

Kingston, Ontario
Currie Building (Building No. 15)
Royal Military College

The Currie Building was built in 1918 to the designs of the Chief Architect's Branch, Department of Public Works. Of the original plans, only the western wing and rear assembly hall were completed. There have been no significant alterations and the building retains its function as an administrative and educational building. The Department of National Defence is custodian. See FHBRO Report 93-99.

Reasons For Designation

The Currie Building was designated Recognized for its environmental significance, its architectural design and its historical associations.

The Currie Building was designed to be the centerpiece of the Royal Military College's (RMC) parade square and of the entire campus. Although never entirely completed as designed due to federal government austerity measures following the First World War and during the 1920s, the existing Currie Building makes an important contribution in establishing the character of the parade square. It presents the most elaborated execution of the Collegiate Gothic style of architecture, which was envisioned for all new buildings on the square. Had it been completed as foreseen in RMC's 1910 expansion plan, the building would have replaced the Mackenzie building (1878) as the College's main administrative and educational building.

The Currie Building is a superior example of the Collegiate Gothic style of architecture which was adopted by universities throughout North America as an evocation of the great British Universities. The selection of this style was particularly influenced by the contemporary redesign of the United States Military Academy at West Point which was based on a medieval theme. The western wing and rear assembly hall present only a partial vision of the intended whole, yet demonstrate a mature interpretation of the style in the adept use of stone detailing and patterning of its details.

As the focal point of the early expansion of RMC, the Currie Building is associated with the emergence of a professional armed forces in Canada. The intermittent building program at the College spanned over the next forty years, testifying to the difficult economic times that prevailed in the first half of the 20th century. The interior decorative programme of Currie Hall, designed by prominent Montreal architect Percy Nobbs, has strong symbolic associations with the achievements of the Canadian Corps in the Great War and with the British Monarchy

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Character Defining Elements

The heritage significance of the Currie Building resides in the quality of its architectural design, in its superior level of craftsmanship, and in its contribution to the character of the parade square.

The building displays elements typical of the Collegiate Gothic, such as the rough surface texture of the rusticated stone facing which contrasts with the smooth cut-stone tracery and deep mouldings. The visual interest of the facade is enlivened by the projecting pavilion with its parapet gable, by the semi-circular raised approach to the arched entry surmounted by the carved coat-of-arms, and by the variety of window styles employed. The segmentally-arched tri-partite basement windows, the fixed and double-hung sash of the upper levels and the oriel and bay windows are significant elements of the building's character. The continued careful maintenance of these well-crafted wood windows should be assured.

The interior plan of the Currie Building reflects the ideals of modern technical training developed early this century in its use of naturally-lit and well-ventilated large lecture halls and smaller classrooms. The building is generally utilitarian and well-crafted, while the entry hall, with its beamed ceiling and wide stairway, is more ornate. The interior decorations of Currie Hall have notable symbolic significance, both for the volunteer effort to complete it during a period of financial austerity, and for the military personnel and units that are honoured on its walls. The Royal monograms and initials of senior generals on the ceiling beams, the badges of units displayed on the oak panels and the municipal coats of arms that decorate the underside of the balcony all have great significance to the College and should warrant ongoing maintenance and protection.

The superior design and fine detailing of the Currie Building make an important contribution to the formal, if somewhat eclectic, character of the parade square. All interventions should be avoided that detract from these elements or from the established relationship of the building with the square.

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