Cutting to receive annual historic preservation award for log house project

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The Decorah Historic Preservation Commission (DHPC) will present its annual award to Paul Cutting for his documentation and rehabilitation of historic log houses. The public is invited to the award presentation on Tuesday, May 26, 2026, 4:30-6:00. The ceremony will take place in the restored log garage/workshop at the Cutting house at 707 E. Broadway. DHPC will provide light refreshments.

Over the past fifteen years Cutting has restored about a dozen nineteenth-century Norwegian-built log houses. Paul came to this project as a University of Iowa senior majoring in geography. His senior project involved talking with Winneshiek County residents who had relocated and recycled log buildings beginning in the 1960s and 70s. Through this project, Paul discovered a number of abandoned log houses still remaining untouched and largely abandoned, and over the subsequent years documented upwards of 250 Norwegian-built log houses and outbuildings throughout Winneshiek, and Fillmore and Houston Counties in southeast Minnesota. In addition to documenting these buildings, Cutting has taken apart and rebuilt many, including two of which were moved to his residence in Decorah and now function as an addition to his early 1860s brick home and as a detached garage and workshop.

DHPC Commission member Nan St. Clair noted, “It is especially amazing that prior to beginning this project Cutting had little experience with construction. He in effect taught himself how to dismantle and reconstruct these homes.”

Commission member Hayley Jackson noted how important log construction was to the European settlers in this region. “Documenting, preserving, and repurposing these houses is an important act of tangible historical research and education.”

Cutting now works at Winneshiek Energy District in Decorah as an energy auditor. His present hobby is making custom made furniture.

For a list of DHPC’s previous annual Historic Preservation Awards, see https://www.decorahia.org/commission-and-boards/historic-preservation/awards

The Decorah Historic Preservation Commission is a state-certified city board established in 2007 to promote the public’s educational and economic welfare through the recognition of historic sites. (Contact: historicpreservation@decorah.iowa.gov)

Paul Cutting working on the deconstruction stage of one of his log houses.

A historic log structure attached to the Cutting home as the future kitchen.