Halifax City Hall

Halifax Regional Municipality

HALIFAX
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

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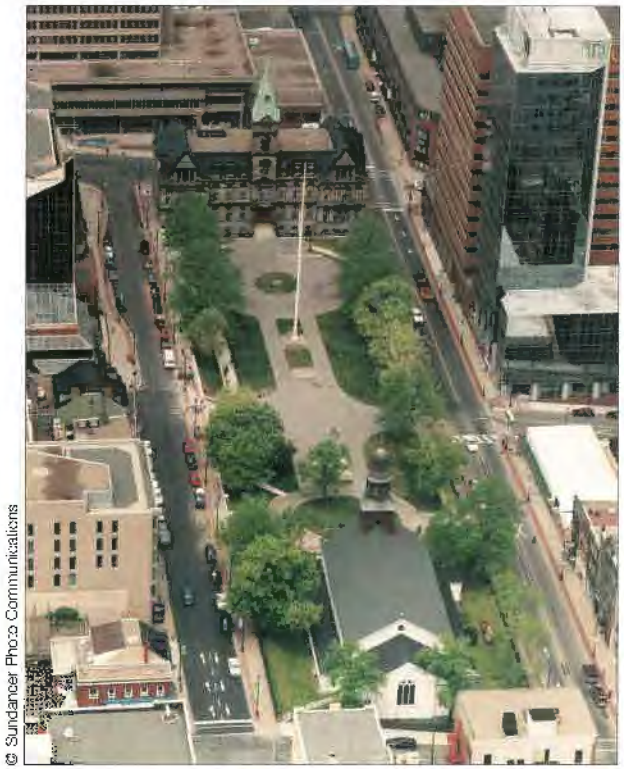
Halifax City Hall and the Grand Parade



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Laying the Cornerstone for City Hall

It was a lovely summer afternoon in Halifax on 18 August 1888, the day proclaimed for laying the cornerstone for Halifax's new City Hall. At four o'clock dignitaries from the city, the Provincial government and from Halifax County and Dartmouth, led by a band and the Halifax police force, paraded from the old city hall on the waterfront, up George Street to the Grand Parade, where an "immense crowd" had assembled.

After the band played appropriate music, Mayor Patrick O'Mullin delivered his address. He compared the Halifax of 1841, the year of its incorpora-

tion, with the present day, emphasizing the progress made in lighting and improving the streets and the building of sidewalks, construction of a public water supply, creation of a police force and a fire department second to none, a street railroad and a public school system. He concluded by saying:

> *I am quite sure [this edifice] will be an ornament to the city and a credit to the architect and the builders, and indeed to all concerned.*

After the assemblage sang a hymn, a sealed copper box was placed inside the cornerstone, containing such items as newspapers of the day, and the corner stone then lowered into position. Mayor O'Mullin tapped it with his silver mounted mallet, declared it well and truly laid, and invoked God's blessing on all concerned.

At the mayor's invitation, some thirty or more of the dignitaries gathered in the council chamber. Proceedings began with the Mayor's toast to "Our guests", and the "city fathers" sang "For they are jolly good fellows". After "a very pleasant and profitable two hours were spent", the gathering dispersed to the singing of "Auld Lang Syne".

Haligonians had insisted that their new City Hall be located on the Grand Parade, the focus of civic life since the city's founding in 1749. On 21 June in that year, some 2500 settlers, had arrived at what the Mi'kmaq called "Chebookt", meaning "chief harbour" or "great long harbour". Most of the settlers were English, but there were also among them Swiss, Irish, Jews, and Germans. George Montague-Dunk, Earl of Halifax, President of the Board of Trade and Plantations, had been instrumental in obtaining British government approval for the projected town. And so in his honour the new town was named Halifax.

Founding a New Town and The Grand Parade

During that summer of 1749, surveyors laid out a gridiron pattern of streets running up the side of a broad steep hill, on which in the next century would arise the massive fortification, the Halifax Citadel. In the town's centre the surveyors placed "The Parade", which they envisaged to be anchored at its north and south ends by public buildings. Saint Paul's Church was built on the south end with the first service held on 2 September 1750, but the north end would remain vacant until the construction of Dalhousie College in 1821.

National Archives of Canada, NMC 1012 (B74331)

1750 Plan of Halifax

Halifax City Hall

Struggle for Civic Incorporation

For its first one hundred years, the goverance of Halifax remained firmly in the hands of His Majesty's Council, or the infamous Council of Twelve, all appointed. They considered themselves not responsible to the citizens of Halifax, but solely to the colony's Governor. Agitation for a charter of incorporation first began in 1785 when mechanics, shopkeepers and other inhabitants unsuccessfully petitioned the Council to give Halifax the power to conduct its own local affairs. Such a corporate body would have meant the Council forfeiting its cherished control over the town, exercised through its appointment of magistrates or justices of the peace.

In what passed for civic administration of the day, no clear line divided administrative and judicial functions. At sittings of the Courts of Session, justices of the peace not only dealt with such town matters as poor rates, streets and markets, and the licencing of taverns, but also sat as a criminal court trying petty offences. When sitting as a criminal court, juries decided the verdict and the justices the punishment; the lash was freely used, with twenty or more lashes regularly administered for convictions for theft of no more than a pair of boots.

Some reforms were made. Halifax got a police court presided over by John George Pyke, who always dressed in drab knee breeches with gray yarn stockings and a snuff-coloured coat. He received eleven shillings and eight

Collection of Halifax Regional Municipality

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1777

pence a day and had command of three police constables.

From its founding Halifax's population and prosperity had ebbed and flowed with war. Prosperity came indeed during the long war with Revolutionary France and Napoleon from 1793 to 1815, when it was said Halifax's streets were paved with gold. But with peace came a deep depression. Yet, also, with peace came what has been called an intellectual awakening when Nova Scotians sought, in the words of a former Provincial Archivist, D.C. Harvey, "to overhaul the entire ship of state, from the keel of commerce to the captain on the bridge". No institution was more in need of reform than Halifax's governance by appointed magistrates.

As owner and editor of the *Novascotian* newspaper, the youthful Joseph Howe had the means to arouse the populace against the prevailing abuses. In November 1834 and January 1835, he published two letters, signed "The People", but written by his friend George Thompson, with sweeping indictments of the magistrates' maladministration. When the second letter accused them of taking "from the pockets of the poor and distressed at least £1000" annually for the last thirty years and pocketing it themselves, the offended magistrates charged Howe with publishing a criminal libel.

All the lawyers Howe consulted told him that as the libel law then read, he had no chance. Howe chose to defend himself. In a packed and sympathetic courtroom (now the Legislative Library in Province House), for over six and half hours of rousing and often witty oratory, Howe laid bare the corruption and incompetence of the whole body of magistrates. Although Chief Justice Brenton Halliburton advised the jury that under the law Howe was guilty, it took barely ten minutes to find Howe not guilty to loud cheers from the onlookers.

Howe's triumphant victory led to his election to the House of Assembly and leadership of the Reformers, who sought constitutional reform and an end to oligarchical rule by the Council of Twelve. Halifax's incorporation now became a major goal for Reformers. They succeeded finally when An Act to Incorporate the Town of Halifax passed on 10 April 1841.

Halifax's first civic election was held on 12 May. After the polls closed *The Times* newspaper reported:

> *the candidates... did the thing handsomely by their supporters and many were the bottles of champagne cracked in their respective houses, in honor of the City of Halifax—and many have been the prognostications since of improvements that are to be made within the municipal bounds.*

Next morning the newspapers carried the results, heartily approving of the worthy men elected. With the exception of one lawyer, all the other eleven elected were merchants. Among them were such notable names as Alexander Keith, John Duffus, Edward Allison, James Tremain, Stephen Binney, and

John Leander Starr and Hugh Bell, the last two were members of the province's Legislative Council.

Prospering Halifax and a Coat of Arms

Creating an urban infrastructure did not come without difficulty. By mid-century, Halifax had, however, such much-needed civic improvements as dependable piped water supply, street cleaning, sewers and mud-free sidewalks, befitting a community of some 20,000. With increasing wealth, much of it from expanding mercantile seaborne trading in the great age of sail, came renewed confidence in Halifax's destiny as a metropolitan centre. After some thirty years of construction, the completion of the imposing star-shaped masonry fortification on Citadel Hill demonstrated Halifax's strategic significance for British imperial defence. Rudyard Kipling called Halifax "Warden of the Honour of the North".

Its prospering seaport and military importance were symbolically linked in the City's Coat of Arms granted in 1860. It displayed a fisherman with a cod fish in his right hand and a Naval seaman as supporters of a blue shield consisting of a gold kingfisher (an heraldic symbol for the fishing industry) surmounted by a golden mural crown in the form of an embattled wall, a device widely used in civic heraldry. On a ribbon at the shield's base was the City's motto *E MARI MERCES* ("WEALTH FROM THE SEA").

A New City Hall

This confidence and prosperity, symbolized by the Coat of Arms, found solid expression in such new buildings, all in stone, as the Halifax Club on Hollis Street, a Customs House and Post Office (today the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia), and after the great 1859 fire, the rebuilding of business premises on Granville Street. But as Haligonians recognized, especially after they saw Saint John, Montreal and Ottawa all build new city halls during 1870's, Halifax still had to make do with civic offices in the old court house erected in 1810 on the waterfront. Never the ideal, as the years passed the old court house, disparagingly referred to as the "Temple", became more and more inconvenient, with overcrowding and a roof that continued to leak for years, or as a contemporary so elegantly described it: as "a trifle porous".

If Halifax citizens were united in the need for a new city hall, they were equally emphatic that it should be sited on the north end of the Grand Parade. But an ongoing dispute with Dalhousie College over ownership of the north end of the Parade seemed beyond resolution. In 1879, a committee appointed to consider questions surrounding the Grand Parade reported that it had been unable to reach an agreement with Dalhousie College, which had demanded that the City, in essence, renounce its whole case for ownership. In reply, the committee submitted that for upwards of sixty years the public had "free use and possession" of the space with free right of way and

transit over every part of it as well as having it for:

> *parade purposes, such as the organization, forming, re-forming and disbanding of processions, and of sleigh rides, for the drilling of militia and volunteers, as well as of the regular troops of the garrison, for public meetings, lectures, addresses, preaching, and public demonstrations.*

Sir William Young, a former premier and later chief justice, and the late chairman of Dalhousie governors, had worked for years to resolve the dispute between the City and the college. In 1886, he stepped forward with a donation of $20,000 to Dalhousie, but conditional on the City providing an acceptable site for the college to erect a new and larger building. Such a site proved to be five acres on the South Common, at the corner of Morris (University Avenue) and Robie Streets, where Dalhousie constructed a new building, to be named after the Reverend John Forrest, Dalhousie's president at the time.

The resulting deed stated that the City

> *"shall have absolute in fee simple the said land [Dalhousie College and the land on which it stood] and in the whole of the Grand Parade (so called) and the same and every part thereof shall thereby be absolutely vested in the City of Halifax".*

In his end-of-year Mayor's Address, James Mackintosh noted the city hall project had "passed from the stage of uncertainty and agitation to that of certainty and action".

There was a "universal consensus" of the desirability of Halifax, a city of

Dalhousie University Libraries, William Inglis Morris Collection

Dalhousie College on the Grand Parade

38,000, having a "respectable building" for its city government.

Matters now moved forward with speed. E.H. Keating, as the city engineer, oversaw the process. A native of Halifax, Edward Keating had gone to Dalhousie. He had then worked in several architects' offices while studying civil engineering. As an engineer, he found ready employment in railway construction, including being in charge of the exploration team surveying the route north of Lake Superior for the Canadian Pacific Railway. On his return to Halifax in late 1872, he found that he had been appointed city engineer *in absentia*. A man of exceptional ability and energy he prepared plans and implemented them for numerous civic projects, using both his engineering and architectural knowledge.

Selecting the Design

Keating prepared for the City's Board of Works an advertisement in 1886 asking for competitive plans for the proposed city hall. Of the architects who submitted plans, the Board of Works recommended to Council that the architect, whose plans were marked "Gladstone", should receive a first prize of $300. Although the Board of Works recommended Gladstone's as the best, it believed some modifications and alterations in the internal arrangements should be made. City Council deferred making any decision to allow for due consideration.

Gladstone's plans did not meet with universal public approval. One writer to the *Morning Herald* newspaper, who called himself "Critic", felt that the "south front facing the parade is not half good enough for the fine approach, which in my opinion can not be beaten in America". He found the entrance on the plan "insignificant". Instead, he recommended that "the doorways should be set off with a fine flight of steps and columns etc., and should be with the clock tower a notable feature of the design". Besides, the plans made no provision for a town hall where public meetings, balls, concerts and receptions could take place, as usual in England and the United States. City Council had intended to spend $75,000, but this sum Critic considered "too paltry" for so noble a site - let Councillors "take Gladstone in hand and give him new orders to make his plans worthy of the times". Since taxpayers would have to pay the piper, Critic concluded "we might as well have good music as bad".

On the day before City Council was to make its decision, Haligonians had their first real view of the plans when *The Citizen and Evening Chronicle* published front, rear and side views of "The Noble Structure". The paper also provided an extensive written description and history of the project.

On 22 October at a special meeting, and after considerable debate, City Council adopted Gladstone's plans. Gladstone proved to be Edward Elliot, a Dartmouth native, who had trained in

Halifax City Hall

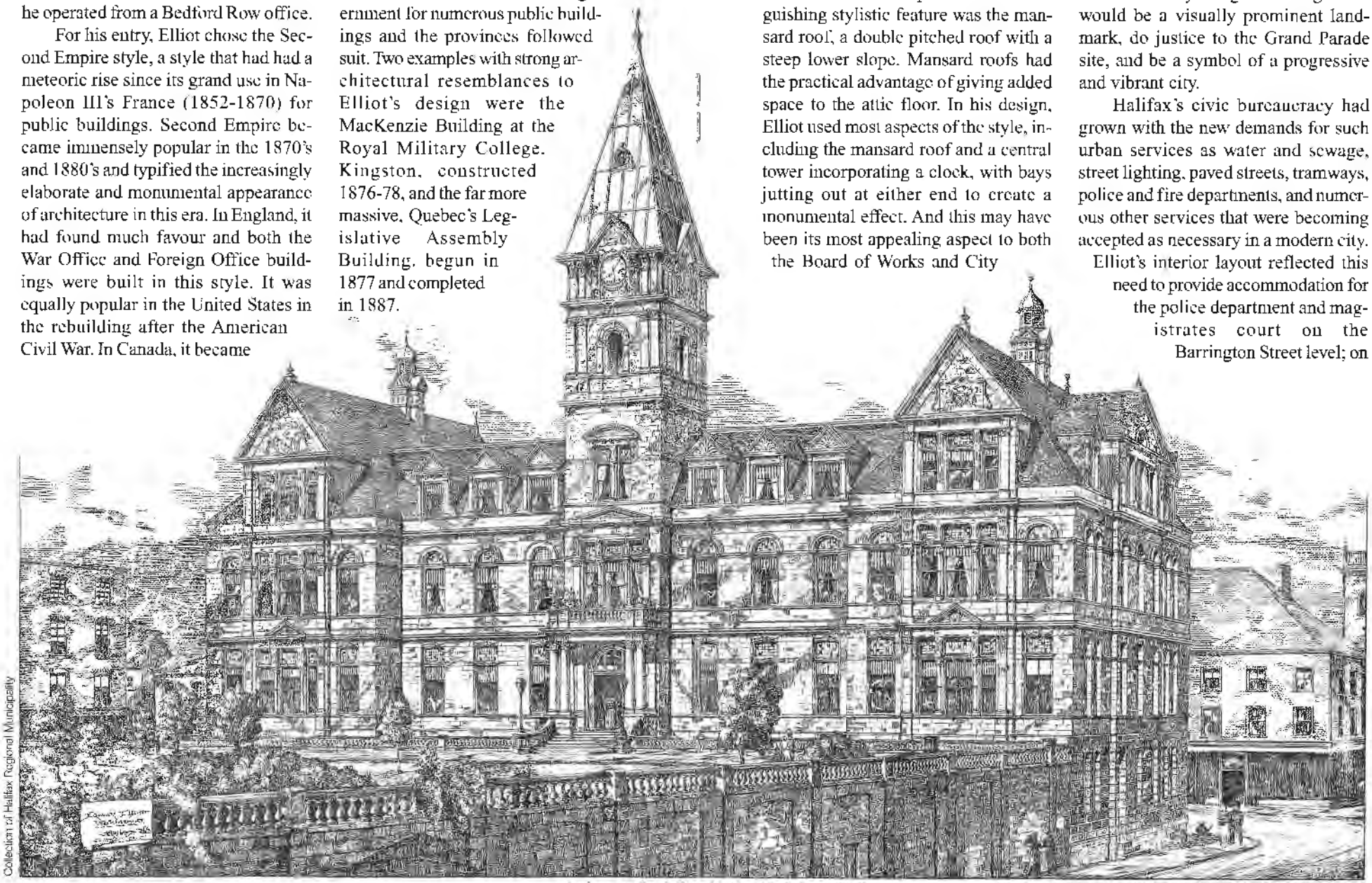
Boston and returned to Halifax where he operated from a Bedford Row office.

For his entry, Elliot chose the Second Empire style, a style that had had a meteoric rise since its grand use in Napoleon III's France (1852-1870) for public buildings. Second Empire became immensely popular in the 1870's and 1880's and typified the increasingly elaborate and monumental appearance of architecture in this era. In England, it had found much favour and both the War Office and Foreign Office buildings were built in this style. It was equally popular in the United States in the rebuilding after the American Civil War. In Canada, it became the choice of the new Dominion government for numerous public buildings and the provinces followed suit. Two examples with strong architectural resemblances to Elliot's design were the MacKenzie Building at the Royal Military College, Kingston, constructed 1876-78, and the far more massive, Quebec's Legislative Assembly Building, begun in 1877 and completed in 1887.

The Second Empire's most distinguishing stylistic feature was the mansard roof, a double pitched roof with a steep lower slope. Mansard roofs had the practical advantage of giving added space to the attic floor. In his design, Elliot used most aspects of the style, including the mansard roof and a central tower incorporating a clock, with bays jutting out at either end to create a monumental effect. And this may have been its most appealing aspect to both the Board of Works and City Council. They sought a design that would be a visually prominent landmark, do justice to the Grand Parade site, and be a symbol of a progressive and vibrant city.

Halifax's civic bureaucracy had grown with the new demands for such urban services as water and sewage, street lighting, paved streets, tramways, police and fire departments, and numerous other services that were becoming accepted as necessary in a modern city.

Elliot's interior layout reflected this need to provide accommodation for the police department and magistrates court on the Barrington Street level; on



Collection of Halifax Regional Municipality

Lithograph of City Hall with Edward Elliot's monogram which appeared in "The Architect", Nov. 25, 1887.

the principal level there were offices for the mayor, city clerk, treasurer, city engineer and similar officials all laid out along a central corridor. Less important officials found themselves on the second floor where, however, was located the Council Chamber.

Elliot's design underwent a series of modifications. On 5 December 1888, the *Acadian Recorder* published a design that included a proposed additional storey. It had ornamented fenestration and an imposing tower. Still more changes were made to the fenestration and to the tower and finer facade articulation before Keating and Elliot settled on the final design. They did not, however, include an additional storey. What had begun as a rather austere four-storey building became a structure with a variety of decorative elements designed to reflect more the Second Empire style and in the process enhance its monumental character.

Constructing City Hall

After the City assumed ownership of the Dalhousie College building and the Grand Parade, it sought bids for constructing a new city hall. The lowest bid came from E.A. Milliken & Co. of Moncton. In the spring of 1887, Milliken began to dismantle the college building. As the design for city hall called for granite outer foundation walls, Milliken used the ironstone from the college for the inner foundation walls. Work went forward slowly, but it became clear by the following spring that Milliken could not fulfil his contractual obligations.

The City cancelled Milliken's contract and brought in Rhodes, Curry Co. from Amherst, which agreed to complete the work for $79,450. As chief mason the firm engaged John Cawsey of Halifax, who had just completed the masonry work for the First Baptist Church at the corner of Spring Garden Road and Queen Street. Granite was used for the bottom storey, while for the two upper stories bright freestone from Wallace and River John quarries on the province's North Shore was used with brown freestone trimmings and cornices. With payments to Milliken and to Rhodes, Curry and the architect, who received $500, the total cost would come to $105,000.

First Council Meeting and the Mayor's 'At Home' in New City Hall

Mayor David McPherson presided over the first council meeting in the new City Hall on Wednesday, 14 May 1890. After reviewing the history of the building's construction, he expressed his "most fervent wish that the opening of our new City Hall will be remembered as the starting point for a time of great prosperity in the good old City of Halifax".

Haligonians got their first opportunity to see inside their new City Hall when, on 22 May, Mayor McPherson held a levee or an "At Home", attended by twelve hundred well-attired ladies and gentlemen. They approached through the Grand Parade, lined with Chinese lanterns, to a building brilliantly illuminated. At the entrance two policemen received their admission cards before they proceeded to the Council Chamber where Mayor McPherson formally welcomed them. All the offices were open to their inspection. On the second floor, the band of the 63rd Regiment entertained, while on the third floor, decorated with flags, bunting and spruce bushes, guests could promenade and enjoy refreshments of ice cream and chocolate cake. The *Morning Herald's* reporter believed everyone "obtained a new idea of the privilege of citizenship in Halifax".

First Marriage in New City Hall

In July, a young couple became the first to be married in the new City Hall. The bride, a Newfoundland girl in service, had become acquainted with a seafaring man and "true love ran smoothly enough for a while", but then, when the young man "should have been most solicitous for her welfare", he left his former love "to paddle her own canoe". Friends of the girl, however, intervened and they had the lad arrested. He then professed his willingness to marry and so the ceremony duly took place in one of City Hall's rooms.

Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management

City of Halifax Council Meeting - 1903

Beautifying the Grand Parade

With the completion of the building, it was now possible to improve the Grand Parade and to enhance its place in civic life. Keating designed an entirely new plan, which had a carriage drive of twenty feet coming off Barrington Street. The drive then went around in circular form to the front of city hall and continued back to the entrance. Keating's plans called for a fountain, fronting on George Street, but this project was not completed until 1905. Similarly, Keating's plan for the Parade also entailed a nine-foot walk along the Barrington Street wall and a narrower one on the Argyle Street side. As part of City Hall's construction and of Keating's plans, John Cawsey built the retaining wall along Barrington Street. For the first time, the Nova Scotian flag was hoisted on the new flagstaff on 5 September 1890.

Halifax Explosion

City Hall became an operational centre in the aftermath of the Halifax Explosion on 6 December 1917, caused when the French munitions vessel, the *Mont Blanc*, collided with the *Imo*, a Norwegian-registered vessel carrying relief supplies for Belgium, in the harbour narrows. Immediately on the collision the *Mont Blanc* caught fire. At

Collection of Brian Cuthbertson

City Hall and the Grand Parade - circa 1900

9:05 she exploded with a devastating blast that laid waste two square miles in Halifax's north end and on the Dartmouth side. Over 2000 died in the explosion or later from injuries.

As Mayor Peter Martin was away, his responsibilities fell on Deputy Mayor Henry Colwell, head of Colwell Brothers, a well known clothier. On that fateful morning, Henry Colwell was walking from his South Park Street home to his office with friends when they heard a massive explosion and "The ground came up to meet them". After determining his family had survived, he realized he "held the most important position in Halifax". He reached City Hall at about 9:30 and there he was to remain for the next four days and nights, virtually with no sleep.

City Hall became the focus for a myriad of relief activities, working through numerous rapidly organized committees. For the distribution of food, that committee took over the second floor. Emergency housing was run out of the Tax Collector's Office. Initially, City Hall served as the headquarters for medical relief. From City Hall volunteers, who were mostly women, organized the distribution of coal, tar paper, blankets, rubber boots, clothing and cooking oil. An Information Bureau was early established in the City Clerk's Office.

Although the explosion's blast broke nearly every window and created chaos within offices, the exterior suffered little structural damage. Even the clock tower survived the blast, though

City of Toronto Archives, SC 244-1779

Halifax Relief Offices

the massive old clock, purchased in 1893 from the old Market building, but apparently not installed until 1904, stopped never to run again.

Unveiling and Dedication of the Cenotaph, 1 July 1929

On Dominion Day, 1929, the largest number of citizens ever to gather at the Grand Parade witnessed the unveiling of Halifax's memorial to her 1360

men and women who had died in the Great War and to all those who had served. Thousands lined the rails around the Parade and crowded into surrounding streets, even mounting roof tops seeking better vantage points. A well-known Scottish sculptor, Massey Rhind, designed the cenotaph. At two minutes of 11 o'clock, a single gun sounded from Citadel Hill, followed by two minutes of respectful silence. Sir Robert Laird Borden, former prime minister, officially unveiled the memorial. The then Minister of National Defence, James Layton Ralston, who had commanded during the war the 85th Battalion, known as the Nova Scotia Highlanders, gave the oration.

Remodelling the Council Chamber, Cleaning City Hall and Improving the Grand Parade

In 1940, City Council had the architect Sydney Dumaresq design and oversee comprehensive interior space changes, including the mayor's office and the Council Chamber. In preparation for the City's bicentenary in 1949, Council had the building cleaned using acid and steam. Citizens were utterly amazed at the change and at the fine appearance of the cream and red sandstone, which for so many years had been covered with black grime. During the bicentenary, the Canadian Pacific Railway gave for the Grand Parade a massive wooden flagstaff, 225 feet high, and reputed to be the tallest in the British Commonwealth of Nations (later it was determined that a flagstaff at Kew, London was taller).

New Coat of Arms and a Mace

During the celebrations surrounding the bicentenary, the lack of standardization in the reproduction of the City's "Arms", caused City Council to authorize the preparation of a revised coat of arms. After considerable deliberation, a new coat of arms gained approval from Council and the Provincial government on 22 October 1964 before its official registration with the Patents Office in Ottawa to prevent unauthorized use. It differed chiefly from the old coat of arms in having the cod fisherman and naval seaman portrayed in 1860 dress, the year the first arms had been adopted.

In the year following the bicentenary, to mark its long association with Halifax, the Royal Canadian Navy presented a mace to the City at a special ceremony on 14 August (Natal Day in 1950). Naval personnel at HMC Dockyard had crafted it. Its stand was fashioned from french-polished wood with two brass dolphins standing on each end forming the rest for the mace.

Engraved on the mace is the mural crown from the City's coat of arms denoting Halifax as a fortified city. The Canadian coat of arms, that of the Province of Nova Scotia, of the City of Halifax and of HMCS Stadacona appear below the mural crown. Beneath the coats of arms are plaques depicting the sails of a British man-of-war with the Admiral's pennant. Near the naval crown are four maple leaves, which in turn are enveloped by the thistle, shamrock, fleur-de-lys and rose, symbolic of those who settled early Canada. Crests of the various armed services units associated with Halifax's history also appear, while clustered near the end of the brass knob are four sea horses, heraldic beasts symbolic of port cities. The Mace, a symbol of authority, is brought into the Chamber during regular meetings of Council, is placed in its holder in front of the Mayor where it remains until adjournment of the meeting.

In April 1956, when Leonard Kitz was mayor, the well-known Halifax architect, J. Philip Dumaresq, undertook a major renovation of the Council Chamber, creating a seating arrangement in the shape of a horseshoe, with the walls panelled in oak, concealed lighting and the windows fitted with green bamboo screens. The official opening of the renovated Council Chamber took place on 17 January 1957. In April, A. H. MacMillan, a former deputy mayor and a skillful wood carver, presented the City's coat of arms, carved in American white oak. The arms were placed above the mayor's chair.

Restoration of the Grand Parade

On 16 March 1978, City Council authorized the restoration of the Grand Parade, "bringing City Hall and Saint Paul's together across a common green, church and state renewed in the sharing of their City's hallowed ground". This involved extending the Parade to the front entrance of St. Paul's Church. At a special ceremony of "Rededication" on 13 September 1978, a plaque was unveiled marking the restoration of the Grand Parade. For the 1995 meeting of the G7 leaders in Halifax, the asphalt on the Grand Parade was replaced by pavers, the balustrade upgraded on Argyle Street at the City Hall end, new street lighting installed and the steps down from Argyle Street renewed.

Rehabilitation Programme and Halifax Hall

Council approved in 1980 a five-year City Hall Rehabilitation Programme. Its purpose was to undertake much-needed work in a comprehensive manner, as opposed to the piecemeal approach of the past. On the exterior, the stonework was repaired and the windows replaced. In the interior, extensive changes were made to ensure space was better used and generally to improve civic operations.

One of the recommendations of a 1983 report by a citizens Advisory Committee on City Hall Renovations was for a reception hall. Council accepted this recommendation. Vacant space on the main floor at the east end, formerly used by Halifax Transit, was completely renovated to create Halifax Hall. Interior finishes for it were purchased from around the globe: pewter chandeliers from Spain; main hallway lights from Alabama; chairs manufactured in Quebec, while the laser die for the Halifax crests on them came from Czechoslovakia; and the carpet from the Crossley carpet factory in nearby Truro.

For a decade and an half Halifax Hall has been the setting for such civic receptions as the annual New Years Day levee and the Mayor's teas for visiting tourists. Organizations like the Halifax Charitable Irish Society, founded in 1786, hold their meetings in the hall.

Halifax Hall

As well, the hall has been used for such varied purposes as book launchings and blood clinics. Halifax Hall has become as much a public space as the Grand Parade.

In 1998, structural repairs were done to the roof and tower and both re-coppered. A year later the Halifax Foundation, a community foundation serving the Halifax Regional Municipality, placed two clock faces in the tower, one permanently fixed at the exact moment, 9:04.35 on the morning of 6 December 1917, of the Halifax Explosion. For the remaining two faces, the Foundation is seeking to raise the necessary funding.

National Historic Site

On the recommendation of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Halifax City Hall became, in 1987, a National Historic Site because of the "Civic pride and optimism... symbolized by its monumental scale, elaborate design and prominent location on the Grand Parade".

Halifax Regional Municipality

From the 1960's, when Halifax's population stood at 110,000, the City and sister communities of Halifax County (created in 1759), Dartmouth (incorporated as a town in 1873), and Bedford (incorporated in 1979) underwent rapid growth, accompanied by far-reaching social and economic change. With the creation of the Halifax Regional Municipality in 1996, incorporating the region's 330,000 inhabitants under one municipal government, City Hall became its seat of government. Renovations to the Council Chamber were necessary, however, before the newly elected Council for the Halifax Regional Municipality could meet there. On 11 February 1997, the Council held its first meeting in the remodelled Council Chamber.

A new coat of arms, badge and flag, adopted by Council in 1998, received approval on 29 September 1999 from Robert Watt, Chief Herald of Canada. Each of the four founding communities is represented by specific heraldic symbols: Kingfisher for the former City of Halifax, ships for the City of Dartmouth, wavy blue bars representing water for old Halifax County, and that of the broad arrow for Bedford. As well, these symbols have multiple significance. The four broad arrows not only refer to Bedford, but recall the long involvement with Halifax of the Sovereign's armed forces, both land and sea. The ships represent the ongoing importance of a great sheltered harbour, of maritime commerce and defence. The Kingfisher is the oldest symbol specifically created for government in the region, dating to 1860 and the first coat of arms.

This coat of arms beautifully and befittingly symbolizes the history and diversity of the new metropolitan region that can rightfully take pride in its past achievements, while displaying full confidence in its future destiny *(see page one)*. That City Hall by its imposing architecture and prominence overlooking the Grand Parade should take pride of place is equally right and fitting.

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