

I IDENTIFICATIONBUILDING

- City Prop:	BANFF, Alberta
- Name:	Administration Building
Address:	Banff National Park
Owner:	DOE

AD HOC

FHBRO (CDA)

- Meeting:	CDA 86-06
- Date:	23 Sept. 1986 85-53
- BER No.:	iii ;
- Date:	

II HERITAGE CHARACTER

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- Designation: RECOGNIZEDSUMMARY

The Banff Administration Building was built in 1935-36 to the designs of Harold C. Beckett, an Ontario architect and landscape architect. The building was Recognized because of its very good aesthetic design and craftsmanship, because the historical relationship between the building and its associated landscape is unchanged and because its setting reinforces the present character of the area.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Banff Administration Building was constructed during a time of intense development in Banff National Park and at the close of a period marked by the extension and maturation of local services. As a consequence, its history is closely associated with the development of both the park and the town, founded in 1883. Business from the Canadian Pacific railway and from mining and logging activities in the Bow Valley contributed to the growth of a village (renamed Banff in 1885 after an ancient resort town in Scotland) but it was the establishment of the Banff Hot Springs Reservation in 1885 and, subsequently, the national park, which proved to be the most important factors in Banff's townsite development. The introduction of the automobile also had a profound effect on the development of the park and the townsite because it led to a dramatic increase in the number of visitors. By 1915, most of Banff Avenue between the Bow River and Fox Street was occupied by buildings. In 1934, two years before the construction of the Administration Building, Banff had seven hotels, three churches, two schools, one museum, one cinema, one bank, an electric light plant, telephone service and hydro-electric power. Throughout the 1920s there were discussions about constructing a new administration building but most of the construction budget was allocated for improvements to visitor services and roads and funding for a new post office and a park administration building was not forthcoming until the Public Works Construction Act of 1934. In Banff, discussions focused upon the construction of a large building to serve both as national park offices and as a federal building for the town of Banff. The decision to build a splendid administration building surrounded by public gardens fit well into the goal of making Banff a "mountain playground" with man-made recreational and tourist attractions such as the hot springs, zoo, hotels and dance halls. From 1937 until the 1950s, the building housed federal services including the post office and customs house and the park staff. Federal offices not directly associated with park administration were vacated in the 1950s allowing park staff to take over the building. Today it is used by senior park staff. The superintendent of the park continues to occupy the central office on the second floor allocated in the original plan.

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ENVIRONMENT

The Banff Administration Building is distinguished by a commanding site terminating the southern end of Banff Avenue and by splendidly landscaped grounds. It is situated on 12 acres of land, and, at the time of construction, about one third of the property was planted as gardens while the rest was left as meadows and forests.

The gardens and the layout of the grounds were designed by the architect of the building, Harold C. Beckett, who submitted a proposal on his own for landscaping work on the site of the building. His plan, originally known as the Cascades of Time, had the support of the National Parks Branch which considered it a tourist attraction as well as suitable landscaping scheme for the Administration Building.

After Beckett left Banff, portions of his plans for the garden were not completed but the current Cascade Rock Garden is still an important component in the Administration Buildings's setting; it also represents a rare example of landscape design coordinated with the design of a building by the same architect. A stone and ornamental wrought iron fence, subsequently constructed to replace the original rustic wood fence, gives the property a more institutional appearance but it is not out-of-keeping with the design of the building or its grounds. Banff residents and many visitors consider this building to be the most important symbol of the federal government's responsibility for the care and management of Banff National Park and the townsite while its Cascades Rock Garden is generally recognized as a unique and beautiful example of Canadian landscape design.