



THE ENTRY SEQUENCE

By Patrick Molzahn



For any architect, the way one reaches their building plays a major role in their design. At the Seth Peterson Cottage, your journey begins through a gate along Fern Dell Road. Back in 1959, the driveway was a shared entrance servicing multiple cottages. When Mirror Lake State Park acquired the property several years later, they installed a generic swing gate.

In 1996, Bill Martinelli designed a gate more consistent with Wright's aesthetic to replace the State Park gate. Bill's design included two sandstone pillars, supporting a pair of swinging gates with a sliding lock in the middle. The cost to construct two sandstone pillars and mount the steel gate was less than \$5,000, part of which was paid for by a grant from the Knowles-Nelson stewardship program.

continued on page 4

WRITINGS

WRITINGS is a semi-annual publication of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy Inc.

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Seth Peterson cottage Conservancy Inc.

Executive committee

- President: Kermit Traska
- Vice President: Bill Martinelli
- Treasurer: Catherine Sperl
- Secretary: Marc Londo

Board members

Tim Heggland, Dr. Melissa Kincaid, Dr. Steven Kincaid, Greg Kliner, Carolyne Kotchi, Rachel Lohman, Patrick Molzahn, Beth Zondag-Traska, and Laura Colt

Ex-officio members

- Marcus Jaeger, President
Mirror Lake Association
- Patrick Cieslewicz, Park Superintendent
Mirror Lake State Park

Conservancy staff

- Office Manager: Ron Dakter
- Marketing Coordinator: Gail Kohl

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Kermit Traska

As I began thinking of what to write for my article for this newsletter, the word *longevity* came to mind. Longevity is a noun that means a long duration of individual life or length of life. It can also mean length of service, tenure, or seniority. While we generally think of longevity in terms of human life, we can also apply it to the life of the Seth Peterson Cottage. The life of the Cottage for more than two decades was dismal, as it was abandoned and left in ruin. With the 1991 creation of the public/private partnership between the Department of Natural Resources, owner of the Cottage, and the newly created Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy (SPCC), the Cottage received a new life. The Conservancy, now in its third fifteen-year lease that goes through 2035, continues to oversee and care for the Cottage, making it available for the many overnight stays and Open House visitors each year.

Built of stone, wood and glass, the cottage has stood up well to the constant use of many visitors. Our Guest Comment Book provides evidence of the joy people experience during their stays. Part of longevity is not just surviving, but the quality of the experience our visitors have had during their stay in a work of art created by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Now let us apply longevity to our Board of Directors in terms of service and tenure. We have been blessed over the years to have many board members dedicated to overseeing the care and operation of the Cottage. Several of our current members were at the first meeting in 1989, and others have served for more than 25 years. At our recent Board of Directors meeting, we considered eliminating two board positions, going from 15 to 13 positions. It was pointed out that it's time for some "new blood" on the board as some of our current long-serving board members are approaching the end of their tenure. We will keep the board at 15 members and look for people to fill those positions. Recent board additions have included a business entrepreneur, a master cabinetmaker/educator, and a lawyer. Each brings with them a sincere interest in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and a passion for the care and preservation of the Seth Peterson Cottage. Who will be the next SPCC board member?

We are thankful that the longevity of the Seth Peterson Cottage has been extended through the longevity and tireless work from the members of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy Board of Directors.

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

The SPCC annual meeting will be held on Sunday, December 14th at 4:00 PM at the cottage following our Open House. Agenda items include the 2025 financial report and approval of the 2026 proposed budget. Anyone is welcome to attend.



MIRROR LAKE STATE PARK REPORT— The “Other” Cabin at Mirror Lake State Park

By Patrick Cieslewicz, Park Superintendent

Mirror Lake State Park features a unique, barrier-free log cabin nestled among the pines of the Cliffwood Campground. Built in the spring of 1991 and gifted to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources by the Telephone Pioneers of America - WI Chapter 4, this 700-square-foot cabin provides an accessible and scenic retreat. A screened-in porch offers beautiful views of Mirror Lake. Inside, the cabin includes a small kitchen, a bedroom with two single beds, a full-size sofa sleeper in the family room, and a bathroom with a roll-in shower. It accommodates up to six guests.

In 2018, the Friends of Mirror Lake State Park led a full renovation of the cabin. Upgrades included a completely remodeled bathroom, an enclosed front porch, and a new roof. Improvements were also made to the outdoor observation area, including a new bench, railings, and pathway repairs. This project was made possible through donations from the Friends of Mirror Lake State Park, a Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant, guest contributions, and support from local contractors.

Statewide, the Wisconsin State Parks Program offers 10 accessible cabins: eight larger cabins with full amenities and two smaller rustic cabins. The larger cabins are located at Buckhorn, Harrington Beach, High Cliff, Kohler-Andrae, Potawatomi, Richard Bong State Recreation Area, Mirror Lake, and Kettle Moraine State Forest–Southern Unit (Ottawa Lake).

These cabins are reserved exclusively for individuals with disabilities and their guests. Reservations for the following year open on January 10.



Above: The accessible log cabin was originally built in 1991.

Below: SPCC President Kermit Traska (second from left), back in 1991 in his role as Southern District State Park Supervisor.



MIRROR LAKE ASSOCIATION REPORT

By Marcus Jaeger, President

On Mirror Lake, I measure the seasons by when my pontoon boat goes in the water, and then about six months later, when my boat gets winterized and placed in storage. While autumn is my favorite season, I also realize that this means the end of my time on the water is near. Every week I drive from my home on the lake for 2-1/2 hours to the western suburbs of Chicago. The ride itself goes by quickly if I have something interesting to listen to. Another way that helps the time pass by is a long telephone conversation with a friend, like one I had last week.

My friend, Laura Colt, has become the newest member of the Seth Peterson Conservancy board of directors. She is a wonderful candidate to serve. Laura grew up on Mirror Lake where her immediate family members still reside. She is a successful attorney in Reedsburg. Most importantly, she is a loving spouse and mother. She has constantly displayed a strong loyalty to noble ideals. I am proud to call her a trusted friend. After exchanging hellos, we began to discuss her first meeting of the board. We spoke at length about the stated goals of the board. Then our discussion veered into another topic that really impressed her: the absolute dedication shown by the board. Dedication to the cottage, dedication to Frank Lloyd Wright, and dedication to the experience that others will enjoy as they spend time at the cottage.

As an ex-officio on the board member by virtue of my involvement in the Mirror Lake Association, I knew little of Wright's work. Certainly I knew of him and could identify his style of architecture, but that was about it. It was only after being involved with the board and witnessing the enthusiastic dedication of these fine people, that my eyes were opened - first to the beauty of the cottage, and then to the uniqueness of Wright's architecture. We appreciate your interest in the Seth Peterson Cottage and all that surrounds it. Now I am going back to my boat!





Because the cottage is occupied almost every night of the year, and reservations are secured two years in advance, planning for this project started back in 2022.



Fast forward almost 30 years later. Bill's design has withstood the test of time, and thanks to his continued efforts, we are now celebrating a newly paved parking lot and driveway. Because the cottage is occupied almost every night of the year and reservations are secured two years in advance, planning for this project began in 2022. Bill had to get quotes, block out a second week in April two years in advance, and then hope the weather cooperated.

Asphalt is a tricky material. Installation is always weather dependent, and the start of the installation season is as certain as knowing when spring will arrive. Once installed, the surface needed time to cure before anyone could drive on it. Thankfully the stars aligned, and we now have a more hospitable surface to drive on. This will also make it easier for snow-plowing when winter arrives, and for those with mobility impairments to access the property.

The cost to pave the parking lot and driveway was \$28,000. A last-minute grant from the Knowles-Nelson Foundation provided \$14,000. Maintaining the cottage and upgrading access like a paved driveway is the primary reason for creating The Seth Peterson Cottage Preservation Endowment Fund. Whether you have stayed at the cottage previously or just visited for a tour, please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to help ensure the cottage is around for future generations.



Above: The original gate erected in the 1960's was repurposed for another road in the park.

Left: The newly repaved driveway.

Facing Page: Drawings and images from the new gate installation in 1996.

2025 VISSER AWARD

By Kermit Traska

The Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award Fund was established through a bequest from the Visser Family. The award is named in honor of Kristin Visser, who was one of the people instrumental in the restoration of the Seth Peterson Cottage, and a tireless worker on its behalf. Visser was especially interested in the historical preservation of Frank Lloyd Wright or Prairie School buildings in Wisconsin or a contiguous state. The Award is given once every two years to an individual or organization in recognition of past work.

Past Kristin Visser Historic Preservation Award Winners

- 2007 Steve Sikora and Lynette Erickson-Sikora, Willey House, Minneapolis, MN
- 2009 Paul Harding and Cheryl Harding, Davenport House, River Forest, IL
- 2011 Mary Arnold and Henry St. Maurice, E. Clarke Arnold House, Columbus, WI
- 2013 Frank Lloyd Wright Wisconsin, B-1 ASBH, Milwaukee, WI
- 2015 John Eifler and Bonnie Phoenix, Ross House, Glencoe, IL
- 2017 Gene Szymczak posthumously, Thomas P. Hardy House, Racine, WI
- 2019 Doug LaBrecque, Curtis and Lillian Meyer House, Galesburg, MI
- 2021 Nicholas and Lauren Witkowski, Brookfield Kindergarten, Brookfield, IL
- 2023 Ellen Bendel-Stenzel and husband Michael, Jack and Gloria Grabow House, Rochester, MN

The next Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award will be presented in 2027.

For more information, contact via email: SethPetersonCottage@gmail.com



Above: SPCC Board President Kermit Traska presents a check for \$10,000 to Taliesin Preservation, Inc Executive Director Carrie Rademaker (center), and Andrea Dumke, Director of Finances (right).

SPCC BOARD NEWS

By Patrick Molzahn

The SPCC is governed by a fifteen-member volunteer board. We are pleased to announce that Laura Colt has joined our board to fill an open seat resulting from the passing of long-term Board member and past president Claire Barnett.

Laura is an area attorney practicing in the neighboring community of Reedsburg. She was interested in serving on the SPCC board because it represents both a personal legacy and a deep connection to the place that shaped who she is. Laura's grandfather, Attorney Ken Stevens, helped organize this non-profit, and his commitment to the community and its stewardship left a lasting impression on her. In Laura's words, "growing up on Mirror Lake, where the SPCC is based, I developed a profound appreciation for its natural beauty and the values it represents. Serving on the board is a way for me to honor my family's legacy, give back to the community that raised me, and help ensure that future generations can enjoy and benefit from this special place."



In other news, the board continues to address the long term preservation of the cottage through the creation of an endowment fund (sidebar right). Earlier this year, letters were sent to all lifetime members announcing the endowment.

THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE PRESERVATION ENDOWMENT FUND

Now there is a new way for you to support the continued preservation of the Seth Peterson Cottage! The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy has established a permanent endowment fund with the Community Foundation of South Central Wisconsin located in Baraboo. Gifts to the fund are invested and will provide an annual grant to support the preservation of the Cottage forever!

Established in 1998, the Community Foundation of South Central Wisconsin provides financial support to dozens of local non-profits. Watch for more information as we develop the plan for promoting the endowment fund.

If you would like more information, please contact Kermit Traska at: SethPetersonCottage@gmail.com

FROM THE GUESTBOOK

"... The stillness and incredible greenery here are so refreshing. Viewing Mirror Lake from the side patio, then canoeing it and seeing the pristine shores and tall rock bluffs was amazing. I am so glad this cottage was "found", restored/rebuilt with such care and attention to detail and opened to overnight stays, so the world can experience the wonder of living in a Frank Lloyd Wright gem."

Debbie & Dave
Chicago, IL

"We have enjoyed our retreat in the woods of Wisconsin – canoeing on the lake, listening to the birds, feeling inspired by the architecture... I'm glad this beautiful place was brought back to life. I hope it continues to be given the love and care it deserves and needs."

Heather & Mark
Portland, OR

"We are loving our stay at the Seth Peterson Cottage, inhabiting FLW's design aesthetic in the midst of the lovely, lush and green Wisconsin woods... Thank you to all who created it, all who restored it, and all who maintain the treasure and share it with the public."

John & Katherine
Austin, Texas

"As a retired architect, I find it a privilege to stay on this special property. I greatly enjoyed studying FLW's details"

"A relaxing and enjoyable place to spend the weekend with my brothers."

"The view from the living room is reminiscent of a Claude Monet painting. I particularly love the blend of nature and habitat."

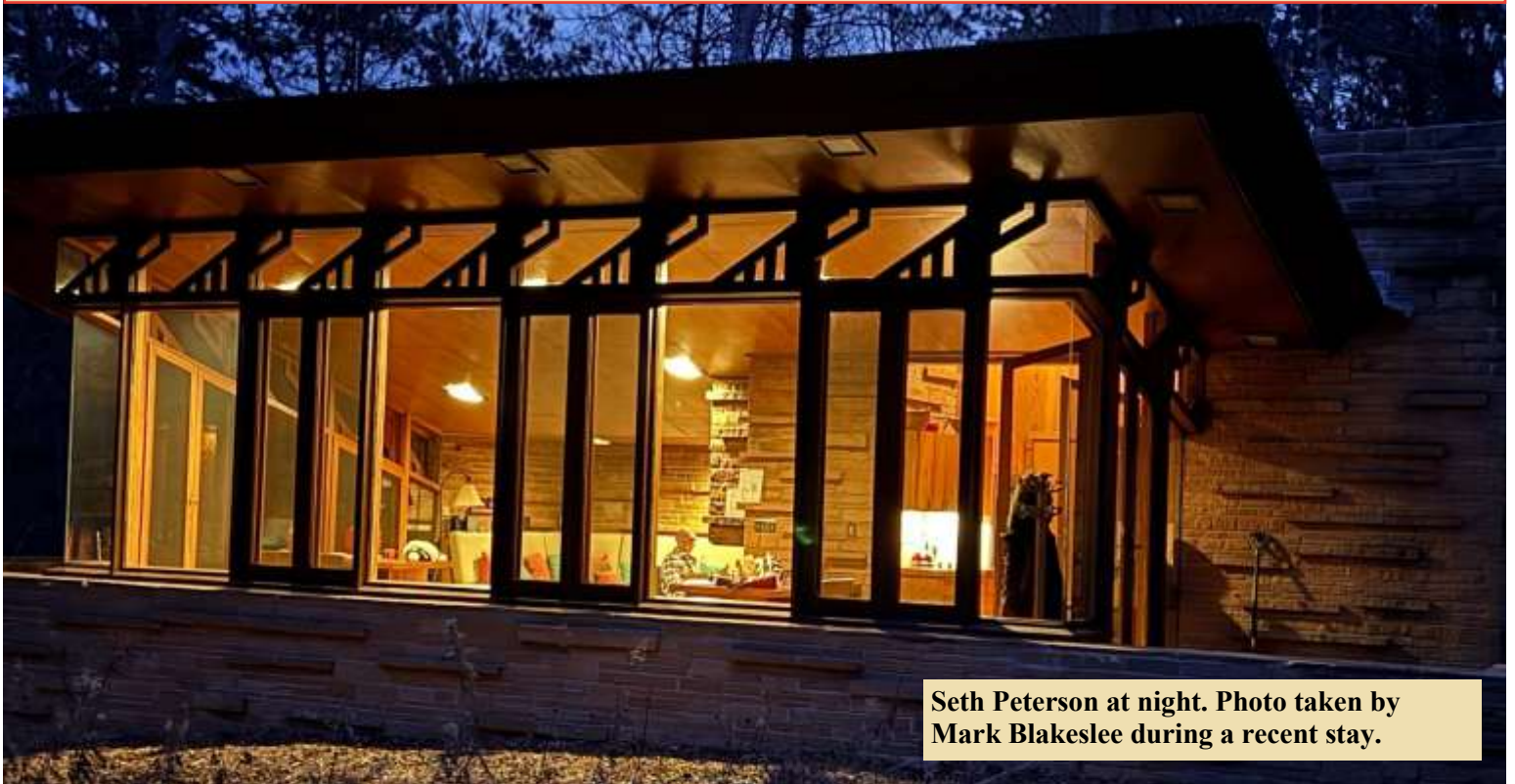
Al, Fred & Jim
Cedar Rapids, East Moline & Blue Grass, IA

"As a Welshman and Architect practicing in Green Bay, what a great way to connect with FLW again. I have traveled across the USA to see many of his works and compositions. Thank you! Thank you!"

Ian, Sarah, Aled, Huw
Green Bay, WI

"This was a gift from my daughter who has known for years that I was somewhat obsessed with FLW. It is a magical place! You can feel the peace in this little cottage in the woods. If I close my eyes, I can imagine FLW sitting on the couch & surveying his design, and feeling quite smug about it, too!"

Bill & Karen



Seth Peterson at night. Photo taken by Mark Blakeslee during a recent stay.

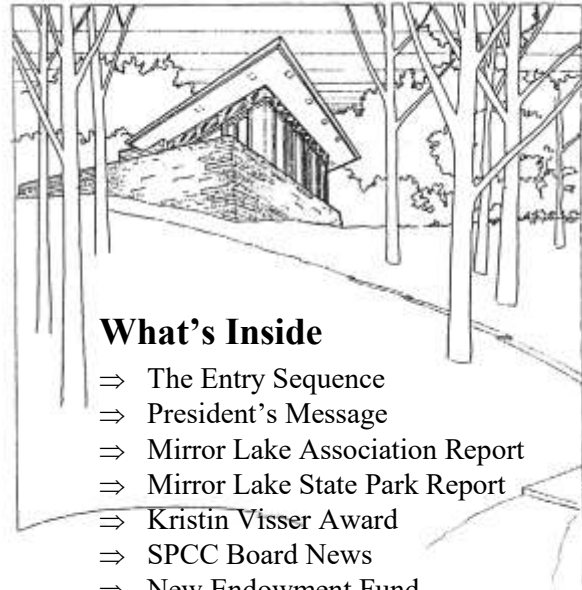
WRITINGS

The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy Inc.

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Note: Cottage location appears in the map below.



What's Inside

- ⇒ The Entry Sequence
- ⇒ President's Message
- ⇒ Mirror Lake Association Report
- ⇒ Mirror Lake State Park Report
- ⇒ Kristin Visser Award
- ⇒ SPCC Board News
- ⇒ New Endowment Fund
- ⇒ From the Guestbook

Want to learn more about Frank Lloyd Wright's work in Wisconsin? Visit WrightInWisconsin.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

Seth Peterson Cottage Open House and Guided Tour Schedule:

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-------|
| • Nov. 9 | 1 to 4 p.m. | \$5 * |
| • Dec. 14 | 1 to 4 p.m. | \$5 * |
| • Jan. 11 | 1 to 4 p.m. | \$5 * |
| • Feb. 8 | 1 to 4 p.m. | \$5 * |
| • Mar. 8 | 1 to 4 p.m. | \$5 * |
| • Apr. 12 | 1 to 4 p.m. | \$5 * |

*Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy members receive free admission and a discount of 10% off cottage merchandise.

Become a Member of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy

More information is available on our website, sethpeterson.org. Click "Membership," under "The Conservancy" on the top menu.

Visitors find touring the cottage a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon. Take a scenic drive and experience firsthand this restored Frank Lloyd Wright-designed home during the open house tours held on the second Sunday of each month. For more information about the cottage, visit us online at SethPeterson.org.

Seth Peterson Cottage
E9982 Fern Dell Road
Lake Delton, Wisconsin

GPS:

43.56178°N, 89.82432° W

