

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Halifax Citadel

Casemates of Defence 57-58, Northwest Demi-Bastion

Halifax Defence Complex

The Casemates of Defence 57 and 58 in the Citadel at Halifax were constructed between 1828 and 1832 for the colonial garrison of the Imperial War department based at Halifax, under commander-in-chief Lieutenant General Peregrine Maitland. The Casemates were the work of Lieutenant-Colonel Gustavas Nicolls (1825-1831), a member of the Corps of Royal Engineers, who both formulated the design and oversaw their construction. External modifications are summarized at Appendix A to this document. Casemates 57 and 58 are currently the property of Canadian Heritage. See FHBRO Building Report 95-01, Volume 1.

Reasons for Designation

Casemates 57 and 58 were designated Recognized because of their important historical associations, the qualities of their functional design and the important role they play in the environment.

The structures are associated with the active defence of the Imperial naval station in the period of mutual suspicion and hostility between Great Britain and the United States following the War of 1812. Displaying the prototypical characteristics of a casemated work in a bastioned masonry fort for the mounting of smoothbore ordnance and bomb-proof storage, Casemates 57 and 58 are excellent examples from the initial phase of construction of the present Citadel.

The construction of the Casemates was part of an ambitious building program on Citadel Hill, involving civilian contractors, the Corps of Royal Sappers and Miners, the Corps of Royal Engineers, and military labour. The employment generated by the project and the money poured into the local economy gave a great boost to the economic and social life of Halifax.

Functional in design and representative of British military construction from the first half of the 19th century, the Casemates were successfully used as barrack accommodation or cells until 1907.

The comprehensive restoration of the ramparts of the Northwest Demi-Bastion in 1980-1981 has largely recovered the outward appearance of the Casemates and associated landscape in the 1869-1871 period. As integral components of the main body of the

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work, Casemates 57 and 58 have a strong, reinforcing influence on the military character of the Citadel.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Casemates resides in their status as specialized military structures for the mounting of artillery in casemates for flanking the dry ditch of the north ravelin and bomb-proof storage when not under attack. Externally, the features which define the heritage character of these casemates are the cranked rectangular plan, the construction of the escarp wall (a thick, battered wall of roughly squared hammer faced ironstone, laid in irregular courses with a projecting cut sandstone coping), the construction of the retaining wall (a vertical wall of rough hewn coursed ironstone faced in granite ashlar) and the granite ashlar lined areaway containing a cut granite stair leading to the terreplein. Another character defining feature of the defence casemates is the treatment of openings. In the escarp wall each casemate has a single gun-port with 3 checks cut in the east jamb (in Casemate 56 the gun-port is cut obliquely) and two flanking vertical musketry loopholes of oblique design trimmed in granite. In the retaining wall the doors and windows have one piece flat lintels, quoined jambs and lug sills/thresholds in rock-face granite ashlar with chiseled margins.

The heritage character of the exterior would be best protected by conservation treatment of the iron bars on the windows and the iron balustrade of the stair, cleaning of the iron oxide and efflorescence staining of the masonry, regular repointing of the ironstone and granite walling, regular inspection of potential weak points in the rampart waterproofing (the junction of the escarp and dwarf retaining walls with the roofs of the casemates), and keeping catchbasins and drains clear.

Internally the features which define the heritage of these casemates are the vaulted bomb-proof construction of the casemate roofs (segmental profile brick vaults of multiple rings, a counter-flagging with granite slabs with both ends hipped, a 3/8" layer of asphalt and thick earth cover), and the open fireplaces connected by inclined flues to chimney stacks rising from the northern slope of the rampart.

The heritage character of the interior would be best protected by monitoring the performance of the waterproofing over the casemates, conservation treatment of the

iron ring bolts beneath the gun-ports, and regular repointing of the brick vaulting.

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The historic relationship between the area walls of the Casemates projecting from the ramparts of the Northwest Demi-Bastion and its associated landscape has been enhanced and strengthened by the mounting of ordnance, and the restoration of emplacements, brick lined ammunition and shell recesses, shaped parapet, and other features on the terreplein. The continued maintenance of these vulnerable and less-stable elements will preserve the military character of this area.

APPENDIX A

External modifications over the years include: the collapse of the retaining wall face and the area walls (1842), the re-facing of the retaining wall and the reconstruction of the area walls in granite ashlar masonry (1846), the uncovering, hipping, flagging, asphaltting, piping and re-covering of the Casemates (1851-1854), the replacement of the original two flight, timber stair in the areaway by a single flight granite stair (1857 or 1858), the installation of bars in the retaining wall windows of both casemates (c. 1886), the backfilling of the areaway (1934), and the excavation of the areaway (1976). Internal modifications include: the breaking of a passage way in the party wall (1842-1849), the replacement of the original brick on edge paving by a timber floor in both Casemates (1846), the mounting of 24-pounder guns on wooden-ground platforms in each Casemate (c. 1855), the dismounting of the guns (c. 1886), and various changes to the fireplaces and lamp recesses in the pier walls of each Casemate (n.d.).

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