

Longview, Alberta

Percheron Box Stalls (Building 29)

FINAL

Bar U Ranch

The Percheron Box Stalls are part of the second phase of building at the Bar U Ranch, and are believed to have been built between 1902 and 1920. Their designer is unknown. After the Percheron herd was removed from the Ranch in 1927, the building was easily adapted for other uses, including grain storage. The Percheron Box Stalls are a component of the Bar U Ranch National Historic Site. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 92-17.

Reasons for Designation

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

The Bar U Ranch is strongly associated with the development of ranching in Alberta. The Percheron Box Stalls are associated with George Lane’s large-scale Percheron breeding program at the Bar U and with the development of ranching in Alberta. The building is the most evident structure remaining of the Percheron breeding program at the Bar U. The Percheron Box Stalls are 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.

A major structure on the site, the Percheron Box Stalls building is the product of a simple yet unusual function-oriented design that sets it apart from other buildings on the site. It has a strong aesthetic impact due to its scale, unusual massing and patina. Like other structures of this phase, the building reflects the gradual shift from log building tradition and use of native materials, to a reliance on external sources for building materials.

As part of a cohesive complex of buildings arranged to great functional effect in a simple and beautiful natural setting, the Percheron Box Stalls building contributes significantly to the character of the Bar U Ranch. The building, located on the northern perimeter of the ranch, is a conspicuous feature within the working area of the complex. It is also a component of the collection of pre-1927 buildings which contribute to the landmark value of the complex as one of the region’s most important early ranch sites. This landmark value is reinforced by the designation of the complex as a National Historic Site.

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Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Percheron Box Stalls structure resides in its scale, form, plan, massing, design, construction materials, exterior finish, interior hardware and features, and setting.

This extensive structure consists of three simple shed-roofed wings arranged in a “U” plan around a central paddock. The shed roofs meet each other at the corners of the “U”, forming hipped roofs at these locations. The large expanse of roof is a significant feature of the building; decisions about cladding and colour would have a major impact on character and should be based on sound documentary and physical evidence.

The shed-roofed wings are made up of long banks of box stalls facing onto the paddock. Each stall has a horse door that is divided horizontally in two sections, with an additional hatch opening above the door.

The construction of the building reflects its utilitarian, function-driven character and its informal, innovative approach to design and materials. The walls of the west and north wings are of light frame construction, with exterior walls clad in vertical board and batten. Foundations are minimal and informal. The east wing’s wall assembly consists of peeled logs standing in the earth, sheathed with horizontal boards, pierced with windows and supporting a narrow clerestory. A curb of concrete at the building’s perimeter is an example of the minimalist approach to maintenance and the liberal, inappropriate use of poor quality concrete to repair foundations, which was widespread at the Ranch during certain periods. The informal, low tech, low cost approach to some new construction and to repairs is character-defining and should be respected. At the same time, repairs and ongoing maintenance should aim for a balance between authenticity of repair technique, and good building practice to prevent accelerated deterioration of original materials.

The exterior of the Percheron Box Stalls has remained virtually unchanged since its construction. The colour scheme (red walls and white trim) continues a tradition across the Prairies and visually links this structure to other buildings on site.

At the interior, evidence of the original function of the building, including features, hardware and patina, should be retained.

Any development should seek to retain the unornamented, functional quality of the site and respect existing patterns of access and circulation. Any changes to circulation or access should consider historic patterns. The long narrow trough or feed bin, with lapped corner joints, located in the courtyard, is of interest and should be conserved.

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

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