

89-204

Esquimalt, British Columbia
Naden Building #33-33A-33B (Former Drill Hall)
CFB Esquimalt

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The former Drill Hall was built in 1936 to designs by the Department of Public Works. It continued to be used as a drill hall until the 1950s, at which time it was converted to a lecture hall. It now serves as a club and lounge. The Department of National Defence is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 89-204.

Reasons for Designation

The former Drill Hall was designated Recognized as a result of its association with the development of the Royal Canadian Navy training school at Naden and for its prominence in its setting, as well as for its architecture.

HMCS Naden, commissioned in 1922, was the first permanent naval training centre established on the west coast. As a result of post-war financial restraint, the government's strategy centered on naval reserves, who could be called for duty if necessary. Reserve units were established across the country, but training was centered in Naden on the west coast and Stadacona in the east. The increasing threat of war in the 1930s resulted in the expansion of naval training and the growth of facilities at Naden: the construction of the Drill Hall required the first extension of the property beyond the original site.

Because of its size and highly visible location between the current parade ground and the wartime parade ground (now a parking area), the drill hall dominates the setting. It is a local landmark.

The building is a good example of a moderately-sized drill hall designed by the Department of Public Works.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of this structure is defined by its massing, detailing, construction and materials, and its historic relationship with the surrounding parade ground.

The former drill hall is a two-storey gable-roofed structure, rectangular in plan, with the main entrance centered on the long expanse of the primary facade. Its restrained exterior detailing stepped gable parapets, string course, and stone capped piers - reflects the economic constraints imposed by the Depression.

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Naden Building #33-33A-33B (Former Drill Hall) (Continued)

The drill hall's military function is expressed in its traditional form: a large rectangular mass under a gable roof, with large window openings marking the drill space. The buttress-like piers on all facades are a stylized expression of the fortress motif typical of Canadian drill hall designs. Modifications to the exterior as a result of changes in the building's function have disrupted this classic drill-hall profile. Single-storey extensions to both ends of the hall, added relatively soon after its construction, are composed of similar materials. A wood-frame vestibule enclosing the main entrance is more recent; consideration should be given to its removal in order to re-establish the characteristic large troop entrance.

Traditionally, drill halls relied on large windows to promote natural lighting of the interior. In this building, most of these windows are now covered with exterior panelling, which significantly alters the appearance of the building. The heritage character of the former drill hall would be greatly enhanced by reinstating these windows based on physical and documentary evidence. If the current function of the structure requires the windows to be screened or insulated, this could be achieved by internal coverings which do not interfere with the external appearance.

The contrast between the red brick walls on the one hand, and the white concrete string course and window sills and the stone caps of the piers on the other, is an essential part of the design; these features should be carefully preserved. Any repairs to the masonry should be undertaken with the assistance of a masonry conservation expert.

The original open interior space, created by steel roof trusses supported on concrete piers, is reduced to one-half its original size, and is now used as an auditorium. The other half of the space is occupied by offices and service rooms. Remaining early interior elements should be preserved, and future modifications which would improve the legibility of the intended single volume encouraged.

The building is located on a sloping site bounded by open paved areas. There are currently no landscaping features associated with the structure. Any landscaping should be preceded by research into the early treatment of the site.

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