

**FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT  
HARBOUR AIR HANGAR, VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT  
RICHMOND, BRITISH COLUMBIA**

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FHBRO Number: **06-107**  
DFRP Number: **16781**  
Resource Name: **Harbour Air Hangar**  
Address: **Building T-018 at the Vancouver International Airport, 4670 Cowley Crescent,  
Richmond, BC**  
FHBRO Status: **“Recognized” Federal Heritage Building**  
Construction: **1930**  
Designer: **Arthur Julius Bird**  
Original Function: **Hangar**  
Current Function: **Hangar**  
Modifications: **Addition of an administrative wing (1956)**  
Custodian: **Transport Canada**

### **Description of Historic Place**

The Harbour Air Hangar is a two-storey concrete structure which features a vaulted roof over its main bay and concave buttresses extending over its flanking, one-storey side wings. Its exterior walls are covered primarily with a white stucco finish and possess ample glazing. The main façade features a two-storey tower at the southwest corner and tall, metal retractable doors. The two-storey addition located on the north side of the building is comprised of a fully glazed entrance abutting a rectangular, red brick wing. The hangar is located at the southern extent of South Terminal at Vancouver International Airport, situated on Sea Island.

### **Heritage Value**

The Harbour Air Hangar is a “Recognized” Federal Heritage Building because of its historical associations, and its architectural and environmental values.

#### Historical value:

The Harbour Air Hangar is one of the earliest representations of the federal government’s 1928 program to construct the Trans-Canada Airway. Built to serve the new airport in Vancouver, it is directly associated with the development of civilian aviation in Canada and the establishment of the country’s first airports during the 1930s. The original Vancouver airport – what is now referred to as the South Terminal - was comprised of an administrative building, two hangars and a single runway. As one of only two buildings to survive from that era, the Harbour Air Hangar is one of the best examples to illustrate that initial phase in the airport’s development.

#### Architectural value:

The visual qualities of the Harbour Air Hangar are a good expression of both its building type and its Modernist Art Deco style, evident through its geometric form, horizontality and structural expression. The hangar is characterised by a simple, but impressive, sweeping roofline, minimal ornamentation and a utilitarian interior featuring exposed wood trusses over a large, column-free space. The later administrative addition, designed in the International style, is sympathetic to this modernist vocabulary. Designed by local architect Arthur Julius Bird, the hangar features very good functional qualities that are derived from employing an innovative engineering technology - the Lamella roof system - to meet the clear span requirements of accommodating aircraft and from providing workshops along the north and south sides. The Harbour Air Hangar was built of durable, economic and local materials such as concrete and wood. The precision of its roof assembly conveys good quality craftsmanship.

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**FEDERAL HERITAGE BUILDINGS REVIEW OFFICE  
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## Environmental value:

Located amidst a variety of building types, sizes and styles within the setting of the South Terminal, the Harbour Air Hangar is compatible with the heterogeneous character of the area. Its continued use for seaplanes retains the aeronautical association with the site. The hangar is situated toward the southern boundary of the terminal and is surrounded by paved surfaces such as the apron to the west and roadways to the north and east. Despite later additions to the north and east, the historic relationship between the building and its surroundings has been retained. The hangar is a familiar landmark to the community of Richmond and has been designated by the City as a heritage building.

## **Character-Defining Elements**

The character-defining elements of the Harbour Air Hangar include, among others:

- The use of the Modernist style, popular in Canadian architecture in the 1930s;
- Its simple geometric form, generous massing and horizontal emphasis;
- The clean lines of the roof's sweeping curve as it rises over the vaulted hangar and inverts over flanking buttresses and north side wall;
- The simplicity and asymmetry of the principal façade with its two-storey tower at the southwest corner featuring a flat roof and balanced punctuation of narrow vertical windows;
- Its minimal ornamentation;
- The symmetry and repetition of large multi-pane windows which span between buttresses, run almost the full width of the tall, retractable doors and are grouped in vertical bands on the east façade;
- Its simple, rectangular floor plan consisting of a large, column-free interior space for flexibility in servicing aircraft and flanking offices and workshops along the north and south sides;
- Its utilitarian interior featuring the warm contrast of natural, exposed wood timbers which form the diamond pattern of the vaulted roof structure;
- The Lamella roof system;
- The use of durable, economic and low-maintenance materials such as its concrete construction; and
- The heterogeneous character of its setting and its immediate surroundings of apron and roadways, typical of the airport's hard landscape.

For guidance on interventions, please refer to the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. For further information contact FHBRO.

March 2008