



109 Main Street, P.O. Box 1078, Liverpool, Nova Scotia B0T 1K0

Date: March 6, 2018

To: Region of Queens Municipal Council

Subject: Annual report pursuant to subclause 3(m) of the agreement between the Region of Queens and the Queens County Museum for the use of the Liverpool Courthouse.

Introduction

In February, 2017 the Queens County Museum took possession of the Liverpool Courthouse to operate as a museum of justice. The Queens Museum of Justice opened its doors in June, 2017 and remained open until the end of October of that year. During that time period the courthouse received over 800 visitors. Of that number, many people described themselves as being from outside the Queens Region Municipality.

The Queens County Museum has assembled a Committee of five people to direct the development of the Justice Museum. They are:

Peter Leslie, Co-Chair
Don Smith, Co-Chair
Linda Rafuse
Linda Moulton
Gerrard Eddy

Background

Liverpool's first courthouse was built in 1798. By the mid-1800s its usefulness had declined. The Chief Justice of Nova Scotia described the old courthouse as being "truly disgraceful."

The current Courthouse was constructed in 1854 for use by all levels of court as well as the Grand Jury (which functioned as the local government). After the construction of the Town Hall in 1903, the Courthouse continued to function as a venue for the courts until 2015 when it was decommissioned and the courts moved to Bridgewater.

Unfortunately, the old courthouse of 1798 was torn down in 1980. The current courthouse was received by the Queens County Museum in excellent structural condition. However, it had been stripped bare of most furnishings and decoration.

The Building

Designed by local carpenter, William C. Hammond, and built by George Boehner of LaHave, the courthouse is one of the finest examples of Greek Revival temple-style buildings in Canada. Early in the 19th century the Greek Revival movement had begun in the United States, moving north from New England. It was a fashionable design for Court Houses as they were “Temples of Justice”. The Liverpool Court House is the only extant example of this style of courthouse in Eastern Canada. Save for some modifications to allow for necessary modernization, including heat, electricity, plumbing, etc., it remains essentially the same building as originally designed and constructed.

Architectural historian Howard Smith of Victoria, BC, has confirmed the Queens County Courthouse is most certainly Greek Revival in style — in fact Doric Revival, and a very good example of the style. It is odd that this style never completely caught on in Canada. It was practically the official style in the U.S. after the American Revolution, especially on the Eastern Seaboard. By the time the Queens County Courthouse, as well as a very few in Ontario, were constructed the style had been superseded by the Italianate or Neo-Renaissance style. It is suspected that the unpopularity of the architectural style in this area and other parts of Canada may directly relate to its popularity in the United States.

Because of the rarity of the design, (Marion MacRae and Anthony Adamson in their Cornerstones of Order Courthouses and Town Halls of Ontario, 1784-1914, page 260), note that only three Greek Revival Courthouse were built in Ontario. The fact that the interior of the Queens County Courthouse has been restored and in part preserved, certainly makes it a rare historical jewel.

The attention to Doric detailing as shown in the intercolumniation of the portico, the execution of the Dentals, Triglyphs and Metopes, indicate the building designer was familiar with classical Greek Architecture. It was very difficult to adapt the windowless Greek Temple form for modern buildings, especially courthouses that require abundant interior light.

Defining characteristics of the Liverpool Court House related to its Greek Revival style:

- single storey;
- twelve-over-twelve sash windows, one on front façade and three on each side;
- pilasters at all four corners;
- rear porch with dropped pediment supported by two Doric columns;
- wood construction;
- wood exterior covered in stucco scored to resemble cut stone;
- granite block footers;
- massive triglyph frieze;
- prominent pediment and prostyle front portico with four fluted Doric columns.

The first case was heard in the Court House in 1854 and, ironically, was the case of Mr. Boehner, who found it necessary to sue for his fee! It remained in constant use as a Court House until only a few years ago. In its lifetime the building functioned as a Court House for all levels of courts as well as a public meeting place. It was the site of Joseph Howe's famous anti- confederation speech and was the place where people came to vote for or against confederation. It was also the seat of municipal government. The Grand Jury (effectively the local government) sat there until dissolved in 1897 to give way to the Liverpool town council that sat there for its first five years.

Nova Scotia's legal system

The first British governor of Nova Scotia in the post-1719 colonial period was tasked with establishing courts of law. Following the arrival of the first settlers in 1759, Liverpool was considered settled by 1762 when the "Book of Records" was begun by Proprietor's Clerk, Elisha Freeman. The court system at that time, primitive as it was, was fairly well established with Simeon Perkins and five others commissioned as Justices in 1764. The Inferior Court of Common Pleas was meeting and doing business by mid-1766.

The mandate of the Queens County Museum is to collect, preserve, study, interpret and exhibit the human and natural history of Queens County. The rationale for the Museum of Justice is to exhibit the building itself and to provide a setting to interpret the development of the Justice system in the Region of Queens and in Nova Scotia.

The Museum aims to present a mid-19th century courthouse, reasonably appointed, to allow visitors to get an idea of what a courthouse was like in that era. Pew seating has been installed to replace the seats that were removed. Chairs and other small furnishings have been acquired that are appropriate to the target period. Large counsel tables, already obtained, will be installed to complete the furnishing of the Courthouse itself.

Donations of old law books and a set of Judge's robes have been received that will allow for the appropriate presentation of the Judge's Chambers. Donations of lawyers' robes are being sought to allow for visitors to have photo opportunities.

In the coming year interpretive panels will be developed to explain the architecture and architectural significance of the building. These displays will be augmented by a website (to be developed) that will offer access to more complete background information.

Displays will also be developed to describe the legal system as it developed over the lifetime of Liverpool. The experience of women and minorities in that system will also be addressed. All of this will be backed up by access to the supporting website for a more complete discussion.

This courthouse is a link in a chain. In the very early days of Liverpool's settlement court sessions were held in the Widows West's and Dexter's taverns. These buildings still stand. Court was also held in the meeting house and often in people's homes, including Simeon Perkins' house. Once the old courthouse was built, all courts moved there. Likewise, court moved to the new courthouse until its decommissioning.

The Museum of Justice will describe the justice system of Queens County within the context of the broader Nova Scotia legal system throughout its history as a British colony and beyond confederation.

Activities will include costumed-interpretation and, on occasion, live character interpretation. A whipping post and stocks will be installed to give visitors a visual link to the punishments meted out in the relevant times.

This past year has been a very successful one for the Queens Museum of Justice despite the limited time for planning and development, with attendance figures exceeding expectations. In addition to operating as a museum the courthouse was host to a wedding and a music concert. It is expected that these specialized community-based activities will continue and grow in popularity, attracting not only local visitors but those from outside the municipality as well.

Conclusion

The Museum of Justice fits seamlessly into what can be referred to as the Queens Museum complex. Its development shows that Liverpool has respect for its history and is willing to display that history with pride. The Museum of Justice will attract visitors who will add to the economic life of the Queens region and who will spread the word, so to speak, of what the Region of Queens has to offer to residents and visitors.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

Don Smith, Co-Chair
On behalf of the
Justice Museum Committee

Peter Leslie, Co-Chair
On behalf of the
Justice Museum Committee

Don Smith is a resident of White Point Estates. He holds an Associates Diploma in Graphic Design and a Bachelor's Degree in Visual Communications from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, a Bachelor of Arts and Honours degrees in History from the University of Prince Edward Island, a Master's Degree in History from Saint Mary's University and has completed two years of a PhD in History at the University of Dundee. Don works as a consultant in the fields of historic interpretation, museum planning and exhibit design. He is a member of the Board of trustees of the Queens County Museum and co-chair of the museum's Court House Committee.

Peter Leslie grew up in Eagle Head and now resides in West Berlin. He is a direct descendant of William Wentzell, the first settler of Eagle Head. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from Acadia University, a *Juris Doctorate*, a Masters of Business Administration and a Masters of Arts (litt.) from Dalhousie University. He was admitted to the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society in 1985 and retired the end of 2015. Peter qualified as a Chartered Accountant (CA) in 1987. He spent his entire legal career with the Federal Department of Justice, his last 10 years as the Atlantic Regional Director. Peter is an avid genealogist and history buff.
