

Armoury
317 Park Street
Thunder Bay, Ontario

The armoury was constructed in Thunder Bay in 1913 to a standard plan by the Department of Public Works. It was built by the Department of Public Works. Subsequent alterations include a large addition to the rear in the 1980s, as well as replacement of the windows. The building continues to be used as an armoury. The Department of National Defence is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 94-22.

Reasons For Designation

The armoury has been designated Recognized for its environmental significance and its architectural importance as well as its historical associations.

The armoury contributes significantly to its surrounding streetscape because of its dominant scale and its distinctive design which reflects the building's military function. The armoury has a prominent location and has a generous front lawn and surrounding grounds which reinforce its importance. The characteristic, large, flat site required for drill exercises is associated with this armoury.

The influence of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts is reflected in this armoury, which exhibits a monumental style using medieval military motifs. The Ecole advocated clear volumes, axial planning, horizontal massing, and less decorative detailing, characteristics which are found in this building. This is reflected in the design features of the two storey brick facades and the projecting crenellated frontispiece. Built to standard plans, following departmental guidelines, the armoury is functionally organized with ancillary spaces around the drill hall. The structural design, employing steel trusses, allows the use of large glazed areas between piers, a characteristic feature of pre-World War I armoury design.

The construction of the armoury is associated with the reform and expansion of the volunteer militia under Sir Sam Hughes. Hughes instigated the development of standard plans to aid in the efficient implementation of the intensive armoury building program. The armoury reflects a government policy to supply arms to all militias and to construct good local training facilities. The drill hall has a steel truss to span the large open area, a typical feature, pre-world War I, in the development of the Canadian drill hall.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the armoury resides in its overall form, proportions, construction materials, architectural details reflecting military precedents, interior planning and volumes, and site relationships.

The simple massing of the armoury is dominated by the two-storey, gable roof of the drill hall. The structure has a two-storey flat-roofed block as a frontispiece with a slightly projecting entrance bay with corner turrets. The two-storey, front block has varied parapet profiles and prominent chimneys in contrast to the simple, gable roof profile. These profiles should be maintained. The pleasing balance of the original building masses reflected modern preferences for simply composed forms, while the later, three-storey flat-roofed addition has altered the balance. Subsequent additions should reflect the original, symmetrical massing.

The simple brickwork, featuring deeply recessed windows and arch-headed arcading, is effectively contrasted by the horizontal banding of the sleek stone work. The massiveness of the walls is emphasized by these masonry details. The split-faced, stone foundation wall and specific features such as the stylized coping crenellations, doorway labels and shields and the bartizan above the entrance indicate the military function of the building and should be maintained. The masonry requires an ongoing maintenance program and conservation expertise in the choice of materials and techniques for repair and replacement. The simpler, flatter detailing, uniformly applied to all facades, employs smooth surfaces and geometric forms characteristic of the preferred taste for simplification of ornamentation.

The extensive surface area of the drill hall roof is a component of the design. The roofing material is asphalt shingles and these appear to be recent. The choice of replacement roof material must be based on research to confirm historic precedent for materials and colours.

The windows are modern replacement units. The modern, vertical sliding sashes, generally follow precedent, but the visual richness of the traditional frame and sash profiles are greatly simplified and glazed areas are increased. At the end of their life, historic research should be used to determine appropriate replacements.

The armoury has windows blocked off with solid panels, thereby introducing a new material which alters the symmetrical expression of the overall window placement. Where windows have been blocked off, consideration should be given to reinstating them, particularly those windows which introduce interior day lighting to the drill halls as

they make a important contribution to the spacious, naturally lighted character of the

hall.

The interior follow a standard plan, with the principal entrance located in the centre of the drill hall's short facade. The drill hall is characterized by its large open volumes, with exposed steel trusses and extensive glazing. The spatial openness and bright, naturally lit character of the hall should be maintained. The drill hall interior exhibits a deliberately utilitarian, functional design, with exposed brick walls, steel trusses, and concrete floors. This contribute to the character and should be maintained.

A simple ground plane is characteristic of the historic setting of armouries. The use of turf grass, and asphalt or concrete paving supports the austere character of this site, and should be continued. Mature specimen trees should be protected. The asymmetrical relationship of the armoury on its site should be maintained. The black metal fencing should be protected. Research is recommended to determine a more historically appropriate material to replace chain link fencing.

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