

Cabin

From Page 1A

find a home started," Mack said. "We contacted area museums, and we finally found the Wagner museum was interested in taking on the project."

Richard Kafka, representing the museum, was on hand Thursday to watch the crew load up the cabin and give it a ride to its new home.

"This is a dream of ours to get a log cabin," he said. "We have been trying to get a couple of them, but they were either too big or something else didn't work."

The Charles Mix County Historical Society will restore the Machacek cabin and make it a centerpiece of the Wagner museum complex, Kafka said.

"It's so important to save these log cabins," he said. "We sure would hate to lose them."

A TIME FOR REMINISCING

John and Bessie Machacek emigrated from Czechoslovakia in 1860 and homesteaded on the site. The couple had four children: John, Lillian, Joe and Adeline.

"Cottonwood lumber was dragged by the oxen from the Missouri River to build the cabin back in 1872," Mack said. "There was also a sod house built at the same time, which is not standing anymore, with walls 36 inches thick."

This log cabin was used as a house during the first two years, then was converted into a shop when the sod house was built next door.

Bessie Machacek, who lived to age 101, spoke Bohemian her entire life and never learned English, Sternhagen said.

"Our grandmother came from Czechoslovakia at the age of 16," Sternhagen said. "She never wanted to go back (to the Old Country), even though her brother and sister were still over there, because she feared the Communists."

Besides Mack, the family on-lookers at Thursday's move included her cousins Ilene Sternhagen and Norma Reining of Tabor; Norma's husband, Larry; and in-law Marlene Syrovatka of Lesterville. The family members reminisced about the cabin, the sod house and neighboring trees that were the scene of childhood mischief. They spoke of a chalkrock building, also built on the site, with walls 2 1/2 feet thick.

The Machacek relatives described how quickly the search for a new cabin home came to-

gether, with the arrangements finalized only a week earlier. They also spoke of Thursday's record temperatures nearing 70 degrees. They saw the ideal January day as a blessing on the cabin-moving effort.

But mainly, they marveled at their ancestors who persevered to till the prairie and start a new life in a new country. They also stood in awe at how a family lived in the tiny log cabin, which Kafka said measures about 18 feet by 15 feet and about 12 feet high at the spire.

MAKING THE MOVE

The moving crew, led by Francis Doom of Wagner, arrived on the scene Thursday and began shoring up the cabin to provide adequate support for the trip. He was particularly concerned about the walls and the cabin's ability to bear weight.

"We intend to keep the cabin intact rather than dismantle it," he said.

Even after getting the cabin mounted, the trip to Wagner remained a challenge. The crew was taking the structure on South Dakota Highway 50, where it traveled past Tabor, Tyndall and Avon on its way to Wagner.

"This will be a wide load," Doom said. "If you're going down township or county roads, you don't need a permit. But if you're going down a state highway, you need a permit."

Doom, who owned Wagner

Building and Supply from 1964-82, came out of "retirement" to lend his expertise to the move.

"I am tickled pink that this (move and restoration) is happening," he said.

Sternhagen gave a sigh of relief when the cabin was loaded after some tense moments.

"It's unbelievable. It's part of history, and something you don't see very often," she said. "I guess I thought (the cabin) was all going to fall apart (during Thursday's move). It looks like petrified wood, except for the flooring."

Thursday's onlookers included Darold Loecker, a Celm family friend who was checking out the effort while the Celmers are wintering in Denver.

"I think it's great that somebody is going to keep (the cabin) going and use it for the future," Loecker said. "(The Celmers) were farming around it for the last few years. Come April, they were going to level it. I am pleased to know the cabin is going to stay going."

PRESERVING HERITAGE

Crystal Nelson, director of the Dakota Territorial Museum in Yankton, said the cabin looks structurally sound. The roof and inside floor would need to be replaced, which could cost \$800 to \$1,200 if cedar shingles or shakes are used, she said.

The cabin will require chinking, or mortar between the logs,

Nelson said. The chinking is a mixture of lime, cement type N and sand costing about \$100.

None of the notches on the corners were out of place and still fit rather snugly, which is good, Nelson added. Scrap planks can be used for the floor and for windows and a door at little cost, she said.

Nelson recommended allocating \$2,000 to cover moving costs from Utica to Wagner, which could have varied depending on the complexity of the move.

"The time line (for restoration) shouldn't be that much," she said. "Our cabin (at the Dakota Territorial Museum) was twice the size and took about three months, so I'm guessing it will take a couple of months for this cabin."

Log cabins are literally becoming a vanishing sight on the prairie, Nelson said.

"As farms got bigger and bigger, and people moved off the family homesteads, a lot of those cabins were left out in the field. They became endangered and in the way," she said. "I really like these cabins. They are great and unique. You learn different styles by using different clues."

The cabins reflect the owners' heritage, Nelson said. Czechs tended to use massive trees, placed distinctive notches in the corners of the cabin, and used fillings between logs such as mortar, horse hair or mud and straw.

The Germans from Russia put an awning on their cabins so animals could remain nearby, she said. The cabin at the Dakota Territorial Museum, an 1860s structure from near Volin, showcases a Norwegian architecture.

Regardless of heritage, the cabins were small and sparse, Nelson said.

"These weren't real big cabins. They only had enough for a bed and stove to stay warm," she said. "They must have done most of their cooking outside, which was very common, especially during summer. They didn't want to make the cabin hot, especially in the summer time, so they cooked outside and in a pit. They also washed their clothes outside."

The cabins were also very stark and didn't take a great deal of material, Nelson said.

"If you look at (a cabin), it's crudely put together. You can tell the purpose was to get a roof over their heads so they could sleep at night in the wintertime without snow," she said. "For those pioneers, their home was something they would throw together quickly. Their main purpose was to get your horses and oxen up to plow so you could work your cropland."

FINDING A NEW HOME

While the Yankton museum couldn't take the Machacek cabin, Nelson remains interested in the structure and asked for

documentation of the family history and transporting the cabin to Wagner.

"(The cabin) really lies within our geographic focus. We want to keep tabs on it," she said. "I'm glad that it ended up in a museum. I would have hated to see it come down. Once it's gone, it's gone. I would love to see it when they are done with restoration."

The cabin display will teach younger generations their ancestry and about the pioneers who sacrificed so their descendants could enjoy freedoms and a better life, Nelson said.

"There's no better way to teach children about history than to give them the opportunity to step into it and touch it," she said. "They don't fully understand all the details, but they develop an appreciation for it."

As the Machacek family prepared Thursday to follow the cabin to its new home, Mack expressed only one regret about the donation — its timing.

"My mother, Adeline, passed away last February," she said. "If I could have done this (cabin move) before she passed away, she would have been overjoyed."

However, Mack preferred to remain focused on the joy of finding a new home for the family cabin and keeping it alive.

"It was just perfect, how things came together," she said. "It's a miracle from God that this (cabin) didn't go down."

Rate On 30-Year Mortgage Down To Record 3.91 Pct.

BY DEREK KRAVITZ
AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON — 2012 looks to be another year of opportunity for the few who can afford to buy or refinance a home.

The average rate on the 30-year fixed mortgage fell to 3.91 percent this week, Freddie Mac said Thursday. That matches the record low reached two weeks ago.

The average on the 15-year fixed mortgage ticked down to 3.23 percent from 3.24 percent. That's up from 3.21 percent two weeks, also a record low.

Mortgage rates are lower because they tend to track the yield on the 10-year Treasury note, which fell below 2 percent this week. They could fall even lower this year if the Fed launches another round of bond purchases, as some economists expect.

Still, cheap mortgage rates have done little to boost the depressed housing market. For eight straight weeks at the end of 2011, the average fixed mortgage rates hovered around 4 percent. Yet many Americans either can't take advantage of the rates or have already done so.

High unemployment and scant wage gains have made it harder for many people to qualify for loans. Many don't want to sink money into a home that they fear could lose value over the next few years.

Previously occupied homes are selling just slightly ahead of 2010's dismal pace. New-home sales in 2011 will likely be the worst year on records going back half a century.

Builders are hopeful that the low rates could boost sales next year. Low mortgage rates were cited as a key reason the National Association of Home Builders survey of builder sentiment rose in December to its highest level in more than a year.

But so far, rates are having no major impact. Mortgage applications have fallen slightly in recent weeks, according to the Mortgage Bankers Association.



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