

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Administration Building (originally known as Journey's End) was built in 1928-32 as a residence for Muriel Wingfield, on the estate of her father, industrialist James Dunsmuir. It was acquired in 1952 by the Department of National Defence as part of the Royal Rhodes Military College, and served as a residence for senior naval officers stationed at the Esquimalt naval base. It became the property of the Canadian Parks Service in 1988, since which time it has served as the Administration Building for the Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Park. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 92-10.

Reasons For Designation

The Administration Building was designated Recognized as a result of its association with the theme of suburban residential development on Vancouver Island in the 1920s and 1930s, for its Arts and Crafts design, and for the integrity of the site.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Victoria Island was a favoured location for the development of private summer estates. Hatley Park estate, the largest in western Canada, consisted of 650 acres on Esquimalt Harbour near Fort Rodd Hill. The estate and the Hatley Castle mansion formed the country retreat of wealthy industrialist James Dunsmuir, who served as British Columbia's premier from 1900 to 1902, and as its Lieutenant-Governor from 1906 to 1909. His daughter, Muriel Wingfield, was given a twelve-acre parcel of the property on which to build her house, which she called Journey's End.

The architecture associated with the turn-of-the-century Arts and Crafts movement is based on functional designs using vernacular forms and traditional materials and craftsmanship. Journey's End is a late example of this domestic style, which flourished in Victoria and southern Vancouver Island from the 1890s through to the late 1920s. Its leading regional exponent was Victoria architect Samuel Maclure, who designed a succession of stately Arts and Crafts Style homes in the area, including several for members of the Dunsmuir family. The largest of these commissions was Hatley Castle. The source for Muriel Wingfield's house has not been determined, but its design bears close resemblance to work from the final years of Maclure's career.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of this structure is defined by its Arts and Crafts design elements, including its massing, simple detailing, functional layout, and use of traditional materials; and by its unchanged setting.

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Elements of the profile of the building which signify its Arts and Crafts origin include the profusion of gables, the pitched roofs with overhanging eaves, bands of multi-paned casement windows, whose placement is dictated by functional requirements, and projecting elements such as the bay window, the front entrance porch, and single-storey sunrooms, which both enliven the facades, and establish connections between the interior and the surroundings. The use of stucco, of simplified detailing in the vergeboards and limited half-timbering, and of historic references such as the pointed-arch opening of the entrance porch are also typical of Arts and Crafts designs. These characteristic design features should be preserved.

The interior retains its original layout despite its current use as an administrative office. The plan reflects the typical Arts and Crafts articulation around a stairhall, with principal rooms oriented to the sunlight and the view. This highly characteristic arrangement of spaces must be retained.

An Arts and Crafts emphasis on craftsmanship and the use of traditional materials is evidenced in the stone foundation, the stucco wall finish, the multi-paned windows, and the interior plasterwork, mouldings, and detailing. These original materials should be carefully maintained and preserved.

The tree-covered private site, on the crest of a hill overlooking the harbour and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, has remained unchanged since the house was constructed. The seclusion and the unobstructed view should be protected by restricting development on the property.

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