

Province House National Historic Site of Canada

165 Richmond Street, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada

Formally Recognized: 1979/10/26

Other Name(s)

165 Richmond Street / Province House

Colonial Building

Provincial Legislature

Links and Documents

n/a

Construction Date(s)

1843/01/01 to 1847/01/01

Listed on the Canadian Register: 2005/11/29

Statement of Significance

Description of Historic Place

Province House is a Classical Revival style public building constructed of Nova Scotia sandstone located in historic Queen Square. The building has housed the legislature since the Island was a colony and was the location of many important historical events such as the Charlottetown Conference of 1864. Province House is also recognised as a National Historic site and as a designated provincial heritage place. It is open to the public year round. This municipal designation encompasses the building's exterior and parcel; it does not include the building's interior.

Heritage Value

The historic value of Province House lies in its important role in the history of Canada; its beautiful Classical Revival architecture; and its importance to the streetscape.

Before Province House was constructed, the Island's Legislature met in various homes and taverns. Finally, in 1837 Lieutenant Governor, Sir John Harvey, called for 5000 pounds for a building to house the two branches of the legislature and offices. A public design competition was held that year but the project was delayed by the need for a building to house the Supreme Court as well. At last, in 1842, the Legislature voted for a further 5000 pounds and construction began the following year.

Local builder, Isaac Smith, who had won the public design competition, had no formal architectural training but he was responsible for many of the public buildings around Charlottetown in the period. Smith was also appointed foreman of the project. His brother, carpenter Henry Smith, as well as local trades people and labourers were hired to work on the huge structure making it a truly Island accomplishment. The Colonial Building was comparable to public buildings in other colonies making it a huge achievement and a source of pride to Islanders.

Province House was built in the Classical Revival style. The Classical Revival style was the result of further study of Greek original forms. Pattern books, such as those by architect and writer, Asher Benjamin, made the architectural vocabulary available to all builders. The style influenced Canadian architecture the most of any of the architectural styles. A more formal approach to the

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Classical Revival style was used for public buildings reminiscent of the temples of Greece and Rome. A great number of 19th Century public buildings were built in the Classical Revival style.

Lieutenant Governor, Sir Henry Vere Huntley, laid the cornerstone of Province House in May 1843 among a celebration that included a speech, a band and a parade. The official opening of the building took place in January 1847, when the first session of the Legislature was held there. Interestingly, the Legislature still meets there to this day. One of the most important events that ever took place at Province House was the Charlottetown Conference of 1864 when delegates met to discuss the Confederation of Canada. The meeting was the first of a series of meetings that would ultimately lead to the Confederation of Canada in 1867 making Charlottetown the Cradle of Confederation.

Province House was made a National Historic Site in 1966 for its role as the Birthplace of Canada. The building had been altered a number of times throughout the years, however between 1979 and 1983 the building was restored to reflect the 1864 period. The building, which is located on historic Queen Square at the end of University Avenue, is a landmark in Charlottetown and an important building to the City, Province, and the Nation.

Source: Heritage Office, City of Charlottetown Planning Department, PO Box 98, Charlottetown, PE C1A 7K2

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Character-Defining Elements

The following character-defining elements illustrate the Classical Revival heritage value of Province House:

- The overall massing of the building
- The symmetry of the building's façades
- The Nova Scotia sandstone construction
- The style and placement of the windows including the six over six windows and the first and second floor, as well as the three over three windows of the third floor. The windows behind the portico have pediments above them as do the windows of the east and west sides
- The size and central placement of the heavy paneled doors
- The portico, with its arched doorways, four square columns, four Doric columns and pediment above, giving a temple effect
- The size and shape of the mouldings and stonework of the building's exterior including the pilasters, lintels, sills and beltcourses running between the floors
- The hipped slate and copper roof
- The size and placement of the chimneys

Other character-defining elements of Province House include:

- The location of Province House on Queen Square

Recognition

Jurisdiction

Prince Edward Island

Recognition Authority

Province House National Historic Site of Canada

165 Richmond Street, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada

City of Charlottetown

Recognition Statute

City of Charlottetown Zoning and Development Bylaw

Recognition Type

Heritage Resource

Recognition Date

1979/10/26

Additional Information

Location of Supporting Documentation

Heritage Office, City of Charlottetown Planning Department, PO Box 98, Charlottetown PE C1A 7K2

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