
FHBRO Number 91-38

The St. John Bastion Foundry

Artillery Park

Québec, Quebec

The Arsenal Foundry, located in the St. John Bastion, was built between 1902 and 1906 under the supervision of D. Ewart, the chief architect of the Department of Public Works. Over the years, the Foundry was modified and expanded several times to meet new needs, then restored between 1975 and 1977 to house an interpretation centre. The Arsenal Foundry is now the property of Parks Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 91-38.

Reasons for Designation

The St. John Bastion Foundry was designated Recognized for historical reasons, for its aesthetic qualities, the quality of its workmanship as well as for its environmental significance.

This building is a testimony to the period in Québec's military and industrial past when the Dominion Arsenal established its headquarters in the former Artillery Park. The Foundry, which created many jobs, is representative of the development of Québec's manufacturing sector in the 20th century. It also attests to the contribution of women to the war industry during the 20th century.

The Arsenal Foundry, with its architecture which recalls the classicism of the first hydro-electric stations, is a good example of an early 20th century industrial building. The choice of materials and the quality of the workmanship have contributed to its excellent state of preservation.

With the demolition of certain additions during the restoration, the original environment was restored. Despite its imposing dimensions, the Foundry is well integrated into the bastion's terreplein and does not detract from the image of the fortifications. Located near the St. John Gate, the Foundry currently serves as a reception and interpretation centre for Artillery Park, and consequently receives many visitors. We should also point out that this National Historic Site is located in Old Québec and is therefore recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of the St. John Bastion Foundry resides in its architectural form, the choice of building materials and techniques, as well as the integrity of its site.

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The current Foundry includes two main volumes: the original block, which is 25 feet high and topped by a pitched copper roof; and the extension, a long flat-roofed structure which was built later along the west wall. The original section houses the interpretation centre, while the two-storey addition houses the Parks Canada offices, to which access is provided by a discreet entrance on the southwestern corner.

The external envelope combines dressed stone foundations and red brick walls in a harmonious whole. The effect of monumentality is accentuated by the symmetrical alignment of the small-paned upper windows. On the facade, they are surmounted by semi-circular transoms while on the secondary elevations, a surbased arch simply highlights the upper portion. We should also point out several decorative elements in rough stone, such as the imposing voussoirs of the entrances, the window sills, the band course linking the openings on the facade as well as the band course running along the top of the wall.

The general proportions, the arrangement of the openings and the architectural details are all elements that define the heritage value of the building and merit preservation. Should it be necessary to replace certain defective stones or bricks, care should be taken to ensure that materials of the same type and texture are chosen; the new joints should faithfully reproduce the originals.

The five lanterns added later to provide light for the interior of the principal room reinforce the Foundry's industrial character. Leaving them intact is consistent with an important conservation principle, namely preserving the historical layers of a building. An effective maintenance program should be instituted to ensure their longevity as well as that of the attractive wooden windows.

The restoration of the interior demonstrates a respect for the integrity of the building as well as a concern for blending the modern elements with the original setting. Indeed, the designers were able to use the potential provided by the vast interior space to install a self-supporting structure in the middle of this space and thus expose the original load-bearing masonry walls and the metal roof trusses. The latter are representative of turn-of-the-century structures and must absolutely be preserved.

The arrangement of the inner courtyard, designed to accommodate large numbers of visitors, consists of hard surfaces alternating with grassy areas or areas planted with

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small shrubs. The latter are perhaps not very representative of a military/industrial facility. Historical research on period treatments could lead to new interpretative elements concerning the site.

1997.02.28

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