

Ottawa, Ontario
Rideau Hall
Sussex Drive

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Rideau Hall, the official residence of the Governor General of Canada, is formed of a series of additions to an original 1838 house of local industrialist Thomas McKay. A two-storey wing was added in 1865, the Ballroom in 1873, the Tent Room in 1876-78 and the Minto Wing in 1898-99. In 1914 a grand pedimented front was built to link the Ballroom to the Tent Room creating the characteristic view of Rideau Hall familiar to most Canadians today. It currently belongs to the National Capital Commission. See FHBRO Building Report 85-66.

Reason for Designation

Rideau Hall was designated a Classified heritage building on October 29, 1986, because of its important historical associations, because it establishes the character of the neighbourhood, and because of its high landmark value. As the official Government House, the residence of the Crown's representative in Canada, it is a focal point of political and social life in the nation's capital.

Character Defining Elements

The historical significance of Rideau Hall is reflected in its evolutionary character, which records the tastes and ambitions of a succession of notable occupants. The designation applies to all remnants of the original McKay House and to those subsequent additions and alterations which contribute strongly to the present grandiose, if eclectic, nature of the complex. Of particular note are the landmark northwest façade, the Ballroom, the Tent Room, the south façade of the long 1865 addition and the Greenhouse. Also important is the relationship of the building to its grounds, which have their own intrinsic value.

Various reorientations of the building, its layout, and its grounds have taken place over the years, affecting the property's functional characteristics as well as its architectural style and massing. The present layout and decorative treatment, particularly of the more public areas, should be maintained. Alterations, if required, should be used to reveal or reinstate earlier patterns of use, or to highlight important surviving elements of previous phases. New additions or insertions should be kept to a minimum. Where required, they should be sympathetic to the historical material but clearly of their own time, so as not to obscure the evolutionary nature of the property.

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