

FHBRO Number 92-017

Longview, Alberta

Abattoir (Building 27)***FINAL***

Bar U Ranch

The Abattoir is a component of the Bar U Ranch complex. Although the precise construction date of the Abattoir is unknown, it is part of the second phase of building (ca. 1902-05 to the 1940s). Its exterior construction suggests it may have been built in the early 1900s, however, its designer is unknown. The Abattoir has not been significantly modified since it was built. It is part of the Bar U Ranch National Historic Site. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 92-17.

Reasons for Designation

The Abattoir, as a component of the Bar U Ranch complex, was designated “Classified” because of the historical associations of this building and the ranch as a whole, because of the exceptional qualities of the site and setting, and because of its contribution to the overall aesthetic qualities of the complex.

As part of the Bar U Ranch complex, the Abattoir is associated with the development of ranching in Alberta. It is believed that the building fulfilled the slaughterhouse requirements of the Bar U as well as those of the immediate vicinity, and was suitable for the ranch’s diverse livestock. Its mere existence is an impressive testimony to the success and stature of the Bar U, as it was constructed at a time when most farms and ranches practised slaughtering out-of-doors using improvised equipment. The Abattoir is also associated with Patrick Burns, who purchased the Bar U Ranch in 1927 to add to his vast cattle empire. Burns, who is recognized as the kingpin of the meat processing industry in western Canada during the mid-1920s, has been designated a person of national significance.

As part of a cohesive complex of buildings arranged to great functional effect in a simple and beautiful natural setting, the Abattoir contributes to the character of the Bar U Ranch. Located in a cottonwood grove on the north side of Pekisko Creek, mid-way between two piggeries within the working area of the complex, the building was deliberately placed with due consideration to its somewhat unpleasant function. Surrounding trees provide a screened view.

Serving an unusual function on the site, the Abattoir is the product of a highly function-oriented design and yet has a strong aesthetic impact due to its scale, massing and patina. Its specialized function is reflected in many features of its design.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Abattoir resides in its construction techniques and materials, in features expressing its highly specialized function, and in its setting.

FHBRO Number 92-017

Longview, Alberta

Abattoir (Building 27)**FINAL**

Bar U Ranch

The Abattoir is a simple, rectangular, light frame structure with a gable roof and board and batten walls. The roof is covered with milled cedar shingles. The structural system is exposed, and features diagonal braces nailed across studs on the interior walls. The structure rests on a shallow foundation of small stones lying on the ground.

Approximately four-fifths of the floor is covered with heavy planks, while the remaining is an earth floor. Vents with wooden louvers are located high in both gable ends. All of these features contribute to the building's heritage character and should be protected in any future modifications or maintenance work.

Many aspects of the design relate to the function of the building and therefore merit careful respect, including the size and placement of doors; the six-by-six beam used to hoist carcasses; the height of the walls, which were low enough for hoisting a beef carcass clear of the floor using block and tackle; the asymmetrical placement of openings, determined by the position of the corral at the exterior and the various processes taking place at the interior; the size of the headway at the exit door, which is large enough to pass beef sides slung over a person's shoulders; the stone fireplace in the northeast portion of the dirt floor; the deliberate slope of the floor; the planked killing pen with its removable east wall and innovative cleat configuration; the hooks and knife rack; and the clean-out door.

All clues to the building's evolution and use should be protected, including evidence of charring on the walls from a fire, wear marks on the floors, layers of soiling and the graffiti on the south interior wall.

Any development should seek to retain the functional quality of the site and respect existing patterns of access and circulation. Any changes to circulation or access should consider historic patterns related to the movement of animals and motorized vehicles. The relationship of the Abattoir to its immediate setting and its screened view are important to its heritage character and should be protected.

For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.

2000.03.27