

FHBRO Number 99-021

Hall Beach, Nunavut

ATWELL Dormitory B02C

FOX-M Station

The ATWELL Dormitory (building B02C) was constructed in 1956 or 1957 on the airfield sector of the FOX-M station of the former Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line. It is a prefabricated structure originally designed to be erected on any American military base of the period. The building served as overflow accommodation for staff and seasonal workers. The Department of National Defence is the custodian of the building. See FHBRO Building Report 99-021.

Reasons for Designation

The ATWELL Dormitory has been designated “Classified” because of its important historical associations, its relationship to the environment in a heritage setting and the qualities of its architectural design.

The primary historical theme identified for the building is its role in continental air-defence programs during the Cold War. As part of one of four main stations constructed for the DEW Line, the ATWELL Dormitory was part of a joint US-Canada effort to monitor Arctic airspace through an innovative radar and radio system designed to provide advance warning to North American military authorities of a possible air attack from the Soviet Union. As one of four main stations along the DEW Line, FOX-M also served as a regional communications hub, supply centre and administrative base for 8 to 10 auxiliary and intermediate stations in the area.

Secondary themes for the building are its contribution to the opening of the Canadian Arctic to programs and services delivered and managed by the federal government; its status as an example of appropriate temporary building technology for the Canadian Arctic; and its role in establishing and maintaining a Canadian military presence in the Canadian Arctic.

The ATWELL Dormitory is also part of a military establishment that was a catalyst for the establishment and growth of an important Arctic community, namely Hall Beach.

This station is distinguished from other former stations by its relative completeness in terms of the number of original structures that have remained on the site and the survival of the supporting engineering works such as the airfield. The FOX-M DEW Line station retains its technological and military appearance through: the arrangement and form of its buildings; the survival of the gravel pad that defines the two occupied sectors of the station; and the continuance of associated communications structures such as the radome and radar billboards.

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The ATWELL Dormitory is situated on the airfield sector of the FOX-M DEW Line station. The integrity of the historic relationship between the ATWELL Dormitory and its immediate landscape continues. The structure sits on the gravel bed that covers the airfield sector and which links the station's buildings to the airfield and to one another.

As part of the set of structures built in the first five years of the station's operation, the ATWELL Dormitory is of strategic value in maintaining the technological/military character of the site as a whole. As a building type, it also helps distinguish main DEW Line stations from the smaller and less complex intermediate stations.

The ATWELL Dormitory was one of the first structures erected on the FOX-M DEW Line Station. This modest one-storey building is 53.5 metres in length and 7.3 metres in width. Its distinctive arched metal frame is covered and hidden by a wood-framed pitched roof that is supported by the peak of the arch frame. From the exterior, the structure is a long rectangular building with a slightly peaked roof. It is covered with steel cladding.

The important functional and craftsmanship design elements of the building lie in the competent application of permafrost engineering solutions to its foundation, which consists of a raised post-and-beam frame supported by posts driven below the permafrost grade, and in the quality of the workmanship that extended the use of the building well beyond the 10 years originally intended.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the ATWELL Dormitory resides in its form, construction and site relationships.

The ATWELL Dormitory is a utilitarian pre-fabricated structure whose design, construction and materials are consistent with its original purpose as a temporary residence. The building is characterized by a simple form and the use of a limited number of construction materials. As an expression of its function, this form should be respected.

The one-storey structure is covered by a wood-framed roof. The interior walls are covered in plywood and the exterior with painted metal cladding. The metal cladding was used because of the station's location and the technological and military requirements of the time and should be maintained. The main entrance to the building is located in the middle of the long side facing another dormitory building. Small

windows are located at regular intervals along the length of the structure. The pattern and form of these openings within the exterior walls provides visual interest to each main facade. This pattern and form should be respected.

The ATWELL Dormitory, like other residential structures on the station, is built on a raised wood-framed platform that allows snow and air to circulate under the structure. This was a standard solution for building in permafrost and snowdrift conditions of the period. The platform with its open sides should be respected.

The ATWELL Dormitory is located on a thick gravel pad that covers the entire airfield sector of the station. As the primary landscape feature, consideration should be given to maintaining the gravel pad. The ATWELL Dormitory is also set within a tightly formed row of warehouses and dormitories. This formal arrangement of buildings reinforces the military character of the station. Any further site development should respect the strict alignment and established character of the remaining buildings at the station.

For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.

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