Albany City Hall

Albany City Hall is the seat of government of the city of Albany , New York . It houses the office of the mayor , the Common Council chamber , the city and traffic courts , as well as other city services . The current building was designed by Henry Hobson Richardson in his particular Romanesque style and opened in 1883 at 24 Eagle Street between Corning Place (then Maiden Lane) and Pine Street . It is a rectangular , three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half @-@ story building with a 202 @-@ foot (62 m) tall tower at its southwest corner . The tower contains one of the only municipal carillons in the country .

Albany 's first city hall was the Stadt Huys , built by the Dutch at the intersection of Broadway and Hudson Avenue probably in the 1660s , though possibly earlier . It was probably replaced around 1740 with a larger building , which continued to be known as the Stadt Huys . In 1754 , the Stadt Huys was the location of the Albany Congress , where Benjamin Franklin presented the Albany Plan of Union , the first proposal to unite the British American colonies . In 1797 Albany was declared the state capital of New York and the New York Legislature made its home in Albany 's city hall . In 1809 the Legislature opened the first New York State Capitol and Albany 's government moved in with the Legislature . After purchasing a plot of land at the eastern terminus of Washington Avenue , across Eagle Street from the capitol , the city government moved into a new city hall designed by Philip Hooker in 1832 .

In 1880 , Hooker 's city hall was destroyed by fire and a new design was commissioned by Henry Richardson ; the building opened in 1883 . The new city hall still stands and is a fine example of Richardson 's unique Romanesque style . Architectural critics consider the building to have been designed around the high point of Richardson 's career . The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places on September 4 , 1972 .

Former city halls

Albany has had multiple buildings dedicated to being the seat of city government over its history . However , historians disagree on details of many of the earlier structures , namely , when they were built .

Stadt Huys

Albany 's original city hall , the Stadt Huys (/ ?stæt ?ha?s / ; Dutch for " city hall " ; sometimes written Stadt Huis) may have been built as early as 1635 . Evidence from the journals of Wouter van Twiller , Director of New Netherland (1633 ? 1638) , suggests that at least some type of punitory building was built on the site during his term in office . George Howell and Jonathan Tenney , in their book Bi @-@ centennial History of Albany , claim that reports from 1646 state the building was a substantial (at least for its time) three @-@ story structure , with the lower floor built of stone and used as a jail . However Albany historian Cuyler Reynolds claims the Stadt Huys was not built until 1673 . All sources agree that it stood at the northeast corner of today 's Hudson Avenue and Broadway , the current site of the SUNY System Administration Building . The Stadt Huys officially became city hall when the Dongan Charter incorporated Albany into a city in 1686 . An engraving of a 1695 map of Albany clearly identifies the Stadt Huys at the northeast corner of present @-@ day Hudson Ave and Broadway .

It is probable that a new city hall was built on the site of the Stadt Huys around 1740 ; historians at the New York State Museum (NYSM) claim it was 1741 . Growing tired of increasingly cramped space , the city government was able to secure funds from the provincial government to construct a new city hall on the same site . This building was also commonly known as the Stadt Huys , even though it was a completely new structure and the English had been in control of New York for more than 75 years . The NYSM describes the new Stadt Huys as a three @-@ story brick structure , adding that it was a " more substantial building " than its predecessor . This new building was the third @-@ largest building in Albany , surpassed only by the local Dutch church (though not the one

that stands today) and Fort Albany . The roof of the new structure was gabled and was topped with a cupola and belfry . Howell and Tenney claim that the original Stadt Huys was in use for at least 160 years (meaning a replacement structure would not have been needed until 1795 at the earliest) , which is in disagreement with the idea that a new Stadt Huys was built in the 1740s .

In 1754 , the Stadt Huys was the site of the Albany Congress ; Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania presented the Albany Plan of Union there . This was the first formal proposal to unite the British American colonies . The Plan of Union 's original intention was to unite the colonies in defense against aggressions of the French to the north ; it was not an attempt to become independent from the auspices of the British crown . Although it was never adopted by the British Parliament , it was an important precursor to the United States Constitution . A month prior to the meeting , Franklin published his Join , or Die political cartoon , an infamous graphical representation of the Plan of Union .

During the Revolutionary War , city hall was home to the Albany Committee of Correspondence (the political arm of the local revolutionary movement) , which took over operation of Albany 's government in 1775 and eventually expanded its power to control all of Albany County (which at that time was the largest county in the colony , extending far past its current borders) . Tories and prisoners of war were often jailed in city hall alongside common criminals . Following the war , city hall was an occasional meeting place of the newly formed New York Legislature , in addition to being home to the city and county governments , the jail , courts , and local registry .

In 1797 Albany was declared the official capital of the state and the Legislature made city hall its home until the first state capitol was opened in 1809 . In an effort to move public buildings away from the bustling and expanding waterfront , the new capitol was located atop the State Street hill , on the same land the current building now stands . City surveyor Simeon De Witt , in his 1794 plan of the city , set aside this land as a public square . Also included on this map are depictions of city hall and the new city jail , located at State and Eagle Streets . In 1809 , Albany city government moved with the Legislature into the new capitol and remained there until a new city hall was opened in 1832 . The old Stadt Huys was eventually demolished after a fire in 1836 .

= = = 1832 city hall = = =

In an effort to move city and county government functions out of the state capitol , the city purchased a plot of land to build on in 1832 . They chose a spot on the edge of De Witt 's public square , along Eagle Street at the eastern terminus of Lion Street (later renamed Washington Avenue) ; the land was bought from St. Peter 's Church for $ 10 @,@ 295 @.@ 95 ($ 244 @,@ 000 in modern dollars) . The design of the new city hall was done by Albany architect Philip Hooker . The cornerstone was laid by Mayor John Townsend amid a Masonic ceremony , however the date of this event is in dispute . The building was completed in 1832 at a cost of about $ 92 @,@ 000 ($ 2 @.@ 18 million in modern dollars) . The new city hall was a Greek Revival structure , built of white marble with an entrance porch supported by four Doric columns . On the roof was a gilded dome . The interior was simple , with little ornamentation , though a full @-@ length statue of Alexander Hamilton stood in the center of the upper hall , between the Court room and the Common Council Chamber . Upon one side of this hall was a bas @-@ relief of DeWitt Clinton , with a view of a primitive canal @-@ boat in the distance , and on the opposite wall was a similar figure of Sir Walter Scott . The building was destroyed by fire on February 10 , 1880 . Plans for a replacement city hall quickly developed .

= = Current city hall = =

Following the 1880 fire , Henry Richardson quickly secured the commission for the replacement city hall after a limited competition between six architects and architectural firms . Richardson had been a frequent visitor to Albany over the prior four years , having been one of the lead architects on the state capitol . The budget was limited to $ 185 @,@ 000 ; Richardson 's design came in at $ 184 @,@ 000 . However the appointed public committee upped the price to $ 204 @,@ 000 after granite

was substituted for brownstone in the design . The new city hall design dates from the period that is typically regarded as Richardson 's architectural peak . His design was similar to his other designs done in his unique Romanesque style . Architectural historian Henry @-@ Russell Hitchcock described city hall as " one of Richardson 's most Romanesque designs " and the building 's NRHP nomination added : " Albany City Hall 's banded arches , rhythmic fenestration , bold expression of materials and corner placement of the tower are characteristic features of Richardson 's work often to be repeated by his followers . "

The building is a load @-@ bearing masonry design laid out in a rectangle , with a 202 @-@ foot (62 m) tall , Venetian @-@ style tower on its southwest corner topped with a pyramidal roof . The main structure is three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stories tall and the front (west) face is nine bays wide . The exterior walls are rusticated Milford (Rhode Island) granite with Longmeadow (Massachusetts) brownstone trim . Save for the bold asymmetrical placement of the tower (which is a prime example of Richardson 's disregard for architectural correctness and known for being one of his best tower designs) , the building is noted for its general simplicity in design . The entranceway is a simple triple @-@ arch loggia ; other design elements on the front façade are limited to its windows and a quadruple @-@ arch balcony off the Common Council chamber . The building is simultaneously noted for its general simplicity and care for small details , especially its intricate carvings . The entranceway is flanked by multiple tiers of relief sculpture and gargoyles . Most of the stone cutters originally brought to Albany to work on the capitol were later hired to do the sculptural details on city hall .

Many elements of the exterior design are representations of interior functionality . Because the Common Council chamber is located on the second floor (above the entrance) , that story is the same height as the first @-@ floor entrance hall . The tower is essentially window @-@ less because it was meant to be the city archive ; a round staircase extends up the southeast corner of the tower for access . The short tower on the building 's southeast corner was originally meant to be the transition between city hall and the (to @-@ be built) jail , complete with a " bridge of sighs " to transport inmates straight from their cells in the jail to the court rooms in city hall .

Due to lack of funds at the time (the building 's initial budget doubled , ending up at $ 325 @,@ 000 ($ 7 @.@ 97 million in modern dollars) including furnishings) , Richardson devoted most of his efforts to the building 's exterior . A report from the Times Union states , " There wasn 't enough money for Richardson to do the job as thoroughly as he would have liked . He said in his writing that if there wasn 't sufficient money , he 'd rather do it right on the outside and leave it to a future generation to finish the interior . The interior was finished by city architects a good 30 years after Richardson built it . " The interior was redesigned by Ogden and Gander in 1917 . The mayor 's office is on the first floor of the tower , the Council chamber and offices are on the building 's second floor , and the city clerk 's office is on the second floor of the tower . The mayor 's office contains a painting of the city 's first mayor , Pieter Schuyler .

With the leadership of William Gorham Rice in 1927 , a carillon was added to the tower ; it contained sixty bells (though it could produce only 47 different notes since top notes have double bells) made by John Taylor & Co in England . Financed by public donations (from upwards of 25 @,@ 000 people) , it cost $ 63 @,@ 000 ($ 8 @.@ 65 million in modern dollars) and was the first municipal carillon in the United States . In 1986 Mayor Thomas Whalen had the carillon restored , which included replacing 30 bells and adding two notes to its repertoire . The 49 bells weigh 27 short tons (24 @,@ 000 kg) . The largest bell is 5 feet 9 inches (1 @.@ 75 m) in diameter and weighs 10 @,@ 953 pounds (4 @,@ 968 kg) . The carillon is still in use and plays multiple concerts during the week .

The clock faces on the tower were added in the 1920s , possibly around the time the carillon was added . The 1897 image of the city hall above shows the tower without the clock faces (though the stonework shows obvious intent to have clock faces installed) . City hall was added to the National Register of Historic Places on September 4 , 1972 .