

FHBRO Number 92-017

Longview, Alberta

**Post Office (Building 5)*****FINAL***

Bar U Ranch

The Post Office at the Bar U Ranch is believed to have been built around 1886, at the time of George Lane's tenure as the first foreman of the Bar U, possibly to serve the double function of post office and police station. It was identified as a residence and office on plans of the ranch dated 1930, by which time the building had been moved from its location close to the creek embankment southward to its current position, probably in response to threats of flooding or erosion of the creekbank. The Post Office's designer is unknown. It is 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 Post Office, 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 its functional design and its contribution to the overall aesthetic qualities of the complex, and because of the exceptional qualities of the site and setting.

As a component of the Bar U Ranch, the Post Office is strongly associated with the development of ranching in Alberta. Constructed around 1886, the Post Office is also associated with George Lane, a prominent Alberta cattleman, who was hired at Bar U in 1884 to serve as the ranch foreman and who ran the ranch between 1902 and 1925. Finally, the Post Office is 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 a person of national significance.

The introduction of a Post Office on the site implied a larger degree of permanence and stability at the ranch. The Post Office's public function further distinguished it from others at the headquarters site and made it a destination for Bar U employees and neighboring residents.

The Post Office is a key component within the community centre, and its configuration is typical of many pioneer dwellings built during the early stages of settlement in western Canada. It stands out from other ranch structures because of its slightly more sophisticated and well-executed squared-log construction and its domestic appearance. It is believed that skilled log builders were hired and that high grade spruce logs from the foothills were used.

As part of a cohesive complex of buildings arranged to great functional effect in a

simple and beautiful natural setting, the Post Office contributes significantly to the character of the Bar U Ranch. It is also a component of the collection of pre-1927

Within the interior, the main floor is separated into three rooms, with a staircase leading to an unfinished attic space accessed through a trap door. Simple mouldings are

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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.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of the Post Office resides in its scale, construction techniques and materials, exterior finish, interior features, floor plan and setting.

The Post Office is a rectangular, one-and-a-half-storey log structure with a medium-pitched gable roof. The construction materials and craftsmanship are of high quality. The wall construction consists of squared logs with dovetail corner notching. The roof is of milled frame construction and is covered with milled cedar shingles, while its gable ends are sheathed with shiplap siding. A brick chimney pierces the north side of the roof. The foundation is an informal arrangement consisting of intermittently spaced stones. The courses of logwork, siding and shingles provide a strong horizontal emphasis. Any repairs should respect the building's character defining features and maximize the retention of original fabric. Tool marks and wood species should be respected. The informal character of the foundation is related to the fact that the building was relocated, possibly under urgent conditions, and is in keeping with the "temporary" character of much of the repair work done at the Ranch during certain periods. This informal approach to repair and construction is character-defining and should be respected in any intervention.

The placement and sizes of windows and doors are function-driven, and provide a strong, largely asymmetrical pattern which should be respected. Early sash, doors, trim and hardware should be retained and repaired.

Evidence of earlier configurations should be respected, including the patch in the area below the ground floor west window suggesting that it was a door previously, the sleeper found under the north-east corner of the building that may have been used to move the building, the remnants of whitewash on exterior walls and of moss chinking on interior walls, and the presence of an early lime chinking under the cement base chinking indicating that the building was probably moved with its log assembly intact. The building is currently painted dark red with white trim, a colour scheme which dates from the 1950s. Paint samples and historic photographs from the early-20th century indicate that the building was painted white with a darker colour used on the sides of the structure. Evidence of black paint has been found on the roof shingles.

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present around some doors and windows. All surfaces have the patina of age and use and this should be respected. Clues to the building's evolution within the interior should be protected, including evidence of electrical switches and fixtures on the interior wall, ghost marks on interior walls and marks in the interior floor pattern revealing the former location of partitions.

Any development should seek to retain the functional quality of the site, respect existing patterns of access and circulation, and recapture the known frontage for the building. Any changes to circulation or access should consider historic patterns related to the movement of pedestrians, mounted horses, wagons and motorized vehicles. The relationship of the Post Office to the foreman's house, the implement shed and its position near the lane are important to its heritage character and should be protected.

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

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