

Kingston, Ontario

Portsmouth Community Correctional Centre (Eldon Hall)

508 Portsmouth Avenue

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Eldon Hall was built in 1854-55 as a country estate for Kingston merchant and politician John Flanigan. The house and property were acquired by the Department of Justice in 1930, as part of the Collins Bay Penitentiary. Used as the Warden's Residence until the 1960s, the building is now operated as a pre-release residential facility. Correctional Services Canada is the custodial department. See FHBRO Building Report 91-26.

Reasons for Designation

Eldon Hall was designated Recognized as a fine example of the mature work of architect William Coverdale, for the quality of its materials and construction, and for its association with the villa movement in Upper Canada.

In the 1850s, John Flanigan, a Kingston butcher who served both as alderman and mayor of the city and later as Reeve of Kingston Township, engaged noted local architect William Coverdale to design a country villa. Country villas, derived from the Picturesque movement in Britain, were popular in North America between 1830 and 1860. The Picturesque aesthetic, while stylistically eclectic, emphasized the visual relationship of a house to its setting. Sited on a rise above Little Cataraqui Creek, Eldon Hall consisted of a 120-acre farm, with fourteen acres of gardens and lawns framing the villa in the Picturesque manner. Throughout its history, Eldon Hall has served as a residence, currently for inmates on community release programmes.

The original section of the substantial two-storey hip-roofed stone structure consists of a rectangular block in classical Italianate style, with a symmetrical arrangement of bays around a projecting frontispiece. A rear addition is sympathetic in style and materials. This elegant residence is a worthy representative of the villa movement in Upper Canada, which entailed the flight of the well-to-do to spacious suburban or rural residences in the Picturesque manner and is a local landmark.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of this structure is defined by its Italianate villa style as evidenced in its massing and detailing, by its materials and construction, and by its site relationships.

The profile of the original two-storey rectangular block reflects the Italianate style in the symmetry of its facade, its projecting front gable, shallow hipped roof with wide

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eaves, and large flanking chimneys. The later rear addition is constructed of similar material and does not impinge on the primary facade. The additions of a porch on the north side and fire-escapes on both sides are more intrusive; if possible, these elements should be masked with appropriate plantings. If future use permits, the fire-escapes should be removed.

The detailing, although simple, is refined. Characteristic of the Italianate villa style are the corner pilasters, tall paired rounded-headed windows on the second storey, arched entrance, sidelights and fanlight of the door, and dressed-stone window and door surrounds. These design elements should be retained. The original ornamental eave brackets have been removed, the decorative centre porch has been replaced by a storm porch, and some second-storey windows have been replaced by aluminum windows set in plywood boarding. The heritage character of the structure would be greatly enhanced by restoring the brackets, reinstating wood sash windows of the proper configuration, and replacing the porch with one of compatible design. Any modifications to accommodate changing use or requirements should be designed with minimal impact on historic fabric.

Eldon Hall is noteworthy for the quality of its masonry. The walls are constructed of dressed local limestone in variegated tan and cream. Any repairs or repointing should be undertaken with the advice of a masonry expert.

The original centre hall plan survives, despite changes in the function of some of the rooms, and much of the original woodwork is retained. Care should be taken to preserve all early finishes, design features and circulation patterns.

As a result of the sale of land by the federal government in the 1950s, Eldon Hall now rests on a half-acre lot in a residential suburb. The fenced property contains a sunken flower garden and a vegetable garden; mature trees flank the front of the house. A remnant of the stone wall of an enclosed garden, which once extended to the south of the Hall, has survived and, from the street, masks the large parking area located at the rear of the structure. A parking lot adjacent to Eldon Hall on the south provides access for park visitors; appropriate plantings and fencing along this boundary should be used to demarcate the Hall property.

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