Ottawa, Ontario
Nutrition Building
Central Experimental Farm Bldg. No. 59

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Nutrition Building was built in 1898-1899 as the Chemical Laboratory. The plans were prepared by the Chief Architect's staff of the Department of Public Works, under the direction of Thomas Fuller. The building was originally a simple rectangle. In 1913 a large wing was added to the east side of the building. In 1924, another large addition was constructed on the north side of the original building creating an L-shaped building. A one-storey brick addition was built around 1948, and another one-storey frame addition was added in the 1950s. The building is owned by Agriculture Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 91-1 70.

Reasons for Designation

The Nutrition Building was designated Recognized because of its historical association, its architectural and environmental significance.

The Nutrition Building is closely associated with the development of the Experimental Farms system in Canada. In accordance with its 1886 mandate to introduce new and profitable farming methods to Canada, a Chemistry Division, one of the four original divisions, was established in 1886. On its completion in 1899, all the experimental laboratories which serviced the various divisions of the farm were contained in the Chemical Laboratory (later named the Animal Nutrition Laboratory).

This building is closely associated with Frank T. Shutt, the Dominion Chemist from 1886 to 1932, who was awarded a prize from the American Society of Agronomy in 1929.

The Nutrition Building is a well-preserved example of the sturdy, functional type of building characteristic of the first thirty years of the CEF's history. The grounds of the building exhibit a "gardenesque landscape," a landscape style popular in the late 19th century. The building merges well into the natural landscape and the pastoral, semi-rural setting of this part of the CEF.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Nutrition Building resides in the massing, proportions, architectural details and materials of the 1898-1899 building and the 1913, 1924 and 1948 additions. The heritage character also lies in the relationship of the building to its setting.

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Nutrition Building
Central Experimental Farm Bldg. No. 59 (Continued)

The building consists of a smooth red brick basically rectangular mass set on a well defined rock-faced limestone basement storey, and topped with a steeply pitched hip roof. Although numerous additions more than tripled the size of the original building, the additions were designed in a manner sympathetic to the original character of the exterior.

The roof is enlivened by triangular and shed dormers, and by prominent masonry chimneys. A boxed cornice with modillions and narrow frieze board accentuate the horizontal lines of the building. The formal west entrance is defined by a semi-circular masonry arch and is reached by exterior stairs. A secondary entrance is located on the south elevation. Multi-paned windows reflect the interior layout and contribute to the balanced composition of the elevations. Any changes in building use should attempt to retain the existing pattern of openings and access.

Care should be taken in maintaining the exterior finishes. The masonry should be regularly inspected. Major maintenance should be done by qualified conservators, using appropriate materials such as soft mortar, and proper repair and repointing techniques. Cleaning should be done only if required for conservation, and then with the least abrasive approach possible. Wood elements should be repaired rather than replaced, and repainted on a regular basis. Historic finish analysis can be used to determine the original colour scheme. The original doors should be preserved and repaired as required. Reinstatement of multi-paned wooden windows inspired from the original design would greatly enhance the aesthetic qualities of the building.

While interior spaces have been reworked many times in response to changing needs and demands it would be appropriate to identify any surviving interior layout and patterns of circulation, and incorporate these in any interior refurbishing. It would be desirable to create some continuity between the exterior and interior in terms of quality of finishes.

The landscape around the building which survives today is indicative of the "gardenesque landscape" style. Every effort should be made to maintain the relationship of the building to its site through the retention of the circular drive and the planting plan. Introduction of any new elements should respect the historic layout.

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