

FHBRO Number 90-31

Grosse Île, Quebec

### **The Catholic Chapel (No. 48)**

The Grosse Île Catholic Chapel was built in 1874 according to plans prepared by the Department of Public Works. Frédérick Montizambert, who was the superintendent of this quarantine station at the time, was very much involved in its design and construction. The Catholic Chapel is the property of the Department of Canadian Heritage and is part of the Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site. See FHBRO Building Report 90-31 (Part II: 1861-1 880).

#### **Reasons for Designation**

The Grosse Île Catholic Chapel was designated Recognized mainly for its importance to local history. This Chapel, together with the Catholic Presbytery, is a central symbol of community life of the village of Grosse Île.

In 1857, the Canadian government assumed responsibility for the Grosse Île quarantine station. The following decades were marked by an intense functional reorganization of the island, under the direction of the medical superintendent, A. Von Iffland. The “health” and “disease” sectors were reversed and an extensive repair and building program was instituted. In the 1870s, the new medical superintendent, Frédéric Montizambert, continued the work of his predecessor. The new Catholic Chapel dates from this period.

The aesthetic and functional design of the Catholic Chapel as well as the choice of building materials and techniques also played a role in the decision to “recognize” this Gothic Revival-inspired building for its external decoration in particular. The fact that the Catholic Chapel is an essential element of the central sector’s current heritage character also weighed in this decision. Because of its location, the building is very prominent and helps make this place of worship one of the attractions of the guided tour.

#### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage value of the Catholic Chapel resides in its general composition, its fenestration and its many Gothic Revival-inspired ornamental details, as well as its plan and interior decoration. Its relationship with the Presbytery and the site also help define its heritage value.

The Catholic Chapel is a small structure clad with vertically laid planks and topped with

---

FHBRO Number 90-31

Grosse Île, Quebec

**The Catholic Chapel (No. 48)**

a pitched roof. The bell tower-porch, which rises in the middle of the facade, terminates with a lantern surmounted by a cross. Its location outside the rectangular plan is inspired by Protestant churches built in the Gothic Revival style, prior to the High Victorian Gothic period. A small low sacristy adjoins the flat apse of the Chapel, which is oriented to the northwest, contrary to the directives of canon law, which recommended that it face east. A lean-to porch provides access to the sacristy.

The Chapel's Gothic Revival-inspired ornamentation is more extensive on the facade than on the sides. We should mention in particular the use of pointed arches for the window frames, despite the fact that the windows themselves are round-headed windows. The bell tower is decorated with a trefoil motif gable which is surmounted by a circular rose-shaped window; this motif is taken up again by the transom of the main door. The arcading of the tower's apex and the corbiesteps\* which run under the cornices\* enhance the elegance of this facade. All of these decorative elements should be preserved.

From the porch -- the lower part of the tower -- the entire Chapel can immediately be seen. A balustrade separates the nave from the choir. Several steps lead up to the solitary altar\* surmounted by its tabernacle; the sacristy entrance is hidden behind. Because of the heritage value of this Chapel, care must be taken to ensure that these surroundings are not changed, just as it will be appropriate to preserve the Chapel's furniture, which is remarkably intact and complete.

The altarpiece is simply articulated on the wall of the choir. Two pilasters rise to meet an imposing cornice which encircles the Chapel walls. Above the capitals, it defines a semicircular arch in such a way as to delimit a space for a mounted canvas. The decor of the choir is completed by two statues set on decorative brackets; an applied moulding creates the illusion of niches. A false basket-handle vault divided into cells by transverse arches completes the interior decor; mouldings define panels and circumferences. The sacristy has a large two-piece credenza, a wardrobe and a corner cabinet. It is important to ensure the longevity of all these decorative elements and of the period furniture which is used or ornamental.

---

\* Translator's note: these terms could not be confirmed

FHBRO Number 90-31

Grosse Île, Quebec

**The Catholic Chapel (No. 48)**

Maintaining the Chapel's relationship with its site and with the nearby Presbytery is highly desirable. The treatment of the site could be revamped based on available iconographic documents.

For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.

Translation

---