

## 1840s log Cabin Readied for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Restoration

When the developers of Innsbrook purchased a 400-acre tract of land on March 25, 1997, little was known of one 40-Acre Quarter Section. Found on this Section was an 1840 era homestead. Had it been someone's home, farmstead, or hunting lodge? We now know the answer, because in 2010 interested Innsbrook residents have formed the Innsbrook Historical Society (IHS) to uncover history in this area. As the name implies, the IHS is interested in understanding the heritage of the land and the people who once lived here and then provide opportunities to celebrate this rich past with present-day friends, neighbors, and families.

Under the leadership of John Welter, chairman, and Wayne Edwards, project manager, the IHS, a volunteer committee of residents, has begun restoration of an 1840 log cabin home located just south of Innsbrook Resort's Alpine Dam. Historical research reveals the first known settlers of the 40-Acre Quarter Section were the Bottemuller family. Hermann Bottemuller came to Missouri from Germany with his wife and family in the 1840s and in 1843 purchased this 40-acre section from the local land office in St. Louis. A land grant was subsequently signed and issued by the General Land Office in Washington DC in 1848. Now little by little Innsbrook residents are uncovering the history of the area and have started the restoration of this 170-year-old building.

The Innsbrook Historical Society envisions linking this 19<sup>th</sup> Century settlement to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Welter explains, "The Innsbrook Historical Society seeks to restore and preserve historic structures and adjacent properties within the Village of Innsbrook in order to educate and deepen the understanding of the legacy of the land and its inhabitants with the hope of bringing friends and neighbors together to celebrate the Innsbrook area history in a natural recreational setting." Welter continues, "While all this sounds very serious, the overall intent is to have fun: meet, work, and play with Innsbrook friends and neighbors." Currently over 40 Innsbrook residents and friends are involved in the fun. IHS committees include: land and family history; archeological investigation; local area and geographic history; building site/ interior decor restoration; fundraising; and website communication with our larger community.

While many IHS members are busy with "behind the scenes" background investigations, project manager Wayne Edwards and his fellow workers have "rolled up their sleeves" and begun the labor of work on the cabin site. Edwards sees this toil as a work in progress: tearing down before building up. Speaking of his fellow project workers and consultants Edwards said, "Our initial effort has been to deconstruct and remove the deteriorated parts of the cabin, such as the front rooms on the porch. We are now in a position to assess the condition of the stone

foundation. We will start at the foundation to level it and shore it up where needed and start replacing rotted logs in the walls.”

Edwards said concerning the next plans, “Rotten logs across the back of the cabin will be removed and replaced with new logs. Any logs on the ends of the house that have rot spots, usually at the corners or around windows and doors, will be replaced totally or have the decayed spots cut out and new wood spliced in place.”

“All windows and doors and jambs will be replaced with period originals or reproductions. The roof is currently corrugated sheet metal. This will be replaced with shake shingles as would have been original to the cabin,” Edwards said.

IHS hopes to utilize this site as a multi-purpose area. Chairman Welter said, “The site will function both as venue for various social and entertainment events, such as concerts and meetings, as well as an interpretive center where visitors will gain insight into the history of the area, the building, and the families who lived there.” Additional site structures include a smoke house, log barn, and chicken coop. IHS plans to restore many of these on the historical land. Heritage plants for the garden and period furnishing are additional considerations.

Restoration efforts will focus both on keeping true to the time period and providing safe and ready access for present day visitors. With this in mind, Edwards said, “A new porch along the entire length of the cabin will be added. The porch will be approximately 42’ long and 10’ in depth. It will not be enclosed. Four posts will be used to hold up the roof over the porch.”

IHS hopes visitors to the cabin will be able to linger on this porch and view the fertile Charrette Creek valley as they “travel back in time”. Welter added, “The site, once completed, will also contain areas to simply rest, relax or enjoy a picnic before or after a walk in the beautiful Alpine Valley.”

Additional information about the work of the IHS may be found on its website: [www.innsbrookhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.innsbrookhistoricalsociety.org). Webmaster Mike Gambill said the site is still being developed but it already provides a valuable source of information for those wishing to become involved in this fun and meaningful work. Anyone with knowledge of the history of this cabin site or wishes to help in the reconstruction is invited to utilize the IHS’s website contact link: [ih@innsbrookhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:ih@innsbrookhistoricalsociety.org), and we will return a response. Any bit of information or help, large or small is valued. “Never be afraid to try something new. Remember, amateurs built the ark. Professionals built the Titanic.”