
FHBRO Number 90-19

Lachine, Quebec

Machine Shop (Building No. 2)

Lachine Canal

The Machine Shop appears to have been built in 1909 according to plans prepared by an engineer from the Department of Railways and Canals. An extension was added in 1955. Designed for utilitarian purposes, the building currently serves as a workshop and warehouse for maintenance equipment for Parks Canada property in the Montreal region. Environment Canada is the custodian department. See FHBRO Building Report 90-19.

Reasons for Designation

The Machine Shop was designated Recognized for its architectural and environmental significance.

The Machine Shop evokes the period of urbanization on the shores of the Lachine Canal and attests to the important role played by the canal in the economic development of Canada.

The architectural interest of the building resides in the use of new construction methods and new materials. As one of the oldest industrial buildings in Quebec constructed entirely of concrete, the Machine Shop is a valuable example of the earliest applications of this material. Designed by engineers to meet functional requirements, the Machine Shop nevertheless presents an attractive architecture and a surprising aesthetic quality for a building of this type.

The Machine Shop and adjacent buildings form a coherent whole which constitutes a cultural landscape and merits preservation.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of the Machine Shop resides in the type of construction, the materials, the massing as well as the regular and symmetrical arrangement of the openings.

Several components of the building envelope demonstrate attention to detail; the footing is expressed through false blocks of dressed stone formed into the concrete, the wall framing is accentuated by the addition of concrete buttresses and the gables are covered with shingles. All these characteristics deserve to be retained and protected.

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The massing of the Machine Shop is simple and well-ordered. The long walls are divided into five sections separated from each other by pilasters. Each section is pierced by a large window or a door. The balanced distribution of the openings on the two facades must be respected. It would be desirable to restore the composition of the southern gable wall by reintroducing the two windows which once flanked the main door.

On the inside, the Machine Shop adapts the form of an axial factory plan with very sober finishes. The resulting free space facilitates the movement of large, heavy objects. There is no division except a small office space. In order to respect the original function of this building, the current volume should not be fragmented.

The concrete addition, built onto the northern gable wall around 1955, changed the functional design of the building by not extending the axial plan. While this structure does not really add to the aesthetic quality of the Machine Shop, it does not necessarily merit demolition. Its preservation may be justified by Parks Canada's functional requirements. If a decision is made to keep it, the blocked-up openings should be replaced by a window or door. These options should be confirmed by historical research.

It is recommended that emphasis be placed on preventive maintenance of the building in order to preserve all its historical components. Priority must be given to repairing the steel and concrete structure, and to restoring the crumbling parging. The hung sash windows are important elements and merit restoration. If the roof must be replaced, it would be advisable to redo it in sheet metal, the original material. It would be wise to conduct an inventory of the interior and exterior hardware.

The site on which the Machine Shop is located still has an industrial character today despite various changes, the most important of which is the construction of the nearby Bonaventure highway. It is important that no attempt be made to change this environment. The functional aspect of the site must continue to be evident in order to highlight the original function of the building.

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

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Translation
