

Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba
Grey Owl's Cabin (B-21)
Beaver Lodge Lake

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Grey Owl's Cabin was built in 1931. The design is attributed to Godfrey (Gottfried) Johnson, an accomplished log builder who was involved in the construction of several major buildings in the Wasagaming townsite and vicinity. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 85-54.

Reasons for Designation

Grey Owl's Cabin was designated Recognized for its historical associations, its environmental significance and its architectural qualities.

The building is associated with the naturalist Grey Owl, who was hired in 1931 to re-establish a beaver population in Riding Mountain National Park. Grey Owl transferred to Prince Albert National Park after just six months at Riding Mountain National Park, but his personal popularity and the popularity of the causes he espoused have made his cabin a popular hiking destination and a significant interpretative resource in the park.

The cabin contributes to the character of its beautiful natural site on a small lake, which was later named Beaver Lodge Lake in reference to Grey Owl's work (however short-lived) in this area.

Designed to provide a substantial two room cabin for Grey Owl, his wife and their tamed beavers, the building is simply detailed and carefully executed.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the building resides in its massing, materials and construction techniques, and in the character of its setting.

"L" shaped in plan, the cabin is of high quality construction. The walls are of peeled spruce logs, horizontally laid and saddle notched at the corners. The corner joints are of particular interest: the projecting crowns are in alternating lengths, unlike the uniform lengths found on other park buildings. The roof on the main building section extends several feet beyond the wall to provide a sheltered porch area which was previously enclosed.

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Peeled logs, wood shingles, exposed rafter tails and simple door and window trim create a simple, rustic character which should be preserved by repairing in kind, with the emphasis on maximum retention of original material. Features related to the period of occupation by Grey Owl, such as the beaver access doors in the main section, merit preservation. The natural finish of the logs should not be altered without careful analysis of appropriate finishes and patina.

The interior, with its simple two-room plan and exposed log walls, is in keeping with the rustic character of the building. Various shelves, tables and enclosures should be investigated to determine their relation to the use of the building, and appropriate conservation methods employed.

Situated on a small lake, the cabin benefits from its beautiful natural setting. An overly manicured appearance should be avoided.

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