

FEDERAL HERITAGE BUILDINGS REVIEW OFFICE

BENCHMARK REPORT 10-102

TITLE: WP1058 Offices, Gun Shop, Change Rooms
WP1091 Ranks Quarters
WP1125 Storage

Work Point Barracks
Canadian Forces Base, Esquimalt, B.C.

DFRP: 17402

SOURCE: [REDACTED] Historical Research Branch

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office (FHBRO) has been asked by the Department of National Defence (DND) to evaluate 3 buildings at Work Point Barracks, CFB Esquimalt for their heritage status. WP1058, built in 1938 (Figures 3, 4, 7-11), is a formerly a Signals

Building currently being used as offices, a gun shop and change rooms. WP 1091 (Figures 3, 5, 12-18) was constructed in 1953 as Ranks Quarters, and is still used as such. WP1125 (Figures 3, 6, 19-22) was built in 1952 as a Radar Building and Gymnasium, and is now used for storage. The buildings under review have reached over 40 years of age and are being submitted for evaluation as per Treasure Board policy.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Thematic

Building WP1058 is associated (as a support facility) with the coastal defence system established in the 19th century to protect the naval dockyard at Esquimalt. The defence system was expanded several times between 1887 and 1956, when it was dismantled. WP1058 was built during the revitalization of Work Point Barracks just prior to and during the Second World War, when it became the fortress headquarters of a much expanded coastal defence artillery network.

Buildings WP1091 and WP1125 are associated with the emergence of a large-scale permanent Canadian military force after World War II in response to Canada's commitments to NATO during the Cold War.

Work Point Barracks was created as a permanent military base in 1887. For much of its history, Work Point was the garrison and/or fortress headquarters of the Victoria-Esquimalt coastal artillery defences, established to protect the Esquimalt naval base and the adjacent provincial capital, Victoria, from attack. The site was established as the quartering, administrative, and command centre for the Canadian artillery company assigned to operate temporary batteries at nearby Macaulay Point. Work Point's importance was enhanced in 1893 when it became, under the administration of the Imperial War Department, the command headquarters of an expanded coastal defence system developed jointly between Canada and Britain. Given over to Canadian

control when the British withdrew in 1906, Work Point remained the headquarters of the coastal defence system until its abolition in 1956.¹

In addition to the central role it played with respect to the coastal defence system, Work Point has also played a role as an infantry barracks, largely in association with various components of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI). The first permanent infantry unit to occupy Work Point Barracks was "B" Company, PPCLI, which was garrisoned there from 1920 until the outbreak of World War II, when it proceeded to England.² During the Second World War, Work Point Barracks was expanded, and the open land adjacent to the west expropriated for future use, but much of the construction was impermanent, and was demolished after the war to make way for new, permanent buildings. WP1058 was an exception to this general trend in that it was built just prior to the war, and was constructed in permanent materials and clearly intended to last.

After World War II, the facilities used by the coastal-defence system during the war were subsequently used during the establishment of the Royal Canadian School of Artillery, Coast and Anti-Aircraft. The school came into being in 1948 and was the first step toward the training of troops in peacetime. The postwar period saw the creation of a new development plan for Work Point Barracks (and other parts of the military installations in the region). The School of Artillery tabled its Work Point Development Plan in 1951, of which WP 1091 and WP1125 were a part. The three-stage plan was intended to "develop Work Point as a peacetime headquarters, administrative, training, and housing area for the Active Force units now located in Greater Victoria, capable of expansion in the event of war."³ The development projected 19 buildings, identified in the order by which they were to be constructed. Two "Radar Buildings" were slated for construction. WP1125, listed originally as a Radar Building/Gymnasium, may therefore have ranked either first or seventeenth. WP1091 ranked third in priority.

The importance of the coastal artillery defence system declined through the late 1940s and early 1950s due to changes in military technology. Over the same period, Canada's Cold War commitments and responsibilities increased. Work Point Barracks during this period was used to house some of the Canadian units on rotation in Germany, where a Canadian combat group was maintained.

The artillery garrisons and engineers left Work Point Barracks in 1957, and the PPCLI moved in, following its deployment in Germany (1956-57)⁴. It was in turn replaced by the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, subsequently renamed the 3rd Battalion of the PPCLI as part of a reorganization of the army in 1970.⁵ The use of the buildings under review during the postwar period reflected the shift within the Canadian armed forces toward international peacekeeping, rather than defence.

¹ Parts of this report are abstracted from Nicolas Miquelon, "2 Buildings, CFB Esquimalt, Work Point Barracks," FHBRO Report 05-044.

² Base Information Officer, ed., *Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt* (Esquimalt, CFB Esquimalt, 1988), 6-7.

³ *Work Point Development Plan*, Royal Canadian School of Artillery, Coast, and Anti Aircraft, July 1951, 6-7.

⁴ Base Information Officer, ed., *Canadian*, 8-9.

⁵ *Ibid.*

WP1058, WP1091, and WP1125 have borne witness to many different occupants of Work Point Barracks. The Signals Building, Ranks Quarters, and multi-purpose Radar Building/Gymnasium have seen continuous use during a time when Work Point shifted toward the housing of a permanent military force. Beginning during World War II and as part of the coastal defence system, and later, in support of the Cold War, these buildings illustrate the build-up of Canadian forces as they emerged as a permanent feature of Canada's military landscape.

Person/Event

No persons or events of historical significance are known to be associated with these buildings.

Local Development

The community for the buildings under review might be considered Work Point Barracks itself, which is now part of CFB Esquimalt. The history of Work Point Barracks is characterized by four periods of construction: the period of founding and initial construction (1887-1893), the first period of major expansion (1893-1904), the World War II expansion (ca. 1940-1945), and the postwar period (1950s onward). WP1058 was part of the third period, while WP1091 and WP1125 were part of the fourth.

Work Point Barracks began in 1887 with the construction of a number of wooden buildings (two of which remain in 2012) intended to house a garrison of approximately 100 men. These were located at the far northeast of Work Point.⁶ These buildings later housed the British Royal Marine Artillery and Royal Engineers unit, which occupied Work Point from 1893-1899. The arrival of a much larger force in 1899, however, prompted new construction. In the spring of 1900, additional ground was obtained for expansion. By the end of 1902, a series of barracks stores, a cookhouse, a boathouse, officers' quarters, a recreational centre, married quarters, officer's stables and several other buildings had been completed. Work slowed after 1902, but continued until 1904. In 1906, Work Point was returned to Canadian control.

Little development occurred at Work Point between the withdrawal of the British and the outbreak of World War II; the same can be said of surrounding army and naval sites – the Dockyard, Signals Hill, and Naden, although at each of these sites, a small pre-war expansion occurred. At Work Point, this included the construction of WP1058, the Signals Building, as well as WP1020, an administration building, and a station hospital, WP1033 (demolished). During this period, a quantity of land to the southwest of the established Work Point area, between the barracks and DND owned Macaulay Point, was expropriated from the Township of Esquimalt. The acquisition almost doubled the size of the barracks property, although much of it was subsequently left vacant. WP1125 is an exception, having been built in the southwest quadrant of the expropriated land, behind the John Jardine house, now WP1163.

While construction during World War II was geared to the exigencies of war, postwar construction was intended to address long-term development and to support a permanent military force. After the war, a development plan was produced to guide and streamline new construction, as well as to oversee the demolition deemed necessary to institute the plan. Buildings WP1091 (known in the Development Plan as No.1 Barrack Block) and WP1125 were constructed during

⁶ Ian Doull, "Work Point Barracks," FHBRO Report 89-205, 10.

this period.⁷ Two buildings, WP1080 and WP1081 were demolished to permit the construction of WP1091. The building was constructed in the old part of Work Point at a time when efforts were being made to rid the space of many structures perceived as obsolete in order to redefine the parade ground. WP1091 was thus an important element in the redevelopment of Work Point after World War II. Its geographic location around the parade ground made it a visually prominent feature in the new image being created for the sector. The prominence of the building on the priority list, as the first to be constructed, indicated its importance in the minds of military planners, and may also have suggested a pressing need for new housing. The same can be said for the adjacent WP1092, another large barracks built in 1954.

WP1091, known in the Work Point Development Plan as Barracks Block No. 1, was the first building on the Development Plan priority list. It was constructed in 1952 as part of the first stage of the plan. Such a large building was easily constructed because it was outside the historic core of Work Point. The plan described how “One Radar building will be constructed in the training area. This building will be designed to accommodate the Radar conveys and equipment required by the RCSA. This building will also house certain fire control instruments and technical stores together with an electronics laboratory and repair and maintenance shops.”⁸

The development plan proceeded to unfold through the 1950s, modified somewhat when the Royal Canadian School of Artillery, for which the sector had been planned, closed in 1955, and the artillery unit left two years later.

WP1058

1938

Original Use: Signals Buildings

Current Use: Offices, Gun Shop, and Change Rooms

ARCHITECTURE

Aesthetic Design

WP1158 is a two-storey structure with a flat roof, symmetrical about a projecting central entrance on its long side (Figures 7, 8). The building is of concrete, painted white, with a course of corbelled red brickwork that defines the ground storey connects with the brick surrounding the main entrance on the exterior. The barest hint of a plain cornice outlines the flat roof of the building. WP1158 can be described as a modest Modern Classical building; its symmetry, its prominent, projecting central entrance and its even proportions are features of classicism, while its flat roof, lack of applied ornamentation and pure white coloration hint at the Modernism that would come to characterize military construction at Esquimalt and across Canada over the next two decades.

Functional Design

The plan of the former Signals Building is a simple, clear, double-pile plan, symmetrical about a central hallway that contains the projecting main entrance, the central staircase, and services (Figure 11). A long, narrow hallway divides the front rooms from the back ones (Figure 9).

⁷ *Work Point Development Plan*, 12.

⁸ *Ibid*, 9.

There are small offices, storage, and conference rooms on both side of this hallway, with the exception of the back (East) side of the building on the first floor, which contains a large, open workshop. Each office has at least one window (corner offices have two), providing the internal spaces with natural light. The second-floor plans are similar, though the entire north side of the building, rather than one quarter of it, as on the first floor, has been opened up to provide a large open room. The building appears to be both flexible and very functional.

Craftsmanship and Materials

The craftsmanship in WP1058 building was just above utilitarian and the execution careful, with an overall effect of simple refinement. The materials used are uncomplicated, featuring reinforced concrete and brick on the exterior, and tile and industrial flooring, and dropped acoustic tile ceilings with fluorescent lighting on the interior. The building has been well maintained and appears to be in good condition.

Designer

The designer of WP1058 is unknown.⁹

ENVIRONMENT

Site

WP1058 is located on a corner lot on Victoria View Road. The site is completely separated from the road at the front and on the north side, being elevated on a man-made, site-sized podium now covered in grass and outlined in small stones. A paved walkway leads from the road to the front steps of the building and around to the south side entrance, which is reached via a metal emergency staircase. The rear entrance is accessed directly from a paved parking lot behind the building. No significant changes appear to have been made to the site.

Setting

WP1058 is located in the sector immediately south of the older, built-up part of Work Point Barracks that was subject to a major building campaign in ca. 1940-1943 (Figure 3). It is the only building in the setting that predates World War II. Across Victoria View Road, the building faces a parking lot and sits kitty-corner to WP1367, an NOTC Ventures barracks block built in 1998. Slightly to the northwest is the single-storey red-brick Lecture Training building, constructed in 1988 (Figure 23).¹⁰ Southeast of WP1058 is WP1055, a building of approximately the same size and massing, built in 1942 and now used as storage space. Interestingly, though WP1055 postdates its 1938 neighbour, and although it appears to be constructed of white painted concrete like WP1058, it has a sloped, gabled roof, which give it a more pre-modern or traditional appearance.¹¹

The extent to which WP1058 may have influenced the buildings around it is ambiguous. It seems to set the tone for some elements of the surrounding built environment (such as WP1055), and is merely aesthetically compatible with others (such as the Lecture Training Building). WP1055 may have followed it aesthetically. The choice of materials – red brick – in the Lecture Training

⁹ The designer is not listed in Nelson's comprehensive *CFB Esquimalt Military Heritage*, (1984), 147.

¹⁰ Preliminary Information Sheets submitted by the DND, January 2011.

¹¹ Nelson, *Military Heritage*, 123.

building may have been suggested by the red brick used at WP1058 (as well as in other older structures around the base), but the choice of materials is the most that could be claimed for resemblance between the two structures.

Landmark

All of the buildings at Work Point Barracks are recognized by the Township of Esquimalt as reflecting an important part of the region's history and are considered valuable local landmarks even though they are not freely accessible to the local population.¹² As a physical landmark, this building is not particularly prominent. It is set on a short podium, but the larger WP1367 to the east blocks its view of Victoria's Inner Harbour, and presumably the view of it from the harbour.

WP1091

1953

Original Use: Ranks Quarters

Current Use: Ranks Quarters

ARCHITECTURE

Aesthetic Design

WP1091 represents the standardized designs produced for the Department of National Defence in the postwar period in an effort to project a modern, efficient image for the Canadian army, navy, and air force.

WP1091 has several features that place it within the aesthetic range of the International Style (Figures 12-14). It is a large (approximately 3093m²), rectangular building of three storeys with a flat roof. The exterior is of white-painted concrete and has no applied ornament except a thin string course above the ground-storey windows. WP1091 has two main entrances, set symmetrically off-centre at either end of the long east side of the building, as well as two secondary entrances on the short north and south sides and another at the centre of the west (rear) elevation. Entrance doors are modestly sized and articulated by a short concrete canopy supported by thin steel posts. The massive white wall of the principal façade is broken up by the two three-storey, multi-pane vertical windows with generous, scored but unpainted concrete window surrounds that connect with a course of smooth unpainted concrete across the centre front of the building at ground level. Three horizontal bands of windows delineate the building's three stories.

Functional Design

WP1091 expressed in plan the desire for utilitarian efficiency that was characteristic both of International Style buildings and the version of it embraced by the DND (Figure 18). The building's plan is a reflection of the pursuit, in the Canadian military of "long life and low depreciation with minimum maintenance costs and a low risk of fire,"¹³ in its postwar building program.

¹² Personal Communication with [REDACTED] Chair of the Township of Esquimalt Heritage Committee, [REDACTED]

¹³ Department of National Defence, "DND Post War Construction Program Introduction," *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal*, vol. 33, no. 9 series no. 373 (1956), 318.

WP 1091 has a simple, long, rectangular shape and straightforward cubic massing. It was constructed to a standard plan, similar to that of the slightly later WP1092, which sits adjacent to it. The plan of each floor features two long files of barrack rooms on either side of a long hallway. The off-centre entrance hallways contain stairwells, well-lit by the three-storey vertical windows, and services are also located in this area.

Craftsmanship and Materials

The choice of materials in WP1091 reflects the decision to produce inexpensive, functional, solid buildings that could have a low maintenance cost over time. The principal construction material of the inner and outer walls is concrete, which was relatively inexpensive and very durable, and has withstood the rigours of time well. Being paintable, concrete was thus an aesthetically flexible choice, allowing for the two-tone exterior effect described above. The inside finishes of WP1091 consist mostly of simply and functionally applied plaster with some wood detailing.

Designer

This building is a variation on a standard plan developed by the Design Division, Directorate of Works, DND (Army) in 1950 or 1951.¹⁴

ENVIRONMENT

Site

WP1091 is on a flat site surrounded by a narrow strip of grass beyond which is a paved parking and parade ground lot on the entrance façade, and a base road on the rear façade separated from the building by a high wire fence (Figures 12, 14). Two mature trees are located on the lawn in front of the building, obscuring a small proportion of the façade.

No significant changes have occurred in the relationship of WP1091 to its site. All original door openings have been maintained and are used as constructed.

Setting

Building WP1091 is located directly off and to the west of the parade-ground in the northeast quadrant of Work Point Barracks (Figure 5). This area forms the core of the older part of Work Point Barracks where lots were purchased to permit the first expansion of the base in 1893. As part of Phase 1 of the Work Point Development Plan and in order to create more space for military activities, several buildings were demolished in the densely built-up area.¹⁵ The parade square and the buildings around it constitute one of the major formal public spaces on the base.

Adjacent to the northeast of WP1091 is WP 1092, a very similar barracks building though somewhat more traditional in appearance because of its gabled roof. To the southwest of the parade square is WP1075, a red-brick structure that is now an office and storage building but originally designed (in 1902) as two separate buildings to house the British Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA). Beside WP1075 is WP1090, the old mess hall. Another white, flat roofed building, WP1090 is recognizably a product of the Modernist inclinations of the postwar military

¹⁴ Department of National Defence, "DND Post War Construction Program Introduction," 319.

¹⁵ Miquelon, FHBRO Report 05-044, 5.

building program. Across the parade ground directly east is WP1372, a relatively new (approximately 10 years), four-storey building, red-brick and concrete block building constructed for the Royal Canadian Navy.

WP1091 neither dominates nor is dominated in its setting. The slightly later WP1092 follows its design fairly closely, while it rejects the more traditional aesthetic of WP1075. The materials and principal façade of WP1372 makes gestures to WP1091 with its horizontal bands of windows, minimalist entrance with small canopy, and large, multipane window beside the entrance. The red-brick of WP1372 resembles that of the WP1075, one of the early buildings around the parade square.

Landmark

All of the buildings at Work Point Barracks are recognized by the Township of Esquimalt as reflecting an important part of the region's history and are considered valuable local landmarks even though they are not freely accessible to the local population.¹⁶ WP1091 is a large and prominent building located on a major public site in the older section of Work Point Barracks. It would be well-known by most residents of the base, and highly visible to visitors.

WP1125

1952

Original use: Radar Building/Gymnasium

Current use: Storage

ARCHITECTURE

Aesthetic Design

WP1125 is an extremely utilitarian design (Figure 19). It is a large, shed-like, single-storey rectangular building of painted reinforced concrete with a gable-end roof. It has a raised, open-plan central section and two low, flat-roofed sections along its long sides that contain a variety of multi-purpose spaces including offices, storage, changing rooms, and services. The building resembles a slightly older model of the drill hall or aircraft hangar, with its combination of large, open central space and smaller enclosed secondary spaces ones.

Functional Design

WP1125 has an extremely functional and flexible plan, with an open, rectangular core and smaller strings of secondary spaces that have supported multiple uses over time (Figure 22). Almost all of the smaller spaces open onto the larger internal space, while a few of the smaller rooms are internally connected by doorways. The interior of the larger space was once lit by a large, horizontal clerestory window above the side aisles subdivided by thick, squared beams.¹⁷ The window appears to have been either painted over or filled in. Most of the smaller rooms have individual windows.

¹⁶ Personal Communication with [REDACTED] Chair of the Township of Esquimalt Heritage Committee, [REDACTED]

¹⁷ The clerestory window appears in the photographs provided by DND to the FHBRO, but does not appear in more recent photographs taken at the site.

Craftsmanship and Materials

Both materials and craftsmanship at WP1125 are standard and workmanlike. The principal external material is reinforced concrete, and the building has a concrete slab floor. Internally, the walls are of painted plaster and dry-wall, while floors are linoleum and other industrial materials. Ceilings in the offices are dropped acoustic tile.

Designer

The designer of this building is unknown.

ENVIRONMENT

Site

WP1125 sits on land expropriated from the Township of Esquimalt in 1941, south and west of the older sections of Work Point Barracks, and northeast of Macaulay Point (Figure 3). It is surrounded on two sides by flat, grassy lawns, and on the other by a narrow strip of grass and a paved parking lot. The relationship of the building to its site, and the way in which it is now accessed may have changed over time, due to changes in the function of the building. The original door openings appear to have been maintained, with the personnel entrance in the long side, and the equipment through double doors in the gable end, but the details of use cannot be confirmed by the custodial department.¹⁸

Setting

WP1125 is located behind the Permanent Married Quarters area of Work Point, north of Macaulay Point, an area bounded by Munroe Street to the north, Vaughan Street to the south, Clifton Terrace to the west, and Anson Street to the east (Figure 6). There are only small sheds and outbuildings in the immediate setting, with a parade square to the north, baseball fields to the east, and the DND boundary with the Township of Esquimalt on Clifton Terrace. WP1163, an Arts and Crafts house from 1895-96, is located beyond the baseball fields. The closest building to the south across Vaughan Street is WP1184, in the Sea Cadets training area. The single-storey, white-painted concrete building with a red gable roof has been condemned, as is currently being used by the Urban Search and Rescue Unit for rescue practice. There is little discernable physical resemblance or cross-influence between WP1125 and the buildings around it. As a primarily horizontal, neutrally-coloured building this building might be said to reinforce its flat, relatively empty landscape setting.

Landmark

Representatives of the Esquimalt Heritage Advisory Committee have stated that the buildings at Work Point Barracks are recognized by the Township of Esquimalt as reflecting an important part of the region's history and are considered valuable local landmarks even though they are not freely accessible to the local population. This building, however, as one of the more utilitarian

¹⁸ Personal communication with [REDACTED] April 2012.

postwar structures on the base, might be considered to be at the lower end of the Committee's priority list.¹⁹

The building is not accessible to the public. It is far from the older, densely built-up sections of Work Point Barracks to the northeast. In order to see it, one would need to travel almost as far as Macaulay Point. Since it is no longer used as a gymnasium, WP1125 would likely be known mainly to those who make use of it for office or storage purposes.

¹⁹ Personal communication with [REDACTED] Chair of the Township of Esquimalt Heritage Committee, [REDACTED]



Figure 1. Pacific coast defence installations (R. Lovatt, *Shoot, Shoot, Shoot: A History of the Victoria-Esquimalt Coast Artillery Defences 1878-1956* (Rodd Hill Friends Society, 1993)).

3 BUILDINGS, WORK POINT BARRACKS, CFB ESQUIMALT

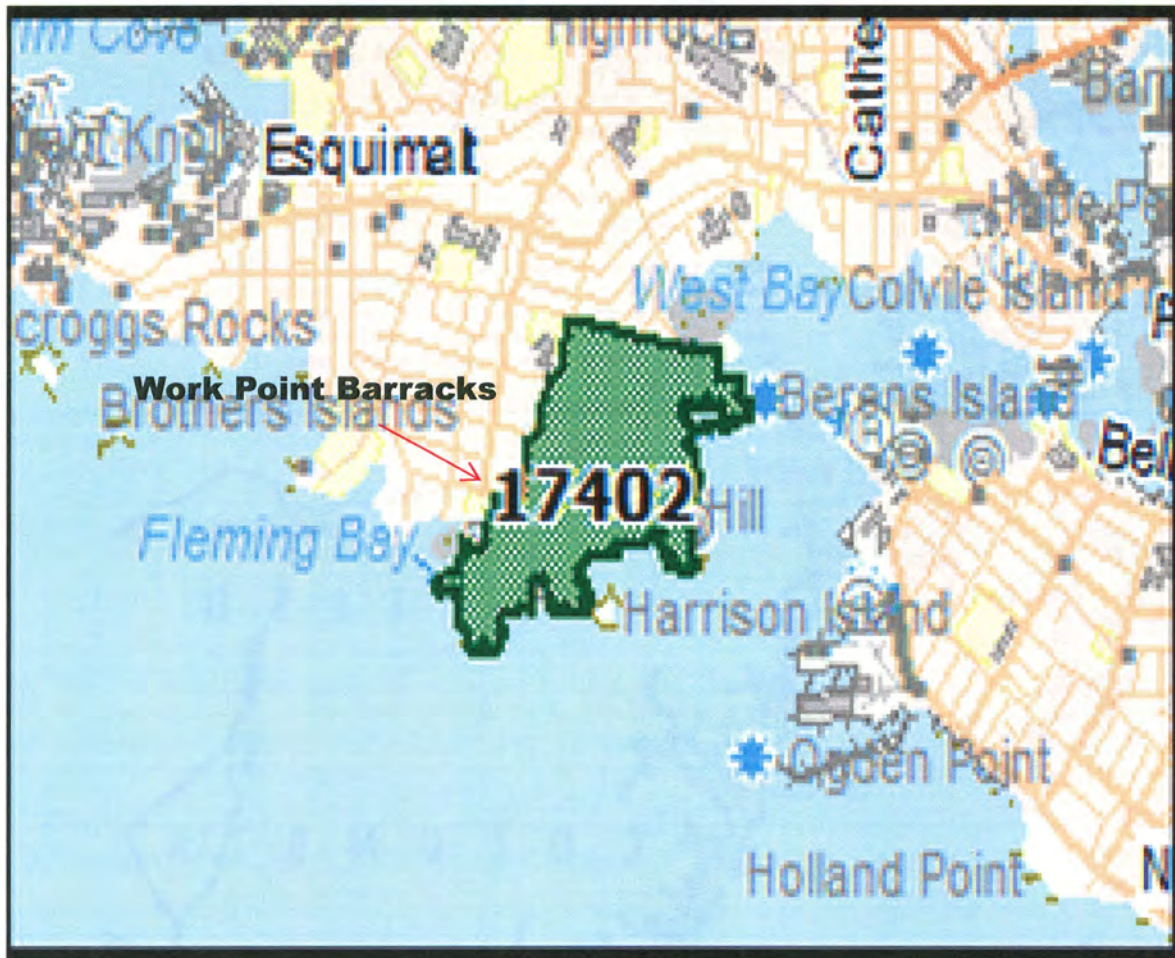


Figure 2. Work Point Barracks, CFB Esquimalt (maps.google.com, accessed March 12, 2012).