

Fort Lennox, Quebec
Officers' Quarters
Casemates of the North and West Fronts
Saint-Paul-de-l'Ile-aux-Noix

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The officers' quarters were built in the period 1821-1827 to the plans of Samuel Romilly, then commanding officer of the Royal Engineers in the Montreal district. It seems that the design for some of the casemates built between 1819 and 1830 can also be attributed to Romilly.

The officers' quarters and casemates are integral parts of Fort Lennox, which became a national historic site in 1922. Today, the second storey of the officers' quarters houses the offices of Fort Lennox National Historic Park's services to the public, and the ground floor has exhibition rooms. The casemates are mostly unused, except for one, which houses a generator. The casemates form part of the Fort Lennox interpretation plan. These structures belong to the Canadian Parks Service. See FHBRO Report 89-57.

Reason for Designations

The officers' quarters were designated Classified and the casemates on the north and west fronts were designated Recognized. These structures were designated because their construction attests to the defensive strategy for Canada's borders that was current between 1820 and 1830. The officers' quarters are also of excellent aesthetic quality while the casemates of the north front are very good. Finally, it must be emphasized that the historic association between all these buildings and the scenic country setting of Ile-aux-Noix has remained unchanged.

In the wake of their experiences in the War of 1812-1814, the British military authorities reviewed their defensive strategy for warding off attacks from the south, and a few years later they decided to build a new fortification at Ile-aux-Noix: Fort Lennox. The prime objective of this fort was to halt any enemy advance by way of Lake Champlain and the Richelieu River. The officers' quarters and the casemates were built to meet the needs of the British garrison posted in Fort Lennox.

Though relatively simple volumetrically, the officers' quarters are architecturally attractive and esthetically striking. The pattern of the masonry on the main facade of the building, drawing on the Palladian style, brings out the remarkable series of archways behind which there is a longitudinal portico. The more Spartan treatment of the secondary facades shows a neoclassical influence.

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The interior of the officers' quarters is also of interest, as the woodwork has remained appreciably as it was at the time of construction, and the original partitions, despite some alterations, still exist.

Finally, the good state of preservation of a large number of the original architectural details of the officers' quarters shows that the materials we chosen have proven durable and that excellent workmanship quality was maintained throughout construction.

The architectural quality of the first four casemates built on the north front is related to their symmetrical distribution on both sides of the passage of the fort entrance. In functional terms, the design of the casemates located on both the north and west fronts is typical of the military engineering of the period, which counselled the use of the rampart embankments to erect bomb-proof structures. These casemates, taking the form of circular or elliptical masonry vaults, were used for a variety of complementary and utilitarian functions connected with garrison operations. Different materials and details were employed in the design of the casemates associated with the officers' quarters or the barracks. These variations, in the quality of finishes for instance, were intended to distinguish officers from men in the military hierarchy.

Character Defining Elements

Officers' Quarters:

The heritage character of this edifice lies in its facades, with their skillfully fitted cut stone, and in the large number of original interior details.

The existing contrast between the masonry of the wall sections, with their smooth surfaces, and the rusticated quoins and archways, is a notable characteristic and must be preserved. The obvious similarity between the officers' quarters and their counterpart, the guardhouse, creates a symmetrical combination in relation to the entrance to the Fort Lennox parade square. The arcaded portico and hipped roof and regular distribution of openings are elements that define this similarity and should not be altered. To do so would diminish the impact of this architectural similarity, unquestionably deliberate at the time the fort was laid out.

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Fort Lennox, Quebec Officers' Quarters Casemates of the North and West Fronts Saint-Paul-de-l'Ile-aux-Noix (Cont'd)

Great care must be taken with the banisters on staircases and the door- and window-frames that exemplify the rich interior woodwork of the officers' quarters. Any future museological arrangements should be designed so as not to alter the existing distribution of space or cover up the original fireplaces and other distinctive elements of the interior decor.

Casemates of the North and West Fronts:

The overall effect created by a succession of apertures under the ramparts of Fort Lennox's north and west curtains largely determines the casemates' heritage value.

These vaulted spaces covered with earth merit preservation as essential components of the fort. A number of details go back to the casemates' construction: fireplaces, small hand-basins and other details of this kind still survive. They should be left in place and protected. The archings and the masonry ribbon decorating the casemate facades on both sides of the fort entrance help to reinforce the symmetry mentioned above. The casemates' present appearance should be preserved.

The scenic country setting of the officer's quarters and casemates is still what it was when the British military occupied Ile-aux-Noix. Fortunately, no construction has come to disturb these fortifications. If the vocation of Fort Lennox and Ile-aux-Noix is maintained in future, continuity should be ensured for the fort's surroundings.

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