

87-134

Jasper National Park
Information Centre
Jasper, Alberta

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Jasper Information Centre, a landmark "rustic" style building, was originally constructed as an administration building and superintendent's residence. It was erected in 1913 to the designs of architect A.M. Calderon, and served its original function until 1931. It was used for offices, with a fish hatchery in the basement, until 1941; it served as the community library from 1942 to 1962; and in 1972 it became the park's information centre. The custodial department is Environment Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 87-134.

Reason for Designation

The Information Centre has been designated Classified because of its historical associations, its design and craftsmanship, and its importance in establishing the character of its environment.

Its historical associations are with the early development of one of Canada's first national parks, and in particular the emerging ideals of protecting and enhancing designated wilderness areas for the pleasure and benefit of the Canadian people. Its impressive design and craftsmanship were a conscious expression of the need for harmonious and appropriate buildings within the natural setting. It remains to this day the physical, historical, social and architectural focal point of the park, located at the centre of the townsite grid and surrounded by well-tended grounds.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of this property is defined by the building's exterior and associated landscaped grounds, and by the few remnants of the original interior.

The exterior of this two-storey building is marked by a prominent gable roof and dormers, a single-storey projection at the south-east corner, a two-storey turret at the north-west, and an open verandah along the east and south. The irregularity of the extensions, the dormers and the windows gives the building a lively and picturesque appearance. The use of stone walls, cedar shingle roofs, and log roof brackets and verandah posts give the building its deliberately rustic character.

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Information Centre (Continued)

The exterior has survived relatively intact and should continue to be carefully maintained. More major repair or restoration should be undertaken only with appropriate levels of research and supervision. The surviving interior elements, such as the two-sided stone fireplace, should be protected and, where possible, incorporated into any redesign or reworking of the interior. Further work to the interior should be preceded by careful investigation to identify other surviving elements, details and designs.

The landscaped grounds have always been an essential feature of this building, and more generally of the design approach developed by S. Maynard Rogers as park superintendent. The development of stone-lined paths and roadways, and the encouragement of suitable trees and plant material, were part of the original design intentions and survive to some extent today. More detailed research into the design and evolution of the grounds is recommended; this research might suggest ways of recovering more closely the original balance between the building and its setting.

The most distinctive feature of the original town layout was the angle of two prominent streets (Miette and Pyramid) which created the triangle of land which is Athabaska Park. The relationship of the boundaries and orientation of the Centre to this site must be maintained.