

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

SUMMARY

Rideau Cottage was constructed in 1866-67 by Stewart Taylor and Co. The architect from Public Works in charge of preparing Rideau Hall as a vice-regal residence, F.P. Rubidge, designed Rideau Cottage to serve as a home for the Secretary to the Governor General. It was Recognized because of its association with the Secretary to the Governor General and because the character of the relationship between the building and its site has been retained.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

By 1859, Ottawa had been chosen to be the permanent capital of Canada and the construction of the Parliament Buildings soon began. The estate of Thomas McKay, Rideau Hall, was first leased as a temporary residence for the Governor General in 1864 and then purchases in 1868. The post of Governor General carried with it a staff, primary among whom was the Secretary. It was as a residence for this key figure that Rideau Cottage was constructed within easy walking distance of the Hall. It has subsequently been the home of the Secretary or Military Attaché of all successive governors general. The historical significance of this structure rests in its role as an ancillary building at Rideau Hall, intimately connected with the administrative machinery of the governor generalship.

ARCHITECTURE

Rideau Cottage, in its original form, was a one-storey red brick cottage with a truncated hip roof and a verandah on three sides. Containing 14 rooms, Rideau Cottage was a generously scaled mid-Victorian house which may be seen as a late interpretation of a picturesque villa. Its one-storey plan, low pitched roof spreading over the verandahs and the picturesque nature of its wooden bargeboard indicate the stylistic roots of Rideau Cottage. The symmetrical plan of the house was reflected in its symmetrical square-headed fenestration. In the same manner that Rideau Hall grew according to the requirements and desires of its successive inhabitants, Rideau Cottage was expanded in 1872 when Thomas Scott, the chief architect of Public Works, prepared plans for a second storey addition. Other than the second story itself the major alteration involved the addition of a small enclosed balcony above the front verandah which transformed the appearance of the house from that of a picturesque cottage to a more substantial Victorian house. Rideau Cottage continued to grow with an addition to its rear in 1905, primarily for an expansion of the kitchen: flat-roofed and constructed of red brick, this wing, a portion of which is one-storey and another portion two-storey, is extremely utilitarian. In 1933 a two-storey hip roofed bay wing was added to the northeastern facade to extend the dining room. A screened porch on the rear facade

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and an attached lean-to frame garage have been added since the 1930s. A major transformation in 1954-55 involved the removal of the verandahs on three facades and the construction of a prominent, classically inspired central entrance porch: four pillars support a pedimented canopy below which the entrance door is framed.

ENVIRONMENT

Rideau Cottage is located behind the rear gardens of Rideau Hall in what was originally a rather wild wooded corner of the estate. A formal entrance drive, lawns and flower beds lead up to the building, behind which is a less manicured wooded area. Behind Rideau Hall a large area of the grounds is devoted to service structures. Rideau Cottage is in an area somewhat separate from these service buildings but within sight of both them and the rear of Rideau Hall. Because Rideau Cottage is not readily visible from the road its only landmark value rests in its being part of the readily identifiable vice-regal estate.

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