

Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario  
**Officers' Kitchen**  
Fort George

## **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

The Officers' Kitchen was built in 1939, to designs by Toronto architects W.L. Somerville and Edward Carswell, as part of the reconstruction of Fort George. Repairs to the roof and bake-oven, repointing of the chimney, and some log replacement have occurred. The Environment Canada Parks Service is the custodial department. See FHBRO Building Report 89-15.

### **Reasons For Designation**

The Officers' Kitchen was designated Recognized because of its association with the 1930s philosophy of preservation and presentation of historic sites, its architectural qualities and use of traditional materials and techniques, and its compatibility with the environment.

During the 1930s, historic sites in Canada were developed and expanded as a result of the provision of government funding for Depression relief works programs. The philosophy of historic reconstruction employed in this period followed a North American pattern influenced by the reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg. A recognition that an increase in private ownership of automobiles would encourage tourism, promoted the reconstruction of Fort George as a tourist destination. Both the reconstruction process and the subsequent attraction of the public to the area contributed to the economic development of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Reconstructions were intended to commemorate and interpret important events in history, and generally were based on extensive research. The Officer's Kitchen is only loosely based on an historic antecedent; the appearance and construction of the building is consistent with others on the site, and represents the designers' concept of a "frontier" aesthetic.

The Officers' Kitchen contributes to the work-related cluster of buildings at Fort George and, given its interpretive use, is a well-known local landmark.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of this structure is defined by its "frontier" aesthetic, its functional design, its use of traditional materials and craftsmanship, and its contribution to the work-related aspects of the setting.

The Kitchen is a rectangular single-storey building, constructed of squared logs, with

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**Officers' Kitchen** (Continued)

dovetail joints at the corners. The gabled roof is covered by hand-split cedar shakes.

The internal division of the structure into a separate kitchen and pantry is reflected in the asymmetrical facade. The use of traditional materials, methods, and tools in the construction was part of the reconstruction philosophy of the 1930s. The exposed log construction and the functional placement of doors and windows found in the Officers' Kitchen represents Somerville and Carswell's concept of the frontier aesthetic. Logs were milled in a saw-pit on site, and broad-axes and adzes were used for finishing. As the heritage character of the Officers' Kitchen resides in the use of traditional materials and construction, these elements should be preserved.

The Officers' Kitchen, located in a cluster of work-related structures including the saw-pit and blacksmith's shop, contributes to the functional atmosphere of the fort, and is a local landmark.

1992.03.23