

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Bridgehouse at Burritts Rapids was built in 1925-26 by the Government of Canada, as a residence for the bridgmaster, replacing an earlier one from the 1850s. A rear shed addition, surviving from the earlier residence, dates from 1898. The house is now leased by the town to serve as a library. The Canadian Parks Service is the custodial department. See FHBRO Building Report 91-81.

Reasons for Designation

The Bridgehouse was designated Recognized as a result of its historical associations, its architectural qualities and its unchanged historic character.

The house, which provided accommodation for those operating the swing bridge, is associated with the Post-Confederation use of the Rideau Canal for transportation purposes. The current swing bridge, combining Fink and Pratt truss design and dating from 1897, is associated with the bridgemasters who lived in the house. The bridge continues to be used as a means of crossing the canal to the town of Burritts Rapids, a Loyalist settlement of the 1790s. Although the house is now used as a library, knowledge of its original function makes it a local landmark to residents of the area.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of this structure is defined by its vernacular architectural design and its contribution to the environment.

The house is a good example of vernacular frame construction from the period -- a rectangular side-hall plan, two storeys in height clad with cove siding, with a cedar-shingled gable roof. The house retains its small front entrance porch, while the single-storey frame addition at the rear, dating from 1898, is clad in cove siding like that of the main structure. The house retains its interior layout, much of the woodwork and, apparently, the original windows. The functional residential design of the building reflects the early twentieth-century commercial and recreational use of the canal system and exhibits the competent craftsmanship of the period. Inspection and maintenance of the building fabric should be carried out routinely.

The Bridgmaster's House and its setting remain essentially unchanged since the 1920s. The house forms part of the streetscape of the town, while the lawn extends down to the water and bridge as it did historically. This relationship should be preserved.