

FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

TOWN CLOCK ON CITADEL HILL, HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

FHBRO number: **02-118**
DFRP number: **02991**
Resource name: **Town Clock on Citadel Hill**
Address: **Halifax Citadel, Brunswick Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia**
FHBRO status: **“Classified” Federal Heritage Building**
Construction: **1960-1962**
Designer: **Parks Canada, following an original 1803 design by Captain Fenwick of the Royal Engineers**
Original function: **Town Clock (tower) and caretaker’s residence (lower floor)**
Current function: **Clock (tower) and exhibition space (lower floor)**
Modifications: **Full restoration of the exterior to its current appearance, which is reminiscent of the original garrison clock (early 1990s)**
Custodian: **Parks Canada Agency**

Description of Historic Place

The Halifax Town Clock is a faithful reconstruction of an early 19th century Palladian structure. Clad in white wood clapboard and shingles, the building consists of a symmetrical rectangular base supporting a three-tiered octagonal tower, and features typical classical elements and details. The tower is composed of a round-plan colonnade, which supports the octagonal clock storey, which in turn supports an octagonal arcaded storey and is crowned by a copper dome and a balustrade and copper ball. The structure still contains the original functional clock mechanism, which has been operating since October 20, 1803. It is set on the grassed eastern glacis of the Halifax Citadel, fronting onto Brunswick Street. The designation is confined to the footprint of the building.

Heritage Value

The Halifax Town Clock is a “Classified” Federal Heritage Building because of its historical associations, and its architectural and environmental values.

Historical value:

The Halifax Town Clock is associated with the national theme of the pre- Venice Charter heritage conservation movement. A very faithful reconstruction of its predecessor, it reflects the conservation approach of the early 1960s in Canada and stands out as one of Halifax’s most significant conservation projects of the time. The project was one of the early restoration/reconstruction projects in the area and distinguishes itself as a prominent undertaking. Through its great influence and symbolic importance, it served as an example to alert and sensitize the population to the potential loss of historic structures and helped pave the way for later conservation projects in the city.

Architectural value:

As a reconstruction of the original structure, the Halifax Town Clock is a very successful and accurate model of its remarkable Palladian original. Characterized by a symmetrical and balanced composition, monumental scale and elegant proportions, all classical characteristics, the design offers a good solution to the somewhat ambitious and unusual hybrid program it was meant to accommodate. The original design is credited to Captain Fenwick, a Commander of the Royal Engineers. The reconstruction project, lead by Parks Canada architects, demonstrates

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very good skilled traditional craftsmanship and quality materials, and reflects an overall attention to detail.

Environmental value:

Through its strong presence and visibility, the tower reinforces the historic character of Brunswick Street and of the green expanse of the eastern glacis, and marks the boundary between the contemporary city and the historic compound of the Citadel. One of the most recognizable buildings associated with Halifax, the Town Clock is regarded as both a symbolic and visual landmark.

Character-Defining Elements

The following character-defining elements of the Halifax Town clock should be respected:

Its remarkable Palladian-inspired aesthetics, its functional design as a clock tower, as well as the high quality craftsmanship and materials invested in the building's reconstruction, as manifested in:

- the building's symmetrical and well proportioned composition, consisting of a rectangular base storey surmounted by a three-tiered clock tower;
- the clock tower's circular form, a rare subset of Palladian aesthetics;
- the interior layout which includes a central well for the clock pendulum;
- the finely crafted classical elements and details, such as the applied Doric corner pilasters, the entablature at the perimeter of the base storey, the colonnade of twelve Doric columns surmounted by a simple architrave, as well as the frieze, cornices, 12-over-12 and 6-over-6 sash windows, arched openings embellished with moldings and ornamental keystones;
- the use of copper roofs and white wood clapboard and shingles on the exterior;
- the exterior cobalt blue clock faces and copper-clad hands and numerals constructed of copper plate.

The manner in which the building reinforces the historic character of its setting and marks the boundary between the city and the Citadel, as evidenced in:

- the site line from the waterfront to the clock tower through George and Carmichael Streets, which has endured as a significant viewscape;
- the building's relationship to its surroundings, as a monument placed on the open grassed area of the Citadel's east glacis;
- the building's value as a visual monument which recalls Halifax's 19th Century character.

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