

Halifax, Nova Scotia
Former Guardroom and Prisoners' Quarters (No. 79)
Fort Charlotte, Georges Island
Halifax Defence Complex

The former Guardroom and Prisoners' Quarters was constructed in 1866 for the colonial garrison of the Imperial War department based at Halifax, under the command of Major General Hastings Doyle. The Guardroom was built to control access at the main gate and provide administrative facilities for security personnel (the guard), and included holding cells for short-term incarceration of garrison personnel. The Guardroom was designed by Lieutenant-General William F. Drummond Jervis and Lieutenant E. Harding Steward of the Corps of Royal Engineers. External modifications include: the removal of the multiple light casement sash at the guardroom window (n.d.); the removal of the heavy door to the guardroom (n.d.); and the repair of the brickwork and the installation of modern door and window assemblies in the casemate face (c. 1995). Internal modifications include the removal of the cell and prisoners' room doors, heating stoves and interior fittings (n.d.), and the removal of the wood floors, joists and plates (n.d.). The former Guardroom and Prisoners' Quarters is currently the property of Canadian Heritage. See FHBRO Building Report 95-01, Volume 2.

Reasons for Designation

The former Guardroom and Prisoners' Quarters was designated Recognized because of its important historical associations, the qualities of its functional design and construction, and the important role it plays in the environment.

The theme identified for the structure is the defence of the Imperial naval station during the period of heightened tension following the Trent affair of 1861, and the internal organization of a coastal fortification in the rifled muzzle-loading era.

The main gate to Fort Charlotte, of which the Guardroom and Prisoners' Quarters is an important component, is located on the right flank, in a deep cutting in the rampart. The casemated Guardroom occupies one side of the ten foot wide passage leading to the interior of the work. A high stone retaining wall, now restored to its historical configuration, lines the opposite side. The ditch, now spanned by a temporary fixed bridge, was originally equipped with a rolling bridge operated from within the Guardroom. The gap in the escarp wall, flanked by stone piers, was originally barred by heavy double doors.

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The location selected for the main gate and more particularly the casemated Guardroom presented the fortification engineers with a number of problems, including an enormous drop in grade from the traverse of the Upper Battery to the general level of the work, the vulnerability of the casemate face to fire from the north, and the possibility of flanking fire breaching the gates and reaching the centre of the work. By constructing an enormous abutment wall on the casemate face, erecting a high retaining wall opposite and bending the entrance passage, the engineers met each challenge.

Because of its prominence, the Guardroom has a major influence on the character of the main gate area.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the former Guardroom and Prisoners' Quarters resides in the features expressing its role as a specialized military structure, integral to a permanent fort, for the control of access to the main gate, provision of administration space for security personnel, and short term incarceration of garrison personnel. Externally the features which define the heritage character of this guardroom are: the casemate face - an irregular coursed ironstone rubble abutment wall with bull-header brick wall coping and cut-stone skew corbels, two segmental arches within the wall (the segmental profile brick vaulting of the two casemates carried through to the face) with English bond brick walls below; the cut-granite trimmed openings (a one-piece flat lintel and plain bevelled lug sill and threshold) in the brick walls; the channel stones for perimeter drainage; the cut-stone sleepers to carry the rack used in rolling the bridge along the entrance passage; the brick chimney stack with a double course oversailing, and the ventilation stack with cast concrete chimney top, rising above the traverse on the roof.

The heritage character at the exterior would be best protected by restoring the chimney and ventilation stacks and repairing the bull-header brick coping on the stone abutment wall.

Internally, the features which define the heritage character of this guardroom are the vaulted bomb-proof construction of the casemate roofs (segmental profile brick vaults of six rings coated in two thicknesses of asphalt, a layer of concrete to give the roofs of

the casemates a low-pitch gable profile, and a thick earth cover), and the stove heating

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system (stone chimney thimbles, clean-outs, and cut-stone front hearths). These features must be protected and conserved.

Surviving in the interior and on the exterior of the building are a variety of metal artifacts, generally in a heavily corroded state: the hand winch for operating the rolling bridge, the bars in the two windows of the prisoners' room, the bars in the transom of one of the cell doors, the perforated zinc plate covers to the wall ventilators, and various items of door hardware. The detailed recording and conservation of these important artifacts should be given high priority.

Future work on the interior should focus on stabilizing the environment, consolidating the interior plaster finish, and arresting the corrosion of the metal artifacts.

The historic relationship between the Former Guardroom and Prisoners' Quarters, entrance passage, parade, and surviving surface buildings (Former Field Forge Store, Former Laboratory, and Former Artillery Stores), is largely intact. Restoring the profile of the superimposed traverse, hydroseeding and mulching with a low growing vegetative layer and regular maintenance will enhance the military character of the area.

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