

FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

NIXON BLOCK, ROYAL ROADS UNIVERSITY, COLWOOD, BC

FHBRO number: **99-137**
DFRP number: **17452**
Resource name: **Nixon Block (RR24A)**
Address: **Royal Roads University, Colwood, BC**
FHBRO status: **"Recognized" Federal Heritage Building**
Construction: **1954-56**
Designer: **McCarter & Nairne, Vancouver**
Original function: **Cadets accommodation**
Current function: **Cadets accommodation**
Modifications: **Alterations to the interior layout; Millward Block addition (1990)**
Custodian: **Department of National Defence**

Reasons for Designation

The Nixon Block is a "Recognized" Federal Heritage Building because of its historical associations, and its architectural and environmental values.

Historical value

The Nixon Block is associated with the post-WWII expansion of the Canadian Armed Forces and professional training programs. The Nixon Block was built during the second phase of development of the Royal Roads University campus in order to accommodate the increased numbers of cadets joining the Forces. Its construction also signaled a shift in the location of training programs from the base at Esquimalt to the Royal Roads University.

Architectural value

The Nixon Block is a good example of a stripped collegiate Gothic style. Consisting of an asymmetrical, four-storey, reinforced concrete building, the building features elements influenced by the modern aesthetic such as the footprint and massing of the building, as well as elements influenced by the Tudor Revival Style such as the stylized crenellated parapets, the three-storey mullioned bay windows, the engaged buttresses, and the decorative shields. Good quality materials and craftsmanship are evident in the handling of the modern concrete work and the period details.

Environmental value

Located within the grounds of J. Dunsmuir's former Edwardian estate, the formality of the architectural style of the Nixon Block reinforces the pastoral character of this Edwardian era estate as it has evolved into a military university. Together with the Grant Block, the Nixon Block serves as a backdrop to Hatley Castle and is familiar to the faculty and the students of the university.

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Character-Defining Elements

The following character-defining elements of the Nixon Block should be respected:

Its role as an illustration of the post-WWII expansion of the Canadian Armed Forces and professional training programs is reflected in:

- the building's distinctive aesthetic design and its visually prominent location which speak to the transformation of J. Dunsmuir's Edwardian estate into a modern military college.

It's stripped collegiate Gothic style, and good quality craftsmanship and materials as manifested in:

- the building's monumental scale and modern, asymmetrical cubic massing;
- the three-wing asymmetrical plan derived from the "pin-wheel" plan of the Bauhaus School;
- elements influenced by the Tudor Revival Style such as the stylized crenellated parapets, the three-storey mullioned bay windows, the engaged buttresses, and the decorative shields; and,
- the reinforced concrete work and the formed concrete details such as the decorative buttresses, the treatment of the window openings, and the cornice's drain spouts.

The manner in which the building reinforces the pastoral character of the former estate, as evidenced in:

- its scale and the formality of its architectural style which are compatible with Grant Block and the park-like Edwardian campus; and,
- its visual prominence and careful siting which allows it to serve as a backdrop to Hatley Castle.

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

January 2003