at various parks throughout the state. I look forward to building relationships with all the great organizations that have a stake in the park and the lake. Special thanks to Becky Green for serving as acting Superintendent for so long. She will now return to her valued role as Park Manager.

We have had a cold winter at the park, but we continue to see high numbers of skiers enjoying the trails. Fortunately, along with the cold has come a generous amount of snow. Trail conditions have been good throughout the winter. We had more than 12,000 visitors in January and are on track to match those numbers in February.

The annual candlelight ski / hikes in January and February saw more than 1,200 visitors between the two events. Visitors enjoyed the food and beverages and many stayed to warm up by the après-ski bonfires. Several individuals and families visited the park for the first time—and surely not the last. It is always exciting to witness the first impressions people have of a place so many of us hold so dear.

We will continue to have some staff shortages, with our full-time Ranger position remaining vacant, but we have a great team of full-time staff to pick up the

slack. The park will also be lucky to have many great part-time seasonal employees returning from previous summers, and we have good candidates for our new hires as well.

Winter may be in full force, but spring will be here soon. Get out and enjoy the ski trails, ice fishing, snowshoeing, or any other great outdoor winter activities while you can. Mirror Lake offers so many splendid choices for recreation all year round! ☐

ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION RESULTS

Directors whose terms were expiring—Claire Barnett, Jim Booth, Jim Draeger, Raymond Matlosz and Kermit Traska—were re-elected to new terms at the Annual Meeting. The exception is John Muchow who announced his retirement from the board. His position will be filled by Dr. Steven Kincaid whom John had recommended. John was thanked for his many years of service at the subsequent January board meeting.

The current officers were re-elected to another year's term at the January quarterly board meeting where Ryder Will was introduced as the new Superintendent of Mirror Lake State Park. Thanks are extended to Becky Green for serving on the SPCC board as the acting superintendent and representative of the park. ☐

2013 FALL COLOR BOAT TOUR AND RECEPTION

The Fall Color Boat Tour event was held on October 13th, following the Sunday Cottage Open House tours. The weather cooperated this year and participants enjoyed their pontoon boat tour of the lake. All enjoyed the usual delicious food prepared by Beth Traska. Special thanks to Dave Clemens, Mark Jaeger and Waldo Peterson from the Mirror Lake Association, who volunteered and operated their boats. ☐



WINNIE HUTCHISON AND THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE

Claire Barnett



The Conservancy lost one of its founders and early major contributors to the Cottage preservation effort when Winifred M. Hutchison died November 30, 2013, at age 88. Winnie earned her degree in Early Childhood Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and an MA at the University of Iowa. Her long education career included many teaching and teaching supervisory positions in three states. She was a founding member of the Olbrich Botanical Society, in Madison, and also of The Mirror Lake Association. Her early involvement with the Cottage and the Conservancy is not well known to most, but she was one of the original subcommittee members from the Mirror Lake Association who were charged with finding a way to save the Cottage. The other members of that original committee included Jerry and Lois Majerus and Audrey Laatsch.

She also was active in fundraising after the formation of the Conservancy. After Jill Vladick discovered the existence of the newly formed Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, it was Winnie who undertook the successful application that obtained ten thousand dollars with which to put a roof over the Cottage. That was the first construction work that began the rehabilitation. Prior to that, the Cottage was a roofless shell of a building that made fundraising difficult when we had little to show for our efforts. She also wrote a successful grant application to American Family Insurance. In addition to acting as Secretary, she also assembled our earliest newsletters.

In January of 1991, she announced that because of personal commitments, she was resigning from the SPCC board of directors. In a February letter, President Audrey Laatsch thanked her for her many services and acknowledged that Winnie's involvement with the Cottage predated Audrey's own! Before the subcommittee formation, Winnie had researched the origins of the Cottage. There was some misinformation that surfaced initially when the Cottage was purchased by the State of Wisconsin and was to be demolished like other purchased structures in the new park. Winnie established that the Cottage design was by Frank Lloyd Wright and not the independent work of one of his apprentices. The Cottage later displayed a plaque from the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, authenticating its origins. ☐



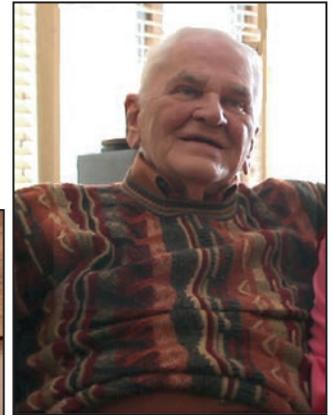
Seth Peterson with his sister Caroline.

Photos provided by Caroline Royster



DISCOVERING SETH PETERSON

INTERVIEWS WITH HIS SISTER AND BOYHOOD FRIEND



Caroline Royster, Seth Peterson's sister; and Bert Goderstad, Seth's boyhood friend.

*Photo Credits:
Caroline—Claire Barnett
Bert—Bill Kult*

By Claire Barnett

Recently, Bill Kult and I had a chance to learn more about Seth Peterson. As part of the work for the short film that we are developing, we interviewed Seth's sister, Caroline Royster, and her son, Will, at the Cottage last September, and more recently we interviewed Seth's boyhood friend, Bert Goderstad, at his home in Hastings, Minnesota. I conducted the interviews and Bill Kult recorded them for later film use. Winter weather prevented me from going to Hastings where Bert lives, so I conducted the interview from home using SKYPE technology, and it worked quite well.

Most of our readers know very little about Seth Peterson. Our Cottage book, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Seth Peterson Cottage: Restoring a Lost Masterwork*, does not have many details about Seth and only shows his high school graduation picture. We did know that Seth was a lifelong asthma sufferer and that he went into the army to get computer training, and later became one of the early computer operators for the Wisconsin Department of Motor Vehicles. The combined information from Caroline and Bert fills out our knowledge of this extraordinary young man who had achieved so much before his untimely death shortly before his twenty-fourth birthday.

Asthma prevented Seth from taking part in high school sports, but it gave him time to learn to love music and art and culture. He listened to opera on the radio, had an extensive record collection of opera and classical music, and played the piano. He may have gotten these interests from his sister, Caroline, who was six years older and who was interested in music and dance.

Bert was two years older than Seth, but because their fathers did business together, they became friends.

When Bert had a paper delivery route, he used to stop at the Peterson house and he and Seth would listen to music and play Monopoly. When Bert was eight years old, he bought a copy of Mr. Wright's autobiography, so his interest in Wright predates Seth's. Bert remembers that he was a high school junior and Seth a freshman when they took the train to Oak Park, Illinois in about 1951, to walk around and look at Mr. Wright's houses there. We also learned of Seth's various jobs that enabled him to meet the owner of the old wooden cottage that stood where Seth's Cottage is now. He also worked as a page at the State Capitol building and that explains why he attended the tax hearings about Taliesin. We already had a picture of Seth in the background of a picture showing Mr. Wright at the Capitol.

We did learn more about the last few months of Seth's life from both Caroline and Bert. There remains a time period that I am investigating because, if I could discover the date of a visit that Seth made to the Cottage, it might shed some light on his death which friends and relatives described as so unexpected.

We offered to have Caroline and Will stay at the Cottage after their interview, but Caroline said that she couldn't do it, nor had she stayed there with Will during the many times that he had been there. She likes the Cottage but she said that being there would just be too intense and she could not bear to stay. Bert has not stayed at the Cottage either, because he says he would not sleep one bit. He would be thinking of all his experiences with Seth and how wonderful the Cottage is.

It will be 44 years in April since Seth's death, but Caroline remembers him as an exceptional person and says that she still thinks about him almost every day. □



AUTUMN AT THE COTTAGE

Clockwise from upper left: The tour day banner glows in the autumn sun, enjoying the terrace, passing kayakers in October, the terrace wall and floating roof.



Photos by Claire Barnett



Photo by Claire Barnett

FROM THE GUEST BOOK

“I traveled from the West Coast for the opportunity to spend a single night in this gem and it was worth every mile! Wes Peters was definitely right—so much detail, so lovingly restored. More than that, so incredibly livable.”

Stan, Los Angeles

“We were married this past May at the Frank Lloyd Wright Wyoming Valley School. We had our rehearsal dinner at the Visitors Center. New Year’s Eve at the Seth Peterson Cottage is the perfect way to end the year. I forgot to mention that we were engaged in Oak Park during the Frank Lloyd Wright house walk and spent my 50th birthday at Fallingwater.”

Jene and Nicole, WI

“What a wonderful retreat to reflect on the simplicity of life and beauty of the natural world. The solitude of the snowy woods was comforting as we pondered by the fireplace hearth. We will return.”

Anonymous

“Arriving here without expectation or pretense, allowing for the space to show us its magic. Seth’s Cottage is not just a living space—it breathes. Its impact has yet to fully sink in.”

Martha, Adam, Scott and Rachel

“The experience of living in Frank Lloyd Wright’s merging of nature and home was truly wonderful. A loving atmosphere we will remember when we are sitting on the back porch of life.”

Jeff and Ann

“About as special an experience as we have ever had. Thank you Frank. We will be back.

The Youngs, New Zealand

LIFE GOES ON

The main focus of this newsletter may have been the past, but life goes on. There have been many weddings and birthdays and anniversary celebrations at the Cottage over the years. They are a reminder that the Cottage is a living building and that many choose it as the setting to celebrate a pivotal moment in their lives. An example of this is the wedding of Cody Smalley from nearby Pardeeville, Wisconsin, and Nicole Thomas from far-away Dresden, Germany. But their wedding also has a connection to the past history that you have been reading about. The groom’s grandfather, Al Boyles, had a stone quarry in Rock Springs and provided all of the stone used in building the Cottage back in 1959. 

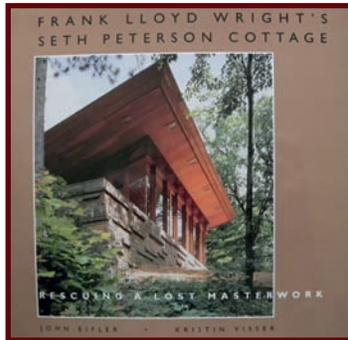


Photo by Kayce Smalley

RESCUING A LOST MASTERWORK

DOORS AND WINDOWS: Part II

This is the fifteenth in a series of excerpts from the book, Frank Lloyd Wright's Seth Peterson Cottage: Rescuing a Lost Masterwork, by John Eifler, ALA, and Kristin Visser. It is the definitive story of the Cottage. The previous excerpt described the ways in which Wright designed doors and windows to create desired spatial effects.



Because the rehabilitation philosophy was one of conservation as well as improvement, John recommended that the cottage insulation be upgraded not only by adding roof insulation but also by installing new window sash that incorporated double-pane glass where possible. The clerestory panels and mitred corner windows would remain single-pane. Department of Administration and State Historical Society staff vehemently opposed the substitution of double-pane glass for single-pane glass. The original design called for single-pane windows, but in this case, as with the flat roof, John pointed out that more modern materials would conserve energy, last much longer, and not detract from the aesthetics of the building. Using double-pane glass would allow the Cottage to be rented year round. John also pointed out that condensation that forms on the inside face of single-pane glass in winter would cause water damage to the wooden sill below; double-pane glass would virtually eliminate this problem. The Department of Administration and the State Historical Society would not budge, concerned with what they called “precedence,” though double-pane glass has been approved in many rehabilitation projects throughout the country. The Conservancy requested that the proposal be reviewed by a higher authority, in this case the National Park Service.

The case was forwarded to a National Park Service review official by the State Historical Society. John called the Park Service and discovered that a substantial portion of the information, notably the energy study, was not included in the packet forwarded by the state. John sent the missing information directly to the National Park Service and eventually the double-pane glass was approved. This episode was a reminder that it is important to make direct contact with any key third parties that are involved in discussions about the project.

Pella Windows was contacted through the local supplier, Ver Halen, and asked to help out on the project. Realizing the significance of the project, Pella generously donated custom-fabricated replacement windows that duplicate the originals. Ver Halen provided a team of carpenters, who arrived wearing matching blue jumpsuits, to install the windows. This time the window sash was

attached to the frame with brass piano hinges, consistent with the original design. The mitred-glass corner windows were left as single-pane units, as at that time no one made that type of window from double-pane glass. Pella now manufactures a mitred-glass double-pane corner window unit, and Conservancy board members like to think that it was the cottage that provided the inspiration for this product. 

Next time: Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing

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. Merchandise pictures are not online yet, so check the website Gift Shop periodically for its update, and an update of the order form. There are new puzzles of the Cottage that are available at the Sunday open houses, and they will soon be added to the merchandise order form.

ANNUAL COTTAGE WORK WEEK IS APRIL 14-18

Call Bill Martinelli at 608-238-8355 to volunteer for raking, cleaning, and other chores.

FALL COLOR TOUR AND RECEPTION

The Fall Color Boat Tour will be held on October 12th. \$30 fee for a boat tour and hors d'oeuvres with a limit of four reservations per person. See full details at http://www.sethpeterson.org/about_events.html

WRITINGS

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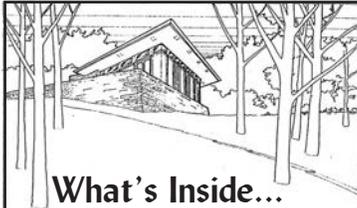
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UPCOMING EVENTS

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

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

Annual Cottage Work Week is April 14-18.
Call Bill Martinelli at 608-238-8355 to volunteer for raking, cleaning, and other chores.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sunday, **October 12**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4
Fall Color Boat Tour and Reception, 4:15-7:30 pm, \$30

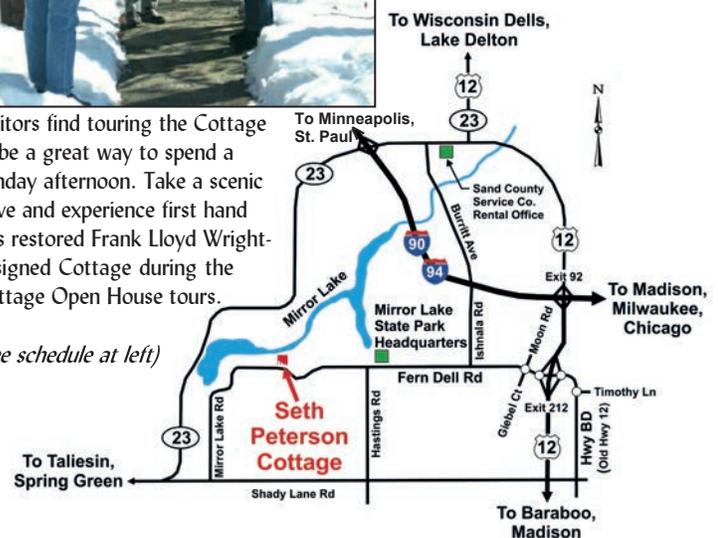
Join us at one of our monthly Open Houses.



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

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