

Fort Erie Historical Museum

Bertie Township Hall

est. 1874

Designated Significant

On April 11, 1988, the Council of the Town of Fort Erie passed by-law No. 114-88. This by-law designated the former Bertie Township Municipal Building as being of architectural and historical value. The reasons for designation are as follows:

This property is being designated for historical reasons.

The former Bertie Township Municipal Building was constructed in 1874. The original stone structure was built by the Edsall Brothers and the stone used to construct the building originated from one of the local Windmill Point quarries. The Edsall Brothers were the "professionals" of the day as stone masons and it is understood that they constructed St. Paul's Anglican Church on Niagara Blvd. and the original Windmill Point Disciples Church on Stonemill Road.

The original building, although very high, did not contain a second floor. The interior contained one office for the Clerk/ Treasurer and the remaining area was used as a common meeting room for Council. (The Township of Bertie was incorporated in the year 1850).

Over the years, the interior area was rearranged to accommodate additional office space. In the 1920's or very early 1930's (precise date not known) two jail cells, a central heating plant and washrooms were added to the east end of the building. The Bertie Township Police Department was established in the late 1930's or early 1940's and they also occupied the space at the Bertie Township Hall. The Township Council created its own police department in the 1950's and subsequently moved them to a new building on Cutler Street and at this time, the Ontario Provincial Police for the Bertie Township area were no longer required.

In the ensuing years (1950's) a second floor was added to the building to accommodate additional offices and the new Council Chambers. In 1970, the Township of Bertie became part of the new Town of Fort Erie. The former Township of Bertie Hall was used by the Town of Fort Erie for offices for the Roads Department and the Bertie Historical Museum, which was established on the second floor in 1972.

In 1976, the building was turned over to the Fort Erie Historical Museum Board to operate a museum on behalf of the Municipality.



Fast Facts

1793 - Township of Bertie named by Act of Parliament

Size - 38, 390 acres

Named after - Willoughby Bertie, the 4th Earl of Abingdon

1850 - Township of Bertie incorporated

1874 - Township Hall built

Building Timeline

March 7, 1874 "Petitions were received from J.G. Beam and 19 others in reference to building a Town Hall and locating it in Ridgeway. Also from John A. Edsall and 18 others to the same effect."

By-law 343 "Be it therefore enacted - that the sum of \$2495.00, Twenty four hundred and ninety-five dollars be and it is hereby appropriated - for the erection of said Town Hall"

January 5, 1875 First meeting held at new hall.

April 1881 A lock-up was added "about 12 by 15 feet with a door on the south side and small window on the north wall with iron bars built into the stone wall."

1928 "Two offices, about 12 feet square were built by Carl Pooler in the north west and south west corners on the Hall early in 1928. A floor was put down over these offices and a stairway built which made a balcony..."

1938 "...vault built on north side at the west end of the hall, mason work done by Chas. Belfield, the steel door for the vault coming from the Fort Erie Custom's House..."

June 22, 1961 Roy Everett performed the stone work which divided the single, tall windows into two sets of windows. Heating had been done with 9 gas heaters, but it was still cold in the building and was felt the windows had to be replaced. The work was a winter works project, employing local labour. Donald Kennedy oversaw as building inspector, Councillor Earl Beam was chairman of the building committee. The total cost of the renovations was \$15,000.

December 29, 1969 Last council meeting held in the hall.

Quotes taken from Town Hall Story, by Robert Disher.

Building Style

The hall originally consisted of one large room, a common feature in most other early township halls. It is with the exterior features that small towns showed off their personality.

This Italianate structure was designed to look monumental, solid, and respectable. The hallmarks of the Italianate style on this building (the round-headed windows and paired brackets at the cornice) set off against heavy limestone, certainly achieve the design goal.

Many Meetings

The hall was the prime place for meetings in town. Whether for reeves or reverends, the hall was well used! In addition to the Council, clerk, and police, the following groups made good use of the space: churches (Presbyterian, Quaker, Church of England, Lutheran), Philharmonic Society, Horticultural Society, and Women's Institute. The hall was used for many social and political functions, and was the heart of the community.

