## I IDENTIFICATION

BUILD ING		AD HOC	
		FHBRO (CDA	
_	BANFF, Alberta	- Meeting:	CDA 86-06
<ul> <li>City Prop:</li> <li>Name:</li> <li>Address:</li> <li>Owner:</li> </ul>	Administration Building	- Date:	23 Sept. 1986
	Banff National Park		85-53
	DOE	- BER No.:	iii ;
	I	- Date:	

Designation:

# II HERITAGE CHARACTER

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## SUMMARY

The Banff Administration Building was built in 1935-36 to the designs of Harold C. Beckett, an Ontario architect and landscape architect. The building was Recognized because of its very good aesthetic design and craftsmanship, because the historical relationship between the building and its associated landscape is unchanged and because its setting reinforces the present character of the area.

#### HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Banff Administration Building was constructed during a time of intense development in Banff National Park and at the close of a period marked by the extension and maturation of local services. As a consequence, its history is closely associated with the development of both the park and the town, founded in 1883. Business from the Canadian Pacific railway and from mining and logging activities in the Bow Valley contributed to the growth of a village (renamed Banff in 1885 after an ancient resort. town in Scotland) but it was the establishment of the Banff Hot Springs Reservation in 1885 and, subsequently, the national park, which proved to be the most important factors in Banff's townsite development. The introduction of the automobile also had a profound effect on the development of the park and the townsite because it led to a dramatic increase in the number of visitors. By 1915, most of Banff Avenue between the Bow River and Fox Street was occupied by buildings. In 1934, two years before the construction of the Administration Building, Banff had seven hotels, three churches, two schools, one museum, one cinema, one bank, an electric light plant, telephone service and hydro-electric power. Throughout the 1920s there were discussions about constructing a new administration building but most of the construction budget was allocated. for improvements to visitor services and roads and funding for a new post office and a park administration building was not forthcoming until the Public Works Construction Act of 1934. In Banff, discussions focused upon the construction of a large building to serve both as national park offices and as

a federal building for the town of Banff. The decision to build a splendid administration building surrounded by public gardens fit well into the goal of making Banff a "mountain playground" with man-made recreational and tourist attractions such as the hot springs, zoo, hotels and dance halls. From 1937 until the 1950s, the building housed federal services including the post office and customs house and the park staff. Federal. offices not directly associated with park. administration were vacated in the 1950s allowing park staff to take over the building. Today it is used by senior park staff. The superintendent of the park continues to occupy the cental office on the second floor allocated in the original plan.

RECOGNIZED

FEDERAL HERITAGE BUILDINGS REVIEW ) FFICE

BUILDING EVALUATION REPORT

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BUILDING		AD HOC FHBRO (CDA)		
- City/Frov:	-	- Meeting:		
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'- :   :	Banff National Park DOE			

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scissor trusses, and travertine marble covers the floors.

- Designation: RECOGNIZED

### ARCHITECTURE

The Banff Administration Building is a handsome three-storey structure designed in a domestic Tudor-Revival style. Its appearance is enchanted by picturesque grounds and by complementary building materials which are evocative of its magnificent alpine setting. The roofs are covered with cedar shingles and the exterior walls are covered with Rundle rubble limestone laid in broken courses. The colour and texture of the brownish-green limestone provides a pleasing contrast with ashlar sandstone used for decorative trim on the gables and around windows and doors. Based upon an L-shaped plan with a one-and-one-half-storey wing, the Administration Building has pitched roofs, a full-size basement and several entrances. The main entrance to the building is centrally located within a projecting square tower decorated with an oriel window, crenalation and sandstone trim while the entrance to the east wing is recessed behind a stone archway. The rear elevation has an unpretentious entrance and three projecting gable end :: which are characteristic of many examples of domestic Tudor Revival buildings. Double-hung sash windows are used throughout the structure including in the hipped roof dormers of the third storey. All of the windows have sandstone transoms and lintels including the bay windows and oriel windows which are divided into rectangular lites separated by sandstone mullions. The formal appearance of the building created by the regular placement of windows is softened by the use of a variety of plastic elements including a tower, projecting gables, dormers, bay windows and a pavilion. Tudor Gothic ornamentation was favoured for the design of the Banff Administration Building because it was perceived to be harmonious with a mountain setting and because it could evoke a sense of permanence, tradition, and authority. As the most prominent structure in the national parks system, the Banff Administration Building was a clear statement of the government's intention to link its image to the style. Beckett made considerable effort to have the best possible materials used in its construction for both the exterior and the interior. He convinced Park authorities that local sandstone should not be used in place of limestone for the exterior elevations in spite of the difference in costs. Cochrane sandstone is only used for stone trim while Rundle stone, obtained from the Spray River quarry near Banff townsite, covers the exterior walls. Sandstone carving decorates the main entrance and the gable over the former post office entrance. The interior craftsmanship of the Banff Adminstration Building is also impressive. Local materials were used as much as possible for interior finishings which were often drawn from Tudor architectural sources. Douglas fir is used for wainscotting in the former post office, British Columbia red cedar used for open

BUILDING EVALUATION REPORT

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#### ENVIRONMENT

The Banff Administration Building is distinguished by a commanding site terminating the southern end of Banff Avenue and by splendidly landscaped grounds. It is situated on 12 acres of land, and, at the time of construction, about one third of the property was planted as gardens while the rest was left as meadows and forests.

The gardens and the layout of the grounds were designed by the architect of the building, Harold C. Beckett, who submitted a proposal on his own for landscaping work. on the site of the building. His plan, originally known as the Cascades of Time, had the support of the National Parks Branch which considered it a tourist attraction as well as suitable landscaping scheme for the Administration Building.

After Beckett left Banff, portions of his plans for the garden were not completed but the current Cascade Rock Garden is still an important component in the Administration Buildings's setting; it also represents *a* rare example of landscape design coordinated with the design of a building by the same architect. A stone and ornamental wrought iron fence, subsequently constructed to replace the original rustic wood fence, gives the property a more institutional appearance but it is not out-of-keeping with the design of the building or its grounds. Banff residents and many visitors consider this building to be the most important symbol of the federal government's responsibility for the care and management of Banff National Park and the townsite while its Cascades Rock Garden is generally recognized as a unique and beautiful example of Canadian landscape design.