

FHBRO Number 96-51

Kingston, Ontario

Caponier

Fort Henry

The caponier was constructed between 1832 and 1837 to designs by Lt.-Col. Gustavus Nicolls, who adopted the general principles of fortification design used by the Royal Engineers to design Fort Henry. The Department of National Defence is the custodian of this National Historic Site. See FHBRO Building Report 96-51.

Reasons For Designation

The caponier at Fort Henry has been designated Recognized because of its functional design, environmental qualities and historic associations.

The role of the caponier was to form a secondary line of defence of the redoubt by providing supporting cross-fire together with the reverse fire galleries in the counterscarp. Crossfire defence would have been accomplished through evenly spaced loopholes located at grade level. The vaulted ceiling was designed for bomb proofing and the roof was probably made of stone. The design was in keeping with the classical detailing and proportions of the Fort Henry military complex.

The caponier is situated in the centre of the main ditch and projects from the north face of the redoubt. Although not a highly visible element within the fort, the caponier does reinforce the military character of the main ditch and plays an integral functional role in the larger complex. Its setting has remained virtually intact.

As a defensive element in a fortified complex, the caponier is linked with the history of the defense of the country.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the caponier resides in its practical, functional layout and in its site relationships.

The design of the caponier is congruent with the design of Fort Henry. It is simple and symmetrical, with smooth dressed limestone ashlar walls and a stone roof over a bomb-proof vault. The smooth ashlar finish provides the visual link to the escarp and the redoubt, reinforcing the fortified appearance of the complex. Any future conservation activity should take into account the potential impact on the overall appearance and function of the surrounding walls and ditch. The ashlar stone wall, especially the vulnerable areas where the caponier meets the wall of the redoubt and the interior water levels, should be continuously monitored through a consistent maintenance program. Replacement stone, mortar composition and mortar joint profiles should be carefully selected to be in keeping with the historic appearance and to promote the ongoing preservation of the building.

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The interior should not be altered by partitions or modifications to the openings (loopholes).

Early photographs show seemingly conflicting evidence of a shingled roof where now we have a stone roof. Further study is recommended to determine the original material used for the roof.

The physical and visual relationships between the caponier, the ditch and the reverse fire galleries should be maintained. The adjacent turfgrass surface of the main ditch should be maintained such that views from the caponier remain unobscured.

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

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