

HARDY HOUSE HONORS

©Mark Hertzberg, June 13, 2017

Eugene (Gene) Szymczak



Eugene (Gene) Szymczak was posthumously honored Sunday as recipient of the 2017 Kristin Visser Award for Historic Preservation for his rehabilitation of Frank Lloyd Wright's Thomas P. Hardy House in Racine. Szymczak, who died December 3, arguably saved the house for another 100 years when he bought it in September, 2012 and began four years of repairs.




The award is presented by directors of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy at the diminutive (but stunning) Wright-designed cottage on Mirror Lake. It is presented every other year to an individual or organization in recognition of past work in historical preservation of a Wright or Prairie School building in Wisconsin or a contiguous state. Buildings constructed between 1900 and 1925 are given preference, and the restoration work shall have been substantially completed within the two calendar years previous to the year of application.

The award is named in honor of Kristin Visser, who was instrumental in the restoration of the Seth Peterson Cottage and a tireless worker in 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, who was a planner for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, died in 1998 at the age of 48 (Photo © by Brent Nicastro, and used with permission)

Bill Martinelli of the Conservancy presented the award to Tom, (left), Curt, Jim and Joan Szymczak. Tom and Jim are Gene's brothers and Curt is a nephew of his. Joan, who is married to Tom, tirelessly helped with the rehabilitation and staged the house for the many benefit tours which Gene generously opened the house for.

Recognition includes a large plaque, a monetary award, and a small plaque affixed to a marker near the cottage. The marker is mounted on a slab of sandstone shaped like the state of Wisconsin. Martinelli found the slab at a nearby quarry.

Tom Szymczak wrote to the Conservancy after the presentation, "Our sincere thank you for honoring Gene with the Visser award. On the surface Gene would not have liked the attention but I believe deep down inside he would have seen it as a 'thank you.' I know at times, especially early on in the project, he would wonder what he had gotten himself into. But once he saw the public begin to cherish the house, he knew it was all worth it. Gene had plans of retiring in the Hardy house and sharing it with visitors so they could feel the magic of a Wright-designed home. We truly lost a person that Lived by Example. Again, Thank You for honoring Gene with this award." 

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kermit Traska

This has been a busy year for the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy as we celebrated our 25th anniversary and the 150th birthday of Frank Lloyd Wright. The Anniversary Committee included Heather Sabin, Gail Kohl, Bill Martinelli, Mark Blakeslee, Beth Zondag-Traska and me. The event took place on Sunday, June 4th from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. More than 200 people participated.

The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy collaborated with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation in a nationwide effort to recognize Wright's life and work. More information on this can be found at <http://franklloydwright.org/flw150/>. Several articles included information on the Seth Peterson Cottage bringing more attention to our little Cottage.

Reservations for the Cottage remain strong with bookings through 2018 and into 2019. People are planning far in advance; but plans can change. Occasionally there are cancellations so those with flexible schedules may be able to obtain a reservation on short notice. Our rental agent, Sand County Service Agency, maintains a list of people to call when a cancellation occurs.

Current information about the Seth Peterson Cottage is available on Facebook. We are excited about getting this information out to our friends and there is a cadre of followers who share our Facebook posts with their friends. We recently surpassed the milestone of having 1,000 "likes."

A hearty *thank you* goes out to all who have made the Seth Peterson Cottage a success in our first 25 years. The many volunteers provide needed maintenance and guided tours on Open House days. And, of course, the people who rent the Cottage and visitors on Open House days generate the revenue needed to successfully maintain and operate the Cottage. We are committed to continuing the legacy of the Seth Peterson Cottage well into the future. ☐

HELP WANTED: NEWSLETTER DESIGN & LAYOUT

After nearly 30 years of doing the newsletter for the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, Alice Seeliger of AJS Creative has decided to move toward semi-retirement. Alice was instrumental in developing the newsletter during the early days of fund raising for the cottage rehabilitation through the newsletter as it is today. She took on the task as a volunteer for many years. Her quality work was noticed and eventually the Conservancy provided a budget to pay for this service. The Conservancy greatly appreciates the work Alice has done and wishes her the best in her semi-retirement. Thank you, Alice!

Anyone interested in more information about taking on the design and layout of *WRITINGS* should e-mail: sethpetersoncottage@gmail.com ☐

JILL VLADICK MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Claire Barnett

Christopher Lord, the 2017 winner of the Jill Vladick Memorial Scholarship Award, is described by his instructors and Taliesin residents as a Renaissance Man. Among other things, he has taught English in middle schools, including in the inner city in Los Angeles, where he found teaching rewarding due to fewer distractions for the students than in the suburbs.



Christopher Lord

His mother was an art history teacher and he visited Taliesin West at the age of seven. His grandfather suggested that one day he should go there as a student and three architecture classes in high school strengthened his interest. He compares the different climate and desert landscape at Taliesin West area to living on Mars, with glowing ceilings, weird life outside, and open horizons.

His education was quite varied before enrolling at Taliesin. In addition to his teaching degree, he has a Master's Degree in Urban Planning from UCLA, and also majored in theater because he has always felt free to study what he wants. He is in his fourth and final year at Taliesin. He had already finished all required credits, but stayed on longer because he enjoys the life there. He speaks of being intrigued with educational philosophy, and describes talking and living architecture, as "slowly marinating in the culture, and being changed by it." After he graduates in the spring, he may teach again or pursue a doctorate in education. ☐

Taliesin visitors picnic at the Seth Peterson Cottage



Visitors from Taliesin including staff, students, and 10 visiting students from Taiwan

THANK YOU TO ANNIVERSARY SPONSORS AND DONORS

The following sponsors provided support for our 25th Anniversary Program:

- **Sand County Service Company:** Has provided the reservation service and housekeeping services since 1992.
- **Ishnala Supper Club:** Strong supporter of SPCC, the Mirror Lake Association and Friends of Mirror Lake State Park. Provided the anniversary cake and lemonade and picnic meal for Cottage volunteers following the anniversary program.
- **Tommy Bartlett Show:** Has provided advice and financial support since 1990.
- **Roberts Construction Associates:** Provided construction services during the rehabilitation of the Cottage in the early 1990's.
- **Mastercards of Baraboo:** Provided the golf cart for transportation for the anniversary program.

The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy wants to say a hearty *thank you* to our sponsors and donors. Overall, the Conservancy received more than \$1,900 in sponsorships and donations for our 25th Anniversary.

Thank you also to our many supporters and volunteers who since 1992 have provided for the care and maintenance of the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Seth Peterson Cottage.

THANK YOU!

THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE

More than 200 people attended the Seth Peterson Cottage 25th Anniversary program on Sunday, June 4, 2017. The anniversary program celebrated the 25 years since the Cottage was opened to the public in June 1992 and the 150th birthday of Frank Lloyd Wright on June 8th.

The speakers for the day included Ben Bergey, John Eifler and Tim Wright. Bergey is the head of the Bureau of State Parks speaking about non-profit Friends groups, such as the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, adding value to the state park system. Eifler was the rehabilitation architect responsible for the design and oversight of the demolition and reconstruction of the Cottage. Tim Wright, Frank Lloyd Wright's grandson, spoke on his early life spending summers at Taliesin. Wright and his wife were able to experience the Cottage by spending a night in the Cottage.

Top Row: **Ben Bergey**, Bureau Director for Wisconsin State Parks in the DNR; **John Eifler**, Architect responsible for the rehabilitation design for the Seth Peterson Cottage
Middle Row: **Tim Wright**, Frank Lloyd Wright's grandson; **Bill Martinelli** is recognized for his years of dedicated service to the Seth Peterson Cottage
Bottom Row: **Paul Wagner** is recognized for his continuing service as treasurer for the SPCC; **Claire Barnett**, another original SPCC Board member and past president, greets 25th Anniversary guests



25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

A search was made to find the first couple to rent the Cottage and stay overnight. We only had the names of Richard and Peggy Lehman and that they were from Minnesota. An internet search found several Richard Lehmans in Minnesota, but only one Peggy Lehman. Contact was made and the Lehmans were able to attend the anniversary program. They related the story that the Cottage was not quite ready for occupancy and they had to help carry in the bed in order to have a place to sleep for the night.

Kermit Traska, Conservancy President, served as emcee for the day. Special recognition was given to several people including Bill Martinelli for his years of service to the Conservancy overseeing the maintenance of the Cottage; Paul Wagner, a Taliesin graduate, for his work as treasurer for the Conservancy; and Claire Barnett, one of the Conservancy founding members, who greeted guests for the day. Recognition was also provided for current and past Board members, sponsors and volunteers.

Music for the day was provided by Amy Traska as she did for the 20th Anniversary in 2012 and at the Cottage dedication in 1992. Amy also played music at several of the Cottage fund raising activities.

Conservancy volunteers provided Cottage tours and served guests cake, lemonade and water. Thank you to all for making the Seth Peterson Cottage 25th Anniversary a huge success. We look forward to continued success in the future. ☐

Richard and Peggy Lehman were the very first guests to rent the Seth Peterson Cottage in 1992;

Tom Ryan, one of the contractors during the rehabilitation of the Cottage in the early 1990s, was recognized for his framing of the new roof.



Mark Blakeslee, President of the Mirror Lake Association, pilots one of the pontoon boats for the Fall Color Boat Tour and Reception;

Amy Traska has played music for the SPCC at fund raising events in 1990 and 1991, at the Cottage dedication in 1992, the 20th Anniversary in 2012 and the 25th Anniversary in 2017;

Kermit Traska and John Eifler



Cottage Tour—Volunteers provided Cottage information to the Anniversary guests.



MIRROR LAKE STATE PARK REPORT

Ryder Will, Park Manager

We are moving out of our “busy season” and into our “slightly less busy” seasons at Mirror Lake State Park. With such a beautiful location and our proximity to the Wisconsin Dells area, we see many visitors year round. We may not fill the campgrounds each night, but a lot of people still come out to enjoy the park and this beautiful area.


Fall sees us working on cleanup and improvements to campgrounds, getting trails ready for the ski season, maintaining equipment, and many other tasks in addition to continued service to visitors. We look forward to this time to get some of the jobs done that we cannot quite get to with all the summer visitors.

A great example of a project perfect for this time of year is replacement of fire rings. Thanks to funds raised by the Friends of Mirror Lake State Park and a grant from Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund we have been able to purchase 50 new fire rings for campsites. This spring we replaced 20, and this fall the other 30 will be replaced. This project’s improvement to the visitor experience is made possible by the work of volunteers and donors. Not only did the Friends pay for the rings, but several of their members put in a lot of time helping with the replacement work. We hope for another good work day to finish up the project this fall. We also hope to refurbish all 50 of the fire rings that we replaced in order to bring them back to the park and continue to improve more campsites. Those rings that are too far gone will be recycled.

The fire rings are just one of the great projects that go on at the park, the lake, and the surrounding area. As many of you reading this newsletter know, it takes many hours from many dedicated people to make a difference (like saving a beautiful piece of architecture). We certainly could not provide the great experience for park visitors with our staff efforts alone.

In the area of staff, we have a few changes that are worth sharing. Unfortunately, Becca Weber, our full-time Ranger, has left Mirror Lake to pursue a career with the Juneau County Sheriff’s Department. She will certainly be missed, but we wish her the best of luck in her new position. The Parks and Recreation Management program is actively recruiting rangers, and we may be welcoming a new ranger as you read this article (we hope). The Parks and Recreation Management program is also transitioning out of law enforcement work. Over the winter our staff will end law enforcement duties and the conservation warden program will start to do all law enforcement work for the DNR. While our staff will not be directly responsible for law enforcement, we will have a strong partnership with the wardens to keep public safety our top

priority. This will be a change, but the park will continue to be a safe and beautiful place to visit.

As always, we love to remind visitors that fall and winter provide some of the best experiences at the park. Visitors will be able to enjoy our beautiful fall colors, take on some exciting hikes, and get out on the lake this fall. This winter we will look forward to good snow conditions for our ski trails, and the lake is more popular than ever for ice fishing. We hope to see you at the park. 

MIRROR LAKE ASSOCIATION UPDATE


Mark Blakeslee, President

It was a great summer on the lake! The weather was cooler than a typical year which isn’t the best for people who like it hot, but it also isn’t good for the aquatic plants in the lake. They didn’t grow as much this year making the lake a little more pleasurable for recreation. However, we’ve received a lot of rain which has brought a lot of trees down in the lake. This makes for a lot of work and expense to remove them.

Membership in the association remains strong. We had many work and social gatherings this summer; all of them well-attended.

Our members do a lot of beneficial work for the lake. We keep the lake and the surrounding area clean. We also test the water and keep track of results for monitoring changes to determine courses of action to keep Mirror Lake an ideal destination for property owners and visitors.


This summer we have been looking at a few long-range projects to remove some runoff deltas. These are large projects that will require the cooperation of local and state officials. They will also require some major fundraising. These deltas, if unattended, will cause major problems for the lake. Raising the required funds will be the hardest part of all the projects.

As always, I’d love to hear your feedback. If you have any thoughts, comments or concerns, please call or send an e-mail. My cell phone number is 608-575-4652 and my e-mail is markblakeslee57@gmail.com. 

FALL COLOR BOAT TOUR AND RECEPTION CHANGES FOR 2018

The Fall Color Boat Tour followed the Sunday, October 8th Cottage Open House tours. The Boat Tour includes an approximately one-hour pontoon boat tour of Mirror Lake guided by a Mirror Lake cottage owner knowledgeable in the area history and lake environment. Following the Boat Tour there is a reception with hors d’oeuvres around the Cottage

fireplace. The Conservancy decided to make a change from the Fall Color Boat Tour and Reception and is looking for other alternatives in the future.

We certainly want to thank the Mirror Lake Association and the pontoon boat owners for making the boat tours a success. 

FROM THE GUEST BOOK

“We were looking forward to our stay here for months. The space is absolutely breathtaking. Last night, in front of the majestic fireplace, we became engaged! We cannot think of a better place to start our life together. Thank you for restoring such a treasure.”

–Kurt & Gina, Milwaukee, WI

“Spectacular view from sun set to sun rise, through the looking glass of Wright’s vision. Simply put this is the best cottage ever. Thank you Mr. Wright and all who helped to make Seth’s dream come true.”

–J & R

“After visiting Taliesin this past summer, I was inspired to make the cottage a place for my retreat. It was beautiful and peaceful, and I could feel the spirit and vision of FLW throughout.”

–Chuck

“... We knew that we would spend this time reflecting and hiking. This cottage is a special place that has allowed us that time and we realize that we need to get back to nature. Thank you to the conservancy.”

–Dave & Sue, Plymouth, WI

“4th year! It gets better every year. Enough said. We’ll be back!”

–Kris & Lynne

“There’s not much to be said about this breathtaking retreat that hasn’t been said in the previous pages. The architecture is more than amazing...the views are stunning...and the wildlife was so much fun to watch...”

–Dan & Jen, Riverwoods, IL

“We had a wonderful stay at the cottage. We woke up to a beautiful new snow covering. The wildlife was busy by day and night. A thank you to those who had the vision and continue to volunteer to share this FLW cottage with the public...”

–Kathe & Mark

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Notice of Annual Meeting

–The Annual Meeting of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy will be held on Sunday, December 10, 2017 at 4:15 pm. It will include annual and financial reports, 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. Social time, dinner, and decorating the Christmas tree will follow the meeting.

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.” Dates through most of 2018 and May through September 2019 are already reserved. Open dates remain January through April 2019. Check often as occasionally there are reservation cancellations that can be filled on short notice.

WRITINGS

is a publication of The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, Inc. for the Cottage by Frank Lloyd Wright in Mirror Lake State Park.

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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

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Secretary: Peter Rott

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Claire Barnett, Jim Draeger, Bill Dupuy, Tim Heggland,

Dr. Steven Kincaid, Carolyne Kotchi, Raymond Matlosz,

Jerry Minnich, Heather Sabin

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: 800-822-7768.

WRITINGS

THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY, INC.
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REEDSBURG, WI 53959

Address Service Requested



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Mirror Lake Association Update
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UPCOMING EVENTS

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

Sunday, **Dec. 10**, 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. 14**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4

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

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

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

April 8 - 13 Annual Work Week, Spring Clean up

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

**SPCC Members receive free admission and
10% off Cottage merchandise.**



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.

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

