

Colwood, British Columbia

Warrant Officer's Quarters

Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site

The Warrant Officer's Quarters at Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site is a two-storey house designed by the British Royal Engineers and built in 1897 to accommodate the officer or caretaker in charge of the fort. Presently the house serves as office accommodation for temporary staff, with a small interpretive exhibit for visitors at ground level. Internally the house underwent major rehabilitation twice, in 1945 when it became an officer's mess, and in 1966 when it was refurbished as offices. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 96-96.

Reasons For Designation

The Warrant Officer's Quarters at Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site was designated Recognized for its environmental significance, architectural importance, and historical associations.

Laid out in the mid 1890s and constructed as a key part of a chain of coastal military defences protecting the indented coastline at the south of Vancouver Island, Fort Rodd Hill was the first large-scale military fortification on Canada's west coast. The Warrant Officer's Quarters is significant as an original component of the fort whose planning, original buildings, and setting into the shoreline environment survive intact. The house is located centrally in the fort, on the path linking the three batteries. It faces onto the large field where military encampments and exercises once occurred.

Architecturally, the house maintains its strong, simple late-Victorian design featuring a rectilinear plan and massing, a gable roof, red brick walls, painted sash windows and panelled doors reflecting the functional design and construction methods favoured by the British military engineers in this period.

The Warrant Officer's Quarters, as an original part of the fort, is associated with British Royal Navy strategy for the Pacific in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and with Canadian coastal defence strategy between 1906-1956, particularly during World War II when the fort defences were modernised. Thereafter, the fort, including the house, is associated with its present custodian, Parks Canada, with the interpretation of Canadian coastal defence history, and with the development of tourism in the region.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Warrant Officer's Quarters lies in its site relationships, in its functional late-Victorian era design and materials, and internally in its general layout,

Colwood, British Columbia

Warrant Officer's Quarters

Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site

surviving original internal finishes, stairs and components.

With a simple, severe, cube-like form, pitched roof, gable-fronted entrance elevation, and attached single-storey bathroom to the rear, the Warrant Officer's Quarters is characterized by its sturdy, durable red brick construction, clean straight lines and surfaces, spare detailing, and contrasting white-painted functional elements, including wood roof trim, doors, sash windows and their surrounds. Important elements include: the continuous projecting base of the external brick walls around the house just below window sill height; the painted wood roof trim including barge boards, fascia boards and soffits; the large rectangular brick chimney stack corbelled out at the top; the white-painted date stone centred in the entrance gable; and the functionally located and sized windows and doors with their brick arched openings. The elevations should maintain their harmonious design relationship with the other original structures and buildings of the fort.

Internally refurbished twice, the house maintains its original floor and ceiling structures, and its configuration with respect to halls and staircases (including balustrades) and rooms. These should be respected and maintained, complete with surviving original feature elements including fireplaces, finishes and trim, doors and fixtures.

The Warrant Officer's Quarters is a central element in the ensemble of defense structures and support buildings which comprise the fort. The house contributes significantly to the unity, integrity and overall 1890s design character of the fort due to its scale, form, style and finishes, including red brick walls and pitched roof. Any future developments or landscape alterations should respect and not diminish the relationship between the house, the batteries and the World War II hut to the north. In particular the open space between the house and the hut should be respected. The turfgrass ground plane is a characteristic feature of this setting. Interpretive presentation media should be as unobtrusive as possible.

1998.03.31

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