

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Guard House, built in 1887, is one of five remaining buildings at the Battleford Post constructed by the North-West Mounted Police. The guard house was used until 1917, when all prisoners were transferred to provincial jails. The design of the Guard House can be attributed to the Department of Public Works during the tenure of Thomas Fuller as Chief Architect. The building has been moved from its original site. Restoration work was undertaken on the building after 1946. The Guard House is one of the focal points of Fort Battleford National Historic Site, which was established by the federal government in 1951. The custodian is Parks Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 89-10.

Reasons for Designation

The Guard House was designated Recognized because of its historical associations, its functional design and its environmental value.

The Guard House is part of a complex of buildings that is closely related to the presence of the North-West Mounted Police on the Prairie frontier during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It reflects the paramilitary character of the force, as well as its role in carrying out law and order among the civilian population.

Typical of the balloon frame buildings erected at Mounted Police posts in the North-West Territories during the latter decades of the 19th century, the guard house employs a basic form that was tailored to specific functions by altering the external dimensions and the arrangement of door and window openings. The Guard House represents one variation of the standardized model for Mounted Police guard houses, although it is the only one known to have survived.

The Guard House and other buildings on the reserve evoke a militaristic image. The open, natural character of the reserve provides an environment sympathetic to the image intended to be conveyed by the National Historic Park.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Guard House resides in its massing, proportions, construction, use of materials and interior plan.

The building consists of a single-storey, gable-roofed structure with a rectangular plan. The clapboard siding and wood-shingle roof were materials commonly used for police post buildings.

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The arrangement of the door and window openings, and the presence of steel bars over the windows, identify the building as a guard house. The north and south elevations are mirror images of each other. The doorway and large window in the western portion correspond to the guard room, while the three high windows on the eastern portion correspond to the cell block. Although functional requirements largely dictated the exterior appearance, the building is enlivened by corbelled chimneys at either end, and by eared mouldings around the windows and doors. The careful, even spacing of the apertures is in keeping with the building's modest appearance. Any interventions should respect the original design intention and materials of the building.

The layout of the building effectively provides two functions - a secure lock-up for prisoners and a large room used by the guards. Partitions, doors and hardware which date from the period of occupancy by the Mounted Police should be preserved.

The building's immediate environs have an open, unadorned character which is similar to their original appearance. Any intervention in the landscape should respect this open character and resist an overly groomed appearance.

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