

WATERTON HISTORICAL BUILDINGS

“Park Administration Building”
215 Mount View Road

#2 on the History Walking Tour



Parks Canada Collection

This building grew as Waterton grew and the park administration responsibilities required more people and more space. The 1935 addition to include a visitor information office was carried out as part of a make-work Depression Relief project. A large stone-arched doorway, built to impress the visitor, is still visible inside the building. In 2002, a rear addition was torn down and replaced by an interpretive garden.

BUILT: 1919- 1936

BUILDERS: In part by Doug Oland

PREVIOUS USES: 1919- Built as an office building; 1925- Enlarged ; 1928- I Information bureau included; 1935- Office enlarged and basement added; 2002- rear addition demolished

OF NOTE: An idea of including a small museum in the 1935 enlargement was nixed.

Parks Canada Heritage Character Statement:

The administration building is a composite structure, built in four successive stages that correspond to important growth phases within the park. The original section, built of logs in 1919, is one of the oldest surviving structures within the park. This section was expanded, then, in 1928, became the rear wing of a larger facility fronting on Mount View Road. The 1928-29 section was built as a new information bureau for the park, and displayed characteristics of the architectural theme that the Parks Branch's staff architects were developing within the townsite by that time. Its most striking feature was a massive arched stone entrance, which is still visible inside the building.

By 1935 administrative requirements within the park had outgrown the existing administration building, and plans were made to build a new section in front of the 1928 information bureau. By that time the Architectural Division had formulated a clear set of architectural motifs for use at Waterton Lakes, and these were incorporated in the new design. These included the use of stucco as a primary wall covering, complemented by a field stone plinth that rises to the sill level, and mock half-timbered detailing on a front bay and on the side entrance. At the same time, the earlier sections of the buildings were encased with similar stucco and stone veneer, and their roofs were modified to mesh with the pitch of the new section. All the roofs were covered with randomly coursed wood shingles. This roof treatment, along with the stonework and half timbering, established a close visual link with other key administrative buildings within the park, notably the registration building and RCMP barracks. The 1935-36 additions and alterations were carried out as Depression Relief projects.

The value of the building rests primarily with its long-standing role as the administrative headquarters for the park, and the way in which its sequential growth depicts major architectural phases within the townsite. The design itself -in particular the 1935-36 addition and modifications- amplified rather than defined the architectural themes being developed within the townsite. The intended visual effect of the 1935 section has been obscured through subsequent modifications that removed most of the half-timber detailing. The original 1919 log section, now encased within the 1935-36 modifications, offers interesting interpretive possibilities in its own right, and these should be considered in future plans for upgrading or replacement of the facility.



The 1919 Log Building With Its 1925 Additions

CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS

The principal elements on the 1935-35 building consist of the textured roof shingling, stone plinth treatment, and remnants of the half-timber trim, presently obscured by the sign on the front bay and by modifications to the side entrance. The stone arched entrance of the former information bureau is a noteworthy internal feature. An external boulderstone chimney on the right side elevation dates from 1925 alterations to the original structure. The outline of the 1919 log building and its 1925 additions are clearly discernible when the building is viewed from the lakefront. The original log walls presumably remain intact, and would become major elements in the event of restoration. The residential appearance of the lakeside facade should be retained.