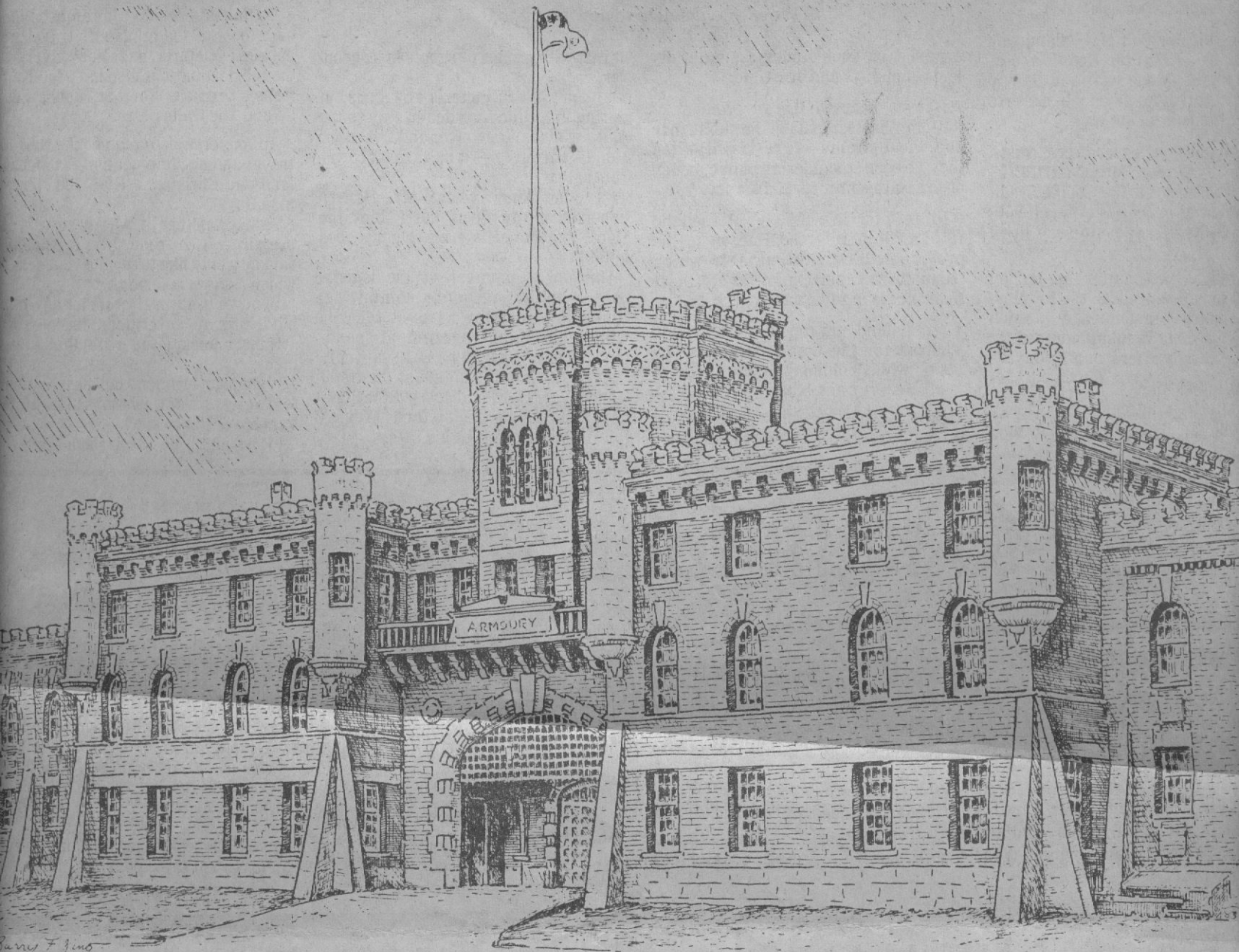


Oct. 1, 1983

Tues Col.



Bay Street Armoury

Barry King

LANDMARKS

Spit-and-polish fortress from the horse soldier era

On Dec. 6, 1915, Lt.-Col. R. Angus took charge of the newly completed Bay Street Armoury from the Public Works Department. It superseded the Menzies Street drill hall at a time when the horse had not yet given way to mechanized transport. Parfitt Brothers constructed the imposing 188 feet-by-261 feet building with its red brick castellated walls for a cost of \$237,000.

Col. William Ridgway Wilson, the architect, was an active militia man and his preference for brick can be seen in his other contemporary work such as St. John's Church on Quadra Street and Wilkinson Road jail.

The basement contained a gymnasium, two rifle ranges and a swimming tank which was available for various units including the 103rd Battalion, C.E.F., 67th Battalion and 5th Regiments, among others. Prohibition of spitting and other forms of pollution of the 65-degree water was strictly enforced and special times were allotted for the use of officers.

Campaign rooms, the Corps of Guides Field

Geoffrey Castle

Ambulance meeting rooms, gun armory, repair shop and drill hall were among the offices located on the first floor. The infantry officers' mess room, cadets' orderly room, sergeants' reading room, army service corps armory and canteen were on the second floor. A wide gallery on three sides was provided above the drill hall. The third floor contained the caretaker's quarters and the band room was in the tower.

Because of the size of the drill hall, a great many events took place over the years such as boxing tournaments and dances. The cost of renting the hall was \$100 plus expenses and was in the form of a donation to the B.C. Returned Soldiers' Commission.

The Victoria Police Mutual Benefit Association held its annual dances there and in 1921 the police were responsible for providing a floor for the hall. The following year the Rotary Club

of Victoria held its first large ball at the Armory and in 1924 there was a championship boxing 10-round contest between Joe Bayley of Victoria and W. Woods of Work Point barracks contending for the lightweight title of Canada.

The 5th (B.C.) Coast Regiment has entertained such prominent persons as the lieutenant-governor and the premier of the province. A special event was Army Week display in May, 1949. Units taking part in the event included the Canadian Scottish Regiment's Battalion, the 5th B.C. Heavy Anti-aircraft Regiment, 13th Field Ambulance and 59th Light Anti-aircraft workshop with cadets from each unit participating.

Although army horses have long since gone and the swimming tank is now used as a "puff" range (named after Len Griffiths, a former battery sergeant-major with 50 years' service with the 5th Regiment), the tradition endures within the formidable buttressed walls.

Geoffrey Castle is a Council member of the Victoria Section of the B.C. Historical Federation.