

Cape Breton Highlands National Park
Information Bureau, Ingonish Entrance
Cape Breton, Nova Scotia

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Information Bureau at the Ingonish Entrance of Cape Breton Highlands National Park (CBHNP) was constructed in 1939-40, at the request of the National Parks Bureau of the Lands, Parks and Forests Branch, Department of Mines and Resources. It was designed by the Department's in-house Engineering and Construction Service. The Canadian Parks Service, Environment Canada, is now the custodial department. See FHBRO Building Report 88-93.

Reason for Designation

The Information Bureau at the Ingonish Entrance was designated Recognized because of its important historical associations, its interesting design features, and because it complements the park's natural setting.

The establishment, in 1936, of CBHNP signaled the expansion of the national parks system to eastern Canada. CBHNP was one of the first national parks in the maritime provinces and, in order to highlight its physical attractions which were reminiscent of the Scottish Highlands and to underscore its uniqueness, the National Parks Bureau adopted a Scottish theme. This approach also provided an effective promotional tool.

Deliberate thought, effort, and research went into the selection of a Scottish crofter's cottage as the prototype for the Information Bureau, one of the earliest and most prominent structures on the site. It was felt that since most of the European settlers to this area of Cape Breton had been drawn from the crofter class of the Scottish Highlands, this image would accurately reflect the traditional heritage of the local inhabitants.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Information Bureau resides in all the forms, details, and materials, both on the exterior and on the interior of the building, which still illustrate the original design intent by evoking the rustic qualities of a Scottish crofter's cottage.

The single - storey massing dwarfed by a low roofline, the fine symmetry in the size and placement of the openings and of the gable end chimneys, and the heavy random rubble masonry walls are design elements which should be preserved. However, the present roof does not respect the original in either form or materials; the heritage character of the building could be enhanced by reinstating the soft contours of the roofline, using the appropriate historic textures and detailing.

Cape Breton Highlands National Park
Information Bureau, Ingonish Entrance (Continued)

The cozy atmosphere of the interior, created by features such as the unfinished stone walls, the roughly hewn beams, and the stone hearth, reflects the building's traditional function of visitor reception centre and comfort station and is an aspect which should be carefully retained. The integrity of the interior would be compromised by modification of the layout and therefore, should a change of function be envisaged, consideration should be given to maintaining intact the existing spatial subdivisions.

The original choice of building materials such as stone, wood, and grass thatching was made deliberately in order to harmonize with a natural setting. The introduction of manicured lawns and asphalt paving has diminished the quality of the relationship between the structure and its surroundings. The heritage character of the site would be enhanced by reverting to a less rigid and formal treatment of the immediate landscape.