

89-203

Esquimalt, British Columbia

## **Signal Hill Building #508 (Former Reserve Ordnance Stores)**

CFB Esquimalt

### **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

The Reserve Ordnance Stores (Building #508) was built at Signal Hill in 1898, as part of the British Army Ordnance Corps Depot. Designed by the Royal Engineers, it served as the primary ordnance stores until the Second World War, during which Signal Hill was annexed by the Navy. The Department of National Defence is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 89-203.

### **Reasons for Designation**

The former Reserve Ordnance Stores was designated Recognized as a result of its association with the establishment of the Signal Hill military complex, and with the defence of Canada during the First World War. The designation also recognizes its classically-inspired design, and its role as one of a cluster of historic buildings associated with the British Army Ordnance Corps Depot.

Signal Hill, a joint venture of the British and Canadian artillery, was constructed as part of the Victoria-Esquimalt coastal artillery system which defended the dockyard and the Victoria coastline against enemy attack. The ordnance depot acted as a clearing centre for ordnance supplies from England; it supported fixed batteries, mobile and field forces, and the submarine mining system. The Reserve Ordnance Stores, one of the first and largest of the operational buildings constructed at the Signal Hill complex, continued to serve its original function through the First World War. It is now one of a group of industrial buildings which are part of the Esquimalt Naval Base.

The substantial two-storey rectangular brick structure displays the symmetry and pleasing proportions associated with classical architecture. The ornamental brickwork and segmentally -arched openings are classically inspired. Apart from the abandoned gun emplacement, the Reserve Ordnance Stores is the largest extant British-built structure at Signal Hill.

The building is situated on an area of flat land at the base of Signal Hill. Its size and its highly visible location along Signal Hill Road make it the most prominent among a group of turn-of-the-century buildings now serving the navy in an industrial capacity.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of Building #508 resides in its massing, classically-inspired

**Signal Hill Building #508 (Former Reserve Ordnance Stores) (Continued)**

detailing, high quality of construction and materials, and site relationships with nearby historic buildings.

The structure's substantial proportions, large entrance doors and second-floor hoistways reflect its original purpose. The projecting frieze, plinth and pilasters in curved brick, the corbelled brick chimneys, and the brick voussoirs forming the arched openings are important design features which should be carefully maintained and preserved. The high quality of the masonry is noteworthy, and any required masonry repairs should be undertaken in consultation with a masonry conservation expert.

Modifications related to the industrial use of the building have disrupted the integrity of the composition. These changes include the sealing of the original main entrance facing Signal Hill Road, the addition of various-sized ventilators to the roof and facades of the structure, the addition of an external stairway on the east end, and several frame additions which obscure the southern facade. Some of the original multi-paned sash windows remain; however, part of the west-gable hoistway and several windows on the end and rear facades have been bricked in. The removal of the ventilators from the original primary facade would greatly enhance the appearance of the structure as seen from the main roadway. Consideration should also be given to restoration and reinstatement of windows in keeping with the historic configuration.

The original open interior plan is partially subdivided on the first floor, but the second floor remains essentially unchanged. The roof retains its exposed timber-truss framing. All early interior finishes and fixtures should be retained, and historic circulation patterns respected.

The building contributes to a compact grouping of historic structures of similar design and materials, including the former Armourer's Shop, Barracks Stores, Paint Stores, and Clerk of Works Quarters. The traditional relationships among these structures should be retained.

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For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.