

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Main Building

Skoki Ski Lodge National Historic Site
Banff National Park, Alberta

The main building of the Skoki Ski Lodge National Historic Site was built in 1930. Constructed by Earl Spencer for John Boyce and the Ski Club of the Canadian Rockies, it was the original lodge structure built on the site. It has undergone two major alterations, including the addition of the kitchen wing in 1931 and the construction of the upper floor, including the dormer gables, in 1935-36. A small, shed-roofed addition was also added along the length of the kitchen at a later date. The main building currently retains its original use as the nucleus of the lodge. Parks Canada is the custodian of this National Historic Site. See FHBRO Building Report 96-1 05.

Reasons for Designation

The main building of the Skoki Ski Lodge National Historic Site has been designated Classified primarily for its environmental significance, but also for its architectural qualities and historical associations.

The Skoki Ski Lodge is situated twelve miles north of Lake Louise in the Skoki Valley, in the centre of magnificent ski touring country close to several glaciers. Five guest cabins are arranged in a fan-like semi-circle around the main building. Since access to the site continues to be restricted to foot, horseback and ski trails, the site's remote wilderness character remains unspoiled.

Architecturally, the Skoki Ski Lodge is a unique example of an original, rustic winter resort, characteristic of the Banff region. It has remained virtually unchanged since its completion in 1936.

The historical significance of the main building, as a component of the entire lodge, is derived from its association with the growth of back-country recreation in the national parks and the development of tourism. Being the first such facility to operate on a commercial basis in Canada, the Skoki Ski Lodge represents the pioneering phase of skiing as a major recreational activity. The lodge remains a major destination point within the park.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the main building of the Skoki Ski Lodge resides in its picturesque mountainous setting and in its simple rustic design. It was the first structure to be built on the site and it remains the nucleus of the complex.

The main building's massing consists of a two-storey, gable-roofed structure with a one-storey, back kitchen addition, also gable-roofed. Three dormer windows and an off-centre entrance articulate the front elevation. The back elevation is distinguished by a single roof dormer, a massive field stone chimney and a projecting kitchen wing. There is a shed-roofed addition along the length of the kitchen wing. Both the front and side entrances are protected by projecting, gabled porch roofs. The simple massing is an important feature of the rustic aesthetic.

Wood is the predominant construction material. Locally-hewn spruce logs supplied the bulk of the construction material. The main lodge features unscribed horizontal log construction with saddle-notched corners, characteristic of the traditional log construction practised in the mountain parks during the early decades of this century. The massive field stone chimney reinforces the rustic design. Multi-paned windows, door elements and tongue-and-groove floorboards are constructed of milled lumber components. Original wood shingles clad the main roof, while sheet-aluminum roofing clads the back kitchen addition. The patina of weathered wood contributes to the building's historic appearance. Any repairs or upgrades should match the original construction materials and retain the simplicity of their vocabulary. Consideration may be given to reinstating the wood shingles on the back kitchen addition.

The interior layout of the main building consists of a lounge, a kitchen and dining facilities on the main level and sleeping quarters on the upper level. The rustic interior remains virtually unchanged since 1936, and contains photographs and memorabilia directly associated with the history of skiing in the region. Functionally, the building continues to operate as a lodge. Facilities are simple but adequate, contributing to the back-country recreational experience. Wood stoves and propane supply the only heat and energy. It would be appropriate to maintain the existing layout and interiors, including the various memorabilia, all of which reinforce the main building's heritage character.

Located on the banks of Little Pipestone Creek, the main building sits in a clearing surrounded by smaller guest cabins. Because of its size and central location, the main building is the most dominant feature of the site. The historic relationship of the lodge to its surrounding alpine landscape has evolved from a single structure in 1930, to a small rustic complex by 1936. There have been virtually no changes since this time. Beyond respecting the traditional relationships between buildings, preventing vehicular access is the most important factor in maintaining the remote, wilderness quality of the setting.

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

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