

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Defensible Lockmaster's House was built at Nicholsons Lockstation in 1838 by the Royal Engineers as a defensible structure in support of the Rideau Canal system. In the first decades of the twentieth century, a single-storey summer kitchen was added to the south side, while a second storey was added to the main structure. The building continues its historic function as a residence for canal staff. The Canadian Parks Service is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 91-80.

Reasons For Designation

The building was designated Recognized as a result of its historical associations, its functional design and quality craftsmanship, and the character of the site.

The combination of military and domestic elements in this structure reflects the changing function of the Rideau Canal over time. The original defensible design components of the house reflect the military role of the Rideau Canal in the defence of the united Canadas during the nineteenth century. This building, among the earliest of its type constructed, represents the canal's formative period, and that of the local farming community. The second-storey addition, summer kitchen and interior woodwork reflect the emphasis on residential design which resulted from a change in the function of the canal in the twentieth century from defence to recreation and commerce.

The site retains its rural domestic character essentially unchanged since the turn of the century, and contributes to the historic character of the setting.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of this structure is defined by the combination of military and residential design features, and quality materials and craftsmanship.

The Nicholsons Defensible Lockmaster's House is a two-storey structure, with a truncated hipped roof containing a central dormer window on the main facade. A clapboarded frame summer kitchen extends laterally to the south. The house as originally constructed was a single-storey symmetrical stone structure, with a hipped roof. The addition of the clapboarded second storey maintains the overall massing and symmetry of the original, with the lower floor openings of the front and rear facades balanced by three second-storey windows. The summer kitchen, set back and appropriately scaled, is successfully integrated with the main structure.

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The building retains the first-storey thick limestone walls, heavy timber joists and the stone base of the hearth of the original house, attesting to the military function of the structure and to the careful construction associated with the Royal Engineers. Some of the first-floor partition walls also apparently date from this period. Much of the interior woodwork, including the balustraded staircase, dates from the addition of the second storey, and reflects the emphasis on simple domestic accommodation associated with the change in the role of the canal in the twentieth century.

The building retains its original orientation overlooking the canal cut and river, and is visible from both. The house is a local landmark. The overall form, historic materials, residential character, and setting of this property should be maintained.

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