

Heritage Officer's Statement of Significance for the Stone House

Description of Historic Place

The Keillor Farmstead is a cultural landscape consisting of a small collection of historic buildings, including a large log cabin with stone veranda (Keillor Cabin, built circa 1918), a standalone fieldstone residence (the Stone House, built circa 1929) and a fieldstone summer kitchen (the Summer Kitchen, built circa 1929), which is attached to the Keillor Cabin. The buildings are in a landscaped area with numerous historic trees and plantings and are enclosed by a stone and metal rail fence. The Keillor Family Farmstead occupies a portion of a large leased lot, currently the site of the Whitemud Equine Centre. The site is on the south bank of the North Saskatchewan River, just east of Whitemud Creek and is accessible from Fox Drive. This Statement of Significance focuses on the Stone House and the Summer Kitchen.

Heritage Value

The Stone House and Summer Kitchen are valued for their association with the development of the original Keillor Farmstead in the North Saskatchewan River Valley. Keillor bought a large parcel of land along the south bank of the North Saskatchewan River in 1918 to establish a farm.

Keillor was a believer of the therapeutic benefits of outdoor recreation, and had a larger vision for the use of his property for the residents of Edmonton. He opened the property for use as a recreation area, notably for horseback riding, cross-country skiing, hiking and canoeing. He also had hopes of establishing a home for the elderly, where residents could benefit from natural surroundings.

The Stone House and Summer Kitchen are also valued for their architectural style, commonly seen in park and recreation areas, known colloquially as "Parkitecture". Logs were often used for residential construction in early Alberta's settlement period. Most log homes were intended to be temporary structures, and were often replaced with more modern homes when finances improved and refined building materials became available. Stone was infrequently used due to the difficulties inherent in its use. However, a notable exception to these trends is found in buildings associated with outdoor leisure activities.

Throughout the industrialized world, the popular opinion of nature had changed by the early 1900s; the wilderness was no longer to be feared, nor was it seen as existing solely to be conquered and exploited. Theories of the restorative and

character-building benefits of communing with nature developed, and nature parks were created to facilitate outdoor leisure activities. Early structures in these parks were often built hastily with materials close to hand, typically logs and available stone, giving park architecture a rustic appearance. The use of natural materials and the rustic appearance of these makeshift buildings blended well with the Arts and Crafts movement, which lauded craftsmanship, natural materials and the picturesque. By the 1920s, rustic architecture that blended harmoniously with the landscape was demanded by the public, and soon became entrenched as the mandated architectural style for the American National Parks Service, Canada's National Parks Branch, and was also frequently used in provincial and municipal parks. The original Keillor Cabin, built in circa 1918, and the Stone House and Summer Kitchen, both built in circa 1929, all reflect this popular approach to building construction.

The Keillor buildings, including the Stone House and Summer Kitchen, are all made of primarily natural materials and they exhibit an exceptional degree of craftsmanship. The buildings are constructed in a rustic style, featuring fieldstone masonry walls and exposed log rafters. The interior of the Summer Kitchen has been modernized, but the interior of the Stone House retains its fieldstone fireplace and chimney, as well as more refined trim and wall cladding. The rustic appearance of these buildings is enhanced by their location in a landscaped yard with historic trees; all enclosed by a fieldstone and metal rail fence. Although not located in a national park, the rustic and picturesque appearance of the Keillor buildings reflects common trends in recreational and park architecture.

The Stone House and the Summer Kitchen are further valued for their direct associations with Dr. Fred Keillor and Lillian (Lyons) Keillor. Both born in Ontario in 1883, the Keillors moved to Edmonton in 1912 where Dr. Keillor established a medical practice. After serving as a Lieutenant with the Canadian Army Medical Corps in the First World War, Dr. Keillor returned to Edmonton, and in 1918, purchased a large piece of property on the south bank of the North Saskatchewan River to establish a farm. In 1928, Keillor donated a portion of his property to the City, and requested that a road be built to provide better access to his farm and Whitemud Park. The buildings Keillor constructed on the site were not intended directly for public use, but were highly visible to those visiting the site.

Dr. Keillor was the city's coroner, and also served two terms as a City Alderman from 1926–1927, and 1929–1932. Mrs. Keillor was a wife, mother and grandmother who did welfare work in a supervisory capacity through the YWCA.

Over time, the farm was expropriated by the City, first to build Fox Drive, and then completely by 1967, for a park (which in time became used by the Whitemud Equine Centre). Mrs. Keillor died in 1955; Dr. Keillor passed away in 1971. Keillor Road was closed to vehicle traffic in 1995, and became used as a bicycle and walking trail. Remnant portions of a large retaining wall for Keillor Road in the Belgravia community had been in use as an informal viewing area (known locally as the “End of the World”) for the river valley for many years after the closure of the roadway. Recession and slumping of the embankment, along with deterioration of the pillars, presented a significant safety hazard. A study was conducted on slope stability which recommended that a viewpoint be constructed on top of the current concrete pillars using the existing trails for access. Improvements were suggested for access routes, railings and a viewing area. The City of Edmonton Naming Committee approved the name Keillor Point for this project site, which was opened in late 2018.

Character-defining Elements

Key character-defining elements of the Stone House and Summer Kitchen include:

Landscape and General Appearance:

- Use of natural building materials (stripped logs and local field stone) as the primary construction materials for the buildings and fencing
- Exceptional quality of craftsmanship evident throughout the structures
- Profile and general appearance of the buildings, which blends harmoniously with the park-like setting
- Spatial relationship between the buildings and Keillor Road, a historic roadway along the riverside
- Location on the south bank of the North Saskatchewan River

Stone House (circa 1929) Exterior:

- Location slightly to the southwest of the main Keillor Cabin
- Fieldstone construction of exterior walls, front steps and chimney with raised mortar joints
- Stucco wall panels in upper north and south elevations
- Side gable roof with exposed eaves and log ends
- Cedar shingles
- Wood frame, single-hung six-over-one wood windows; matching wood storm windows
- Wood frame, three-pane wood basement windows

Attachment 2

- Wood panel inward-opening front entry door with upper six-pane glazing; outward opening wood panel screen door; double-glazed wood panel opening sidelights, surmounted by a small gabled porch with wood framing and stucco infill panel; centrally-located on the west side of building
- Wood panel door with wood storm door on the south side; small projecting canopy over the door with exposed log ends
- Poured-in-place concrete foundation with exterior parging replicating masonry block construction
- Window openings with concrete sills and lintels

Stone House (circa 1929) Interior:

- Large main open space with cathedral ceiling and exposed log rafters
- Large, well-crafted two-storey stone fireplace and exposed stone chimney with stone hearth (hidden) and wrap-around wood mantel in the open front room
- Panel clad main floor interior walls and ceiling between the logs
- Natural varnished wood panel wainscoting in main room
- Interior wood panel doors with glass knob hardware
- Natural varnished lumber trim work on the interior window frames, door frames and baseboards in the main room
- Cast iron radiators
- Wood-framed wall recess with old door bell cover beside the fireplace
- Wood basement access stair
- Partially exposed concrete foundation
- Partially-exposed main floor 2x8 floor rafters in the basement with steel support beams, including an original railroad rail
- Varnished 1x4 tongue and groove cladding on central partition in the basement
- Painted wall and ceiling panel cladding in the west room of the basement