
FHBRO Number 90-31

Grosse Île, Quebec

The Catholic Presbytery (No. 49)

The Grosse Île Catholic Presbytery was built in 1848 according to plans by architect Michel Patry; it underwent major repairs in 1878 and a second storey was added in 1913. This building first served as the residence of the military commander of the quarantine station and later of the medical superintendent, before being converted to use as a Presbytery in 1874; it is currently unoccupied. The Catholic Presbytery is the property of the Department of Canadian Heritage and is part of the Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site. See FHBRO Building Report 90-31 (Part I: 1832-1860).

Reasons for Designation

The Grosse Île Catholic Presbytery was designated Recognized mainly for its historical value. The 1832-1860 period marked the establishment of what would be, for more than a century, Canada's main quarantine station. Only four buildings from this earliest period of occupation have survived; the Presbytery is apparently the third oldest, after the Lazaretto and the Electrician's House (No. 11). Together with the Catholic Chapel, it is the last surviving vestige of the heart of the former village in this sector of Grosse Île.

The form of the Catholic Presbytery and its architectural qualities are also noteworthy. This wooden building is a particularly good illustration of the transition from a picturesque architecture, designed with seasonal occupancy in mind, to an architecture motivated by concern for the health of its occupants, forced to spend the winter on the island. The good state of preservation of the foundations and of the original block attest to its well-crafted construction.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Presbytery resides in its general form as well as in the materials and ornamental details which refer to different historical layers. Its generic association with the Chapel is also a contributing factor.

The Catholic Presbytery has preserved all of the major elements which illustrate its evolution. The clapboard siding of the ground floor makes it possible to clearly distinguish the original block. The form of the hipped roof and its dormers, inspired by the Regency style, dates from the same period. From 1878, the building has retained the woodwork of the ground floor windows and the dormers. The stone foundations,

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built at the turn of the century, replaced the original pillars. The second storey, as well as the extension located at the rear, are from the same period; these additions can be easily distinguished by their wood shingle cladding. These formal characteristics, which make it possible to read the successive phases of the building, should ideally be left undisturbed.

The arrangement of the windows on the ground floor and of the dormers has not changed since the building was first built. It displays a Neoclassical regularity on the facade, while it is irregular on the other elevations. The distribution of the windows on the second storey is symmetrical on the facade; on the sides, it varies depending on the needs of the interior spaces.

The ornamental details that embellish the windows (small raised pediments) and the Renaissance Revival-inspired portal (pediment, entablature and pilasters) are characteristic elements of this composition. Any defective elements should be repaired rather than replaced, if possible; however, if certain components are irrecoverable, the replacement elements should be similar in all respects to the originals. The same principle will apply to the exterior wooden cladding.

The disappearance of the large verandah that once encircled the Presbytery on three sides detracts from the building's charm. It would be appropriate to restore the stairs and the former verandah from the 1920s.

The layout of the interior rooms has remained virtually unchanged. The entry vestibule, designed to keep out the cold, opens into the main entrance hall, which is flanked by two rooms of equal size on either side. The same arrangement is repeated on the second storey. It is recommended that this layout be maintained.

The various construction phases are also evident in the finishing materials, which differ from floor to floor. On the ground floor, the ceiling joints are concealed with cover mouldings, and there are elongated ogee mouldings. The staircase is typical of those built during the first half of the nineteenth century: square-turned balusters and bulbous newel posts. On the second storey, the faux pilaster window casings are a noteworthy detail. The kitchen, built as an extension to keep cooking odours out of the main structure, has several period elements including a wooden cupboard built under the fireplace. Generally, all the doors and windows, finishing materials, hardware and fixtures which date from the various construction periods should be preserved.

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The proximity of the Catholic Chapel lends the Presbytery its full meaning; it is therefore essential to maintain this relationship. The treatment of the site could be revamped based on available iconographic documents.

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

Translation
