

88-58

Churchill, Manitoba
Air Terminal Building
Churchill Airport

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Air Terminal Building in Churchill, Manitoba, was originally built as an RCAF hangar in 1949-51 to designs produced by the Directorate of Works and Buildings of the RCAF. The building was used by the RCAF as a combination hangar, control tower and office building until 1964. It is now used as an air terminal building for various commercial airline companies and as office space. The custodial department is Transport Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 88-58.

Reasons for Designation

The Air Terminal Building in Churchill has been designated a Recognized federal heritage building because of its historical associations, its design, and its status as a local landmark.

The building illustrates the expansion of military, and later civil, aviation into arctic and sub-arctic regions of Canada. The Churchill Airport was originally part of the Crimson Route, designed by the U.S. government to ferry operational aircraft to Great Britain during World War II. After assuming control of Churchill in 1945, the Department of National Defence developed the base as a Canadian Joint Services Station for the conduct of cold weather experiments, equipment trials, training in winter warfare and arctic survival. The former RCAF hangar was built as a multipurpose structure and reflected the broad aviation mandate of the RCAF at Churchill. It was an important servicing area for planes during the installation of the DEW line in the mid-1950s. Civil aviation became an integral part of the airport after the takeover by DOT in 1964, and the former hangar has been used as an air terminal building since that time.

In terms of design, the building is a rare example of an airport structure combining hangar, office, and control tower functions. The wood roof trusses and well-detailed hangar doors are notable features. The building is prominent in its setting because of its size and function. It serves a broader symbolic role as the major remnant of the Churchill base and as the current point of entry and exit for air travellers to the community of Churchill.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Air Terminal Building is defined by its overall form and detailing, and by its relationship to its setting.

.../2

Churchill, Manitoba
Air Terminal Building (Continued)

The building appears to have been constructed as a variation of Standard Plan S-1 0-58 (a 160-foot hangar with a two-storey lean-to on each side), with the conspicuous addition of the three-storey control tower on the south-west corner.

It has a concrete foundation and floor, wood framing with steel bracing around the hangar doors, wood roof trusses and a tar-and-gravel roof. The present exterior finish is a combination of wood and cement asbestos shingle, with steel flashings and trim. The hangar doors have six panels each, with an attractive and elaborate pattern of glazing with diamond patterns created by diagonal stiffeners.

The layout has been significantly altered in the lobby, control tower and office areas, with the extension of the lobby space into the hangar area. Window openings in the office areas have been modified, several vestibules added, and the east hangar door sealed shut and insulated. Although no longer serving its original purpose, the building has been successfully adapted to accommodate air terminal requirements.

During the Cold War era, the building served as the dominant element and focal point of the Churchill base, and it continues to be a central facility for airport operations. It is the oldest surviving building in the area, and maintains its direct connection with the runway.

It is recommended that a continuing maintenance and repair program be used to preserve the general form, material and detail of the building. Small scale modifications required to meet changing functional requirements and operational relationships to the larger airport complex would be appropriate -- preserving the building's historical associations while adapting to current demands.

1990.06.08