



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Delaware Water Gap
National Recreation Area

Bushkill, PA 18324-9999

570-426-2418 phone
570-426-2407 fax
www.nps.gov/dewa

Delaware Water Gap NRA News Release

Release date: Wednesday, November 4, 2009

Contact(s): Brinnen Carter, 570-588-3840

Rehabilitation of Ramirez Solar House Begins

BUSHKILL, PA – Superintendent John J. Donahue announced that work has begun on the rehabilitation of one of the park’s most significant historic structures: the Ramirez Solar House. National Park Service staff and Frederic Schwartz Architects have been cooperating for the past two years to complete architectural and engineering plans to restore the building. As a result of this combined effort and flexible operating funds awarded to Delaware Water Gap NRA by the Washington Office of the National Park Service, a restoration contract was awarded at the end of September to M.E.R.I.T., INC. The contractor will be removing lead paint, repainting the exterior, and repairing the steam heating, plumbing, sewage and electrical systems. The work is planned to be completed by summer 2010.

The house was built in 1910 as a summer retreat called “Golden Spring.” After a serious fire in 1942, architect Henry N. Wright renovated the house in 1943-1944 to be a thoroughly-modern, sustainable home. Wright was an editor with the magazine *Architectural Forum* in the 1930s and 40s who was interested in low-cost renovation, energy efficiency and modern design. He reused large portions of the 1910 house in the remodeling and incorporated a large window wall of early double-paned glass to improve the building’s energy efficiency. According to a 2001 energy study, the house draws 18% of its winter heat from the sun pouring in through the great window wall. Wright also insulated the attic and walls with four to six inches of mineral wool.


“This building and its surrounding landscape is one of the most interesting and oldest examples of what we now call sustainable design,” said Donahue. “It is a prime example of how a handful of mid-20th century architects and designers carried to completion some of the oldest principles of energy-efficient building design in the post-World War II era. We plan to give this unique building the attention that it deserves.” Schwartz’s firm is planning to perform some of the hands-on improvements to supplement the contracted work. “I am pleased to have such a responsive, talented, and interested park partner.” Donahue added.

-more-

-page 2 of 2

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



Frederic Schwartz is currently the Joseph Esherick Visiting Professor in Architecture at the University of California at Berkeley, College of Environmental Design, where he is advising on the restoration of another historic early-modernist house. It is the 1942 Havens House in the Berkeley Hills designed by Harwell Hamilton Harris. Schwartz also restored the first modernist house in San Francisco, the 1935 Cowell House by Morrow & Morrow. Morrow is best known as the architect of the Golden Gate Bridge including designing the towers and lighting and selecting the color.

When the restoration is complete and the building is ADA-accessible, staff members from Delaware Water Gap NRA and Schwartz Architects plan to conduct tours of the building to highlight its importance as an historic sustainable structure and the straightforward ways that energy efficiency measures can be incorporated into architectural design.

Additional information on the Ramirez Solar House can be accessed through the following links:

<http://library1.njit.edu/etd/2000s/2001/njit-etd2001-035/njit-etd2001-035.html>

<http://crm.cr.nps.gov/archive/25-03/25-03-19.pdf>

http://www.aiaeasternpa.org/ColorBook_files/RamirezSolarHouse_B.pdf

-NPS-