

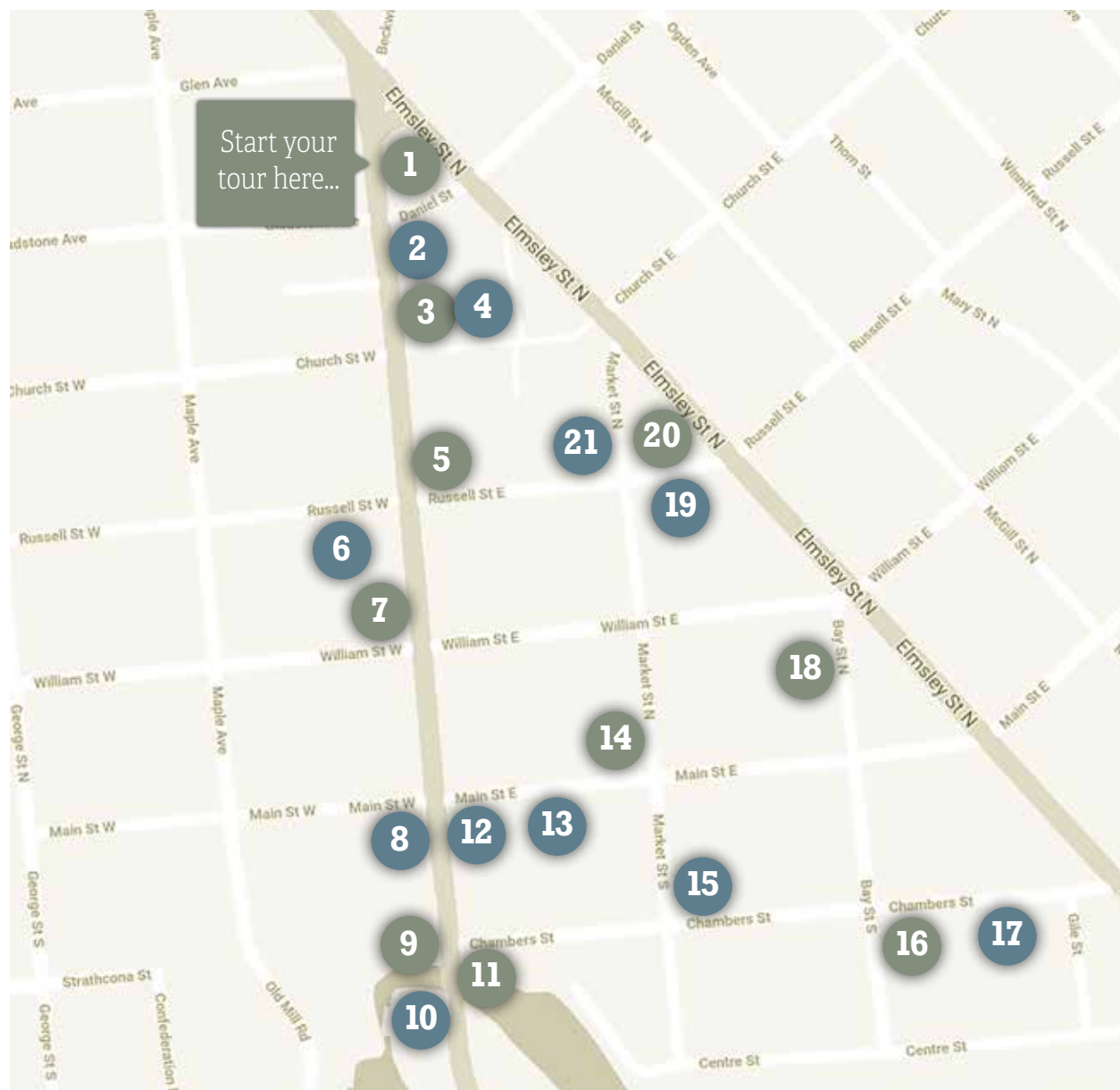
Smiths Falls, Ont. 1900-1910



the Smiths Falls
Heritage Walking Tour



www.townofsmithsfalls.ca



Welcome to the Town of Smiths Falls in the heart of Eastern Ontario. We are proud of our architectural heritage, and pleased to be able to provide you with this self-guided walking tour of our historic downtown.

Smiths Falls became a settlement in the early 1830's, with the construction of the Rideau Canal, which has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Industry developed in the form of mills on Jason Island and Ward Island, powered by the falls on the Rideau River. With the completion of the Canal, Smiths Falls developed as a commercial village, with ready transportation provided by the river.

By the 1850's Smiths Falls had a railroad, and in the 1880's became a divisional town for the Canadian Pacific Railway. This allowed the town to become an industrial centre. Over the years major industries have come and gone, including Frost and Wood, which provided stable employment for 116 years, the Canadian Northern Railway, RCA Victor, Hershey's Chocolate and Stanley Tools.

From the days of the construction camp to the beginning of the twentieth century, families such as the Frosts, Woods, Wards and Clarks prospered and built grand homes. This tour will take you past some of their mansions.

The tour also includes the Town's public and commercial buildings from the 1860's to the early 1900's, and some of the earliest stone buildings from the 1830's. We hope you enjoy it!

1. Smiths Falls Library ***81 Beckwith Street North***

This Carnegie library was designed by George Massy Bayly, an Ottawa born architect. The yellow brick building, on a limestone foundation, features a temple like portico composed of four large Doric columns supporting a pediment that bears the date of construction - 1913. The brick quoins along the edges of the structure are evidence of skilled workmanship.

This library has the distinction of being the first that Andrew Carnegie visited in Canada. He declared it to be the handsomest small library he had seen that was built thanks to his grant program.

The building received a heritage designation in 1984.



2. Central School ***79 Beckwith Street North***

Now part of the municipal complex, this stone structure was built in 1871 as a public school by contractor William Willoughby of Almonte. It was financed with railroad funds. The school was enlarged by a rear addition in 1878. The 2½-storey stone structure is well proportioned and incorporates classical elements such as a symmetrical façade, large gable above a central projection, and prominent cornice with frieze adorned with dentils. The words "Public School" and the date "1871" are still present under the central gable.

The rough cut grey-brown limestone of the exterior walls is contrasted by the radiating voussoirs above the windows featuring granite keystones, lug sills, and the heavy quoins.

The bell tower is devoid of the bell which was moved to Chimo School in 1973.

3. Town Hall

77 Beckwith Street North

Built in 1859 to house the municipal offices, the Town Hall was designed by architect Ezekiel Shipman of Brockville, and constructed by contractors John Dodds and William and Francis Ballantyne. A number of additions have been made to the structure over the years, but none interfered with the Classical Revival emphases on balanced proportions of the façade, and straight lines. The gabled central projection includes the words "Town Hall 1859" at the top, and a rectangular transom and sidelights that emphasize the front door.

The rough-cut gray-brown limestone of the exterior walls is contrasted by the use of sandstone in the keystones above the windows, lug sills, the string course between the first and second floor, and the quoins that have both capital and base resembling pilasters supporting the building.

The Town Hall received a heritage designation in 1977.



4. Hose Drying Tower *Church Street East*

An integral part of every fire hall, this hose drying tower was constructed in 1876. Originally the red-brick tower had a mansard roof, with decorative wooden brackets, semi-circular windows and doors topped by arcs of granite, and stood well above all nearby buildings. A large bell that came from Garth & Co. of Montreal in 1894 was used as the fire alarm. It was replaced by a siren in 1950, and the whole tower was lowered by 35 feet in 1972.



5. Former Canadian Bank of Commerce *2 Russell Street East*

Constructed for the Canadian Bank of Commerce in 1913 (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce since 1961), this building was designed by Victor Daniel Horsburgh. A Scottish born architect, he was appointed architect to the Canadian Bank of Commerce in 1910, and over the ensuing years he designed numerous branch offices following the bank's specifications, which typically included, in small communities, accommodations for the manager.

The balanced façade, large roof and generous fenestration are characteristics of Edwardian Classicism. Also typical of the style is the interruption of the brick exterior finish by contrasting stone string courses and lintels that span apertures. Of note is the brick's Flemish bond.





6. Davidson Courtyard 7 Russell Street West

H. A. Davidson established Davidson's Bakery in 1889, and installed the best equipment money could buy. It was continued by Milton F. Davidson and Forrest E. Davidson, and grew to be considered at one time the largest commercial bakery in eastern Ontario. It delivered bread six days a week, and was a major employer in the community. By 1994 it was the oldest continuing business in town.

The original bakery building has undergone a number of expansions that resulted in the present configuration of a central courtyard flanked on three sides by a mixture of commercial and residential units.

The elevator remains as a reminder of days gone by.

7. Hotel Rideau 20 Beckwith Street North

Constructed between 1901 and 1902 by Charles O'Reilly, this 3-storey flat roofed building is a fine example of turn of the century commercial architecture.

One of the most outstanding features of the structure is the wooden cornice along the roofline of the front and side façades along Beckwith and William streets which incorporates carved brackets under the soffit, dentils, and frieze boards with a garland motif, and the words "Hotel Rideau" above the main entrance.

The front originally featured a two-storey portico.

The ground floor has round headed windows, while the rectangular openings on the second and third floors are flanked by brick quoins. The William Street façade features four oriel windows on the second floor. These are surmounted by balconies with wrought iron balustrades.

The Hotel Rideau received a heritage designation in 1986.



8. Washburn Block 2-6 Beckwith Street South

Built as the Garrett's Block, this building has been part of the main street since the mid 1800s. Subsequently known as the Washburn Block or the Farmer's Exchange, it provided a place for farmers to sell goods to forwarders until a public market was opened in 1892.

This structure incorporates Italianate features such as the dichromatic double-tiered brick corbeling along the roof line, quoins, and repetitive cast-iron window heads and consoles on the second and third floor.

The brick treatment of the 2-storey addition along Main Street West attempts to relate to the main block.



9. "Fort Hemlock"
28 Beckwith Street South

According to local folklore, this building, the last commercial structure on the west side of Beckwith Street, sits on the site of a mid-19th century donnybrook between two local groups, where the existence of a large Hemlock tree prevented one group from pushing the shack where the other group took refuge into the river, thereby naming the site Fort Hemlock.

A stone above the central second-storey window bears the words - Fort Hemlock, Erected AD 1868, Rebuilt by Jas Gould, 1877, Us Vincit (Justice Triumphs).



**10. East Mill,
Wood's Mill Complex**
34 Beckwith Street South

The East Mill is part of the Wood's Mill Complex located on the bend of the Rideau River adjacent to the Rideau Canal. The complex played a key role in the industrial development of the Smiths Falls area.

Alexander Wood, partner in Frost & Wood, purchased Ward Island and mills from Abel Russell Ward in 1880, and constructed this building ten years later. Originally flat roofed, the unornamented exterior walls of this large, four-storey structure are of contrasting dark and light limestone from Beckwith Township, to harmonize with the Town Hall at the top of Beckwith Street. A smaller, two-storey office wing abuts the south façade.

The mansard roof was added, and the building was altered to accommodate changes in milling technology and access requirement. During the 1950s the East Mill was used for offices and apartments. In 1981 the Canadian Parks Service purchased the run-down property, and restored the East Mill building.

This property received a heritage designation in 1979.



11. The Old Rideau Theatre
1 Chambers Street East

This flat iron shaped building was constructed in 1912. The Rideau Theatre was equipped with a motion picture screen and a full stage. The projection room was located in the narrow end at the corner of Chambers and Beckwith streets.

Renamed the Capital Theatre in 1929, it replaced the Opera House for live productions, and operated until the late 1940's.

The two-storey, concrete-block building featured a car-port style portico that has since been removed. The concrete blocks on the front have been stuccoed, but are still visible in the rear.





12. Clark Building
1 Beckwith Street South

The Clark Block, or Clark's Granite Block, was built by Alexander Clark for his hardware store in 1871. His son James Clark took over the business four years later.

Reflecting the fashionable French Second Empire style of the times, the 2-storey limestone and sandstone building incorporates the style's most distinguishing element - a mansard roof. The transom above the front door in the corner entrance, quoins, cornice, and window treatment give the building a classical appearance.

The brick annex to the east was added in 1889.

13. Royal Canadian Legion Branch 95
7 Main Street East

This residence, one of the finest in the downtown, was built for Alexander Clark upon his move to Smiths Falls in 1840. He subsequently founded his commercial business on the corner of Main and Beckwith. (See previous stop).

When built, the two-storey yellow brick house was "40 x 45 feet, exclusive of the kitchen and offices in the rear" and stood facing Main Street "on plat of ground 120 feet square, tastily laid out in lawns and gardens, and ornamented with shade and fruit trees, flowers, vines and shrubbery."*

Renovated and altered over the years, the building has been used by a number of local groups.

*"Town of Smith's Falls: History of One of the Latter-Day Railway Centres", The Toronto Mail, Saturday, March 5, 1887, page 7.



14. Formerly the "Last Chance" Hotel
32 Main Street East

This stone structure was built in the 1840s for Patrick Tierney and served as his residence and store. About ten years later, the James Burrows family operated a hotel in the building. It was leased to Robert Robertson between 1858 and 1859, who called it the Burrows Hotel. In the 1880s it was known as the Doyle's Hotel but nicknamed the "Last Chance" hotel. The round-headed window on the Market Street façade was originally a door with a fanlight, and the rooms on the upper floor were accessed by an outside staircase.

Mr. J.J. March purchased the property in 1906 and converted the hotel into a residence and funeral home until it was purchased by G. Ray Lannin in 1957. The adjacent new funeral home was erected six years later.



15. 30 Chambers Street

This 2-storey structure is purported to be the oldest stone building in Smiths Falls, and presumed to have been built in the 1830s. Its sides are defined by extension of the walls above roof level and finials, and quoins along the wall edges. The front doors are set above street level.

Used as a shop and residence by Alexander Williamson, a British tailor, it became the Pig's Ear Tavern that provided rooms on the upper level. William Edgar from Kitley sold stoves here in the 1850s, and by 1863 Frost & Wood used it as a store in which they accepted produce from farmers in exchange for their manufactured goods.

16. 57 Chambers Street

This brown sandstone residence was built for Abel Russell Ward, one of the first settlers of this area, in the 1830s. The 2½-storey house incorporated Neo-Classical elements such as a balanced façade, smooth masonry surfaces, a low-pitched gable roof, dentil mouldings, and returned eaves. The ornate brick chimneys emphasized the symmetry of the original structure.

The main entranceway has been altered and now features a wood portico with four Ionian columns and two Ionian pilasters. A leaded glass rectangular transom and sidelights accentuate the centre door.

Following Ward's death, the house was purchased by Charles B. Frost, co-owner of Frost & Wood, and underwent a number of additions such as the bay window with its bracketed cornices on the west side.



17. Frost Mansion Row *65 and 69 Chambers Street*

Both of these Edwardian mansions were built in 1905 for members of the Frost family, children of Ebenezer Frost, the founder of Frost and Wood, a farm equipment company which was located where the Giant Tiger store is now. These homes are fine examples of the American shingle style of architecture, featuring irregular rooflines with uniform covering of shingles across the gables and open verandas highlighted with classic pillars.

65 Chambers was built for Edwin J Frost, while 69 Chambers was built for Nellie Frost and her husband George F McKimm. McKimm was a prominent citizen in his own right as founder and editor of The Rideau Record, the local newspaper which later became known as The Record News.

18. The Craine House
2 Bay Street North

A fine example of local early stone structures, this house was built in the 1850s by James Rose. It served as the home of the Craine family from the late 1800s till 1937. Agnes Craine (1861-1937), a native of Smiths Falls, was one of Canada's pioneer women in medicine. After graduating from the Kingston Women's Medical College in 1888, she set up a medical practice, while her brother set up law offices in this large home they shared with their parents.

The building received a heritage designation in 1974.



19. 39 Russell Street East

Replacing an earlier structure on the site, this 2-storey brick veneer building was constructed in 1887 by Charles Cross, a carpenter, carriage maker, machine sales agent, and sometime butcher. Incorporating many features of the Italianate Villa style, inspired by the vernacular architecture of the Italian countryside, this house features a central square tower, hip roofs, prominent decorative brackets under wide eaves and a Palladian and round-headed windows. The original building featured a keyhole shaped veranda on the east side.

For fifty years, from 1901 to 1956, this property was home and surgery for four successive doctors. Note the ball on the pole in the old photo, which signifies a doctor's office. Each owner made changes to the building, including the creation of a separate entrance to the doctor's office either at the front or side, the removal of the veranda, and the addition of a porch (now at the rear). It is now a single residence.

[The original of this photo is held by the Heritage House Museum.]

20. Trinity United Church
41 Market Street North

Dedicated in February 1886, the church building proved too small to house the congregation due to the increase of the Smiths Falls population during that decade. The 1896 addition doubled the size of the structure. Master craftsmanship is visible in the brick work of the tapered central tower, and decorative details below the gables.



21. Old Post Office
30 Russell Street East

This building was designed by Thomas Fuller, chief architect to the Dominion of Canada from 1881 to 1886, in the Romanesque Revival style, typified by heavy masonry, steep roofs and wide semi-circular arch openings.

Constructed in 1894 using local red-brown sandstone on a foundation of Beckwith Township limestone, with red sandstone trim from New Brunswick, the building consisted of a 2½-storey structure with a single storey wing at the north end. The first floor was the Post Office, the second was used by the Customs Office, while the top level served as accommodations for the caretaker.

The 1914 addition at the rear filled in the corner of the courtyard and raised the wing to two storeys. The clock tower was added a year later.

After the closure of the Post Office in 1964, the building served a variety of functions and received a heritage designation in 1978.



My favourite stop was...

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Welcome Centre
77 Beckwith St. N.
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K7A 2B8