

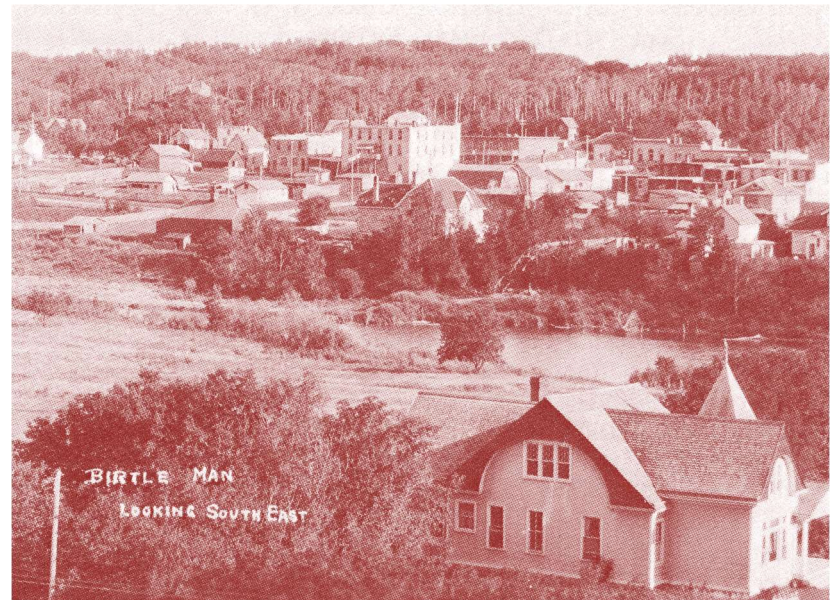
Landmarks

Birtle's Significant Heritage Buildings

The Birtle Special Places project was inaugurated in 2008-09, with the first major component being a comprehensive and detailed inventory of 52 buildings and sites. Through rigorous analysis and assessment processes suggested to us by the province's Historic Resources Branch, we have identified a handful of buildings that most effectively define and illustrate key aspects of our history and heritage. The following list of 12 buildings and sites constitutes the Birtle Heritage Group's recommendations and reminders to the community about those places that have major claims for heritage significance.

- Spring Park
- Birtle United Church
- Pratt Block
- Former Union Bank
- Birtle Post Office
- Peters House
- Shepherd House
- Patterson House
- Hatch House
- Corr House

- Craftsman-style House
- Lime Kiln Site



Archival view of Birtle, looking southeast.

As noted, 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. This work was carried out by the Birtle Heritage Group with assistance from staff of the Historic Resources Branch of Manitoba Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection. We are grateful to the branch for their generous support and patient attention in this endeavour.

As a collection, these 12 buildings define many aspects and themes from Birtle's past, and do so through places that are at once significant, but also interesting and attractive. We note the selection of key buildings that remind us of the range of architectural qualities that define three essential aspects of Birtle's pioneer world: spiritual life (via the United Church), commercial activity (via the old bank, general store and post office) and the domestic realm (via several important houses). We also note, with some helpful observations from provincial architectural historians, that our community has important claims that are expressed in several of these buildings: the skilled and creative exploitation of the granite stones and boulders that abound in the community; and of the many impressive houses, whose exceptional designs, materials and fine details are notable in a community of our size.

All of these buildings remind us of past glories, but also suggest an enduring sense of community, and are a beacon for its future.

These buildings are presented on following pages with an accompanying Heritage Value Statement that elucidates each building's key heritage attributes.



Archival view of downtown Birtle, 1927.

Spring Park

St. Clare Street



Heritage Value Statement

Spring 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.

Pratt Block

688 Main Street



Heritage Value Statement

The Pratt 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. 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, and more recently of St. Mary' 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.

Shepherd House

902 Main Street



Heritage Value Statement

The Shepard 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 Durham, 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.

John 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 and then for its development and success over the next many decades.

Peters House

737 St. Clare Street



Heritage Value Statement

The Peters House is one of Birtle's important examples of stone construction, a defining architectural quality of the community. With long-standing connections to the Brown family (from 1898 until 1956), the house is a beloved local landmark, noted for its exquisite stonework by Charles Durham and for its picturesque and eclectic design, with Gothic Revival forms and details as well as a distinctive clipped gable roof.

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 Durham, who undertook many other masonry commissions in Birtle over the years.

Corr House

907 St. Clare Street



Heritage Value Statement

The Corr House is a good example of the kind of grand houses built in many small Manitoba towns for the merchant class of the early 20th century. Dating to 1902, the house was home to the family of Allan Corr, who was a major retail operator in Birtle for more than 25 years. 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.

Craftsman-style 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.

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.