

Kingston, Ontario

Commandant's Residence (Building No. 10)

Royal Military College

The Commandant's Residence was built in 1813-14 by the Royal Navy as a hospital, which was expanded in 1817. Two-storey projecting bays and enclosed verandas were subsequently added to the building's facade and rear elevation, and a two-storey addition was added at a later date to the north. The building is currently used as residence for the Commandant of the Royal Military College. The Department of National Defence is custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 93-99.

Reasons For Designation

The Commandant's Residence was designated Recognized for its important historical associations, for the quality and integrity of its environment and for its architectural design and execution.

As one of the few remaining pre-1853 buildings on the Royal Military College (RMC) campus, the Commandant's Residence provides a direct link to the Royal Navy period of Kingston's military history. The building first served as a hospital for the sailors and workers of the Royal Navy Fleet and dockyard on Point Frederick, and later was a residence for the naval and Ordnance storekeepers. With the establishment of the RMC in 1876, the building continued to function as residence, initially for senior Officers and after 1900, for the College's Commandant.

The Commandant's Residence and its associated buildings, the Guest House (1813) and Tool Shed (c. 1930s), are prominently located between the two main sections of the campus in an open area which has retained its open vistas and mature tree plantings, lending the structure its landmark status. The campus-like quality of the adjacent grounds has not been significantly altered, although a palisade fence, present until the 1850s, is no longer extant, and the grounds are now surrounded by a low hedge and a rear parking lot.

The Commandant's Residence is an austere example of the British Classical tradition of architecture, befitting its original function as a Navy hospital. The symmetrical and ordered appearance of the building's elevations, typical of this style, has been mitigated by later additions and by the relocation of the main entry to the side. These alterations to the building testify to its transformation into a residence, embellishing the simple shape with domestic forms such as verandahs and projecting bay windows. The interior by contrast, retains much of the original hospital plan and some finishes, reflecting the classical character of the design.

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Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Commandant's Residence resides in the massing, proportions and profile of its architectural design, in the craftsmanship of its construction and in the integrity of its setting.

The Commandant's Residence is a two-storey rectangular structure capped with a low-pitched hip roof with minimal ornamentation, typical of the British Classical tradition. The original design intent is still evident in the symmetry of its window placement and the ordered appearance of the facade. The two-storey north addition is stepped back from the main building, maintaining the same roof line, stone work and detailing. The high quality of masonry craftsmanship evident in the random-coursed ashlar limestone and the detailed brick chimneys should be properly maintained, and when repairs become necessary, conservation expertise should be consulted.

The well-crafted verandahs and projecting bays, are also significant as evidence of the adaptation of the hospital to a new use as residence. The multi-paned sash and casement wood windows evident on the original building and the later additions, also relate to these different stages in the building's history, and should be maintained.

The building's interior, with its long central corridor running the length of the building, retains the layout typical of a small hospital. Early materials, such as mouldings, doors, newel posts, built-in cupboards and fireplace mantels generally remain. The careful maintenance of these early elements should be incorporated into the building's maintenance plan.

Together with the adjacent Guesthouse and Tool Shed, the Commandant's Residence retains its formal character as an important 19th century residence incorporated in a campus setting. Its open location along the main road into the College provides vistas overlooking the Kingston Harbour and lends the building certain prominence. Any changes to the site which would obscure the structure or alter its relationship to the setting should be avoided.

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