

FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT ARTS BUILDING, SYDNEY N.S.

FHBRO number: **00-200**
DFRP number:
Resource name: **Arts Building**
Address: **196 George Street, Sydney, Nova Scotia**
FHBRO status: **"Recognized" Federal Heritage Building**
Construction: **1956**
Designer: **Larson and Larson**
Original function: **Classrooms and offices for a junior college facility**
Current function: **Offices for Health and Welfare Canada and Transport Canada**
Modifications: **Minor modifications to interior**
Custodian: **Public Works Government Services Canada**

Reasons for Designation

The Arts Building is a "Recognized" Federal Heritage Building because of its historical associations, and its architectural and environmental values.

Historical value:

The Arts Building is associated with the significant expansion of post-secondary institutions during the 1950s, in particular the provision of academic training in under-served regions. St. Francis Xavier University, well-known for its efforts outside traditional academia, established the Xavier Junior College in Sydney in 1951 to provide higher education in an area with limited resources. As the first permanent and purpose-built secondary institution in Sydney, the building also reflects the community's recognition that post-secondary education could provide alternatives during a period of decline in the area's traditional economic industry of coal mining. The importance of the college gave regional prominence to its founding principals, Reverend Dr. Malcom MacLellan and Father Donald F. Campbell, who oversaw its establishment and expansion.

Architectural value:

The Arts Building is a good, late example of the American Colonial Revival style. The building's symmetrical, brick-clad, two-storey rectangular form features a projecting central entrance pavilion and is capped with a low-sloped roof terminated by brick gables rising to large central chimneys which are typical of the style. The revival aesthetic is also reflected in the applied decorative millwork elements at the entrances, as well as in the non-historically correct placement of certain elements such as the doors under the chimneys at the gable ends which were incorporated to meet modern requirements.

Environmental value:

Located in the northern section of the downtown commercial core of Sydney, the Arts Building shares its site with the matching Science Building, and was designed to incorporate elements that would reinforce the mixed institutional/residential character of the neighbourhood. Minor changes have not modified the open character of the building's site.

Character-Defining Elements

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The following character-defining elements of the Arts Building should be respected.

Its role as an illustration of the expansion of post-secondary institutions during the 1950s, in particular the provision of academic training in under-serviced regions, is reflected in:

- the location of the building, as part of an academic campus along with the Science Building, in the oldest area of downtown Sydney.

The building's American Colonial Revival style, successful functional plan, competent craftsmanship and good quality materials, as manifested in:

- the formal, symmetrical composition of the brick building, which consists of a rectangular plan, a projecting central entrance pavilion with pediment, evenly spaced large multi-paned windows, a continuous cornice, and a low-sloped gable roof with large brick chimneys rising from the gable ends;
- the use of applied Classical decorative millwork around the entrances, and consisting of pilasters, an entablature and a broken pediment;
- the location of entrances at the gable ends, and the use of over-scaled window openings, both of which reflect the functional requirements of this modern interpretation of the style; and,
- the good quality materials and craftsmanship exhibited in the exterior brickwork and millwork.

The manner in which the building reinforces the mixed residential / institutional character of the setting, as evidenced in:

- the compatible scale of the building vis-a-vis the neighbouring structures; and,
- its matching relationship with the Science Building which creates the campus setting.

For guidance on interventions, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*. For further information contact FHBRO.

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