

Halifax, Nova Scotia

**York Redoubt**

**York Shore Battery Searchlights (Nos. 690, 691 and 692)**

Halifax Defence Complex

The York Shore Battery Searchlights were constructed between 1940 and 1941 for the Department of National Defence. The searchlights illuminated the field of fire of the York Shore Battery and the World War II defence boom stretched between Sleepy Cove and McNab's Island. The three identical, single storey emplacements were designed by the Royal Canadian Corps of Royal Engineers. External modifications include the removal of the timber framed shed roofs on the access shafts (n.d.), the patching of the concrete surfaces, the cleaning and stabilizing of the folding sliding heavy doors and sliding steel shutters, the blocking of the roof hatches, and the re-covering of the roofs (n.d.). Internal modifications include the stripping of the lights and controls (c.1956 & 1959) and the patching of the concrete surfaces (n.d.). The York Shore Battery Searchlights are currently the property of Canadian Heritage. See FHBRO Building Report 95-01, Volume 3.

**Reasons for Designation**

The York Shore Battery searchlights were designated Recognized because of their important historical associations, the quality of their architectural and functional design, the superior workmanship and handling of materials they exhibit and the important role they play in the environment.

The theme identified for the Searchlights is the coastal defence of a major commercial port and naval station during World War II and in the decade following. Complete except for the lights and controls, the cluster of searchlight emplacements are excellent examples of their type.

In the context of concrete emplacements, the York Shore Battery Searchlights are impressive with their curved facades, roof overhang, horizontal band shutters, concrete drum bases, and strong vertical emphasis provided by the shed roofed access shafts. Recessed into the rocky cliff face, the geometric shapes have a pleasant sculptural quality.

From a functional standpoint the emplacements are straightforward and utilitarian, with large square access shafts and folding sliding heavy doors to receive and extricate the lighting equipment, bow windows to illuminate the broadest field of fire, and a spacing between units which would allow an intersection and concentration of the light beams.

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The prefabricated steel components making up the window assemblies, the curved shapes executed in poured-in-place reinforced concrete and the standard pattern framed, ledged and braced heavy doors with commercially available hardware all demonstrate a practical yet effective choice of materials and building components. Considering the difficult site and the close tolerances involved, they also indicate a confidence and skill in construction.

The historic relationship between the Searchlights and their associated landscape is largely intact. Despite their increasingly camouflaged state, the Searchlights continue to reinforce the military character of the Sleepy Cove area.

**Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of the York Shore Battery Searchlights resides in their status as specialized permanent military structures for the emplacement of coastal defence searchlights. Externally, the features which define the heritage character of these emplacements are the stepped concrete drum foundation, the bow shaped steel window assembly fitted with sliding and telescoping steel shutters, the flat reinforced concrete roof with entrance hatch, and the square concrete access shaft with shed roof.

At the present time the access shafts stand open to the elements, with no apparent provision for drainage of accumulated water at their base. Temporary roofs would offer some protection to the emplacement interior.

Internally, the features characteristic of this type of emplacement are the folding sliding heavy door set (three framed ledged and braced doors), and the unfinished poured-in-place concrete floor, wall and ceiling surfaces.

Integral to the Searchlight emplacements are a number of mild steel fittings, threatened by corrosion: the bow window assembly and its sliding telescoping shutters (channel frame, formed shutters, rosette pulls, cane bolts, and sheaves or rollers), the folding sliding door and its hardware (the Kalamein covering, trolley track and four-wheel hangers, extra heavy full surface "T" strap butt hinges, cane and chain bolts, extra heavy cremone bolt, pulls, and rim night latch), and other components cast into or bolted to the floor, wall and ceiling surfaces. Conservation of these artifacts should be

given the highest priority.

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The re-establishment of woody vegetation and trees on the rocky slope into which the Searchlights are recessed has altered the historic appearance of the site. The selective cutting back of some of the woody vegetation and the felling of a number of trees would enhance the military character of the area.

97.10.20

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

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