

This article was written by Ozark Alive. It was captured for Future Royal Rangers to understand the history of the cabin that now resides at Eagle Rock. To view the original article by Ozark Alive, please visit <https://ozarksalive.com/what-happened-to-evangels-log-cabin/>

## What happened to Evangel's log cabin?

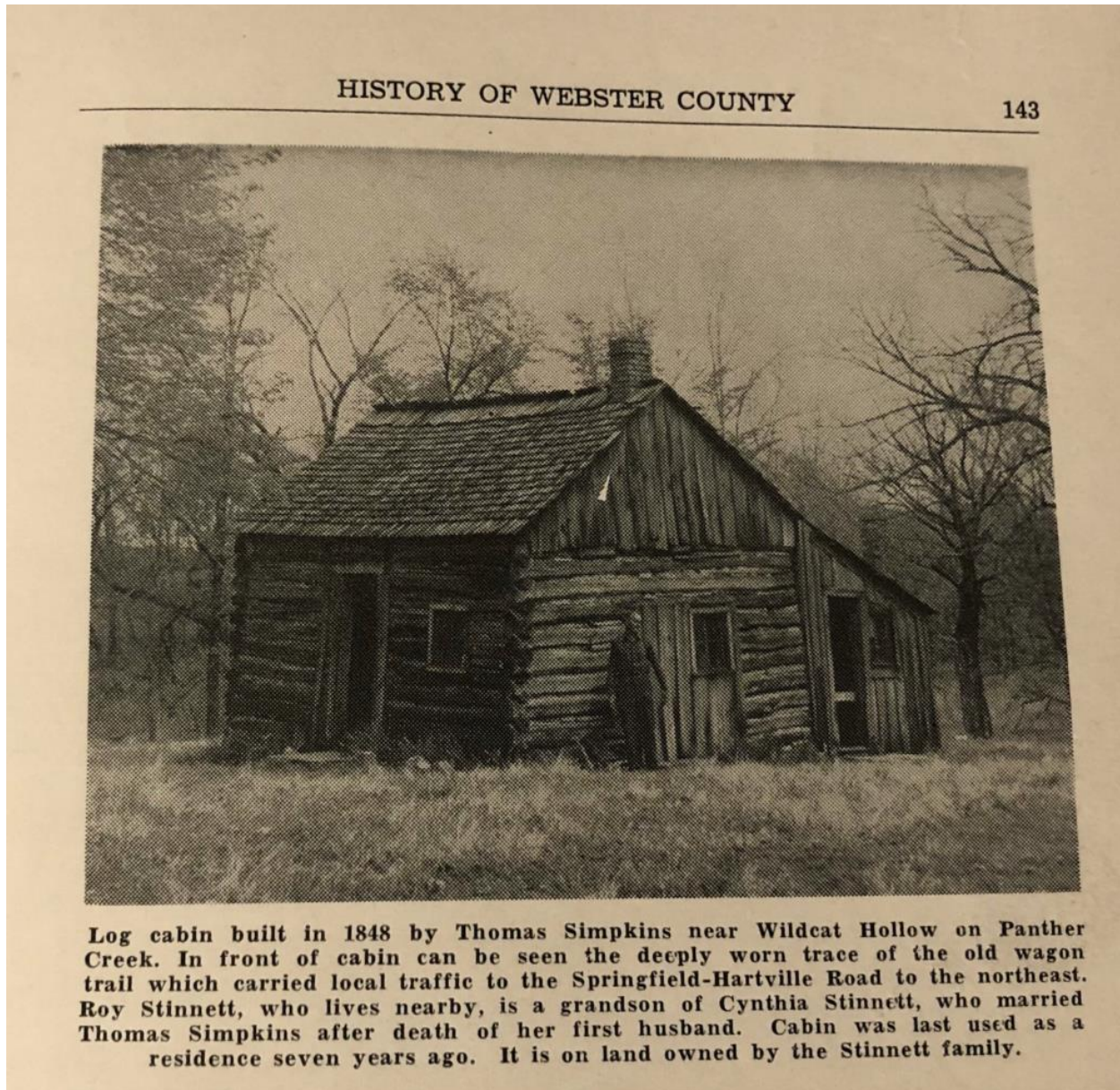


**For more than 30 years, an Ozarks log cabin was a feature of the Evangel University campus. (Courtesy of Evangel University Archives)**

Sixty years ago, this month, an old-fashioned log cabin — made with logs likely hand-hewn by settlers seeking a new life — was raised on a grassy Ozarks expanse known today as Evangel University.

Many will likely remember the cabin, which sat on the campus along Glenstone Avenue for more than three decades. It was arrived in 1960, five years after Evangel was chartered, which according to its website was the first Pentecostal liberal arts college in America.

It remained there until 1992, when the university's growing needs prompted its relocation to Eagle Rock Retreat Center in Barry County.



**The Simpkins Cabin was featured in “The History of Webster County,” a book published in 1956 in recognition of the county’s centennial. (Courtesy of “The History of Webster County”)**

While the cabin was new to the college, it wasn't new to the Ozarks. It was originally constructed in rural Webster County in 1848. To put it in perspective, it came to be more than a decade before the Civil War even began.

“Originally built in 1848 on Panther Creek north of Fordland by Thomas Simpkins, the cabin was the oldest in Webster County,” printed the Springfield Daily News in December 1960.

According to a 1979 article in the Ozarks Mountaineer magazine, Thomas Simpkins and his family came to Missouri from Tennessee, carrying their belongings by ox cart.

Sources aren't clear or consistent on how long the Simpkins family lived in the cabin, or if it was occupied continuously. At one point, a descendant of the builder said it was nicknamed the “honeymoon cabin” because so many young couples used it after their marriages.

But in a day and age where progress came far more slowly to the rural Ozarks, the tiny cabin was still being used in some capacity around 100 years after it was constructed. A photo of it was even featured in “The History of Webster County,” a book published upon the county's centennial in 1956.

Only a handful of years after its final occupant called the cabin home, descendants of its builder worked with Evangel, and Professor Bernard L. Bresson, former leader of the History and Social Sciences departments, to move the structure so it might be preserved.

“Professor Bernard L. Bresson the impetus for bringing the 1848 log cabin to the Evangel campus,” says Paul Logsdon, who recently retired as Evangel's longtime director of Public Relations. “It is my understanding that someone in the family knew Mr. Bresson or made connection with him through the historical society.”



**The original cabin as it stood in 1960, prior to being moved to Evangel’s campus. (Courtesy of Evangel University Archives)**

Members of Evangel’s History Club and other interested students helped dismantle the cabin, numbering the logs so it might be accurately put back together, and then helped reassemble the cabin in Springfield on Glenstone Avenue.

“It is unusual in that it rested on the ground instead of a stone foundation, and two bottom logs had rotted out,” said Bresson, in December 1960. “We have had to replace them, and also part of the fireplace. Otherwise, it was an excellent state of preservation.”



**The log cabin being reassembled on the Evangel campus by Professor Bernard L. Bresson. (Courtesy of Evangel University Archives)**

The Mountaineer article, written some 19 years after the cabin was relocated to Springfield, noted that the Simpkins cabin was quite spacious compared to others of the period.

“There is a marked contrast between the remote isolation of the cabin 120 years ago in Wild Cat Hollow and its location today in the stream of traffic passing only a few yards from the front door,” the Mountaineer printed. “The Simpkins cabin rendered a humble service in its youth. But instead of quietly passing from the scene when its days of usefulness were over, it has been given an additional service as a silent reminder of our heritage.”

(A side note: This cabin is one of two from Webster County’s early years to be preserved. [The Callaway Cabin, built in 1853 and today thought to be the county’s oldest cabin in existence, was relocated to Hidden Waters Nature Park in Marshfield in 2010.](#))



**This sign was a part of the display in 1977, explaining the history of the log cabin at Evangel. (Courtesy of Evangel University)**

Over the next few years, the cabin stood alongside Glenstone and watched generations of traffic go by. A sign greeted visitors with some brief history, and an invitation to peek inside. The building itself was also open occasionally for academic use.



**Dr. J. Calvin Holsinger, professor of history, speaks to a group of ladies about Ozarks history beside the log cabin at Evangel University (then College). (Courtesy of Evangel University Archives)**

However, by the late 1980s, issues with the foundation kept tours from being given. A 1989 News-Leader article noted that there were plans for repairs, after which it would reopen. It's unclear if those happened, however, because three years later the cabin was moved to a new home.

In 1992, when the college needed the ground to expand the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, the cabin was relocated to what is today known as Eagle Rock Retreat Center. Located in Barry County, the retreat is owned and operated by the National Royal Ranger Council, the Assemblies of God version of the Boy Scouts.

“The denominational tie is the reason it went there, and the cabin was a natural tie-in to the rustic development of the site and facilities there,” says Logsdon, who notes he recalls when Ranger leaders came to move the cabin. “They photographed it extensively, numbered every piece of wood, and carefully hauled it away.”



**After photographing the cabin, each of the old logs was numbered and carefully transported on a trailer (background) to Eagle Rock. The “modern” floorboards and rafters are shown piled for later transport and reuse. (Courtesy of Evangel University Archives)**

“Students, Royal Ranger leaders and boys tagged the logs, diagrammed the building and took it apart,” noted a Springfield-News Leader article, and mentioned that the logs and flooring were taken, as they were the original pieces.

Today, the cabin is still located at Eagle Rock Retreat Center and is used for activities.

“Guests can stay in the cabin if they would like,” says Branden Krause, camp manager. “During our Camporama and Rendezvous events — national Royal Rangers events hosting between 1,000 and 5,000 boys — the cabin is used as a museum to showcase the history of the Frontiersmen Camping Fellowship.”

Due to efforts to keep the camp secure for kids, Krause says the cabin is not open to the general public to view. However, if anyone would like to see it, there are still ways to make that happen.

“If someone is interested in seeing the cabin, they can make an appointment with me baring that it is not in use at the time,” says Krause.



## Want to visit?

Krause may be reached at [bkrause@eaglerockcampground.com](mailto:bkrause@eaglerockcampground.com).



**The historic log cabin from Evangel University was rebuilt with a stone foundation at Eagle Rock Camp in 1992. (Courtesy of Evangel University Archives)**

## Resources

“1849 cabin at Evangel under repair,” Michael Dale, Springfield News-Leader, Sept. 18, 1989

“Booklet on Ozarks heritage offered for Bicentennial,” Sunday News & Leader, Aug. 24, 1975

“Evangel’s log cabin is almost completed,” Springfield Daily News, Dec. 14, 1960

“The History of Webster County,” Floy Watters George, 1956

“Tom Simpkin’s cabin,” Hayward Barnett, Ozarks Mountaineer, March-April 1979

“Volunteers ready Evangel cabin for transport,” Springfield News-Leader, March 29, 1992

## One thought to “What happened to Evangel’s log cabin?”



1. **Jane Elder**

[December 30, 2020 at 12:01 am](#)

How neat. Glad to hear that it is still in the Ozarks.