

Explore the New Main Branch

Learn about the history of the Paris Old Town Hall - now known as the Bawcutt Centre and future location of the County of Brant Public Library's New Main Branch!

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Paris Old Town Hall

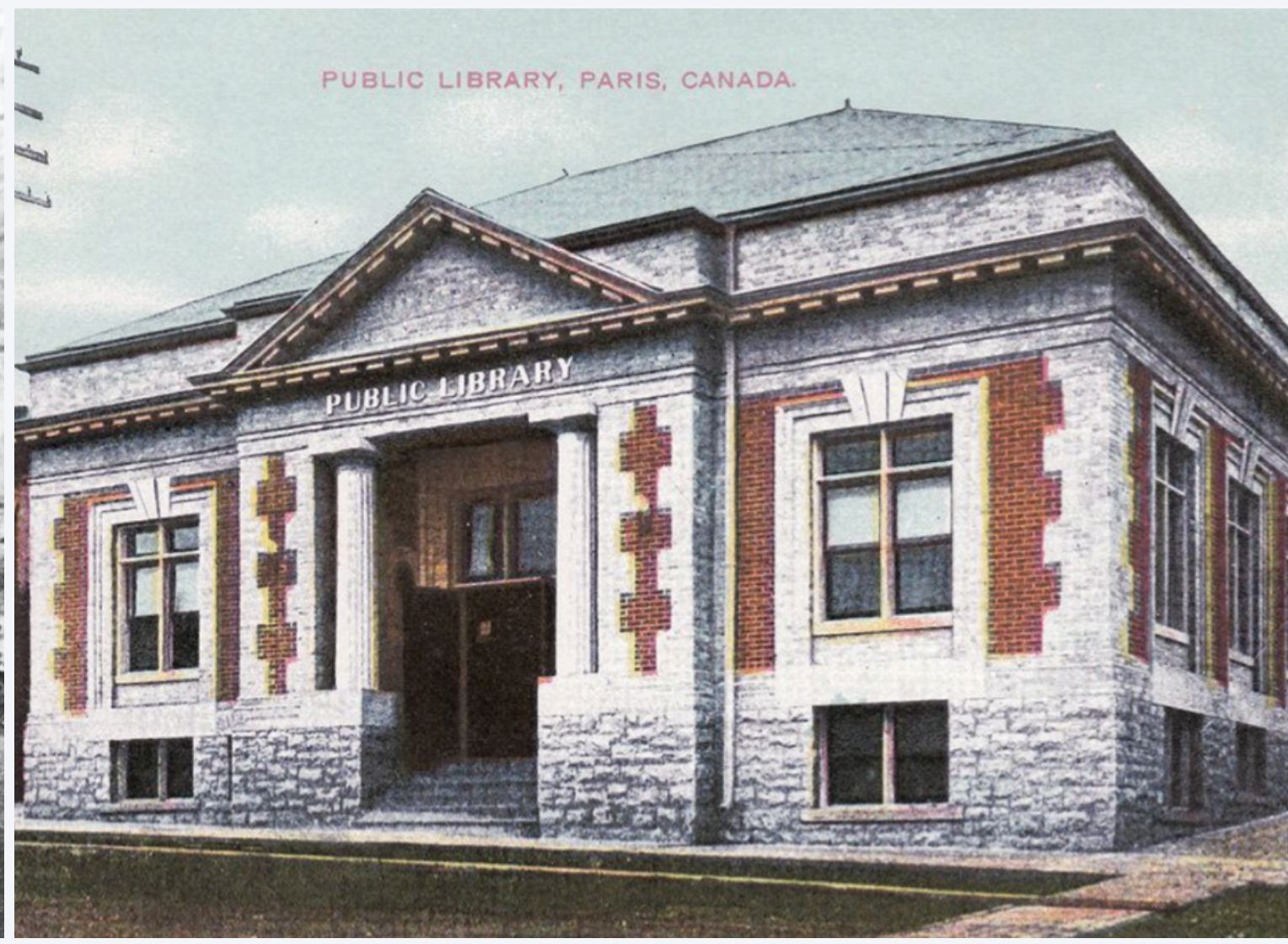
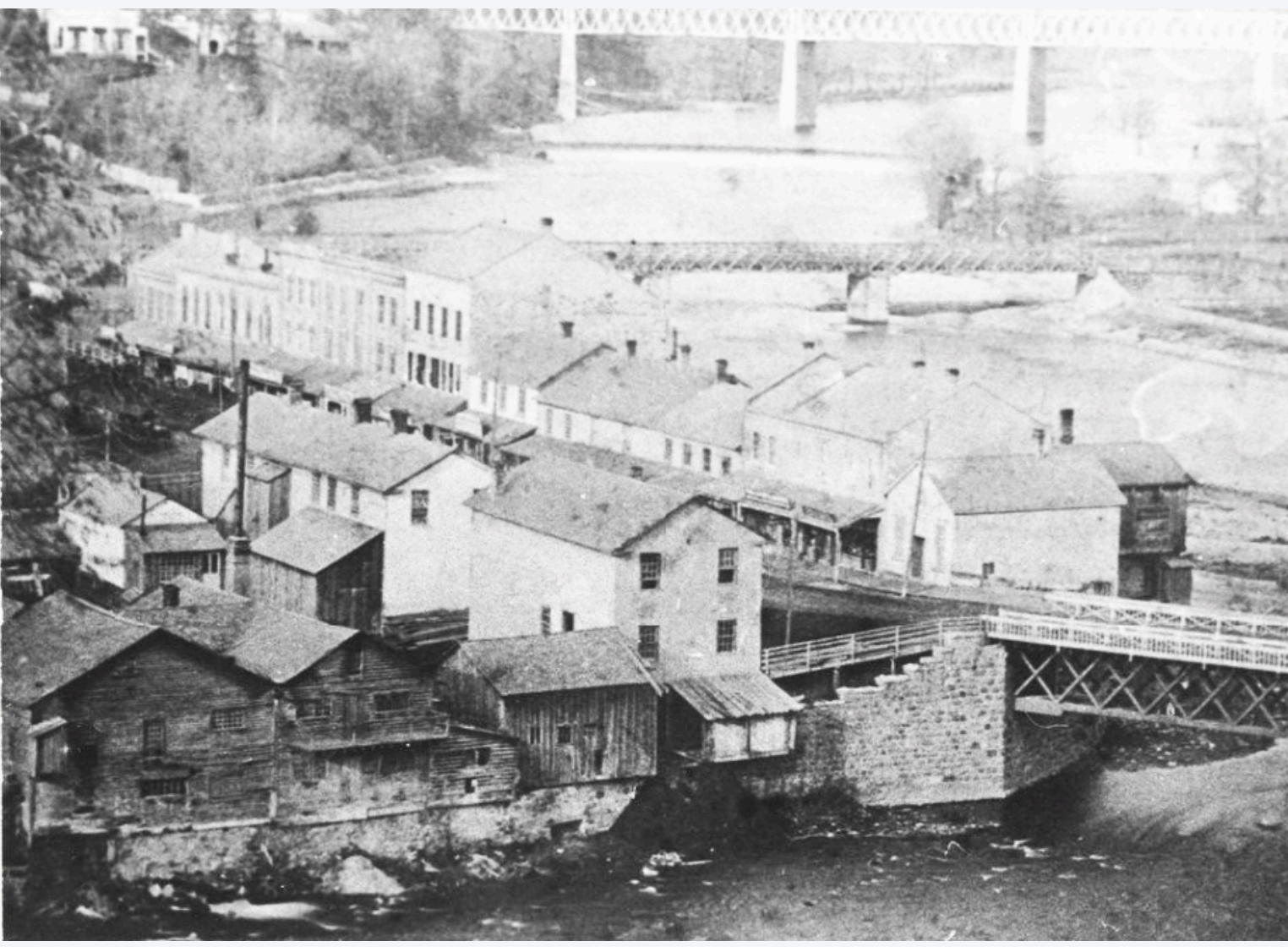
(Now known as the Bawcutt Centre and future location of the County of Brant Public Library's New Main Branch)

In 1854, Architect John Maxwell and contractors Gardner and Strickland were hired and completed the Gothic Revival-style building, complete with jail cells in the basement, for \$12,000. It was Paris's first town hall and is widely believed to be the oldest of its kind.

Historic Paris, Ontario

A town known for its beauty and architecture

Named after the rich gypsum deposits used to make plaster of Paris, the town of Paris, Ontario has a long and rich history. Referred to as both the “Cobblestone Capital” and “Prettiest Town” in Canada, the sights of Paris are worth noting. The historic architecture of the town helps to justify both of these nicknames as many historic buildings dating back well over 100 years are still standing and used to this day.



“

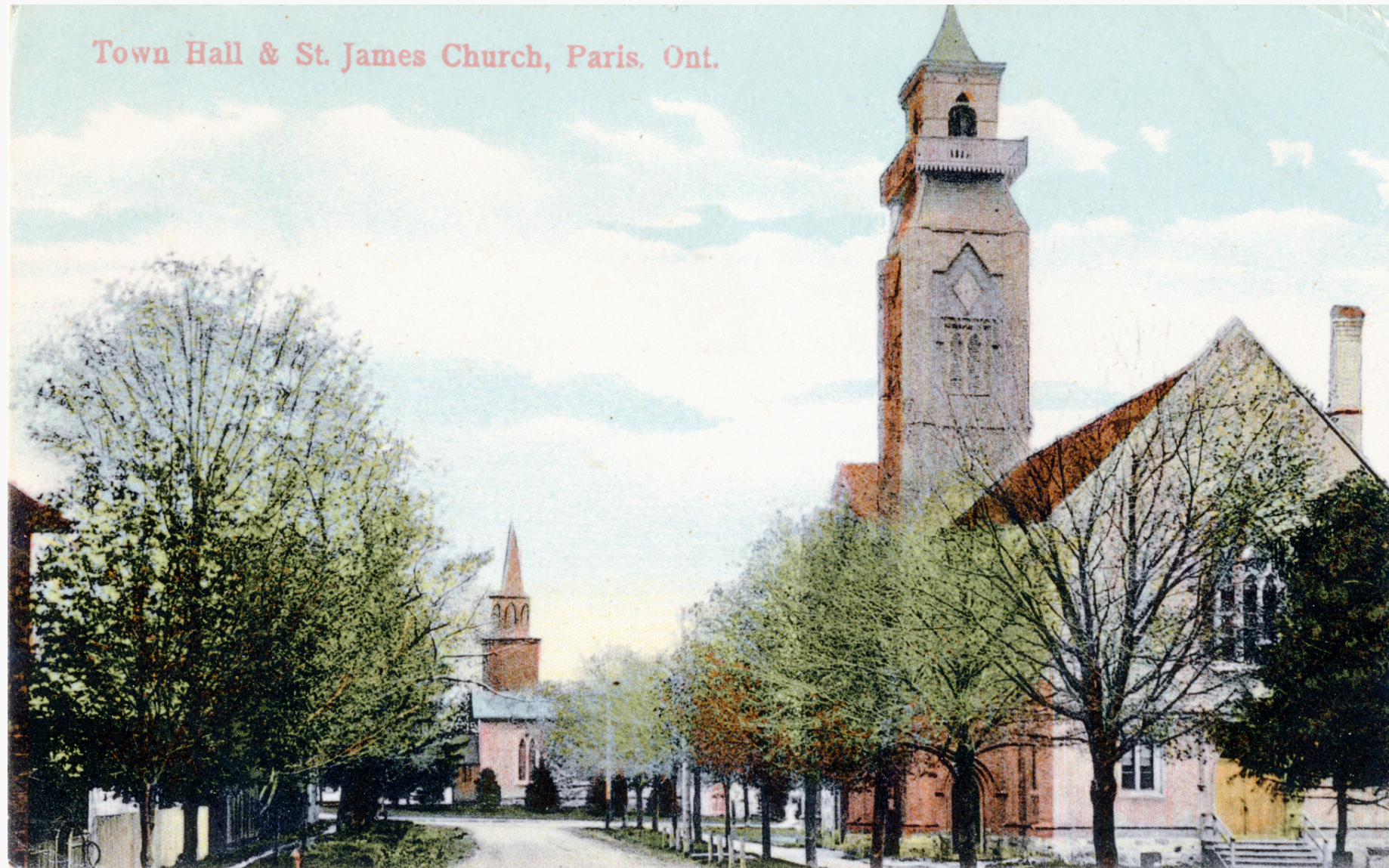
Looking up the Grand ... the prospect is very pleasing. The river with its verdant islands, the winding waters, the bridges and residences on the hill ... their heights covered with young oaks in all the glory of autumnal livery, together combine to form a panorama of more than ordinary beauty.

– Hiram Capron

Excerpt from *At the Forks of the Grand: Volume 1, 1956, page 26*

Architecture

The first ever Gothic Revival-style civic building to be built in Canada.



While Ancient Greek and Roman architecture was typical of civic buildings in the 1850s, Gothic architecture was mainly reserved for Churches of the time.

Bawcutt Centre - Exterior

The Town Hall was inspired by the Houses of Parliament in London circa 1840. The building pre-dates Ottawa's Gothic-style Parliament buildings from 1859.



Who Was John Maxwell?

John Maxwell was born on 24 May 1803 at Kilmadock, Perth, Scotland. He registered as a Provincial Land Surveyor on 23 January 1849, and later advertised himself as a "Surveyor & Architect". He was building new roads and bridges for Paris when he was asked to design a new Gothic Revival-style town hall.



Building History Timeline

From a rich past to a future of discovery

The Paris Old Town Hall has served a variety of purposes over the years including town hall, needleworks factory, performance theatre, Mary Maxim, auction hall, and soon to be the location of the new Main Branch of the County of Brant Public Library.

1856

The First Paris Town Council meeting is held at the Town Hall on January 21.

1917

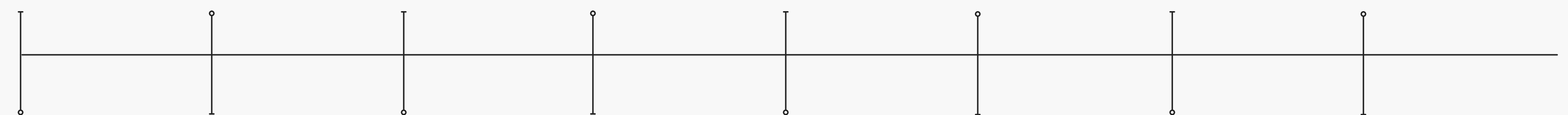
Charles and Chester Wheeler move the Wheeler Needle Works Factory to the Paris Old Town Hall location.

1990

John Runnquist purchases the building. The Paris Old Town Hall is now used as an auction hall.

2021

The County of Brant Public Library and County of Brant announce the Bawcutt Centre as the future location of the New Main Branch library.



1854

The Paris Old Town Hall is built and is established as a town hall and market.

1900

After the Great Fire, Town Council offices are moved in order to be located in a more central location.

1954

The Paris Old Town Hall is purchased by Mary Maxim.

2016

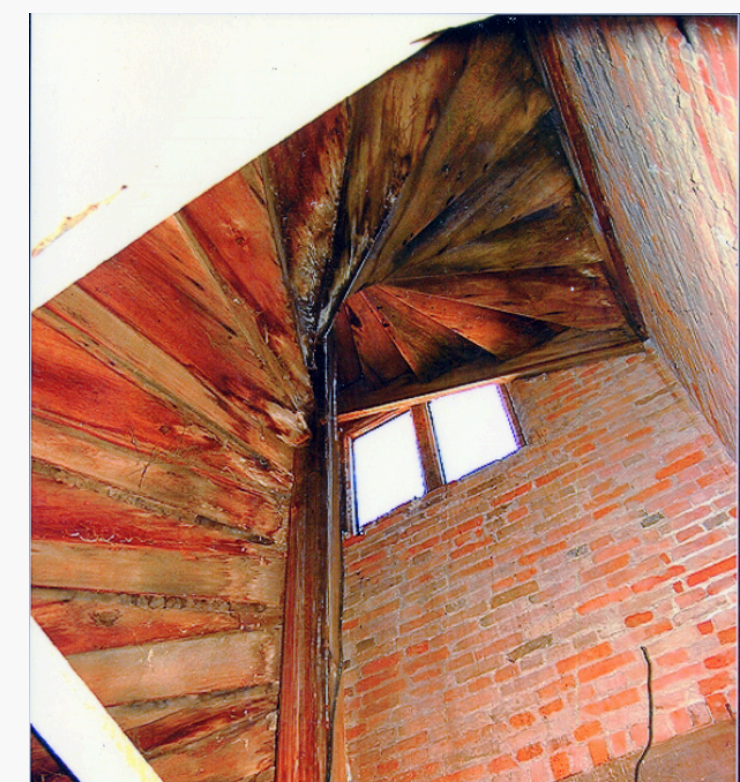
The County of Brant purchases the Paris Old Town Hall thanks to a million dollar donation from Degrassi producer Linda Schuyler. The building is renamed the Bawcutt Centre.



Main Floor & Basement Features

Spaces for doing business and doing time

The main floor and basement of the Paris Old Town Hall/Bawcutt Centre have served a variety of purposes including council offices, jail cells, artillery shell manufacturing, and flea market booths.



Main Floor

The main/ground floor is divided by wooden columns into three aisles and originally served as the Market Hall. On the west end of the ground floor were the council chamber, Magistrates, and Treasurers offices. The treasurer's office was attached to the east end of the doorway to the tower through the vault. The stairs are located in the north wing, and run from the ground floor to the hall. Originally there were two stairways leading up to the assembly room, however one was removed to make room for an elevator that was ultimately never approved.



Basement

The partial basement was used for the "lower market" on the eastern side and prisoner cells consisting of one communal cell and two smaller cells on the western third. Square wooden columns divide the eastern two thirds of the basement into six equal aisles. The eastern side of the market could be entered through a four-centred brick arch at the east end of the building.

In 1885, Constable Randall responded to complaints of hearing noises below the town clerk's office. When investigating the jail he found a prisoner who had been left for three days without food or water. The Constable gave him a meal after which the man left.

Second Floor Features

High ceilings for high culture

The second floor was used as an assembly room and eventually became an opera house. This floor features an open-timber roof similar to that of the original London Guildhall circa 1411-1440. Braces form a pointed arch under a tie beam. The principal rafters and struts feature tracery similar to St. Mary's Church's roof in Adderbury.



Opera House

The place to be in the early 20th century

After Council members moved offices in 1900, the Paris Old Town Hall/Bawcutt Centre was mainly used as an opera house to host a variety of productions until the First World War. Performances and productions with origins both local and abroad could be attended for as little as 10 cents per ticket. A screening of the first motion picture (a Jerky Recording of Queen Victoria's Funeral) drew considerable interest in 1901.

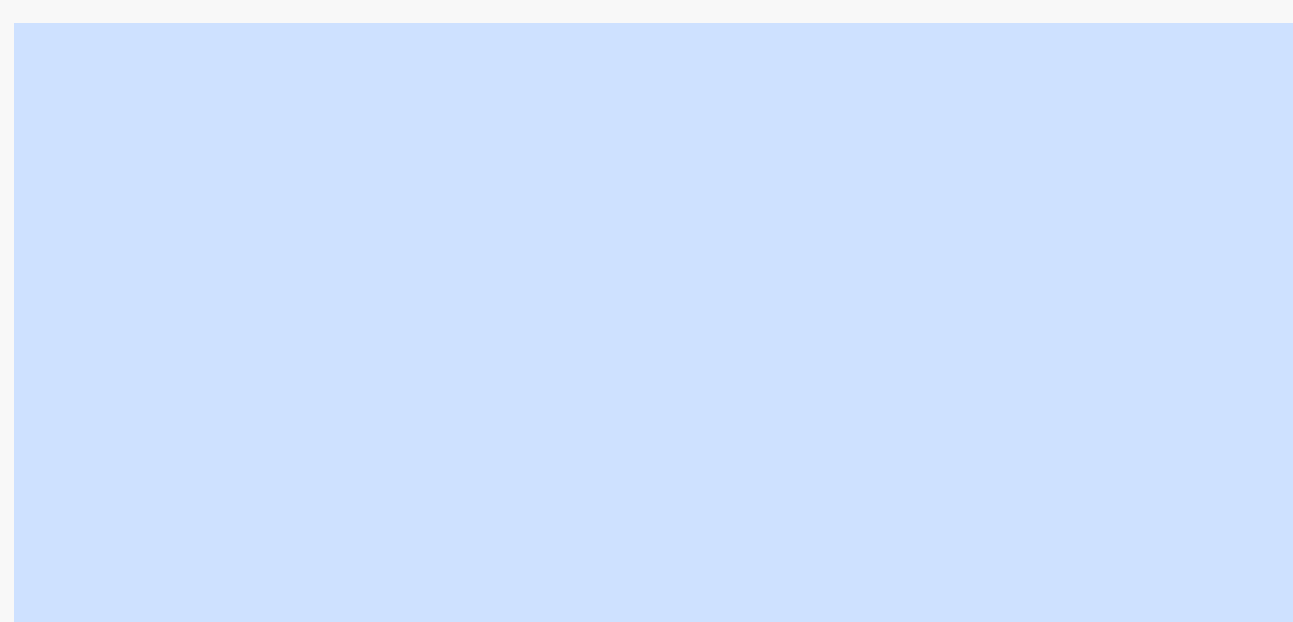
The Centerpiece

The vaulted ceilings and arched doors of the second floor space are the building's centerpiece. Events such as plays, operas, concerts, conferences, and film projections have all occurred in this space over the years.





49 cm x 6" BN
Paris



Community Restoration Efforts

Beginning in 2012, the Society for the Preservation of Paris Heritage (SPPAH) became the driving force behind saving the Paris Old Town Hall.

Thanks to the work of the SPPAH, an anonymous donor – later revealed to be Linda Schuyler – came forward in 2015 and offered \$1,000,000 on the condition that the County of Brant purchase the building.

County Council passed a motion to purchase the Paris Old Town Hall by a majority of 7 to 4 and the purchase officially closed in March 2016.

Restoration Efforts in the News

Several years of community efforts to save the building occurred before Linda Schuyler's donation allowed the County to purchase the site in 2016.

COUNCIL County to buy, save Old Town Hall

MICHAEL-ALLAN MARION
Postmedia Network

PARIS - Brant County council is moving to buy the Old Town Hall in Paris for \$1.1 million to save the historic building from ruin.

After spending more than an hour in closed session near the end of a long meeting on October 27, council emerged in open session and approved 7-4 a resolution to sign an agreement of purchase and sale for the venerable, but deteriorating Gothic style building at 13 Burwell St.

The resolution also directed staff to finalize a gifting agreement for a donation of \$1 million toward the project from a yet-undisclosed person.

In favour of the purchase were Mayor Ron Eddy and councillors Shirley Simons, Don Cardy, Murray Powell, John Peirce, David Miller and Joan Gatward.

Opposed were councillors John Wheat.



BRANT COUNTY: Money for Paris Old Town hall project

\$1M donation 'wonderful'

MICHAEL-ALLAN MARION
Postmedia Network

PARIS - Acclaimed television producer Linda Schuyler is making a \$1-million donation to save the Paris Old Town Hall.

Schuyler, co-creator and executive producer of the award-winning Degrassi series, will return to her hometown with her husband, Stephen Stohn, for an official announcement of the donation at a special county council meeting on Dec. 8.

In October, Brant County councillors approved a resolution to sign a \$1.1-million agreement of purchase and sale for the venerable Gothic style building at 13 Burwell St.

The resolution also directed staff to finalize a gifting agreement for a donation of \$1 million toward the project from a donor whose name was kept under wraps until all the financial details were settled between the county, the donor and a group called the Society for the Preservation of Paris Architectural Heritage, which has been working for two years on a plan for the building.



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Linda Schuyler and her husband, Stephen Stohn, are donating \$1 million to save the Paris Old Town Hall.

With everything ready, the clerk's office issued an announcement Tuesday of the special council meeting and issued invitations.

"It's so wonderful to get this donation,"

“This is truly a great move forward for Paris, for Brant and for Ontario.”

Brant Mayor Ron Eddy

Brant Mayor Ron Eddy said.

"It was absolutely important because the renovations to the building would not have been possible without it. This is truly a great move forward for Paris, for Brant and for Ontario."

He said the Old Town Hall is of historical significance to the growth of local democracy in Ontario.

The mayor noted that the building was constructed in celebration after the passage of the Baldwin Act in 1849 that established local municipalities and councils.

The gift from Schuyler is one of the largest from a private donor in the county's 164-year history, Eddy said.

A spokesman for Schuyler's production company said she and Stohn prefer to reserve their comments until after the agreement is made official on Dec. 8.

According to the agreement, the county will place \$750,000 of the \$1-million donation toward the property's purchase and use the remainder to pay off a mortgage.

Schuyler is the daughter of Jack Bawcutt, a former Paris mayor, and his wife, Joyce.

"We're very proud and pleased that she is in a position to do that and that she thinks so much of the community where she grew up that she wants to do that," Jack Bawcutt said.

He recalled working in the historic building in sales and office management when it was occupied by Mary Maxim Ltd.

"It's a wonderful old building and deserves to be saved."

Society president Janet Snaith said the donation will allow the group to move forward with a fundraising campaign for renovations.

See TOWN HALL | Page A2

TOWN MEETING AT THE PARIS OLDE TOWN HALL

COME ONE COME ALL
FRIDAY, AUGUST 7TH,
2009 at 6pm

INFORMATION NIGHT AT
THE EARLIEST MEDIEVAL NEO-GOTHIC
CIVIC HALL ANYWHERE!

This Majestic Jewel In Our Brant County Crown Will Be Discussed By Our Supportive Panel, M.P.P. Dave Levac, M.P. Phil McColeman, Carlos Venzin, Professor Malcolm Thorby, And Other Guests. Followed By A Question & Answer Period Come And Be Amazed By The Historical Significance Of Our Up To Code Working Old Town Hall & Opera House.

Which Has Been Proclaimed
"A ONE OF A KIND MONUMENTAL CANADIAN NATIONAL TREASURE"

THE G.O.T. H.I.C. GRANDEST OLDE TOWN HALL IN CANADA!

For further information contact the meeting coordinator,
Deano Wilson-Rouse at 519-717-7469

BRANT COUNTY County council votes to buy, save Old Town Hall

MICHAEL-ALLAN MARION
Expositor Staff
PARIS - Brant County council is

engaging people throughout the county. "We extend our sincere thanks to the individual whose major gift

ple will see that we are a forward-looking county, which has not lost sight of its historic past." He said a county that protects

LOCAL NEWS | COUNTY OF BRANT COUNCIL County favours buying Paris Old Town Hall

MIKE PEELING
BRANT NEWS

The County of Brant is moving ahead with the purchase of the Old Town Hall in Paris.

Following an in-camera discussion Tuesday evening, council voted 7-4 in favour of a bylaw approving a purchase and sale agreement of \$1.1 million.

The county proposes to purchase the hall at 13 Burwell St., built in 1854, thanks to a \$1 million gift from a private donor.

However, the donation was only forthcoming on the condition the county agree to purchase the hall, home to the original council chambers of the Town of Paris when it was first incorporated.

Manager of corporate services Michael Bradley said that the agreement is conditional on finalizing the donation.

Bradley said the county will put \$750,000 down on the purchase of the hall, while the remainder of the donation will be used to pay off a mortgage. The county will lease the hall to its current owner for the next few years, which will help pay off the \$106,000 balance on the Old Town Hall.

Bradley said leasing the hall back to the owner will



The Old Town Hall on Burwell Street in Paris. BRANT NEWS PHOTO

funds are raised to restore the building.

"It's a wonderful building and it needs to be saved," said Coun. Shirley Simons.

The Society for the Preservation of Paris Architectural Heritage (SPPAH) plans to be involved in raising funds to restore the building and prepare it for community use.

"Mayor Ron Eddy and his council showed great vision and leadership embracing this opportunity for the community," said Janet Snaith, president of SPPAH.

Bradley said there may also be opportunities for funding from other levels of government to be explored. The Paris Old Town Hall is the oldest civic building in the County of Brant.

A Bright Future



The County of Brant Public Library and County of Brant announce historic location of New Main Branch library.

Once at the heart of its community, the Paris Old Town Hall (known as the Bawcutt Centre) will be restored as a cultural cornerstone for County of Brant residents. The building was recognized as a National Historic Site in 2020.



This location allows us to create a community hub that embraces diversity and encourages curiosity, discovery, and literacy.

We are honoured to preserve its history and build a central library that reflects our community's growth and needs.

- Fred Gladding
Library Board Chair

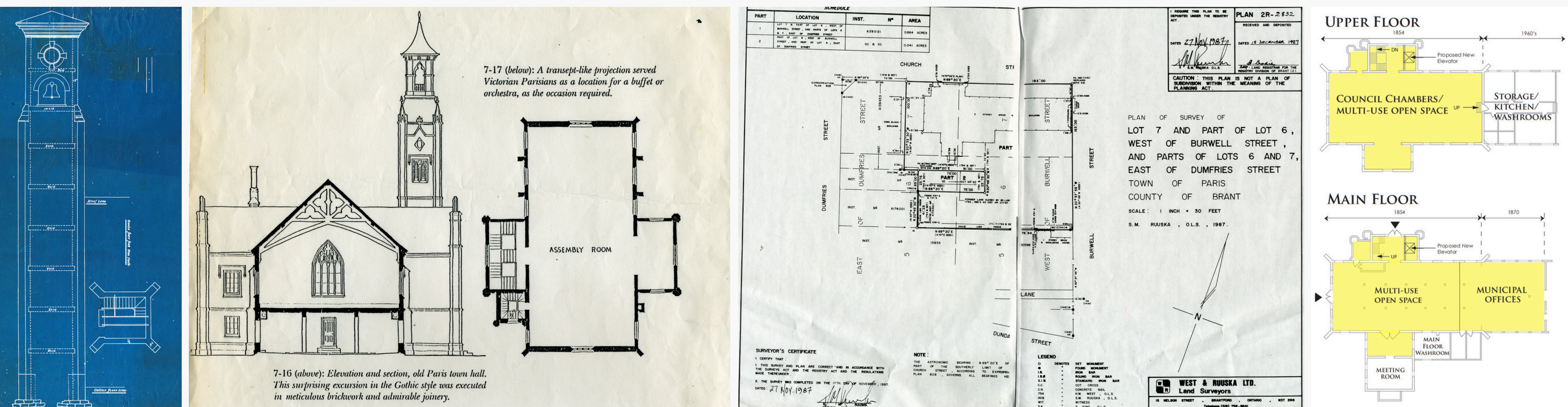


Scan the QR code with your phone and read the press release!

Past Site Studies & Upcoming Designs

Balance between preserving the past and embracing the future will be key

The Paris Old Town Hall/Bawcutt Centre has immense potential to serve as a central hub for both Paris residents and the County as a whole. The planning process for potential spaces is in the very early stages and feedback from the community will be sought.



New Library Building Features

Restored heritage features will be combined with modern design elements to create an accessible and future-forward community library space! New features will include:



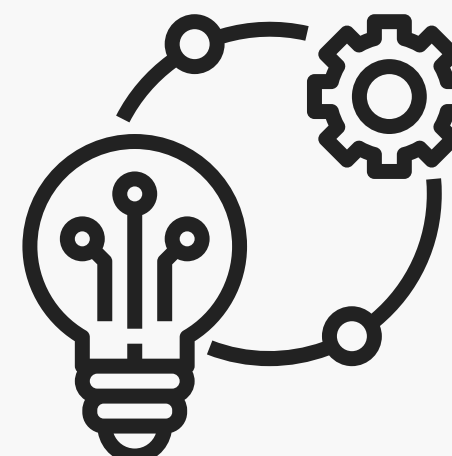
Architecture
Preservation and restoration of heritage features, with modern design elements.



Open Spaces
From plenty of parking, to open and accessible community spaces, the new Main Branch will have it all!



Study Areas
Need to make the library your "office for the day" or cram for exams? You'll love the quiet study areas.



Technology Labs
From makerspaces, to state-of-the-art computers, 3D printers, and tech gear, new technology spaces will inspire young and old alike!



Performance Hall
Enjoy author talks, storytimes, and community events in a fully renovated opera hall!

Upcoming News

Stay up-to-date on building, community, and library news. There's something for everyone at the County of Brant Public Library!



Library News

From Main Branch building news, to service interruptions, find the news you need to learn about upcoming library developments. Scan the QR code to visit brantlibrary.ca/news.



Library Newsletter

Sign up for the County of Brant Public Library's monthly newsletter and discover exciting activities, collections, courses, events, and programs provided by the library. Scan the QR code to visit brantlibrary.ca/newsletter.



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