

KINGSTON  
CITY HALL  
**SELF-GUIDED  
TOUR**



# Welcome to KINGSTON CITY HALL

Welcome to City Hall National Historic Site. City Hall is located on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee. This short guide highlights many of the interesting and historical features of this building. Built in 1844, City Hall is the centre of the City's municipal government and is one of the finest 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings in Canada.

Only areas of the first and second floors are open for self-guided tours. See the maps on the inside for locations of the features of each floor, including:

- 1 **City Hall Chronicles** are historical information pillars that share some of the fascinating stories associated with the building and its occupants. The full text for each pillar can be found here: [CityofKingston.ca/explore/culture-history/history/city-hall/chronicles](http://CityofKingston.ca/explore/culture-history/history/city-hall/chronicles)
- 2 Temporary **"niche" exhibits** showcasing objects from the civic collection.
- 3 An extensive collection of historic **mayors portraits**, one of the country's best municipal collections. Note the mayor's beautiful gold chain of office that "grows" over time.



Portrait of Mayor Robert McLean (1846), restored in 2018

## The Building

Irish-born architect George Browne (1811-1885) designed Kingston's landmark neo-classical City Hall. His work includes numerous other commercial and government buildings in Kingston and Montreal.

In 1842, when Kingston was a community of 6,000 and capital of the Province of Canada, council ordered an international competition for a "Town Hall and Market for increasing the conveniences of the Town." From the beginning, plans called for most of the building, including its west-wing market, to be rented out to local businesses. A multipurpose structure, the building included space for civic government, business, professional offices, public assembly, police department and market. Contrary to a persisting myth, the building was not built to house the Canadian parliament. Completed in 1844, it cost more than £25,000. Most of the money was borrowed in England. Before the building was completed, the capital of Canada had moved to Montreal – a serious economic depression descended on Kingston.

### SOME MAJOR RENOVATIONS

- 1865 Following a devastating fire in January, the west Market Wing was shortened to its current length. Originally it had extended all the way to King Street and included a three-storey building housing a clock tower and bell.
- 1908 A workman accidentally set fire to the north face of the clock in the dome. Extensive fire and water damage was repaired the following year with the installation of a new clock in the dome.
- 1956 The building's front portico was removed when cracks were discovered in the main pillars. In 1965 it was rebuilt.
- 1973 City Hall was closed for one year and extensively renovated.



# First Floor

## MAIN ENTRY

The Ontario Street entrance was originally an open-air corridor leading to the Market Wing on Market Square. It has been enclosed since the early 1900s. Note the arched ceiling and interior windows.

## HERITAGE RESOURCE CENTRE

Learn about Kingston's history and built heritage. Exhibits highlight the city's past and display archaeological objects from the civic collection.

**Note: Guided tours begin here.**



## CLERK'S DEPARTMENT CORRIDOR

Beginning in 1850, the Bank of British North America occupied this space for 74 years. The three niches, now display cases, are original features.

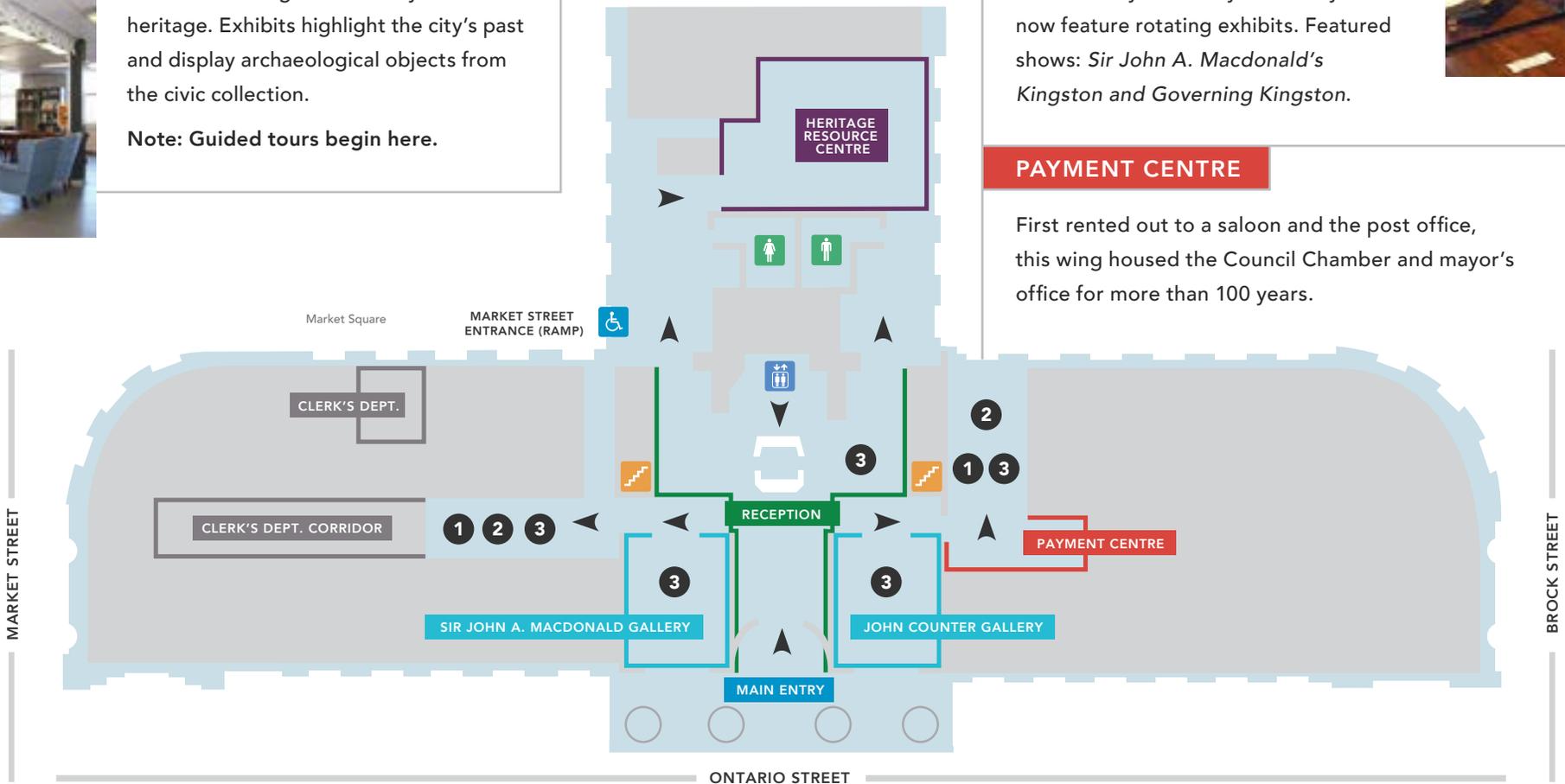
## SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD & JOHN COUNTER GALLERIES

Until 1973, these rooms were public entranceways into City Hall. They now feature rotating exhibits. Featured shows: *Sir John A. Macdonald's Kingston and Governing Kingston*.



## PAYMENT CENTRE

First rented out to a saloon and the post office, this wing housed the Council Chamber and mayor's office for more than 100 years.



- 1 CITY HALL CHRONICLES
- 2 NICHE EXHIBIT
- 3 PORTRAIT COLLECTION

- ELEVATORS
- STAIRS
- RESTROOMS
- ACCESSIBLE

- HISTORIC CITY HALL
- OUT OF BOUNDARY AREAS

Access the second floor by staircase or elevator.

# Second Floor

## MEMORIAL HALL

Originally called *Town Hall*, it has long been the location of many civic events. The room was rededicated as *Memorial Hall* in 1921 to honour Kingstonians who died during the First World War. Note the elaborate plaster ceiling and beautiful stained glass windows commemorating battles in which Canadians fought. The bronze plaques and illuminated *Book of Remembrance* honour men and women who participated in the First and Second World Wars.

First Canadian Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald served on Kingston's council when City Hall was built. After his death in 1891 his body lay in state in Memorial Hall before burial in Kingston's Cataraqui Cemetery. His full-length portrait by artist William Sawyer hangs in this room.



## ONTARIO HALL

This magnificent space has served as a dry goods merchant's office, a place of worship, a meeting space, dance hall, and offices. From 1883 to 1889 it was home to one of the first women's medical colleges in Canada. Offices of the mayor and chief administrative officer moved here in 1973. Note the classical plaster and wood detailing.

## COUNCIL CHAMBERS

The mayor and council have met in this splendid space to debate, discuss and reflect upon decisions that govern the daily lives of Kingstonians since 1973. Some of the curved desks and railings come from the earlier chamber downstairs. The magnificent globe-shaped chandelier dates from 1973. Behind the mayor's chair is the City's current coat of arms granted in 2000.



- 1 CITY HALL CHRONICLES
- 2 NICHE EXHIBIT
- 3 PORTRAIT COLLECTION
- 4 MEMORIAL BOOK

- STAIRS
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## Guided Tours of Kingston City Hall

Join us for a guided tour and see other fascinating City Hall spaces including the former police station and lockup and the beautiful Victoria Dome.

**TOURS RUN MID-MAY TO MID-OCTOBER**

Details are available in the Heritage Resources Centre or at [CityofKingston.ca/explore/culture-history/history/city-hall](http://CityofKingston.ca/explore/culture-history/history/city-hall)

