

Kingston, Ontario
Administration Office/Vincent Block
Fort Frontenac

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Administration Office/Vincent Block was constructed in its present two-storey hip-roofed form in 1847, and incorporates two earlier single-storey attached houses dating from the 1820s. The plans were prepared by the Royal Engineers as part of the development of the barracks by the British in the 19th Century. In 1870 the property was deeded to the Canadian government, which manned it with one of the first units of the newly created Canadian permanent force. The complex is now the headquarters of the Canadian Land Forces Command and Staff College, and the National Defence College. The custodial department is National Defence. See FHBRO Building Report 89-40.

Reasons For Designation

The Administration Office/Vincent Block has been designated a Classified heritage building because of its strong historical associations, its architectural quality, and its contribution to the character of the military compound.

Historically, the building is associated with the development of the Tête-de- Pont barracks (renamed Fort Frontenac in 1947) as the most important military post in Upper Canada. Kingston's strategic importance was related to the ongoing threat of the invasion of British North America by the Americans. The conversion of a guardhouse and canteen at Tête-de-Pont into an additional barracks building (the present Administration Building/Vincent Block) was a response to the Oregon crises of the mid-1840s. With the transfer to the Canadian government in 1871, the Barracks became home to the "A" Battery Garrison Artillery, the first unit of a permanent Canadian military force. This unit was reorganized in 1901 as the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery. During the Second World War, the barracks became an important recruiting centre and dispatch depot. In 1947 the complex became the site of both the newly created Canadian Land Forces Command and Staff College, and the National Defence College.

Architecturally, the building shows some slight irregularities in design because of the incorporation of the earlier garrison and canteen, but it still achieves the elegant simplicity characteristic of the work of the Royal Engineers. Together with the wall, the entrance gate, the Lasalle Block, the de Noyan Block, and the former commissariat storehouse, it contributes strongly to the early 19th Century character of the complex.

Character Defining Elements

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Administration Office/Vincent Block (Continued)

The heritage character of the Administration Office/Vincent Block is defined by the exterior façades and the setting.

The building is a simple rectangular structure with a hip roof. The lower floor shows evidence of the earlier one-storey attached guardhouse and canteen.

On the northern end is a five-bay section with centre entrance; on the southern end is a six-bay section with slightly deeper windows and the segmentally arched openings on the two central bays. The regularly coursed cut stone façade, however, gives the elevation a strong continuity, and this is reinforced by the matched openings along the second storey and the hip roof. Two large stone chimneys survive of the three indicated in the original drawings. Window sash and doors have been replaced over the years, although some of the window openings still retain iron bars presumably associated with use of part of the building as a prison. The end façades are of similar ashlar construction, with a more roughly dressed and smaller stone used on the rear west façade. There is eavestroughing with prominent downspouts around the perimeter of the roof.

It is important that the elegant stonework of the façade be carefully maintained, with supervision of any significant repair or restoration works by masonry conservation professionals. When replacement of roof finishes or windows and doors is required, consideration should be given to restoring the original materials and profiles, based on historical evidence. The eavestrough and downspouts detract from the simplicity of the façades, and consideration could be given to removing them and simply providing proper drainage of a drip catchment area around the perimeter of the building. Deflectors could be integrated into the roof surface above the entryways.

The layout of the fort compound has remained basically as it was in the mid-19th Century. The interrelationship of the buildings, the wall, and the open space should be preserved as an appropriate setting for the building. The building and its environment exist in a mutually supportive state.

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