

Log school renovation brings back memories

Students recall warmth of cabin

By **Patricia Merritt**
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BLACK FOREST — As log cabin schools go, it was pretty average: a one-room structure built of Ponderosa pine logs and warmed by a stove.

What makes the 75-year-old Black Forest Log School special now is its place on the National Register of Historic Places and its place in the memories of former students and the community.

"We all knew each other," said Lexie Manfrin, 66. "It was a real warm, nice feeling."

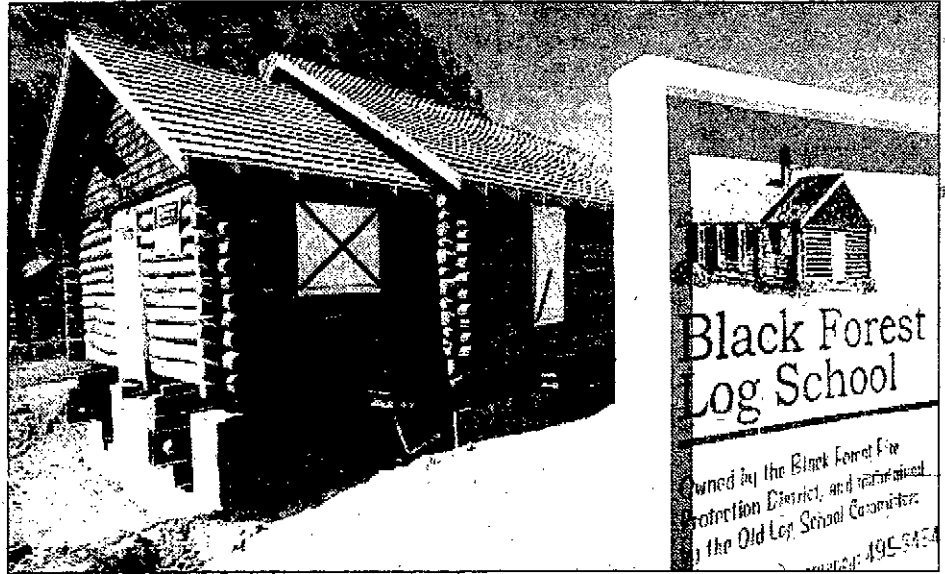
Vera Ellett, now 73, remembers another kind of warmth.

"I remember we used to reach up to put our mittens on the fence that was over our heads and surrounded the stove," said Ellett, who attended the school as a first-grader and again from fourth through eighth grades.

The schoolhouse, at the corner of Black Forest and Shoup roads, was built in 1922 and was home to children in the first eight grades until it closed in 1945.

Wooden desks and seats filled the classroom. A piano sat in a corner, and on weekends, it was used to play hymns for Sunday school.

It's those kind of memories that organizers in Black Forest have harnessed to help raise money to renovate the school-



The Black Forest Log School, owned by the Black Forest Fire Protection District, is in the midst of a three-phase makeover. The building is set to be put back on its foundation Saturday.

TO HELP

Donations may be sent to The Old Log School's Restoration Project, c/o Black Forest Log School, P.O. Box 88001, Colorado Springs 80908.

house. When completed, it will become the visitors center.

The project so far has cost \$35,000.

Placed on the historic registry in 1993, the 750-square-foot schoolhouse is now in the midst of a three-phase makeover. At 9 a.m. Saturday, if the weather cooperates, phase two will come to a close as workers use a crane to place the schoolhouse on the restored foundation.

The first phase of replacing the roof was completed in May 1996, said Carrie Robertson, a member of the Old Log School Committee. The new roof cost about \$4,000 for present-day brown shingles that look similar to the original wood.

"Of course we wouldn't use wood because of the fire danger. The shingles are fire-resistant," Robertson said.

The committee received a state grant for \$3,000 to help with the first phase and an additional \$23,000 for the second phase, which cost \$31,000.

The cost for the third and final phase, which involves sprucing up the interior, hasn't been calculated.

But the committee does know work will include replacing the wood paneling on the ceiling and walls, painting the paneling and fixing the windows, Robertson said.

For 23 years, the schoolhouse brought Black Forest residents together.

"It was the social center at the time," said Robertson. "Dances, ice-cream socials and church were held there."

Former student Manfrin remembers how her teacher, Edith Wolford, would bring Jell-O to school, leaving it outside in the winter chill to set.

When it was ready, the class would whip up a can of evaporated milk to spread on the dessert.

"That was a real treat, because we didn't have electricity then," Manfrin said.