

FHBRO Number 92-017

Longview, Alberta

Blacksmith Shop (Building 14)

FINAL

Bar U Ranch

The Blacksmith Shop at the Bar U Ranch is believed to have been built between 1900 and 1906. It was relocated in the 1930s to its current set-back position, and was probably moved from its original location very close to the Saddle Horse Barn in order to reduce its risk of fire from flying sparks. The Blacksmith Shop was originally associated with the shoeing of horses and the repair of farm machinery and implements. The Blacksmith Shop is a component of the Bar U Ranch National Historic Site. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 92-17.

Reasons for Designation

The Blacksmith Shop, as a component of the Bar U Ranch complex, was designated “Classified” because of the historical associations of this building and the ranch as a whole, because of the exceptional qualities of the site and setting, and because of its contribution to the overall aesthetic qualities of the complex.

As part of the Bar U complex, the Blacksmith Shop is associated with the development of ranching in Alberta. The structure is also associated with George Lane, a prominent Alberta cattleman, who was hired at Bar U in 1884 to serve as the ranch foreman, and who ran the ranch between 1902 and 1925. Finally, the Blacksmith Shop is associated with Patrick Burns, who purchased the Bar U Ranch in 1927 to add to his vast cattle empire. Burns, who is recognized as the kingpin of the meat processing industry in western Canada during the mid-1920s, has been designated a person of national significance.

The Blacksmith Shop served an important role at the ranch, since the Bar U maintained large herds of horses for operational and breeding purposes, and required maintenance of implements and machinery. Thought to have been built from logs salvaged from an earlier building damaged by fire, the structure also represents the thrift and ingenuity of the Bar U Ranch managers.

The Blacksmith Shop is situated within the community centre, focused on Pekisko Creek, and is a component of the historical grouping which acted as the engine of the overall ranch operation. As part of a cohesive complex of buildings arranged to great functional effect in a simple and beautiful natural setting, the structure contributes significantly to the character of the Bar U Ranch. It is also a component of the collection of pre-1927 buildings which contribute to the landmark value of the complex as one of the region’s most important early ranch sites. This landmark value is reinforced by the designation of the complex as a National Historic Site.

The Blacksmith Shop’s unornamented, functional design is characteristic of the buildings erected at the Bar U Ranch and complements other early structures in the

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vicinity. It has a strong aesthetic impact due to its traditional log construction, strong colour scheme and prominent cupola. It is also of interest for features expressing its role and for its significant patina of use.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Blacksmith Shop resides in its construction techniques and materials, form and massing, function-driven interior features and layout, and setting.

The Blacksmith Shop is a simple, one-storey log structure with a gabled roof supported by exposed peeled-pole rafters covered with roof boards and cedar shingles. A chimney at the north west corner of the roof and a cupola roof vent at the centre are important features of the roofline that are tied to use. The Blacksmith Shop's wall construction consists of round logs with squared dovetail-notched corners. The gable walls are also constructed of logs, including the upper gable area, which is unusual in log construction. The building sits on a crude concrete foundation on the west half of the building, while the east half is covered with wood planks. A sliding door on the north façade permitted the entry of horses and machinery.

The design includes several windows for good natural lighting and ventilation, which were critical to the effective use of the forge. Its interior is an undivided, open space. The interior layout of the building and its surviving forge and farrier equipment underscore its specialized function and should be retained.

Clues to the building's evolution should be protected, including the blackened and, in some instances, charred, interior surfaces, the wear marks and tool marks on the floor and work surfaces, the tie-up rings on the east interior wall, and the various hooks, shelves and containers located on all walls (including exterior ones).

Any development should seek to retain the functional quality of the site, respect existing patterns of access and circulation, and recapture the almost barren frontage of the Blacksmith Shop. Any changes to circulation or access should consider historic patterns related to the movement of pedestrians, horses, wagons farm equipment and motorized vehicles. The relationship of the Blacksmith Shop to the Saddle Horse Barn and Bunkhouse/Cookhouse, and to other structures within the community centre, should be protected.

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

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2000.03.27