

# WRITINGS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY

Vol. XVIII, Issue 2

## COTTAGE COMMENTS BY CLAIRE

This is the first of our re-designed newsletters, and I hope that you like it. It is the result of a meeting between Alice Seeliger, Jerry Minnich, and me, back in June. Alice has done the design and layout of nearly all of our newsletters since the early days of the cottage, and we wanted her to continue doing so. Jerry, in addition to being a long time Board member, is the former owner and publisher of Prairie Oak Press, author of a dozen books, and has been involved with the newsletter for a long time, too. I got involved with the newsletter after the death of Audrey Laatsch. I am not sure why I wasn't involved before, especially since Audrey and I produced the very first cottage brochure, a single-sheet affair that told little more than how to find the cottage and where to send donations.

is so much to tell about how we got from wondering what to do with a cottage in ruins, to where we are now.

Speaking of now, the temperature is 96 degrees as I write this article. I am so glad that we air-conditioned the cottage last year! This extended heat wave could have overwhelmed the cottage's natural cooling, making for a less pleasant stay for guests. I think that the new cooling system, and the recent major renovation, are good examples of how we have tried continually to improve the Frank Lloyd Wright experience for visitors and overnight guests.

In July we welcomed back a former SPCC Board member, Terry Boyd, as a guest speaker, and you can read about her presentation in the article "Frank Lloyd Wright and the House Beautiful." In August, the recipients of the Jill Vladick Scholarship Award wrote of their stay at the cottage



"There is so much to tell about how we got from wondering what to do with a cottage in ruins...to where we are now."

I met with Alice and Jerry at Lazy Jane's Café, in Madison, where we talked about the design and paper and inks, and what we wanted to change. We eventually decided to publish two newsletters a year, in May and September. Jerry will be the editor. I started producing the newsletter before I became president, and soon found that either job could be fun, but trying to do both was not! I will write this and other occasional articles, as well as choose guest book comments, and will continue to supply photographs for the newsletter.

We plan to have more photos in each issue, and more about the history of the cottage and how we restored it. There

that, "One thing we really enjoyed was an overwhelming sense of tranquility which grew out of the beauty of an Architecture that is one with surrounding Nature. I can only hope that one day I find the wisdom to design with the simplicity that the Seth Peterson Cottage has." There is also an article by our vice-president and facilities manager, Bill Martinelli, detailing the recent cottage renovation. I hope that you will enjoy these and other articles and visit the cottage soon to see and appreciate its "new look."

*Claire Barnett,*  
*President, Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy*

## SETH PETERSON COTTAGE NEW AGAIN

Bill Martinelli

Since the Seth Peterson Cottage underwent a major restoration back in 1990–1992, more than 4,500 overnight guests have stayed at the cottage and more than 11,000 Frank Lloyd Wright fans have attended our monthly open house tours. Needless to say, heavy traffic results in considerable wear and tear on the cottage.

Back in 2003, the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy Board of Directors decided it was time for another major repair, refinish, and restore project. Because the cottage is rented two years in advance, the dates of February 13 to April 13, 2006, were blocked out to accommodate this project.

Another driving force behind the repair project was the fact that the rubber radiant heat tubing that was installed during the 1992 restoration was failing. We decided to remove the flagstone floor once again, discard the old rubber tubing in the concrete slab, lay the new PEX radiant tubing over the existing slab, and replace the stone floor—no easy task.

At the Sunday, February 12, 2006 open house, a group of volunteers emptied out all the kitchen cabinets, closets, utility and storage rooms, and removed anything that wasn't nailed down. Everything was stored offsite in preparation for the start of work the next morning.

All the freestanding and built-in furniture was sent out for repair, refinishing, and new upholstery. The kitchen cabinets and closets were also removed for repair and refin-

ishing. Once the cottage was completely emptied, the job of stone removal began. We didn't know how easy or difficult the removal of the stones was going to be, but the masons did a fantastic job and were able to save about 85 percent of the original stones. We located a quarry near the one that supplied the original stones, and a supply of new stones was delivered to substitute for any that had been destroyed during removal.



Removing the stone floors in the bedroom.

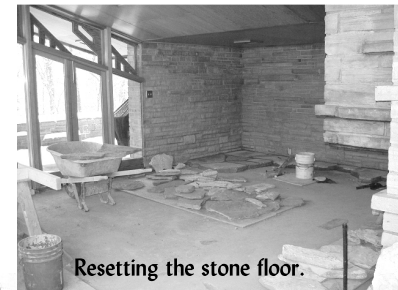


Radiant heat tubing.

mometer sensors imbedded in the thermometer connected to the heating controls, to help regulate the system.

Once the new tubing was in place, a two-inch setting bed was placed over the tubes and the stones were put back into place, using a drawing of the original stone layout that was created back

The new tubing was laid out in two zones—one for the bedroom and bathroom, the other for the kitchen, dining, and living areas. Each zone now has its own thermostat, affording better control over the radiant heating system. There also are two thermostat sensors imbedded in the floor, and an outside



Resetting the stone floor.



The stone floor is completed... and the reupholstered furniture installed.

in 1990. All the interior woodwork was cleaned and refinished, and the restored cabinets, built-ins, and reupholstered furniture were returned to the cottage and installed.

The exterior stone was also cleaned, and some badly deteriorated mortar joints were cleaned and tuck-pointed. Finally, the exterior woodwork was cleaned and refinished.

The cottage is now back in good working order, looking refreshed, and ready for the next decade of overnight guests and monthly tours. Come visit the next time you are in the Wisconsin Dells–Lake Delton area. ■

## 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  
Design & Production: Alice J. Seeliger, AJS Creative, Brooklyn, WI  
Submit articles/photos to Jerry Minnich at: [jminnich7@charter.net](mailto:jminnich7@charter.net)

### The Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, Inc. Board of Directors Executive Committee

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For cottage reservations call the Sand County Service Company, Lake Delton, Wisconsin: 608 254-6441.

## NEW COTTAGE DINNERWARE

Peter Rott

Cottage guests will be pleased to see that the cupboards are now stocked with brand-new Wright-inspired dinnerware. We feel that, after the recent major renovation, the new dinnerware offers a bright and appealing accent. The cottage board selected the Guggenheim pattern, a distinctive design produced through the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, to replace the existing dishes. Eight place settings of this smart line have been delivered to the cottage for guest use.



Guests who become enamored of the new dinnerware will be happy to know that they can buy their own set at the Taliesin Visitor Center, in Spring Green. ■



## JILL VLADICK SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

The Jill Vladick Scholarship Award for 2006 was presented to Ebbie Azimi and Niloofar Karimi. The married couple are first-year students at The Taliesin Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture. Ebbie, a civil engineer by trade, and Niloofar, an artist with a Bachelor's Degree in business who also paints, had not heard of Frank Lloyd Wright before a friend took Ebbie to Taliesin West.



The 2006 Jill Vladick Scholarship Award recipients Ebbie Azimi (r) and Niloofar Karimi at the cottage.

Ebbie described their Taliesin experience as "a huge change in our lives." As a child, he grew up around architects and later wanted to be one. But in his native Iran, students are tested and ranked in standing from one to one million. There is a choice of programs in 13 different universities, but if the program is full, another choice has to be made. Ebbie ranked 2700 out of a million for a chemical engineering program, and architectural study was not possible at that time.

The award recipients were announced at a recent formal dinner at Taliesin, by Victor Sidy, Dean of the Taliesin Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture. During his remarks, he mentioned the close relationship that exists between Taliesin and the Seth Peterson Cottage. SPCC President Claire Barnett was present at the dinner, met the awardees, and drew a map for them showing the route between Taliesin and the cottage. She also stayed after the August 13<sup>th</sup> SPCC open house tour to welcome them and to give them a detailed tour of the cottage. ■

## FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT AND THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

The guest speaker at the July open house was Virginia Terry Boyd, Professor of Design Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is also the Curator of the traveling exhibition, "*Frank Lloyd Wright and the House Beautiful: Designing an American Way of Living.*" Her presentation explained the three components of Mr. Wright's concept of the House Beautiful. First was a new form with its interior space arranged in response to a new American pattern of living. Second, the new form was modern, breaking away from past styles. And finally, the new house had to be accessible to all. She spoke for about twenty minutes, and brought along a few copies of the exhibition catalogue for inspection.



The exhibit with more than one hundred original objects including furniture, metal work, textiles, publications, and accessories, focuses on Wright's skill in creating harmony between the architectural structure and its interior design in the context of a modern American lifestyle. The current exhibition schedule includes the Naples Museum of Art in Florida, the Boise Art Museum in Idaho, the Columbia Museum of Art in South Carolina, the Midland Center for the Arts in Michigan, the Portland Museum of Art in Maine, and the Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma. ■

## WINTER DISCOUNTS AT THE COTTAGE

Gail Kohl

Just imagine yourself all curled up in front of the cozy fire, enjoying the beauty of Frank Lloyd Wright's great gem, the Seth Peterson Cottage, as snowflakes dance outside in the pines. You can be a part of this picture, and at very favorable rates! Stay at the cottage during the winter season for \$225 a night in the months of January, February and March, 2007. (The regular rate is \$275 a night.) The special rate is good for stays Sunday through Thursday.

The cottage takes on a different personality during the winter months. Nestled into the lush woods of Mirror Lake State Park, it offers privacy, security, and quiet—an opportunity to relax, refresh and reflect. You may want to hibernate with a book or board game, or just get lost in your thoughts while watching the fire. You can also watch the squirrels and birds cavorting outside at the feeder station. And, if the spirit moves you, you have ample opportunities for hiking and cross-

country skiing on the park's 17 miles of groomed trails. If you're lucky, your cell phone won't work up here.

Come enjoy this special place of beauty to celebrate your birthday or anniversary, or come just to take a break from the dreary winter routine. For reservations and complete information, call the Sand County Service Company in Lake Delton: 608 254-6441. ■

## VISSER HISTORICAL PRESERVATION AWARD

**T**he Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy Board of Directors has announced the establishment of the Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award.

The award will be 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 restoration work shall have been substantially done within the two calendar years previous to the year of application.

Applicants are asked to support their applications with a statement fully describing the restoration project, including its state of completion; a supporting statement from the building contractor and/or architect; a letter or letters of support from scholars and/or working professionals familiar with the project; photographic evidence of work completed; and any other appropriate materials. Applications will be judged by a panel of members of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, along with several outside experts/scholars.

The initial award, to be presented in 2007, will be in the amount of \$5,000.

March 1, 2007 is the deadline for applications for work done in 2005-06. The award recipient will be announced on April 15, and the award presented at the Seth Peterson Cottage in July.

The award is named in honor of Kristin Visser, who was instrumental in the restoration of the cottage and a tireless worker in its behalf. Visser, who was a planner for the Wisconsin State Department of Natural Resources, died in 1998.

Applications should be sent to award committee chairman Jerry Minnich, 821 Prospect Place, Madison, WI 53703. Email: [jminnich7@charter.net](mailto:jminnich7@charter.net) ■

## LIFE MEMBERS

**A** growing number of SPCC members who are tired of receiving renewal notices every year have solved the problem by becoming life members! It's a great way to support the cottage while assuring your permanent connection with the conservancy. Life memberships are \$250.

Here are some members who have made the commitment in the past few years:

**Dr. Annette Beyer-Mears**  
**Suzanne Blue**  
**Virginia T. Boyd**  
**Rose Christof**  
**Lucy Fischer**  
**Jack Holzheuter**  
**Winnifred Hutchinson**  
**Mike & Joanne Michalski**  
**Konrad Michalski**  
**John & Debbie Muchow**  
**Barbara A. Obois**  
**David Peterson & Family**

**James P. Peterson**  
**John P. & Evelyn Peterson**  
**James & Jean Potter**  
**Mathilda V. Schwalbach**  
**Ron & Pat Shaw**  
**Mark F. Speyer**  
**James & Sally Strand**  
**David & Julia Uihlein**  
**Paul & Aural Umhoefer**  
**Ilda Vaja**  
**Jon Visser**

If you, too, decide to join this select group, just use the order form in this issue of the newsletter. ■

## SUMMER IN THE PARK

*Paul Zajackowski*

*Mirror Lake State Park Superintendent*

**T**his summer has been a busy one, the park alive with campers, hikers, bikers, bird watchers, and other outdoor enthusiasts. The park has seen a slight increase in use so far this year, which may or may not be attributed to warm, dry weather we have been experiencing—or it might be because the high price of gasoline has families looking for low-cost outdoor activities. Fortunately, we have been receiving just enough rain to keep things green and growing—not so the case in much of central and northern Wisconsin, which has experienced a drought and where a burn ban was in effect for part of the summer.

In addition to the normal summer day-to-day maintenance routine, the park staff has started replacing roofs on several of the buildings. Many of the roofs still have the original shingles that are in much need of replacement. Twelve buildings will receive new steel roofs and other improvements. Park staff and the Sauk County chapter of Pheasants Forever have been mowing prairie and areas with high populations of wild parsnip. The goal of the summer mowing is to prevent invasive plant species like wild parsnip and thistles from going to seed for next year. The mowing also helps new prairie plants become established, by reducing the competition from more aggressive common field plants such as foxtail and ragweed. As the prairie becomes established, mowing in the future will, we hope, no longer be required, and the prairie plants will force out unwanted plant species.

The prairie located at the corner of Fern Dell and Turtleville Road is full of color and is a must-see during the summer months. It is only a short distance from the Seth Peterson Cottage and can be seen from the Turtleville hiking trail. Hope to see you out there! ■

## RESCUING A LOST MASTERPIECE

**B**eginning with this issue of the newsletter, we will excerpt passages from the book, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Seth Peterson Cottage: Rescuing a Lost Masterpiece*, by John Eifler and Kristin Visser. It is the definitive story of the cottage.

The Seth Peterson Cottage was designed in 1958 and represents Frank Lloyd Wright's final Wisconsin commission. At only 880 square feet, the cottage is one of Wright's smallest homes and was designed as a variation on Wright's Usonian theme. The Peterson Cottage design is the Usonian home stripped to its essence: tiny kitchen, a small bath, a bedroom, and a combined living/dining space, all surrounding the massive fireplace. The cottage lacks a carport, a hallway, and a primary entryway. The concept of unobstructed spatial flow is prevalent throughout the cottage, as evidenced by the lack of interior doors. There are only two—one on the bathroom and another on the utility closet. Because Peterson was on a tight budget, Wright scaled down the utilitarian Usonian plan to produce what Taliesin architect Tom Casey called a one-room space, a building contained "under one ceiling."

Despite the cottage's small size, Wright's chief assistant, William Wesley Peters, claimed the structure contained "more architecture per square foot than any building Wright ever built." The building feels surprisingly spacious due to the sloped shed roof sheltering the living/dining space. The sloped roof rises from six feet eight inches to twelve feet to allow an abundance of natural light through the window wall, which wraps around three sides of the living/dining space. The kitchen is a typical Usonian galley, open to the dining and living area. The kitchen, like that in other Usonians, is two stories high, topped by a flat roof with a skylight, giving it a spacious feel even though it is quite tiny. (The bathroom and a storage loft above, along with the fireplace masonry, are also part of this two-story element.) The bedroom, by contrast, with its low ceiling and band of narrow windows, feels cozy and cocoon-like.

Built primarily of local sandstone, Douglas fir-faced plywood, cedar shingles, and glass, the cottage sits on the edge of a bluff overlooking Mirror Lake. Viewed from below, its strong battered terrace and walls, along with the soaring roof and large window wall, give the building a monumentality that is surprising to find in such a small structure. Unlike most lakeside cottages, which are sited to maximize views, the Seth Peterson Cottage is oriented almost sideways to the lake. This gives a southwestern orientation to the large window wall, which allows the warming rays of the sun to penetrate the cottage during the winter, while the large cantilevered roof overhang protects the interior space from the hot summer sun. The terrace is located on the northwest side of the cottage, and provides a striking view of the lake and summer sunsets. Finally, the bedroom, with its narrow band of windows and large roof overhang, is located on the northeast corner, shielded from direct sun but allowing for early morning light in the summer.

The Seth Peterson Cottage is one of the last examples of Wright's Usonian homes, a housing type that was first realized with the construction of the first Herbert Jacobs House in Madison, Wisconsin, designed in 1936. The Usonian home was Wright's personal solution to America's need for moderate-cost housing. Wright believed, "In our country the chief obstacle to any real solution of the moderate-cost house problem is the fact that our people do not really know how to live. They imagine their idiosyncrasies to be their 'tastes,' their prejudices to be their predilections, and their ignorance to be virtue—where any beauty of living is concerned." In the Jacobs I House, Wright established the Usonian home as a specific type characterized by:

1. Elimination of the basement, except for a fuel and heater spot.
2. Elimination of the attic and, therefore, elimination of the visible roof.
3. No painting or plastering. All materials to be sealed with clear oils and waxes.
4. No garage—a carport will do.
5. No radiators or heating grilles, heat to be provided by a radiant floor hot-water heating system.
6. Floor plans designed according to a planning module, usually a multiple of four feet.

*Next issue: The commission, design, and construction of the cottage.* ■

## FROM THE GUEST BOOK...

"Beyond Imagination. Thank you".

~ D. Beruman and Kate Green

"I actually had goose bumps as I approached the Seth Peterson Cottage, and the wonder never ceased! Staying here was a dream come true."

~ Jo Uden

"We have made a habit of staying in Frank Lloyd Wright homes—Price Tower, the Schwartz House, and now Seth Peterson. . . . All of our visits have been special, but this visit was the most intense FLW experience. The concept of the home as an enclosed patio is perfectly executed here—and we love the results."

~ Dana and Chris Boroughs

"The last morning always brings a somber and reflective mood. We would have had a harder time leaving if we didn't already have plans made to return..."

~ Tim and Trish McNeely

## Work Week 2006

Fixing the shed hatch.



Staining,

Fixing the shed roof.



Yardwork.

staining,




Fixing the grill.



...and MORE staining.

**Membership Renewal and Merchandise Order Form**

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

<i>Item</i>	<i>Choices</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Unit Price</i>	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>Total</i>
Individual Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> Gift		\$15.00		
Household Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> Gift		\$25.00		
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		
<b>Membership subtotal</b>					
<b>Members receive 10% discount on merchandise.</b>					
"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.			\$65.00		
Official SPCC visor cap. Cream w/bright red logo. One size fits all.			\$15.00		
100% cotton pique polo shirt w/Cottage logo and name in red. <b>Mark color &amp; size.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Forest Green <input type="checkbox"/> Natural <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> XL <input type="checkbox"/> XXL		\$32.00		
Beige and rust T-shirt w/Cottage perspective by John Eifler. <b>Mark size.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> XL <input type="checkbox"/> XXL		\$15.00		
Sweatshirt w/red logo. <b>Mark color &amp; size.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Black <input type="checkbox"/> Tan <input type="checkbox"/> Red <input type="checkbox"/> Natural <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> XL <input type="checkbox"/> XXL		\$35.00		
Elegant silk tie. Black design based on the design in the clerestory panels. <b>Mark background color.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Red <input type="checkbox"/> Beige <input type="checkbox"/> Blue		\$25.00		
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Book: <i>Frank Lloyd Wright's Seth Peterson Cottage: Rescuing a Lost Masterwork</i> by John Eifler, AIA and Kristin Visser.			\$90.00 \$15.00		
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<b>Merchandise subtotal</b>					
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Under \$10			\$2.00		
\$10-\$30			\$3.00		
\$30-\$100			\$6.00		
Over \$100 -- free shipping					
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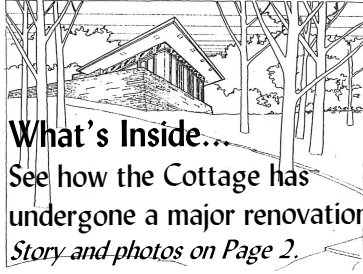
Make Check payable to: Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, Inc. Send to: SPCC, c/o Wegner LLP, Box 150, Baraboo, WI 53913

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
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# WRITINGS

THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY, INC.  
P. O. Box 334  
LAKE DELTON, WISCONSIN 53940

**Forwarding Service Requested.**



## What's Inside...

See how the Cottage has undergone a major renovation.  
*Story and photos on Page 2.*

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
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Madison, WI  
Permit #2783

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Sunday, October 8, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2
- Sunday, November 12, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2
- Sunday, December 10, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2  
4-5 pm, Directors/Members Annual Mtg
- Sunday, January 14, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2
- Sunday, February 11, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2
- Sunday, March 11, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2
- Sunday, April 8, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2
- Sunday, May 13, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2
- Sunday, June 3, 1-4 pm, Annual Mirror Lake State Park Open House, Guided Tours, FREE Admission
- Sunday, June 10, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2



Visitors find touring the cottage to be a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon. Take a scenic drive and experience first hand this restored Frank Lloyd Wright-designed cottage during the cottage open house tours. (See schedule at left). The Seth Peterson Cottage is located at E9982 Fern Dell Road, Lake Delton, WI



For cottage reservations, call 608 254-6441