

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Esplanade powder magazine was built in 1807 to plans by the military engineer Ralph Henry Bruyères. In 1959, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recognized its national historic significance. Since 1979 the structure has housed the reception centre for Quebec's fortifications, and it belongs to the Canadian Parks Service of Environment Canada. See FHBRO Report 88-1 65.

Reason for Designation

The Esplanade powder magazine was designated Recognized because its construction attests to the vast reorganization of Quebec City's defensive system at the turn of the nineteenth century, its functional design is of great quality, its relations with its immediate surroundings have changed very little and, finally, because it has become, over the years, a point of interest in Old Quebec.

An integral part of Quebec's system of fortifications, the Esplanade powder magazine has played a significant role in local history, as it bears witness to the defensive works building program begun in 1790 to meet the needs of a military presence that was growing steadily in the Upper Town of that period.

True to the pure military tradition established by the engineer Vauban, the magazine has all the features needed to render the two rooms characteristic of this type of edifice bomb-resistant and dry. The main building, of vaulted stone construction, is today still surrounded by a protective wall at a distance of 12 feet. Despite the addition of a roof between the two structures, the original design is still evident. The south-facing entrance and the presence of vents attest to the measures taken to ensure better ventilation.

This powder magazine is located close to the St-Louis Gate on the west side of the rampart in a setting that has always helped enhance its value. Since 1939, the building has housed various services to the community: a recreation centre, restaurant, and a reception centre. For this reason, and no doubt because of its picturesque character, it has become a landmark for both Quebec residents and the city's many tourists.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the edifice lies generally in the ensemble of features associated with its original function, namely: the protective wall built largely of coarse sandstone, the barrel vaults of the magazine, the vents in the longitudinal walls, and the interior division into two rooms.

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If a renovation or refit is ever done to the interior, it would be desirable to highlight these features of the building. In such case, the best way of restoring the original relationship

between the protective wall and the magazine would be to remove the roof that has connected them since the 1920s or 1930s. The vaults now covered up by hanging ceilings should be exposed. Unobtrusive modern lighting could be installed on the side walls to suit the requirements of the projected use of these spaces.

The original relationship of the magazine and its site still exists because of the presence of Esplanade Park, and the absence of big structures near by. It would be preferable to leave it that way.

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