

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The four corner towers of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul Penitentiary were built in 1929-31 to the design of the Architectural Branch of the Department of Justice under Chief Engineer W.S. Lawson. Correctional Services Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 89-33.

Reasons for Designation

The towers were designated Recognized for their historical associations, functional design and environmental qualities. The walls, while an integral component of the ensemble, are not subject to FHBRO policy, and are referenced here for contextual purposes only.

The guard towers and walls are related to the general theme of law enforcement and consequential incarceration of convicted lawbreakers within the confines of the penitentiary. Given the remarkably small number of escapes from this facility, they have served their purpose well. Functionally, the towers and guardhouses were designed to shelter guards patrolling the walls and to give access to the walls via interior spiral staircases. Considered by departmental policy to be essential design elements in any pre-1950 penitentiary, the towers and guardhouses prominently located on the four corners of the enclosing walls clearly identify the complex as a correctional facility.

The four corner towers were built to a single plan prepared in 1927. Each consists of a simple circular frame guardhouse glazed on all sides and capped by a steep octagonal roof, perched on a poured concrete platform at the apex of a concrete tower veneered with dressed stone. The guardhouses are set within a semicircular concrete enclosure, which opens onto the walkways along the top of the walls either directly or by metal stairs, depending upon the relative heights of the towers and the walls. Their design rests within the traditions of military engineering.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the towers is defined by their exterior elevations and materials, and by their landmark qualities. They are little changed since their construction.

The guardhouses are undecorated structures of frame construction with a distinctive steeply-sloping octagonal roof. They sit on a platform which is corbelled out from the

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tower base, made of poured concrete that has been tinted and scribed to resemble the Trenton limestone facing of the tower supporting it and the walls stretching between the towers. Any repair or restoration work required should be carried out in a manner sympathetic to the original materials and design, including mortar joint composition, colour and profile.

The interior spiral staircases of the towers leading up to the glazed enclosure of the guardhouse should be maintained.

The prominent siting of the towers on the four corners of the enclosing walls, and the public view of these identifying features, should be protected in any site development.

Revised
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