

Dawson, Yukon
Commanding Officer's Residence
508 Fifth Avenue

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Commanding Officer's Residence in Dawson City was constructed as a residence for the commanding officer of the NWMP in 1902 as a part of the Fort Herchmer NWMP complex. In the 1940s the building was abandoned. It was acquired by Parks Canada in 1976 as a support building for Klondike National Historic Sites. Since that time it has been renovated into two apartments for the use as staff housing. At an early date the original wood shingle roof was replaced with pressed metal shingles. A wood shingle roof finish was reinstated in 1985. The building is currently owned by Environment Canada, Canadian Parks Service. See FHBRO Building Report 88-12.

Reason for Designation

The Commanding Officer's Residence was designated Recognized because of its association with the NWMP and their role in the establishment of law and order and the exercise of Canadian sovereignty in the northern territories, and because of its important role in the early development of the community. It was one of several permanent government buildings constructed in Dawson during this period and one of only four surviving structures from the original Fort Herchmer complex.

This residence was built to accommodate A.E.R Cuthbert who, in 1902, was commander of a force of 450 men stationed at Fort Herchmer.

The Commanding Officer's Residence is one of four early NWMP buildings that survive on the Fort Herchmer site. Its siting has two aspects. Functionally it was related to the Fort Herchmer complex, but visually it was set apart - oriented to Fifth Avenue - and linked with the seat of power in the Territorial Administration Building just across the road.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Commanding Officer's Residence resides in its general design and materials of construction.

The style of the building is that of a foursquare - characterized by its two storey cube shape, low hipped-roof, strong roof lines, and full width verandah. Tall sash windows are symmetrically arranged around the main front door. The massiveness and stability of the style being, in this case, particularly appropriate.

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Dawson, Yukon

Commanding Officer's Residence (Continued)

It is important that both the overall design and the individual elements of the building be protected and maintained. Original materials including siding, windows and doors should be conserved, priority being given to the preservation of original fabric.

The present pattern of occupancy by government employees should continue. Not only has this been a constant factor in the history of the building, but government presence on the site undoubtedly assists in presentation of its important historical association.

The military nature of the NWMP at Fort Herchmer should be remembered in landscaping the site of this building. While the building now serves as contemporary staff residence, its grounds should be maintained in crisp order, preferably planned with some reference to earlier landscape features.

The siting of this building within a complex should be underlined through landscape, paint, signage and similar details. Its link with other buildings in the Fort Herchmer complex should be evident, as should its role as a center of authority in association with the Territorial Administration Building.

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