



HISTORIC DOWNTOWN WALK

Historic Downtown Walk

Stratford's Victorian downtown was designated as a Heritage Conservation District by City Council in 1998. This recognizes the significance of the Victorian details, the importance of the streetscapes and the fact that many of the Victorian features are intact on most of these buildings. This walk will take you to different blocks of the downtown and within each block description, buildings and interesting details will be highlighted.

Walk 1 Approximate time: 45 minutes

Begin your walk at the Perth County Court House, located on Huron Street.

1 Perth County Perth County Court House. This historic building replaced the original courthouse, which was built in 1853 when Perth County separated from the Huron District. Constructed in 1886, the building took two years to complete. It was designed by London architect, George F. Durand of London Ontario, who also designed the jail, located on St. Andrew Street, the old pump house (now Gallery Stratford) located on Romeo Street and the old hospital located on John Street. Built in the Queen Anne Revival Style, the building uses various architectural details including turrets, decorative chimneys, Italianate brackets and neoclassical features such as columns adorning the windows. Note the contrast of materials, colours and textures and the terra cotta details, which were created by sculptor Henry Plasschaert from the United States. It contains tile flooring, stained glass and other elegant appointments. It opened in 1887 on Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee (50th year as queen) during a party costing \$500, at which time, electric lights in the Perth County Court House were turned on, as in this year electricity became available in Stratford. This building is one of the most photographed structures in Stratford and remains an important landmark, which can be seen from several kilometres when entering Stratford from the East.



AT THE CROSS WALK, CROSS TO THE SOUTH SIDE OF ONTARIO STREET AND DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION TO THE NORTH SIDE.



2 York Street and the Mill Block. The Mill Block is the oldest business block in Stratford. **4 & 6 Ontario Street** and **55 Ontario Street** were constructed during the 1850s, with the buildings in between replacing original structures during the 1880s and later. Built on a natural cliff, the back of the Mill Block is York Street, which is exactly one storey below. During the 1980s, York Street became a boutique area transforming the original delivery service entrance area for Ontario Street stores into a boutique and restaurant shopping area.

PROCEED EAST ALONG ONTARIO STREET CROSSING AT THE ERIE STREET INTERSECTION TO 55 ONTARIO STREET. YOU MAY ALSO ACCESS YORK STREET AROUND THE CORNER.

Early Hotels, prominent local barristers and businesses were located in the Mill Block. Built in 1855, The Albion Hotel stood at this location, **55 Ontario Street**. Most of the other buildings in the block date to the early 1860's and remain as a fine example of early architecture. Neo-Classical buildings complement each other on either end of the block. They feature a rounded wall into which a doorway was set to allow access to important intersections.



AT THE ONTARIO STREET CROSSWALK, PROCEED EAST BY MEMORIAL PARK TO THE CROSS WALK AT ONTARIO AND DOWNIE STREETS. CROSS SOUTH AND DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION WEST TO FESTIVAL SQUARE.



3 Ontario Street, second block, south side or Festival Square. The Festival Square is comprised of the Gordon Block and the Idington Block.

Local businessman and politician William Gordon built the Gordon Block in 1894. It was one of the first buildings to adopt modern technology (cast iron beam framework supported by a stone foundation) but still retain architectural features common to the time period. These include the round-arched Romanesque windows and the dominant pilasters. The two corners are capped with towers, which complement the tower on 70-76 Ontario Street.

The Idington Block was built in two stages. The first half was built in 1875, and the part facing onto Downie Street was added in 1885 and joined to the Erie Street section behind. It is an example of Victorian architecture, complete with the wall frieze, which is a combination of pressed tin and tin sculpture, one of the best remaining examples in Southwestern Ontario. Notice the intricate scrolls and variety of floral roundels in the concrete lintels.

PROCEED SOUTH ON DOWNIE STREET TO VIEW THE DETAILS MENTIONED IN 4M.

4 Downie Street, first block, east side. This block has some interesting buildings constructed during the 1890s. Note the round-arched Romanesque windows and pilasters on **19 Downie Street**. Of special interest are the rams' heads located between the second and third storey of the buildings. This red brick was used throughout the 1890s and many of Stratford's later commercial buildings are constructed with this material.

RETURN TO THE CORNER OF DOWNIE AND ONTARIO STREET TO VIEW ONTARIO STREET, THIRD BLOCK, NORTH SIDE.

5 Ontario Street, third Block, North Side. Note the twin blocks, which unify the streetscape. **70-76 Ontario Street** added its tower about 1904 to complement the Gordon Block. The rest of the block features many interesting buildings capped with pressed tin cornice work. These buildings are also typical of the early commercial style of architecture. However, third story additions changed the ambiance by incorporating Gothic features such as heavy cornices and finials.

CROSS TO NORTH SIDE OF ONTARIO STREET TO VIEW ONTARIO STREET, THIRD BLOCK EAST SIDE.

6 Ontario Street, third Block, South Side. In an 1857 tax assessment roll, buildings on this block were indicated. Many were altered, especially during the 1880s, which accounts for their Gothic features. In 1881, the owners of **75-83 Ontario Street** agreed to add a third storey and a unified storefront to their buildings, creating the existing structures. Note the bracketed-pediment window lintel detail at **87 Ontario Street**. The Romanesque round-arched windows complete with a prominent keystone are of interest at **95 and 97 Ontario Street** as well. This block has a varied roofline streetscape. Also notice the pressed tin cornice on many of the buildings.

7 Knox Presbyterian Church, 142 Ontario Street. This building was constructed in 1913-1915 replacing the original Knox Presbyterian Church, which was destroyed in a fire. A good example of a later Gothic Revival Church, it is built in the traditional Latin cross form with a thru bay nave, shallow transepts, and choir loft. The Sunday school on Waterloo Street is part of the original church and dates to 1873.



8 161 Ontario Street. The present structure, built in 1905, by J.F. Corrie, replaced the original framed Queen's Arms Hotel. It is an example of a later Neo-Classical Revival Style building. A Neo-Classical Revival occurred in this area at the turn of the century. Identifying elements include the cupola on the top of the structure as well as the rounded doorway. The building was restored in 1987-1988.

TURN TO THE RIGHT, OR SOUTH ON WATERLOO STREET AND PROCEED TO WATERLOO AND ALBERT STREETS.

9 The Armoury was built in 1905 in a Baronial Gothic style of architecture, which features crenulated towers. A government-appointed architect designed it and the plans were used in several other cities.



TURN RIGHT ONTO ALBERT STREET PAST THE ARMOURY.



10 Albert Street, North Side. The houses located at **42 and 52 Albert Street** were originally constructed as residential dwellings. **52 Albert Street** appears to be older as it is listed in the 1861 Assessment roll as a bricked cottage while **42 Albert Street** was still a framed house and was not bricked until 1888. The decorative quoins or interlocking corner brick on **52 Albert Street** are a Neo-Classical feature and both buildings appear to have similar windows on the top floors as well as a similar gable. **48 Albert Street** was built later in the Queen Anne Style and shares a common wall with **42 Albert Street**. The other building, **56 Albert Street** was built in 1912 and was the location for the Bell Telephone Company for many years.

11 Albert Street, South Side. This block contains **51 Albert Street**, which was built in 1939 and is an example of another revival of Classical architecture. The Windsor Block, now **23 Albert Place**, formerly The Windsor Hotel was built in 1873 and originally extended to Downie Street.



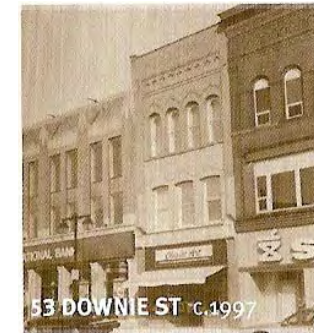
TURN LEFT ONTO DOWNIE STREET.

12 Downie Street, East Side. The top storey of **47 Downie Street** is a good example of Art Deco architecture and was built during the 1920s. The emphasis on vertical lines and decorative banding highlight the flat panels.

Originally part of a three bay commercial block, **53 Downie Street** has been designated for its 1880s High Victorian facade, as well as original interior features, which include the tin ceiling. Note the decorative brickwork and round-arched windows. These windows are found in all three buildings and add continuity to this block to unify the streetscape.

Another magnificent commercial building was the Myers Block **69-71 Downie Street** built in the early 1870s. Note the intricate brickwork and detailed design along and above the eaves line. The extended Romanesque round-arched windows and complementing decorative brick reflect the overpowering presence of the structure, which its prominent corner position demands. The tower matches those on Ontario Street. The building serves as an anchor to Market Square.

The adjoining three bay Victorian building, once housed J.A. Duggan's department store, which was the biggest of its kind west of Toronto. The large, original windows on the second floor were unique to the area. The arched windows complement those on the Myers block. The intricate brickwork creates a building worthy of attention.



CONTINUE SOUTH ON DOWNIE TO GEORGE STREET.

13 Downie and George Streets. The heavy cornice on the front facade and simple lines identify **105-109 Downie Street** as Edwardian in style. It complemented the Theatre Albert, which was located where the Avon Theatre now is.



14 Downie Street, West Side. Originally built as the Victoria House Hotel between 1867-1868, **98-100 Downie Street** was constructed with Neo-Classical quoins, and unusual brackets under the eaves.

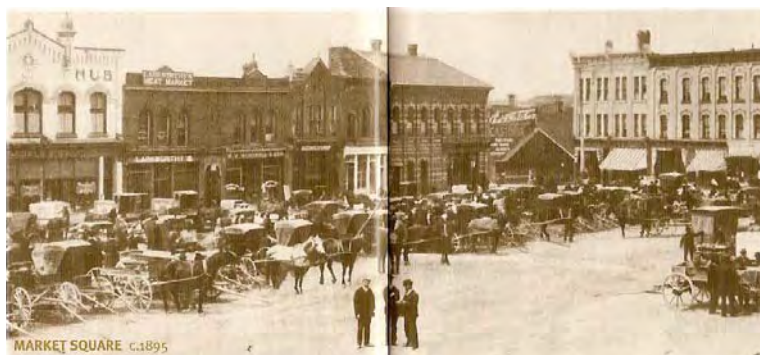


RETURN TO CORNER OF DOWNIE AND BRUNSWICK STREETS OTHERWISE KNOWN AS MARKET PLACE AND MARKET SQUARE.



15 Market Place Built primarily in the 1890s; this block was one of the last commercial sections developed and reflects the Victorian Gothic architecture, which was in vogue at the time. Of interest is the heavy cornice, which adorns most of the buildings and is sometimes decorated by ornate brackets or projecting finals. Although some alterations have been made, much of the streetscape remains. Note the decorative columns on the second floor of **21 Market Place**. Built in 1900, **27 Market Place** was recently restored. Note the unusual windows and adorning lintels. Completing Market Place is **53**; the first building erected in this block. Built into a natural cliff, this block creates an extra storey at the back. Romeo Creek once ran through the Market Square and is now channelled beneath the Avon Theatre Stage and Market Place.

16 Market Square is the name given to the area behind the City Hall. When the first Town Hall was constructed the property was acquired by the municipality from surveyor John McDonald on the condition that it be used as a meeting place for people. The first Town Hall was actually called the Market Building with little emphasis on the municipal function. In November 1897, this building was destroyed in a fire and the present City Hall was constructed, opening in January 1900. In 1902 the City built a market building on Waterloo Street and the market area became a parking area.



CROSS MARKET SQUARE AND DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION TO THE SOUTHERN MOST CORNER OF WELLINGTON AND ST. PATRICK STREETS.



17 Wellington Street. As a railway town with a main repair centre and junction for a number of lines, at one time Stratford had thirty-eight hotels for a town of only 10,000 people. *DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION TO THE SOUTHERN MOST CORNER OF WELLINGTON AND ST. PATRICK STREETS.* Built in the 1870s, The Olde English Parlour, formerly Mansion House Hotel housed VIP's from the Grand Trunk Railway whilst in Stratford.

Wellington Street has had as many as four or five hotels on it at one time. Although the hotels no longer exist, their names were adopted by the buildings of blocks in which they were located. The earliest remaining block is the Easson Block, which is located at **28-30 Wellington Street.** Looking to your right, The Brandenburger Block, **32-34 Wellington Street** was built in 1870-1871 by William Brandenburger, sausage maker. His wife, Caroline, operated a small hotel upstairs. The Brandenburgers were also responsible for the construction of the "Theatre Albert", which was located where the Avon Theatre now stands. William Worth, hotelkeeper in 1880, built the Worth Block, **38-40 Wellington Street.** The strong Romanesque features embellish the Worth Block's prominent location in the Market Square. Detailed brickwork provides both pattern and texture. The original patterned slate roof remains intact and unifies the building's intricate design.

18 The City Hall replaced the Neo-Classical building, which burned in 1897. It was constructed between 1898 and 1899 and was designed by architect G.W. King and J.W. Siddall. Originally intended to match the Perth County Perth County Court House, the architect's specification called for the use of buff-coloured brick. Technical difficulties prevented this and red brick was substituted. The City Hall is a High Victorian building with many Queen Anne features. These include contrasting textural and bichromal wall materials, Flemish wall dormers, and Neo-Classical cupolas and arches. The building is geometric with a dodecagon (twelve-sided shape) on either side of the outside triangular stairwell, and a hexagonal shape on the side facing the Market Place. The clock tower is also hexagonal. Situated by itself in the middle of town, the City Hall is reminiscent of a Dutch Raadhuis or Town Hall.



THIS CONCLUDES YOUR HISTORIC DOWNTOWN WALK.

ARCHITECTURAL VOCABULARY

The following terms are provided to assist you in making your strolls around Stratford more interesting and enjoyable. Space does not permit us to point out the features of all buildings you may pass and picking out the details on your own will make the experience more complete.

Baluster – A carved column or upright post supporting a handrail.

Bargeboards (vergeboards) – The ornamental boards, often fretted, hanging from the edge of the protective gable or verge of Gothic Revival buildings. Often called “gingerbread” detail.

Batten – A strip covering a joint between vertical boards, as in “board and batten”

Bay – (a) A compartment or division of a façade usually indicated by an opening such as a door or window (b) A projection, as in a bay window.

Bracket – Any overhanging member projecting from a wall, to support a weight, generally formed with scrolls or volutes.

Corbel – A masonry projection on the courses of a wall, each course projecting slightly beyond the next below it. Intended to carry the weight of the cornice, it is often decorative.

Cornice – Horizontal moulded projection at the top of a building.

Coursing – A continuous horizontal row of brick or stone in a wall.

Cresting – Ornamental finish along the top of a wall or roof.

Dentil – Small rectangular block, similar in effect to teeth, found in the lower part of a cornice.

Dichromatic brickwork – Brickwork laid in two colours, also called bichromatic.

Finial – Ornamental terminating on an apex of a gable, pinnacle, spires, etc.

Frieze – The part of a cornice below the fascia board and soffit, flat on wall surface, sometimes highly decorated

Gable – The triangular portion of a wall, between the enclosing lines of a sloping roof.

Headings – The area immediately over a window or door.

Keystone – The central wedge-shaped stone of masonry arch.

Label – A door or window moulding extending part way down the sides.

Lintel – A horizontal length of stone, iron, timber or reinforced concrete, carrying the weight of the wall above a window or door.

Oriel Window – An upper floor bay-window supported by corbels.

Palladian Window – A window in three parts, the centre section larger and arched at the head, the smaller sections on either side having squared heads.

Pediment – The triangular area above a portico or window or door.

Pilaster – A rectangular feature in the shape of a pillar but projecting only about one-sixth of its breadth from a wall.

Portico – A small porch with pillars supporting a roof.

Quoins – The accentuated members of a corner, often formed of stone, but also fashioned of brick, appearing to bond the corners of a building.

Sidelights – Glass panels on either side of a door.

Transom – The rectangular member and sash above a window or door.

Verandah – An open portico, gallery or balcony, usually roofed, along the outside of a building

Regency Style – One of the earliest brick house styles in Stratford popular from the later 1850s to the early 1870s.

Gothic Revival Style – Features include gables, finials and the decorative wooden bargeboard or ornate gingerbread gable trim, popular in Stratford 1871 – 1890s

Second Empire Style – Identifiable by its third storey which is a mansard roof with dormer windows and Italianate brackets.

Italianate Style – Features include asymmetrical shape, two storey structure, protruding bay windows and prominent, ornate brackets.

Queen Anne Revival Style – First style to have a broken roof line (different heights). Emphasis is on contrasting building materials and colours, architectural features and windows. A prominent feature is the fish scale or wood shingling which appears on the top storey of residential buildings.

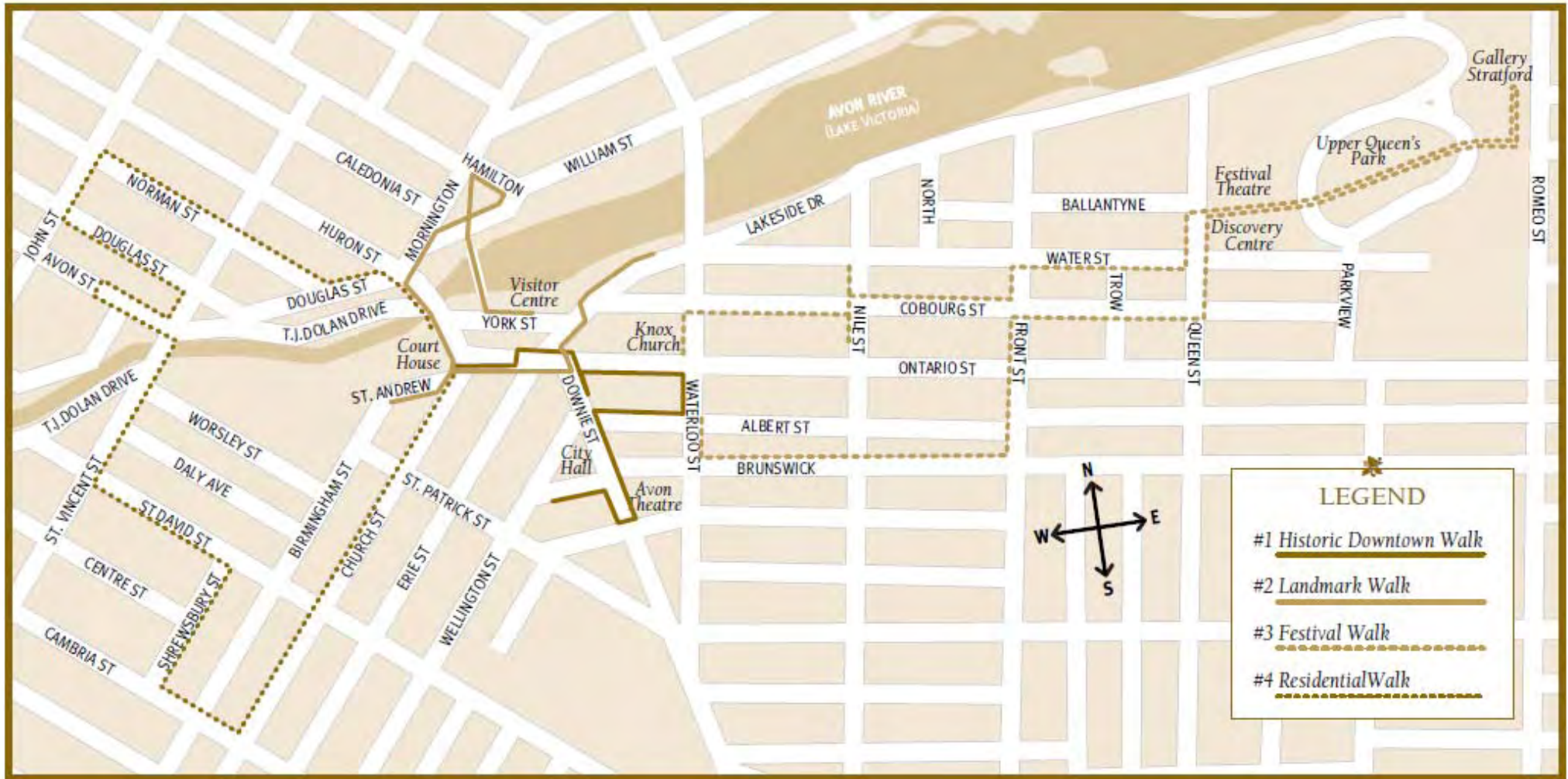
Queen Anne Box Style – Working man’s home, post WWI until the late 1920s. Features include an a-shaped pediment with fish scale and a boxlike structure.

Edwardian Revival Style – Named after King Edward I, features include Neo-Classical lines, pressed tinwork or cornice work adorning under the soffits.

Jacobethan Style – Combination of Jacobean and Elizabethan architecture. Features include large bay windows, round-arched doorways, brick and stone with wooden work.

Foursquare Style – Based on the work of American architect, Fran Lloyd Wright, square in structure and very simplistic in design, popular during the 1920s-30s

STRATFORD STROLLS
MAP



The contents of this historical walk were originally developed by the Perth County Historical Foundation and the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (Heritage Stratford). The information has been revised and updated by the Stratford-Perth Archives in partnership with Stratford Tourism.