94-21

Ottawa, Ontario
K.W. Neatby Building
Central Experimental Farm

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The K.W. Neatby Building was constructed for governmental records storage in 1936-38 to designs by Edgar Louis Horwood and J. Albert Ewart. There have been two main alterations: an annex in 1941, and an L-shaped addition in 1956-58 for the Science Service of the Department of Agriculture which was designed by William H. Gilleland of Gilleland and Strutt, architects. The building is currently used as a laboratory and office facility. The custodian is Agriculture Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 94-21.

Reasons for Designation

The K.W. Neatby Building was designated Recognized because of its architectural importance, its historical associations, and also for its environmental significance.

The building has three main components which have similar massing and scale. The south component reflects Tudor Revival motifs used during the 1930s federal building program. The simple stepped massing, symmetrical facade, and selective use of Tudor Revival and Gothic detail are characteristic of the style. The north component exhibits the International style as it was used for federal buildings of the mid-1950s, characterized by horizontality of forms and materials and restrained formality.

The Neatby Building is associated with the consolidation of basic and applied research into one agricultural research facility. The large addition reflects the public and governmental support of post-war research programs as well as the further consolidation of the research laboratories. The building is named for K.W. Neatby, a leading force in the creation of the Research Branch, to commemorate his contribution to Canadian agriculture and his directorship of the Science Service.

The Neatby Building is located in a groomed park-like setting on the north-west edge of the building campus of the Experimental Farm, and is compatible with the present informal layout of adjacent buildings.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the K.W.Neatby Building complex resides in the building's form, its overall proportions, and in its Tudor Revival and International style details.

The construction materials, surviving interior layouts and finishes, and relationship to the site and setting are also character-defining.

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The building is a flat-roofed, four storey reversed "G" shaped structure comprised of three components which are similar in scale. The 1936-38 "U"-shaped building reflects the classical tripartite division of base, body, and cornice typical of the Tudor revival style. The L-shaped 1956-58 addition uses simple massing and a utilitarian approach to function, structure, and materials, in keeping with the International style. All building faces (with minor projections and recesses) are aligned within a rectangular perimeter. Penthouse areas are flat roofed and recessed from the facade plane. The consistent massing, roof profile and footprint throughout the complex should be maintained. The height of roof top installations should be limited to reduce further impact on the roof profile.

Although the product of two different building campaigns, the complex is unified by the uniformly matched brick and non-reflective glazing. The 1936-38 building features brick diapering linking second and third floors, and projecting stack-bonded brick window surrounds. The detailing of the limestone trims on this building (split-face limestone cladding for the base; dressed limestone for string courses and sills, high relief carving; coat of arms, spandrels, quoins, crenelated parapets) is Tudor Revival in inspiration and should be maintained. On the 1956-58 building the brickwork and limestone coping are simply detailed. A program of regular inspection and maintenance and the involvement of appropriate conservation expertise are recommended for any masonry work.

The 1936-38 building's entrance doors and transoms appear to be original and should be maintained. Elsewhere, the replacement windows are inappropriate in materials and design. When they are at the end of their service life, consideration should be given to replacing them with units that are compatible with the initial design intent. Window-mounted air conditioning units detract from the character of the building.

Based on photographs, the original 1956-58 building's principal entrance featured silvery anodized aluminum framing and canopy detailing, characteristic of the International style, with metal lettering and a coat of arms above. The metalwork has been replaced with a brown-finished metal which diminishes the intended contrast with the masonry. When the materials are at the end of their service life, they should be replaced with units in a finish compatible with the initial design intent. The original strip windows, with their pattern of fine-scale mullions and colored spandrel panels

reinforcing the horizontal proportions of the facade, were replaced in the 1990s with units that respect the intended horizontal expression and fine scale detailing.

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The laboratory and office layouts of the complex have a central double-loaded corridor with stairwells at the corridor ends. This layout should be maintained. The original interior materials of the 1936-38 building remain, including plaster ceilings, terrazzo and linoleum flooring, marble stairs, and early doors, transoms and woodwork. The interior finishes and millwork of the 1956-58 building are largely extant; of note are the terrazzo floors, metal stair and handrails, and the stone and glass walls of the lobby. These materials and finishes are typical period finishes for laboratory buildings and merit conservation as part of the heritage character of the structure. Any surviving early interior finishes should be documented and preserved, and incorporated in future work.

The building footprint and patterns of site access have been unchanged since the 1956-58 addition and should be respected. The scale of the complex is in keeping with that of the larger buildings on the farm and should not be changed significantly. The landscape treatment, manicured and park-like with a mix of plant sizes and types, is appropriate to the character of the building.

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