

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

FHBRO Number 96-24

DFRP Number 32086

Recognized Federal Heritage Building

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia

Gun Emplacement Nos. 3 and 4, (includes Left Magazine, Crew Shelter and Radar Building)

Fort McNab, Halifax Defence Complex

Gun Emplacement Nos. 3 and 4 comprises five interconnected elements: a 10-inch gun emplacement; a 9.2-inch gun emplacement; a radar building superimposed on the second gun emplacement; an underground magazine joined to the two emplacements; and, an underground crew shelter joined to the magazine. The 10-inch gun emplacement and the underground magazine and crew shelter were constructed in 1888-93 as part of the original armament at Fort McNab. The 9.2-inch gun emplacement was constructed in 1903-6 on the site of an abandoned 6-inch gun emplacement. Modifications made to the magazine have included enlarging the stairway, converting existing shell stores to cartridge stores, and adding a new lobby with an ammunition lift and shell-storage area. The crew shelter was abandoned before 1903 and the 10-inch gun emplacement was abandoned in 1911. The 9.2-inch gun emplacement and the magazine were abandoned in 1942. In 1944 a concrete radar building was superimposed on the former 9.2-inch gun emplacement, obscuring most of the former structure. It continued in use until Fort McNab was closed in 1960. The 10-inch and 9.2-inch emplacements and the magazine and crew shelter were designed by the British Royal Engineers. The radar building was designed by the Canadian Department of National Defence. Gun Emplacement Nos. 3 and 4 now forms part of Fort McNab National Historic Site. The custodian is Parks Canada.

Reasons for Designation

Gun Emplacement Nos. 3 and 4 has been designated "Recognized" because of its historical, architectural and environmental significance.

Historical Significance

The 10-inch and 9.2-inch gun emplacements and the magazine and crew shelter are directly associated with the British defence of the Imperial naval station at Halifax between 1892 and 1906. The 9.2-inch gun emplacement and the magazine illustrate the defence of Canada by Canadian forces from 1906 to 1960. The radar building was a key component of the Fort McNab detection and fire-command system and is directly associated with the defence of Canada during and after World War Two and with the evolution of coastal defence technology.

Architectural Significance

Gun Emplacement Nos. 3 and 4 and its accompanying magazine and crew shelter are engineering works of purely utilitarian design. The 10-inch gun emplacement is the largest extant gun emplacement in the Halifax Defence Complex. In its simple, open overall design and configuration, it resembles the late generation of rifled muzzle-loading emplacements, rather than the more sophisticated and advanced breech-loading coastal artillery installations found elsewhere at Fort McNab. The ground-level gun floor features a large, central-pivot mounting base, and a raised, semi-circular concrete retaining wall and parapet with recesses for shells and cartridges.

The underground magazine was constructed to meet late-19th-century standards for the safe and efficient storage and handling of shells and explosives. It is the largest and most complex of Fort McNab's three underground magazines. The magazine is of concrete construction with brick-lined vaulting in the ammunition storage areas. 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 cartridge storage areas are separated by a shifting lobby used by crew to dress in special "magazine clothing". A separate shell stores room was later converted to cartridge stores. Shell stores are provided in shallow recesses along the main passage, and in a lobby added in 1903-6. Hoists were provided at either end of the main passageway to lift ammunition to the two gun emplacements. A heating system was added in 1913 and replaced in 1948-9.

The 9.2-inch gun emplacement was of standard design for breech-loading coastal artillery guns of the period. It was altered by the superimposition of a two-storey reinforced-concrete radar building on the gun-mounting area of the emplacement. Only the raised foundation and surrounding semi-circular concrete apron of the original structure survive. The radar and electrical generation equipment were housed in the lower storey, while the operations area was housed in several small rooms in the upper storey. The look-out window is similar to the contemporaneous Battery Command Post at Fort McNab. The interior of the radar building has been stripped of all fittings, except for the remains of the heating system.

Environmental Significance

Gun Emplacement Nos. 3 and 4 is one of three aligned gun emplacements at Fort McNab. In its materials and overall design and scale it is consistent with the other two emplacements and with other large concrete military structures at Fort McNab. The height and configuration of the radar building add to the prominence of the gun emplacement in the immediate area, and make it one of the few buildings at Fort McNab to be visible from the harbour channel.

Character-defining Elements

The heritage character of Gun Emplacement Nos. 3 and 4 resides in the following character-defining elements:

- The physical relationship and irregular footprint created by the assemblage of several structures over a number of construction periods between 1888 and 1944.
- The simple, functional design and concrete construction of the 10-inch gun emplacement, consisting of a raised, semi-circular concrete retaining wall and parapet, a large, central-pivot mounting base, and recesses for cartridges and shells.
- 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, separate stores for cartridges and shells, and a separate room for the heating system.
- Specialized features, including a shifting chamber between the cartridge stores, brick-lined vaulted ceilings in the cartridge stores, and lamp recesses in all rooms and corridors.
- Extant interior fittings of the magazine, including ammunition lifts to both gun emplacements, wooden doors, frames and benches.

- The crew shelter, consisting of one, small, underground, vaulted, concrete room with separate entryway and wing walls.
- The functional design and concrete construction of the 9.2-inch gun emplacement, consisting of a raised foundation and large, semi-circular concrete apron.
- The adaptive functional design of the radar building superimposed on the gun-mounting area of the original emplacement.
- The physical relationship of Gun Emplacement Nos. 3 and 4 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*.