Halifax, Nova Scotia
Lower Battery (No. 85)
Fort Charlotte, Georges Island
Halifax Defence Complex

The casemated Lower Battery of Fort Charlotte, on the seaward face of Georges Island, was constructed in 1868-71 for the colonial garrison of the Imperial War Department based at Halifax, under the command of Major General Hastings Doyle. The Battery, a fortification in its own right, is built into the counterscarp of the Fort proper, and connected to it by the south caponier. The Battery, which mounted four 10 inch rifled muzzle-loading (RML) guns, and contained three expense shell stores, four expense cartridge stores, and a general artillery store, was designed by Lieutenant-General William F. Drummond Jervois and Lieutenant E. Harding Steward of the Corps of Royal Engineers. External modifications include: the walling up of the window embrasures in front of the shields and the backfilling of the space between the earthen traverses (c.1901); the re-configuration of the doors in the counterscarp wall (n.d.); the attachment of permanent iron covers to the caps of the circular brick ventilation shafts (n.d.); and the restoration of the earthen traverses and the re-exposure of the armour-plated gun ports (1993). Internal modifications include: the dismounting of the guns (c. 1901) and the removal of the heavy doors to the stores (n.d.). The Lower Battery is currently the property of Canadian Heritage. See FHBRO Building Report 95-01, Volume 2.

Reasons for Designation

The Lower Battery was designated Classified because of its important historical associations, the quality of its architectural design and workmanship and its environmental significance.

The associated theme is the defence of the Imperial naval station during the period of heightened tension following the Trent affair of 1861, and the change in armament technology represented by the appearance of the rifled muzzle-loading (RML) cannon. Displaying the latest military engineering theory on the mounting of heavy muzzle-loading rifled guns in a casemated battery, the use of armour-plated gun shields in window embrasures, and the segregated storage and movement of shells, cartridges and fuses in a multiple gun battery, the well preserved Lower Battery of Fort Charlotte is a rare surviving example of a casemated battery from the RML era.

The construction of the Lower Battery at Fort Charlotte occurred toward the end of an extensive modernization program involving the whole of the Halifax Defence Complex,

which began in 1865 and continued well into the 1 870s. The influx of funds targeted to the fortifications, together with the increased personnel needed to supervise the construction and man the defences, had a significant impact on the community of Halifax.

Viewed from the south, the Battery is impressive for the formidable but elegant seaward facing irregular coursed ironstone rubble wall with its cut granite parapet and framed window embrasures. The geometrically shaped earth cover (burster layer) to the casemates and the earthen traverses in front of the wall (now restored) contribute to its appearance. Internally, the casemates in particular, with their irregularly coursed ironstone rubble walls, openings framed in cut granite and ceilings of segmental and conical section brick barrel vaulting, display an equally competent handling of masonry materials, notable for its large spans, clean geometrical lines, and strength.

The dismounting of the RML ordinance at the Lower Battery in 1901 and the use of the structure as a magazine during WWI had little impact on the immediate environment. The uncovering of the window embrasures and restoration of the earthen traverses on the seaward face of the Battery in 1993 have re-established its character defining role. Visible to marine traffic passing the Island and to the occasional visitor, the Lower Battery enjoys a certain recognition among Haligonians.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Lower Battery resides in its status as a specialized coastal artillery structure, designed for the mounting of RML guns in a casemated bomb-proof structure with its attendant stores. Externally, the features which define the heritage character of the Battery are the irregular trace of the work and the ironstone casemate face (in three planes) with granite-framed flat-arched embrasure openings containing two segmental rere-arches (similar in pattern to the experimental casemates erected at Shoeburyness in 1870) separated by shaped earthen traverses. Also characteristic of an RML battery is the treatment of the ironstone rear wall, which because of the concern for exhausting fumes and smoke has wide segmental relieving arches within which were centred timber double doors and glazed transoms.

The heritage character of the exterior would be best protected by restoring the profile of

the earthworks, hydroseeding and mulching, repointing the masonry and lifting the RML gun barrels out of the floor of the ditch so the pitted and corroded bottomside surfaces contacting the ground can be treated.

Internally, the features which define the heritage character of the Battery are: the linear arrangement of casemates and stores, the vaulted bomb-proof construction of the battery roof, the solid masonry walls and the cut-granite trim. The plan of the battery is comprised of four casemates, each flanked by an expense shell store and an expense cartridge store built into the masonry front. The various chambers are connected by a passage parallelling the rear face and terminating in a general artillery store.

The roofs of the casemates, stores and passages each comprise a semi-circular or segmental profile brick vault of five rings coated in two thicknesses of asphalt, a layer of concrete and a thick earth cover. The side walls of the casemates and rear wall of the work are an irregularly coursed ironstone rubble construction with cut-granite quoins at the angles. The wall of the communication passage facing the front is lined with brick in an English pattern bond, while the stores are lined with brick laid in a Common bond. Doors within the brick-lined walls are fitted with a one-piece lintel, a pair of "hinge stones," and a single "lock stone" in cut-granite, rebated to carry a heavy door.

Other features characteristic of an RML battery of the period are the brick lined conical-shaped ventilation shafts rising from the roof of the communication passage, the smaller diameter vent shafts rising from the roof of each expense shell store, the iron-framed and brick-lined lamp recesses in the rear wall opposite each store, the painted nomenclature of each gun on the embrasure arch and the rectangular vents closed by a perforated zinc plate centred over each store door.

Surviving within the casemate are a variety of metal artifacts of significant heritage value, all in a heavily corroded state: the armour plate shields (three thicknesses of 5 inch armour plate separated by 5 inches of iron concrete, bolts, nuts, an iron supporting structure and port frame) mounted in the embrasures, the mantlet bars and rings attached to the rear of the shields, the racers and traversing arcs mounted on granite sleepers set in the concrete gun floors, the luff tackle eyebolts in the side walls, the pintles set in the door jambs, the lamp recess frames anchored to the rear wall and

other fittings. The detailed recording and conservation of these artifacts should be given the highest priority.

Halifax, Nova Scotia
Lower Battery (No. 85)
Fort Charlotte, Georges Island
Halifax Defence Complex

The interior of the Lower Battery maintains a good deal of the visual quality and integrity of the original 1868-1 871 design, despite the dismounting of the guns and the removal from the site of the traversing slides and carriages, heavy doors, and all of the interior fittings. Future work should focus on achieving a stable environment, repairing and repointing the masonry and arresting the corrosion of the metal artifacts.

The historic relationship between the Lower Battery, the seaward slope, earthen traverses, earth cover, dry ditch, and escarp wall is largely intact. Restoring the profile of the traverses and cover and controlling the vegetation would enhance the military character of the area.

1997.10.20

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