

Kingston, Ontario

Murney Martello Tower (originally Murnay Redoubt)

Macdonald Park

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Murney Martello Tower was built in 1846. Its design was supervised by Sir Richard Bonnycastle of the Royal Engineers. It was armed in 1861-62, received its first detachable roof in 1867, saw an addition to the top part of the counterscarp wall c. 1900, and underwent a major program of repairs in 1933-36. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 91-86.

Reasons for Designation

The Murney Martello Tower was designated Classified because of its architectural and engineering importance, its significance in the local environment and its historical associations.

The Murney Martello Tower, in several aspects the epitome of the martello tower, represents the pinnacle of martello design as the advent of rifled artillery halted any further advance or refinement in the type. It is one of ten surviving martellos built in Canada by the British between 1796 and 1847 and one of four built in an arc on the Kingston waterfront in 1846-7, the final phase of the fortification of the city.

Built of Kingston limestone, the tower's design includes projecting caponiers at the foundations, the parabolic arches on the walls, the constant slope of the edge of the parapet, and the bomb-proof ring-shaped vault within. Provisions for water collection and storage, sanitation, ventilation and storage of arms and food were integrated into the plan, making the tower a self-contained fortress for the presiding officer and 24 men.

The tower commands its site in Macdonald Park and occupies a prominent position along the Kingston waterfront.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of the Murney Martello Tower resides in its masonry construction, interior configuration and details, surrounding earthworks and open site.

The tower's form is based on state-of-the-art martello design. The profile and massing, consisting of the tower with four caponiers projecting into the ditch created

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Murney Martello Tower (originally Murnay Redoubt) (Continued)

by the encircling grassed berm, must be respected. The walls, which increase in thickness toward the waterfront side, are pierced by three round-arched "carronade porte" openings, fitted with iron shutters and one iron doorway. The stone walls end in a parapet which slopes downward to the waterfront side. Above the stone walls, a polygonal clapboard-sheathed gun platform rises. A hipped corrugated metal roof surmounts the tower.

The building's smooth masonry surfaces are character-defining. The wood truss roof is tied together by iron tie rods. Prior to any repair or restoration, detailed documentation of all known interventions should be compiled and analyzed, and appropriate structural and masonry conservation expertise consulted.

The interior, which has served as a museum since 1925, should continue to be conserved as a military engineering artifact. A central stone pier supports a double-vaulted circular chamber, 600 square metres in size. The chamber, with timber floor and restored brick and limestone walls and ceiling, originally housed a barracks. A hearth remains in the chamber. Off the chamber are two cannon-occupied carronade portes and one vacant carronade porte. In the cellar, there are brick and limestone storerooms and four caponiers which are accessed by vaulted passageways. A narrow half-spiral stone staircase leads to the gun platform in the upper level. In the middle of the gun platform's circular stone floor is a revolving artillery piece. The floor is surrounded by a stepped-up stone banquette and the parapet.

The Murney Martello Tower enjoys an open parkland site with unobstructed views to the water; the latter relates to the strategic and functional character of this military site. Any development that would have an impact on viewplanes from the tower should be resisted.

1996.03.15

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