

Halifax, Nova Scotia

York Redoubt

South Battery (No. 645)

Halifax Defence Complex

The open South Battery of York Redoubt, which mounted two 64-pounder rifled muzzle-loading (RML) guns and incorporated a crew shelter, R.A. store (artillery general store), underground shell and cartridge stores and a caponier, was constructed in 1890 for the colonial garrison of the Imperial War department based at Halifax. The medium gun battery, intended to defend the southern approaches to the Redoubt, was designed by the Corps of Royal Engineers. External modifications include demolition of the hood cover to the entrance of the south caponier (n.d.), removal of the partitions closing the rear of the crew shelter and artillery general store (n.d.), the dismounting of the guns (n.d.), and the gunite treatment of the concrete surfaces (c. 1990). Internal modifications include the removal of the heavy doors to the shell and cartridge stores. The South Battery is currently the property of Canadian Heritage. See FHBRO Building Report 95-01, Volume 3.

Reasons for Designation

The South Battery was designated Recognized because of its important historical associations, the quality of its architectural and functional design and the important role it plays in the environment.

The theme identified for the structure is the defence of the Imperial naval station during a period of strengthening of coastal fortifications, and the deployment of breech-loading ordnance. Displaying the latest military engineering innovations for an open or barbette battery of primarily Portland cement concrete, the South Battery is a rare surviving example from the late RML period.

Viewed from inside the work, the Battery has an elegant and symmetrical massing with an interesting play of light and shadow created by the recesses, countersunk ringbolts, crew shelter and artillery general store. Looked at from above, the most notable feature is the intersecting horseshoe shaped parapets of the emplacements and look-out place, each with a gentle slope, rounded at their intersection so as not to show any sharp-edged shadows.

The functional program for the South Battery presented a number of challenges for the Engineers including the integration of a caponier into an open gun battery feature, providing bomb-proof protection for the stores without placing them beneath the guns

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and maintaining a proper interval between guns to reduce the effect of concussion on the detachment of the adjoining gun. By placing a look-out place between the guns, the Engineers achieved a suitable interval as well as a location for the entrance to the caponier. By placing the stores beneath the traverse of No. 2 gun they achieved the bomb-proof storage.

The historic relationship between the Battery and its associated landscape is largely intact. The above grade exposed concrete elements of the Battery continue to reinforce the military character of the area.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the South Battery resides in its status as a multi-functional military structure, integral to a permanent fortification, designed both for the mounting of RML guns "en barbette" with their attendant stores and as an outwork for the close musketry defence of a dry ditch. Externally, the features which define the heritage character of the gun battery function include the Portland cement concrete foundation, drum and parapet of the barbette emplacements; the countersunk ringbolts in the curved inner face of the parapet; the ammunition recesses in the rear face of the parapet (originally fitted with shell shelves and heavy wood doors); the C pivot racers (central pivot and full circle racer) on dwarf traversing platforms; the concrete crew shelter and general artillery store recessed into the rampart on the left flank; and the concrete look-out place accessed by a short flight of stairs. The features which define the heritage character of the caponier function include the concrete one-storey fighting caponier with four faces; the three square musketry loopholes in the two forward faces; and the three vertical musketry loopholes in each of the flanking faces.

The heritage character of the exterior would be best protected by monitoring the performance of the gunite treated concrete surfaces.

Internally, the features characteristic of this type of structure are: the wall construction of the underground shell and cartridge stores (a half brick lining, an air space communicating with the outer air and an outer wall of mass concrete); the construction of the slightly inclined passage serving the caponier (a semi-circular profile concrete vault roof, concrete walls and floor); and the concrete banquettes serving the forward

facing loopholes.

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The heritage character of the shell and cartridge store interior would be best protected by ensuring the drains in the floor are functioning properly and the brick lining at the walls and ceiling is adequately pointed.

Adjoining the Battery on the high ground to the east are the remains of an earthwork "Keep", built in the 1880's for the defence of the flank. Largely destroyed by the construction of the Fire Command Post in the 1940's and heavily overgrown by mature trees and shrubs, it is almost unrecognizable as a fortification feature. Restoration of its former profiles and planting would improve the readability of the original keep trace and enhance the military character of the South Battery area generally.

The erosion of the rampart profiles screening the battery and the cultivation of turfgrass in the gorge have altered the historic relationship which existed between the Battery and its associated landscape. The restoration of the rampart profiles and the planting of native grasses, herbs and forbs would recover some of the military character of the Battery.

97.10.20

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