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## Brant County Court House

On Saturday, September 14, 1974 a provincial plaque commemorating the Brant County Court House was unveiled in front of the court house, 80 Wellington Square, Brantford. This plaque is one in a series erected throughout the province by the Historical and Museums Branch of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, acting on the advice of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario.

The County of Brant sponsored the ceremony. Mr. Alvin G. Marr, Warden of the County of Brant, acted as chairman of the program. Others in attendance included: Mr. Leslie R. Gray, representing the Ontario Archaeological and Historic Sites Board; His Worship Charles Bowen, Mayor of Brantford; Mr. Dick Beckett, M.P.P. (Brantford); Mr. Robert F. Nixon, M.P.P. (Brant); Mr. Derek Blackburn, M.P. (Brant) and Mr. Walter D. Rutherford of the Brant Historical Society, who gave a historical background of the court house. The plaque was unveiled by His Honour W. Ross MacDonald, former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, and by His Honour Judge E.O. Fanjoy. The Reverend K. Jensen, of Oakland United Church dedicated the plaque.

In 2003, the provincial plaque was replaced with the following bilingual version.

### **BRANT COUNTY COURT HOUSE**

Architect John Turner and contractor William Sinon built this court house for the Provisional County of Brant in 1852-53. Turner was Brantford's most influential nineteenth-century architect, designing several important public buildings in Brant and Elgin Counties. The Brant County Court House contained court rooms, county offices, the law library and jail. Although the architecture of the building remains predominantly Greek Revival, its appearance was transformed in 1861 and 1886-87 when the building was enlarged and its roofline altered. Turner also designed Victoria Square, which the court house faces. With its walkways patterned after the Union Jack, the square is one of Ontario's most impressive public spaces.

### **LE PALAIS DE JUSTICE DU COMTÉ DE BRANT**

Le palais de justice du comté de Brant est l'œuvre de l'architecte John Turner et de l'entrepreneur William Sinon, qui le construisent en 1852-1853 pour le comté provisoire. Au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle John Turner est l'architecte le plus influent de Brantford

et il dessine des édifices publics pour les comtés de Brant et d'Elgin. Le palais de justice abrite des salles d'audience, les bureaux du comté, la bibliothèque de droit et la prison. Si son architecture est essentiellement néo-grecque, son aspect se transforme en 1861 et en 1886-1887, époque où le bâtiment est agrandi et où sa ligne de toiture est modifiée. John Turner dessine aussi le parc Victoria sur lequel donne le palais de justice. Avec ses allées qui évoquent le drapeau britannique, ce parc reste l'un des plus beaux de l'Ontario.

### **Historical background**

The Provisional County of Brant built the Brant County Court House in 1852, engaging John Turner and William Sinon as designers. A jail capable of holding twenty prisoners and a jailer's residence were constructed at the same time.

Brant County Council held its first meeting on January 24, 1853 during which Eliakim Malcolm was elected the Warden of the Independent County, succeeding J.D. Clement, the former Warden of the Provisional County of Brant.

In 1861, contractor John Elliot enlarged the jail by building an addition that accommodated forty inmates. In the original county court house, judge's rooms, as well as rooms for grand and petit juries and a clerk, were on the second floor, which also accommodated the township clerk's office. The main floor held the offices of the sheriff, county judge, county court clerk, various registrars and treasurers, the school inspector and the law library and secretary. By 1886, another addition had been constructed to the west of the structure.

The present court house has been altered over the years and reflects a variety of styles. Originally three storeys in height, with a steep roof line, the building had rounded Romanesque windows with decorative brick trimming. A false balcony rose from the centre of the building, beginning at the second floor and terminating at the roof line. Two clusters of Doric pillars supported a Baroque pediment. The front exterior of the main floor was dressed in heavy stone, and each storey was clearly articulated from the other by thin linear ledges. The overall effect was one of weight and dignity, despite the eccentric pediment.

The basic design of the court house remains today, although it has been enlarged. A tower, six stories high, has been added to the left and the roof line has been altered to include a storage floor. The roof line has three sections. The main pediment above the pillars is a simple, classical triangle and is flanked on each side by similar pediments.

The court house building is set back from Wellington Street and faces Victoria Square, a

delightful city park which contains a handsome monument to Joseph Brant and the Six Nations. The park is surrounded by impressive public and private buildings and is one of the finest public squares in Ontario.

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