

## HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

FHBRO Number 98-075

DFRP Number 02087

### **Recognized Federal Heritage Building**

CAVENDISH, Prince Edward Island

### **Main House**

The Simpson Farm

The Main House on the Simpson Farm was built in 1921 by a local farmer, Arthur Simpson (1835-1922), as a farmhouse and tourist home. The designer is unknown. During its ownership by the Simpson family, the house was altered by the addition of an enclosed porch at the rear, the installation of electricity and a main-floor washroom, and the modernization of the kitchen and bathroom. The house was acquired from the Simpson family by the Province of Prince Edward Island in 1992 and subsequently transferred to the federal government. Since then, the front porch and all the windows have been replaced, the roof has been resingled, the interior has been refinished, a floor has been added to the basement, parts of the foundation have been replaced, and new plumbing and an alarm system have been installed. The house is presently leased to a private individual for use as offices. Parks Canada is the custodian.

### **Reasons for Designation**

The Main House at the Simpson Farm has been designated “Recognized” because of its historical, architectural and environmental significance.

### **Historical Significance**

The Main House illustrates the early development of the tourist industry in the Cavendish area. Summer visitors began to frequent the area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, attracted, in part, by the popularity of local resident Lucy Maud Montgomery’s novels. The Main House was the first known residence in the area deliberately built to accommodate summer visitors in addition to the farm family. The Main House also illustrates the continuing viability of the family farm in Prince Edward Island into the 20th century. It was the third house built on a property farmed by the same family from 1790 until 1996. The Main House is also known for its association with a prominent Cavendish family. It was built by Arthur Simpson (1835-1922), whose ancestor William founded Cavendish in 1789. The Simpsons , including Arthur’s son Jeremiah (1875-1961) were well known in Cavendish society.

### **Architectural Significance**

The Main House represents an attractive, vernacular interpretation of the Classical Revival Style popular throughout urban and rural Canada during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Edwardian classicism is evident in the scale and massing of the house, the rigidly symmetrical front elevation, and the limited range of classically inspired decorative elements. The exterior is comparatively elaborate for a Prince Edward Island farmhouse, due to its seasonal role as a tourist home. The interior design of the house, and the high quality of materials used in its construction, also reflect this special role. In the context of the Island’s rural domestic architecture, the Main House exhibits a high level of craftsmanship and materials.

### **Environmental Significance**

The Main House is prominently located on the brow of a hill, overlooking a provincial highway. It retains its dominant relationship with the other extant farm buildings, which form an irregularly shaped farmyard to the rear of the house. The typical farmyard layout has been disrupted by the removal of several outbuildings, including the main barn, but the house's role within the farm context is still discernable.

### **Character-defining Elements**

The heritage character of the Main House at the Simpson Farm resides in the following character-defining elements:

- The Classical Revival design of the house, as evidenced by its solid, rectangular shape, balanced front facade and classical detailing. The symmetry of the front facade is achieved through the central placement of a two-storey front porch, flanked on either side by bays with generously scaled windows, and a centrally-placed attic dormer. Classical detailing includes colonettes on the front porch, framing around the windows, and the use of stepped clapboarding above the ground-floor windows.
- The formal centre-hall plan with generously scaled entry and main floor rooms, a pass-through cupboard between the dining room and pantry, and wood flooring and trim on the upper level as well as the main level of the house.
- The placement of the Main House in a prominent location, facing but set back from the highway, with other farm buildings arranged in an irregular farmyard behind it.

All maintenance and repair work, as well as future interventions, should respect these character-defining elements.

For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.