

Kingston, Ontario  
Royal Military College  
Hewett House

#### HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Hewett House was built in 1875-1876, to designs by local architect Robert Gage, to house the first Commandant for the newly-established Royal Military College at Kingston. The residence was enlarged and converted to a duplex in 1884 by Kingston architect Joseph Power. Subsequently, the front veranda was enclosed and a rear extension was added to provide new kitchens for each unit. The house is the property of the Department of National Defence and is currently the Principal's residence. See Building Report 89-80.

#### Reason for Designation

Hewett House was designated Recognized on the basis of its association with the early development of R.M.C., its design and use of materials, and its unspoiled setting.

The Royal Military College in Kingston was founded in 1874, after the withdrawal of British troops from Canada. The establishment of an institution to train Canadian army officers was a significant step in the development of a national military system. In addition, the life of Kingston was greatly enriched by the development of R.M.C. Hewett House, designed to attract a British officer to the position of Commandant, is a good example of the original structures built for the opening of the college.

The residence is an interesting illustration of Victorian eclecticism, combining an overall Italianate design with Second Empire influences. The polychrome exterior, and interior fittings and joinery, were designed to express the high degree of sophistication expected of a British Commandant. The process of dividing the house into two residences was carried out sympathetically, and later additions and modifications have left the original balanced asymmetry intact.

Although the house has evolved over time, the surroundings are much the same as those of the original structure. The residence is a well-known landmark in the R.M.C. community.

#### Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of Hewett House resides in the original integration of architectural styles, the successful adaptation of the structure to new requirements while retaining the original aesthetic qualities, the choice of materials, and the character of the environment.

Royal Military College  
Hewett House (Continued)

The house is solidly constructed of red brick, with yellow brick dressings, set on a limestone foundation. It consists of the original three-storey hipped-roof structure and the gable-roofed projections later added to each side. In both the original structure and the current one, the asymmetrical front elevation is balanced by the centrally-located four-storey mansard-roofed tower. While the additions reduced the strong vertical emphasis of the original design, they reflect its overall Italianate-Second Empire style and are well-integrated with the original structure. The use of single, as opposed to multiple, windows and of roof dormers is characteristic of the Second Empire. The elements of the Italianate style used in the design include the low-pitched roof, the paired entrance doors, the polychrome segmentally-arched window surrounds, and the projecting eaves. The original decorative wood eave-brackets and cresting on the tower have been removed. These elements are highly characteristic of the Second Empire style. Installation of new units of an appropriate pattern would enhance the building by completing the architectural composition. An inspection and maintenance program for the exterior fabric should be undertaken if not already in place.

The extensive interior changes to the house were well-integrated with the original design. The typical Victorian room arrangement has been preserved and many of the interior features retained. The quality of the surviving interior detailing and fittings - elegant staircases, carved mouldings, Italianate marble fireplaces and wrought-iron radiator covers - should be respected in any future changes. If modifications to the interior are contemplated, investigation and identification of original, possibly concealed, features should occur with a view to their incorporation in new work.

Hewett House is set in a spacious, open landscape facing Kingston and the harbour. At one time, the main entrance road to the college passed in front of the house. While this is no longer true, the general setting is unchanged and the house is still visible from Kingston. The openness of the site and the visibility of the house should be maintained.

1991.01.23