

# WRITINGS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY

Vol. XIV, Issue I

## COTTAGE COMMENTS BY CLAIRE

**S**pring finally arrived at the cottage after a rather strange winter season. Winter started out by being unseasonably warm, and there wasn't even snow for Christmas. Then in early February, it got very cold. Still very little snow, but temperatures were below zero at night for much of two weeks. The cottage seemed especially warm and snug then, thanks to our radiant floor heat, auxiliary forced air system, and of course roaring fires in the fireplace (with the firewood bills to prove it). As if to make up for the lack of earlier snowfall, early March roared in with what felt like all of the snow that hadn't fallen before. While taking winter pictures without leaves in the way, I saw a radically different view of our structure. Seen from below, the cottage is reduced to a roof floating over the terrace wall.



Seen from below, the cottage is reduced to a roof floating over a wall.

Work week came and went. There were no major projects this year, but there are always leaves to rake, as well as driveway gravel and landscape timbers to put back in place from where the snowplow left them.

We are adding two reports to this issue reflecting the cottage's location and partners. Now I would like to share some details about our relationship with Mirror Lake State Park and the Mirror Lake Association. We are good neighbors sharing the lake, so it seems fitting to show how the SPCC fits into the bigger picture of Lake and Park.

The Seth Peterson Cottage is within the boundaries of Mirror Lake State Park, and is owned by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Our not-for-profit group

leases the cottage, and pays a percentage of our proceeds as rent. By law, those funds go directly into the state budget, not to the local park. We have always had a good working relationship with the park personnel, and try to be supportive of both the lake and the park. For example, when the new park headquarters was built, we borrowed money to help fund the addition of a needed meeting/education room, with the Mirror Lake Association and the Ho Chunk Nation providing the rest of the funding. We hope to help with future projects, also.

The Mirror Lake Association consists of property owners around the lake plus interested members of the general public. It was this group that encouraged one of its members, Audrey Laatsch, the SPCC's late founding president, to investigate the possibility of restoring the cottage. Our bylaws specify that some of our board members must also be members of the MLA, and that its president be a member of our board.

The SPCC, in turn, has assisted their efforts to improve the lake—recently by contributing to a lake dredging study and a sediment basin study—and we make an annual contribution to help with other study and engineering costs. The Association itself has recently been instrumental in finding a new way to improve the lake that you will read about inside this issue.

I hope that you enjoy receiving news about the park and the beautiful lake where our cottage is located. The fall newsletter will provide details of the lake and photos of the wonderful scenery around the lake, as seen by our guests from the cottage canoe. I wish you an enjoyable summer and hope that you can attend an open house or stay at the cottage.

*Claire Barnett*

*President, Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy*

## SETH PETERSON COTTAGE GARNERS MORE PRESS ATTENTION

Gail Kohl, Marketing Director

“When *USA Today* called recently, asking me to describe the most romantic experience or setting a person would find in Wisconsin, I didn’t want to pick something predictable or overused. So I chose the very private Seth Peterson Cottage, on a bluff overlooking Mirror Lake.” So Mary Bergin began her column called “Roads Traveled” for the Madison *Capital Times*. I would guess that is how many guests feel when they stay at the Seth Peterson Cottage, judging from the notes in our guest book.

The cottage is featured in the current issue of the *Frank Lloyd Wright Quarterly*, published by the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. For Wright enthusiasts who don’t own a Wright home, it’s now possible to experience living in any of four of them. Two of the overnight rental houses are in Wisconsin—the Seth Peterson Cottage and the Bernard Schwartz House. The other two are the Haynes House in Indiana and the Penfield House in Ohio.

If you like collecting travel books, as I do, pick up a copy of *Great Wisconsin Winter Weekends*, A Wisconsin Trails guidebook. You will find wonderful places to visit, including our Seth Peterson Cottage. Also look for Mark Blakeslee’s piece in the book, *Who was Seth Peterson?* Mark is President of the Mirror Lake Association and a member of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy board.

For Pedro Guerrero fans (aren’t we all!), his new book, *Pedro E. Guerrero: A Photographer’s Journey*

(Princeton Architectural Press) is a poignant memoir. This gorgeous book, with more than two hundred of his photographs, covers his sixty-year career and is full of his wit and insight. It begins with his simple declaration: “Through some combination of luck, talents, and naiveté, I became a photographer. Eventually I worked for three of America’s great artists, Frank Lloyd Wright, Alexander Calder, and Louise Nevelson. All three of these gifted artists shared a dedication to their work that profoundly affected me. Each had a distinctive personality I attempted to capture through my lens. . . . I was comfortable with them all, and I tried to remain their trusted observer. All of them were my friends.”

*\*Guerrero’s photograph of Frank Lloyd Wright hangs above the bed at the cottage. Pete gave it as a gift to Audrey Laatsch for her leading the effort to restore the cottage. ■*

## HAIKU IN THE WOODS

Jeanne

My love and I came  
to reflect on nature’s gifts.  
It was a child’s dream  
a small cabin in the woods.

Twinkling stars above  
trees, lichen, and moss  
remove us from city lights.  
Peace descends on us.

The fire warms the night  
pine woods fall silent  
Mirror Lake reflects moonlight  
This is paradise

*(Editor’s note: OK, Jeanne kind of bends the rules of haiku, but it’s the spirit that counts.)*

## THE MUG THAT NEVER WAS

Claire Barnett

Each year, a special coffee mug is designed by Flying Fish Graphics, of Blue Mounds, Wisconsin, and is given to each of our guests who stay at the cottage during the year. All the mugs are dated, and the color and design varies from year to year. Sometimes, the mug includes a quotation chosen by our editor, Jerry Minnich. Recent mugs have included a color photo of the cottage, an architectural floor plan, a silhouette of Mr. Wright, and several of his quotations.

This year’s mug is dark blue with gold writing that says, “Seth Peterson Cottage 2007” on one side, and the following quotation from Mr. Wright on the other side:

*“Architecture is something profound. It is something in the human spirit and the human soul, and it requires poetry.”*

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

President: Claire Barnett  
First Vice President: Bill Martinelli  
Second Vice President: Peter Rott  
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### Members

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Carolyne Kotchi, Jerry Minnich, John Muchow, Kermit Traska

### Ex-officio members

Mark Blakeslee, President, Mirror Lake Association  
Paul Zajackowski, Superintendent, Mirror Lake State Park

### Conservancy Staff

Office Manager: Sheila Bentley  
Marketing Coordinator: Gail Kohl

For cottage reservations call the Sand County Service Company, Lake Delton, Wisconsin: 608 254-6551.

But there might have been a different quotation. If you have read either Mr. Wright's *Autobiography* or *The Natural House*, you know that he had a wry sense of humor. For a while, we considered the following Wright quotation for this year's mug:

*"A physician can bury his mistakes. But the architect can only advise his clients to plant vines."*

As much as we liked this quote, we decided against using it on the mug, for fear of offending some of our good friends.

But now you know, as Paul Harvey would say, the rest of the story.



### FROM THE GUEST BOOK

"A little piece of heaven right here on earth. What a wonderful gift to be able to come to this place and share it with someone you love." ~ *Carol and Jim*

"Thanks to all who maintain our Frank Lloyd Wright 'time share!'" ~ *John and Pamela*

"We loved every minute here and even when we were leaving, still pinched ourselves in disbelief that we spent a weekend in a dwelling designed by Frank Lloyd Wright." ~ *Craig and Terry*

"Our seventh or eighth visit. As usual, we planned to hunker down with good books, good wine, and appalling amounts of food. Night two had us up at 1:30 a.m., convinced that a rabid pterodactyl, at least, was screeching. . . . Imagine our chagrin to find it was only the famous raccoon lounging on top of the bird feeder." ~ *Tom and Diana*



### 2006 ANNUAL MEETING AND HOLIDAY PARTY

The SPCC Seventeenth Annual Meeting was held at the cottage on December 10, 2006, following the Sunday Open House tours. President Claire Barnett gave her Annual Report, and singled out Jan Aslaksen, Bill Martinelli, John Muchow, and Paul Zajackowski for their roles in the successful cottage renovation project that was completed earlier in the year.

The terms of board members Tim Heggland, Jerry Minnich, and Peter Rott expired this year, and they were unanimously elected to new three-year terms.



The principal officers, Claire Barnett, President; Bill Martinelli, First Vice President; Peter Rott, Second Vice President; Paul Wagner, Treasurer; and Chris Wontor, Secretary; were unanimously re-elected for another year's term.

Committee assignments remained the same, with the exception of adding former SPCC President Jan Aslaksen to the Facilities Committee, and Office Manager Sheila Bentley to the Volunteer Committee.

A pilot version of the cottage video history program was shown at the conclusion of the meeting, and was enthusiastically received by those present. (See article following.)

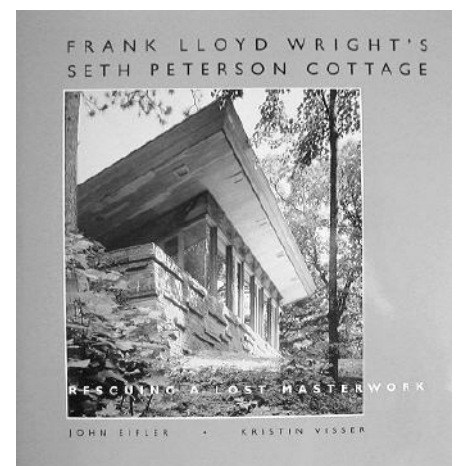
The meeting was followed by the holiday and volunteer recognition party. Tour guides Patrick Cleary, Bill Martinelli, Carolyne Kotchi, Claire Barnett, Peter Rott, Doug Bentley, Diana Trendt, Jim Booth, and Carolyne DeLong were presented with dinner gift certificates in recognition of their frequent open house service. The evening concluded with dinner and trimming of the cottage Christmas tree. ■

### COTTAGE VIDEO PROGRAM

Work is progressing on the cottage video program project. The two short films, "The History of the Seth Peterson Cottage" and "The Architecture of the Seth Peterson Cottage," will be completed by summer 2007 and will be available for viewing at the Mirror Lake State Park Headquarters. The programs are being produced by Bill Kult of Elements Digital Studio, narrated by noted actor Lee Ernst, and are approximately twelve minutes each in length. A future hour-long program that will expand upon the two shorter films is also being planned. ■

### RESCUING A LOST MASTERPIECE

*This is the second in a series of excerpts 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. This excerpt discusses the Cottage as an expression of Wright's Usonian concept.*



The first Usonian houses were built from relatively inexpensive materials such as plywood and boards with concrete floors. The use of brick was limited to chimneys and selected walls. Nearly all of the first Usonians were designed

with flat roofs. In time, Wright further developed the concept by experimenting with alternative building materials and various plan and roof types.

Wright's use of the dramatic shed roof similar to the one on the Seth Peterson Cottage began to appear in his designs as early as 1936 in a design for the living room of a large home in Marquette, Michigan, and reappeared in other Wright designs of the 1940s and 1950s. The design origins of the Seth Peterson Cottage can be directly traced to an unbuilt 1947 design for a small summer cottage Wright did for Berta Hamilton in Brookline, Vermont. Like the Seth Peterson Cottage, the Hamilton project gathers the living and dining areas under a sloping roof with a large window wall. A terrace, enclosed by a low parapet wall, projects from the living area. A bedroom and studio are tucked under a flat roof behind the central fireplace. The kitchen is located to one side in a two-story masonry mass under a flat roof. Later that year, Wright proposed a two-bedroom variation of the Hamilton project to Ruth Keith, who commissioned a design for a summer cottage in Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, she also elected not to pursue construction.

Another direct link with the design of the Seth Peterson Cottage is the 1952 design for Archie Teater in Bliss, Idaho. Wright was never one to throw away a good plan, and in this case he conceived a small residence/studio on a diamond grid, based on the earlier Hamilton project. The design transforms the Hamilton project one step closer to the Seth Peterson Cottage by relocating the primary entry to the side of the shed roof, adjacent to the kitchen area. Once again, the combined living/dining area is located beneath a large shed roof, and the kitchen, living, and dining areas surround a massive central fireplace. A single bedroom and bath were placed behind and to one side of the fireplace.

Simultaneous with the Peterson Cottage, Wright designed a house for Don Sturmquist in Bountiful, Utah. The 1958 Sturmquist House contains many of the elements found in both the Peterson Cottage and Teater Studio. This house was conceived on a diamond grid, yet has a continuous living/dining/kitchen area radiating from a central hearth. The terrace, enclosed by a low parapet wall, projects from the exterior façade of the living area. The utility and bath rooms were placed behind the kitchen.

An extended bedroom wing, placed behind the bathroom, makes this house considerably larger than the Peterson Cottage. By removing the bedroom wing and increasing interior angles from 60 degrees to 90 degrees, Wright could have produced a very near cousin of the Peterson Cottage. ■

*Next issue: The commission, design, and construction of the Cottage, including the story of the client, Seth Peterson.*

## VISSER PRIZE AWARDED FOR WILLEY HOUSE RESTORATION

**T**he 2007 Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award has been given to Steve Sikora and Lynette Erickson-Sikora,

in recognition of their work in restoring the 1934 Willey House, in Minneapolis.

The house, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for Malcolm and Nancy Willey, was the first built project for Wright during the Great Depression and the only project for a paying client on the drafting boards during the early years of the Taliesin Fellowship. It is considered a bridge between Wright's Prairie years and the Usonian houses that followed.

Steve Sikora and Lynette Erickson-Sikora acquired the house in 2002. Much like the Seth Peterson Cottage, it was un-lived in and languishing. Thus began the long and meticulous restoration process. The core restoration of the house was completed in 2005, and execution of further design elements, as envisioned by Wright, continue to be implemented. Commented William Allin Storrer, professor of architecture at the University of Texas at Austin, "I liked seeing items that the Willeys could not afford, but which are essential to the well-being of the structure, being finished at this time. The restoration process will bring this marvelous structure to completion as Wright envisioned it."

Throughout the restoration, the owners have maintained a Restoration Journal, which is accessible on their web site [www.thewilleyhouse.com](http://www.thewilleyhouse.com).

The Visser Award, currently \$5,000, 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. The next award will be given by the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy in 2009, for work done in 2007 and 2008. ■

## MIRROR LAKE STATE PARK REPORT

*Paul Zajackowski*

**W**inter lasted longer than in previous years, offering excellent opportunities for cross-country skiing and ice fishing late into March. The change in weather has also allowed the park staff to work on projects started last fall. These included trail repairs, and completing electrical and final landscaping and cleanup in the Cliffwood campground. In April, the park staff seeded the new trails that eliminate many of the road crossings that currently exist within the trail system. These new trails will be open for public use in mid- to late summer. Along with developing these new trail segments, Park Manager Becky Green is already working on a project to redesign the entire trail system within the park, a long overdue improvement.

Other spring projects included park cleanup and the planting of more than 5,000 trees. The Friends of Mirror Lake will continue to implement the invasive species plan that was developed in 2003 by Clark Forestry, and they have contracted with Seifert's Field & Forest LLC to remove wild parsnip, vetch, Japanese barberry, and other invasive plants and shrubs around the prairies at the southwest corner of the park.

Future projects currently in the engineering and bidding stage include construction of a new firewood shed, and continuing work with engineers and with other state agencies on the Ishnala Trail development project. ■

## NEWS FROM MIRROR LAKE

Mark Blakeslee

**T**he Mirror Lake Management District was created on March 21, 2006 by unanimous vote of the Sauk County Board of Supervisors after 82 percent of the property owners within the district boundaries signed a petition asking the county to form the district. The District is a special unit of government that has taxing authority to finance projects approved by the elected board of commissioners, which also has representatives from Sauk County and the Town of Delton.

As a governmental agency, the management district has the opportunity to apply for state grants to help offset the costs of studies or projects. Prior to this, the Mirror Lake Association would have had to ask the town or village to apply on their behalf for grants to pay for such studies or projects.

Current plans involve building a sediment trap and working on some smaller erosion control projects around the lake, all of which will improve the quality of the lake for visitors and residents alike. A volunteer group with training and funding from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will begin this summer to monitor and test the water quality of the lake. ■

## APRIL WORK WEEK

**E**ach year, we reserve one week in April to spruce up the cottage and make any necessary repairs. This year,



Wednesday's work (April 11<sup>th</sup>) was interrupted by a heavy snowstorm, which was in sharp contrast to the nice spring weather we enjoyed earlier in the week. Fortunately, the outdoor work such as raking leaves and replacing gravel on the driveway had already been done, as well as replacing a snow-plow-damaged driveway light and making some repairs to the planters on the storage shed. The crew from Mirror Lake State Park came and removed a few hazardous trees that could have fallen on our driveway and paths.

The bedroom mattress was replaced, as it is every year, and adjustments were made to the cottage doors and screens to make them latch properly. All chairs were removed to check or replace the bottom slides, which wear out quickly on our stone floors.



Work week ended with the installation of some new shelving as well as a general cleanup in our rented storage space. Bill Martinelli stayed at the cottage and arranged all the work, as usual. And now our "gem in the woods" is ready to welcome another season of visitors. ■

## COTTAGE ART

**A**rtist and tour guide, L. Genevieve Davis, displayed her cottage art at the 2006 Annual Meeting and Holiday Party on December 10, 2006.

She is also the creator of a series of prints based on her tempera, watercolor and oil paintings of Taliesin, available through [TaliesinBookStore.com](http://TaliesinBookStore.com)



Artist L Genevieve Davis with her cottage art.

# WRITINGS

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Lots of snow created a wintery picnic at the cottage, a damaged light post, and interesting angles on the sheds...



Work week...



Ready for Summer...




Adventure awaits...



**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. Forest Green or Tan w/bright red logo. One size fits all. <input type="checkbox"/> Forest Green <input type="checkbox"/> Tan <b>Mark color.</b>			\$15.00		
100% cotton pique polo shirt w/Cottage logo and name in red. <input type="checkbox"/> Forest Green <input type="checkbox"/> Natural <b>Mark color &amp; size.</b> <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. <input type="checkbox"/> Beige <input type="checkbox"/> Blue <b>Mark background color.</b>			\$25.00		
Cottage Jewelry of black, white and silver, based on design in the clerestory panels.					
Letter Opener			\$25.00		
Long Earrings			\$30.00		
Short Earrings			\$20.00		
Cuff Links			\$29.00		
Bar Pin			\$20.00		
Cottage Pin, red logo/black background			\$5.00		
Book: <i>Frank Lloyd Wright's Seth Peterson Cottage: Rescuing a Lost Masterwork</i> by John Eifler, AIA and Kristin Visser. <b>Special Edition (signed &amp; numbered)</b> \$90.00 <b>Softcover Edition</b> \$15.00					
Frank Lloyd Wright Quarterly Magazine with Seth Peterson Cottage articles <input type="checkbox"/> Summer 1993 B & W \$5.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Winter 2007 Color \$5.00					
<b>Merchandise subtotal</b>					
<b>Member discount 10%</b>					-
<b>Shipping &amp; handling</b>					
Under \$10			\$2.00		
\$10-\$30			\$3.00		
\$30-\$100			\$6.00		
Over \$100 -- free shipping					
<b>Total (membership + merchandise - discount + shipping)</b>					

Make Check payable to: Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, Inc. Send to: **SPCC, c/o Wegner LLP, Box 150, Baraboo, WI 53913**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

# WRITINGS

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

Forwarding Service Requested.



What's Inside...  
The Cottage emerges  
from another winter season.

Non-Profit  
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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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

Sunday, **July 8**, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2  
Guest Speaker to be announced.

Sunday, **August 12**, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2

Sunday, **September 9**, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2

Sunday, **October 14**, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2  
Fall Color Boat Tour & Reception, 4-7 pm, \$20

Sunday, **November 11**, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2

Sunday, **December 9**, 1-4 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$2  
Directors/Members Annual Meeting, 4-5 pm

**Correction:** The Fall 2006 newsletter listed an incorrect telephone number for Sand County Services and for cottage reservations. The correct number is: **608 254-6551**



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

