

FHBRO Number 99-005

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Murray Building (S-15)

FINAL

CFB Stadacona

The Murray Building at CFB Stadacona was built in 1941-43. It was designed by the architectural firm Ross and MacDonald of Montreal. The building was designed to house the Gunnery and Torpedo School. It currently houses the Canadian Forces Naval Operations School. Alterations include the addition of an exterior ramp, exterior lighting at the entrance and some ductwork on one exterior elevation. The custodian is the Department of National Defence. See FHBRO Building Report 99-05.

Reasons For Designation

The Murray Building was designated “Recognized” because of its environmental significance, its thematic associations and its architectural design.

The generally open, level site of the Murray Building has undergone minimal change, and the structure contributes to the air of permanence and dignity of its setting. Together with three other buildings, it completes the north-western edge of the former main parade square perimeter.

The construction of the building is associated with the development of a full-time professional navy during World War II and the need for a training facility for the Canadian Naval force. It is also associated with the evolving support role of shore facilities and is the first purpose-built training structure for the navy. As the site of naval training, the Murray Building is of great importance to the HMCS Stadacona and dockyard communities. The building is located on the parade square which also played an important role in the community.

The stripped classicism of the Murray Building reflects the conservative approach to design that was used for many federal buildings constructed during the first half of the 20th century.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Murray Building resides in its form, proportions, classically inspired design and architectural details, construction materials, interior planning and site relationships.

The Murray Building is characterized by symmetrical three-storey flat-roofed massing and an E-shaped footprint. The underlying classicism of the design is expressed in the division of the facades into base, body and cornice through variations in material, and in the subtle notching of the building’s corners at the main facade to create the effect of a main pavilion with flanking wings. The massing, footprint and overall building profile are important elements of the design and should be maintained.

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The composition of the elevations also contributes to the classicism of the design: fluted limestone pilasters, which rise the full three stories, separate the recessed bands of windows; the band of brick above the windows suggests an entablature. The contrast between the brick walls and the prominent stone pilasters and spandrel panels heightens the effect of a colonnade. The regular rhythm of the windows and stone spandrel panels contributes to the classical character and adds a strong horizontal emphasis to the elevations. Projecting air conditioner units interfere with the intended crisp lines of the facades.

The facades are executed in matte red brick and limestone, which results in dramatic textural and colour contrast. Simplified classical features include horizontal dentilated string courses in limestone and small, multi-coloured, low-relief decorative panels relating to naval history located at the entablature and on the end pavilions. The design and material choices are deliberate and should be respected. The masonry merits an ongoing maintenance program and conservation expertise to assist in the choice of materials and techniques for repairs and replacement. The windows are another important element of the facades; when replacement is required, the design and material should be based on historic precedent.

The original interior configuration which features double-loaded corridors and an axial relationship between the main staircase and the principal entries is largely intact. This functional plan, characteristic of office building design in the early 20th century, should be respected. Original interior finishes (terrazzo floors, exposed brick partition walls, wood doors, frames and transoms) are of a high quality and reflect the material choices of the period. They should be maintained.

The site is characterized by its simple and austere treatment with turfgrass, asphalt and concrete paving. Current landscape planting at the entrances detracts from the understated design of the building and consideration should be given to its removal.

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

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