

STOP 1 - OLD CITY HALL

Welcome to the building that we now call Old City Hall. The land on which this site was built had been given to Captain James Macaulay on September 1st, 1791. "Macaulay Town" was absorbed into the growing City of Toronto, in 1884, it was home to a mixture of homes, businesses, stores, and ale houses. Original plans for the site only called for a courthouse to be built, but plans for a new city hall were added later. Twenty years' worth of debates and changes followed, including a plan for a grand plaza to be built in front of the main entrance of City Hall. This was never constructed.

On May 11th, 1886, Toronto Mayor W. H. Howland announced that an architect named Edward James Lennox had won the design competition for the new city hall. E. J. Lennox would become one of the greatest architects Toronto has ever known, and would later design the King Edward Hotel, Casa Loma and many other buildings.

City Council was firm that the total cost for the new building was not to exceed \$200,000. Original tenders were for as little as \$111,000 - far below the maximum limit. As construction began on August 30th, 1889, the cost kept getting higher and higher. Toronto's newspapers kept bemoaning increasing costs

and the fact that the building's construction was taking much longer than planned.

City Hall finally opened to staff on Dominion Day, July 1st, 1898. The official opening wasn't held until September 18th, 1899, more than a decade after construction started. The final cost was \$2.5-million - well over the original city council cap of \$200,000.

The building was opened with great fanfare. Mayor John Shaw was lifted up in a wooden worker's bucket to place the last brick on top of the tower. Concerts were planned by various Toronto area regiments, including the Governor General's Foot Guards, the 48th Highlanders, Royal Grenadiers and the Queen's Own Rifles band. At 2:15pm the front door was unlocked with a golden key. It was a miserable rainy day and yet the building was not completely finished.