United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

3

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms* Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic	Peterson, S	eth, Cotta	ge			······			
and/or common			- N/A						
2. Loca	ation								
street & number	Lake Dollo	nue Tor	SWŻ, NEŻ, Section 31, Town 13 North, Range 6 East. 스 Lake Delton			t	not for publication		
city, town	Delton, Town		d <u>x</u> vic	inity of 🔨		sional district	2nd		
state Wisc	onsin	code	55	county	Sauk		cod	e 111	
3. Clas	sificati	on							
Category district X building(s) structure site object	Ownership _X_ public private both Public Acquis in process being cons	ition A	Status occupied _X unoccupied work in progress Accessible yes: restricted yes: unrestricted _X no		Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military		museum park private residence religious scientific transportation x other: none		
4. Own	er of Pr	operty	1						
name ^W is.	Department o						on, Adminis Resource M		
street & number	Post Office	Box 7921							
city, town	Madison		vic	inity of		state	Wisconsin	53707	
5. Loca	ation of	Legal	Dese	criptie	on				
courthouse, regi	stry of deeds, etc	. Sauk	c County	Courthou	ise				
street & number		515	Oak Str	eet			 		
city, town		Bara	iboo			state	Wisconsin	53913	
6. Rep	resenta	tion in	Exis	sting s	Surve	eys			
title Wisconsin	n Inventory o	f Historic	Places	has this pro	perty been	determined e	l e gible?	yes _X_ no	
date 1973					fed	leralx_sta	ite count	y local	
depository for su	urvey records	State His 816 State		Society					
city, town		Madison				state	Wisconsin	53706	

7. Description

Condition

____excellent _____d ____good _____ru ____fair _____u

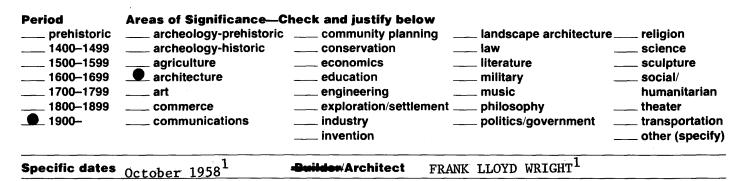
Check one deteriorated unaltered ruins altered unexposed Check one original site moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Seth Peterson Cottage is asmall (30-by-36 feet) one-bedroom, summer cottage with random ashlar foundations and walls, and large areas of glass under a shed-roofed living area, which faces a dramatic view of Mirror Lake to the west. The plan is composed of three essential parts: a bedroom, a living-dining area, and a kitchenbathroom utility core. The cottage is set on a base that emerges from the slope of the ground and juts westward on battered, ashlar stone foundations. The living-dining and bedroom areas are wrapped around the massive masonry core, which houses the kitchen-bathroom and fireplace. A soaring shed roof shelters the living area and reaches down to the flat-roofed bedroom southeast of it.

The cottage is located in Mirror Lake State Park, owned by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), where there are no current plans for its continued maintenance and use. It is in seriously deteriorated condition, having received no appreciable maintenance for years. The windows are largely broken and covered with plywood. The roof has serious leaks. Repairs and maintenance are needed soon, or the building will be lost due to its neglect. A six-foot, chain-link fence was built by DNR around the house when it acquired the property late in the 1960s. Though DNR is currently updating its Mirror Lake State Park master plan (May 1981), it has made no determination as of this writing as to the future prospects for this cottage, the only Frank-Lloyd-Wright-designed building owned by the State of Wisconsin.

8. Significance



Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Seth Peterson Cottage is representative of the late work of a master architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. One of his last works¹, the drawings for the cottage were signed by Wright only six months before his death in April, 1959.

The cottage is the smallest known commissioned residence built by Wright in Wisconsin, and one of the smallest such commissions he ever executed (apparently approached only by the Stevens cottages of 1939 in Yemassee, South Carolina).² It also appears to have been the last Wright building built on a rectangular module,² for the circle and triangle predominated in his work during 1958 and 1959.

According to Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, Director of Archives, Frank Lloyd Wright Memorial Foundation, Scottsdale, Arizona, "The Seth Peterson Cottage was one of the last works by Frank Lloyd Wright, and for that very reason has great significance. His work was one steadily expanding thesis of organic architecture, and it grew better and better right up to the time of his death in April of 1959."³ The concern of Taliesin's architects and a private client about the fate of this particular house was dramatized in 1976, when Don Loveness replicated the Seth Peterson Cottage on his property in Minnesota. According to Pfeiffer, "...since the original cottage in Wisconsin had become so vandalized, we felt it a good idea to preserve the design in this way."³

In spite of its tininess, the Peterson cottage evidences many of the visual and spatial characteristics of late-Wright houses, and thus well represents this period in his life's work. The dramatic shed roof over the living area, reaching back to a low, flat-roofed bedroom, and both together wrapped around a dominant masonry mass, were frequent qualities of rectangular Wright houses of the fifties. Examples of other shed-roofed houses of this period include the Blair house (Wyoming, 1953), the Buehler house (California, 1948), the Levin (1950), Eppstein (1953), and Harper (1951) houses in Michigan, and the Shavin house (Tennessee, 1952). "These shed roofs have no obvious prototype in earlier Wrightian domestic architecture."⁴

Other qualities found in Wright's houses of the fifties, also found in the Peterson cottage, are his "concepts of free interior space brought to life by horizontal and vertical masses of warm rock or wood arranged as sculptural forms. Even in these more muted rectangular houses of his last great productive period, he often worked with the void of interior space as a sculptor would work with a solid form, molding it by fireplaces, lighting decks, and masonry or wood masses as partial partitions, but letting it flow freely from one area to the next, and always joining it to the large space of the outdoors through large window and door expanses."⁵ The concept of a closed side to the cottage burrowing slightly into a slope found in the Peterson design is found in the Weisblatt (1951) and Pratt (1951) houses in Michigan; and battered-wall, raised deck-prows were incorporated as well in the Weisblatt house and the Penfield house (Ohio, 1954). "The emphasis on horizontality, massiveness, acceptance of the natural site, and open plan appear in all" of Wright's houses during this period.⁶

(Continued)

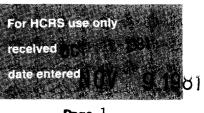
9. Major Bibliographical References

Storrer, William Allin. The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. Cambridge, Mass., 1979.
Pyron, Bernard. "Wright's Small Rectangular Houses," Art Journal XXIII, Fall 1962, pp. 20-24.
<u>NOTE</u>: According to Robert Sweeney's complete Frank Lloyd Wright: An Annotated Bibliography, Storrer's book is the only publication specifically mentioning the Peterson cottage.

10. Ge	ograp	hical Data	APDERG	יי ביכויי בו	[[الألام ه
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which the cot t is 200 fee cottage. The	tage was t wide, w rear lot	designed. It is it the northeast	an average t property l t from the s	of 281 d ine loca outheast	he original Seth Peterson lot fo eep from the shore of Mirror Lak ted 64 feet northeast from the facade of the cottage. y boundaries
state		code	county		code
state		code	county		code
11. For	m Pre	epared By			
name/title	•.	an, Deputy State	Historic Pr	eservati	on Officer
organization	Histori	c Preservation Di istorical Society	ivision		May 29, 1981
street & number	816 Sta	te Street		telepho	one (608) 262-1339
city or town	Madison			state	Wisconsin 53706
12. Sta	te His	storic Pres	servatio	on Off	ficer Certification
The evaluated sig	nificance of	this property within th	e state is: local		
665), I hereby nor	ninate this p	roperty for inclusion-in	the National Re he Heritage Co	gister and o	reservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89– certify that it has been evaluated and Recreation Service.
State Historic Pre	servation Of	flicer signature	relieved	pau	Richard A. Erney
title	Directo	r, State Historic	al Society	of Wiscon	nsin date August 5, 1981
For HCRS use o		property is included in	n the National Re	gister	date 11/09-81
Keeper of the N Attest: Chief of Registr	nda	ster Snº Uli	Ulasof		date // / / / 8/

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Continuation sheet Seth Peterson Cottage tem number

Page 1

Statement of Significance (Continued):

Less has been written about Wright's work of the 1950s than of earlier periods in his career, perhaps because scholars feel it is too recent for detached judgement. It does seem clear, however, that the Seth Peterson Cottage will be a necessary ingredient in a balanced understanding of this period in Wright's career because of its diminutiveness, its late use of the rectangular module, and, within Wisconsin at least, its unique form. Further research by a scholar of Wright's entire <u>oeuvre</u> would be required to determine whether the cottage represents the smallest-scale application of Wright's residential design principles in all, or a period of, his career, in which case its level of significance could be elevated to "national." Based on known information, however, this cottage is properly nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at this time at the "state" level.

8

- ¹ Letter to Jeff Dean from Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, Frank Lloyd Wright Memorial Foundation, Scottsdale, Arizona, dated May 22, 1981. Date of construction cited therein is affirmed on the presentation drawing and the plot plan for the cottage, both signed by Wright and dated October 1958.
- ² Storrer, William Allin. These statements are based on a survey of all Wrightdesigned residences included in Storrer's exhaustive book (see bibliography).

³ Pfeiffer letter.

⁴ Pyron, Bernard, article in Art Journal, page 23 (see bibliography).

⁵ Pyron, page 24.

⁶ Pyron, page 21.