

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

FHBRO Number 96-24

DFRP Number 32086

Recognized Federal Heritage Building

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia

Gun Emplacement No. 2, Central (includes Magazine No. 2 and Crew Shelter No. 2)

Fort McNab, Halifax Defence Complex

Gun Emplacement No. 2 consists of a raised gun platform and an underground magazine and crew shelter. The magazine and crew shelter were constructed in 1888-93 to serve a gun emplacement that was never built. The existing gun emplacement was constructed in 1903-6 and joined to the magazine. All three components were designed by the British Royal Engineers. The gun platform was altered in 1938 and again in 1953 to accommodate new guns. Metal stairs were also installed in 1953. The gun was removed in 1956 when the emplacement was permanently deactivated. The gun emplacement now forms part of Fort McNab National Historic Site. The custodian is Parks Canada.

Reasons for Designation

Gun Emplacement No. 2 has been designated “Recognized” because of its historical, architectural and environmental significance.

Historical Significance

Gun Emplacement No. 2 is directly associated with the British defence of the Imperial naval station at Halifax between 1892 and 1906. It also illustrates the defence of Canada by Canadian forces from 1906 to 1960. Fort McNab served as a heavy artillery coastal defence installation from 1906 until 1945. Gun Emplacement No. 2 was one of the principal gun positions in the fort. After the war, Gun Emplacement No. 2 was used for coastal artillery training. The successive modernizations of the emplacement illustrate the technological evolution of coastal defence artillery.

Architectural Significance

Gun Emplacement No. 2 and its accompanying magazine and crew shelter are engineering works of purely utilitarian design, modified over time to meet changing functional requirements. The concrete gun platform is of standard design for breech-loading coastal artillery guns of the period. It was modified in 1938 and 1953 to accommodate the installation of new guns. The underground magazine was constructed to meet late-19th-century standards for the safe and efficient storage and handling of shells and explosives. The magazine is of concrete construction with brick-lined vaulting. The entryway is contained between concrete wing walls. A lamp room for maintaining the lamps used for illumination is segregated from other rooms and lamp recesses are provided throughout the magazine. Two chambers for explosives storage are separated by a shifting lobby used by crew to dress in special “magazine clothing”. A separate room is provided for shell stores. Hoists were provided to lift ammunition to the gun floor. Between 1903-6, the stairwell was enlarged and changes were made to the hoists. A horizontally sliding metal fire door was installed over the entrance passage at an unknown date. An additional room was constructed in 1913 to house a heating system, which was replaced in 1948-9. A small crew shelter, (later used as artillery stores), is also located underground, adjacent to the magazine.

Environmental Significance

Gun Emplacement No. 2 is one of three aligned gun emplacements at Fort McNab and is conspicuous within the immediate area. In materials and overall design and scale it is compatible with to other concrete military structures at Fort McNab.

Character-defining Elements

The heritage character of Gun Emplacement No. 2 resides in the following character-defining elements:

- The physical relationship and irregular footprint created by its three components: the above-ground gun platform, the underground magazine and the underground crew shelter.
- The functional design and concrete construction of the above-ground gun platform, consisting of a raised platform accessed by concrete stairs and metal stairs, a single visible issuing hatch, a larger concrete issuing aperture, and several shell and cartridge recesses with doors.
- The functional design and concrete construction of the underground magazine, consisting of an entryway flanked by concrete wing walls, a concrete stairway, a segregated lamp room, explosives and shell stores, and a separate room for the heating system.
- Specialized features, including a shifting chamber between the explosives and shell stores rooms, a brick-lined vaulted ceiling in the explosives chamber, and lamp recesses in all rooms and corridors.
- Extant remnants of magazine fixtures, including a sliding metal fire door, visible elements of the 1945-6 oil heating system, and various wall brackets and shelves.
- The crew shelter, consisting of one, small, underground, vaulted room with separate entryway and wing walls.
- The physical relationship of Gun Emplacement No. 2 with other gun emplacements at Fort McNab. All three emplacements are roughly aligned and feature similar construction materials, design and scale.

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*.