

# FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

## ARTHUR O. WHEELER HUT, ROGERS PASS, GLACIER NATIONAL PARK, BC

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FHBRO number: **05-150**  
DFRP number: **18752**  
Resource name: **Arthur O. Wheeler Hut**  
Address: **Rogers Pass, Glacier National Park, BC**  
FHBRO status: **"Recognized" Federal Heritage Building**  
Construction: **1945-46**  
Designer: **Designed by A. A. McCoubrey and constructed by Hobart Dowler**  
Original function: **Alpine Hut**  
Current function: **Unchanged**  
Modifications: **Wooden sleeping platforms in upstairs rooms (early 1960's); conversion of the "ladies' room" to custodians quarters (1966); replacement of the original cedar shake roof with green aluminum sheeting (1966); removal of partition between the custodian's quarters and kitchen (1976); modifications to the stairs (1976); construction of an addition on the north side (1978); and installation of a fully insulated roof, enlargement of windows in the sleeping loft, addition of new windows under the eaves, new front steps, removal of the back porch (1985).**  
Custodian: **Parks Canada Agency**

### Description of Historic Place

The Arthur O. Wheeler Hut is a one and one-half storey, rectangular, log building on a stone foundation, with a gable roof and deep overhangs supported on log brackets, a centrally located main entrance, and a large wooden deck at the front. An addition on the north side, constructed in 1978, is in keeping with the overall design and aesthetic quality of the original building. The Arthur O. Wheeler Hut is situated just south of the Trans-Canada highway at Rogers Pass in the Glacier National Park, which spans the Selkirk and Purcell mountain ranges of British Columbia. The designation is confined to the footprint of the building.

### Heritage Value

The Arthur O. Wheeler Hut is a "Recognized" Federal Heritage Building because of its historical associations, and its architectural and environmental values.

#### Historical value:

The Arthur O. Wheeler Hut is a very good illustration of the development of mountaineering in Canada because of its location at Rogers Pass, which is considered the "birthplace of alpinism in North America" and its links with the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC), established in 1906. Built in 1945-46, the Arthur O. Wheeler Hut also illustrates well the ongoing history of recreational climbing, hiking and skiing within the Glacier National Park. Following the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885, the Selkirk and the Rocky mountains of Canada became the first ranges to be systematically explored by the mountain climbers. To encourage the practice of

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mountaineering, the exploration of alpine and glacial regions and the preservation of the flora and the fauna, the ACC constructed and maintained a number of facilities in Western Canada including its clubhouse and several functionally distinct structures known as alpine huts to provide temporary shelter for hikers, skiers, and mountaineers. The Wheeler Hut is one of ACC's larger, better-equipped, and most accessible huts.

## Architectural value:

A well-proportioned, symmetrical building constructed of good quality local materials and well-executed rustic details, the Arthur O. Wheeler Hut is a good example of the rustic style of architecture. In Canada, the term "rustic" was first applied to assorted log cabins erected in the 19<sup>th</sup> century wilderness by trappers, prospectors, and railway workers. A self-conscious rustic characterized by simplicity of design, choice of local materials and craftsmanship, and attention to setting was part of the architecture in the national parks from the 1880's. The Wheeler Hut achieves good functional quality as a temporary shelter through the efficient layout of its interior spaces. Despite various changes to the layout, the basic function of the hut has not changed since its construction.

## Environmental value:

Set amongst tall firs and cedars and constructed of natural and local materials, the Wheeler Hut reinforces the existing natural wilderness character of its surroundings. The Arthur O. Wheeler Hut is located on its original site, on the Illecillewaet River and in a clearing surrounded by dense mature trees and two structures - a woodshed and an outhouse. Various changes to the site, notably the 1978 addition, have resulted in the changes to the access patterns but the wilderness character is retained. The Wheeler Hut has symbolic value to the alpine community due to its association with the history of mountaineering in Canada.

## **Character-Defining Elements**

The following character-defining elements of the Arthur O. Wheeler Hut should be respected:

The features that reflect its role as an illustration of the development of mountaineering in Canada and as a significant component of the ongoing history of, notably, recreational climbing, hiking, and skiing within the Glacier National Park in BC such as:

- The building's rustic aesthetic and form which was part of the architectural character of Canada's national park facilities from the 1880s until the end of the Second World War.
- Its accessible location on the Rogers Pass; and,
- Its link with the Alpine Club of Canada including the initials ACC in peeled logs that adorn the main entrance.

Its good rustic design, very good functional design, and very good quality craftsmanship and materials as manifested in:

- The well-proportioned, symmetrical composition of the building, with a centrally located gable roofed entrance portico, and a large front deck;

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- The efficient and functional interior layout comprised of a living room with a large fieldstone fireplace, a large kitchen, and a dining room on the main level and sleeping quarters on upper level;
- The clear, functional division of the rooms, which creates a sense of privacy in each space;
- The presence of a mud room on the north side to store equipment;
- The well-executed rustic detailing and the use of local materials including the horizontal log construction with saddle-notched corners and rubble stone foundation;
- The fireplace which is constructed of rough-cut irregularly coursed stone, a deep hearth, and a heavy log mantle; and,
- The natural and rustic finishes including the wood plank floors, the exposed log walls, the exposed ceiling beams and the rustic stairway railing built of peeled logs; and,
- The well executed eaves detailing including the expression of the roof purlins and rafters and the thickness of the eave.

The manner in which the building reinforces the wilderness character of its setting as evidenced in:

- The choice of natural materials, rustic design and detailing; and,
- Its scenic and remote location.

For guidance on interventions, please refer to the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. For further information contact FHBRO.

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