

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Ryan Retail Store (Building No. 1 of the Ryan Premises) was built circa 1860-1874 for the Ryan family fishery. The family-run company has been closed since 1978 and the buildings abandoned. As one of the earliest surviving buildings in the complex, it has been slightly altered over the years. The complex is in the care of Parks Canada because the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada has designated the Ryan Premises for potential development as a commemorative site representing the Atlantic fishery. See FHBRO Building Report 92-83.

Reasons for Designation

The Ryan Retail Store was designated Recognized for its strong association with an important historical theme, for the merits of the craftsmanship and materials used in its construction, and for the important role it plays in the character of the complex.

The Ryan Retail Store is one of six buildings that constitute the "Ryan Premises", headquarters of a family operated inshore fishery. The Ryan Company made an important contribution to Newfoundland and Canadian history, and is representative of various aspects of the Atlantic fishery. The Ryan Premises forms a coherent whole that is highly evocative of the business of 19th and 20th century Atlantic fishery.

The Retail Store and other buildings of the Ryan Premises are simple wooden structures whose severe, unadorned, angular qualities exemplify Newfoundland vernacular architecture. Their basic rectangular massing, rigid symmetry and regular fenestration establish the visual character of the complex.

Ryan Premises is a significant complex of buildings grouped on a gently sloping site by the sea. The recognized designation applies to the entire building, and to its site relationships with other buildings in the Ryan Premises and with the sea.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Ryan Retail Store resides in its massing, proportions, architectural details and materials, and site relationships.

A two-and-a-half storey wood frame building on a stone and concrete foundation, the Retail Store is a simple box-like form capped with a side-gable roof. A small shed-roofed structure is attached to the rear wall. The overall form and footprint of the building should be respected, and the evidence of hoists and landings connecting it to the adjacent store retained.

The pattern of window and door openings, the presence of a single two-storey pilaster, and the single off-set chimney suggest a division of function between the east and west ends of the building, and large display windows at the ground floor reveal the building's retail use. Further investigation is required to determine the evolution of window and door openings, and the character of early sashes and doors. Early surviving windows and doors should be restored.

The clapboard walls are outlined by finely proportioned trim, and by the slight eaves overhang and the narrow fascia which read as a sharp line. Ornamentation is limited to the simplified pilasters which flank the retail display windows and mark the corners of the building. Care should be taken to maintain the existing wood finishes. All elements should be repaired rather than replaced, and painted in traditional colours based on paint analysis.

The building's stark linear geometry and understated ornamentation compliment the surrounding uncompromising landscape. The features which create this quality should be maintained; alterations which would soften or embellish the architecture should be resisted.

The structure is solid heavy timber post and beam frame construction with round wood studs at two foot centres sheathed with straight edged lumber and finished with narrow spruce clapboard. The integrity of the structural system should be respected. The masonry and concrete foundations should be regularly inspected and maintained by restoration contractors; the relationship between the lower edge of the siding and the foundation wall should not be altered.

The Retail Store was built as a commercial structure with retail and offices on the ground floor, retail on the second floor and storage above. Commercial spaces are intact, and the quality of interior finishes are testimony to the fine craftsmanship of local builders. The interior plan should be respected; woodwork such as the fireplace mantel in the office and stair railings, original shelves and counters in the store should be restored by qualified conservators.

When built, the principal facade of the building was oriented toward the sea. The increased importance of road transportation in the 20th Century later made the south facade the principal public facade. Evidence of both relationships should be maintained as an indication of evolving relationships with the sea.

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