

# TOWN HALL ARTS AND CULTURAL CENTRE AND ASTOR THEATRE 219 MAIN STREET, LIVERPOOL

BY BRITTANY WENTZELL

Built between 1901 and 1902 and designed by A.H. Boucher, the Town Hall and Liverpool Opera House opened in 1903. Even in the early 1900s, a town hall with an opera house attached to it seemed a bit odd.

In the front of the building, taxes were paid and council meetings were held. In back, hundreds would take in local and travelling shows and in 1917 they would see some of the first silent films in the renamed Astor Theatre.

Top: An undated photograph shows the inside of the old Opera House. This photo was taken in the early part of the century, note the piano player in the front for silent films and the tin ceiling. (Tim McDonald Collection)

Bottom: A photograph of the former town hall taken prior to 1921. A cenotaph was erected in 1921 where the fountain in the photo once stood. (Tim McDonald Collection)





In 1996, the Town of Liverpool and Queens County amalgamated, becoming the Region of Queens Municipality and the town hall was moved to a new building.

Photographer Sherman Hines leased the former town hall for a museum until he moved his collection to another building in 2014. That same year, the municipality renovated, reconfiguring the building to open up the walls that once separated the two spaces.

Visitors are now welcomed to the theatre through the Town Hall Arts and Cultural Centre. They can sip wine before shows, buy tickets at the new box office, and wander up the winding staircase to galleries or the balcony.

The Sipuke'l Gallery—an art gallery owned and operated by Acadia First Nation—also has a home in the building. The Astor Theatre, updated with a digital projector and state of the art lighting, is home to movies, plays, comedians, and more.

Special thanks to Tim McDonald and the Queens County Museum.

Top: The inside of the Astor Theatre seats around 300 people including a balcony. Seats once used in the National Arts Centre in Ottawa were donated to the theatre several years ago. (Brittany Wentzell photo)

Bottom: The exterior of the Town Hall Arts and Cultural Centre as seen in 2019. (Brittany Wentzell photo)

Below: The original staircase greets visitors to the Town Hall Arts and Cultural Centre as they come to visit galleries or the theatre. (Brittany Wentzell photo)



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#### FEEDBACK

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