

FHBRO Number 88-161

Québec, Quebec

### **Former Commissariat (Building No. 8)**

Single Officers' Quarters and Stores

The Citadel, Québec

The Former Commissariat was constructed in 1839. The building extends from the wall of Mann's Bastion to the Prince of Wales Bastion. In 1985, it was converted to barracks. The rear wall was demolished and rebuilt, and the old loopholes on the ground floor were replaced with new windows. Within the interior, stairs were added and partitions were built to create a corridor. The Former Commissariat (Building No. 8) is today used as single officers' quarters and stores. The building is part of the Citadel of Québec, a National Historic Site. It is owned by the Department of National Defence. See FHBRO Report 88-161.

### **Reasons for Designation**

The former Commissariat has been designated "Classified" because of the importance of the historical theme with which it is associated, its fine design, the importance of its designer and its environmental value.

The building, which is an integral part of the walls of the Citadel, is directly associated with the defence of North America between 1839 and 1857, a period marked by the threat of a U.S. invasion. More specifically, it is associated with the first phase of improvements to the fortress (1839-1842) resulting from the tension created by the 1837 Rebellions. Building No. 8 accentuates the military character of the Citadel, which last century had a major impact on the civilian administration of Québec and also on local development.

The design of the Former Commissariat was ingenious. Because the building had to serve as a curtain, its back wall was pierced with loopholes that made it possible to defend the fortress against attackers scaling the cliff. In addition to serving that defensive purpose, the Commissariat housed the department responsible for furnishing provisions to the military personnel at the Citadel. The interior was compartmentalized and vaulted throughout to make it more bomb-proof. The building's designer, Lieutenant-Colonel John Oldfield, is credited with the construction of several other buildings in the fortress.

The Former Commissariat is a landmark building in the Prince of Wales Bastion. It strengthens the historical and military character of the bastion. Building No. 8, the Administration building of the Royal 22<sup>e</sup> Régiment and the Men's and Women's Quarters, which are similar in terms of scale, style and materials, together form an architectural grouping of great interest.

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**Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of the Former Commissariat resides in its architectural design, the choice of building materials and techniques, and the strategic location of the building.

The Former Commissariat is a long, rectangular, two-storey masonry building. It has a hip roof supported on wooden trusses and covered with painted sheet metal with batten seams. The facade has ten similar bays. On the ground floor, each bay has a door framed by two windows; on the upper floor, each bay has three similar windows that bring light into the vaulted interior spaces. The small stone corbels under the eaves were originally intended to support a gutter that has now disappeared. In contrast with the other elevations, the rear wall, which overlooks the cliff, looks like a fortified structure. A string course that runs the length of the building divides the two storeys. The lower part of the wall is slightly inclined, while the upper storey wall is set back slightly and rises vertically. Windows have replaced the old loopholes on the upper storey.

Because of its regular design and the small number of decorative elements, the building is faithful to the British military building tradition. It is recommended that the current composition not be altered and that the defensive character of the rear wall be preserved. An ongoing masonry maintenance program should be put in place, and new mortar joints and replacement stones should be chosen so as to blend in seamlessly with the texture of the existing walls. To preserve the masonry, it is recommended that all metal elements be protected from corrosion and that the gutters be checked periodically to make sure they are in good working order.

Ornamentation that is inconsistent with the simplicity of the original design should not be added. The two small pediments, added later to protect the entrances, are a decorative touch that detracts slightly from the military context; they could be replaced with more neutral elements. It is important to preserve the stone corbels as significant elements of the original design. The original shutters and storm doors have disappeared, but some hinges, supports and pegs are still visible; these iron elements set into the stone should be preserved as testimony to the past. The old type of doors, windows and gutters could eventually be restored (in terms of material and style), in order to respect the historical consistency of the materials. The installation of interior lighting and air conditioning units should not undermine the historical texture; it is recommended that a style compatible with the that of the building be chosen.

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Originally, there was one room behind each exterior bay. Despite the addition of new partitions, the creation of a corridor on the upper storey and the installation of new stairs, the compartmentalization of the spaces, the thick walls and the vaulted ceilings are still visible. It is recommended that these formal characteristics that define the heritage character of the building be preserved.

The architectural design of the Former Commissariat is closely associated with the building's defensive role and its strategic position between Mann's Bastion and the Prince of Wales Bastion. It is therefore important to respect the integrity of the site and avoid constructing new buildings or additions that would make the area even more congested than it already is.

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

2000.02.18  
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