

Waterton Lakes National Park
RCMP Detachment Building and Garage
Waterton Lakes

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Manifest witnesses to the important role that the Mounted Police was beginning to play, the RCMP detachment building and garage were constructed in 1927 and 1928. Modified very little over the years, they are the oldest and largest buildings still used by the RCMP in the national parks. Environment Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 87-82.

Reasons for Designation

The RCMP detachment building and garage have been placed on the list of “Recognized” federal heritage buildings because of their historical ties and their visual impact.

These carefully designed and well-located buildings are directly associated with the RCMP’s role of law enforcement in the national parks. They were built at a time when the RCMP was undergoing a reduction of its police surveillance role in the provinces and an expansion of its responsibilities for Crown lands. These buildings also manifest the symbolic importance of the RCMP, and on a broader scale they suited its federal identity. This symbolic role is displayed in the use of the rustic style embellished with Tudor details, one of the first examples of this style in the national parks, and by the design of appropriate landscaping.

Character-Defining Elements

It is the homogeneity of the exterior design of these buildings, as well as their appropriate landscaping, that give the whole its heritage character.

These buildings are among the first examples of use of the Tudor rustic style, adopted by the national parks system in the late 1920s and early 1930s as an expression of the connection that exists between natural and built settings. The plans were designed by the Urban Planning Division of the National Parks Branch headed by W.D. Cromarty, who was a direct contributor to the development of Waterton Lakes as the park’s acting superintendent. The RCMP building and garage are typical of the architectural quality that the National Parks Branch wanted to lend its most important parks. W.D. Cromarty subsequently directed the Architecture Division of the national parks system during the 10 to 15 years that saw the most intensive construction in the Picturesque Tudor rustic style. These buildings represent one of the important links in the evolution of this distinctive phase of park architecture.

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RCMP Detachment Building and Garage (continued)

Waterton Lakes

The detachment building is an asymmetrical assemblage of rough stone, stucco, leaded windows, half-timbered roofs and imposing cedar-shingled roofs. Modified very little over the years, its style and site continue to make it a regional landmark. The garage is less elaborate, but its proportions and materials are similar. An impressive gable and outdoor staircase have been added, the garage's wood doors have been replaced with aluminum ones, and the roof has been given a new covering of asphalt shingles.

These buildings should be preserved in their current state, paying particular attention to preservation of the different exterior finishes and decorative elements. Regular maintenance should be complemented with specific repairs and restoration as required. If the occasion presents itself, the garage doors and roofing should be restored to their original appearance, which is more consistent with the style of the building.

The landscaping, which is very conspicuous in one area, should also be preserved as a heritage characteristic of the property. The stone wall, trees and shrubs, and other landscaping features contribute to the original architectural whole.

Translation