

FHBRO Number 90-27b

Fort Lennox, Quebec

## **Guardhouse**

Saint-Paul-de-l'Île-aux-Noix

The Guardhouse was constructed between 1821 and 1823, under the direction of the engineer Samuel Romilly, to house the guard picket and prison. It was left vacant when the British troops withdrew in 1871. When Fort Lennox was designated a National Historic Site in 1922, the Guardhouse was used as a workshop and storage. From 1940 to 1944 it served as a refugee internment camp. In 1945-47, the second storey was converted to a dormitory for members of Jeunesse étudiante catholique. It later reverted to a workshop and storage. The facade of the Guardhouse was restored in 1973-74. Today it is unoccupied, but has interpretation modules on the ground floor. It is part of Fort Lennox National Historic Site. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Report No. 90-27.

### **Reasons for Designation**

The Fort Lennox Guardhouse has been designated Classified because of its considerable architectural and environmental value and because of the significance of the historical theme associated with it.

The aesthetic design of the Guardhouse is notable for its balance and strength. These qualities reside largely in the ground-floor portico set off by a series of rusticated stone arches. The vaulted ground-floor ceiling reflects the defensive role that the building was intended to play if necessary. The adaptation of the building to each new function is evidence of the flexibility of its design, and the quality of its construction details is an indication of the high standards of the period. The technical challenge of restoring the portico facade, which had sagged over the years, was successfully met.

The Guardhouse is strategically located within the Fort. Its presence alongside the officers' quarters is one of the most memorable images of the National Historic Site. In addition to its classic architectural beauty, it holds particular fascination for visitors because it was formerly used as a detention facility.

After the War of 1812-14, the British high command revised their defensive strategy for Upper and Lower Canada in view of the threat of invasion from the United States. To repel an enemy advancing through Lake Champlain and the Richelieu River, and to protect the supply depot on Île-Sainte-Hélène, it was decided to build a fortification on Île-aux-Noix. This site was preferred over Saint-Jean because of its clear advantages in the event of a naval assault. The Guardhouse contributed to the strategic role of the Fort.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of the Guardhouse resides in its architectural composition,

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construction details, and its interior layout, designed for the purposes of detention and defence. It resides also in its relationship to the neighbouring officers' quarters.

The elements that define the architectural composition of this building are its rectangular plan, the arcaded portico, the hip roof, and the regular arrangement of openings; these elements should all be preserved. To maintain the coherent composition, the roof style and materials should follow the original concept. Similarly, the original windows and doors should be either repaired or replicated according to the original designs. The installation of modern mechanical installations should not cause damage to historical fabric (e.g., existing openings could be utilized where necessary.)

The masonry walls of the Guardhouse are constructed of cut stone laid in a very carefully designed arrangement. The masonry work includes quoins, a belt course on the facade, and rustication on the portico and voussoirs (those on the facade being different from those on the end walls). To preserve the visual integrity of the walls, it is recommended that any new mortar or replacement stones match the original fabric (in material, colour, shape and bonding).

Any future alterations to the building should be adapted to the building's capacity. If it is to be used as a museum, the surviving materials and elements of decor, including the three brick fireplaces, should not be altered. The traces of the old cells and the bell system, reminders of the building's use as a detention facility, should be preserved; the metal doors of the cells should be rustproofed to extend their useful life. Elements serving as reminders of the building's defensive role (compartmentalized layout, thick walls, vaults and arrow slits) are formal characteristics and should be preserved.

Maintaining the integrity of the environment and defensive works around the Guardhouse is highly desirable. The strong similarity between this building and the Officers' Quarters should not be altered, as this would diminish the impact of the architectural symmetry in relation to the main gate of Fort Lennox. Changes to the grounds that would be inconsistent with the military setting are to be avoided.

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

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Translation