

**FEDERAL HERITAGE BUILDING REVIEW OFFICE (FHBRO)
HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

FHBRO Number:	92-28
DFRP Number:	06870
Resource Name:	Wilfrid Laurier House
Address:	12 th Avenue, Ville des Laurentides, Québec
Construction:	c. 1870-1871; 1939, farm outbuildings demolished, house moved to new foundation, basement added, restoration, new landscaping
Original Function:	Residence
Current Function:	Residence used for interpretation
Custodian:	Parks Canada
Status of Resource:	“Recognized” Federal Heritage Building

Reasons for Designation

Wilfrid Laurier House was designated a “Recognized” Federal Heritage Building for its architectural, environmental and historical interest.

Historical value

Acquired by the federal government in 1937, this house goes back to the government’s earliest efforts to remind Canadians (other than with plaques) of events, places, people and significant themes in Canadian history. Although it was later discovered that the house was not the birthplace of the first French Canadian to serve as Prime Minister (1896-1911), Laurier House is the centrepiece of Sir Wilfrid Laurier National Historic Site of Canada and remains one of the most important non-military historic sites in the country.

Architectural value

Laurier House projects the image of what was believed in 1939 to be a late 19th-century middle-class vernacular house. However, when the house was restored after heritage designation, a stylistic vision was chosen. In order to increase the monumentality of the small one-and-a-half storey residence, the outbuildings were demolished, the house was moved onto a new foundation and architectural elements that were deemed no longer consistent with this “ideal” vision were replaced. Under the careful guidance of ethnologist Marius Barbeau, the interior was also restored. Wilfred Laurier House therefore bears increased witness to the evolution of conservation and interpretation practices than to the building’s original style, which can be described as a combination of elements characteristic to both the traditional Quebec home and to a classic New England vernacular home, also called “colonial”.

Environmental value

The environment of Laurier House has been modified somewhat over the years, always with

the goal of idealized presentation. On the advice of landscape architect Frederick G. Todd, the building was moved, and several years later, all the buildings to the east were torn down to make room for a visitor centre commemorating the years Sir Wilfrid Laurier was in office. The commemorative component of the site, which consists mainly of Laurier House and the visitor centre, establishes this historic site as a major tourist and cultural attraction for the local community.

Character-Defining Elements

- The architectural features that make this small one-and-a-half storey brick house a good example of the transition period between the traditional “québécoise” house and the colonial house of the late 19th century. Features of the Quebec tradition are evident in the typical silhouette with the side façade facing the street; the gently curved gable roof; and the regular layout of the wood windows. The almost-square plan, the small size, the brick siding and the brick arches over the windows are elements that illustrate the incorporation of methods inspired by the classic vernacular New England house.
- The attention given to the decorative treatment of this building, particularly the main and side façades, making it an interesting witness to what was, at the time the house was restored, an idealized vision of a late 19th-century middle-class vernacular house.
- The partially windowless back façade, which evokes the old farm buildings that were demolished when the house was moved. This type of complex, consisting of outbuildings attached to the main building and commonly known as “maisons-blocs”, are very specific to the Lanaudière region.
- The elements of the interior that contribute to the above-mentioned idealized vision.
- The relationship between the house, its site and the street, as well as with the associated landscape proposed by Frederick G. Todd. These elements help illustrate the landscape architect’s ideas for enhancing a historic property.

For guidance on interventions, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*. For further information, contact FHBRO.

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