

Rideau Canal, Ontario  
**Blockhouse**  
Narrows Lockstation

## **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

The Blockhouse at Narrows Lockstation was built in 1832-33 by the British Ordnance Department as a defensible structure for the station. Extensive renovations occurred in the early 20th century to better accommodate residential use. Further renovations were undertaken by the Department of Transport in the 1960s including the addition of the first floor entrance. Environment Canada Parks Service is the custodial department. See FHBRO Building Report 89-160.

### **Reason for Designation**

The Blockhouse was designated Recognized because of its historical associations, its design and materials, and its setting.

During the period when the Blockhouse was constructed, the Rideau Canal fulfilled a defensive role for the United Canadas. Blockhouses were an essential element in Colonel By's strategy for the canal, which called for a major defensible building at each lockstation. The Narrows Blockhouse is one of only four completed on the Rideau Canal and, like that of Newboro, is a rare surviving example of a blockhouse with a stone masonry lower storey.

While the site has changed over time, the isolated setting of the military era remains today.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of this property is defined by its exterior massing, its use of stone masonry construction, and the historic character of its setting.

The Blockhouse at Narrows Lockstation is a two storey pyramidal-roofed structure, square in plan, with an overhanging second storey. The use of stone masonry construction in the lower storey, normally constructed of timber, is unusual in this building type. The upper storey is built of squared timbers, but not clapboarded as it would have been when originally built. Like the Newboro Blockhouse, the Narrows Blockhouse does not have the tin roof and wall cladding, or masonry infill 'bomb-proofing' between floors as proposed in Colonel By's original design. Defensible features include the small windows and loopholes found in the second storey and second storey entrance with exterior stair. The interior has been completely renovated with modern finishes throughout.

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The craftsmanship associated with Colonel By and the Royal Engineers is evident in the surviving masonry and roof framing. It is important that the remaining original material and construction details of this building be maintained and protected.

The natural and isolated character of the setting on a spit of land between Upper Rideau and Big Rideau lakes is reminiscent of the military period. The Blockhouse, a dominant feature in this spare landscape, is a local landmark. The relationship of the building to its setting should be preserved.

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