



SPECIAL PLACES

Birtle's Heritage Sites: Heritage Overview

List of Significant Sites

The following list of buildings and sites constitutes the Birtle Heritage Advisory Group's recommendations to the community about those places that have major claims for local heritage significance. Each building and site listed below is also presented on the following pages, with an accompanying Heritage Value Statement that elucidates that building or site's key heritage attributes.

- Walker Park (Spring site)
- Birtle United Church
- Stewart House
- Shepherd House
- Patterson House
- Lime Kiln Site
- Manwaring Block
- Former Union Bank
- Birtle Post Office

The development of this short list of significant sites was the result of careful and studied deliberations using standard heritage evaluation criteria, processes and scoring regimes that were applied to the 52 sites in the inventory. This work was carried out by the Birtle Heritage Advisory Group with assistance from staff of the Historic Resources Branch of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism. We are grateful to the branch for their generous support and patient attention in this particular endeavour.

As a collection, these nine buildings and sites define many aspects and themes from Birtle's past, and do so through places that are at once significant, but also interesting and attractive. These are places that the people of Birtle can look to with pride. These places remind us of past glories, but also suggest an enduring sense of community, and are a beacon for its future.

The group also noted in its evaluation exercise that a collection of six other buildings were very close in terms of their scores to the sites noted above, and should be identified for the record as Sites of Heritage Interest:

- Herchmer House
- Hatch House
- Cartmell House
- Walley House
- Birtle Indian Residential School
- St. Peter's Ukrainian Catholic Church



Walker Park – Birtle Spring
St. Clare Street



Heritage Value Statement

Walker Park is valued primarily because of its association with the origins of the community. As a stopping place for fresh water that was well known even in the early 19th century, the site became a notable camping spot for fur traders and then settlers in the 1870s. As agricultural settlement expanded in the late 1870s, and small villages sprang up, the Town of Birtle was a natural spot for community growth. The spring site is now a park, with a lovely gate and fence, set right in the heart of town.

Birtle United Church
684 Vine Street



Heritage Value Statement

Birtle United Church is the community's most important church building. The church is first a major connection to the Protestant roots of the founding settlement groups who were originally from Ontario, and secondly the best expression of the Gothic Revival architecture that defined such buildings in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Other examples that might also have expressed this quality have either been lost (Anglican, burned and replaced in the 1950s) or much altered for new uses (Baptist as the Tourist Centre). Birtle United is an excellent example of those traditions, with fine woodwork and windows.



Shepherd House
902 Main Street



Heritage Value Statement

The Shepherd House is valued primarily because it is the community’s best example of the kind of building technology that has defined Birtle since its inception – construction in stone. Built by Charles Dunham, a master mason who also built several other surviving Birtle landmarks (Hatch House and Stewart House), the building is an exceptional example of a mason’s skill, with stones laid expertly and to eye-catching effect. The house is valued because it has survived almost intact, with high levels of integrity both inside and out, and thus is one of the town’s most complete and effective expressions of the Victorian/English way of life that defined Birtle’s first decades. The house is also valued as a very good local example of the Gothic Revival style, the most popular architectural expression of the day, and defined here by its overall form, steep roof and many fine details.

Tom and Catherine Patterson House
240 Centre Street



Heritage Value Statement

The Patterson House is valued for its architecture and for its connections to a celebrated Birtle family. A truly exceptional design, mostly in the Queen Anne style (popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries), but also with qualities reflecting more up-to-date architecture of the opening decades of the 1900s (in particular Arts and Crafts), the house is a local masterwork. The house also is significant for its mostly intact interior, which still boasts original floorplans, fine woodwork and staircases. The Pattersons were a notable Birtle family for more than 75 years, important players in the origins of the town. Brothers John and Tom constructed several buildings in the town and operated Patterson Lumber Company.



Stewart House
737 St. Clare Street



Heritage Value Statement

The Stewart House is one of Birtle’s important examples of stone construction, a defining architectural quality of the community. The house was occupied by the Stewart family from 1898 until 1956. The house is a beloved local landmark, noted for its exquisite stonework by Charles Dunham and for its picturesque and eclectic design, with Gothic Revival forms and details as well as a distinctive clipped gable roof.

Lime Kiln Site
Mill Park



Heritage Value Statement

The Lime Kiln Site is an important, and now rare, reminder of the kind of pioneer industrial and manufacturing activity required in the construction of buildings. It was here that the lime used for the production of mortar was produced by burning limestone (which is abundant in Birtle); the mortar produced here was used in the construction of nearly every foundation in town and in all the masonry buildings as well.

MAKE HISTORY.

Manwaring Block
688 Main Street



Heritage Value Statement

The Manwaring Block is one of Birtle’s most important buildings. A landmark on Main Street, a fine example of stone construction (especially with both its north and east facades clear to view) and with notable connections to various of Birtle’s business elite, the building is one of the community’s proudest heritage sites.

Former Union Bank
738 Main Street



Heritage Value Statement

The Former Union Bank, now the Birdtail Country Museum, is valued first as the site of a critical (and typical) service for any community – a bank. Constructed of stone with cement blocks on its surface, it was first developed as a Union Bank, the most ambitious banking operation active in small Manitoba communities in the early decades of the 20th century. The building eventually served as a Royal Bank from 1925 until 1969. The building is valued today as the site of the Birdtail Country Museum, the repository for the community’s irreplaceable artifacts and historic documents.



Birtle Post Office

719 Main Street



Heritage Value Statement

The Birtle Post Office is valued as the one historic government function that still serves Birtle. With the loss long ago of a land titles office, old St. Mary's Hospital and the old fire hall, the Post Office is the solitary reminder of the theme of civic activity. Built in 1938, the building is also important as a very good example of the kind of modest Art Deco style that the Federal Government was using at the time to distinguish its important role in small communities.



Sites of Heritage Interest

Herchmer House 675 St. Clare Street



Heritage Value Statement

The Herchmer House is the oldest occupied building in Birtle, dating to 1882. While greatly altered over the years, the house still bears hints of its former self (in its interior configurations, wall heights and some finishes), and is well known for its stone foundation, being one of the places in Birtle that contains visible signs of the immovable boulders that still grace many town basements (walls and even floors). The house is historically associated with Lawrence Herchmer, an important government official who came to the Birtle area as the Indian Agent in 1878. Herchmer also served as Farm Instructor at the Birdtail Sioux Band, and as Divisional Agent for all reserves and bands within a 50-mile radius of Birtle. Herchmer became NWMP Commissioner in 1886, at which time he left the community.

Hatch House 401 Kent Street



Heritage Value Statement

The Hatch House has importance as the site of an informal maternity hospital, where midwife Mrs. Hatch brought more than 100 babies into the world. But the house also has importance architecturally, as a fine example of the craft of stone construction. With nary a crack, straight and solid after almost 120 years (it was built in 1896), and expressing a beautiful sense of proportion and placement of the stones, the walls are a tribute to the mason, Charles Dunham, who undertook many other masonry commissions in Birtle over the years.

Cinderblock House 907 St. Clare Street



Heritage Value Statement

This a good example of the kind of grand houses built in many small Manitoba towns for the merchant class of the early 20th century. Built by Ed Taylor in 1904, the house is also valued as an important and fascinating example of building technologies and styles. It combines typical Queen Anne-style forms and details (in particular the corner tower and wealth of wooden details in the gable ends and porch), with concrete block construction.



Sites of Heritage Interest

Walley House

691 St. Clare Street



Heritage Value Statement

This house, from around 1920, is an excellent example of the Craftsman style, a very popular architectural form used for domestic design in North America from about 1890 to 1930. The name of the style comes from a popular magazine published in the early 1900s by furniture maker Gustav Stickley called *The Craftsman*, which featured house and furniture designs. This Birtle example, which is quite rare in a small-town Manitoba context, is a textbook example of the type, with a low-pitched roof, deep eaves, exposed rafters and decorative brackets, and a broad front porch. The interior has been well preserved, with many of the typical features of the style—exquisite woodwork and Frank Lloyd Wright-type details—still intact.

Birtle Indian Residential School

North Hill



Heritage Value Statement

The Birtle Indian Residential School is one of only two sites that remain in Manitoba to recall the history of residential school activity. The site is thus one of Birtle's most notable places. However, all the buildings at the site, and especially the old school, are in very dilapidated condition and some other form of commemoration will likely have to be considered.

St. Peter's Ukrainian Catholic Church

672 Lundy Street



Heritage Value Statement

St. Peter's Ukrainian Catholic Church is valued primarily as an expression of the changing face of Birtle in the mid-20th century, as Catholics from the Rossburn and St. Lazare areas began moving into the community. This church is also valued as a good example of Ukrainian church architectural traditions, with its typical form, round-arched windows, signature banyas (towers) and colourful interior.