

Woodside National Historic Site
Woodside (house)
Kitchener, Ontario

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Woodside was constructed in 1952 by a local committee named the Woodside Trust as a replication of the childhood home of former Prime Minister W.L.M. King. Designs were prepared by the firm of Jenkins and Wright, based on records of the original building. It was declared a national historic site in 1952 and acquired by the Government of Canada in 1954. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 91-28.

Reasons for Designation

Woodside was designated Recognized because of its significant historical associations, its architectural design and the quality and integrity of its environment.

Woodside illustrates the development in Canada of the commemoration of important people and places and the growing interest in social history in the post-war period. During this period communities undertook to commemorate and celebrate their past through the establishment of house museums in restored or reconstructed buildings, in this case influenced by political interest in the subject. The building is a very good example of a house museum of the 1950s, based on the vernacular Gothic Revival building which preceded it on the site. It is associated with L.O. Breithaupt, a member of the Woodside Trust, Member of Parliament for the federal riding, and Lieutenant Governor of Ontario from 1952-57.

Despite some change in the picturesque character of the grounds, Woodside is well integrated into the surrounding landscape and reinforces the picturesque and park-like character of its site. It is well known to residents of the region.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of Woodside is defined by those aspects of the building which relate to its original construction as a medium of commemoration in the 1950s, and by the picturesque character of its wooded grounds.

Woodside is an attractive, low building which consists of a 1-1/2 storey block, 'L' shaped in plan, with a lower 1-1/2 storey wing which extends to the east.

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In form, massing, plan and some details the building is loosely based on the vernacular/Gothic Revival farmhouse which preceded it on the site. The steeply pitched roof, centre gable on the west elevation and the porch located in the corner of the 'L' are also characteristic of the type. Purpose-built as a house museum, Woodside is of conventional construction, and in some features reflects the construction practices and design aesthetics of its own time, such as the veneer brick, the shed roofed dormer and the trim treatment.

The building is well integrated into its setting and reinforces the estate-like and slightly institutional character of the national historic site. Some of the early picturesque character of the site has been lost through management of the property in the manner of a formal park. Efforts to return the property to its earlier, less formal state would be appropriate. At the same time, period re-creation would be an inappropriate accompaniment to the 1950s building and should be discouraged.

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