

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Artificer's/Blacksmith's Shop was built in 1939, to designs by Toronto architects W.L. Somerville and Edward Carswell, as part of the reconstruction of Fort George. It was built as a modern workshop, but has been modified to serve as an interpretive area. Repairs have been made to the roof and floor, and some logs have been replaced. The Environment Canada Parks Service is the custodial department. See FHBRO Building Report 89-15.

Reasons For Designation

The Artificer's/Blacksmith's Shop was designated Recognized because of its association with the 1930s philosophy of preservation and presentation of historic sites, its architectural qualities and use of traditional materials and techniques, and its compatibility with the environment.

During the 1930s, historic sites in Canada were developed and expanded as a result of the provision of government federal funding for Depression relief works programs. The philosophy of historic reconstruction employed at a number of sites in this period followed a North American pattern influenced by the reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg. Both the Niagara Parks Commission and Ontario Ministry of Highways encouraged the reconstruction of Fort George as a tourist destination. Both the reconstruction process and the subsequent attraction of the public to the area contributed to the economic development of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Reconstructions were intended to commemorate and interpret important events in history, and generally were based on extensive research. The Artificer's/Blacksmith's Shop, however, was originally designed as a modern workshop, and was not based on any historic antecedent. Its appearance and construction is consistent with others on the site, and represents the architects' concept of a "frontier" aesthetic.

The Artificer's/Blacksmith's Shop contributes to the work-related cluster of buildings on the site and, given its interpretive use, is a local landmark.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of this structure is defined by its "frontier" aesthetic, its functional design, its use of traditional materials and craftsmanship, and its contribution to the work-related aspects of the setting.

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The exposed log construction and the functional placement of doors and windows found in the Artificer's/Blacksmith's Shop represents Somerville and Carswell's concept of a frontier aesthetic. The Shop is a rectangular single-storey building, constructed of squared logs with dovetailed corners. The hipped roof is covered by hand-split cedar shakes. The use of traditional materials, methods, and tools in the construction, despite the modern origin and function of the building, was part of the reconstruction philosophy of the 1930s. Logs were milled in a saw-pit on site, and broad-axes and adzes were used for finishing. As the heritage character of the Artificer's/Blacksmith's Shop resides in the use of traditional materials and in the exterior construction, these elements should be preserved.

The Artificer's/Blacksmith's Shop, located in a cluster of work-related structures including the saw-pit and kitchen, contributes to the functional atmosphere of the fort, and is a local landmark.

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