

Halifax, Nova Scotia

**Halifax Citadel**

**Counterscarp Gallery and Countermines**

Halifax Defence Complex

The Counterscarp Gallery and Countermines in the Citadel at Halifax were begun in 1829 - 1832 and completed in 1838-1849 for the colonial garrison of the Imperial War department based at Halifax. The Gallery and Countermines were the work of four members of the Corps of Royal Engineers: Lieutenant-Colonel Gustavas Nicolls (1825-1831), responsible for the original design; Lieutenant Colonel Richard Boteler (1831-1833), who deepened the footings opposite the northwest demi-bastion because of "made ground"; Captain Loyalty Peake (Acting), who evolved the idea of segmented vaulting; and Lieutenant Colonel Rice Jones (1833-1842), who deleted one half of the countermines and executed most of the construction. Modifications are summarized at Appendix A to this document. The Counterscarp Gallery and Countermines are currently the property of Canadian Heritage. See FHBRO Building Report 95-01, Volume 1.

**Reasons for Designation**

The Counterscarp Gallery and Countermines were designated Classified because of their important historical associations, the qualities of their architectural design and the important role they play in the environment.

The theme identified for the tunnel complex is its association with the active defence of the Imperial naval station in the period of mutual suspicion and hostility between Great Britain and the United States following the War of 1812. Displaying the prototypical characteristics of a bastioned masonry fortress component designed for the musketry defence of the ditch and scarp wall and the placing and firing of explosives beneath the glacis during a siege, the Counterscarp Gallery and Countermines are rare completed examples from the smoothbore era. The completion of the Gallery and Countermines in 1849 was part of a major upgrade of the Halifax defences advocated by the Smythe Report of 1825 and largely accomplished between 1838 and 1862. The employment generated by this project and the money poured into the local economy gave a great boost to the economic and social life of Halifax.

Viewed from the ditch, the Counterscarp on the north and west fronts is impressive for the tall vertical ironstone walling with finely executed cut-granite quoins, framed musketry loopholes and projecting coping. The Counterscarp on the remaining fronts is notable for the equally high, granite ashlar walling, pierced at intervals by musketry loopholes and carrying a projecting coping. Viewed from the interior, the Gallery is impressive for the 3500' long, dimly lit, vaulted passage completely encircling the star

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shaped trace of the fortress.

As an integral and complementary component of the main body of the work, the Counterscarp Gallery and Countermines have a strong, reinforcing influence on the military character of the Citadel.

**Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of the Counterscarp Gallery resides in its status as specialized military structure, a vaulted passage within the counterscarp fitted with musketry loopholes, for the defence of the ditch and the escarp wall. The heritage character of the Countermines resides in their status as specialized military structures, vaulted tunnels beneath the glacis, for the planting of explosive charges which could be fired when the enemy occupied the ground directly above the mine. Externally, the features which define the heritage character of the 1829-1832 sections of this counterscarp gallery are: the irregular coursed roughly squared and hammer-faced ironstone counterscarp wall with a projecting beveled granite coping; the cut-granite framed vertical musketry loopholes; and the cut-granite quoins. The heritage character of the 1838-1849 sections of counterscarp gallery is defined by: the rock faced chisel drafted granite ashlar counterscarp wall with a projecting beveled granite coping; and the vertical musketry loopholes with a one-piece flat lintel.

The heritage character of the exterior would be best protected by regular repointing of the ironstone and granite walling and granite coping.

Internally the features which define the heritage character of the 1829-1832 sections of counterscarp gallery are: the long unbroken gallery walls of irregular coursed ironstone rubble and the continuous segmental profile brick barrel vault. The features defining the heritage character of the 1838-1849 sections of counterscarp gallery are: the inter-connected oblong compartments; the irregularly coursed roughly squared ironstone walls; and the transverse segmental profile brick barrel vaults. Another character defining feature of the counterscarp galleries generally is the construction of the roof (a 1' 6" thick brick arch, a wedge shape of rubble masonry sloping down from the top of the counterscarp to the top of the rear wall, covered with tiling laid in cement and a thick earth cover). Internally the features which define the heritage character of these countermines are the "T" shape plan and the narrow and low tunnels.

The heritage character of the interior would be best protected by monitoring the

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performance of the waterproofing over the Gallery, replacing spalled brick in the vaults, repointing the ironstone walling and brick vaulting, monitoring wall movements, and cleaning the efflorescence staining of the masonry.

The historic relationship between the counterscarp and glacis has been impaired by the construction of the perimeter road under the Unemployment and Relief Project of 1932-1936. Further damage was sustained by the widening and paving of the road in 1938-1939. Restoration of the slope of the glacis in a number of representative sections would enhance the historic character of the site.

APPENDIX A

External modifications include: the dismantling of the two walls opposite the west ravelin escarp and adjoining sections of west counterscarp (1932-1936), the construction of the perimeter road and the cutting down of the crest of the glacis where it met the coping of the counterscarp wall (1938-1939), the reconstruction of the south counterscarp wall and musketry tunnel of the west ravelin using a poured concrete arch over the gallery (1938-1940), the repair or reconstruction of sections of counterscarp wall and musketry gallery on all faces except those opposite the redan, north and south ravelins, and left escarp of the west ravelin using a poured concrete arch over the gallery (1950), the construction of floodlighting niches in the counterscarp wall (n.d.), the blocking up of three entrances to the Gallery (n.d.), the construction of an exposed-concrete vehicular ramp over the counterscarp, opposite the left face of the Northwest Demi-Bastion, along the ditch and across the gorge of the West Ravelin, and the asphalt paving of a section of the ditch for a parking lot (1993-1995). Internal modifications include: the collapse or partial collapse of 15 countermines (n.d.), the stabilization of sections of the Gallery and the restoration of some of the countermines (1980-1981).

1997.10.20

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

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