

London, Ontario  
**Wolseley Barracks, "A" Block**  
Canadian Forces Base London

## **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

Wolseley Barracks was constructed in 1886-88 to designs by Henry James, the first Chief Engineer of the Department of Militia and Defence. The building was renamed Wolseley Hall in 1899 and designated a national historic site in 1963. Today the building serves as a multi-use facility of CFB London. The Department of National Defence is custodian of the building. See FHBRO Building Report 89-39.

### **Reasons for Designation**

Wolseley Barracks was designated Classified because of its long-standing association with the Royal Canadian Regiment, its fine architectural design and because of the integrity of its environment.

Wolseley Barracks is directly associated with a significant stage in the history of the Canadian Armed Forces - the creation of a permanent military force in Canada. As the first purpose-built infantry training school in Canada, it was originally constructed to provide quarters for "D" Company, Infantry School Corps. The building was later occupied by the Royal Canadian Regiment. In 1923 it became the regiment's headquarters, a role which continues.

The building was designed to give an impression of importance and sophistication. This is reflected in its substantial construction and traditional organization and massing which are typical of British military architecture and in its High Victorian and Italianate characteristics.

Designed to provide comfortable healthy accommodation for the men, the building included sanitary conveniences and space for recreational activities. The three wings of the building express, in their designs, the range of functions they house.

The grounds are relatively unchanged. The open area of the parade square and trees planted at the time of construction are in place.

Block "A" is the oldest building at CFB London.

### **Character Defining Features**

The heritage value of Wolseley Barracks, "A" Block resides in the whole of its exterior composition, design and fabric.

"A" Block is an outstanding example of military architecture in Canada. It is a large structure, U-shaped in plan, which consists of three wings arranged around a courtyard. Consistent with the classical tradition of military architecture,

"A" Block is organized to a rational, symmetrical scheme with strong horizontal massing a regular grid of fenestration, and central entry points. This scheme is elaborated by an

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**Wolseley Barracks, "A" Block (Continued)**

eclectic mix of pavilion, massing, central tower, truncated mansard roof, elliptical arch and oriole windows, slate roofing with fish-scale pattern, corbelled chimneys, iron cresting and polychrome buff brick and sandstone masonry representative of the richness and texture of the High Victorian taste. These elements, all applied with restraint and a careful eye to composition, reflect the influence of various stylistic trends, most importantly, the Italianate.

On the exterior the three wings are somewhat different in character. The composition of the south wing identifies its function as officers' housing; a series of separate entrances each marked by a steeply pitched gable above, gives the character of a domestic terrace. The wing is terminated at each end by a three storey projecting pavilion. The west wing is more institutional in character, stemming from its regular, symmetrical composition and central, hip-roof tower. The east wing is the least elaborate of the three, appropriate to its original function as an enlisted men's barracks. It consists of a simple elongated block with a row of regularly placed windows at each storey and a hip roof. Similarly, at the inner courtyard, ornament is minimal. Here the design of the three wings is more consistent - regular and symmetrical - and is further unified by a bracketed porch roof which extends along all three elevations. All doorways from the east wing exit to the courtyard. This pattern should continue.

Generally the three wings comprising "A" Block retain a high degree of historic integrity. The original features and materials of these wings should continue to be protected and respected in the future. Some alterations, particularly incompatible because of the regularity of the building's design, have occurred - for example the entry porch to the Museum at the north end of the west wing and the closed up middle door on the south wing.

The interior of "A" Block has been considerably altered. However, some early woodwork, window and door frames and, in the south wing, staircases and fireplaces remain. These are significant remnants. Architectural investigations should be carried out to identify architectural elements and details for protection and incorporation in any future design scheme.

Having been kept free of intrusions, the interior courtyard has undergone very little change. This area, and the entrance arch to it, are important heritage features of the building and should be protected.

"A" Block is the predominant building on the Wolseley Barracks site. This characteristic should continue.

Continued association with military activity, in particular as a residential and administrative facility for the Royal Canadian Regiment, would be the most favourable use for the building.