

Quebec, Quebec
Monk House
57-63, rue St. Louis

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Monk House was built in 1796 on the foundations of an early 18th century house destroyed by fire. It functioned as a private residence until it was acquired by the British Army in 1811, for use as officers' quarters. It became the property of the Canadian Government in 1871, and is currently used for apartments and storage. The Department of National Defence is the custodial department. See FHBRO Building Report 88-1 63.

Reasons for Designation

Monk House was designated Recognized because of its important historical associations, its functional design and craftsmanship, and its contribution to a well-preserved historic streetscape.

Monk House was the residence of two important British colonial administrators. James Monk, owner of the residence which was destroyed by fire and, builder of the current structure on its remains, was Attorney-General of Quebec, surrogate judge of the Vice-Admiral Court and, later, Chief Justice of Montreal. The subsequent owner, John Elmsley, initially Chief Justice of Upper Canada, bought the house on his appointment as Chief Justice of Lower Canada in 1802. The area in which the house is located, Upper Town, became a residential enclave of colonial administrators. Monk House, one of the earliest large houses in the area, is also one of the few in the traditional Quebec style. A preference for Neoclassical designs later predominated.

The 1811 acquisition of the house and property by the British Garrison established an additional historic association the defence of Quebec City against American invasion during the War of 1812-14.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of this property is defined by its traditional Quebec construction, the quality of its materials and craftsmanship, its functional design, and its relationship to its historic setting.

Monk House is a two-and-a-half storey, seven-bay rectangular structure, with a dormered gable roof. Internally, the space is divided in two. This division was apparently original to the pre-1796 house, the vaulted cellar and partial walls of which survive in the current building. On the exterior, this layout is suggested by the off-centre location of the entrance on rue St. Louis and by the existence of a second porticoed entrance on the end wall.

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Quebec, Quebec
Monk House (Continued)

The house was built by two master masons, Michel Parant and Augustin Jourdain, in the traditional residential style of Quebec king-post roof trusses, steeply-pitched roof,

and long rectangular plan. Due to its size, it is detached from its neighbours, as opposed to the more typical shared-wall arrangement of urban Quebec dwellings. Its main façades are constructed of good-quality coursed sandstone, while the end walls are of rubble limestone. The surviving historic building fabric is an important element of the heritage character of the house and should be carefully maintained and preserved.

The interior plan has been repeatedly modified to serve evolving needs. It could be managed with some flexibility. Due to the age of the building any future work at the interior should be preceded by appropriate investigations to better understand the original form and subsequent evolution of the interior fabric and design.

The building forms part of a grouping around a courtyard. The site has remained relatively unchanged, although several outbuildings have disappeared over time. The larger streetscape, consisting of contiguous townhouses of similar construction and scale built during the early 19th century, remains essentially intact. The relationship of Monk House, a local landmark, to its larger setting should be preserved.

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