

We took down the old farm house, but saved the cabin that was inside.

In late 1969, we bought the first part of our Snake River Farm. That 120-acre farm included an old house and a set of farm buildings. That site is a half mile south of the current farmstead. If you have toured the farm on event days, you have seen the old house. The old farmstead is on the gravel road, essentially in the center of the farm.

In early 1970, we renovated the old house extensively in order to make it livable.

I housed my family there until I built our present home in 1976-77.

The old house was in very poor condition when we bought it.

During the renovation, we discovered that the house was built around a log cabin.

In 1982 I sold the house and 2.5 acres to Frank Johnson.

Frank was a good neighbor. He lived there until 2019.

Last spring, we bought the house back.

My eldest daughter Shannon and her family are going to build a Minnesota summer home on the lot.

The log cabin was built by Jens Ellefson, a Norwegian immigrant in about 1895.

Many of the folks in this area are descended from Jens and his brothers, all of whom settled in this immediate area. But that is another story. Shannon and I will write that story someday.

Ellefsons lived in or owned that house until about 1962.

Over that time, as the family grew, three wings were added to the house plus a complete second floor.

No doubt each piece was added at a different time.

Farming here was often poor.

The additions were made with local materials, at minimal cost and with re-used timbers and lumber.

For example, the old house had no footings. The corners of each segment were simply set on large field stones.

If you have been to our farm, you know that we own and maintain a one room school house.

That is the Kragero School.

It was built in 1897. It was initially used as a school, church and community center.

Classes were taught there until 1967.

Kragero is the Norwegian town from which the Ellefsons originated.

We plan to move and resurrect the cabin on the Kragero school grounds. Just south of the schoolhouse.

It will be on a concrete slab, sheltered by an open roof with a picnic table much like in a park.

1. The first photo is the west wall of the cabin.
Samantha, Shannon's daughter is cleaning up.
2. The second is the old house just before demolition began. Viewed from the northeast.
Shannon arranged for a demolition expert to pull down and separate the material. He did that with a huge tracked grapple. Toxic or non-burnable material like shingles, asphalt siding, plastic and metal went to a landfill in a roll-off.
We burned the clean wooden debris over the next several days.
The main demolition took one day, followed by a week of sorting and cleanup.
3. The third photo is the southwest view of the house.
Shan and family exposed much of the cabin walls before demolition.
That was done so we would know what to expect and so the demo guy could get his bearings.
4. The fourth photo shows Shannon inside the house. The cabin walls have been stripped to expose the log walls. The view is from the southeast. Living room to the right.
Shannon is standing in the kitchen.
We cut the doorway to her right with a chain saw and chisels in January of 1970.
The exterior of the cabin was whitewashed a century ago.
5. Next is a photo of my son Joel taking down an interior wall in the cabin.

In the 1970 renovation, I covered every wall in the house with sheetrock or paneling. The paneling has been removed from this wall exposing multiple layers of wall paper over a lath and plaster surface.

Joel was nine years old when we left this house.

He remembers it well.

6. The next photo shows the west, exterior wall.

The right window was originally a doorway to the cabin.

In this view you can see the various layers on the exterior of the house.

When built, the cabin logs were chinked with sticks and mortar.

Then the cabin was whitewashed.

Later the exterior walls were covered with shiplap siding, (overlapping thin boards).

Still later, probably in the 1940s, the exterior of the house was covered with asphalt shingles bearing a grey brick pattern.

In the spring of 1970, my Dad and I covered the entire house with olive colored aluminum siding.

We rebuilt all the windows and doors.

I bought the aluminum combination windows from the now defunct Knox Lumber that was near Osseo.

The window sets were \$9.95, complete.

7. To avoid destroying the somewhat fragile cabin, we had the demolition guy leave a lot of supporting material.

My brother Jim, his son Jeremy, grandson Travis and friend Dave worked a full day to complete the demo job.

8. My nephew Paul is working in the eighth photo along with Travis. Paul put in three work days on the cabin

9. The ninth photo shows the floor of the second story.

10. The cross timbers supported a loft. The loft was no doubt sleeping space for the Ellefson children.

Jim's son Jeremy is in the photo. He took the more adventurous job.

11. The eleventh photo is from the northeast.

The guys braced the east wall since it will need to stand over winter.

The floor of the kitchen is still in place. I did not remove it because it covers a partial cellar.

There is no trace of the living room which was on the right side of the photo.

Its floor came off in one piece, unattached to the rest of the house.

The chimney, which was no doubt built with the original cabin has an interesting story.

The chimney is made of yellow bricks. Our neighbor Terry Herman told us that it must have come from Brickton, a town that was two miles north of Princeton.

Jim did some research and that too is an interesting story, for another time.

Or, Google Brickton MN.

12. The twelfth photo is the final view of the west wall. The original doorway is open again.

Notice the cellar entrance in the foreground.

(I don't know why that old guy keeps showing up in these photos.)

13. A photo from the south showing the partial cellar.

14. This south wall was largely cut away when a bathroom was added in the 1960s.

15. Photo of the north wall. This wall was inside the living room.

I exposed the logs and cleaned them up in the 1970 renovation.

I thought the old house was kind of charming when we lived there.

16. The cellar's outside stairway. The cellar has a sand floor.

We intend to convert it to a root cellar after the cabin is moved to the Kragero School yard.
One last panoramic photo of the cabin interior.
This was great fun for all involved.
Give us twelve months to get it situated at the school.
Tom



























