



Photo by Mark Blakeslee

A NIGHT AT THE COTTAGE

Mark Blakeslee, President, Mirror Lake Association

My parents bought our cottage on Mirror Lake in 1962. It is located about a quarter mile down the road from the Seth Peterson cottage. As kids we would crawl around in the ruins to satisfy our curiosity. Later on, after it was refurbished, we would take the tour in awe of all the work done by the Conservancy. Finally, after all these years of visiting it, I checked the occupancy calendar in February and saw two open nights in mid-March. I called and made our reservations to stay there. My wife, Kathe, and I always talked of going and, if we did, we always wanted to stay in the winter. Our cottage isn't winterized, so this is a perfect way to enjoy the winter outdoors.

We went thinking that in two days we would have time to cross country ski and hike the snowy winter trails of Mirror Lake State Park (or maybe blaze a few new trails of our own). The problem with that plan was when we got there, the snow had all melted and the temperatures were in the 50's. However, it turned out to not be a problem at all. Once we arrived we built a fire in the big open fireplace, walked around in our socks on the heated stone floor, opened a bottle of wine, and looked out the large wall of windows at the forest and the many birds and creatures that visited the bird feeder.

It was so relaxing that we didn't go outside at all. We were pleasantly happy to just sit inside and let the world revolve around us. This is not the normal for us. Usually we have to be doing something, especially when there's a forested wonderland right outside the door. It even snowed while we were there! There was just something about the place that made you want to enjoy the building and the surroundings around you. Oddly enough, that's what the brochure said about the place, but whoever believes tourist brochures?

If you have never stayed a night at the cottage, I highly recommend you check out vacancies. They are booked most of the time, but openings happen and sometimes you can sneak in.

This is one of those great places that everyone should experience. People from around the world come to see it. It's worth the trip. 

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kermit Traska

How did you foster your interest in Frank Lloyd Wright? Seth Peterson and his boyhood friend would take the train to Chicago to get to Oak Park, Illinois to view the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed homes.

Growing up in Wisconsin we are exposed to the name of Frank Lloyd Wright. However, it doesn't mean a whole lot until one gets to experience a Wright design up close and personal. That happened when I first viewed the boarded-up Seth Peterson Cottage through the locked gate of the chain link fence that surrounded the Cottage. Over the next few years I became fully involved—representing the Department of Natural Resources in the rehabilitation of the Cottage and, post-retirement, joining the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy Board of Directors.

The Conservancy Board meets quarterly and for the last three years we have been holding our July meeting at the Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center near Spring Green. For each of those years, one of the Conservancy Board members has arranged pre-meeting tours of Taliesin. These have been behind-the-scenes tours to places the regular visitors have not been able to go. This year we had the opportunity to view the improvements made to the Home and Studio. Talk about getting up close and personal to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright—this was it!

It has been a privilege to get to know first hand the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and to have the opportunity to view his original work up close. We are always looking for volunteers interested in Wright's work to help with Open House tours or to serve on the Conservancy Board of Directors. Come join us and you too might just be able to get that up-close and personal tour of Taliesin. 

TALIESIN

Top: Garden Tour

Left: Studio

Right: Dining Room



MIRROR LAKE STATE PARK REPORT

Ryder Will, Park Superintendent

It has been a good year at Mirror Lake State Park. Our attendance and revenue numbers are on pace to exceed many previous years, and we have filled the campgrounds almost every summer weekend. More and more people are out enjoying the park, and we have received a lot of positive feedback.

The biggest news related to Mirror Lake State Park and the rest of the Wisconsin State Parks has been the change to a completely self-funded system. The budget passed by the Legislature and signed into law in July held several provisions related to the Department of Natural Resources, and specifically the Parks Program. Foremost among those is the elimination of tax dollar funding for the program and a move to reliance on program revenues generated primarily from camping fees and admission sticker sales. As part of the Legislature's budget plan, fee increases were put into effect.

Beginning in late July camping fees were increased at all state parks. Fees were increased in a set of tiers determined by park usage and camping demand. Mirror Lake State Park was placed in the highest tier, so our fees have increased to \$20.00 per night for a resident to camp and \$25.00 per night for non-residents. In addition, the electric fee increased from \$5.00 per night to \$10.00 per night for all State Parks. Along with the camping fee increase, the park admission sticker prices will be higher in 2016. Beginning with the December release of 2016 stickers, there will be a \$3.00 increase in the annual stickers. This will result in resident annual stickers going to \$28.00 per year from \$25.00, and non-resident sticker fee going to \$38.00 from \$35.00. The senior stickers also increase to \$13.00. Numbers are still tentative at this time, but the projections show the fee increases will make up a good portion of the lost funding previously received from general purpose tax revenues.

On the subject of revenue and fees, Mirror Lake State Park will also see a change this winter as we begin charging for daily and annual passes to use the park's ski trails. Park staff grooms 19 miles of trails for cross country skiing and we receive thousands of visitors each winter who enjoy the trails. Given the amount of staff time and resources that go into the trail grooming and upkeep, the quality of the skiing experience here, and the scope of the facilities, it has been decided to join several other parks in charging for trail passes for skiers. The annual trail pass will be \$25.00 and the daily pass will be \$5.00. Mirror Lake State Park offers some of the best quality, and maybe the highest total miles of groomed ski trails in this part of the state. The revenue generated from trail passes will allow us to continue the tradition of great cross-country skiing visitors have come to expect.

The park is fortunate to have such a strong following of visitors who return year after year, and we hope to continue to see them and many new faces as we move forward. While changes in fees can be a concern for some, it is important to recognize that the fees charged are now the primary source of revenue to support all the operations of the park system. With that mentioned, I have to thank the Conservancy for their many years of financial support to the park and its programs. Without the extra effort and support from organizations like the Conservancy we would be unable to provide this level of service and programming to our visitors. I am proud of the partnership that has been built and thank the Conservancy sincerely for its continuing support of the park and even more so for all its efforts to restore, support, promote, and interpret the Seth Peterson Cottage. □

JILL VLADICK AWARD

Claire Barnett



Cody Charles Johnston (*right*) the 2015 Jill Vladick Memorial Scholarship award recipient and friend, Alanna Polowek, enjoy a moment on the terrace.

The Jill Vladick Memorial Scholarship award was presented on July twelfth. The winner, chosen by Taliesin staff, is Cody Charles Johnston of Alberta, Canada. Cody became interested in Mr. Wright’s work when he was about twenty years old and halfway through his undergraduate studies in astrophysical and theoretical physics. He explained that the more he studies

architecture, the more connections he finds between it and his previous major. He visited various architectural schools in Alberta and British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada, before choosing to come to Taliesin. He began his first year in the graduate program in August of 2014, and will have another year and a half before receiving his degree. He hasn’t decided what to do after graduating, but he has time to decide as he completes his studies.

Any Taliesin students, staff, or guests are invited to attend a private tour of the Cottage prior to our annual July Open House. This year, seven staff members and students attended. Cody and his friend, Alanna Polowek, arrived later for a private tour and, following a tradition suggested by the late Cornelia Brierly of Taliesin, were also presented with a gift certificate for dinner at nearby Ishnala.

Cody later wrote in the guest book: “Extremely thankful for everyone and everything that became involved in such a small powerful idea/building. Architecturally, a homage to nature equally as much as architecture. Calm, quiet, giving structures lead to a life full of wonder.” □



Taliesin students and staff enjoying a private tour of the Cottage.



Discover how to get a private tour of Taliesin. See “From the President” on page 2.

THE PRINCESS NEXT DOOR

Carolyn Kotchi

You never know what gems of information you will uncover when you talk to locals about the Seth Peterson Cottage. This is exactly what happened to me when I spoke to our neighbor, Dennis Hanger. He intrigued me by saying, “I had an aunt who lived near that cottage and she was a princess.” I needed to explore this story further.

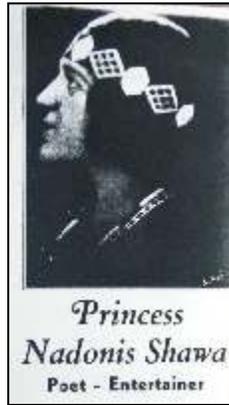
What I found was not only a “princess,” but a unique, eccentric woman, a published poet, song writer, and entertainer. She was Princess Nadonis Shawa, and from 1920 to 1958 she lived just one-eighth mile east of the Seth Peterson Cottage along the shore of Mirror Lake.

Born Louise Alston in 1880 in Washington DC, her lifelong desire was to become a vaudeville dancer and singer. While pursuing that career she met her husband, H. T. Burleigh, in 1898, when they were both performing in “Clorindy” the first Black Musical. They had a son, but in time she and Burleigh parted company, possibly because his vision of a musical career, which centered on more “serious” music, differed so much from hers.

They had performed in England and, in 1909, Louise returned there to enroll their son, Alston, in school. That was the first time she performed Indian lore and music, adopting a Native American persona. (Many thought she had some American Indian heritage.) She played in many capitals on the Continent, giving European audiences a glimpse of American Indian culture. It was reported that “she looked very much an Indian, and a strikingly beautiful one.”



Later, in New York, Louise met Albert Lowe, a member of the Ho-Chunk tribe. They began performing together and fell in love. After Albert’s service in WWI, they were reunited in 1919. Louise bought the cottage on Mirror Lake in 1920 and the couple spent their summers there. They formed the Princess Nadonis Indian



Company, traveling the Chautauqua and Lyceum circuit around the country performing Native American dances and reciting poetry and lore.

In 1930 disaster struck. Albert left the princess for a woman from the Ho-Chunk tribe. Princess Nadonis could never reconcile with this reality. For the rest of her life, she believed that “her chief” had been kidnapped by his family. After this trauma, the princess turned to the occult. She consulted practitioners in Chicago and began reading fortunes at the Heidelberg Restaurant in Madison.

Bravely, she continued to hold fast to her dream of stardom, and performed solo around the country. The princess was interviewed on Wisconsin Public Radio and performed in the southeastern states and in California. She began to spend winters in Los Angeles because the Mirror Lake cottage had no indoor plumbing, electricity, or insulation.

In 1958 the aging princess asked the Hanger Family if she could stay with them over the winter, as the trip to California seemed too difficult for her. But the Hangers had just moved to Mirror Lake and there was no room for her. She called a friend, Glen Halley from the Dells, to drive her to the train station. As she said goodbye to him, she gave him the keys to her cottage and to her 1951 Studebaker. They were his to keep. She died that year in the City of Hope Hospital, in California. Her remains were returned to Wisconsin and buried in Spring Grove Cemetery in Wisconsin Dells.



The cottage in 1964 before it was swallowed by the earth.

Since then, her cottage has fallen into ruin and been swallowed by the earth. Mirror Lake State Park purchased the land, incorporating it into the park. Although it is highly unlikely that the Princess and Seth Peterson ever met, both were closely connected to the land and the beauty of Mirror Lake.

Thanks to Dennis Hanger and to Professor David Peterson for his research. □

VISSER AWARD TO RESTORERS OF THE ROSS HOUSE

Jerry Minnich

The 2015 Kristin Visser Award for Historical Preservation has been presented to John Eifler, AIA, and Bonnie Phoenix for their brave and outstanding work in rescuing and restoring the William F. Ross House in Glencoe, Illinois.

The presentation was made on Sunday, June 15th, at the Cottage.



Bonnie Phoenix and John Eifler, AIA,
2015 Visser Award Recipients



Jerry Minnich presents the 2015 Kristin Visser Award to John Eifler, AIA and Bonnie Phoenix

The Ross House is one of six in Ravine Bluffs, a development designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1915, a variation of his famous “fireproof house for \$5,000” as published in the *Ladies Home Journal* in 1907.

The house was vacant for several years, had fallen into serious disrepair, and was threatened with demolition when John and Bonnie bravely stepped forward to buy the house and then to spend several years in difficult and painstaking restoration to its original glory.

The next Visser Award will be presented in 2017, again to an individual or organization for their work in restoring a Frank Lloyd Wright or Prairie School building in Wisconsin or in a contiguous state. An honorarium of \$5,000 accompanies the award. It was established to honor the memory of Kristin Visser, whose personal efforts contributed greatly to the restoration of the Seth Peterson Cottage. 

FROM THE GUEST BOOK

“This was a perfect one day escape from the hectic pace of life. This is the second FLW (home) I have stayed in and enjoyed the scenic, secluded location. Will plan to stay again! Thanks for saving this wonderful architectural jewel and making it available for more than a tour.”

–Barbara

“We had a delightful two days soaking in the fantastic view of Mirror Lake from the deck and enjoyed canoeing between the limestone formations on the river. Frank Lloyd really got it “Right” with this cottage as far as putting guests into the nature setting. The serenity of being immersed in the natural setting of flora and fauna was a real joy. It was well worth the wait.”

–Joyce & Chuck, Arlington Hts. IL

“Exceeded our expectations in every way. Delightful to get to spend quality time in a Wright designed home—porch was the perfect place to sit and read—glorious weather! A marvelous vacation which we enjoyed tremendously.”

–Aaron & Melissa, Washington DC

“Thanks to Audrey Laatsch for her fortuitous discovery and her hard work and great vision, so that we may all enjoy this gem for all ages to come. Thank you to the Conservancy and all those who have made this stay wonderful and possible!”

“Loved our time here! We will be back. Thank you FLW & Seth Peterson.”

–Mark & Jen, Kenosha, WI

”There is no other place like this in the world. Admire it, be gentle with it, and enjoy it—we are fortunate to have it.”

–Brent & Jane

“I am deeply grateful to Ms Audrey Laatsch and to the workers, volunteers, and contributors who teamed to bring this wonderful cottage back to life. What a privilege it is to share Seth Peterson’s dream and Mr. Wright’s art. Waking here on my birthday is a memory I’ll treasure always.”

–John, Austin, TX

Membership Renewal and Merchandise Order Form

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/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		
Membership subtotal					
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		
"Audrey's Star" print, matted and framed.			\$100.00		
Unframed limited edition rendering print of the Cottage by Frank Lloyd Wright.			\$70.00		
Official SPCC Visor. Tan w/bright red logo. One size fits all.			\$15.00		
Official SPCC Cap with bright red logo. One size fits all. Circle color. Forest Green or Tan			\$15.00		
100% cotton pique polo shirt w/Cottage logo and name in red. Circle color & size. Forest Green or Natural M L XL XXL			\$32.00		
Beige & Rust or Brown & Tan T-shirt w/Cottage perspective. Circle color & size. L XL XXL			\$15.00		
NEW! Women's V-neck Brown & Tan T-shirt w/Cottage perspective. Circle size. S M L XL			\$15.00		
Sweatshirt w/red logo. Circle color & size. Black Tan Red Natural M L XL XXL			\$35.00		
Elegant Blue Silk Tie. Black design based on clerestory panel design.			\$25.00		
	NEW ITEM! PUZZLES OF THE COTTAGE IN A DRAWSTRING CLOTH BAG				
	Large		\$12.00		
	Medium		\$10.00		
	Small (Magnetic)		\$8.00		
Cottage Jewelry of black, white and silver, based on design in the clerestory panels.					
Short Earrings			\$20.00		
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. Softcover Edition			\$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		
Merchandise subtotal					
Member discount 10%				-	
Shipping & Handling, U.S. and Canada. Double these rates for other countries.					
Under \$30			\$6.00		
\$30-\$50			\$8.00		
\$50-\$100			\$10.00		
Over \$100			\$12.00		
Total (membership + merchandise - discount + shipping)					

Please make check or money order payable in U.S. funds to: SPCC Send to: **SPCC, 400 Viking Drive, Reedsburg, WI 53959**

Name: _____ Telephone # _____

Street Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

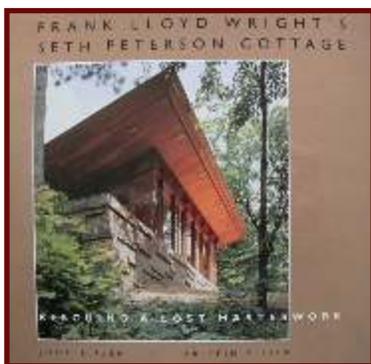
Email Address: _____

RESCUING A LOST MASTERWORK

Site Work

This is the eighteenth 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 interior finishes and furnishings.



The Seth Peterson Cottage was one of many homes built on Mirror Lake. Although all the other buildings along the lake were removed when the land was purchased for the state park, the ornamental plantings put in by the original owners remained. The state has a nonintervention policy in most state parks to allow nature to achieve its own vegetative balance. When Owen Pritchard lived in the Seth Peterson Cottage he planted a number of spruce, pine, and cherry trees which appeared foreign to an area characterized by large red and white oaks. Photographs from 1959 and the early 1960s taken from the terrace of the cottage show a spectacular view of Mirror Lake which new growth obscured.

With the assistance of landscape architect Ted Wolff, who has extensive experience restoring historic landscapes, including Graceland Cemetery in Chicago, a plan was developed that removed inappropriate plantings and restored a view corridor to the lake. As the cottage was constructed of materials native to the region and designed to connect the inhabitants with nature, Ted felt that the landscape design should consist primarily of native plants. The restoration of the view corridor was significant for the enjoyment of guests, and even more important, it shows why Wright designed and sited the cottage as he did. Rarely does one advocate the removal of trees, but in some cases it is necessary and actually complements the site and the structure.

On a practical level, the cottage required a number of services that could not be hidden, including a well, a large LP gas tank, and storage of off-season furniture, supplies, and equipment. John designed a simple shed that would both screen the large propane tank and provide for necessary services and storage. Constructed of cedar board and batten walls, the shed complements the cottage design by using a similar shed roof, trim, and window details. □

Next time: The Cottage today

FALL COLOR BOAT TOUR

If you missed this year's Fall Color Boat Tour, make a note to yourself to join in the fun in October of 2016. The exact date will be listed in the next **WRITINGS**. □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

–Notice of Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy will be held on Sunday, December 13th at 4:15 pm. It will include annual and financial reports, the election of board members and volunteer recognition.

Any member of the Conservancy whose annual dues have been paid may attend and vote on issues brought up at the meeting. The meeting generally lasts about one hour. Anyone desiring to attend the meeting should indicate their interest by sending an e-mail to sethpetersoncottage@gmail.com.

Following the meeting there will be a private party for the Cottage guide volunteers.

–Check Cottage Availability On-Line

Reservations for the Cottage are generally made far in advance. Cottage availability can be checked on-line by going to our website, click on reservations and then click on “View Seth Peterson Cottage Availability.”

A few open dates remain for this November and December and there are many open dates January through April 2016. Meanwhile, nights in May through October 2016 are almost fully booked. Check often as there occasionally are reservation cancellations. □

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: Kermit Traska, Oregon, WI

Design & Production: Alice J. Seeliger, AJS Creative, Brooklyn, WI

Submit Articles/photos to: Kermit Traska at:

sethpetersoncottage@gmail.com

Visit us on the web at: www.sethpeterson.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Seth-Peterson-Cottage-Conservancy-Inc

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 Hegglund, Dr. Steven Kincaid, Carolyne Kotchi, Raymond Matlosz, Jerry Minnich, Heather Sabin, Cheryl Weston

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

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...

A Night at the Cottage
From the President
Mirror Lake State Park Report
Jill Vladick Award Recipient
The Princess Next Door
Visser Award to Restorers of
the Ross House
From the Guest Book
Membership Renewal and
Merchandise Order Form
Rescuing a Lost Masterwork Excerpt
Announcements
-Annual Meeting
-Cottage Availability

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

Sunday, **Dec. 13**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4
4:15 pm, Annual Meeting of the
Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy and
Volunteer Recognition

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

Sunday, **Feb. 14**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House and Valentine's
Day, Guided Tours, \$4

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

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

April 10 - 14
Annual Work Week, Spring Clean Up

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

Join us at one of our monthly Open Houses.

SPCC Members receive free admission.



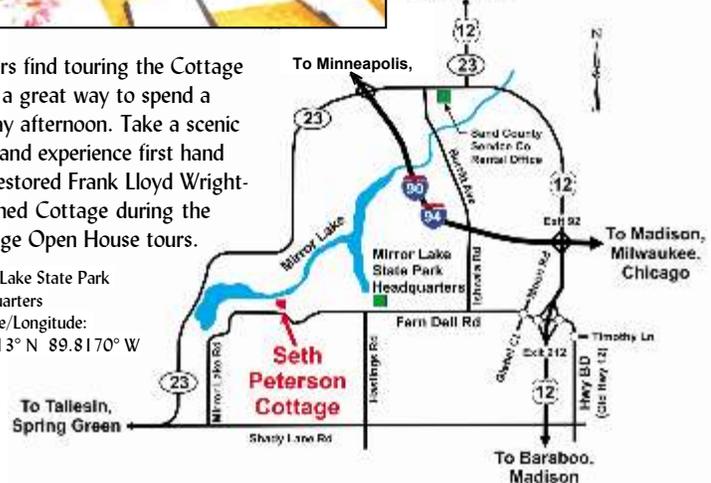
Volunteer Larry LaMar leading an Open House Tour of the Cottage.

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

To Wisconsin Dells,
Lake Delton

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.

Mirror Lake State Park
Headquarters
Latitude/Longitude:
43.5613° N 89.8170° W



www.sethpeterson.org