

# WRITINGS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY

Vol. XXIV, Issue 2

## COTTAGE COMMENTS BY CLAIRE

**T**he biggest news of our Summer edition is the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the cottage being rehabilitated and made available for rent and tours. There are pictures and an article inside with details.


Our organization began as a steering committee in 1989, eventually forming a not-for-profit group named the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy. A few of us have been associated with the cottage for over 23 years! There are details inside of who we are.

Many of you reading this are already familiar with the widespread summer drought. Fortunately, being in the woods, the drought has been less apparent at the cottage, with the exception of the parched lawn. Even that has perked up, after some much-needed rain. Comments in the guest book bless us for the air conditioning in the cottage during 90-degree heat spells!

News from earlier this spring concerns a change in the conservancy leadership. I had announced at the January board meeting that I was going to have to step down as president of the Conservancy. I requested and obtained election as Interim President until after the April board meeting so I could complete some projects and bring my term to an even number of years. I became Acting President in April 2004 when then-President Patrick Cleary resigned due to an increased workload caused by a promotion and the restructuring at his workplace. I was not intending to set an eight-year presidential record, but it appears that I have done so.

I will remain on the board of directors and will continue to produce *Writings*, following the example of our Founding President, Audrey Laatsch. Her "Have I Told You?" column set the tone for communicating with you, our members, using a personal touch that I have tried to emulate since taking responsibility for the newsletter in 2003, after Audrey's death. I hope that you enjoy and will continue to enjoy, our shared vision of *Writings*. As always, I encourage you to send any newsletter suggestions, comments, guest photos and articles to me at [crmrogan@yahoo.com](mailto:crmrogan@yahoo.com).

The Jill Vladick Memorial Scholarship Award is presented to a Taliesin student who has shown special qualities in his/her work during the past year. The recipient, chosen by Taliesin staff, receives a two-night stay at the cottage and dinner at the nearby historic Ishnala restaurant. See the article inside about this year's unusual recipients.

One thing that we have learned over the years is that visiting the cottage is the best way to understand and appreciate it. There are many good photographs of it on line, but there is nothing like first-hand experience. Please join us for a tour if you are in the area. Better yet, stay overnight. You have seen praise for the cottage from our guest-book entries in each *Writings* issue. We always include guest entries to help you experience the cottage as others see it. Here is an especially succinct observation from guests Dan and Carolyn: "*This was a truly ethereal experience. Immersion sure beats observation.*" 

Claire Barnett



Heather Sabin and Carolyne Kotchi arrange flowers for the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration


## FROM THE PRESIDENT

**H**ello! I'm Kermit Traska, the new president of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy. In January, Claire Barnett announced that she would be stepping down from the presidency after eight years in that position, and I was elected at our April Board of Directors meeting. Actually, Claire has been active in the Conservancy from the very beginning and we thank her for her hard work and dedication over these many years.

There are two other people who have been with the organization from the beginning—Bill Martinelli and me. Bill has diligently overseen the rehabilitation and maintenance of the cottage since the beginning. We want to recognize and thank Bill for his attention to detail of keeping the cottage ready for the monthly Open Houses and annual work week. As for myself, I served as liaison from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to the Conservancy from the beginning until the mid-1990s and then was elected to the Board of Directors in 2001. I look forward to continuing to work for the Conservancy, carrying out its vision to maintain and preserve the Seth Peterson Cottage for future generations.

The success of the cottage comes from several factors. The first is the relationship among the Cottage Conservancy, the DNR and the Mirror Lake Association (MLA). The Conservancy is in our second 15-year lease from the DNR and is very much supported by the residents around Mirror Lake who make up the MLA. The second factor is the many volunteers who serve with the Conservancy. Volunteers serve on the Board of Directors, carry out the maintenance of the cottage, and lead tours on open house days. Thank you volunteers for all you do! And, the third factor is the ability to rent out the cottage for overnight stays. The rent provides the financial resources needed to maintain the cottage.

This year is the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of opening the Seth Peterson Cottage to the public. The anniversary was celebrated on June 10<sup>th</sup> with more than 200 guests visiting that day. Anniversary photos can be viewed on the Conservancy's updated webpage at [www.sethpeterson.org](http://www.sethpeterson.org). You can also "friend us" on Facebook by entering "Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy, Inc." in the search box and pressing "enter." Take a tour of the webpage and *friend us* to keep up with what is happening at the cottage.

I look forward to working with the Conservancy in the years to come. To get the most out of the cottage, plan a visit on an open house day, the second Sunday of every month, or, get a reservation to stay overnight in a truly remarkable Frank Lloyd Wright-designed cottage. 

*Kermit Traska*


## MIRROR LAKE ASSOCIATION NEWS

*Mark Blakeslee, President*

**I**n June the Mirror Lake Association held its annual meeting. Thanks go out to Ishnala for their generosity in hosting us. The meeting had two good presenters. Paul Wolters of the Sauk County Historical Society gave a presentation on the formation of Mirror Lake, and on the Morris Hotel owned by the Ringling circus family and located on the east end of the lake next to the dam. Many great pictures went along with his presentation. A recording of Paul's talk is on our website at [mirrorlakeassociation.com](http://mirrorlakeassociation.com).

The other presenter was Jared Urban from the DNR. Most of the non-camping area of the Mirror Lake State Park has been designated a state natural area, and Jared is the DNR representative responsible for helping to restore that area to its natural state. Keeping the land natural is part of the Mirror Lake Association's mission, and we will be taking a more active role in this restoration. We have already spent a day pulling garlic mustard, an invasive plant.

This year we are leasing Sauk County's weed harvester for use on the west end of the lake. The harvester was out in June and will make future appearances as needed. We have also contracted with Onterra of DePere, Wisconsin—a highly regarded company that conducts lake management planning—to do a study of aquatic vegetation. The study will be useful in understanding what vegetation is in various parts of the lake, and will be a first step to initiate future controls. Later this summer we will also do a fish and habitat study to complete a total comprehensive study of the lake.

Our annual association picnic is scheduled for August 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm and September 1<sup>st</sup> will be our second annual flotilla. The public is invited to both events at the park. Check out our website above for further information. If you have any thoughts, comments or concerns on Mirror Lake, please contact me at my e-mail address: [mblakeslee@uwalumni.com](mailto:mblakeslee@uwalumni.com) 

## MIRROR LAKE STATE PARK REPORT

*Becky Green*

**O**verall, the summer has been going well, even with the drought! Mother Nature has been good to us over the last week by giving us some rain. The grass and the trees have perked up a little and it has also been nice for the campers so they can still have a campfire. The burning ban may return if there is not enough rain.

Our amphitheater remodel project is still underway. The seating portion of the project, which was paid for by the Friends of Mirror Lake and a Stewardship

Grant they were awarded, is completed and looks beautiful! Photos have been posted on the Friends of Mirror Lake Facebook page if you would like to take a look. We continue to work on lighting, sound system and the stage. Our goal is to have it completed this fall but that is dependent on additional funding of approximately \$45,000 that is needed for its completion.

The Mirror Lake Superintendent position is still vacant. We have gone through a second round of applications and interviews but were unable to find a match. We will continue to try to fill it in future hiring processes.

Our new full-time Ranger, Patrick Carlson, started on May 7<sup>th</sup> and has hit the ground running with a wide range of education and experience. He grew up in Somerset, earned an Associate's Degree in Criminal Justice and attended the Law Enforcement Recruit Academy at Chippewa Valley Technical College. He then attended the University of Wisconsin River Falls and worked on a Bachelor's Degree in Conservation. He worked as a Ranger-Enforcement limited-term employee at Kinnickinnic State Park, and was an active member of the St. Joseph Fire/Rescue and an EMT Intermediate-Technician at Osceola Area Ambulance Service. We look forward to the off season for more training opportunities for him. □

### JILL VLADICK AWARD

**T**his year's recipient of the Jill Vladick Memorial Scholarship Award is Sam Wharton. Sam is somewhat different from past award winners, having come to study at Taliesin after retiring. He and his spouse, Lani, applied to join the Fellowship as a couple after an inspir-

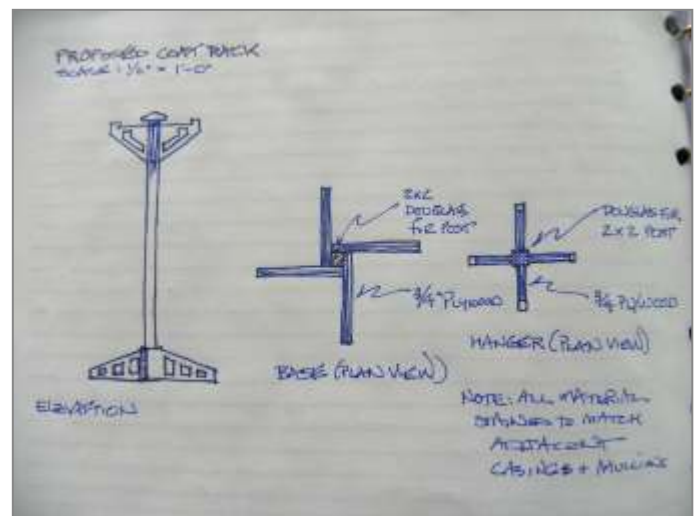


Lani and Sam Wharton at the cottage.

ing tour of Taliesin West. Sam has been involved with architecture throughout his career, having built solar and earth-sheltered houses and spending 30 years selling windows and providing window specifications to architects.

Both Sam and Lani like the sense of community at Taliesin. Sam has shared his building and proofreading skills with other students, and Lani, in the words of Minerva Montooth, "...has been a wonderful contributor to our Taliesin life. She is good at whatever she does."

While at the cottage, they enjoyed the canoe and Lani used some of her photographs from out on the water to produce some wonderful nature note cards. Sam designed a beautiful coat rack for the cottage that will be built soon. Writing in the guestbook, they stated that "Living here if only for a moment has altered how we consider and conceive of space and place." □



Proposed coat rack designed by Sam Wharton.

### FROM THE GUEST BOOK

"We celebrated our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Dale's retirement from UPS. Can't think of a better way to start the next chapters of our lives together. We leave here with feelings of peace and tranquility, after being enveloped by this cottage while enjoying the wonders of nature." *Dale and Carla, Wisconsin*

"For a brief moment in time, we lived the dream. From the raccoon who peeped his head in our window to the leisurely canoe ride, we enjoyed the splendor of Wisconsin's beauty in this fabulous small architectural gem. We hope to return someday to this serene piece of heaven on earth, charmed by its welcoming hearth and massive windows bringing the outside in." *Alexandra and Phil, Los Angeles*

"First trip after a one-and-a-half-year wait and it was everything and more than expected. At first sight it seemed like an enchanted doll house. A tiny gem that was more magical than photography could capture. Once inside it was both spacious and intimate. One never had the sense of being enclosed except possibly that wonderful shower. A wonderful stay!" *Buffy and Ted, West Virginia*


## KRISTIN VISSER HISTORICAL PRESERVATION AWARD

**A**pplicants are sought for the 2013 Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award.

The award 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, 2013, for work done in 2011 and 2012.

The 2013 award, which will include an honorarium of \$5,000, will be presented in June 2013 at the Seth Peterson Cottage.

Complete requirements may be obtained by contacting the Award committee chairman, Jerry Minnich, at [jminnich7@att.net](mailto:jminnich7@att.net). 



The Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award plaque was mounted on a Wisconsin-shaped flagstone during the April Work Week.

**“Mirror lake shimmering  
An ant hurries past on the sill  
Crow calls ‘Good Morning’.”**

*Gary and Kate, St Paul*

## SETH PETERSON COTTAGE 20<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

*Gail Kohl*



**T**he Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy celebrated in style its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the restoration on Sunday, June 10<sup>th</sup>. Nearly 200 enthusiastic visitors participated in the fun with free open house tours, music, cake, and lemonade, along with a drawing for a free night at the cottage. All visitors received a copy of the Anniversary booklet highlighting the cottage history, updated by Bill Martinelli. A program was presented by President Kermit Traska and past presidents Jan Aslaksen and Patrick Cleary.

Publicity for the day included a full-page story in the Baraboo newspaper. Many people who attended the open house came because of this great article. We drew many local people who had never been to the Cottage—young and old alike!

Sponsorship for the event included Sand County Service Company, the Ishnala restaurant which donated three large cakes and lemonade, and Spring Brook, which provided a golf cart for transporting people back and forth from the cottage.

Thank you to the Anniversary Planning Committee members Mark Blakeslee, Gail Kohl, Bill Martinelli, Heather Sabin, and Kermit Traska, who enjoyed planning the festivities. A special thank you is extended to all who volunteered their time to make this a remarkable day in the history of the cottage: Jan Aslaksen, Claire Barnett, Mark Blakeslee, Jim and Nancy Booth, Patrick Cleary, Ron Dakter, Gail Kohl, Carolyn Kotchi, Larry LaMar, Bill Martinelli, Donna Ochsner, Peter Rott, Heather Sabin, Kermit Traska, and Diana Trendt. 



SCENES FROM THE 20<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



(L to R) President Kermit Traska, SW District Parks/Rec. Supv. Paul Zajackowski, and former President Claire Barnett share a moment before the program. President Kermit Traska presents the opening remarks. Gail Kohl, Bill Martinelli and Heather Sabin prepare to serve one of the three celebratory cakes.



(Clockwise from top left)  
The celebration begins. Waiting for a tour of the cottage. Amy Traska (with daughter Elizabeth) provide background music. A group tours the cottage. Ron Dakter and Jim Booth at the merchandise table. Visitors enjoy a picnic.



Photos on this page by Paula Hamilton, Surrey, England

## COTTAGE WORK WEEK

Bill Martinelli

**A**pril 8-13, 2012 marked the 20<sup>th</sup> work week at the Seth Peterson Cottage. This year was a relatively quiet one, with the biggest project being a complete rebuild of the pier and stairs down to the lake. Joe Dorava did a great job of strengthening the structure of both the pier and stairs, which should help lessen any future ice damage.

We have an ongoing furniture repair and refinishing program, and selected furniture needing attention was sent out for repair. All upholstery was cleaned and lamp shades on the living room floor lamp and the two table lamps in the bedroom were replaced.

Hardware on the tall windows in the living room was replaced to help make it easier to open and close the windows.

Work Week tasks included a check of the heating and cooling systems and checking the roofs for any leaks or flashing problems, which this year included caulking the edge of the membrane roof and the cedar fascia over the bedroom. The mattress and box spring in the bedroom were replaced, which is done each year, and the landscaping, gravel drive, and parking areas were cleaned up after a relatively mild winter. Wood chips were placed around the cottage and on the paths. All of the outdoor benches were also power washed and refinished, and the porta-potty received its yearly cleaning and sanitizing. The Kristin Visser Historical Preservation Award plaque was mounted on a slab of sandstone and is now on display.

Thanks to Larry LaMar, Peter Rott, Barry Owens, Steve Gabby, Tom Martinelli, Bruce Gregg, and Joe Dorava for all their volunteer help during the week. Also thanks to Becky Green and her staff at Mirror Lake State Park for providing wood chips and taking down some problem trees around the cottage. ☐



Top: New Pier

Bottom: New Stairs



The Cottage  
in Springtime



Top: Refinished Benches

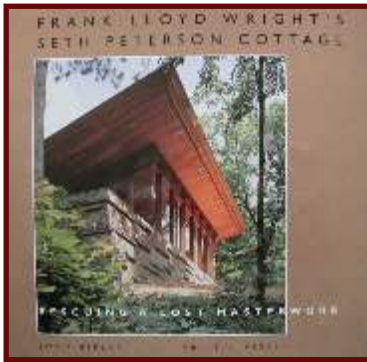
Bottom: Washing Windows



*New pier and stairs photos by Claire Barnett, all others on this page by Bill Martinelli.*

## RESCUING A LOST MASTERWORK

This is the twelfth 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 challenges posed by the slope of the cottage's roof.



The shed roof over the living room was originally specified as cedar shingles nailed to 1 x 8 sheathing. Typically cedar shingles are applied to roofs no flatter than a 4 in 12 (rise to run) roof slope. Wright, ever the optimist, designed the roof slope to be 2-1/2 to 12. During the rehabilitation a special roofing sub-base known as Ice and Water Shield was installed beneath the cedar shingles to help guard against leaks and ice dams. The flat segments of the roof were originally sealed with a conventional 4-ply asphalt roof which is durable but requires considerable maintenance and has a relatively short life span. After considerable discussion with State Historical Society staff, who wanted to use asphalt roofing as was done originally, EPDM roofing was installed. EPDM is a relatively new roofing material comprised of a single sheet of "synthetic neoprene" that has proven to have superior performance and durability for buildings with minimal slope roofs, providing the sheathing's underside is properly vented externally.

Originally, the roof structure contained only two inches of insulation, causing heavy snow to melt quickly from heat loss. John recommended that the maximum amount of insulation be installed as part of the rehabilitation work. Preservation, by its very nature, should work hand-in-hand with energy conservation and every effort should be made to reduce energy consumption. One of the best methods of ensuring preservation of an historic building is to keep the monthly utility costs as low as possible. □

Next time: Masonry walls, chimney, and flooring.



A bird's-eye view of the cottage model built by Ron Olsen.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Website

Our new Seth Peterson Cottage website is up and running and has a completely new look. Check it out at: [www.sethpeterson.org](http://www.sethpeterson.org)

### Cottage Merchandise

The cottage merchandise order form has been moved to The Gift Shop, on our website: [www.sethpeterson.org](http://www.sethpeterson.org) There will soon be pictures of our merchandise on the website Gift Shop page.

### Fall Color Boat Tour and Reception

As the newsletter goes to press, there are still some available seats on the Fall Color Boat Tour October 14<sup>th</sup>. See full details at: [http://www.sethpeterson.org/about\\_events.html](http://www.sethpeterson.org/about_events.html)

### Annual Meeting Notice

The Annual Meeting of the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy will be held on Sunday December 9<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 pm at the cottage. It will include annual and financial reports, and the election of Board Members. Any member of the Conservancy whose annual dues have been paid may attend and vote on any motions made at the meeting. The meeting will be approximately an hour long and will be followed by a private party for cottage volunteers. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting should send an email to [ktraska@frontier.com](mailto:ktraska@frontier.com), with "Annual Meeting" as the subject.

## 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  
 Coordinator and Photography: Claire Barnett, Baraboo, WI  
 Design & Production: Alice J. Seeliger, AJS Creative, Brooklyn, WI  
 Submit articles/photos to Claire Barnett at: [crmrogan@yahoo.com](mailto:crmrogan@yahoo.com)  
 Visit us on the web at: [www.sethpeterson.org](http://www.sethpeterson.org)  
 Cottage Voice Mail: 877 466-2358

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

President: Kermit Traska  
 First Vice President: Bill Martinelli  
 Second Vice President: James Booth  
 Treasurer: Paul Wagner  
 Secretary: Peter Rott

### Members

Claire Barnett, Jim Draeger, Bill Dupuy, Tim Heggland, Carolyne Kotchi, Raymond Matlosz, Jerry Minnich, John Muchow, Heather Sabin, Cheryl Weston

### Ex-officio members

Mark Blakeslee, President, Mirror Lake Association  
 Becky Green, Acting Superintendent, Mirror Lake State Park

### Conservancy Staff

Office Manager: Ron Dakter  
 Marketing Coordinator: Gail Kohl

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

# WRITINGS

THE SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY, INC.  
400 VIKING DRIVE  
REEDSBURG, WI 53959

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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

Sunday, **October 14**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4  
4:30-7:30 pm, Fall Color Boat Tour & Reception, \$25

### Fall Color Boat Tour and Reception

As the newsletter goes to press, there are still some available seats on the Fall Color Boat Tour on October 14<sup>th</sup>.

See full details at: [http://www.sethpeterson.org/about\\_events.html](http://www.sethpeterson.org/about_events.html)

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

Sunday, **December 9**, 1-3:30 pm, Open House, Guided Tours, \$4  
Directors/Members Annual Meeting 4:30-5:30 pm  
Private Party for Cottage Volunteers 5:30 pm

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

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

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

Join us at one of our monthly open houses.

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



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).*

