

Port Royal, Nova Scotia
Port Royal Habitation
Lower Granville Road

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Port Royal Habitation at Port Royal, Nova Scotia was constructed in 1939-1940 as a replica of the original structures erected in 1605 by Sieur de Monts and his group of French settlers. It is administered by Parks Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 92-85.

Reasons for Designation

The Port Royal Habitation was designated Classified because of its historical associations, its status as an architectural reconstruction, and its environmental significance.

Port Royal Habitation is composed of a group of six buildings forming a quadrangle in an open setting near the waters of Digby Sound. Intended to replicate buildings depicted in a journal sketch by Samuel de Champlain, the site is the earliest large scale reconstruction undertaken by the federal government to commemorate Canadian history and is illustrative of an early attempt to achieve historical accuracy through scholarly interpretation.

In the reconstruction of the site, attempts were made to replicate the architectural style, method of construction and life of settlers early in the development of Acadia. Traditional materials and methods, and the involvement of local craftsmen, contributed to the spirit of historicity and to a revival of early skills. The group of buildings represents such functions as the guard's quarters, a chapel, a kitchen and bakery, artisans' quarters, gentlemen's quarters, and trading and storage areas.

The Port Royal Habitation is one of the best known of Canada's National Historic Sites.

Character Defining Features

The heritage character of the Port Royal Habitation resides in its distinctive form and massing, its materials and finishes, and the relationship of the entire ensemble to the natural setting.

The Habitation is a picturesque group of six buildings, each with steeply pitched roofs and tall chimneys, and linked together to form a quadrangle. The buildings were constructed using traditional construction methods and native materials including fieldstone, hewn timbers and brick. The stone elements - chimneys, well and pathway - juxtaposed with the weathered patina of the wood is a character defining feature which must be maintained. The traditional skills, materials and methods of construction evident in the reconstruction should continue to be utilized when repairs are required.

Small windows and numerous entrances face the interior courtyard. The absence of openings on the outer walls, combined with the palisade and a cannon platform, two unroofed structures to the south-east and south-west corner corners, create a dramatic overall form. The arrangement of the buildings and the placement of openings are integral to the historic effect and should be maintained as constructed, and without alterations or additions.

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At the interior, rough hand hewn board walls and floors reveal traditional construction methods and should not be altered.

The immediate grounds have a lived-in, unmanicured look that contributes to the authenticity of the site. Any alterations to the grade and landscaping of the courtyard should be preceded by research to guide the selection of appropriate features and surfaces. In the larger context, the manipulation of parcels of land near the Habitation has resulted in the removal of nearby buildings. Future interventions compromise neighboring buildings and landscapes of interest.

1994.01.13