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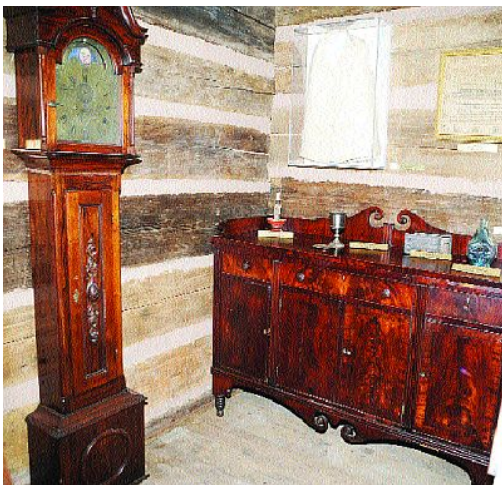
Cabin now in state museum

by MICHAEL BROWNING, Managing Editor

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Opal Lewis, sitting, and her daughter, Betty Giuliano, read the plaque outside the log cabin that used to be her home, which is now reconstructed in the state museum in Charleston. Standing with Lewis and Giuliano, are Lewis'™ sisters, Edna Fields and Louise Baisden, and Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin. Lewis, her family, Senate President Tomblin and other state officials toured the new state museum, which will open on June 20 in the Cultural Center on the State Capitol campus. Photo/Michael Browning



Inside the cabin is historic furniture that creates the same look it had when it was first built.

was first built. One of the key pieces inside the cabin is a grandfather clock once owned by Laura Ingles Wilder.

"The museum down at the park at Logan was the only museum I knew about," Lewis said on making her first trip to the Cultural Center on the Capitol campus in Charleston.

CHARLESTON â€” Opal Lewis said although she gets a little sad when she looks out her window and the old log cabin schoolhouse in which her mother attended school and Lewis, herself, lived, she's proud that it's on display for everyone in the new state museum in Charleston.

Lewis, 88, of Monahill, got an early look at the newly-reconstructed cabin on Tuesday when Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin; Senator Ron Stollings, M.D.; State Division of Culture and History Commissioner Randall Reid Smith; State Museum Director Adam Hodges; State Division of Culture and History official Frankie Esposito, Raamie Barker, administrative assistant to Sen. President Tomblin; Lewis' sisters, Louise Baisden and Edna Fields; daughter, Debbie Giuliano; son, Amos Lewis, and grandchildren Kayla and Jarod Lewis and Jessica Robison took a tour through the history of West Virginia.

The cabin is nearly 200 years old and was once a one-room school building that became Lewis' home. It sat on Lewis' property near her current home until early last year, when it was taken down and taken to the Cultural Center, where it was later reconstructed. Inside the cabin is historic furniture that creates the same look it had when it

"This is really nice. It's in a big place. Mommie went to school there and then they made a living house out of it and that's where I lived when I got married. It looks real. I'm proud that it's here."

Senate President Tomblin said he is proud to have the cabin from Logan County in the state museum for everyone to see.

"I'm obviously very proud to see something from my home county in the state museum," Tomblin said. "Those kind of structures are disappearing so fast and, probably, in another five years, it wouldn't have even existed. I'm very pleased that the State Division of Culture and History brought it here. It'll be in this museum forever. It's part of our history and heritage and I'm just very pleased to be here with the three ladies who once lived in that house. I think that was a really touching moment to be in there with them when they saw it for the first time since its restoration. It will always be here for their kids and grandkids."

"This gives the museum a little bit of southern West Virginia's history and I like to see that. I'm very pleased."

Lewis said she was surprised when crews came in during the winter months in early 2008 and dismantled the log cabin and took it from her yard log by log.

"It surprised me when they started tearing it down," Lewis said. "I thought they were going to take the whole house and they only took the logs. Its logs were cut on a slant and that was what was holding it together. It didn't even have nails in it. I'm glad it has been preserved, but I hate to see it gone from my yard."

Senator Stollings said he was amazed at how crews reconstructed the old cabin to make it look like it did when it was lived in many years ago.

"The commissioner did a super job with it," Stollings said.

Commissioner Smith said he's pleased with the inclusion of the cabin in the museum.

"I love the cabin," he said. "This is something we can all be proud of."

Lewis' eldest daughter, Debbie Giuliano, said the idea to have the cabin preserved started with her about 15 years ago and she got in touch with Esposito seven years later and got the process rolling.

"We've been working on it and here it is," Giuliano said. "I give Frankie all the credit. It's wonderful. I'm so pleased. I'm tickled. We brought my little grandbabies over here and they said they were going to bring their children."

Lewis' son, Amos, said the reconstructed cabin looks good in the museum.

"They've done a nice job," Amos Lewis said. "We're proud it's here."

The state museum opens on June 20 to the public.

“I’m amazed. The museum captures our history, from the dinosaurs to today,” Esposito said. “It’s better than Disney World. And the cabin is the best thing here. But, to appreciate its beauty, you have to see it in person.”

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