

Longview, Alberta

**Self-Feeder (Former Bunkhouse, Building 30)**      *FINAL*

Bar U Ranch

The Self-Feeder at the Bar U Ranch is thought to have been built between 1909 and 1910. Its designer is unknown. The building began as a large two-storey bunkhouse near the existing Bunkhouse/Cookhouse. After 1947, the building was moved to its present site and modified to serve its new function as a fodder storage facility, through the covering of all but two of the former door and window openings and the installation of exterior braces linked by internal tie rods. A two-foot section of the lower walls was also removed to provide access to feeding animals. The Self-Feeder 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 Self-Feeder, 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.

The Bar U Ranch is strongly associated with the development of ranching in Alberta. As part of the Bar U complex, the Self-Feeder is associated with this development. It also illustrates well the tradition of innovative adaptive re-use and relocation that characterized the approach to building stock at the Bar U Ranch and other ranches. The Self-Feeder is 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. The Self Feeder is also 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.

As part of a cohesive complex of buildings arranged to great functional effect in a simple and beautiful natural setting, the Self Feeder contributes significantly to the character of the Bar U Ranch. The structure sits in a field beyond the northeastern perimeter of the headquarters site. Along with the Piggery and Livestock Shed, it is situated on the south bank of Pekisko Creek, screened by a cottonwood grove and the eastern slope of the valley. The structure 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 Self-Feeder building is the product of a simple, function-oriented design and yet has a strong aesthetic impact due to its scale, massing and patina. It is of interest for its original design as a bunkhouse and its radical adaptation for very different purposes.

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### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of the Self-Feeder resides in its construction materials and techniques, exterior finish, the remaining clues it holds to its original configuration, and its setting.

The two-storey Self-Feeder sits on a concrete wall foundation. Its gable roof is clad with cedar shingles. Walls are of light frame construction, covered on the interior with diagonal board sheathing and on the exterior with diagonally laid shiplap covered with random-width, horizontal beveled siding. The exterior diagonal boarding appears to be original, as it is cut to accommodate window and door openings. The building's former wall openings give evidence of the building's original function as a bunkhouse. The building's colour scheme (red walls and white trim) continues a tradition across the Prairies and visually links it to the other buildings on site. Its design and finish resemble those of the surviving Bunkhouse/Cookhouse. All of these features contribute to the heritage character of the building and should be protected in any future modifications or maintenance work.

Probably at the time of relocation, the lower courses of horizontal siding were removed and diagonal boards were cut away around the building's entire perimeter to allow livestock to feed along all four walls. The disparity in size between the building footprint and its foundation should be protected, as it provides evidence of the structure's evolution and move to this location. Similarly, all marks, depressions and ghost outlines of features that indicate the former use of the building should be preserved.

Any development should seek to retain the functional quality of the site and respect existing patterns of access and circulation. Any changes to circulation or access should consider historic patterns related to the movement of grain tanks, wagons and motorized vehicles. The Self-Feeder's relationship with the Piggery and Livestock Shed, and its setting apart from the ranch headquarters are important to its heritage character and should be protected.

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

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