

FHBRO Number 97-46

Vernon, British Columbia

Brigadier Murphy Armoury

Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack

29th and 21st Avenue

The Brigadier Murphy Armoury was constructed in 1913. It was designed by the Engineer Services Branch, Department of Militia and Defence. The building continues to be used as an armoury and is occupied by the 'A' squadron of the British Columbia Dragoons. The Department of National Defence is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 97-46.

Reasons for Designation

The Brigadier Murphy Armoury was designated Recognized because of its environmental values, its architectural qualities and its historical associations.

The Armoury is an important building for the Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack. Located 100 metres north of the Vernon Army Cadet Training Camp, the Armoury's large flat site is characteristic for this building type. The building has a long association (since at least World War II) with its Regiment, the British Columbia Dragoons.

The Armoury at Vernon was built from one of five standard drill hall plans produced by the Engineer Services Branch of the Department of Militia and Defence under the direction of Sir Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia and Defence. Within a three year period, from 1912 to 1914, 43 armoury buildings were built from these plans. Unlike earlier examples built in Canada, drill halls designed by the Department of Militia and Defence concentrated on the functional and structural aspects of the buildings. The armoury buildings built for this program were the first to employ width-spanning steel trusses methodically.

The Brigadier Murphy Armoury at Vernon was built as part of a reform and expansion program by the Department of Militia and Defence. Its construction helped establish a community-based training centre in Vernon.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of Vernon's Brigadier Murphy Armoury resides in its plan, interior arrangement, massing, proportions, scale, construction materials, structure, window and door pattern, detailing and setting.

Vernon's Armoury is a good example of a Department of Militia and Defence type "B"

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plan, which directly expresses the building's utilitarian function. The type "B" plan was chosen for Vernon largely because its size corresponded with the requirements for this location. It has a double-height drill hall at one end and two levels of auxiliary rooms at the other. A small interior balcony overlooks the drill hall. The rooms were designed to be of an adaptable, uniform size, able to satisfy the individual needs of the occupying Regiment. The arrangement of interior volumes of the drill hall, and especially the volume of the drill hall itself, merit protection.

The Armoury is constructed with the standard set of materials specified for the type "B" design including: a concrete basement; concrete lintels, sills, voussoirs and copings; brick walls; iron window framing and contours; steel trusses and beams; concrete drill hall floors; and wood floors over concrete for the auxiliary rooms. These materials are characteristic of the type "B" plan and should be retained.

The two-storey high building has simple, horizontal massing and modest but strong detailing, further accentuating the design's functional nature. The exterior appearance of the building reveals its plan and structure through the location of its windows and doors and by the presence of strong piers along its longitudinal façades, end façades and corners. Any changes should support the clarity of expression achieved by the building's massing, plan and detailing.

Many of the building's details contribute to its dignified character. Its front and back façades are symmetrical and each has a large, central door. Openings are classically proportioned. A centrally positioned bull's eye window, contoured with brick and trimmed with four concrete key voussoirs, ornaments the upper portion of each end façade. Brick corbels simulate machicolation and project out, adding depth and weight to the roof line. Concrete copings also help define roof contours and add strength to the upper portion of the end façades. Similarly, projecting concrete voussoirs above the building's larger windows bring focus to these openings and interest to the façades. The horizontal stripe pattern of buff coloured brick contrasts with the walls' red brick, adds texture to the walls and contributes to the building's horizontality. The functional yet delicate iron window frames are also part of its heritage character. The building's details, openings, brick patterns, copings, voussoirs and window frames are important features of the building and should be protected.

The Armoury's roof is a prominent feature of the building. The choice of new materials for any future replacement or resurfacing of the roof should include research into

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historic precedents of material and pattern. Careful stripping of paint from the exterior brick walls, restoration of concrete copings and removal of the recently installed ventilation grill from the front bull's eye window would further enhance the building's historic character.

Any site development should seek to retain the functional quality of the site including the large, open access to the main entrance. The Armoury's relationship to the site's other three buildings is also important to its heritage character.

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

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