



CYPRESS

Withstands the Test of Time on the Shores of Lake Michigan

The year was 1933. Chicago played host to the World's Fair. Themed "A Century of Progress," the event featured innovative and groundbreaking model homes designed by some of the world's leading architects. It was a showcase of modern design, experimental materials, and new technologies that would set the tone for future home construction.

The Southern Cypress Manufacturers Association (SCMA) built one of the model homes, named the Cypress Log Cabin. Architect Murray D. Heatherington designed the house to showcase the durability and versatility of cypress by incorporating cypress siding, shakes, structural timbers, walls, flooring, and furnishings.

A mountain-lodge style was

prominent throughout, with cypress knees carved to look like animals and fantasy creatures. Cypress benches, arbors, and a bridge completed the look. In all, a main house and a separate rear building showcased 12 types of cypress.

After the World's Fair closed, the Robert Bartlett Realty Company purchased 16 traditional buildings that had been on display there, including the Cypress Log Cabin and demonstration building. The buildings were moved to the southern shore of Lake Michigan, where the new resort town of Beverly Shores, Indiana, was being developed.

In the mid-1960s, Congress moved to protect the land along the lakeshore by establishing the

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Ten years later, the park's boundaries were expanded to include the area of the Cypress Log Cabin and what today is known as the Century of Progress National Register Historic District. For years, the fate of the historic properties was unclear with funding unavailable for their upkeep or restoration.

The properties are now owned by the National Park Service and leased to the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana. The organization oversees a unique program to preserve the houses by providing 30-year leases to private individuals and families who agree to rehabilitate them following approved restoration plans.



The Cypress Log Cabin was the first to be completed. Despite more than 70 years of assault from the elements, courtesy of its lakefront location, and nearly 30 years with little to no maintenance, the cypress more than lived up to its legend of natural durability.

Todd Zeiger, project manager and director of the Northern Region, Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana considers the wood a marvel. "Cypress is supposed to be resistant to termites and moisture, and this is evidently true," he explained. "Much of the cypress wood was still in excellent condition. Where other wood was used, it had rotted away due to the high moisture and deferred maintenance. The family undertaking the restoration often had to rub the cypress with orange oil to bring back the look. In some rooms the floors had turned black, so they were simply refinished."

In 2010, when the *Century of Progress* homes turn 75 years old,

the Cypress Log Cabin will feature the original cypress siding, walls, structural timbers, and flooring. The few cypress timbers that needed replacing were sustainably sourced.

The reconstruction of the home's exterior front had to fulfill certain requirements, but its new residents were permitted to extend the living space in the rear. Additions include two bedrooms, three bathrooms, a kitchen, and a breezeway that connects the main house and the formerly separate rear building.

After four years of rehabilitation, the residents of the historic Cypress Log Cabin can finally relax and enjoy the home's old and new amenities: an original stone fireplace and a media room, together with breathtaking views of Lake Michigan.

To learn more about the beauty, versatility and durability of cypress, visit the Southern Cypress Manufacturers Association web site at www.cypressinfo.org.



Above: The original interior of the Cypress Log Cabin, as seen at the 1933 World's Fair.

Below: A recent look at the interior of the Cypress Log Cabin, showcases the original cypress flooring, paneling and structural elements.



**SOUTHERN
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