

10 West Main Street Building Evolution and Timeline

December 9, 2013

1853 – 1855

- 1853 Designed/1855 Move-In The George Brisbane (1812-1892) Residence was built by Thomas McCulley on the land inherited from George's father's estate (James Brisbane I who had lived nearby, but died in 1851). It was and generally remains a two story, brick Italianate "villa" of five bays wide with a low hipped roof, rounded arched windows on the second floor. There were full height, walk out window doors on the first floor to a veranda porch which continued on three sides of the residence. The center portico had (and has) four square columns with Corinthian capitals.
- The center hall plan had its single asymmetrical stair in the back corner (rear and west). The original stair was removed in 1918 (and is where today's vault is located).
- An octagonal rotunda with a second floor railings allowed natural light throughout the house. This was probably the most significant feature on the inside of the house. The rotunda was removed /covered /infilled in 1958.
- The mansion had an attached single wing (likely from the beginning) which may have been the kitchen. It has a lower roof than the main house. It is possible this is the supposed 1876 addition described in the National Register (but the City Historian and we are not sure about this). Houses of pre-civil war often had attached kitchens.
- There is an additional detached structure immediately adjacent in the rear: the "servants' quarters." (The precise date of construction of this is unknown, but we agree with the City Historian this might be original, though built of "lesser" masonry than the main house.) We cannot date this for sure. But by the city hall reconstruction on the 1918 Sanborn maps, its use had changed and it is labelled a "shed."
- There were additional separate utilitarian outbuildings as well (1906 Sanborn) of unknown dates. These were removed in the city hall period.

1876

- The National Register nomination form notes an addition. We cannot confirm this nor can the City Historian. We thought it might be the kitchen wing or the

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servants' quarters but we cannot demonstrate either of these with full confidence.

1896

- 1896 The Veranda was "restored" with the return of Sarah Brisbane to the house.

1917 - 1918

- c. 1917 The city acquired the residence from the Brisbane (James II) family. The building was "untenanted for some time" since 1911. The City's intention was to create a park and raze the building.
- 1918 After the fire in the City Hall/Courthouse/Ellicott Hall, the city's leadership re-examined the Brisbane residence and determined it could be retained. They elected to make it the replacement city hall and heavily renovate it rather than demolishing it. It was re-fitted by Frank H. Homelius (later the mayor of Batavia) as the replacement city hall.
- The veranda was removed (deemed to be structurally unsuitable) and the inside was extensively renovated. This included removal of the main stair as noted earlier.

The Council Chamber on the first floor was highly regarded. The octagonal rotunda that brought light through the building was its most distinctive feature.

- The stairway from the first to the second floor was moved from the rear and west side of the house to the rear of the main hallway. (Another stair right behind the 1918 stair was added in 1963).
- (Per Newspaper) A vault of concrete and brick was erected in the former location of the stair: this new two story vault was to allow the assessor and treasurer access.
- 1918 A barn on the property was torn down and its lumber was recycled.

1906-1919 The Sanborn indicates an addition (stair?) on the back side some time between 1906-1918, possibly in 1918, but not mentioned in contemporary new articles.

- James (II) Brisbane died in 1919.

1939

- Basement improvements of unknown scope were constructed.

1958-1959

- 1958-1959 The distinctive octagonal rotunda was eliminated and replaced by a first floor ceiling, as well as flooring and ceiling on the second floor.
- 1958 A new City Council Chambers and City Attorney's office were created on the second floor.
- 1959 The Tax Office was enlarged on the first floor west. We presume this was within existing spaces.

1963

- 1963 The Rear Addition was added to become the Police Headquarters. We presume this is when the connector to the back 1918 wing was added. This wing included another stairs.

1969

- 1969 The Cupola was removed because of structural issues. We are not sure when the original two chimneys were removed.

1982 – 1983

- 1982 The Genesee County Courthouse Historic District was created and certified (12.10.1982). It includes five (5) structures plus the Soldier Monument including the old City Hall/Police Headquarters. Batavia City Hall is/was the second oldest of the five (oldest is the Genesee County Courthouse, which itself is a listed national Register structure confirmed in 1973). The "time of significance" for old Batavia City Hall is/was its 1918 character and appearance and its civic presence.
- 1983 A replacement cupola was installed with local efforts.

2000

- The local Historic district was created for the same area.