

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Commanding Officer's Residence

Fort Battleford NHS
Battleford, Saskatchewan

The Commanding Officer's Residence was built in 1876, to plans prepared by the federal Department of Public Works, and served its intended function until the post was abandoned in 1924. The residence is one among five original structures located at Fort Battleford National Historic Site. The custodian is Environment Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 89-10.

Reason for Designation

The Commanding Officer's Residence was designated Classified due to its outstanding historical value. It commemorates the role of the Mounted Police force in the settlement of the Prairie frontier and particularly, in the establishment of the Town of Battleford. Samuel Benfield Steele, a legendary commander and an historical figure of national significance, once occupied the premises. The building's singular design illustrates an importance facet of the lifestyle at divisional outposts of the frontier era.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of this property is defined by its present configuration, and by all extant fabric and detailing derived from the full period of Mounted Police force occupancy.

As conceived, the structure reflected the prevailing Eastern Canadian standard in residential design: two storeys, gable roof, L-shaped plan. The summer kitchen and verandah additions respect the clarity of the original form. They demonstrate how the dwelling evolved in response to occupant's needs and should be retained.

Features such as the gable-end trefoils, bargeboard, bay window, and the decorative treatment of structural openings were also an expression of the Eastern Canadian ideal and reinforce the notion of stylistic integrity.

A regional influence emerges in the use of local building materials, primarily wood, and Red River frame technology. This distinctive structural system, as well as remnants of early wall claddings which may be hidden from view, should be carefully protected.

The interior layout, typical of the late 19th century, survives essentially intact. The interior fabric, however, is comprised of disparate elements and materials. It is recommended that the significance of the various constituents be carefully assessed and that modifications which compromise evolutionary evidence be avoided.

The Commanding Officer's Residence is the most prominent feature at Fort Battleford

NHS. Its orientation is a function of the post's original site plan and suggests to the observer that circulation patterns have changed. Given the spacious quality of the surroundings, an informal approach to the landscape would produce a more evocative setting.

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

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