

FHBRO Number 90-31

Grosse Île, Quebec

The Medical Assistant's House (No. 38)

The Medical Assistant's House was built in 1892-1893 from plans probably prepared by an architect from the Department of Public Works. This building continued to function in its original capacity until the quarantine station was closed in 1937. In 1942, the Medical Assistant's House served as a residence for civilian employees of the army, a function which Agriculture Canada subsequently maintained. The Medical Assistant's House (No. 38) is the property of Parks Canada and is part of the Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site. See FHBRO Building Report 90-31 (Part III: 1881-1900).

Reasons for Designation

The Medical Assistant's House was designated Recognized for the quality of its materials and workmanship, as well as for its remarkable environment.

The most noteworthy features of the Medical Assistant's House are found in its elegant interior, rather than the exterior. Indeed, this wooden residence has managed to preserve four of the five fireplace mantels - ordered in 1893 from the New York Mantel & Directory Co. of Montreal - which adorned the principal rooms.

The historical link between this residence and its associated landscape has remained relatively unchanged. Its choice location, on a small rise and at the entrance to the central sector, makes it highly visible. Together with the Vaccination and Medical Examination Office and the Guard Post, it comprises an architectural ensemble which establishes the character of this sector of the island.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of the Medical Assistant's House derives from a model inspired by the late 19th century cubic houses, as well as from its craftsmanship, interior layout and elegant decor.

The Medical Assistant's House is a large two-storey wooden building, which was built on a "L"-shaped plan in order to adapt to a narrow site, hemmed in between the road and an escarpment. Its hipped roofs are pierced by two large chimney stacks and a single dormer. A large covered verandah, which becomes a glassed portico on the north side, occupies three sides of the building. The general composition of this building is asymmetrical. It is recommended that this architectural scheme, which

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contributes to the heritage value of the building, not be altered, particularly since it clearly evokes the dual occupancy of family home/servant's quarters. Indeed, the extension on the side of the building contained the kitchen downstairs, and the domestic's quarters upstairs. The kitchen opened onto the dining room and a concealed staircase opposite the main staircase of the house. These characteristics, which date to the period of human quarantine on Grosse Île, were partially obliterated during sporadic subsequent occupation. Any new work should enhance the single-family character of the building.

The exterior walls are clad in clapboard (two of the walls - with a northeastern exposure - are clad in wooden shingles); the wooden doors and windows have four panes. The diagonal lines of the portico (pediment) and those of the verandah posts (brackets) add a sense of movement to the whole. All these wooden elements should be the subject of ongoing maintenance. The chimney stacks and the polychromatic decoration of their caps are other architectural features worthy of preservation. It is recommended that any materials used to replace those that are irreparable or missing be similar to the originals. Since wooden shingles, the original roofing material, were representative of late 19th century craft techniques, consideration could be given to using the same material in a restoration, following the same details (sawtooth on the ridges).

The wooden floors, the lath and plaster walls and ceilings, and the built-in wood furniture are all elements that contribute to the residential character of the building and should be preserved. Any adaptation of the Medical Assistant's House to modern requirements, such as the addition of lighting and heating elements, should be carried out in a manner respectful of the original finishes. The old cast-iron radiators could eventually be refurbished for re-use.

The surrounding landscape of the Medical Assistant's House has retained its historical rustic character. Any enhancement work at Grosse Île should not disturb the roads that formerly linked the various buildings in the sector to each other or, at the very least, their traces. Finally, the ground around and below the building may contain architectural and artifactual stratigraphic vestiges associated with its occupation.

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

Translation

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