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## Felts Log House at WKU to receive restoration

By AARON MUDD [amudd@bgdailynews.com](mailto:amudd@bgdailynews.com) Nov 20, 2019

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Brent Bjorkman, director of the Kentucky Museum and the Kentucky Folklife Program, explains Monday the structure of the historic Felts Log House on the campus of Western Kentucky University. A new grant will help with renovations of the early 19th-century structure.

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photos by WES SWIETEK/[wswietek@bgdailynews.com](mailto:wswietek@bgdailynews.com)

One day in 1980, as it sat perched atop the bed of a tractor-trailer, the historic Felts Log House made a sluggish but steady trip from Logan County to its new home at Western Kentucky University.

The journey is documented in an archived black-and-white photograph, where the log structure can be seen plodding its way up what is now WKU's Avenue of Champions, flanked by several vehicles.

Since its construction in Logan County in 1810 – and for 150 years afterward – the Felts Log House was home to the descendants of Archibald Felts, a Revolutionary War veteran and early settler of Kentucky back when it was considered a frontier.

Felts' descendants continued living in the house until the 1960s. In 1978, it was donated to WKU, where it was relocated just outside the Kentucky Museum on campus.

Today, the house is in need of restoration, which will be made possible thanks in part to a new \$36,000 grant from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation.

“It's become an icon for WKU, and we want to preserve that,” said Brent Bjorkman, director of the Kentucky Museum. “We just can't be more grateful.”

Standing in the cabin Monday, Bjorkman noted some deterioration, which he expects will be addressed by a restoration project that will begin in the spring.

“It does need a lot of help,” he said.

Built from poplar, oak and walnut trees, the two-story cabin is divided by a dogtrot, which is a roofed passage similar to a breezeway. On summer days, Bjorkman said, residents could have used it to flow air through the home's rooms. On one side lies a kitchen and dining area, and on the other, what could have been the Felts' bedroom. Two children's rooms are upstairs, past a steep staircase that twists around a corner.

The cabin's living quarters are filled with simple wooden furniture and tools meant to mimic the age, including a sugar chest that a 19th century family could have used to keep supplies.

“It's been such a teaching tool here on campus,” Bjorkman said, adding that history and architecture have used it in their studies.

It's also become a "point of pride" on campus, he said. It's not uncommon for people to approach him and identify themselves as descendants of the Felts family, Bjorkman said.



"There's a lot of pride in that," he said.

WKU said the American Antique Cabin Co. – described as one of the top consultants nationwide in antique log restoration – developed a restoration plan for the house beginning early next year.

It will be restored using period-appropriate materials. Bjorkman said the project will focus on areas near the home's entryway and doors, along with improvements to its chinking, meaning the material between each log that helps insulate the cabin.

The project will offer opportunities for WKU students to view and engage with historic preservation in action, a university news release said.

The Felts Log House has a lot to offer students and visitors to campus, Bjorkman said.

"Everyone is drawn to it in a certain way," he said.

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EMILY ZANTOW ezantow@bgdailynews.com Nov 19, 2019

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