

Town Hall

Location: 72 Main St. South, Seaforth, Ontario

Year built: 1893-1894

SEAFORTH TOWN HALL, built in 1894-94, is a fine example of late 19th-century civic architecture. The style is a simple version of Romanesque Revival, commonly used for administration buildings. A key feature is the central tower projected out from the main part of the building. The front entrance, hidden beneath the gabled porch, has a tall round-arched opening. The round arch is echoed in the windows and window hoods, the original doorway opening to the fire hall, and in louvered windows at the top of the tower. Subtle detail was added to the red brick walls in the raised banding and decorative panels.



The Town Hall when newly built c. 1900

The building originally housed the fire hall on the main floor, town offices on the second floor, and an auditorium with stage on the third. The Mechanics' Institute also had a home in the Town Hall.

A *Huron Expositor* article written May 4, 1894 had this to say about the new Town Hall: "The building, not anything elaborate, is showy enough for a town of this size and it will be serviceable as if it cost three times the money. In fact, we are safe in saying the town has got good value for every dollar spent. The exterior of the building is very good, while the interior could not be better arranged for convenience and comfort, and it will supply the requirements of the town for a great many years to come. The rooms are large, airy and conveniently situated, and there is ample accommodation for every depart-

ment of the town's municipal machinery." An earlier *Huron Expositor* article of March 2, 1894 remarked on the magnificent view to be had from the bell tower: "On a bright, clear day, Clinton can be seen with the naked eye, and the whole surrounding country is spread out below one like a map."



Seaforth's firefighters assembled outside the Town Hall in 1914

The original Town Hall was in the Market building at the intersection of Market and Jarvis Streets. The Market House was a large two-storey frame structure built in 1866. It was used as town hall, fire hall, drill hall, council chamber, and market building with the town scales. To save money on rent, the town clerk's office moved from Market House in February 1882. On August 23, 1891 the Market House burnt. Although arson was suspected and a \$300 reward offered, it was never claimed. The unique position of the Market House in the intersection of the two roads was lost when the road was changed soon after, closing the Market Square part of Jarvis Street.

In 1892, the citizens decided on a location for a new town hall, but heated debate continued over the type and cost of the building to build. A vote of the ratepayers taken in March 1893 decided for a three-storey over a two-storey hall. Young & Causey of Stratford won out over local bidders and was awarded the contract in April, at an estimated cost of \$8,250. The finished cost was closer to \$10,000.

A small building was added to the north end of the original building in 1955, the red brick extension between the Town Hall and the next store, to house the police station. In 1957, the fire hall was converted to the town Clerk's Office, Council Chambers and PUC office, and the front porch was removed. These renovations reportedly cost almost as much as the original building. The front porch, with wheelchair accessibility built in, was reconstructed in 1989. Further changes were made to the interior after Seaforth Town Hall became the hub of the amalgamated municipality of Huron East. The building now houses municipal office, Council Chambers, and the Seaforth & Area Museum.
