



What makes a building historically significant?

Questions that can help you understand whether a building is historically significant can be organized according to four areas:

- History
- Architecture
- Integrity
- Environment

History

Who were the original occupants and what did they do for a living?

Heritage buildings usually have greater potential for interpretation and telling interesting stories if the original occupants were well known in the community. Were any of the original occupants people who made a notable contribution to the community in terms of economic, political, social or cultural activities? Were they leaders in those endeavours?

Who were later occupants?

If the original occupants cannot make a claim for leadership or participation in community endeavours, perhaps later occupants can.

Did an event of historical importance occur in the building?

An event of historical importance will include things like the formal signing of a significant document, a famous trial, or a meeting between important people. It will be a rare building that will be able to make any claim in this regard.

Can the building be said to illustrate a historical theme or issue?

Some buildings are associated with or illustrative of an important or enduring historical development, such as local agriculture (old barn) or the community political life (house of the first mayor).

Architecture

When was the building constructed?

- Buildings constructed before 1870 are of great importance because they recall the Red River Settlement era. They will be either of stone or log construction (the specialized log construction undertaken in Manitoba at this time was called Red River frame construction).
- Buildings constructed between 1870 and 1900 recall the waves of settlers from Ontario, the United States, the United Kingdom, and eastern Europe who filled up the southern part of the province. There are still hundreds of examples of the modest buildings that characterized this period; the important ones will be those that introduced new styles, building methods, or materials to the provincial landscape.



- Many of the significant buildings constructed between 1900 and 1920 are more ambitious in size and detail than earlier ones. Hundreds of these buildings remain; important ones will be those that have considerable architectural merit by the quality of their architecture, materials, and craftsmanship.

Who designed the building?

Most buildings were designed without an architect. Where a building was designed by a trained architect, however, it may be possible to discuss architectural styles and even to compare the building with others designed by that individual.

Did the designer use a style or tradition to create the design?

The design of many buildings is very simple, often a box with a gable roof. There are some buildings, though, where a particular architectural style or tradition was used. These will typically be public buildings or substantial private buildings. We suggest you consult the guides presented in xx section for more information.

Who constructed the building?

The carpenters, masons, and craftspeople who made the province's early buildings were skilled individuals. It might be possible to discuss the quality of their work at a particular site and also to compare the work with that of other buildings in the community.

What materials were used in the construction of the building?

Most historic buildings that remain in the province were constructed of light wood frame and were covered with horizontal wood siding.

The use of other materials (heavy wood frame, brick, stone, metal) and different building technologies will make a building more unusual by comparison.

Integrity

Have there been changes made to the building?

Few historic buildings have survived the years without some change. Roof shingles will likely have been replaced. Paint will have been applied. These changes are minor and do not necessarily adversely affect the historic character of a building. Interior changes may also not detract from the building's character. It will be those significant changes made outside (for instance, an addition, new window openings, removal of original materials and details) that may most affect an appreciation of a building's original appearance.

Has the building always fulfilled its present function?

Over the years many buildings have seen changes to their original function. In some cases, this is the nature of the building and will not detract from its character; for example, commercial structures are expected to accept many different tenants. Other buildings, however, will suffer in terms of their historic character when different functions are introduced. A one-room school that is closed and then used as a community hall, then a store, and then a garage, will likely have been so altered that its original character is erased.



Environment

Does the building look like any others in the community?

Generally we regard buildings with a unique appearance as special and important. These will be structures like town halls, churches, schools, and large and ornate houses. However, more modest buildings in our communities should not be overlooked. In these cases it will be necessary to identify and to select structures that can be said to best represent those more typical examples.

Is the building a local landmark?

Public buildings such as town halls, schools, and churches are often the best known local buildings. Some privately owned buildings may also be well known either for their architecture (a big, ornate house) or their occupant (the home of a well known local citizen).

If you have more questions about your building, please contact:

Manitoba's Historic Resource Branch

