

#155-78-By-law

City of Brockville  
LOCAL ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

February 1, 1978

Designation Recommendation and  
Description for

# Victoria Hall

King Street at Market Street,  
Brockville, Ontario.

Block                      Lot

A.     REASONS FOR DESIGNATION  
          UNDER THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT, 1974

Victoria Hall is being recommended for designation for both Historical and Architectural reasons.

Now used as the Brockville City Hall and Police Station, it was originally built during 1862-64 as a combination concert hall, office space, and indoor market house. Victoria Hall has been important as a public building in Brockville for over 113 years. It is an impressively designed stone building of strength and intricate detailing, with a clock tower of unusual beauty, sitting on a very significant central location.

B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Victoria Hall was erected during the years 1862-64 following a period of heated controversy which began in 1859 with plans to replace the then existing East Ward Market Hall with a more grandiose building.

The use of this site as an outdoor market was established back in 1832 when the local government was presented by the Honourable Charles Jones with a parcel of land running from the King's Highway (King Street) down to the River St. Lawrence.<sup>1</sup> This land, which now comprises East and West Market Streets and the property in between, served in this capacity as a market area for subsequent years. A square-shaped frame building was built on the middle of the site prior to 1852 to house the indoor butcher's stalls.<sup>2</sup>

The electors of Brockville were asked to approve the expenditure of \$3,500.00 for a new East Ward Market House in May of 1859 and did so overwhelmingly.<sup>3</sup> It was at this point that the town council of the day became embroiled in the problem of planning what should be contained in this new building and what its appearance should be. It was not until the fall of 1861 that the disruptive petty politics in Council was resolved and two new firms of architects were approached for their schemes. One firm was Jones & Fuller of Toronto and Ottawa then famous for their winning design for the new Parliament Buildings in Ottawa, and the second architect was Henry H. Horsey of Kingston, the son of the well-known architect Edward Horsey.<sup>4</sup>

It was during 1862 that the design of the present building by Horsey was determined and approved by Town Council and tenders for its construction were called in the summer of that year.<sup>5</sup> The contract was awarded on September 15, 1862 to John Steacy, Jr. (and David S. Booth, his partner) while William Fitzsimmons, the mayor, and an experienced builder himself, was appointed to superintend the construction.<sup>6</sup> H. H. Horsey had originally estimated the total cost of the new building to be \$26,000.00<sup>7</sup> but costs may have eventually exceeded that. Work began that fall of 1862 and continued all through 1863 and into 1864 as the workmen tried to complete all the final details.<sup>8</sup>

The first recorded use of the concert hall on the second floor was on October 8, 1864 with a concert by Madam A. Bishop.<sup>9</sup> The first floor offices were rented to the Post Office and they operated from this building for the next twenty years until 1884. In the 1880's it was decided to convert the main block of the building for the town offices. These changes were designed by Brockville architect, O. E. Liston.<sup>10</sup>

In 1904 two floors were added to the one-storey market in the rear.

C. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Victoria Hall, like similar buildings in other Ontario towns was designed to show off the success and taste of the

inhabitants of the town. It utilizes its central position on King Street with a handsome design in cut stone and round-headed windows and doors. The main block at the front is a large two-storey rectangle topped by a four-slope "hip"-style roof and a tall clock and bell tower toward the north side of the building.

Looking at the King Street facade, one can see a balanced design made up of a large central doorway (originally the front entrance to the rear indoor market) on the ground floor and above that a combination window designed in the palladian style. Both of these openings are placed between two of the projecting stone block pilasters which rise from the street to the roof. The main facade is completed by two bays on each side; on the ground floor, a doorway and a window on each side, and four windows on the second floor above each of these lower openings.

The detailed tower above is placed centrally above the front entrance and is octagonal in shape with a domed top supported by eight columns. The tower is open between these columns and contains a working clock and bell. There are four clock faces included in the design of the tower dome. Two stone chimneys of pleasant design flank the tower at the east and west end of the roof.

Each corner of this main block is emphasized by the use of smooth stone projections with quoins employed on the second

floor. Each floor level is shown by a narrow band of smooth stone blocks. Each of the tall window openings is outlined with stone blocks of alternate widths with a prominent keystone at the centre of the semi-circular top.

The style of the main block might be termed Italianate and its simple massing, embellished with rich detailing would make it a noteworthy structure on any Canadian streets.

The wing which runs to the rear was enlarged in 1904 and was designed to complement the front block. At that time the height of the original market building was raised by the addition of two more storeys to accomodate more town offices.

REFERENCES:

1. MINUTES, Brockville Board of Police, 19 October 1832.  
also ... copy of DEED, registered in Leeds County  
Registry Office. Dated 14 October 1832.
2. MAP OF BROCKVILLE, published in 1853 by Wall and Forrest.  
See copy of this map on Pages 74 and 75 of Ten Cate,  
BROCKVILLE, A PICTORIAL HISTORY.
3. MINUTES, Brockville Town Council, 30 May 1859  
7 June 1859
4. CASH BOOK of Brockville Town Treasurer, 31 October 1862  
24 December 1862
5. MINUTES, Town Council, 25 July 1862.
6. MINUTES, Town Council, 5 August 1862, 15 September 1862.
7. Article, BROCKVILLE RECORDER, 5 November 1863.
8. Entries in TREASURER'S CASH BOOK, 1862-64.
9. Treasurer's CASH BOOK, 8 October 1864.
10. MINUTES, Town Council, 21 April 1882.

D. RECOMMENDATION

The Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee recommends that Victoria Hall be designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, 1974.

The Committee regards Victoria Hall as one of Brockville's most important public buildings and recommends also that all measures be taken to preserve and enhance the beauty of its original design. The exterior of the building should be continually maintained up to standards which will ensure that the building fabric does not deteriorate. The interior use to which the building is put, now or in the future, should not detrimentally affect the original detailing on the inside or outside. Future alterations should be viewed as opportunities to restore any original features lost over the years.

Victoria Hall is a building which the City of Brockville should be proud to possess and should be maintained as a civic responsibility.