

Ottawa, Ontario
The Canadian War Museum
330 Sussex Drive

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Canadian War Museum (formerly the Dominion Archives) was constructed in two stages: the original structure (1904-06) was built to plans by Band, Burritt, Meredith, and Ewart, and the 1924-25 addition to plans by the Department of Public Works. It has housed the Canadian War Museum since 1967. Public Works Canada is the custodian of the building. See FHBRO Building Report 86-87.

Reasons for Designation

The Canadian War Museum was designated Classified because of its strong historical importance, its successful architectural and functional design, and its important role in both the Sussex Drive streetscape and as a local landmark.

As the first permanent home of both the National Archives and the War Museum, the building has contributed substantially to Canada's growing sense of nationhood. Sir Arthur Doughty, Dominion Archivist 1904-35, was a key figure in the development of both the archives and the war museum.

The construction of the archives, and the later addition to it, were a reflection of Wilfred Laurier's desire to enhance Ottawa to be a worthy capital of Canada. Since then, it has assumed considerable landmark status due to its prominent location and present function.

The 1905 block is a strong compact mass, the details and materials of which are well suited to its function. The 1925 addition, intended to be the first of two proposed wings, is designed in similar style but with more overtly Tudor detailing.

The War Museum exhibits good functional design characteristics. It was purpose-built to carry the substantial loads imposed by archival storage, provide large open spaces with minimal intermediate supports, and to be fire proof.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the building resides in its association with the National Archives and Canadian War Museum, the main facades particularly those of the 1905 block, its successful structural design and plan, and its fine setting on Sussex Drive adjacent to the Royal Canadian Mint and the National Gallery.

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Ottawa, Ontario

The Canadian War Museum (Continued)

The 1905 block is a compact rectangular structure designed in the Tudor-Gothic style. It is a formal symmetrical design with a centrally placed entrance on the façade - emphasized by the projecting bay and raised parapet and given depth and solidity by mouldings. The archives was one of the more successful designs produced by Ewart's office during this period. It was designed, and stood for many years as a complete architectural statement in its own right.

The 1924 wing is of compatible design although of a different treatment than the earlier block. The stone and decoration are more plastic and the building surfaces more modeled giving the wing a regular though slightly less formal appearance. A much longer building, it presents a stronger horizontal mass than the more compact original block and as such, introduces an imbalance to the overall site development. This imbalance may provide direction for future site development.

Alterations to the exterior envelope of both parts of the building which would alter the symmetrical composition, details, or fenestration should not be considered as all of these contribute to the Gothic-Tudor design of the building. Careful conservation oriented maintenance practices should be utilized throughout.

As a purpose built structure the building has a structural system designed to provide large undivided spaces capable of supporting substantial loads. The existing circulation routes and structural frame should be retained. Installation of temporary subdivisions within this structural context would be consistent with the original design intent.

Requirements for additional space could be met through further development of the site. It is recommended that any future development be clearly contemporary but of compatible massing, scale, fenestration, and line. Any new development should be approached in a disciplined and formal manner.

Revised
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