

North Vancouver, British Columbia
Armoury
Forbes Avenue and 15th Street

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Lt. Col. J.P. Fell Armoury was erected in 1914 as a drill hall by the Engineer Branch of the Department of Militia and Defence, to the standard plans of the period 1910 to 1915. It is the property of the Department of National Defence, and remains in use by the 6th Field Engineer Squadron, successor to the 6th Field Company of Canadian Engineers for whom the structure was built. The Department of National Defence is custodian of the building. See FHBRO Building Report 87-141.

Reason for Designation

The North Vancouver Armoury has been designated Recognized as a valuable example of a special building type, as a representative of a particular theme of national military history, and as a well-fitting element in its predominantly residential surroundings.

The sole example of its type and scale west of Ontario, the North Vancouver Armoury embodies characteristics associated with the military developments of the period. A straightforward utilitarian construction with little superfluous decoration, it represents well the then-current attitude toward reform in the militia, providing generous drill space together with classrooms and armouries. Its functional design, little altered, grew directly from a mandate to provide greatly expanded militia training facilities at a time of tremendous local and national growth. Its characteristic features of brick, timber and steel construction balanced intrinsic functionality with a dignified public face to its neighbourhood. Its Fink-truss drill hall is a good surviving example of the type.

The location of the building on a sloping site at the edge of what was then a rapidly growing community enabled it to meld with its residential and parkland context while providing good utility for its own requirements. It has also served as a general community hall on many occasions.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of the building resides primarily in the exterior elevations and in the interior spaces characteristic of the armoury as a building type, most notably the open spans of the drill hall itself.

The external character of the armoury is of a simple symmetrical, gable-roofed mass punctuated and articulated by corbelled brick masonry, piers, pilasters, and multiple-paned industrial windows.

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North Vancouver, British Columbia
Armoury (Continued)

A cement coping surmounts its gable-end walls in a manner that employs the vertical pilaster elements and low chimneys to break up the roof line, effectively bringing the

scale of these walls into harmony with their domestic neighbours. A square-plan chimney in contrasting brick has been added in front of the original south elevation, obscuring an original chimney behind.

The long low (east) façade to Forbes Avenue is broken by a series of evenly spaced piers, with coped shoulders at a line about halfway up the face, that also effectively reduces the severity of the elevation to the street. The west façade is a mirror image of the east. The cement shoulders of the piers originally stood out from the brick in texture and colour, but all save those at first-floor level on Forbes Avenue have been painted over in the same colour as the brick.

The internal arrangement of drill hall and smaller subsidiary rooms on two floors is evident in the window arrangements on each face of the building, although the generally similar and symmetrical north and south elevations do conceal differences in internal plan at either end. The windows are light metal-framed, multiple-paned windows typical of industrial construction of the era. Breaking up the large glazed areas into relatively small panes provides an important scale-modifying texture to the façades, another very important means of fitting the bulk of the building into its residential context.

The notable internal feature is the drill hall itself, with exposed painted steel Fink trusses spanning the full 80-foot width of the building over a timber floor structure.

As a whole, the building retains almost all of the characteristic features of its original construction, and these should be protected and retained in the course of any future work. It is entirely fitting that its original and existing use continue. As it stands, only the chimney added to the south façade and the painted exterior have altered the external character of the building. The internal character of the building has apparently been well-maintained and little altered.

The symmetry and clear organization of the building's principal public façades should be respected. The removal of the discordant chimney would improve the aesthetic quality of the building. At the point when the exterior paint has deteriorated to an unacceptable condition, it should be removed, the masonry repointed as required, and the brickwork maintained as unpainted. Specialists in the masonry conservation field should be consulted for such work.

The light metal sash and frames and multiple panes of the armoury's windows are essential features of the elevations, and should be retained.

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