

FHBRO Number 90-031f

Grosse-Île, Quebec

Disinfection Building (No. 29)

The Disinfection Building was constructed in several stages from 1892 to 1927. Originally it was used mainly to disinfect immigrants and their baggage as soon as they disembarked. A new role was added later: generating electricity for all occupants on the island. The central part of the building was also used as a garage for about 30 years. The building was designed by Public Works Department architects, and it now stands empty. It is owned by Parks Canada, which plans to develop it soon. See FHBRO Report No. 90-31 (Part III: 1881-1 900).

Reasons for Designation

The Disinfection Building has been designated Classified because of its historical associations, its functional design and its environmental significance.

From 1881 to 1900, Québec was the busiest port of entry for steamships carrying new immigrants. Erected at the time to process immigrants being detained on Grosse-Île for a time, the Disinfection Building is one of the finest specimens illustrating the themes of immigration and quarantine. The building is also associated with the theme of scientific research, since it was a bacteriological warfare research station during the Second World War.

With regard to local history, the Disinfection Building illustrates several important phases in the history of the quarantine station. Its construction, proposed by Dr. Frédéric Montizambert, was part of the resurgence of quarantine services on Grosse-Île, characterized by disinfection and vaccination. Installation of an electricity generating dynamo in an annex to the building in 1901 was another major event in the history of Grosse-Île.

The functional significance of the building is an important element. In the west part of the building, the traffic routes and functional layout were designed specifically for the purpose of disinfecting new immigrants and their baggage.

Because of its imposing size and its location as an extension of the Grosse-Île wharf, the building is the key character defining element in this section of the island. Its highly visible location at the point of entry to the island makes it a symbol for the whole area.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Disinfection Building resides in the sum of its component parts, the composition of its main facade, its interior layout, and its visual impact in the western section of Grosse-Île.

FHBRO Number 90-031f

Grosse-Île, Quebec

Disinfection Building (No. 29)

The Disinfection Building is comprised of several sections. The central block, which is the oldest part, received a second storey in 1914. The south wing was added the year after, and the north wing was built in 1927. There are three annexes in the rear. It is these several structures taken as a whole, associated with the human quarantine period, which present a heritage interest. The annexes are somewhat inelegantly attached to the building, but they nonetheless offer important clues as to the purpose of the complex. These additions therefore should be maintained and preserved.

The long western facade of the building is in three sections. Each section is comprised of six case bays with a false upper facade wall concealing a lean-to roof. The false upper facade of the central block is higher than those of the two wings, with five small diamond-shaped windows just below the parapet between each of the six case bays. The rhythm created by the roof profile and the arrangement and shape of the openings is a characteristic element of this composition. When a new purpose for the building is found, the windows, doors and wall finishing from the 1927 construction should be preserved as much as possible or at least reproduced as original. A paint analysis could provide guidance on the approach to be used to recreate the original character of the building.

The building interior is characterized by a series of connected spaces associated with the disinfection of immigrants and their belongings. During the quarantine period, immigrants arriving were required to follow a specific route through a series of different rooms in the building. This route and all associated architectural elements are highly significant for an understanding of the role of the complex as a disinfection facility. The rails on which the disinfection carts ran, the staircases, interior finishes, sanitary appliances and heater are some of the character defining elements that should be preserved. When the interior is restored, the disinfection chambers should be reinstalled on the ground floor of the central block.

The other purpose of the building, generating electricity for the quarantine station, is made evident by the equipment shown in the attachments. The boilers, dynamos, steam generator and water reservoir constitute an industrial heritage that should be protected. However, the alterations to the building interior that are unrelated to the themes of immigration, human quarantine or electricity generation are not considered significant elements and could be eliminated.

Because of its location at the end of the wharf where immigrants once landed and tourists now arrive, the disinfection building is an important landmark in the western section of Grosse-Île. Its relation to the wharf and the shore, and the presence of the rails connecting it with the wharf, are elements to be preserved when the building is rehabilitated.

FHBRO Number 90-031f

Grosse-Île, Quebec

Disinfection Building (No. 29)

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

Translation