Historic courthouse called back into service

It will be "Order in court" for the first time in 35 years today at the old Victoria Court House in Bastion Square — now the Maritime Museum of B.C.

There are so many cases set for today in B.C. Supreme Court at the Law Courts on Burdett Avenue that they ran out of courtrooms, and the former court house was booked to take the overflow.

There are nine B.C. Supreme Court judges sitting at the Law Courts today but only seven available courtrooms.

The eighth judge gets to sit in a small claims court settlement conference room and the ninth — Justice Allen Melvin — will preside over a civil family case where Chief Justice Matthew Baillie Begbie once held court.

Begbie arrived in the Colony of Vancouver Island in 1858 and swore in James Douglas as governor. He died in 1895.

Construction on the old court house

started in 1887 and the first court cases were heard in 1889. The courtroom being used today was opened in 1893.

The present Law Courts building was officially opened in 1962 and the old courthouse held its last B.C. Supreme Court cases in 1963.

However, a year and a half ago, the Maritime Museum completed renovations to the old courtroom and it has been used for the past year for federal taxation appeals.