

York Factory, Manitoba
Depot Building

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Depot building at York Factory was built in 1832-38 as the central building in the Hudson's Bay Company's fur trade post at York Factory. From the time of its construction until the 1850s, it was the major Bay Company warehouse for the transshipment of goods between Britain and North America. Historically it was part of a complex which consisted of a formal fort site and an informal area adjacent. Few alterations appear to have been made to the building. A cupola was added to its central three storey portion in 1876, underlining the Depot building's role as the central facility in the York Factory fort complex.

The building was abandoned by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1957, and transferred to the Government of Canada in 1968. Since that time it has become a National Historic Site. The building is now under the care of the Environment Canada Parks Service.

See FHBRO Building Report 88-72.

Reason for Designation

The Depot building was designated Classified because of the major role it played in the operations of the Canadian fur trade. From the 1820s to the 1850s York Factory was the major transshipment link between Britain and Hudson's Bay facilities in North America. This building was its administrative, manufacturing and warehousing core, acting as the major storage facility for all goods entering and leaving Bay posts in North America.

The Depot building is a typical and important example of the architecture of the Hudson's Bay Company. In design, materials and composition it reflects a long tradition of Hudson's Bay Company fur trade construction. The technology used in its construction is an important benchmark in the adaptation of building methods to the North American climate.

Construction of York Factory was a major stimulus to the development of the Canadian North. The Depot building, with its striking setting on the shores of Hudson's Bay, remains a significant landmark in this isolated area.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of the Depot building resides in all early elements of its design, fabric and context.

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York Factory, Manitoba
Depot Building (Continued)

The building is characterized by the classical regularity of its massing, form, proportions

and fenestration. As seen from the principal façade, the central three-storey, hip-roofed block with its cupola is flanked by symmetrical two-storey, hip-roofed wings. The simple, rectilinear design of the remainder of the building, regularly organized around a central courtyard, reinforces this character.

The Depot retains a high degree of integrity of design, plan, and fabric. Of particular interest are its system of shallow wooden foundations and rafter and beam supports. These elements are of technological interest and should be maintained. The location of doorways, rooms and other features which relate to early operation of the depot should be carefully managed. These features should be investigated, identified and protected.

Several aspects of the site relate to the daily operation of the post - the garden, remnants of other buildings, evidence of the surrounding ditch and palisade - have significant associative value and should be identified and protected. The relationship between the depot building and the water is significant and should be maintained.

The York Factory Depot is vulnerable to vandalism and fire. Measures appropriate to the locale should be implemented to mitigate these threats.

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