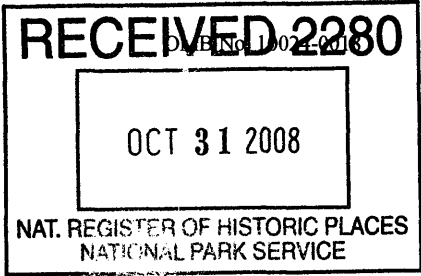


1187



**United States Department of Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

**historic name** Kemp, John and Margarethe, Cabin  
**other names/site number** Wachter Cabin

**2. Location**

**street & number** 6950 State Highway 78  
**city or town** Town of Mazomanie  
**state** Wisconsin **code** WI **county** Dane **code** 025 **zip code** 53583  
**not for publication** N/A  
**vicinity** N/A

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date 10/29/08

State Historic Preservation Officer - Wisconsin

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Kemp, John and Margarethe, Cabin

Dane

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

- I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:)

*Edson H. Beall*

12-10-08

*Bar*

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)	
		contributing	noncontributing
Private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	1	0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	district		buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-State	structure		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	site		structures
	object		objects
		1	0 total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources is previously listed in the National Register

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)  
DOMESTIC/single dwelling

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)  
VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Log

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation STONE

walls WOOD/Log

roof WOOD/shingle

other WOOD

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Kemp, John and Margarethe, Cabin  
Name of Property

Dane  
County and State

Wisconsin

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

### Period of Significance

1863

### Significant Dates

1863

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Kemp, John

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)



Kemp, John and Margarethe, Cabin

Dane

Wisconsin

Name of Property

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional Items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

<b>name/title</b>	Steven Miller, Bureau Director, Facilities & Lands	<b>date</b>	August 20, 2007
<b>organization</b>	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	<b>telephone</b>	608-266-5782
<b>street&amp;number</b>	101 S. Webster Street – LF/6	<b>zip code</b>	53703
<b>city or town</b>	Madison	<b>state</b>	WI

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
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**National Register of Historic Places**  
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

Kemp, John and Margarethe, Cabin  
Town of Mazomanie, Dane County, Wisconsin

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**DESCRIPTION**

*General Description*

The John and Margarethe Kemp Cabin, hereafter referred to as the Kemp Cabin, is located in the Blackhawk Unit of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway, a State of Wisconsin public recreation area near and along the Wisconsin River owned and operated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (hereafter referred to as the DNR). According to the Wisconsin DNR, the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway is a recreation area along the Wisconsin River that has scenic and natural values worthy of being preserved for future generations. The cabin was part of a farmstead that was included in a 525-acre parcel the DNR acquired for this recreational area in 1990. Used originally as farmland and woodlots, the land was later used as a private campground and resort. As such, the cabin was used as a store and office, and then later rented to campers. Since 1990, when the Wisconsin DNR acquired the property, the cabin has been vacant and has suffered from a lack of maintenance.

The cabin sits on a ridge just southeast of State Highway 78 in the Town of Mazomanie in the far northwestern corner of Dane County, located in south-central Wisconsin. It is approximately three miles south of Sauk City in Sauk County, just across the Wisconsin River, and approximately five miles northeast of the small community of Mazomanie in rural northwestern Dane County. An asphalt-paved road off of State Highway 78 leads to the cabin. This road's length is seven tenths of a mile and was developed in the mid-twentieth century. It follows part of the old driveway to the original Kemp farmstead. The road runs through a wooded area that rises steeply up the ridge toward the cabin site. It turns to gravel near the top of the ridge where the farmstead was located.

The cabin is located at the downward edge of a grassy field where the farmstead once stood. Farmstead buildings and structures that have been razed included a house, barn, granary, corn crib, milk house, swimming pool and observation tower, and other outbuildings. A large log structure disassembled and moved from the Rhinelander area by previous owners sits nearby and is still in use; however, it cannot be seen from the cabin. Only the Kemp cabin is included in the nomination.

Old lawn spaces around the cabin are not extant. Just east of the cabin, the land drops steeply toward a wooded ravine and is overgrown. The lawn areas on the other sides of the cabin are more open, but they are also overgrown with shrubs and invasive perennials. It appears that the overgrown trees and shrubs are a combination of ones that were planted by previous owners or they are volunteers.

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Kemp, John and Margarethe, Cabin  
Town of Mazomanie, Dane County, Wisconsin

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*Cabin Exterior*

The one and one-half story cabin is a one-bay log structure with a slightly rectangular form. The gable roof is covered with replacement wood shingles that probably date to the 1960s or 1970s when the building was last in use. The gable ends are clad with vertical wood boards. Small window openings sit in the gable ends; the west elevation opening is covered with a plywood panel and the east elevation opening is covered with an interior plywood panel.

The walls of the building are constructed of large, horizontally-laid, hand-hewn logs that have been left largely rounded on the exterior. The logs are joined at the corners with square notching; that is, each log end has been hewn on both sides before being attached to the next log. The corner notching is reinforced with 1¼ inch wooden pegs.

In between the logs is a thick layer of chinking that extends over many of the logs. This chinking appears to be a mix of both historic lime mortar and a mortar of modern materials, possibly Portland cement. The newer chinking does not match in color or texture and was probably applied during the 1960s or 1970s when the building was last in use.

The walls of the cabin sit on a quarried limestone foundation that is two feet in thickness and seven feet in height. The foundation is not visible on the west elevation, but is more visible toward the east elevation. This is due to the slightly slope the building sits on where the west elevation is at a slightly higher grade than the east elevation, which is closer to the steep ravine just east of the cabin.

The window openings of the cabin are rough and indicate placement after the walls were constructed. However, the openings themselves appear to all date from the historic period. On the east and west elevation, there are two openings roughly in the same position, that is, approximately in the center of the first story of each elevation. The window on the west elevation is covered with a plywood panel, while the window on the east elevation is covered on the interior. Along the north elevation, there is a similar window opening that sits slightly east of the center of the first story of this elevation. It is also covered on the interior.

The main entrance sits in the south elevation and is covered with a full-length porch. The porch has a shed roof that is covered with the same wood shingles as the main roof and is supported by three plain wooden posts. The wooden deck of the porch is extant and in poor condition. A single horizontal timber running between the three posts acts as a balustrade. The porch is not original, and again, was probably added in the mid-twentieth century when the cabin was last in use. The entrance sits off

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Kemp, John and Margarethe, Cabin  
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center in the first story of the south elevation, toward the west elevation. The entry door is a swinging wooden door made of vertical wood boards.

*Cabin Interior*

**Cellar.** The cabin measures 22 feet by 17½ feet with a foundation of 22 feet by 18 feet. The cellar, though, is slightly smaller, a 14 foot 6 inch by 14 foot 2 inch space. This discrepancy is due to the fact that the entire space under the cabin was not excavated for the cellar. Rather, the cellar ends before reaching the western foundation wall. The sloped site may account for the cellar size, as it may have been more difficult to dig as the cellar extended into the rise.

The cellar is reached via an enclosed wooden staircase just inside the entrance to the cabin. The height of the cellar is 6½ feet, matching the 7 foot height of the foundation. There are two modern metal posts that reinforce the first floor joists. The limestone foundation walls are exposed and painted white. The cellar has a dirt floor and there are some built-in shelves, suggesting it was used as a “root cellar” during the time it was in residential use.

**First Floor.** The first floor of the cabin consists of one large room that may have been divided into two rooms at some point. During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, wall partitions were removed, but it is not clear if they were original. At the center of the space is evidence of a chimney, suggesting the location of a central stove for heating. There is also a large T-shaped column that appears to be providing structural support for the second floor. The ceiling has been removed so that the ceiling beams are exposed, as well. The only other structures in the cabin are two sets of built-in bunk-style bed frames put in the cabin when it was rented as a camping structure.

The exposed interior walls are the most interesting element of the cabin. There is evidence that there was a plaster finish applied at some time, and was later removed. Due to the weathering and extensive amount of chinking on the exterior walls of the cabin, it is in this room that the size of the logs can be clearly seen and appreciated. These sides of the logs, unlike the exterior, are hewn and relatively flat. The nature of the chinking can also be seen on this side of the log walls. Due to the large log size, smaller pieces of wood were fitted in between the logs, then the mortar was applied.

Of the three window openings in this room, two are covered on the interior. The west elevation window opening is covered from the exterior. This opening shows that a single-light, double-hung sash was the last type of window used in the opening. All of the windows are roughly trimmed with wood boards. The floor of this room is a mixture of wide-board flooring and some later-added narrow board flooring. All of the flooring is in poor condition.



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Kemp, John and Margarethe, Cabin  
Town of Mazomanie, Dane County, Wisconsin

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Opposite the cellar staircase is the enclosed staircase leading to the second floor (located along the south elevation). Steep wooden steps end in a large area that was probably originally a sleeping loft and was partitioned and improved at a later date. About at the center of the space there is a partially extant partition of inexpensive fiber wall board and a door frame with a molding that suggests the mid-twentieth century. The same type of fiber wall board material is also covering the ceiling in most places, but is very deteriorated and falling off. End walls of the room are covered in plaster that is also deteriorating and falling off the log surfaces. The floor is covered with plywood. Simple wood moldings surround the end wall window openings that are enclosed with plywood.

While the building has suffered from neglect and has had some modifications, the important elements related to its method of construction are still clearly visible and maintain sufficient integrity to represent the construction method of an 1860s log cabin.

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Kemp, John and Margarethe, Cabin  
Town of Mazomanie, Dane County, Wisconsin

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

The John and Margarethe Kemp Log Cabin (hereafter referred to as the Kemp Cabin) is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C at the local level for its architectural significance as a distinctive and relatively intact example of an important type of construction in Wisconsin, a mid-nineteenth century log cabin erected by German immigrants during what was still the pioneer era in this area. The Kemp Cabin features distinctive construction materials and methods that illustrate a variation of typical German ethnic log construction methods using locally available materials. Although in a somewhat deteriorated condition, the log cabin retains a high level of historic integrity, with much of its original fabric extant and visible.

**Historical Background**

The Kemp Cabin is located in the far northwest corner of the Town of Mazomanie, only a few miles from the Wisconsin River. Prior to white settlement, this area was known as being the site of the *Battle of Wisconsin Heights*, a pivotal event in the *Blackhawk War* of 1832.

This “war” resulted from federal government efforts in the late 1820s and early 1830s to convince the Native American tribes who claimed land in what was to become Wisconsin to cede these claims. The *Blackhawk War* ended near the Mississippi River at the *Battle of Bad Axe* in August of 1832. Soon, government surveyors entered Wisconsin’s interior to plat the land for official sale.<sup>1</sup>

The location of the *Battle of Wisconsin Heights* is located about a mile north of the site of this cabin. This land was not part of the original Kemp farm, but some of the land was included in the 300 acres that was added to the original 225-acre Kemp farm in the mid-twentieth century. At that point, the Kemp farm became associated with the battle site and it was the entire 525-acre parcel that was sold to the Department of Natural Resources in 1990. Located along State Highway 78, near the entrance to the road that leads up to the cabin, is an official Wisconsin Historical Marker for the “Battle of Wisconsin Heights.”

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<sup>1</sup> Carol Lohry Cartwright, *City of Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin Architectural and Historical Residential Survey Report*, Fort Atkinson: Historic Preservation Commission, 2002, pp. 45-46.

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Kemp, John and Margarethe, Cabin  
Town of Mazomanie, Dane County, Wisconsin

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Once the land was offered for sale, white settlers came into Dane County. In what is now the Town of Mazomanie, where this cabin is located, the earliest settlement was made in 1843, when large amounts of land were purchased for settlers of the British Temperance Emigration Society. Between 1843 and 1850, members of this organization came to the town, settling largely on farms. This unusual ethnic settlement gave the town a distinctive British character. Other early settlers were Yankees from New England and New York, a typical settlement pattern of Wisconsin's pioneer era.<sup>2</sup>

The British and Yankee influence in the town and in the village of Mazomanie is seen in the churches established in the village. British and American settlers founded the First Congregational Church, the Baptist Church, and the Methodist Episcopal (Methodist) Church during the 1850s. Some Germans had immigrated into the area as well, and they founded a small Evangelical Church in 1845. But, German immigration into the town was low during the mid-nineteenth century. However, a large number of German immigrants did settle in the Sauk City area, in Sauk County, just across the Wisconsin River from the northwestern tip of the town. In fact, this property is located closer to Sauk City than it is to Mazomanie, and the original settlers of this farm, the Kemps, may have had more in common with that community rather than the fewer Germans located further south.

The settlement in the Town of Mazomanie described above did not result in great numbers prior to the Civil War, especially in the northern part of the town. An 1861 plat map for Dane County shows that there were few farmsteads in this area. Rather, larger parcels were owned by individuals, possibly land speculators. For example, the original Kemp farm was part of a larger parcel owned by a "Wheeler." The tax assessment rolls for 1861 indicate that a "Wheeler" was, indeed, the owner of what was to become the Kemp farm, along with some other property, but he was listed in the tax rolls as a "non-resident" owner, suggesting that he may have been a land speculator.<sup>3</sup>

In 1863, John Kemp was the first resident owner listed in the tax assessment roles for this property, then an 80-acre parcel. According to the 1870 federal census, John's wife was Margarethe and they had seven children. The census reported that John and Margarethe Kemp were Prussian immigrants whose two oldest children were born in Prussia and whose next five children were born in Wisconsin. According to the tax assessment rolls, the Kemp family would hold this farm until the late 1890s.

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<sup>2</sup> *History of Dane County Wisconsin*, Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1880, pp. 934-943.

<sup>3</sup> Plat Map of Dane County, 1861, on file in the Archives of Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin; Tax Assessment Roll for Dane County, 1861, on microfilm in the Archives of Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

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Kemp, John and Margarethe, Cabin  
Town of Mazomanie, Dane County, Wisconsin

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Given the location of the farm on the ridge above the Wisconsin River, it is likely that much of Kemp's original farm land was wooded. The 1870 census reveals that of Kemp's 80 acres, only 25 were improved (after about 7 years on the land), while 55 acres were listed as woods. The farm also consisted of two horses, two milk cows, and three pigs. Crops grown were 300 bushels of wheat, 100 bushels of corn, and 200 bushels of oats.

In 1870, Kemp only had one teen-age boy helping him farm. But, between 1870 and 1890, four younger sons would have come of age on the farm, perhaps helping him expand to the 200 acres he had acquired by 1890. Around that same time, John Kemp died, but the family remained on the farm until around 1900, when it was sold to Andrew Williams. Williams was a brief owner; 1911 records indicate the farm had passed to the Wachter family. This family would own the farm for 50 years.

George Wachter was a German immigrant who came with his mother, father, and two siblings to Wisconsin in 1880, a later period of mass German immigration to the United States. Three more siblings of George Wachter would be born in Wisconsin. George was born in 1876 and was the oldest of the children. In his mid-30s, George and his family would locate to this farm, purchasing it from Andrew Williams. According to George's son, Roman Wachter, the cabin was still used as a residence in 1920 when he was born and he and his family lived there for several years of his childhood until a new farmhouse was erected nearby.

Two generations of Wachter family members operated this farm: first George Wachter, then George's sons Roman and John, who operated the farm until 1961. In that year, the Wachter farm (at that time 226 acres) was sold to Larrie and Diana Isenring who acquired the land to operate a campground and recreation area. Called the Blackhawk Ridge Campground, the complex included a converted barn with a restaurant and camper facilities; the converted farmhouse with two apartments; a lodge used as a dormitory (a reconstructed log building from the Rhinelander area); a small outbuilding used later as a store and office; three pole barns used for storage, horse stables, and group event space; an in-ground swimming pool; some miscellaneous small buildings; and this log cabin, also used for the store and office, then as a camper rental. At some point, the Isenrings acquired another 300 acres for their campgrounds, creating a 525-acre recreational complex. The additional 300 acres of the Isenring property included some of the land on which the Battle of Wisconsin Heights took place, about a mile north of the cabin. The Isenring campground was a successful venture for 25 years, with campsites, hiking trails, horseback riding trails, and cross-country ski trails for tourists. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Isenrings planted trees on about 100 acres of cropland, leaving only about 50 acres open.

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In 1989, the Isenrings sold the entire property to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to create the Blackhawk Unit of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway recreational area. Most of the farmstead and recreational facilities were razed, but the Kemp cabin, the reconstructed lodge from Rhinelander, a picnic shelter, an open pavilion, and a pole building remain on the property. The lodge, shelter, and pavilion are still used for picnics and events, and the pole building is used by the Department of Natural Resources. The Kemp cabin has stood vacant since 1989 and has gradually deteriorated. Also, much of the 50 acres left open by the Isenrings appear to have been naturally reforested.

**Area of Significance: Architecture**

The John and Margarethe Kemp Log Cabin has a long and interesting history and is architecturally significant at the local level as a good and distinctive example of a type of construction important during the pioneer era in Wisconsin. It features details that are both typical and atypical of pioneer-era log cabins in southern Wisconsin, especially those erected by German immigrants. As a relatively intact log cabin, still on its original site, and traceable to its original ethnic German owners it is not a common resource in Wisconsin, making the Kemp cabin a significant architectural resource.

*Log Cabin Construction<sup>4</sup>*

Nationally, architectural historians have identified a number of traditional log house plans and construction materials and methods. These elements of log houses were often repeated with simple variations throughout the country. The basic unit of the log house is the one room enclosure formed by four log walls joined at their corners, and referred to as a "pen" or "crib."

The single pen was improved by installing interior partitions or by adding another log pen. Some variations of historic log house plans include the typically mid-Atlantic "continental" plan, consisting of a single-pen of three rooms organized around a central hearth; the "saddlebag" or double-pen plan, composed of two contiguous log pens; and the "dogtrot" plan, formed by two pens separated by an open passage space (sometimes enclosed later), all covered by a continuous roof. The continental plan originated in central and eastern Europe and is attributed to 18th century German immigrants to Pennsylvania. Non-log interior partition walls form the multi-room plan within the exterior log walls.

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<sup>4</sup> National Park Service, *The Preservation and Repair of Historic Log Buildings*, "Preservation Brief No. 26," Internet site, <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief26.htm>.

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The saddlebag plan consists of two adjoining log pens that share a central chimney. A saddlebag is often the evolution of a single pen with an end chimney, expanded by adding a second pen onto the chimney endwall. The saddlebag was built in a number of different regions across the country. The dogtrot plan may be seen with variations in many parts of the country.

Corner notching is another of the characteristic features of log construction. Most notching methods provide structural integrity by locking the log ends in place. The type of corner notching can sometimes be a clue to the ethnic origin of a log building, especially if it is combined with other ethnic-related details. Corner notching techniques appear throughout the country and range from the simple "saddle" notching, which demands minimal time and hewing skill, to common and simple "V" and square notching, to "full dovetail" notching, one of the tightest but most time-consuming notching techniques.

The wood used for early log construction was likely determined by availability, but some woods were preferred for their straight, rot-resistant logs. Log construction required only simple tools, such as a felling axe for bringing down the tree and cutting the logs to length. Some builders removed the bark from the logs or used a broad axe to hew flat surfaces on the logs. Notching was done with an axe, hatchet, or saw; openings for doors and windows were usually cut after the logs were set into place. Roof framing members and floor joists were either hewn from logs or were made from milled lumber, if available. The upper gable walls were completed with logs if the roof was constructed with purlins, or were covered with vertical boards or clapboards.

Most log cabins used a variety of materials to fill in the horizontal spaces or joints between logs in a process known as "chinking" and "daubing". Chinking and daubing sealed the walls against driving wind and snow, helping them to shed rain, and blocking the entry of vermin. In addition, chinking and daubing could compensate for a minimal amount of hewing and save time if immediate shelter was needed. Most ethnic groups used chinking, but a notable exception were the Finnish, who often used tight-fitting scribed logs with dovetail notching and had little or no need for chinking and daubing.

A variety of materials were used for chinking and daubing. Often wood slabs were inserted into the log joints, followed by a soft packing filler such as oakum, moss, clay, or dried animal dung. Daubing was the application of a wet layer of varying composition, but often consisting of a mixture of clay and lime or mortar mix. In some cases, carefully fitted quarter poles or narrow wood strips were nailed lengthwise across the log joints.

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Kemp, John and Margarethe, Cabin  
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In most cases, log cabins were abandoned for frame-constructed housing and/or were later put to use as outbuildings. Some log cabins, though, were retained and enlarged, then clad with clapboards to give them a "finished" appearance and make them look like frame constructed housing. Some log cabins were covered with stucco, as well.

Log building foundations varied considerably in quality, material, and configuration. In many cases, the foundation consisted of a continuous course of flat stones (with or without mortar), several piers consisting of rubble stone, single stones, brick, short vertical log pilings, or horizontal log "sleepers" set on grade. The two "sill logs" were laid directly upon one of these types of foundations.

Log buildings were roofed with a variety of different framing systems and covering materials. In most cases, wood shingles were the first roof covering. As wood shingle roofs deteriorated, many were replaced with standing seam metal roofs, roll roofing, and even later, asphalt shingles.

Chimneys in log houses were usually built of stone or brick, a combination of the two, or even clay-lined, notched logs or smaller sticks. Later log buildings were frequently constructed with only metal stacks to accommodate wood stoves. The chimneys of log buildings erected in cold climates tended to be located entirely inside the house to maximize heat retention. In the South, where winters were less severe, the chimney stack was more typically constructed outside the log walls. With the advent of more efficient heating systems, interior chimneys were frequently demolished or relocated and rebuilt to maximize interior space.

Interior walls of log cabins were often left exposed during the pioneer era as well as in the later era of Rustic style structures. But in the more finished log houses of the 18th and 19th centuries, they were often covered for most of the same reasons that the exterior of the logs was covered: improved insulation, ease of maintenance, aesthetics, and keeping out vermin. Common interior finishes included lath and plaster, and boards covered with newspapers or fabric or wallpaper. These methods increased the wall's resistance to air infiltration, while adding some insulation value. Finished walls could be cleaned and painted more easily, and plastered walls and ceilings obscured the rough log construction and prepared interior surfaces for decorative wood trim.

*Log Cabin Construction in Wisconsin*

According to Wisconsin's *Cultural Resource Management Plan*, most early settlers took advantage of the vast native forests in the state to construct small log cabins. Log cabin construction techniques came with these settlers from the eastern United States and included methods that could be traced to

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both Swedish and German immigrants. During the mid-nineteenth century, waves of German and Norwegian settlers, with other European groups, brought ethnic log building techniques to Wisconsin.

Germans, who heavily settled the southeastern area of the state, traditionally employed two types of timber construction, log and half-timbered. Half-timbered construction used a timber frame with an infill of clay and straw, mud, and/or bricks. German log construction typically used squared logs that were often fully or half dovetailed at the corners. A feature of German log buildings was a wide space between logs that was heavily chinked with clay, straw, and lime mortar.

Norwegian cabins had similar features as German construction. They used squared logs and liberal amounts of chinking. However, Norwegian cabins often were more tightly constructed than German cabins and required less chinking. The tightest log construction techniques were used by Finnish immigrants to Wisconsin, who came closer to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and settled primarily in northern Wisconsin. The Finns squared and scribed their logs, then joined them with full dovetail notches. These techniques often created a log wall that had little need of chinking.

The Kemp cabin has many of the details of American and Wisconsin log construction as described above. Its single-pen form, log walls filled with wood and mortar chinking, and common corner notching can be traced to the log construction forms of Swedish and German immigrants that are found in the eastern United States. It is also typical of cabins built in Wisconsin during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially by German immigrants. Like most German ethnic log cabins, the Kemp cabin has wide spaces between logs that are filled in with a large amount of both wood and mortar chinking. The half or full dovetail corners favored by many German ethnic log cabin builders are not seen in this cabin. Rather a simpler type of notching, the square notch, is used. Also different is the fact that the logs are kept rounded on the exterior. German ethnic cabins commonly used logs hewn on both sides. In this cabin, only the interior logs are hewn.

These features that are both similar and different from most of the known German log cabins of southern Wisconsin make the Kemp cabin distinctive and an important resource in which to study German log building variations. One of these important variations is the size and shape of the logs used in the walls. The Kemps settled in a heavily wooded area, obviously filled with large, mature trees, given the size of the logs used in the cabin walls. But, the use of these large logs may have not been entirely based on convenience. The exposed walls of the interior show how skilled Kemp was in using wood chinking between the large logs, suggesting that he may have deliberately used the large logs, hewn on one side only, as a construction time-saver, knowing that he had expert skill in chinking.



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The evidence for this can be seen in the walls themselves. Although difficult to see on the exterior, the interior walls show a high level of craftsmanship in the use of wood chinking material. The wood chinking seen on the interior is expertly set between the logs with little mortar visible. Instead, large amounts of mortar were used to cover the wood chinking and fill the spaces between the unhewn exterior logs. The result was a tight fitting wall that saved the time of hewing both sides of the logs.

Another time saver used for construction of the Kemp cabin was the square notching at the corners, rather than dovetail notching. A dovetailed notch gives the corners the most stability as the log ends literally "grip" each other, but it is more time-consuming to hew each log so that the angles meet in a tight fit. Square notching would take less time, but would also allow more movement of the corners. What Kemp did to overcome this extra movement was to reinforce the notching with wooden pegs, giving the corners stability while saving time in corner construction.

The interior of the cabin is very intact. The first floor, where partitions were completely removed, and where plaster has come off the walls, show the most original details, especially the construction details of the log walls. More modern materials covering the walls and ceiling of the second floor and to make room partitions obscure some of the original details. But, these materials are easily removed and where they have fallen away, the original details of the second floor are visible. Because most of the original details of the interior are still extant, this cabin has a high level of historic integrity. Stabilization and restoration of the cabin walls and floors, along with the removal of remaining modern materials, could bring back this important pioneer-era resource to almost museum quality.

By using large logs hewn on only one side, and by employing an easier method of corner notching, John Kemp saved some time in getting his family into a suitable home on their new farm in the early 1860s. But, his sound building practices also created a home that was used for at least 50-60 years. The Kemp family, with at least seven children, and the George Wachter family, with nine children, occupied this cabin from the 1860s to around 1920. The wear and tear of these families must have been considerable, yet the cabin stood and was sound enough to revive in the mid-twentieth century as a useful recreational building. It has only been in the last 27 years, through lack of use, that the cabin has deteriorated. Yet, it can still be renovated and returned to useful service, a testament to the high quality of materials and construction techniques used by John Kemp when the cabin was first built in the 1860s.

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Adding to the importance of this cabin as an architecturally significant pioneer-era resource is its location on its original site. Many pioneer log buildings have been moved, often to different locations to preserve them. But, in this way, the characteristics of their original sites are lost. The Kemp Cabin sits where it was originally built, with its original orientation. This factor makes the cabin an even more important architectural resource that could provide information about the geography of early farms and farmstead sites, especially in the bluffs located near the Wisconsin River. While archaeological evidence of early settlement may be present at the site, Wisconsin's archaeological database (ASI) does not list any reported sites in the vicinity of the house.

The John and Margarethe Kemp Log Cabin is a significant architectural resource and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for its type of construction, a pioneer-era log cabin built for an ethnic German family. The building has both typical and atypical construction techniques in comparison to other examples of ethnic German log construction, making it a resource that illustrates the variety of ethnic German log construction in the area. It adds to the knowledge base of ethnic German log cabins as well as the knowledge base of the lifeways of pioneer German families in this area. As such, it is a significant historic building with a high degree of integrity and is worth recognition by the National Register.

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**Boundary Description**

The boundary for this property is as follows. Beginning at the intersection of a line running 15 feet from the east wall of the cabin and a line running 25 feet from the south wall of the cabin, then north along the line running 15 feet from the east wall of the cabin to the intersection with the line running 25 feet from the north wall of the cabin, then west along this line to the intersection with a line running 25 feet from the west wall of the cabin, then south along this line to the intersection with a line running 25 feet from the south wall of the cabin, then east along this line to the point of beginning.

**Boundary Justification**

This cabin is part of a 500-plus acre parcel of public land. It sits in an area by itself and is not located near any other historic resources. Therefore, the boundary was determined to be an area around the cabin that would provide an appropriate setting similar to what might have been the original open space surrounding the cabin. Along the north elevation, the boundary was extended in a slightly open area to include two fruit trees that probably had a relationship with the building when it was used as a farmhouse. On the west and south sides of the cabin, the boundary was extended to enclose what appeared to be an original small lawn on these two elevations. The east side of the building was wooded up to the east wall, but the boundary was extended to the point in which the land begins to significantly drop into the ravine.

The resulting boundary creates an appropriate site around the cabin based on historic and geographical features, while not including excess land not immediately related to the building.

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**Kemp, John and Margarethe, Cabin  
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Photos by Carol Cartwright, June 2007.**

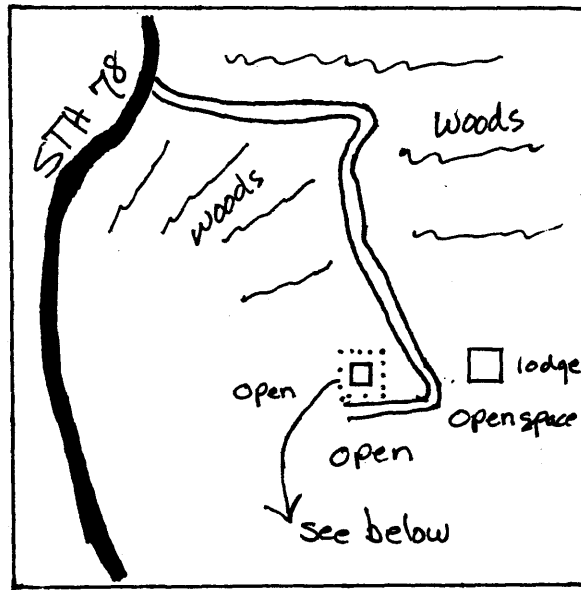
**Negatives on file in Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.**

Views:

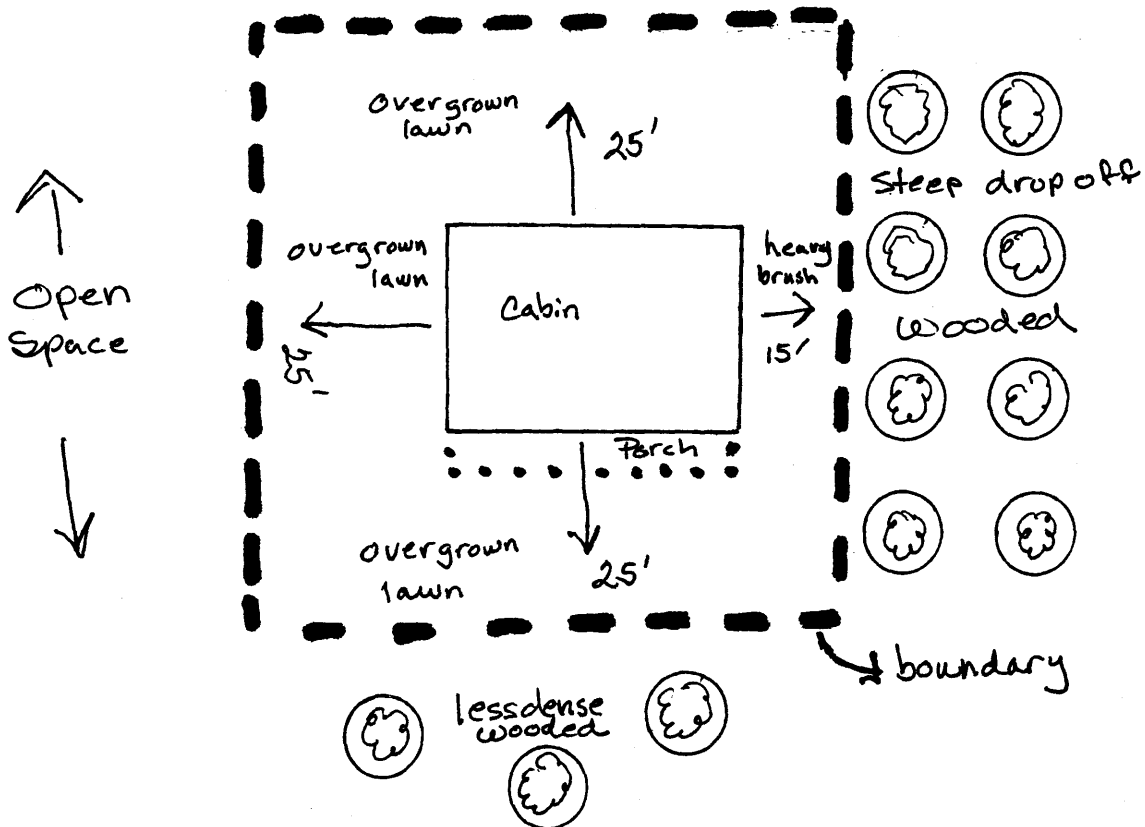
- 1 of 6: Site view, from the southwest.
- 2 of 6: North and west elevations, view from the northwest.
- 3 of 6: South elevation, view from the southwest.
- 4 of 6: South and east elevations, view from the southeast.
- 5 of 6: First story, main or south elevation showing main entrance, view from the southeast.
- 6 of 6: Interior, first floor, view of interior lot walls showing logs and chinking.

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 Figure #1: Site Map

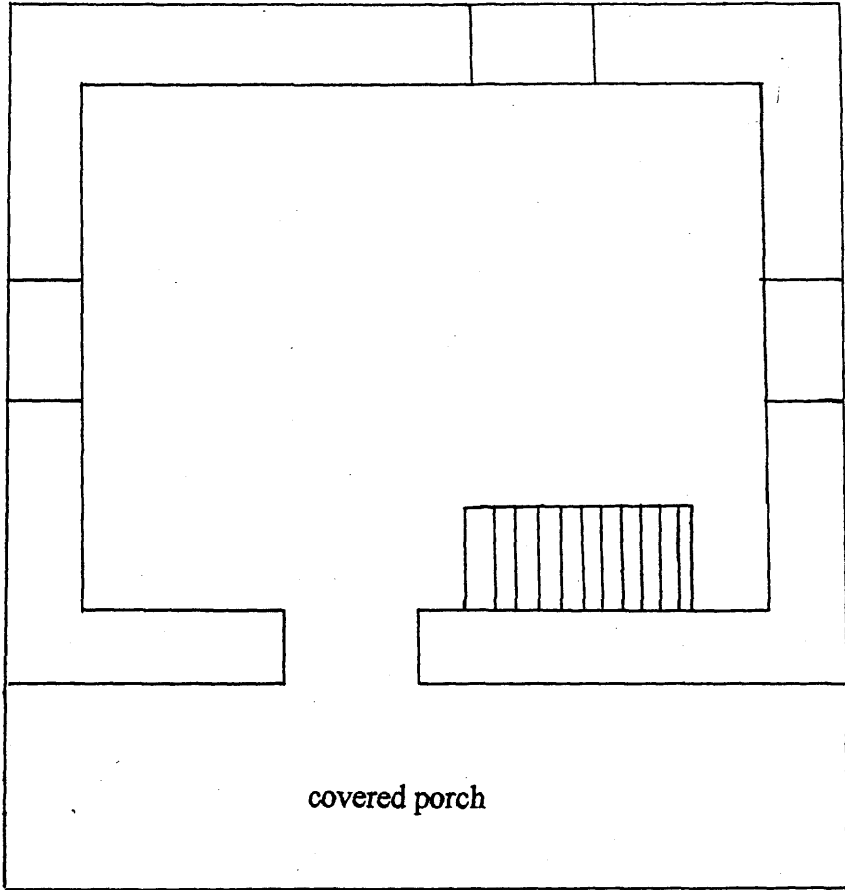
Map to Right:  
 Shows  
 relationship of  
 Kemp Cabin to  
 STH 78 and  
 Driveway



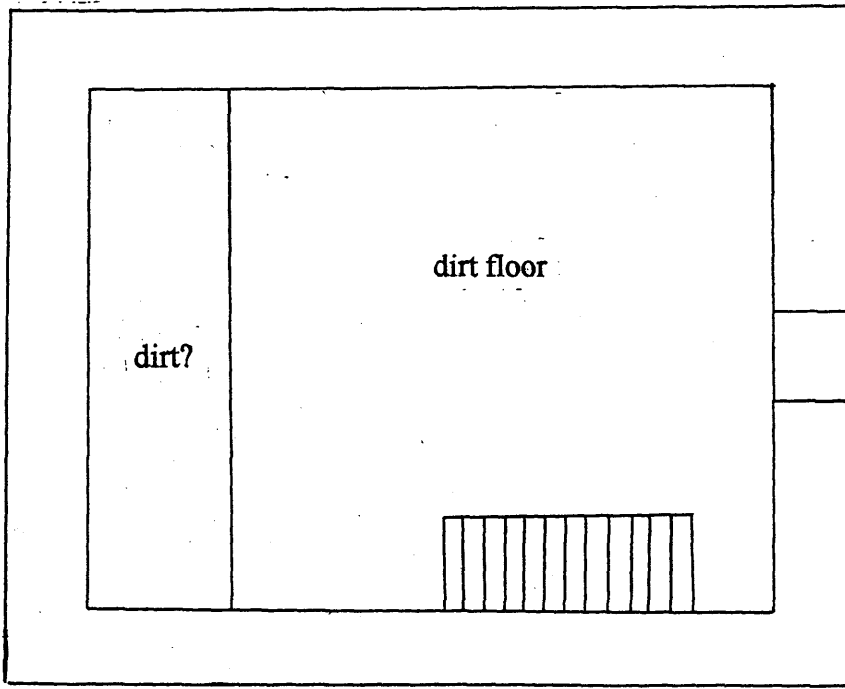
Map Below:  
 Enlargement of dotted area on above map, showing boundaries.



First Floor



Cellar



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Figure #2: Floor Plans

