

84-54

Banff, Alberta

Upper Hot Springs Bath House

Banff National Park

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Upper Hot Springs Bath House was constructed in 1931-32. It was designed by W.D. Cromarty, chief architect for the Department of the Interior, under the Public Works Construction Act. It was altered in 1961 when the main entrance was relocated, and the pool and its enclosing wall replaced. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 84-54.

Reasons for Designation

The Bath House was designated Recognized because of its architectural importance, its environmental and local significance, and its historical associations.

The Upper Hot Springs Bath House is an excellent example of the Queen Anne Revival style with rustic overtones used by the Department of the Interior to create a distinctive architecture for buildings constructed at Banff during the 1930s. Its vocabulary of natural materials - rough limestone, wood shakes, mock half-timbering and stucco - create a rustic appearance that is in keeping with the natural setting.

The Bath House is located at the source of the Sulphur Mountain Hot Springs, the discovery of which led to the creation of the National Parks system in 1885. The prominent setting, the distinctive design and public recreational use make the building a familiar landmark well known by visitors to the Park.

The construction of the bath house reflects early plans to modernize parks by providing recreational facilities that would rival other international spas. This building is the only extant bathhouse of the three constructed by the Department during the 1930s.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Upper Hot Springs Bath House resides in the building's form, in features of its Queen Anne Revival design, in its construction materials, surviving interior layout, and site relationships.

The building is a two-and-a-half storey hip-roofed structure with slightly bell-cast eaves. The principal facade is distinguished by a prominent mock half-timbered gable

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resting on a projecting porch with flared stone buttresses. The simple rectangular footprint, symmetrically placed hipped dormers and low eave line are important aspects of the design and should be maintained. The picturesque massing is characteristic of the Queen Anne Revival style and should be maintained. Air-conditioning units piercing dormers and located in windows undermine the integrity of the architecture and should be relocated in an unobtrusive manner if possible. The modern canopy at the side entrance does not respect the symmetry of the overall composition nor the design character of the building and should be modified when the opportunity presents itself.

The building's rustic character is created by the use of materials which are natural in color and rough in texture: irregularly-coursed split-faced limestone walls, wood shakes on the roof, exposed wooden rafter tails at the eaves, and the half-timbering and stucco accents. Dressed stone is used for window sills and continuous horizontal trim at the foundation wall. The existing materials should be maintained, and any new work executed using sympathetic materials and detailing.

The windows contribute to the texture and interest of the facades, arranged in groupings of two, three and six and with segmentally-arched heads on the main level. The overall configuration of the windows - transoms over larger lower sash - is consistent with Queen Anne Revival design and with the appearance seen in early photographs. One photograph suggests that there may have been small leaded panes within the wood sash. Any surviving early windows should be retained, and research to confirm original design intentions should be carried out when repair or replacement is required. Two window openings in the principal facade have been infilled with stone, interrupting the intended symmetry of the composition. These should be reinstated.

The interior has been modified to accommodate changes in patterns of use. The principal entrance was blocked to accommodate interior layout changes, and the main entrance is now located on what was originally a side elevation. The dramatic second floor view over the valley, intended for change-room users, is now enjoyed only by staff. Pool access through the basement of the building survives, however it is now through a modern glazed enclosure. Any future modifications to the plan and to patterns of use within the building should be predicated on an understanding of and respect for the original design. Early interior finishes such as mahogany panelling should be preserved and incorporated into new work.

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A number of original site features have been lost, such as a central frontispiece at the lower entrance, stone buttressing and fence piers, and a simple rectangular pool which predated the current sculptural-form pool. Any future changes should be based on an understanding of historical precedent for the site.

Revised
96.07.25

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