

Historic Day Log House Statement of Significance

The historic Day Log House remains a notable example of nineteenth century log construction architecture in the State of Missouri and is a significant cultural resource for Platte County. Investigation has revealed that the Day Log House's initial construction date was likely in the mid-19th century. The property's historic character-defining features include: the mid-nineteenth century log house and subsequent additions; the historic stone root cellar; the original stone spring head; the ponds; stone walls, paths and terraces; gardens and plantings and the historic natural landscape created by the site's unique rolling topography with a stream, steep grades, native plants and wildlife.

Of equal significance to the history of the log structure to the Day Log House, is the history surrounding the four generations of the Day-Evans Family and Dorothy Day's long-term vision for her log house and site to serve and educate visitor's to enhance their understanding of conservation and natural resources:

In the rush of everyday high-tech life, this opportunity to feel the delight of feeling the oneness with human life with nature is essential to physical and mental health.¹

The house and surrounding site reflect the multi-generational development and habitation of this property, while the interior of the house reveals the lifestyle that Dorothy Day created. As stated in the *Dorothy Day and the Green Hills of Platte Wildlife Preserve* report by Jean Svadlenak & Associates, "in the design and décor of the house, and the books, decorative arts and furnishings she surrounded herself with – as well as the art that she created. The tiniest details intrigued Dorothy and fed her creativity. Preserving the natural habitat of the land where she lived her entire life became her primary focus in her later years and her family's living legacy."²



Photograph of Emma Day at the Log House ca. 1912.

¹ Martha Zirschky. "Green Hills Comes to Life." *Dispatch Tribune*. December 4, 2004.

² Svadlenak & Associates Museum Consulting. "Dorothy Day and the Green Hills of Platte Wildlife Preserve." September 15, 2014.

Executive Summary

The purpose of the Day Log House Master Plan Project is to provide Platte County with a guiding document for the preservation, restoration, interpretation and public enjoyment of the historic Day Log House and surrounding grounds at the Green Hills of Platte Wildlife Preserve. This planning project has been broken into four research and design phases, with the master plan and treatment recommendation portion as the fourth and final phase.

Phase I included the measurement and production of as-built floor plans of the house and the barn/outbuilding in AutoCAD for use in the subsequent phases of the study.

Phase II included the assessment of the existing conditions of the buildings and site by a professional team specializing in the review of historic properties. The first and second phases were issued in a report titled *Historic Day Log House: Building and Site Assessment Study – Immediate and Short Term Recommendations* by Susan Richards Johnson & Associates, Inc. (SRJA) dated August 16, 2013.

Phase III included historic research of the house and the site by Sally Schwenk Associates, culminating in a final report, *Historic Day Log House Building and Site History* in January 2015 to determine the significance of the nineteenth log house and site. Jean Svadlenak of Svadlenak & Associates Museum Consulting was contracted to document and inventory the contents of the house, and pack and remove items to climate-controlled storage. This work was documented in the *Collections Inventory, Analysis & Storage Project Phase I Report* in February 2014. In addition, Svadlenak & Associates researched the Day-Evans Families and the importance of the conservation movement in the *PHASE II REPORT: Dorothy Day & Her Family History and Nature Conservation Movement History* issued in September 2014.

Phase IV included the development of a master plan for the Day Log House. A steering committee was assembled to provide direction and review of master plan options. The Day Cabin Master Planning Steering Committee (consisting of Platte County officials, Platte County residents, stakeholders and historic preservation professionals) collaborated to develop a future interpretive direction for the Day Log House and surrounding grounds. The committee met four times, during which various interpretive plans for the Day Log House and surrounding site were presented and discussed. The meeting notes from the four meetings can be found in Appendix B. On September 20, 2014, Platte County hosted a public open house at the Day Log House site to solicit input on the future of the house and surrounding property. Written comments were received at the open house and reviewed by the Steering Committee. The open house presentation and comments are included in Appendix B. The Steering Committee considered the historic importance of the house, the intimacy of the site, the structural and capacity limitations of the existing structures, adjacencies of neighbors, access and parking, property maintenance, and educational, interpretation and partnership opportunities.

The Steering Committee envisions the educational programming would include small groups of children or adults to experience the house and learn about the history of Platte County and the environment, in keeping with what Dorothy Day wished. The Committee felt strongly about keeping the main house interior and exterior intact and to preserve the integrity of the house and the site. The main living area should remain simple, with furnishings, artwork and Dorothy Day's library collection. Use fewer displays and exhibits to allow visitors to see the space as Dorothy left it. Recreate the downstairs studio, using Dorothy's drafting table, supplies and works of art. Keep the second floor in existing condition, only to be seen with small tour groups. Utilize the south addition for exhibit space and as an ADA accessible entrance and transition to the main house. Some type of indoor gathering space is needed for cultural and educational purposes. The existing barn is in severely deteriorated condition and the Committee agreed it was not worth spending funds for major repairs or renovations, due to the significant amount of required work and the small footprint of the building. This building would be mothballed until it can be replaced with a slightly larger educational facility with restrooms and an office. Keep as much of the outdoor area as natural as possible, in keeping with Dorothy's original intent of the preserve. Handicapped parking is required near the house, as well as an ADA path. A new sidewalk with integral

steps will offer an alternate route from the lower parking lot to the house. New restrooms will be required in addition to what is existing in the house. Include seating areas along routes of ingress/egress, near the natural areas surrounding the house and include exhibits about the wildlife preserve. Exhibits should include Day family history and photographs, as well as the Dorothy Day video and audio tracks to tell the story of the house. Keep Dorothy's vision in mind when making all plans for maintenance and improvement.

This Phase IV report represents the approved Master Plan and Treatment Recommendations as agreed upon by the Steering Committee. Three potential phases for the historic Day Log House and surrounding site to address maintenance, repairs, and stabilization, as well as long term goals, are outlined in this report. Master Plan design alternatives include: stabilization of the historic structure; ADA accessibility; life safety code; potential restrooms facilities; site planning, access and parking and an itemized probable cost estimate for the proposed phases of work. These phases include:

Phase 1 – Stabilization: This phase outlines recommended stabilization and repair/reconstruction of the existing structure.

Phase 2: Discovery Room Exhibit Space and Access Development: This phase includes two options, Option A and Option B, which outline ADA parking, site access, exhibit space, office space and restrooms. Option B includes a small addition to the south side of the house.

Phase 3 – New Educational and Events Pavilion: This option would be in lieu of Phase 2 Option B above and consists of the demolition of the existing deteriorated barn and the new construction of a 1,850 sq/ft structure in the same location, which would include event space, and office and ADA restrooms.

This Phase IV report is organized with this Executive Summary followed by proposed phased design alternatives and treatment recommendations and a preliminary cost estimate for specific proposed items of work.

This Master Plan provides schematic level information of the proposed maintenance and rehabilitation required to open the house for public enjoyment. Several items outlined in this report will require further professional design and professional interpretive programming guidance in order to be orchestrated and/or constructed. Design development of historic interpretive exhibits will be required, based on the Committee's recommendations.

Acknowledgements

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