

Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba
Casa Loma (A2)
154 Wasagaming Drive

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The cottage known as Casa Loma was built in 1928-29 by Eric Hall, and owned by him until 1932. It was operated as a tourist home from 1944 until acquired by the National Parks Service in the 1960s, after which time it was used as a dormitory for summer staff of Riding Mountain National Park. The building is currently owned by Parks Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 85-54.

Reasons for Designation

Casa Loma was designated Recognized for architectural, historical and environmental reasons. In its form and craftsmanship, the building is representative of cottages constructed in the 1920s and 1930s in the Wasagaming town site area (formerly called Clear Lake) of Riding Mountain National Park. These structures reflect the building traditions of Scandinavian artisans who had established a settlement known as New Sweden to the south west of the present park. Two prominent members of this group are directly associated with Casa Loma: Eric Hall, its builder and original owner, to whom is attributed much of the early stonework at Clear Lake; and its second owner, John Anderson, an accomplished log builder responsible for the construction of a succession of cottages, park buildings and commercial structures.

Casa Loma's construction was roughly contemporary with the designation of Riding Mountain as Canada's fourteenth national park in 1930. Its later acquisition by the park exemplifies the shift away from resort development in the national parks, as expressed in the National Parks Policy which appeared in 1964.

In its form and materials, Casa Loma is compatible with adjacent structures and complements its natural landscape setting.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of Casa Loma resides in its distinctive pagoda-like profile, in the simple yet well-crafted nature of its exterior, and in the character of its natural setting.

Casa Loma is a two-storey vernacular structure whose composition still expresses the original design symmetry. The hipped-roof second storey rises from the truncated hip roof of the large ground floor. Openings include the doorway flanked by tripartite multi-paned windows, the tripartite window of the side addition, and four evenly-spaced windows on the second storey. The exterior is clad in wide drop siding that is typical

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of early Clear Lake cottages and was probably milled locally. Window and door casings, corner boards and skirting boards are simply executed but add to the overall impression of quality construction.

Casa Loma's simple cottage character is enhanced by such features as rafter tails visible under the broad roof overhang at both storeys, wood lattice panels between concrete foundation piers, and wood shutters added to the front door and side windows early in the building's history.

The addition built on the north side in 1946 was executed in compatible materials and does not impinge on the cottage's character. The ground floor window to the right of the principal entrance was lengthened at some point; however, the general form and configuration of the fenestration have been retained and should continue to be respected.

Historic photographs show a cedar shingle roof rather than asphalt shingle, and a simple wooden landing and stair in place of the existing concrete steps and iron handrail at the front door. A return to traditional materials at these locations would be appropriate.

Investigation of the interior should be undertaken to identify original floor plans, features and finishes. Such elements should be retained and restored as components of the building's overall heritage value.

Like the building, the site is characterized by a simple treatment of natural materials, and should be managed in a way that respects and preserves the natural setting. Care should be taken to ensure that trees and vegetation in close proximity to the structure are not permitted to degrade exterior finishes. The garage structure at the rear of the property, called "Little Casa Loma", is not a designated building but is compatible with the character of the site.

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