



# KECSKEMÉT

THE TOWN HALL AND ITS CEREMONIAL HALL



# THE HISTORY OF THE TOWN HALL

The townscape of the centre of Kecskemét evolved to its present form around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century when it experienced a major development. The giant main square used to be the market. It remains the only main square in Hungary to be characterised by the various national architectural styles of Hungarian Art Nouveau. Having a significant role in this, the Town Hall was built in Art Nouveau style between 1893 and 1897 according to the design of architects Ödön Lechner and Gyula Pártos. The style of the building with its rectangle-shaped floor plan mixes the forms of French, Northern Hungarian Renaissance architecture and the elements of Hungarian folk art. Lechner's purpose was the creation of a new, national architectural style.

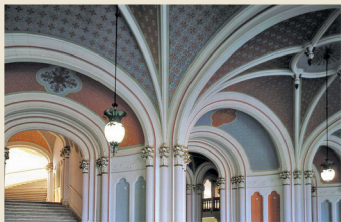
The demand for the expansion and reconstruction of the Town Council had surfaced many times in the almost hundred year period. Following a couple of plans it was finally in 1890 when the General Assembly of the rapidly flourishing town invited entries for the competition of a new Town Hall building. The 150-year-old building of the previous Town Hall was demolished in 1892. József Katona, the author of the Hungarian national drama, worked there for ten years and died right at the entrance in 1830. The cracked stone monument set up in front of the building, at the scene of the heart attack, reminds us of this tragic event. The inscription on the monument reads: „The heart of the son of Kecskemét broke here.”



The foundation stone of the new Town Hall was laid in 1893 and the building was constructed in 28 months. Although the offices were moved into the building in 1895, the Ceremonial Hall was opened only in 1897. The main force and leading spirit of the construction, Mayor Péter Lestár had passed away before the inauguration. His successor, Elek Kada



highlighted in his ceremonial address: "This shall be our message to the future." The busts of these two notable people can be seen in front of the building.



## THE CEREMONIAL HALL

The Ceremonial Hall is the venue of the General Assembly meetings of the town, national and international conferences, wedding ceremonies and ceremonial receptions.



The period furniture of the Ceremonial Hall is handicraft work. The wooden furniture and the printed leather backed chairs were made in Szeged according to the design of Lechner and

Pártos. The beautiful and richly coloured glass windows were made in the workshop of the famous Miksa Róth. The decorative wall-painting was made by Adolf Götz, the chandelier and the wall-candlesticks were made by Sándor Árkay, Imperial and Royal locksmith according to the design of Szilárd Várady.

Based on the decree of the Minister of Education, Loránd Eötvös in August 1894 – calling for the immortalisation of historic scenes on the occasion of the millennium – the General Assembly of Kecskemét decided to ensure that historic iconography has a prestigious place in the council hall besides the ornamentation.



The seccos illustrating particular periods of the then one-thousand-year-old Hungarian history were painted by Bertalan Székely, one of the most significant 19<sup>th</sup>

century figures of Hungarian history painting. The two large seccos picture the blood treaty of the leaders of the seven





settling tribes and the coronation of the Austrian Emperor Franz Josef as king of Hungary in 1867. The Blood oath is an outstanding example proving the diligence of the painter to be historically accurate. For example he studied the history of Asian national costumes and depicted the “chalice” as the bull’s head bowl from the treasure of Nagyszentmiklós. Standing next to the king on the coronation painting are Archbishop János Simor and count Gyula Andrassy, the latter being the prime minister of Hungary at the time. The other paintings – in four groups – show kings, generals and politicians playing a significant role in Hungarian history.



The name of the town originates from the word „kecske” meaning „goat”, and „mét” meaning district. The goat can be seen in our coat of arms as well above the pulpit with the motto of the town beneath it: „Neither height, nor depth frightens us.” This was the slogan chosen for the architectural plans of Lechner and Pártos; it is a paraphrase of the Bible verse (Romans 8:39). The coat of arms is shown in several important places inside and outside the building. The red and white flag of Kecskemét with the goat decorates the Hall along with the flags of several twin cities.

## THE CARILLON

The carillon, which has been operating in a volume of 3 octaves since 1983, is at the 1st floor balcony. The signal can be heard every hour, and the 37 programmed bells play Hungarian classics (Kodály, Erkel) at 12:05, Händel, Beethoven and Mozart at 18:05 and Hungarian folk songs at 20:00.



## DID YOU KNOW?

- The town hall has 174 offices.
- The 5 m tall and 3 m wide gilded bronze chandelier weighs 1200 kg and has 63 bulbs symbolizing the number of the administrative counties of former Hungary.
- The Ceremonial Hall has only experienced three major renovations: after the earthquake in 1911, then in 1960 and in 2014 when the seccos and the fine paintworks were fully renovated.



The courtyard – looking even more glorious during blossoming of the Japanese empress tree – is an intimate venue for musical evenings, performances, concerts and other cultural programmes. The Town Hall is one of the best-known buildings of the town with 110.000 inhabitants. It has become the most popular tourist destination, and the first and most important symbol of Kecskemét.





## GUIDED TOUR OF THE BUILDING

The Ceremonial Hall is open for groups  
from 10:00 to 11:30.  
Reservations are required.

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