

# WRITINGS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY

Vol. XXVI, Issue II



David and Julie Williamson



Julie and friend in 1965



Original Garden Shed and Power Pole

## THE FIRST COTTAGE RENTERS

*Claire Barnett*

**T**he first rental of the Seth Peterson cottage did *not* occur twenty two years ago in 1992 when the Conservancy began its overnight rental program, but actually took place nearly fifty years ago!

David and Julie Williamson lived in Wisconsin Dells from 1964 to 1967. David was employed by the Hans Helland law office and Julie was a local school teacher. In the late spring or early summer of 1965, they moved into the Seth Peterson cottage. Owen Pritchard's mother had purchased the property after it had been vacant for two years and he had lived there from 1962 to 1965. He left abruptly and the cottage was put up for sale. It was still furnished and the realtor wanted someone living there to keep the house clean for showings to potential buyers. The Williamsons stayed there until winter but left then because they had heard of the high cost of heating it. At the time, the cottage was heated with a forced air oil burning furnace and, because of the original plate glass windows, it was expensive to heat. We don't know if the cottage was rented after that but it was purchased by the State of Wisconsin in September 1966.

The Williamsons had made themselves known to us at an open house about two years ago but we lost contact with them before we could get more information. It was the first time we had heard that it had ever been rented. When they recently visited the cottage they even brought pictures of how it looked in 1965. They also told us that the cottage apparently was featured in a magazine in 1964 or 1965. I suggested "House Beautiful" to them because John DeKoven Hill of Taliesin was an editorial director there in the early 1960's and would have known about the cottage. The Williamsons thought that might have been the magazine in which the cottage was featured but further research is required to verify that. □

## CLAIRE BARNETT RECOGNIZED FOR 11 YEARS OF WRITINGS

**S**PCC Board member and past president, Claire Barnett, has coordinated this newsletter, *WRITINGS*, for the past 11 years. At our July Board of Director's meeting, The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy recognized Claire for her dedicated service to the Conservancy and presented her with a Willits Clock from the Frank Lloyd Wright Collection®. It is an adaptation of a window from Frank Lloyd Wright's Ward W. Willits House (1902-1903) in Highland Park, Illinois. Claire continues as a member of the SPCC Board of Directors. □



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Kermit Traska*

**W**hat's in a law anyway? As the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy and the Department of Natural Resources discussed the potential uses of the Cottage, the question remained of how to pay for future maintenance. What use could be made of the Cottage to raise the needed funds? Research had shown that open houses with a modest fee would not be sufficient to maintain the Cottage. A proposal was advanced to rent the Cottage for overnight stays. There were no Frank Lloyd Wright homes for overnight rent at the time. That is where state law came into play because lodging was prohibited in state parks.

Many other state park systems have cabins, hotels or lodges for rent to the public. The hotel industry in Wisconsin did not want the competition that lodging in state parks might provide, thus the state law. After all, state parks have many of the most scenic spots in Wisconsin that would make ideal hotel locations.

There were discussions and good cooperation between the Department of Natural Resources and the state legislature with recognition of the importance of the Cottage. An amendment to the state statute was proposed and passed that reads, "there shall be no lodging in state parks except at the Seth Peterson Cottage in Mirror Lake State Park." Additional legislation included approval for state parks to rent cabins for people with disabilities. The first of these cabins was also in Mirror Lake State Park.

The Cottage is rented in excess of 340 nights each year with reservations generally needing to be made far in advance. The rental income has provided sufficient funds to maintain the Cottage in excellent condition. The news of the success that came with the ability to rent the Cottage spread to the owners or non-profit operators of other Frank Lloyd Wright homes. There are now five additional Wright-designed homes for rent. One is a bed and breakfast and the other four are for vacation rental. More information can be found on the web at: <http://www.oldhouseonline.com/where-to-stay-in-a-frank-lloyd-wright-house/>.

The success of the Seth Peterson Cottage was made possible with the change in state statutes that allowed renting the Seth Peterson Cottage in Mirror Lake State Park. As they say, the rest is now history. ☐

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

**T**he Annual Meeting of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy will be held on Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:sethpetersoncottage@gmail.com). Following the meeting there will be a private party for the Cottage guide volunteers. ☐

## MIRROR LAKE ASSOCIATION NEWS

*Mark Blakeslee, President*

**T**his has been a busy year for us. In May we had our lake clean-up day. About thirty people volunteered to pick up litter along the roads, clean the shoreline, and remove invasive garlic mustard at Fern Dell gorge. Afterward we enjoyed a great lunch with barbecued ribs and smoked salmon—making a hard day's work all worth it!

With some of the funds that the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy provided, we purchased an aquatic vegetation cutter, a sifter, and two rakes to harvest those weeds close to shore that the cutter cannot access.

Our annual June meeting was held at Ishnala, attended by about thirty people. Most of the meeting was devoted to a presentation of the Mirror Lake Management Plan. Representatives from Onterra (the firm that wrote the plan) made the presentation and answered questions. This is a living plan, to be updated annually. We look forward to putting it into action, with the help of many volunteers, and making Mirror Lake and the surrounding area a better place for many years to come. The report will soon be on our web site for all to see.

One of the focuses of the plan is to promote good conservation practices and to explain the Mirror Lake ecosystem. This summer we started the Clean Boats, Clean Waters Program. This effort educates boaters about the problems invasive species can bring to a lake and how boaters can prevent invasive species from spreading from one lake to another. Six college students serve every weekend during the summer, talking with each boater who enters and leaves the lake. We hope to continue this important program annually.

Our annual picnic was held on August 16<sup>th</sup> at the State Park beach, and our annual Flotilla took place on August 30<sup>th</sup>.

If you have any questions or comments, please give me a call at 608-575-4652 or e-mail at [mirrorlakeassocwidells@gmail.com](mailto:mirrorlakeassocwidells@gmail.com). ☐

## MIRROR LAKE STATE PARK REPORT

*Ryder Will, Park Superintendent*

**T**he big news for the park was the dedication of the new amphitheater on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June. We had a great event with several entertainers, dignitaries, and



Mirror Lake State Park Amphitheater

about 200 visitors in attendance. The Ho Chunk Nation's Dells Area Drummers performed along with several dancers. Swing Crew also performed along with The Fiddlers 2. Cindy Cseri, president of the Friends of Mirror Lake State Park, and Dan Schuller, Director of Wisconsin State Parks, lauded the efforts to build the amphitheater and the opportunities it presents. Sarah Klavas, Industry Services Director for the Department of Tourism, discussed the amphitheater's place in the area's natural surroundings and its contribution to tourism. Collin Price, public relations officer from the Ho Chunk Nation, added his perspective on the partnerships and history that the Nation has in the area. Cathy Stepp, Secretary of the DNR, commented on the great relationships that helped to create the facility.

Despite all the great speakers and entertainment, the highlight was probably the food generously provided by Ishnala and Bob Prosser. A variety of appetizers and drinks were greatly enjoyed by all.

We are hosting several events in the amphitheater this summer. It is a great venue for our naturalist programs and guest speakers, and has already hosted several weddings.

In other news, we were able to hire a new full-time, permanent Park Ranger. Becca Dick joined our team in mid-June. With the addition of Becca, the team is fully staffed for the first time in several years.

We also have our new naturalist, John Lindquist, on board for the summer. John has presented several programs and he has scheduled guest speakers for programming. His kayak "hikes" have been well-received and he will continue to let visitors know about the Seth Peterson Cottage when out on the water.

As has been the case since I began here, I am continually impressed by the dedication and enthusiasm displayed by the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy members. I am happy to serve as the Department's representative in such a great partnership. ☐

## VISITORS FROM TALIESIN

*Claire Barnett*

The Jill Vladick Memorial Scholarship Award for 2014 was presented to Pablo Moncayo. Surprisingly, he had never heard of Mr. Wright before visiting his parents in Phoenix and going on a tour of Taliesin West. He had just finished high school and was interested in architecture and learned about the undergraduate program the Taliesin School of Architecture offered at that time. He graduated from that program in May 2014 and is currently enrolled in the Master's Degree program and should complete that in about a year and a half.

He enjoyed his stay in the cottage and wrote in the guest book, "This is an incredible place and perfect to clear your thoughts. Architecturally, it is a beautiful jewel in this landscape." He also went canoeing and had dinner at the Ishnala Supper Club. A gift certificate for dinner there has been part of the Jill Vladick award for about four years since the late Cornelia Brierley of Taliesin suggested dining there to an earlier award recipient.



Visitors from Taliesin enjoy a special cottage tour.

Another tradition connected with the award is to invite Taliesin staff, students or visitors to a special cottage tour before our July open house tours. This year, six people attended.

The following week, Brie Smith and Daniel Faibisoff were referred by Taliesin for a private tour. Brie and Daniel are recipients of the University of Toronto Howarth Wright Fellowship award, named for a former dean. The award is given out every two years and was funded by the sale of a table and two chairs from the Imperial Hotel that were in the collection of Howarth Wright, (who is not related to FLW). They are touring the country by car with two friends and had already visited fifty sites and may see twenty more. ☐



Pablo Moncayo, Scholarship Recipient

## SHARING THE COTTAGE

### OPEN HOUSE DAY AT THE COTTAGE

*Raymond Matlosz, SPCC Board Member*

**A**fter a movie by the same name, it has become popular for individuals to develop a “bucket list.” So what’s on **your** bucket list? For one couple who signed in at a recent Open House, their bucket list included visiting the Seth Peterson Cottage.

What brings people to the Cottage on Open House days? There are a number of reasons, with the main one, of course, being a tour of the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Seth Peterson Cottage. Occasionally, there are special programs offered at an Open House in addition to the monthly Cottage tour. Some examples include the Fall Boat Tour in October, programs by a state park naturalist, a presentation by a member of the Ho Chunk Nation, and a talk on birds of the area.

We have been conducting a survey to find out what programs might be offered to enhance the Cottage Open House experience. Some ideas provided by guests include: inviting artists to paint the Cottage during an Open House and then displaying the artwork at the next open house, kayaking to the Cottage for the tour (kayaks are for rent at the Mirror Lake State Park boat ramp), a presentation on restoration, stories about Frank Lloyd Wright, and a chamber music program. What else might you be interested in? Please cast your vote on any of the above suggestions or send us your ideas by e-mail to [sethpetersoncottage@gmail.com](mailto:sethpetersoncottage@gmail.com).

How does one get to the Cottage for an Open House day? The usual mode of transport is by car. Others have arrived on bicycle and three ladies came by canoe. Then there was the couple from Maine who pulled into the parking lot on their Honda three-wheel motorcycle.

Add the Cottage to your bucket list and join us by car, bicycle, kayak, canoe, or motorcycle. ☐



### MARKETING THE COTTAGE

*Gail Kohl, Cottage Marketing Director*

**I**f you have ever dreamed of spending the night in a Frank Lloyd Wright masterpiece, the Seth Peterson Cottage was the first Wright home to be available for rental. Marketing the Cottage over the last two decades has been filled with joy. With hundreds of stories in national and international magazines and newspapers, the Cottage continues to receive sensational reviews. Articles have appeared in the *New York Times* to the *New Zealand Traveler* and on many travel websites, inspiring readers to rent the Cottage for a few days or a week. More than 10,000 overnight guests have stayed at the Cottage from all over the country and from foreign countries as well!

Since the Cottage is booked far in advance, the monthly Open Houses are publicized in statewide and regional newspapers and magazines. These guided tours of the Cottage are offered on the second Sunday of each month, from 1-3:30 PM, with an admission fee of \$4.00 for adults; children 12 and under and Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy members are admitted free. ☐

### CHECK COTTAGE AVAILABILITY ON-LINE

**R**eservations 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**. Only a few open dates remain for May through October 2015 and there are reservations already made for October 2016.

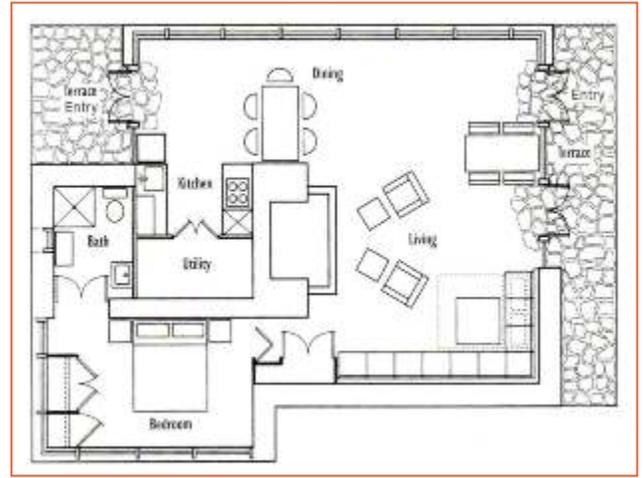
Check often as occasionally there are reservation cancellations. ☐

*Photo inset is a rendering of the Cottage by Frank Lloyd Wright.*

### OPEN HOUSE DETAILS

**T**he Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Seth Peterson Cottage is open for tours the second Sunday of each month from 1:00-3:30 pm. Reservations are not required. The admission fee is \$4.00 for adults; children 12 and under and Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy members are free. The Open House schedule is listed on the last page of this newsletter. The open house tours attract more than a thousand visitors a year!

Group tours for 10 or more people or special private tours can be arranged by calling 608-393-7472. These tours can only occur on days when there are no reservations or on the days after guests have checked out and before the new guests have arrived—generally between 10:00 am–4:00 pm. There is an extra charge for group and special tours. ☐



## FROM THE GUEST BOOK

**I**n the past two decades, the Cottage has received more than 10,000 overnight guests from most of the United States and many foreign countries. Guests are invited to reflect on their visits in the Cottage Guest Book. Over the years, many books have been filled with comments that express the beauty of this jewel in the woods. Recent guests left the following comments:

“This house is truly amazing and we feel like it’s ours now.” *Mr. & Mrs. Jones, Springfield, IL*

“transformative, energizing and restful.” *Jerimiah & Risa, Seattle, WA*

“A disconnect from the craziness of our everyday life . . . A reconnect with nature and the thoughts of FLW and all his detail.” *The D’Alessandros, Lake Forest, IL*

“New Years Eve at the Seth Peterson is the perfect way to end the year.” *Jean & Nicole, Lake Mills, WI*

“We have looked forward to this wonderful getaway for a long time. It’s amazing and beautiful.” *Toni & Andy, Roscoe, IL*

“. . . It was the perfect setting for a relaxing break from the busy world . . .” *Jolene & Tim, Kenosha, WI*

“. . . A special trip with quiet, birds and new snow . . .” *Rex & Judi, Madison, WI*

“Always a pleasure to visit Seth . . . the beauty and solitude of Seth, am always glad when I accomplish a raging fire in Mr. Wright’s fireplace.” *Anonymous*

“What a lovely spot to enjoy the basics of life—a good fire, a good meal, beautiful scenery, entertaining animals and a lovely structure. I’m sorry it took us so long to get here.” *Jim & Joan, River Falls, WI*

“Wow!! A step back in time . . . A dream come true . . . Unforgettable !!” *Ron & Diane, Oak Creek, WI*

“We saw an abundance of wildlife, raccoons, squirrels, numerous species of birds. I think this is what it means to be in tune with nature . . . We did not want to leave . . .” *Linda & David, Peoria, IL*

“. . . FLW’s architecture combines all aspects of fine, simple living. Extremely inspirational—natural lighting brings an experience of the surroundings that pleases the soul . . .” *The Ratliffs, Kewanee, IL*

“The dream of a lifetime—fulfilled, actually sleeping in a FLW home. Will be back.” *Christansen, Minnetonka, MN*

“A lovely place to gather and count our blessings.” *Jane, River Falls, WI*

“Another great stay. So peaceful. We will try to take that home with us.” *Lyane & Kris*

“So many beautiful friends and memories brought us to this wonderful place. Thank you for keeping them present with such a gorgeous space.” *Tom & Emily*

## 2014 FALL COLOR BOAT TOUR

The Fall Color Boat Tour follows the Sunday, October 12<sup>th</sup> Cottage Open House tours. The \$30 per person fare includes an approximately one-hour guided pontoon boat tour of Mirror Lake and hors d'oeuvres around the Cottage fireplace. Reservations can be made by calling 877-466-2358. After the message, please leave your name, phone number and number of reservations being requested. Reservations are limited to four per person and attendance is limited to the first 24 paid reservations. Festivities take place in the Cottage rain or shine. Adverse weather conditions on the lake may affect the boat tour. The path down to the lake and boat dock is steep and not handicapped accessible. We regret that we cannot accept credit cards or cancellations. ☐

## 2014 Annual Cottage Work Week

Bill Martinelli

The 22<sup>nd</sup> annual Seth Peterson Cottage work week was a victim of Wisconsin's usual unpredictable spring weather this year. At the April Sunday open house, afternoon rain turned to snow overnight with 3" on the ground Monday morning. A planned replacement of the rubber



membrane on the flat portions of the cottage roof had to be rescheduled for next spring because of weather and scheduling conflicts. A planned upgrade of the electrical service to the cottage also had to be postponed due to the weather. One planned major project was accomplished despite the weather—stone masons tuckpointed many deteriorating mortar joints.

Work week projects done annually included cleaning the fireplace and flue, checkup of the boiler and air conditioning systems, steam cleaning all the upholstery, repair and refinishing a few furniture pieces, pumping the septic tank—which is required every three years—power scrubbing the stone floor, replacement of the bedroom mattress, and numerous small repair and maintenance items. Also, in spite of the snow on the ground and temperatures in the 20's–30's on Monday and Tuesday, the landscape around the cottage got cleaned up after a very long winter.

Thanks to Jan Aslaksen, Patrick Cleary, Dr. Steven Kincaid, Jim Booth, Kermit Traska, and Mirror Lake Park Superintendent Ryder Will for all their help during the work week. ☐

## THANK YOU FROM WRIGHT IN WISCONSIN

The Wright in Wisconsin organization was pleased to receive the 2013 Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award. The award was given for our work on Frank Lloyd Wright's Model B1 American System-Built Home of 1916-17 in Milwaukee. We want to share with you what we have accomplished with the award funding.



The project is to construct an unbuilt interior for the house, particularly the furnishings and objects typically found in a modest home of that time period. We chose to begin by constructing a particularly complex barrel-back chair with upholstered seat and back. The chair appears in a perspective drawing for another house in the American System project. It is a presentation drawing intended to promote the whole American System-Built project, which might explain why such a complex chair appears in a modest house.

We commissioned furniture craftsman Stafford Norris of Minneapolis to build the chair. Based on the conceptual perspective drawing, Stafford built a prototype. He brought it to the B1 house to be sure the scale and proportions were appropriate for the small interior space. The photo includes the prototype with Stafford and board members Barbara Elsner and Nici Teweles.

The complexity of the chair combined with unusually designed upholstery and embroidery made it difficult to secure funding for it. The Kristin Visser Award made that possible. Thank you for your support. ☐

## KRISTIN VISSER AWARD APPLICATION

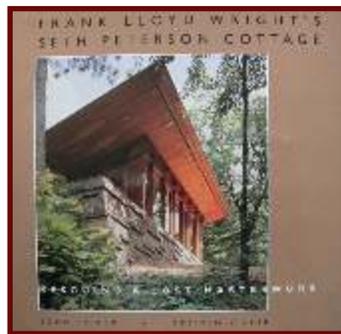
Applicants are sought for the 2015 Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award which is given every other year to an individual or organization in recognition of past work in historical preservation of a Frank Lloyd Wright or Prairie School building in Wisconsin or a contiguous state. In general, buildings constructed between 1900 and 1925 will be given preference and the work shall have been substantially completed within the two years previous to the year of application.

The deadline for applications is March 15, 2015 for work done in 2013 and 2014. The 2015 award, which will include an honorarium of \$5,000, will be presented in June 2015 at the Seth Peterson Cottage. Complete requirements may be obtained by contacting the Award committee chairman, Jerry Minnich, by e-mail at [jmminich7@att.net](mailto:jmminich7@att.net). ☐

## RESCUING A LOST MASTERWORK

Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing

This is the sixteenth 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 design and construction of doors and windows.



The cottage was originally designed to be heated with a radiant floor system like the one Wright first used in the 1936 Jacobs I House. When the cottage was built, a conventional forced-air system was substituted, probably to reduce costs. In considering various heating alternatives for the rehabilitation, the energy study concluded it would be nearly impossible to provide adequate comfort with a forced-air system. As it was the intent of the rehabilitation to finish the cottage in accord with Wright's design, John recommended that a contemporary version of the radiant floor system be installed. The new system combines a forced air system that uses a fan coil heated by the boiler that also warms the water for the radiant heating. This system maintains the historic integrity of the original floor grilles and also provides radiant heat. Most important, the system provides adequate warmth throughout the cottage during the winter.

This phase of the project was difficult primarily because the original stone floor had to be removed in order to install the radiant heat piping. Bill Martinelli photographed and numbered each flooring stone so that it could be cataloged when removed and reinstalled in its exact original position.

After considerable research, in an effort to reduce the use of plastics on the job, John specified expanded perlite (a volcanic mineral) insulation beneath the concrete slab in lieu of the conventional rigid board insulation. The Perlite Association of America donated the perlite and the contractor was pleased to discover that the insulation proved easy to work with. Below-grade electrical conduit and ductwork was trenched through the compacted perlite, which is fire-proof and has an insulation value similar to fiberglass batt insulation. Unlike rigid board, perlite's insulation value does not decrease over time. The four-inch-thick concrete slab on top of the perlite contains the plastic piping for the hot water radiant heating. The flagstones are laid on top of the concrete slab.

The Kohler Company donated plumbing fixtures very similar to the original "desert sand" color specified by Wright. John recommended not installing a prefabricated metal shower stall as specified in the original design due to accessibility problems. The proposed change also

led to a long series of discussions with DOA [Department of Administration] and SHS [State Historical Society] staff. Eventually, they agreed that the metal stall was not a crucial piece of the design. For the shower, John used insulated stainless steel panels attached directly to the stone walls on two sides, with a shower curtain on a rod attached to the ceiling to fully enclose the shower. A floor drain was set directly into the stone floor. Typically referred to as a European shower, the open plan allows for handicap access. Grab rails which double as towel hangers were installed adjacent to the toilet, and other hardware further accommodates the physically challenged. □

Next time: Interior Finishes and Furnishings

## COTTAGE MERCHANDISE NEW ITEM!

Puzzles have been added to our merchandise! You will find these and other Cottage-inspired items on our order form at:

[www.sethpeterson.org/gift\\_shop.html](http://www.sethpeterson.org/gift_shop.html)



## 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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**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



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, **October 12**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4  
Fall Color Boat Tour at 4:15  
\$30 fare includes boat tour and hors d'oeuvres  
See details inside

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

Sunday, **Dec. 14**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4  
4:15 pm, Annual Meeting of the  
Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy

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

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

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

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

**SPCC Members receive free admission.**

**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.

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



[www.sethpeterson.org](http://www.sethpeterson.org)