

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

KINGSTON, Ontario

FHBRO Number **93-99**

DFRP Number **09405**

Building 30a, Royal Military College

Lunette and guardhouse, former Fort Frederick

Constructed as part of the defences of Fort Frederick during the period after 1846, the lunette and the guardhouse building within are components of the Fort Frederick National Historic Site. The fortification, of roughly pentagonal plan, protected two of the Fort's landward flanks and one of its entrances. Rendered obsolete for its original function after the British withdrawal from Kingston in 1870, the building has served at various times as museum and workshop. The former guardhouse has been converted into a washroom, and the grounds within the walls of the lunette have been landscaped.

Reasons for Designation

The lunette has been designated 'Recognized' for its architectural significance, its historical associations, and its environmental qualities.

Historical significance

The original Fort Frederick was constructed in 1813 to defend Kingston harbour against the United States. It was completely reconstructed during 1846 and 1847 when a border dispute in Oregon raised prospects of hostilities between Britain and the United States once more. The most conspicuously augmented harbour defence works, the Martello towers, date from this period, and at three storeys, the central tower at Fort Frederick was the largest and most heavily fortified.

Advancements in the power and range of rifled artillery rendered the fortifications obsolete within a few years. After Confederation, the threat from the United States abated and the British left in 1870. The lunette and its guardhouse have seen various uses since, as a workshop and smithy, as a 'General Staff Museum' after 1922, and subsequently as a service and washroom building after the Museum was moved into the Tower proper.

The lunette was part of the perimeter defences surrounding the Tower, a combination of stone walls and earthworks that commanded the harbour entrance. The lunette, almost precisely opposite the end of the point on which the Fort sits, controlled the landward entrance to the perimeter. The lunette and the guardhouse within are thus integral to the historical significance of the fortifications as an ensemble, a National Historic Site since 1989.

Architectural significance

In a permanent fortification, a lunette is an outwork constructed to shield salients and create crossing columns of fire to cover adjoining faces. Commonly, the 'rear' of the lunette is more or less open to allow for movement from the main walls, and in this case, a guardhouse with windows and loopholes protects the entries to both lunette and bastion.

Following increased tensions in 1845 between Britain and the United States over the Oregon border dispute, the Kingston harbour defences were enlarged and the present fortifications constructed, from 1846 onward. The lunette and guardhouse have been dated to 1846.

The lunette consists of high, slightly battered stone walls (tapered in thickness), generally pentagonal in plan, with a rectilinear extension toward the main wall that effects a narrow passage between outwork and bastion. The walls are rough coursed ashlar, with dressed quoins of irregular-size blocks that are generally double the height of the units in the wall courses. A dressed-stone string course slightly below the midpoint of the walls is integrated with a chain of narrow loopholes, also framed by dressed blocks; there are also loopholes at the corners of the quoins. The whole is topped by a continuous, slightly projecting stone coping. The loophole openings, tapered in plan, are narrow slots to the outside and considerably wider inside, according to their function as shooting emplacements.

The guardhouse is integral to the rectilinear (bastion-side) portion of the lunette, with a small gable-roofed extension into the yard formed by the pentagon. The thick guardhouse walls are of the same rough coursed stone as the surrounding fortifications; its openings are windows rather than loopholes, though with openings widened to the interior.

Environmental qualities

The relationship of the lunette building to the complex recognized today as Fort Frederick remains essentially unchanged from its state after the British withdrawal. The building has been adapted to support the museum role of the site. Its 'external' aspect landward toward the central open space of the Royal Military College has altered over the years as the College itself has changed, and the building is part of what visually defines and contains that open space. The overall environment of Fort Frederick, now a publicly visited historic site, retains its integrity and its green spaces are maintained in a park-like manner.

Character-Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Fort Frederick lunette and guardhouse comprises the following character-defining elements:

- the complex angular stone walls, symmetrically arranged around a small open space and incorporating a small gable-roofed guardhouse.
- the ordered combinations of coursed stone, dressed and rusticated, that correspond to the treatment of all the Fort Frederick structures from 1846.
- the open interior space, faced by a gabled 'frontage'.
- the regular, narrow defensive openings, tapered in plan (both loopholes and windows), with their dressed stone surrounds facing in all directions.

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Lunette and guardhouse, former Fort Frederick (continued)

- the open landscapes outside its walls.
- the building's location in context, helping to define an essential historical and functional setting.

All maintenance and repair work, as well as future interventions should respect these character-defining elements.

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