

Historic cabin added to museum complex

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By David Hutchinson

The Bell-Knapp family cabin arrived at its new home in the Clare County History Park on Thursday, August 15.

The log cabin dates back to the nineteenth century and has survived all this time in Sheridan Township. It was hauled to its new site by truck with police escort. The building will be set in place permanently once construction of the new foundation is completed.

Historian and author, Robert Knapp, donated the building with funds for its relocation and upkeep to the Clare County Historical Society upon his passing last September.

Knapp was a prominent figure in the preservation of Clare history. He wrote several local history books which are listed on the society's website (clarecountyhistory.org). He also helped digitize the Clare Sentinel newspaper (1896-1999) at the Clarke Historical Library of Central Michigan University. Archives of the Clare Sentinel and other Michigan newspapers can be searched and read on the library's website (digmichnews.cmich.edu).

The history park has two other historic buildings—the Dover one-room schoolhouse and the Ott family cabin.

The Dover School is original to the history park site. The nineteenth century structure provided “country schooling” until 1966, as reported in the Clare Sentinel ([May 26, 1966](#)). It currently houses artifacts, old photos, and student lists. The classroom also hosts history presentations.

The Ott log cabin was also built during the lumber era of Clare County. It was disassembled and moved from its original site in Hatton Township in 2000, according to the Clare County Cleaver ([June 15, 2000](#)). The building is “a lasting testament to the past, to those who struggled to be free and independent Americans.”

In addition to historic buildings, the Clare County Historical Society maintains a museum and a blacksmith shop. The museum preserves details of local history with an extensive and growing collection of artifacts and records. The blacksmith shop hosts live demonstrations, displaying a craft that was vital to pioneering communities in days gone by.

The Clare County History Park is located at the corner of Dover Road and Eberhart Avenue, approximately five miles north and one mile east of the City of Clare. It is open Saturdays 1-4 p.m. from now through September. The annual “Old Fashion Day” celebration will end the season on September 28.

