

# Salisbury House Window Restoration Begins with New York Expert

*By Robert Houser, Chairman, Salisbury House Foundation*

The restoration of the steel casement windows at Salisbury House took place July 2-7 with the aid of the Country's best. Over the past 23 years, John Seekircher, from Scarsdale, New York, has visited some of the greatest architectural wonders in the United States, not as a tourist, but as a steel window repair specialist. Seekircher has played an integral role in preserving the steel casement window, a structure and style of window that is characteristic of early 19th century buildings and houses. Frank Lloyd Wright's *Fallingwater* and the Rockefeller Apartments head an extensive list of Seekircher's past and present window frame repair projects. And due to Seekircher's recent trip, Salisbury House is joining the distinguished group that has benefitted from his expertise. Nationally recognized as one of the best in the field of window repair and restoration, Seekircher provides his unique service to residential, historical, and commercial sites. With the roof restoration complete and tuck-pointing projects underway, finding a specialist to restore the steel casement windows could be potentially difficult. However, based on the outstanding reputation of Seekircher, the decision came easy.

Seekircher began a week-long process of assessing each of the mansion's 195 operable windows. Seekircher, with the assistance of his brother, Bobby, and nephew, Paul, restored Salisbury House's operable windows to working order. Comparing himself to a "chiropractor," Seekircher worked by hand to individually adjust each window to ensure the opening and closing motions remain smooth and effortless. Windows needing more intricate work will be carefully packaged and sent to Seekircher's business in New York for necessary repair. In addition to his handiwork, Seekircher's recommendations for future steps in the window restoration project were invaluable.

At times, Salisbury House posed a challenge for Seekircher. The differing window sizes and missing hardware pieces sent Seekircher on an adventure throughout the mansion to find matching handles or plates. The Hope and Crittall windows originally installed at Salisbury House were manufactured in England, with both companies still producing glasswork today. Seekircher noted the "extraordinary" quality of the original windows, and fully admitted that although the work was both tedious and time-consuming, it would be difficult for anyone to not appreciate the craftsmanship of a building like Salisbury House. "One of my favorite parts about any window job is making people aware of what they are fortunate to have. With Salisbury House, I leave not only amazed by the superiority of the windows, but pleased in sharing the knowledge about their initial condition with all the people who are devoted to this project," shared Seekircher. "Everyone involved with the restoration of Salisbury House will have something to be very proud of."

Seekircher, in considering his enormous task at Salisbury House, was immediately struck by the commitment of all who were involved, from not only the Foundation and its Board members, but the contractors and architects, as well. In gaining a sense of people's personal investments and true sacrifice to ensure proper restoration, Seekircher believed his voyage to the Midwest would prove to be worthwhile: "It has been great to be able to put my hands on Salisbury

House . . . to do my work once, and do it right.” Over the next 16 months, additional work on the windows will be completed by local artisans of the Stained Glass Store and Forman Ford Glass Company. The projected cost of the window restoration and improvements is estimated to total \$750,000, an important part of a multi-million dollar restoration effort underway at Salisbury House.