

FHBRO Number 90-32

Artillery Park National Historic Site

Hangar for Gun Carriages

Québec, Quebec

The Hangar for Gun Carriages was built around 1814 in the gorge of the St. John Bastion bordering Rue d'Auteuil in Old Québec. Originally constructed as a storehouse, it was occupied by the British Army until the garrison's departure in 1871.

Subsequently, the Dominion Arsenal shared the building with the Quebec Electric Company. When this company moved several years later, the federal cartridge factory set up a caretaker's house there. The Arsenal continued to own the building until the 1960s.

The Hangar for Gun Carriages was modified between 1831 and 1841, but retains the same scale. Since then, the building has not undergone any major alterations, aside from the addition between 1908 and 1939 of semicircular dormers above the doors. Parks Canada is currently responsible for the building. See FHBRO Building Report 90-32.

Reasons for Designation

The Hangar for Gun Carriages was designated Recognized because of its association with the colonial defence system of Quebec City, then capital of Canada and seat of the government and military administration. From an architectural viewpoint, the building is notable for the quality of its workmanship, but especially for its facing of Sillery sandstone, a favourite stone of the Royal Engineers, which was also used to face the fortifications and the Citadel.

The Hangar is also noteworthy because of its site. It closes the gorge of the St. John Bastion and, with the Foundry building, forms an architectural ensemble that is part of the Artillery Park National Historic Site. This hangar was constructed during the same period as two other hangars, one located between the Dauphine Redoubt and the New Barracks, and the other near the St. Louis Bastion.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of the Hangar for Gun Carriages resides in the classical composition of its facade and its Sillery sandstone facing dating from 1831-1841. The building is well integrated into the site, both in terms of its stepped slab construction and its relationship with the neighbouring buildings.

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Initially built of wood, the Hangar for Gun Carriages is comprised of four 49-foot sections, each with five double doors and a dormer in its centre. A final 16-foot section was probably used as a blacksmith's shop. The building follows the natural slope of the land and has a stepped profile. This relationship to the ground is of primary importance.

When the initial wooden block was replaced by stone walls between 1831 and 1841, the roof timbers were left without their tensile support system. This explains the replacement of the single row of posts in the middle, seen on the Durnford survey of 1823, by a double row of posts, on longitudinal rails joining the principals to help support the span. During these modifications, the opportunity was taken to reduce the number of double doors from five to two, to add a window under the dormer, as well as to add loopholes and change the roof at either end. The hipped roof was then covered with a sheet metal roof with batten seams. Any future renovations will have to be carried out in a manner respectful of these phases in the building's history.

The semicircular dormers above the doors were added between 1908 and 1939. They harmonize very well with the building and lend a certain rhythm to the succession of bays. On the whole, the Hangar is a very good example of British classicism with the symmetrical arrangement of its openings, the alignment of the top of the doors and windows, the repetitions of bays and the balance between solids and voids. These characteristics should be maintained.

The successive renovations have left their traces on the interior layout. The documents suggest that originally the four sections were separate, each with an attic with a dormer (some indicators suggest that the dormers may have served as attic doors). The demising walls have since disappeared and the two middle sections have lost their attic in favour of a mezzanine, revealing the roof trusses. Any future work should highlight the building's post and beam construction. It should also respect the Hangar's stepped slab construction even if the new function requires maintaining the current undivided interior, which would prove to be a challenge for universal access. The blacksmith's shop, for its part, should remain a separate entity because of its specific function.

Although the bastion's powder magazine has been demolished, the Hangar continues to be associated with the rest of the original Artillery Barracks Yard. The blind wall running along Rue d'Auteuil delimits the complex and still serves as a guard wall. The

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Hangar for Gun Carriages has been part of the Artillery Park National Historic Site for 20 years. Because of its location near the St. John Gate, it is visible to thousands of passers-by every year. Its heritage character will therefore have to be preserved during any future interventions.

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