

Kingston, Ontario
Kingston Drill Hall
Montreal Street

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Kingston Drill Hall was built in 1899-1900 to designs prepared by the Department of Public Works under the supervision of Chief Architect T.W. Fuller. In 1936 an extension was built to the south, above the original gun shed. The Drill Hall is the property of the Department of National Defence. See FHBRO Building Report 88-139.

Reasons for Designation

The building was designated Classified for its important historical associations, its architectural qualities, and its environmental significance.

The Kingston Drill Hall is associated with an important theme in Canadian history, and with a regimental group of particular regional importance. The Drill Hall is one of the largest and best equipped of the battalion drill halls constructed by the federal government in the period from 1896 to 1911. It was built to support an expanded role for the militia, by providing local training facilities for their use. The Drill Hall is now the headquarters of the 1863 Princess of Wales' Own Regiment, one of the oldest regiments in Canada. The Drill Hall's architectural importance derives primarily from the quality of its aesthetic and functional design. It is one of the most picturesque of the 17 halls surviving from the period of construction noted above. The Kingston building's medieval revival features are derived, in simplified form, from the Halifax Drill Hall (1895-97), which served here as an architectural prototype for the Public Works design staff.

The Drill Hall plays an important role in establishing the heritage character of the neighbourhood.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Kingston Drill Hall resides primarily in its medieval revival design, its plan, and the pattern and character of access to the hall.

The principal façade of the Drill Hall is executed in rough-faced and random coursed Trenton limestone from the St-Marc-des-Carières area outside Québec City. The elevation is delineated by a regular arrangement consisting of a three storey central pavilion and flanking two storey wings and corner towers, themselves enriched with castle-like crenellations and corbels at parapet level.

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Kingston Drill Hall (Continued)

Picturesque detailing is carried around all sides, embellishing the essentially shed-like form of the Drill Hall. The centrally located principal entrance and its tunnel-like entry to the main hall are important characteristics of the building which should be maintained. Wooden windows of varying sizes and shapes, set deeply into limestone walls, play a significant part in establishing the building's romantic character.

The extension to the south, built in 1936, though carefully matched to the original north elevation, obscures a group of five original, semi-circular headed windows. Consideration should be given in future planning to the possibility of re-admitting light to these windows, if feasible, while retaining the bulk of the 1936 addition.

The layout and design of the Drill Hall, with offices, messes and armories set around three sides of a galleried open hall, have been fully maintained to date. This plan is an important part of the building's character, and should be retained. The iron Fink trusses over the Drill Hall were typically employed in turn of the century drill halls to span large spaces, and are an important element in this space.

Though the Royal Artillery Park - on which the Drill Hall was built - has essentially ceased to exist, the relationship between the building and its original site is relatively intact. With the nearby Barracks' Building #2, Artillery Park, the Drill Hall defines a limited precinct of important military character. Though affected by the loss of military structures of similar age and by construction of contrasting modern buildings, the Drill Hall continues to enhance the character of the surrounding residential neighbourhood, which it helped establish. It is important that the remaining visual relationships with adjacent military buildings of the same era be maintained or strengthened.

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