

FHBRO number: **89-113**
DFRP Number: **19627**
Resource name: **Men's House**
Address: **Fort St. James National Historic Site, British Columbia**
Construction: **1884 (Hudson's Bay Company), restored and partially reconstructed in the 1970s**
Original function: **Clerk's residence, employees' residence**
Current function: **Part of Fort St. James National Historic Site**
Custodian: **Parks Canada**
FHBRO status: **'Recognized' Federal Heritage Building**

Reasons for designation

The Men's House is a 'Recognized' Federal Heritage Building because of its historical, architectural, and environmental values:

Historical value: Fort St. James, founded in 1806 as the administrative centre for fur trade in New Caledonia, played a key role in the development of transportation and communications in northern British Columbia. It provided a base from which the North West Company, and later the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), traded with local First Nations peoples, in particular the Carrier tribe. The Men's House was constructed by the HBC in 1884, the first year of a five-year program aimed at renewing the trading establishment at Stuart Lake. Originally intended to house the clerk, it served as an employees' residence instead due to the cancelled construction of a men's barracks. As one of the oldest buildings in the vicinity of the present-day town of Fort St. James, it also represents a significant phase in the history of the community.

Architectural value: The Men's House and four other buildings on the site constitute the largest group of extant wood fur trade structures in Canada. The Men's House is a well-constructed, rectangular 1-1/2-storey log building with a gable roof. It is simple and plainly finished, reflecting its function and the status of its inhabitants. Like the original Officers' Dwelling House (also FHBRO number 89-113), constructed the same year, it is built of large squared logs, laid horizontally, with dovetailed corners. The exterior walls are for the most part original, although they have undergone repairs.

Environmental value: The Men's House was relocated between 1884 and 1889 and, while its immediate context has undergone changes since that time, the early character of its setting is today largely intact. The building reinforces the cultural landscape of the restored and reconstructed fort.

Character-defining elements

The following character-defining elements of the Men's House should be respected:

Its illustration of the significant role of the fur trade in Canadian history and its changing requirements over time:

- Its current role, as an integral part of the Fort St. James National Historic Site, in the interpretation of the Canadian fur trade, and more precisely, as a Men's House that served other functions (employees' residence, schoolhouse, and rental building), in affirming the need for such structures to adapt to the changing requirements of the fort.

Its simple design and high-quality horizontal log construction:

- The simple form and its arrangement of large windows with a single door. (The building has undergone major renovations and its original interior arrangement is unknown.)
- Its original horizontal log exterior walls with dovetailed corners, which are largely intact. (They rest on a new foundation wall and the roof and the vertical boards of its end gables have been replaced.)

Its spatial relationship with its immediate context and the fort as a whole:

- Its visibility within the historic site due to the open area around the building, which was relocated shortly after its construction to comply with a more axial plan of the fort.
- Its relationship with the surrounding buildings, which is reinforced by the wooden platforms, fences, and other features that make up the restored and reconstructed cultural landscape of the Fort St. James National Historic Site.

For guidance on interventions, refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*. For further information, contact FHBRO.

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