

## **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

### **Motherwell House**

Motherwell National Historic Site  
Abernethy, Saskatchewan

The Motherwell House at Motherwell Homestead was constructed in 1897. The plans were provided by a local building supply firm, Fraser and Cameron. The kitchen addition walls were rebuilt, and window hoods, pergolas, and iron cresting were reconstructed in the late 1970s as part of the period restoration to ca.1910 by Parks Canada. The current use is as a museum. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 88-14.

### **Reasons for Designation**

The Motherwell House 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 a scientific layout and farm beautification. The site is divided into quadrants with different functions. The house maintains its role as the main building in the domestic quadrant. The complex landscape surrounding the house and barn has undergone changes, however site features of shelterbelts, hedges, laneways, and fences were reinstated to recreate the original farm character. The proximity of the Motherwell House to the road makes it a local landmark.

The Motherwell Homestead reflects the prominent role of Ontario emigrants in shaping prairie society and landscape during the settlement era. The farmhouse as part of the model farm is associated with the development of scientific agriculture and the employment of mixed farming practices in the west. Farm beautification and the use of shelter belts are principles found in both themes.

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 House is a well-proportioned Italianate style building with Gothic detailing on the rear wing. The symmetrical design, the bracketed cornice, prominent eaves, iron cresting, and a central pedimented entrance are characteristic of the style. The farmhouse is a variant of a common Ontario building type, reflecting the preferences of Ontario emigrants to the prairies. The stone construction is rare for Saskatchewan in the 1900s.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of the Motherwell House resides in the building's form, its overall proportions, Italianate and Gothic architectural details and materials, surviving interior finishes and layout, and relationship to the site and setting.

The building is composed of two parts, a simple square two-storey mass with an offset rectangular one storey rear wing. The principal form has prominent bracketed eaves, a truncated hipped roof with iron cresting, and two small semi-circular dormer windows, all of which are characteristic of the Italianate style. The details of the two storey projecting gabled porch and balcony on the main elevation contribute to the character. The gable-roofed wing reflects the Gothic style in its single dormer with fretwork details and finial. There is a continuous veranda on one side of the wing. The roof profile, massing and footprint should be maintained.

The distinguishing material of the building is the use of split-face granite fieldstone. The house and wing have irregular corner quoins, slightly rounded window heads, rough stone voussoirs, and plain sills. All masonry merits appropriate conservation expertise. The wood detailing of the prominent eaves, bracketed cornice, and front gabled porch with balcony should be maintained, as should the wood upper dormer gable trims and finial of the wing. The cast iron cresting was rebuilt as part of the 1970s restoration, which also included reinstatement of the wooden window hoods and attached trellises. The original materials and those installed during the restoration should be maintained.

The original wood two-over-two sash windows and the doors with their glazed pointed arch openings reinforce the late-Victorian character of the design and should be maintained.

The planning illustrates the social and functional criteria of the 1900s in the separation of formal, family, and service areas. The period restoration of the original center hall plan reversed later alterations and should be maintained. Original interior finishes and materials, such as the panelled wood wainscotting and pressed metal ceiling of the lobby, the wainscotting at the kitchen, the plaster rosettes and restored frieze in the parlours, the wood fireplace mantel and high baseboards throughout, should be maintained. Any other surviving early interior finishes should be documented and preserved, and incorporated in future work.

The layout of the site reiterates the separation of formal, family, and service areas with the ornamental formal gardens facing onto the municipal highway, the exterior "living

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room" heavily screened by hedges, and the whole of the domestic quadrant being screened by shelter belts from the three other service quadrants. The footprint of the

building and its relationships with the shelter belts, fencing and laneways should be maintained.

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

1996.07.04