

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Former Guardhouse, Fire Engine House and Coal Stores Building (No.114)

Submarine Mining Establishment, Georges Island

Halifax Defence Complex

The former Guardhouse, Fire Engine House, and Coal Stores Building of the Submarine Mining Establishment headquartered on Georges Island was constructed between 1885 and 1890 for the colonial garrison of the Imperial War Department based at Halifax. The multi-functional building, typical of a number of utilitarian brick structures built during the expansion of the Establishment in the late 1880s, was designed by the Corps of Royal Engineers. External modifications include the conversion of a single door at the east elevation to a window (n.d.), and the demolition of the enclosed porch of the guardhouse (c.1991). Internal modifications include the removal of the wood flooring, joists and plates in the guardhouse (n.d.), and the insertion of a stud partition with wire mesh screening in the southern coal store (n.d.). The former Guardhouse, Fire Engine House and Coal Stores Building is currently the property of Canadian Heritage. See FHBRO Building Report 95-01, Volume 2.

Reasons for Designation

The former Guardhouse, Fire Engine House and Coal Stores Building was designated Recognized because of its important historical associations and its environmental significance.

The theme identified for the building is the internal organization and operation of a coastal defence establishment in the last years of the 19th century.

As one of only six standing structures on Georges Island from the second development phase of submarine mining (1885-1905), the building is an essential component of this historic grouping of Establishment buildings.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the former Guardhouse, Fire Engine House and Coal Stores Building resides in its status as a multi-functional military structure integral to a permanent submarine mining establishment for provision of administration space for security personnel, short term incarceration of establishment personnel, the storage of

fire-fighting apparatus and storage of heating coal. Externally, the features which define the heritage character of this multi-function building are: the square plan, large enough

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to accommodate the three different functions; the solid brick walls in English bond with camber jack arched openings and lug sills and thresholds in cut-stone; the 6-over-6 double hung windows; and the low pitched gable roof and single brick chimney stack with a double course oversailing. The opening pattern is also significant, acknowledging the diverse nature of each function (in the case of the guardroom, a single door flanked by two windows in the elevation facing the water, and a window centred on a side wall; in the case of the fire engine house a double door in the elevation facing away from the water and a window centred on the side wall; in the case of the northern coal store a double door opening in the elevation facing the water; and in the case of the southern coal store a double door opening in the elevation facing away from the water and a single door centred on the side wall). The heritage character of the exterior would be greatly enhanced by the restoration of the door and window assemblies.

Internally, the features which define the heritage character of this building are the solid brick partitions separating the four internal spaces, the bull-nosed brick used at door and window jambs, the two communicating doors with shallow segmental profile rowlock arches and built-in solid timber frame (the latter, a typical English detail, would have provided centring for the brick arch), and the system of stove heating in the guardroom and fire engine house (a stone thimble and cleanout on the guardroom face of the chimney and a stone thimble on the engine house face of the same chimney).

The historic relationship between the former Guardhouse, Fire Engine House, and Coal Stores Building and other surface buildings which made up the Submarine Mining Establishment has been heavily altered by the demolition of what were its nearest neighbours; i.e., the Connecting-Up/Sinker Shed, the Boat Shed, the Cable Tanks and the RA Barracks. Stabilization of the above grade foundation remains of these various structures and the control of vegetation would enhance the military character of the area.

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