

City Hall Park



In 1797, a city planned grid system of streets was laid out for Burlington, incorporating the few transportation routes that existed, including King, Pearl, Church and Battery Streets. At the city's center, space was reserved for a park (now City Hall Park) and courthouse. First known as Courthouse Square, the park became a focal point in the early 1800s attracting hotels, taverns and offices in the early 1800s.

The buildings bordering the park tell the story of the city's growth from a frontier lake port to a lumber and manufacturing boomtown to a modern city that stands today as Vermont's foremost industrial, commercial, cultural and educational center. Although no early commercial buildings survive in unaltered form, the park's character has changed little since the 1830s, when buildings of three story brick facades first enclosed it.

City Hall, built in 1928 on the eastern edge of the park, is its most visually imposing building. Its brick façade with extensive carved marble trim is primarily Colonial Revival in style, while its strict symmetry and multi-staged, domed cupola have Georgian overtones. This classical/colonial motif was intended by the architect, W. M. Kendall, to be "in accordance with the same classical principles which inspired the public buildings of the colonies and the early republic." Most all of the finish materials—brick, marble, roofing slate and granite—were produced in Vermont. Constructed at a cost of \$475,000, it was hailed by Mayor Beecher (known as "Beecher the Builder") as "the most ambitious building project on which the City of Burlington has ever embarked."

The old Savings Bank, located at the northwest corner of the Park, is one of the city's most sophisticated works of architecture. Built in 1900 in the Flemish Revival style, its brick and brownstone façade, prominent wall dormers and a corner turret recall the Renaissance guild houses of Brussels and Antwerp in Belgium.



View of City Hall Park in 1859 looking north.



Chartered in 1763, the City of Burlington or the "Queen City" is bounded on the west by Lake Champlain, on the north by the Winooski (Onion) River, and on the east and south by the City of South Burlington. This 1877 drawing shows the busy waterfront and the surrounding countryside.



At seven stories, the Hotel Vermont, located at the Park's southwest corner, is still one of Vermont's tallest buildings. Built in 1910 in the Colonial Revival style, the building featured a glazed roof garden and wrought iron seventh story balconies to take advantage of views of the lake and park.



The Flynn Theater, just south of the park, is one of the finest Art Deco movie houses in the state. John J. Flynn, a local lawyer, banker and real estate developer built it in 1930. This building was restored inside and out in the 1980s as part of its transformation into a performing arts center.

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Flynn Theatre