

**FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT
OFFICER'S DWELLING HOUSE, FORT ST. JAMES, BRITISH COLUMBIA (89-113) / PAGE 1**

FHBRO number: **89-113**
DFRP Number: **19627**
Resource name: **Officer's Dwelling 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: **Residence of officer, residence of officer and clerk**
Current function: **Part of National Historic Site**
Custodian: **Parks Canada**
FHBRO status: **'Recognized' Federal Heritage Building**

Reasons for designation

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

Historical values: 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 the First Nations peoples, in particular the Carrier tribe. The Officer's Dwelling House was built by the HBC in 1884, the first year of a five-year program aimed at renewing the trading establishment on Stuart Lake. It was designed to serve as the residence of the officer in charge of the fort, but it was shared with the clerk after the latter's quarters became the Men's House. As one of the oldest buildings in the vicinity of the present-day town of Fort St. James, it also represents a significant period in the history of the community.

Architectural values: The Officer's Dwelling House and four other buildings on the site constitute the largest group of extant wood fur trade structures in Canada. A side-gabled, 1-1/2-storey rectangular log building with a large verandah, the Officer's Dwelling House is a good example of Victorian rural domestic architecture. Like the Men's House (also FHBRO number 89-113), it was built of squared and dovetailed logs laid horizontally, but its larger size and more elaborate detailing reflect the higher status of its occupants. After extensive renovations over time, it was restored and partially reconstructed in the 1970s to its mid-1890s configuration and appearance.

Environmental values: The immediate context of the Officer's Dwelling House contrasts with the rest of the fort because of its domestic character. As one of the original and most dominant elements within the site, it reinforces the character of the restored and reconstructed fort.

Character-defining elements

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

Its illustration of the significance 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 the Officer's Dwelling House that also served as the officer's and clerk's residence, in affirming - through its impressive size, distinctive architecture, and garden setting - the important status of the officer in charge and clerk of a major administration centre for the fur trade in western Canada.

Its distinctive rural domestic architectural character and its high-quality horizontal log construction:

- The original rectangular, side-gabled, 1-1/2-storey form, with its prominent roof, verandah, central-hall plan, and entrance door arrangement.
- The horizontal log exterior walls with dovetailed corners, which are largely intact despite a new foundation wall.
- The original front door and side lites.
- The reconstructed bedroom and kitchen extensions.
- The restored mid-1890s interior configuration.
- The original interior features - including wall and ceiling panelling, decorative beaded details, and flooring - and the appropriately reconstructed interior features.

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

- The original relationship with the surrounding garden, trees, and dairy building, which reinforces the character of the present-day arrangement of

buildings, 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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