

Ottawa, Ontario  
**Drill Hall**  
Cartier Square

## **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

The Cartier Square Drill Hall was built in 1879 to plans drawn up by the Department of Public Works. The building is now the property of the Department of National Defence. See FHBRO Building Report 84-38.

### **Reason for Designation**

On April 23, 1985, the drill hall was designated Classified because as a functioning drill hall it continues to serve its historical and ceremonial role in the city, and because it is an early and fine surviving example of post-Confederation (1868-1890) drill hall architecture.

The Cartier Square drill hall is the oldest unchanged drill hall of the four that survive from this period and remain in government hands. It exemplifies a significant building type that emerged in the 1870's as Canada took over responsibility for its own defence. The building was at the time of construction, and still is, the home of an active voluntary militia within the city. It serves two regiments, the Governor General's Foot Guards and the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa, both of which are direct successors of the units originally housed there. While space within the building is now at a premium, it is doubtful that the two units could meet their regimental requirements in other premises still situated within sight and marching distance of the city's ceremonial core.

### **Character Defining Elements**

Because of the continuity of its historical function, its architectural representativeness, and its prominent public profile, careful attention should be paid to those aspects of the building wherein this character particularly resides: its interior drill space, its two officers' messes, and its exterior, particularly the north façade.

Essential to militia drill in 1879 as at present is a large, clear span of covered, lighted space. In this drill hall the 19th Century technology of framing a clear open space is clearly expressed in the eleven exposed Queen Post trusses, braced and reinforced with iron ties. Nothing interferes with the appreciation of this exposed structural system, a situation that should be continued. Sufficient natural light is provided by the large round-headed windows across the front of the building and by the clerestory along the roof ridge. These should be maintained. Additional openings that have been obscured should be restored to their original function if the opportunity arises to modify the later additions on the exterior.

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**Drill Hall** (Continued)

Important to any drill hall is access to an adjacent outdoor parade square. The retention in Cartier Square of sufficient unobstructed exterior space should continue to be a priority. As well as being functionally necessary, this space serves to isolate the drill hall from its urban neighbours and to give it a prominent profile within the city core. Circulation in and out of the hall takes place through three large doors in the north façade. Although the original segmental arches have been somewhat altered and obscured, the circulation pattern should be maintained. It is also important on the interior that the traditional relationship and patterns of circulation between drill hall and flanking regimental quarters be respected. Within the quarters, the two officers' messes best preserve the character of the recreational life associated with militia regiments, and should be protected. Another significant decorative feature is the circular stained glass medallion set into the central window on the main façade.

The aesthetic qualities of the building's exterior are best revealed in the composition of its main (north) façade and in the decorative qualities of its brickwork. Intended to be simple and functional, the drill hall nonetheless achieves a picturesque appearance in its Italianate window patterns on the front façade and its flanking mansarded towers. These towers originally evoked the towers of the Parliament Buildings, and have recently been imitated by the towers of the new Carleton County Court House just west of the site. They must be preserved, preferably with their iron cresting reconstructed, as an essential element of the building's design context. Much of the polychromatic effect of the exterior has been lost in the recent application of protective paint; the possibility of returning the brick to the original polychromy should be investigated. Every effort should be made to preserve and enhance the decorative brick panels and moulded string courses.

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