

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Motherwell Barn

Motherwell National Historic Site
Abernethy, Saskatchewan

The Barn at Motherwell Homestead was constructed between 1896 and 1907. The design follows traditional barn plan and construction techniques. The roofing was replaced in the 1970s and the foundations and ramp were rebuilt in the 1980s. The building was restored to ca.1910 by Parks Canada in the late 1970s. The current use is as a museum. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 88-14.

Reasons for Designation

The Motherwell Barn was designated Classified because of its environmental and local significance, its historical associations, and its architectural importance.

The Motherwell Homestead was intentionally developed as an example of model farm planning which emphasized scientific layouts and farm beautification. The model farm layout divides the site into quadrants. The barn is the dominant building of the operational quadrant, reflecting the farming function. The complex landscape surrounding the barn has undergone changes; however, features of shelterbelts, hedges, laneways, fences, and a dugout were reinstated to recreate the original farm character. The height and volume of the barn make it visually prominent and it serves as a local landmark.

The Motherwell Barn reflects the early role of Ontario emigrants in shaping prairie society during its settlement era. As part of the model farm, the barn is associated with the theme of scientific agriculture and the philosophies of mixed farming, the use of shelter belts, and farm beautification in the west.

The homestead was settled by William Richard Motherwell who was the father of the prairie co-op movement and Dominion Minister of Agriculture from 1921-30. He played a dominant role in shaping political and social institutions in the west.

The Motherwell Barn is a well-proportioned, large scaled, L-shaped building. It is a variant of a common Ontario building type, reflecting the preferences of Ontario emigrants, and is one of a few surviving examples of the type left in the prairies. The end elevations are symmetrical and side elevations have a regular placement of windows with simple detailing characteristic of barn design. The form and functional planning reflect the tenets of mixed farming practices.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Motherwell Barn resides in the building's form, overall proportions, functional layout, architectural details and materials, and relationship to the site and setting.

The barn is a large L-shaped three-storey structure with a medium-pitched gambrel roof characteristic of the building type. The roof profile has three cross-gabled ventilation cupolas with trefoil detailing. The roof profile and simple massing should be maintained.

The character of the barn derives in large part from its construction materials. The one storey foundation wall is split-face granite fieldstone, rebuilt to match the original construction, with timber lintels above door and window openings. The superstructure of heavy oak timber structural framing contributes to the heritage character. It is clad in vertical board and batten siding common to the building type. The gable ends each have a prominent diamond window with date of construction above. The barn has been re-roofed in cedar shingles. The original materials should be maintained, as well as those installed during the period restoration in the 1970s.

The original wood sash windows and doors should be maintained as they reinforce the utilitarian character of the design, as seen in the early photographs.

The original interior configuration was reintroduced when the barn was restored. The variety of functions of the barn is reflected in the stables on the ground floor, wood framed divisions of the drive floor, and the large open volume of the hay floor. This differentiation of functions through design should be maintained. Any surviving early interior finishes or hardware should be documented and preserved, and incorporated in future work.

The L-shaped footprint of the building and its relationship to the site should be maintained. The dugout located in the quadrant immediately south of the barn uses landscape features to trap and conserve water for use in the barnyard and this relationship should be maintained. Relationships with the shelter belts, fencing and laneways should be respected.

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

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