

FHBRO Number 91-39a

Cap-Tourmente, Quebec
House - La Petite-Ferme
Buildings at La Petite-Ferme

The House at La Petite-Ferme was constructed in the late 17th or early 18th century; the designer is not known. It was used as a residence until 1969, when the property was purchased by the federal government as part of the Cap Tourmente National Wildlife Area. The house was then converted into an administrative centre, and the ground floor was restored according to the 18th century designs. The Canadian Wildlife Service is the custodian. See FHBRO Report No. 91-39.

Reasons for Designation

The House at La Petite-Ferme has been designated Classified because of the significance of the historic themes associated with it, its considerable environmental significance, and its architectural qualities.

Several Canadian historical themes are associated with the house and its site. Artifacts found on the site indicate an aboriginal presence for over 2000 years. Under the seigneurial system established by the French colonial authority to assure the survival of religious institutions, among other things, the Seminary of Quebec was allowed to operate a farm at Cap Tourmente for over 300 years. The evolution of farming methods at the Little Farm mirrored the progress of agriculture in Quebec as a whole. Finally, the inclusion of the site in the Cap Tourmente National Wildlife Area, acknowledged as the habitat of the only population of giant snow geese in the world, relates to the theme of wildlife preservation.

The historical link between the house and its site and the other farm buildings has been partially preserved. The house provides the basis of the current character of its setting. Besides being a prime destination for thousands of tourists who come to the wildlife area every year, the house is also a familiar meeting place for numerous organizations and researchers from other nations who are concerned with the preservation of wildlife and plant species.

The House at La Petite-Ferme is an excellent example of the architecture of the French regime, to which some neoclassical decorative elements were added during the 19th century. Its survival for more than 250 years is indicative of the quality of the materials used and the workmanship of the period.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the House at La Petite-Ferme resides in its architectural form, which reflects several phases of construction, the materials, the interior layout, and its relationship to the site and surrounding buildings.

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The principal elements of the building which relate to the French regime include its long storey-and-a-half volume built close to the ground; its thick walls of rubble masonry covered with parging, except on the facade; its high gable roof surfaced with wood shingles; its large chimney stacks; and its somewhat regularly-spaced openings. Additions during the 19th century include the rear wing designed to conform to the overall lines of the main building, the curved overhang of the roof, the verandah with ornate posts, the dormers and the gate reflecting a neoclassical influence.

Given the number of alterations to the building, it would be preferable to abide by the choices made in the past, except for reasons of historical consistency. It is in this spirit that the exterior wall covering and window styles should be assessed; the style and materials selected should be consistent with those of the dominant period.

The layout of the ground floor of the main building is reminiscent of that of the 18th century; on the north side of the central room is a partition built during the 19th century. The layout of the remainder of the building was adapted to suit the needs of later occupants. It is recommended that no further alterations be made to the interior layout to avoid obliterating significant historical remains. Doors and stairways should also be left in their original locations to preserve the logic of the floor plan.

Some structural and ornamental period details remain in place (fireplaces, coffered ceilings, lath walls, woodwork, etc.). It is recommended that these details be documented and carefully preserved. The choice of finishing materials or lack thereof (masonry walls left bare) should be based on proper documentation, and the same applies to the restoration of missing elements. Any renovations or installation of modern equipment (lighting, heating, ventilation, etc.) should be discreet and consistent with the simple decor.

All significant structural elements should be preserved, including the very nice roof framing with mortise-and-tenon joints, and the two foundations, which indicate that the house may have been built in stages. Evidence (visible in the east section) that the building was set on fire by the British in 1759, if preserved, may yield some clues to a significant chapter in the history of the site.

This ancestral home was one of several buildings on the Little Farm, some of which no longer exist; it is the only one with stone walls (exposed on the facade) and a shingle roof. It is strongly recommended that these distinctive features be preserved and that the environment not be modified by further demolitions, additions or construction. It is also recommended that the profile of the complex within the landscape be preserved, and that the farm setting be maintained.

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

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