

# WELCOME TO PLATTSBURGH CITY HALL

Prior to the construction of this building, the city government had offices in the Plattsburgh Theater, on the corner of Court and Marion Streets. Millionaire Loyal L. Smith left money in his will to build a new city hall. At the time the city was notified of the bequest by Smith's executors, architect John Russell Pope happened to be in Plattsburgh supervising the construction of the Macdonough Monument, which he had designed. Pope was called in to consult on the selection of an architect and was ultimately hired to design the new building in the spring of 1916.

City Hall is an example of the Classical Revival style which Pope would later utilize in his design for the Jefferson Memorial. It is constructed of Indiana limestone over a steel frame. Pope's plans incorporated offices, a courtroom, and a library; community pressure, particularly by the women of Plattsburgh, resulted in the addition of a public assembly room on the third floor. The building was completed in 1918. In addition to its government functions, City Hall has also been the home of the Plattsburgh Public Library (1918-1940) and the Clinton County Historical Association (1972-1991).



Postcard of City Hall from the 1940s

## Plattsburgh Mural Cycle

In 1984 Mayor Carlton Rennell announced a competition to design murals for the rotunda of City Hall. Peter Charlap, artist and professor of art at Vassar College, was chosen by the committee, which was impressed by the careful consideration he showed for the space. The murals were formally unveiled and dedicated in September 1985.

Charlap's murals depict key moments in the history of the city, including the Battle of Plattsburgh, early industries, and transportation. The separate panels of the cycle are linked by the depiction of Lake Champlain and the Saranac River throughout the series.



HMS *Confiance* is the large ship at the center of this illustration

## The *Confiance* Anchor

HMS *Confiance* was the flagship of the British naval forces at the Battle of Plattsburgh, commanded by Captain George Downie. The frigate sustained serious damage during the battle, taking "250 to 300 cannon shot in the hull and grape without number."

After the battle, *Confiance*, along with other captured ships, was towed down to Whitehall; it would never see service again. In 1820 it was towed into the mouth of the nearby Poultney River and allowed to sink. When dredging work was being done on the river in 1873, the remains of the ship slid into the channel and blocked it, at which point J.J. Holden, also known as "Nitroglycerine Jack," was brought in to deal with the problem.

But wreckage from the *Confiance* remained at the bottom of Lake Champlain, and in 1996 divers located the frigate's anchor. After cleaning and conservation treatment at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, the one-ton anchor was placed on display here at City Hall. If you look closely, you can see a dent on one of its flukes, left by a cannonball hit.