

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

KINGSTON, Ontario
FHBRO Number **93-99**
DFRP Number **09405**
Building 24, Royal Military College
Former Gun Shed

Constructed in 1914 just as World War I was beginning, the former Gun Shed was constructed as the College's role in military preparedness for Canada attained a level of maturity in the early years of the 20th century. Intended as a multi-purpose building for gun storage, battle training exercises, target practice, and horse stables, the former Gun Shed has a prominent location overlooking Navy Bay and is part of the complex of structures that defines the RMC parade ground. Presently in use as a tailor shop, uniform storage, and general stores, the building's architecture combines functional planning with architectural details and artistic images evocative of military history.

Reasons for Designation

The former Gun Shed has been designated 'Recognized' for its architectural significance, its historical associations, and its environmental qualities.

Historical significance

The former Gun Shed accommodated a College expansion just as the World War I was looming, and the shortage of trained officers for the army had become evident. Though planned prior to the outbreak of hostilities in the early autumn of 1914, the building was associated with and constructed as a result of growing pre-war tensions in the British Empire. The provision of specialized facilities for the training of officer candidates in battlefield simulations, as well as improved facilities for gun storage and practice, signaled a shift from the peacetime emphasis on civil and military engineering toward a war footing. Thus, the construction of the former Gun Shed has a particular historic association with the RMC's role in preparing for World War I.

Architectural significance

The building was completed in 1914 as a multi-purpose facility, in particular as a secure lock-up for guns used in RMC training exercises. It is a long, symmetrical, flat-roofed block clad in stone, with a structure of iron and steel to afford large open spaces between end pavilions subdivided into offices and stores, above a high-ceilinged basement.

The former Gun Shed appears to be a single-storey structure from the higher ground to its west, its slightly enlarged ends and symmetrical north and south elevations giving it the general aspect of the armouries of the period. The drop in elevation towards Navy Bay allows for direct basement access and gives the building a two-storey appearance from the east. The exterior elevations are clad in random ashlar blocks, modestly rusticated, with a slightly projecting rusticated band at both sill and lintel levels of the main storey. Smooth dressed stone bands surmount the parapet.

The slightly projecting 'pavilions' at either end are topped by modest three-part castellations, in the form of squared-off corners and wave-formed central pediments on the end elevations and their projections on either side. The motif is repeated, enlarged, in the centre of the long elevation at the upper level above the main entrance, which also contains a carved relief depicting an artillery piece

on its carriage. A former upper-level entrance at the south end has been partly walled in and converted to a window, but its exterior stair remains in the landscape.

Basement-level windows have slightly projecting stone sills and lintels. Doorways on both levels and some smaller windows on the upper level are topped by massive relieving arches with curved soffits and flat tops. Most of the windows are door-sized vertical openings, with one-over-one double-hung sash.

Interior arrangements are substantially as built, though the lower-level horse stalls have been removed. The main level plan comprises offices at one end and gun storage at the other, with a large, almost unobstructed central room originally intended for the construction of battlefield models as part of the officer-training program of the RMC. V-jointed wooden dados line some walls in the office area and clad the two boxed columns in the central room. Some of the iron and steel framing is exposed in the lower level, and a prefabricated circular iron stair continues to enable movement between the floors.

Environmental qualities

The relationship of the building to the complex defining the parade square remains essentially unchanged from the early part of the 20th century, though the lower-level landscape along the shoreline has been altered by paving and vehicle parking over the years. While the former Gun Shed does not face the square directly, the building and the greenery in front do provide a visual enclosure for this major space by screening views out of the northeast corner. In its present incarnation, the building is a regular destination for cadets, where dress uniforms are both fitted and stored.

Character-Defining Elements

The heritage character of the former Gun Shed comprises the following character-defining elements:

- the long, symmetrical, single-volume, stone-clad mass, generally representing the interior arrangements in exterior forms.
- the regular fenestration and modulation of the long elevations, and the subsidiary symmetries of the end pavilions.
- the elaborated roof lines, with their articulated, castellated parapets.
- the large vertical windows.
- the open interior space, bracketed by subdivided end zones, and the surviving wooden and metal details inside.

- the building's location in context, helping to define an essential historical and functional setting.

All maintenance and repair work, as well as future interventions should respect these character-defining elements.

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