

Parkdale, Prince Edward Island
Ardgowan House
Palmers Lane

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Ardgowan House was built circa 1850-54, and served as the residence of William Henry Pope from its construction until about 1873. A two-storey rear extension probably dates from Pope's occupancy, while a section of the house was removed in the early part of the century. Parks Canada purchased the house in 1967, and renovated it for use as a district office. Parks Canada is the custodian department. See FHBRO Building Report 91-58.

Reasons For Designation

Ardgowan House was designated Recognized for its association with the process by which the British colonies united to form the Dominion of Canada and, in particular, with William Henry Pope, a Father of Confederation; its country-villa design; and its landmark status.

Pope, a lawyer and active Prince Edward Island Conservative, was a strong advocate of Maritime Union. He represented the Island at the 1864 Charlottetown Conference, and entertained conference delegates at Ardgowan. In 1865, he presented resolutions in favour of union to the P.E.I. Assembly. However, his views represented a minority of Islanders, and P.E.I. voted against Confederation in 1867. Despite this opposition, Pope continued to promote union through speeches and through his role as editor of the Conservative paper, the Islander until P.E.I. finally joined Confederation in 1873. Pope's brother, James Colledge Pope, who purchased Ardgowan in 1875, was premier of the province and among the first P.E.I. representatives to Parliament. He sold the 76-acre property in 1879, at which point much of it was subdivided into lots.

The original design of Ardgowan was based on the ideas of American landscape architect and designer Andrew Jackson Downing, as popularized in his 1842 book Cottage Residences, and his 1850 book The Architecture of Country Houses. The original house consisted of a single-storey four-bay centre block with front verandah, flanked by two-storey wings with hipped gables. The plan, the board and batten siding, and the Gothic Revival detailing found in the chimneys, verandah fretwork, and bay windows were characteristic of Downing's designs. Although modified over time, the residence retains essential elements of its original appearance.

The site, a National Historic Park since 1982, is a well known regional landmark.

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Ardgowan House (Continued)
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Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of Ardgowan House resides in its country-villa design and its landmark qualities.

The current L-shaped structure, truncated by the removal of the east wing and one bay of the central block, and extensively repaired and renovated, still reflects Gothic Revival architecture. The trim on the veranda and on the front window and door is original, the chimneys have been reproduced according to the original design, and the exterior cladding has been replaced in keeping with the original. Features which reflect the original design intent and finishes should be retained and repaired.

The interior, which now houses offices and meeting rooms, has undergone major renovations. Little remains of original finishes, but the profiles of the interior plasterwork moldings have been replicated. The layout of the west wing remains essentially unaltered, as does the ground floor of the central block, and the framing and flooring of these areas are original. These surviving elements represent the original intention of the design and should be preserved.

The house remains in its original location, on a four-and-a-half acre portion of what was originally a much larger property. An extant barn/carriage house, and landscaping representing the period of Pope's occupancy, contribute to the site's ambience. Despite changes in the function of the building, the site retains a residential character which should be preserved.

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