

85-63

Prince Albert National Park, Saskatchewan

Grey Owl's Cabin

Ajawaan Lake

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Grey Owl's Cabin was constructed in 1932 by Park staff. It was extensively reconstructed in 1979. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 85-63.

Reasons for Designation

Grey Owl's Cabin was designated Recognized because of its historical associations, its environmental and local significance, and its architectural interest.

Also known as the Beaver Cabin, this simple log residence is associated with the naturalist Archibald Belaney ("Grey Owl") and his tame beavers. Grey Owl made a positive contribution to the National Park Service by promoting and publicizing conservation practices, and gained international fame through his wildlife films, writings, and lecture tours.

The site is of particular interest. The cabin is located on the shore of Ajawaan Lake, and actually overhangs the lake to allow beaver access. While this relationship is somewhat altered, the relationship with the upper cabin, which housed Grey Owl's second wife, Anahareo, has been maintained. The cabin is a symbol of Grey Owl's fame: it was a well-known attraction for park visitors during his tenure and continues as such.

Architecturally, Grey Owl's Cabin is an example of rustic construction in the log cabin tradition. The simple form, materials and detailing reflect an appropriate economy of design in keeping with that tradition. The use of natural textures and finishes and local materials results in a building that fits well with its setting.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of Grey Owl's Cabin resides in its form, overall proportions, construction materials and details, in its surviving interior layout, and in its relationship to its site and setting.

The cabin is a rectangular one-storey gable-roofed structure. The simple form, footprint and roofline are essential to the rustic quality which characterizes the building. The

.../2

Prince Albert National Park, Saskatchewan
Grey Owl's Cabin (Continued)

porch extension and roof ladder at one eave contribute to the character of the building and should be maintained.

In keeping with the rustic building tradition, the cabin is built of natural, textured materials, namely horizontal log walls on log footings. Work in 1979 involved replacement of one-third of the walls and complete replacement of the roof. Surviving early material should be identified and protected, and any further repair work executed in compatible materials and detailing. The rustic character of the original construction must be respected.

Archival photographs show dark moss chinking in the joints between logs. When the current chinking is to be renewed, efforts to match the earlier material, colour and texture would be appropriate. The wood shingle roofing is not the original roof finish; research is recommended prior to re-roofing to assist in making an appropriate choice of material and colour.

The wood two-over-two windows and the wood panelled door have been repaired or reconstructed, and are in keeping with the simple, informal quality of the cabin's appearance.

The natural finish of the exterior surfaces is an important feature. The unfinished logs, windows and doors should not be painted.

Built to overhang the lake, Grey Owl's cabin was infilled at the foundation around the perimeter for structural reasons in 1979. This has undermined the integrity of what was an important building-site relationship. The configuration should be reviewed when further foundation repairs are required, and consideration given to reinstating the historic relationship. Other landscape modifications should be resisted in order to maintain the undeveloped character of the lakefront site. If signage is essential, it should be simple, rustic in character, and small in scale.

96.01.08