

Ottawa, Ontario
Physical Metallurgy Laboratories
EMR Complex, Booth Street

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Physical Metallurgy Laboratories were constructed between 1942 and 1952 by the Department of Mines to the designs of Ottawa architect W.E. Noffke. They are a group of five buildings which form part of a larger complex of offices and laboratories bounded by Booth, Lydia, Rochester and Norman Streets. Three Buildings (A, B and C) were erected initially; the pressure for expanded research into metal forming and fabrication in the post-war years led to the construction of two additional buildings (D and E) as extensions. The buildings continue to function today in much the same way as they were initially designed. The custodial department is Energy, Mines and Resources. See FHBRO Building Report 87-1 08.

Reasons for Designation

The buildings have been designated as Recognized federal heritage buildings because of their important historical associations and the functional quality of their design.

Historically, the larger EMR complex played a significant role in the development of Canadian mining and energy industries during the first half of the twentieth century. Both World Wars created new demands. The World War II war effort demanded new sources of energy, strategic minerals and gold. These objectives resulted in the erection of the physical metallurgy laboratories, the last components of the original Booth Street compound.

In the post-war years, the Department involved itself in the investigation of fabrication techniques, in support of manufacturing and production activity, and provided continuing technical assistance to the mining and metallurgical industries during a period of significant technological growth.

In design terms, the original three buildings reflected arrangements used successfully in earlier parts of the complex, with a logical division of access points, offices, and various sizes of laboratories. The flexibility inherent in the design has accommodated changing technologies, and the buildings continue to function well today.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Physical Metallurgy Laboratories is defined by their exterior facades and massing, and their relationship to the larger complex.

The individual buildings were designed in relation to each other, with Building A functioning as the main point of entry and access, and the larger laboratories with mezzanines overlooking the working areas located in Buildings B and C.

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Physical Metallurgy Laboratories (Continued)

Buildings D and E were constructed as extensions of Building B and C respectively, and the end result is five identifiable units linked in a U-shaped plan.

The buildings are generally long and low, and minimally adorned in a restrained, vaguely classicized style characteristic of institutional functionalism. The cleanly defined entrance with its vertical stone pilasters stands out from the overall horizontal character and gives it prominence on Booth Street. The rest of the facades are of brick, with regular window openings and precast lintels and string courses. The interiors are suitably functional, with fully enclosed offices and more open laboratory spaces.

The buildings are successfully integrated into the overall EMR complex. With regular maintenance and repair they should continue to provide a sense of historical continuity while meeting the ongoing functional requirements of the department. Replacement where required should generally be in kind, and the patterns of symmetry and simple ornamentation maintained as far as possible.

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