
FHBRO Number 90-30

Lévis, Quebec

Levis Fort No. 1

Lévis-Lauzon

Fort No. 1 was constructed between 1865 and 1871 according to a concept developed by William Francis Drummond Jervis. A national historic site, Fort No. 1 is under the jurisdiction of Parks Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 90-30.

Reasons for Designation

Lévis Fort No. 1 was designated Recognized for its historical significance, for its design and workmanship qualities as well as for environmental considerations.

“Lévis, A Sentinel of Québec”: this historic theme associated with Fort No. 1 implicitly refers to the military role that Québec played in the defence of Canada. The Point Lévy fortification has both a political and strategic context. Fort No.1 at Lévis, whose construction coincided with the period of Canada’s Confederation, was part of a defensive strategy aimed at thwarting any attempted American invasion, which posed a threat to the integrity of Canada’s territory during this period.

Fort. No. 1 is an excellent example of military engineering. Its essentially functional architecture is in keeping with the military tradition of using fill from the terreplein or rampart to erect structures that could withstand artillery bombardment. Building materials and techniques were chosen on the basis of strict principles. The important contribution of W. F. Drummond Jervis to the concept of detached forts should also be mentioned. Examples of his work can be found in the Portsmouth area.

The integrity of the ensemble formed by the casemates, the caponiers and the powder magazine is remarkable. The fact that the site is surrounded by open terrain allows the various components of the defence system to be perceived. The area is still predominantly semi-rural in character.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of Fort No.1 is defined by all the elements that comprise the defensive system. It is associated in particular with the forms, the materials, the construction techniques and the installations of the site which are characteristic of this military architecture.

Fort No. 1 is delimited by a rock-hewn ditch whose construction debris was used to fill

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the terreplein that covers the casemates, the passages to the caponiers or the alure, and the powder magazine. This arrangement kept the various structures hidden from enemy sight, while the earth absorbed the impact of artillery bombardment.

The facade of the casemates presents alternating doors and windows, arranged according to the needs of the program. Inside, there is a succession of vaulted spaces. The ventilation and heating arrangements of these earth-covered rooms were strategically placed. Sash windows provided a supply of fresh air, while cast-iron stoves connected by pipes to the chimneys - each casemate has one - provided heat in winter. All of these meaningful elements should be preserved. Ideally, the treatment of the walls and ceilings should be faithful to the original treatment.

The design of the caponiers was based on functional criteria which determined the location and angle of the embrasures (based on the desired angle of fire). The vaulted spaces, the beaten earth floors, the ventilation ducts incorporated into the walls, the anchors for the gun carriages and the stairs leading to the alure and to the parade grounds are all elements that should be preserved, since they are essential defining features of this defensive complex.

The powder magazine is located away from the other elements because of the danger of igniting the powder. For the same reason, the soldiers who handled the powder had to wear special clothing and a dressing room was provided for this purpose. Only copper could be used in this area, in order to minimize the risk of creating sparks. The powder was handled through an opening in the wall between the storehouse and the handling room. The corridor that encircled this area provided ventilation and light. This spatial organization, the appearance of the powder magazine as well as all its copper hardware should be preserved.

In the powder magazine area, and everywhere else where the need arises, it would be desirable to install discreet, modern heating and lighting facilities, in such a way as to minimize the impact on the existing materials. Any museological facilities must be designed so as not to interfere with the legibility of the functions specific to each space. The materials used should be compatible with the austere character of the interior decor.

The relationship between the fort itself and the surrounding site is part of the defensive

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concept. It would be preferable to preserve this relationship and to avoid disturbing the associated landscape. The facilities which permit access to the site and ensure visitor safety should be designed so as not to alter the visual perception of the site.

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

Translation
