

Halifax, Nova Scotia
York Redoubt
Main Magazine (No. 611)
Halifax Defence Complex

The Main Magazine of York Redoubt was constructed in 1869-70 for the colonial garrison of the Imperial War department based at Halifax, under the command of Major General Hastings Doyle. The magazine was built to serve the three 10-inch rifled muzzle loading (RML) guns of the open North Battery, and the eight 9-inch RML guns of the open Eastern Battery. The bomb-proof main magazine was designed by the Corps of Royal Engineers. External modifications include: the addition of a brick boiler house and coal store at the east side of the lamp passage entrance (c. 1898); the removal of the wood roofs of the two entrances (n.d.); and the breaking down of the brick lined ventilation shafts projecting from the earth cover of the roof (n.d.). Internal modifications include: the division of the magazine chamber into two rooms by a brick partition, the enlargement of a lamp recess in the lamp passage to form a door; the removal of the magazine chamber floor of wood supported on joists and plates and its replacement by a batten floor, set directly on the original asphalt coating (c. 1898); and the removal of all fittings and the batten flooring of the magazine chamber (n.d.). The Main Magazine is currently the property of Canadian Heritage. See FHBRO Building Report 95-01, Volume 3.

Reasons for Designation

The Main Magazine was designated Recognized because of its important historical associations, the quality of its functional design and construction, and the important role it plays in the environment.

The theme identified for the building is the defence of the Imperial naval station during the period of heightened tension following the Trent affair of 1861, and the change in armament technology represented by the appearance of the rifled muzzle-loading gun. Designed specifically for the storage of powder for making up RML ammunition and incorporating the latest design innovations for ventilation, waterproofing and security under fire, the well preserved Main Magazine is an excellent example of its type.

Considering the complex functional program which included absolute security under fire, a capacity for large receipts and issues, a dry interior, exterior introduction of lamps, and the segregation of magazine personnel, the fortification engineers responsible for the Main Magazine achieved a remarkably successful design. The assurance of the engineers is demonstrated in the column-free 21' 10" x 45' 4"

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magazine chamber space which they easily spanned with a segmental profile brick vault.

The historic relationship between the Main Magazine and its associated landscape is essentially intact. Because of its size and distinctive shape, the Main Magazine makes an important contribution to the military character of the southern area of the work.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Main Magazine resides in its status as a specialized military structure, designed for the bomb-proof storage and handling of gunpowder used in the making up of RML ammunition. Externally, the features characteristic of this building type are: the angular form of the earth cover, the secure placement of the entrances in the land side elevation of the cover, the architectural treatment of the two entrances (brick semi-circular rowlock arched doors, singly or in pairs, with brick jamb trim set in an irregular coursed ironstone rubble wall with sloped wing walls with bull-header brick wall coping and cut-stone skew corbels, the whole recessed into the steep slope of the earth cover), and the four brick-lined ventilation shafts, projecting from the ridge, and fitted with cowl covers.

The heritage character of the exterior would be best protected by restoring the boiler and coal store (in a dangerously near-collapsed state), re-building the wing walls of the entrances with measures to counter-act earth pressure, restoring the profile of the earth cover, hydroseeding and mulching with a low-growing vegetative layer, and restoring the ventilation shafts and cowls.

Internally, the features most characteristic of this building type are the specialized plan and the skilled construction of the magazine chamber and the various passages. The original plan comprised a rectangular magazine chamber oriented east-west with a lamp passage, serving two lamp recesses at the eastern end, and a powder passage with serving hatch and entrance passage with shifting lobby and single lamp recess on the west end.

The roof of the magazine chamber is a segmental profile brick vault, 3' 6" in overall thickness (a full brick lining, 6" air space and multiple rings of brick), a thick layer of

concrete of gambrel profile, a coating of two layers of asphalt, and thick earth cover.

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The walls comprise a full brick lining, 6" air space and 7' 6"- 8'-0" of concrete. Loose stones are packed against the outside to aid water in escaping. The original floor was wood supported on joists and plates.

The roofs of the passages comprise a semi-circular profile brick vault of 3 rings, a layer of concrete and a thick earth cover. The walls of the passages are typically a half or full brick lining, 6" air space and more brick or concrete if an outside wall. All of the air spaces communicate with the outer air through slotted openings in the walls of the chamber or passages.

The heritage character of the interior would be best protected by ensuring floor drains are clear, and stabilizing humidity levels on the interior.

The historic relationship between the Main Magazine and its associated landscape post-1888 has changed in several minor ways; e.g., the erosion of the carefully executed earth cover profile of the Magazine, a reduction in height of the dry stone retaining wall lining the access path, over-grown vegetation, and the temporary enclosure of the boiler house. The military character of this area would be enhanced by the restoration of the boiler house, the restoration of the angular profiles of the earth cover of the Magazine, and control of the vegetation.

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