



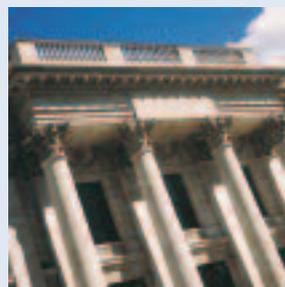
## DUBLIN'S CITY HALL The Story of the Capital



The superb vaults at lower ground floor level were also restored as part of the refurbishment of City Hall. In revealing this magnificent architectural feature, internal walls were removed, brick arches were repaired and new lime plaster was applied. The vaults now host the multimedia exhibition, *Dublin's City Hall: The Story of the Capital*. This exhibition traces the evolution of Ireland's capital city, from before the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1170 to the present day. It is the story of

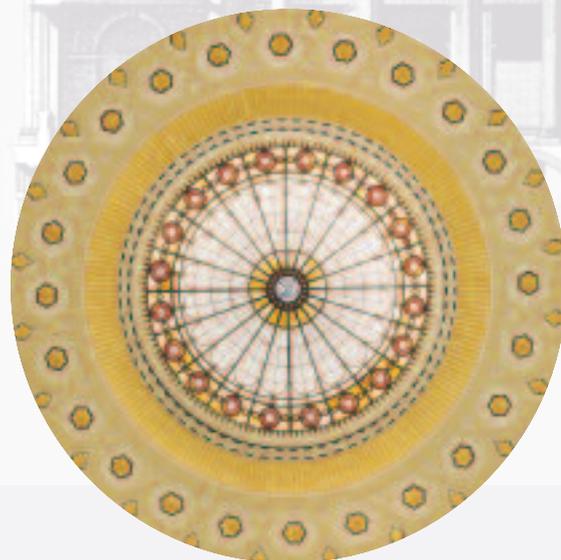
city governance renewing itself over the last millennium, absorbing a multitude of outside influences. The story is told through the display of precious artifacts and medieval manuscripts, supported by computer interactives, archive films, models and costumes, along with original works of modern art, which have been commissioned especially for the exhibition.

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### FEATURES OF CITY HALL

Some later features have been retained in the Rotunda and can still be enjoyed by visitors to the City Hall today. These include a series of painted murals, executed between 1914 and 1919 by James Ward of the Metropolitan School of Art, which depict scenes from the history of Dublin and are rare examples of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Ireland. The large clock with Roman numerals was made by Gaskin's of Dublin in 1871, and is a replica of the original in the Royal Exchange. The marble floor beneath the dome was laid in 1898 to a design by City Architect Charles J. McCarthy, with a circular mosaic depicting the Dublin City Coat of Arms.



INTERIOR OF THE DOME FROM THE ROTUNDA

The Rotunda also provides an elegant space for sculpture. The earliest statue, dating from 1772, is of Dr. Charles Lucas, a member of the Dublin City Assembly and a champion of municipal liberties. It was the first major commission Edward Smyth received. His later work includes the famous series of river heads on James Gandon's Custom House. A statue of the orator and parliamentarian Henry Grattan, by Francis Chantrey, is at the foot of the west staircase. The three remaining statues are all by John Hogan. The massive statue of Daniel O'Connell, standing 18 feet high, was once intended to stand outside the building, where its original



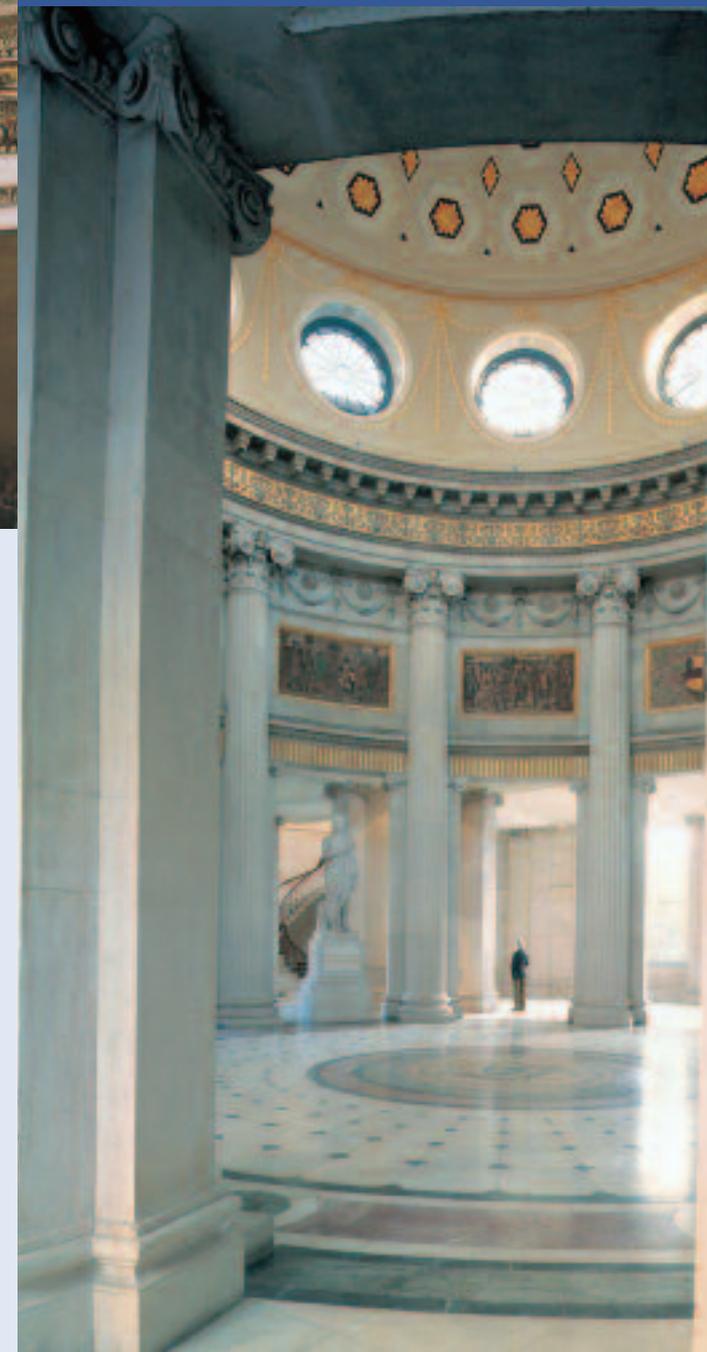
CHARLES LUCAS



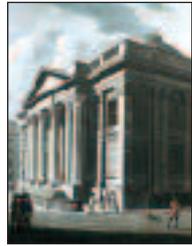
THOMAS DAVIS

granite plinth may still be seen. O'Connell is famous as the Liberator who won Catholic Emancipation in 1829 and he was also Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1841. Across the hall is Thomas Drummond, who as under-secretary for Ireland in the 1830's initiated reform of the police, introduced railways to Ireland and abolished the hated system of tithes, which had brought misery to the country's farmers. A lighthouse at his feet commemorates his invention of a lamp which was a boon to shipping in fog and mist. The final statue is of Thomas Davis, the Irish patriot who founded the *Nation* newspaper. His songs *A Nation Once Again* and *The West's Awake* inspired the revival of Irish nationalism and are still popular today.

# CITY HALL DUBLIN



## CITY HALL: THE EARLY HISTORY



**C**ITY HALL is an outstanding example of the Georgian architecture for which Dublin is world-renowned. It was built between 1769 and 1779 by the Guild of Merchants as the Royal Exchange, at a cost of £58,000 most of which was raised by public lotteries. The architect was Thomas Cooley, winner of a competition to design the building, with his more illustrious contemporary James Gandon in second place. The Royal Exchange belonged to the first rank of European architecture and marked the introduction to Ireland of the neo-classical style fashionable on the Continent. The circular entrance hall, or Rotunda, with its spacious dome, supported by twelve columns, is surrounded by an ambulatory, where the merchants strolled and discussed business. The sheer size and sumptuous fittings of the Royal Exchange, with carved capitals by Simon Vierpyl and plasterwork by the leading stuccodore Charles Thorp, reflect the standing and prestige of Dublin in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Act of Union, passed in 1800, had an adverse effect on the economy of Dublin and forty years later the Royal Exchange lay virtually idle. The building was rescued by Dublin Corporation, which purchased it in 1851 and converted it for civic administration, introducing much-needed office space.



CHARLES THORP



STATUE OF DANIEL O'CONNELL

The changes included partitions around the ambulatory, the construction of a new staircase leading from the Rotunda to the upper floors and the sub-division of the vaults for storage. On 30 September 1852 the Royal Exchange was re-named City Hall, at the first meeting held there of Dublin City Council.

## CITY HALL AND IRISH NATIONALISM

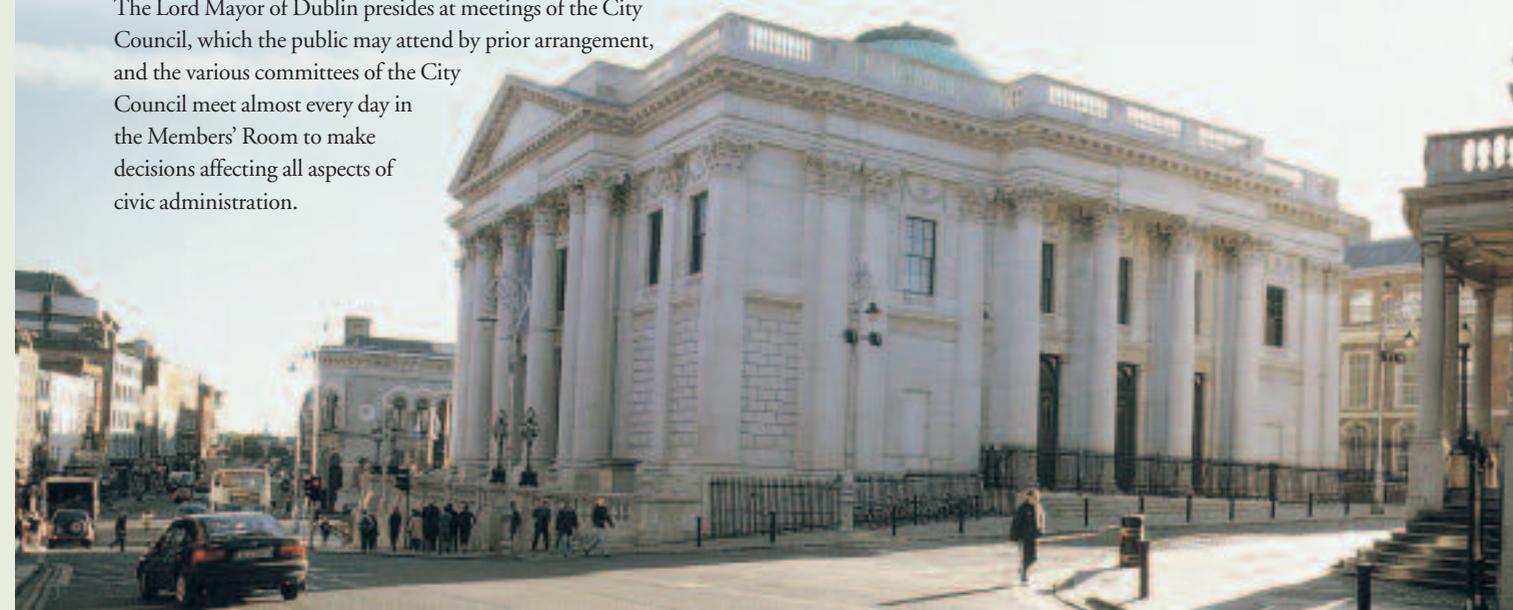
City Hall played its part in the development of Irish nationalism. The funerals of leading patriots, Charles Stewart Parnell and Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, were held there and the building was garrisoned by the insurgents during the Easter Rising of 1916, an event which is commemorated by a plaque at the front gates. In 1922, City Hall became the temporary headquarters of the Irish Provisional Government under its chairman, Michael Collins. The funerals of Collins, and of his colleague Arthur Griffith, took place from City Hall in the same year.



VIEW OF WEST SIDE AMBULATORY

## CITY HALL TODAY

City Hall was the hub of Dublin's civic administration until 1995, when Dublin Corporation moved its headquarters to the newly-completed Civic Offices at Wood Quay. City Hall is still the focal point for the Corporation's elected members, Dublin City Council. The Council meets in plenary session on the first Monday of every month in the historic Council Chamber, originally the coffee-room of the Royal Exchange. The Lord Mayor of Dublin presides at meetings of the City Council, which the public may attend by prior arrangement, and the various committees of the City Council meet almost every day in the Members' Room to make decisions affecting all aspects of civic administration.



## RESTORATION OF CITY HALL

In 1998, Dublin City Council (formerly known as Dublin Corporation) embarked on an ambitious programme of restoration aimed at returning City Hall to its original Georgian configuration. This programme was influenced by three main considerations: its enhancement as a pre-eminent building of civic, historic and architectural significance; the reflection of its importance as the meeting-place of Dublin City Council; and the realization of its potential as a major cultural and tourist attraction. The Rotunda has been opened up with the removal of 19<sup>th</sup> century partitions, allowing visitors to appreciate for the first time since 1852 the proportions of the Cooley original and the wonderful natural light which plays around the internal columns. The Portland stone fabric of the building has been carefully cleaned and restored using stone sourced from the same quarry in Dorset which supplied the original builders of the Royal Exchange. The dome, one of the most striking features of the Rotunda, was completely refurbished and embellished with gold leaf and the fine stone staircases, both of which were damaged as a result of subsidence, were reinstated to their original cantilevered design. The restored City Hall was re-opened to the public on 6 September 2000 to widespread acclaim.