

Elmira Walking & Wheeling Tour Route 2

Note: Most of the buildings on this tour are privately owned; please respect the rights of the owners.

1. 38 Hampton Street West



The Regency style of this house is unusual in Elmira. The style is characterized by a square, 1-1/2 stories, and low hip roof which gives the house a cottage-like appearance. The Regency style was developed during the Regency of King George IV (1811-1820), but was popular in Canada in the mid-nineteenth century. Notice the gable with the vaulted ceiling in the front roof, a gable known as a nun's coif. These gables, as well as the slightly bell-cast shape of the roof, were decorative Regency features.

The first story veranda incorporated as an integral part of the roofline was an important contribution of the Regency style. Many Regency verandas were trimmed with geometric latticework, or Treillage, but the trim on this house is relatively simple. Like the Georgian style, the Regency house has a central doorway and symmetrically placed windows; however, the Regency doorway is smaller and the windows larger than in the Georgian. The pressed glass in the upper panes in this house give additional importance to these windows. The overall effect of these Regency features is romantic and sweet—that of a cottage designed to look out on a garden—in contrast to the solid and more formal appearance of the Georgian house.



2. 36 Hampton Street West



At the turn of the twentieth century this Italianate house was the Methodist parsonage. At that time a veranda trimmed with spoolwork under the eaves extended across the front of the house. The garage in back was once a two-story barn.

The Wesleyan pioneer preacher Charles Fish worked in the area in 1848, and the small group of Methodists used the first log school (located on the present site of the Foundry

apartments on E. Church Street) as a meeting place. In 1855 a small brick church was built on Church Street—thus the street got its name. Around 1875 the Methodists built a larger brick church in the simple Upper Canada Gothic style on Arthur Street N.

3. 30 Hampton Street West (photos on next page)

Notice the beautiful oval window on the east wall of this house set in decorative brickwork. The stained-glass window is concave and set in frame of decorative brickwork. Such fine craftsmanship expresses the individual taste of the builder.



Exterior

Interior

4. 26 Hampton Street West

Notice the rounded veranda—a variation on the bandshell porch—on this early 1900’s Queen Anne Revival house. Found on several Elmira houses of the period, this style porch softens the line of the house and does not block light. The variety of window shapes (notice the round stained-glass window on the first story), the decorative drip mouldings and the stained glass in the upper portion of the windows are characteristic Queen Anne features. The spoolwork under the roofline is also a common feature of the local Queen Anne house.



5. 17 Walker Street



Look across Wyatt Street to the small frame house on the corner. This house stood on the site of the Clock Tower. The house was moved by draft horses in 1912 when the Clock Tower was built. The owner at the time, Aaron Hoffer, was a former reeve and operated a felt bootee

factory in Elmira. The present owners bought the house from a newspaper man who worked for the *Elmira Signet*.

6. St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church, 60 Arthur Street South

The Lutheran congregation was organized in 1850. The corner lot was purchased for 11 pounds and five shillings, and a log building was constructed on the site of the present church. In 1869 a yellow brick church in the Upper Canada Gothic style was built (shown in the 1903 photo on the left). The plot of land at the rear of this church was used as a burial ground from 1850 to 1884. In 1875 a pipe organ built by George Vogt of Elmira, an innkeeper and a noted organ builder, was installed in the church. This organ, transferred to the new building and rebuilt and enlarged in 1951. It was not replaced until 1975.



1869 church



Present church

The present church was built in 1914-15. The interior was renovated in 1954 and the new wing at the back added in 1963. Like many Ontario churches, St. James is a mixture of styles and thus hard to classify. The pointed-arch windows and doors as well as the wooden tracery on some of the windows are in the Gothic Revival style popular in church architecture. But the asymmetrical design of the two towers—the bell tower is square

while the shorter tower is octagonal with a battlement top—suggests Italianate influence. The focal point of each flank wall is a broad round-headed window set under a central gable. This window shape is Italianate, while the wooden tracer in the upper portion is Gothic.

Notable in the interior of the church is the ornate Gothic altarpiece and the floral motif of the stained glass.

7. 75 Arthur Street South

Cross Arthur Street and walk south to No. 75. This is the Wylie House, built in 1860, it is one of the oldest structures in Elmira. Its first owner, August Blatz, was a shoemaker who had immigrated from Germany. Like many craftsmen of his day, he had his workshop next to his home—where the front left side of the building to the house is now. The Wylies were relatives of Blatz. This 1-1/2 story house of Georgian proportions has changed over the years, but the clapboard exterior, two interior doors and the plank flooring remain from the original house. The 6-pane over 6-pane windows on the side of the house are original. The shutters which were added by the Wylie family in the 1970's or 80's, are over 140 years old. They were taken from a Wylie family home in Floradale.



The porch is old and may be original. Note the vaulted roof, the delicate vergeboard, and post lifts on the turned pillars. The rear addition, which nicely echoes the simple style of the original house, was constructed in 1938, while the dormers are likely a later addition. An attractive and unusual feature of the house is the simple but decorative vergeboard trimming the front and sides of the house just below the eaves.

8. The Clock Tower, 69 Arthur Street South



Formerly the Township Hall, this building was constructed in 1912 as the post office with customs office on the second floor and an armoury in the rear portion. The township took over the building in 1966 when the new post office was built. The style of the original portion of the building defies easy classification, but the vernacular combination of features from several styles is very like many other public buildings of this period in many small Ontario towns. Perhaps “Ontario Post Office Style” would be a suitable label for these buildings.

The impulse behind such buildings is to achieve the imposing and thus trustworthy appearance required of public buildings at the time—but to do so on a relatively modest budget. Stone would be the obvious choice of building material for an imposing and solid look, but in this area the cost of

stone would have been prohibitive. So the structure is of the familiar red brick trimmed with a healthy quantity of stone in the doorway surrounds, the rusticated sills and the keystones over every window and door. The offset square tower, and Italianate feature, lends an additional air of importance to the building. The slightly bell-cast shape of the hip roof and tower roof is another feature which is decorative rather than functional, and the combination of both flat-topped (first story) and round-headed windows (second story) is found in both Italianate and Classic Revival buildings.

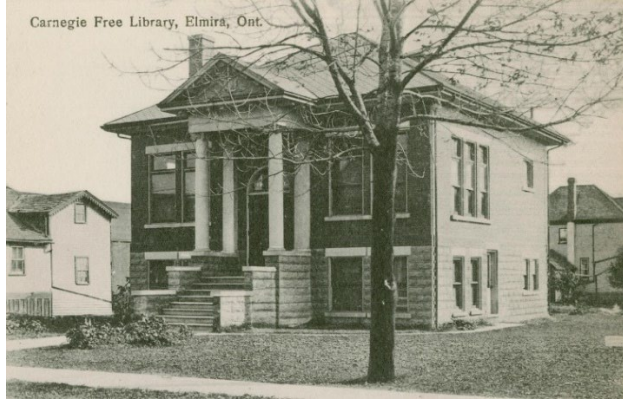
Features from the Classical style of architecture also play an important role here, as in many old public buildings. The prominent keystone over the windows and doors has its roots in the Classical style, as do the gables (triangle shapes) breaking the eaves line. The segmented stone doorway surrounds with heavy lintels (the wide band at the top of the door) suggest the Classical style, but the relative simplicity of the square cut masonry gives these doorways a modern streamlined flavour.

Look for 2 walled in doorways: a second entrance left front and in the rear portion of the original building, which led to armoury. Photos of the original building show an interesting semi-circular balcony protruding from the second story where the 1985 addition is now. The balcony was part of an apartment in which the building custodian lived.

9. Elmira Library, 65 Arthur Street South (photos on next page)

The land for the Elmira library was donated in 1912 by August Kimmel, a founder of the Elmira Felt Co. and a leading Waterloo County industrialist. A board and batten shop which served as Henry Hahn’s cooperage then stood on the corner site. Also on the site was the Henry Hahn house that stands at Wyatt and Memorial Streets directly behind the library. From the 1903 Pig Fair Day photo above, this house is possibly the brick one partially behind the tree on the right.

Like many small towns in North America, Elmira obtained from Andrew Carnegie for the library building. The 1912 portion of the building fulfills Mr. Carnegie’s requirement of a functional rather than a pretentious building. He favoured one-story libraries with plain ornamentation for small communities.



1912 Library



Arthur St. S., 1903 Pig Fair Day

The only ornamental work is a Romanesque arch and semi-circular transom light over what was then the main entrance, with a small classically-styled portico consisting of a triangular pediment with dentils and Ionic columns.



During the winter of 1977-78, an addition was added to the south and east sides of the 1912 building which doubled the area of the library. The new addition was sympathetically designed to reinforce the original architectural features. The addition was set back from the front façade, leaving the focus on the original building, and the rounded windows echo the semi-circular arch over the original main entrance.

Continue along Wyatt Street East. Note the site of the Elmira rink and the lawn bowling club, demolished in 1939, where the Beer Store stands now.

10. 17 and 19 Wyatt Street East

These twin houses were built by the well-known local mason, Charles Wilken, who also did the masonry on the Great West Felt Co. at the north end of Elmira. He built No. 19 for himself about 1907 and then built No. 17 shortly thereafter for his wife's sister who wanted an identical house. One difference between the original buildings was in the foundation blocks; Charles' son Walter relates that the sister-in-law and her husband spent evenings through the winter making the blocks for No. 17 by hand.



The geometric latticework or treillage (a Regency feature) over the verandas is a special feature of these houses. The turned posts are also original, and the bottom railing of the upper veranda on No. 17 is probably original while that of No. 19 has been replaced. Notice also the delicate scrollwork at the top of the Italianate round-headed windows.

11. 26 Wyatt St East, former site of St. Teresa of Avila Church



This former church was built in 1889 to serve the Roman Catholic population. It replaced the small frame church, built in 1851, on the site of the Catholic cemetery north of Elmira. Some of the wood from the frame church was used in the construction of the present building. The round-headed windows and door give the building an Italianate flavour, but the dominant theme here is simplicity. Lacking a tower or steeple, the decorative features are the arcading between the plain pilasters set at intervals along the flank walls, the corbelled brick

embellishing the cornice, the extended drip mouldings linking the windows, and the bulls-eye window at the front. Originally, the church extended the length of four windows only, but in 1916 an addition was made to the rear of the nave. This addition is hardly noticeable because care was taken to match the colour of the brick and the architectural features of the original building.

12. 19 Centre Street

Built in the 1880's, this house is a vernacular mixture of styles often found in the local architecture. The irregular floor plan and the roofline of the house are Queen Anne Revival, while the narrow, paired round-headed windows, ornated eaves bracketing, and the double doors are Italianate features. The yellow brick accenting at the corners and over the windows adds another decorative vernacular touch to the house.

In 1903 this was the home of George Auman, reeve and member of the Woolwich Township Council for six years. He was a prosperous livestock dealer.



13. 17 Centre Street

The octagonal turret extending from the two-story bay at the centre front of this house is a distinctive feature of some Queen Anne Revival houses. Notice that the veranda follows the octagonal shape of the turret. Originally, five full-length windows offered a view from the outward-facing sides at the top of the turret, and there were no rails on the veranda.



The house was built for L. A. Jeanneret, a local jewelry store owner and real estate entrepreneur. He was a member of the Elmira Board of Trade in 1903.

14. 18 and 20 Centre Street



18



20

These similar houses are fine examples of the local variety of Italianate architecture. Again, the ornate frieze, paired eaves brackets and the paired round-headed windows are typical. It is interesting to see how differently two such fundamentally similar houses have evolved.

The upper porch of No. 18 retains the original wrought-iron cresting, which was also a common feature of the Second Empire style. This house originally had a wraparound porch like the one on No. 20. The original posts and brackets remain on the present porch.

The wraparound porch on No. 20 is a later addition. The original porch was like the present one on No. 18. The posts and brackets on the new porch are replicas of those on the original porch, but the spooled balusters were added with the new porch, giving it a somewhat colonial look. Typically Italianate, the round-headed double doors are original.

No. 18 was built in the late 1880's by William M. Behrens, a salesman in the general store of Messrs. Weber and Erb. He was treasurer of the Elmira Musical Society for many years and an officer of the Elmira Public Library.

15. 10 Centre Street



This house built in the Ontario House style in the 1870's, was the home of John Ratz, Elmira's first reeve. Among the oldest remaining homes in Elmira, this one has several notable features. The brickwork on this house, with the inset panel design on each wall, is more sophisticated than one usually finds in a house of this style. Notice too the graceful wooden tracery in the gothic windows at the front and south side.

In 1869 John Ratz and his brother Jacob bought up all the stock in the Elmira Flouring Mills, one of the oldest industries in Elmira. John Ratz became sole proprietor in 1875, and the firm continued under his three sons after his death in 1889. In 1904, John's son Simon built the neighbouring Queen Anne Revival style house at 20 Mill Street.

16. St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Mill and Centre Streets

The present St. Paul's building is the third used by the congregation in its 165-year history. Originally, the congregation met in a church behind the Foundry residence on Church Street. Then a church was built beside the present location.



On January 2, 1889, the congregation decided that the current building was no longer adequate, and the cornerstone of the present church was laid in June of 1889. The cost of the building was \$4,920.49, with all but \$600 being paid by the day of dedication in November, 1889. The building is a slightly smaller version of a plan drawn by W. H. Schmalz for St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Kitchener. The style is Upper Canada vernacular Gothic (a popular church style described in MacRae and



Adamson's *Hallowed Walls*), with pointed-arch windows and doors emphasized by drip mouldings which connect the windows. The bays of the nave are defined by pilasters set at intervals along the flank walls and decorative brick at the cornice. The 125-foot square-based tower is topped by an octagonal spire,

and small pinnacles on the corners of the church add to the vertical upward-pointing effect typical of the Gothic style.

The parish hall was added in the early 1960's and new front and side entrances echoing the style of the original building were added in 1982. The original building had coloured glass windows during the years of World War I. Three lovely stained-glass windows in the chancel have also been removed and the openings filled in. However, the special Bullas glass window depicting Luther inside the front entrance is an original window.

Hidden beneath the ceiling tile in the nave and chancel of the church is a hand-painted ceiling reputed to have been done by a traveling artist. A gold border in the chancel is all that remains of this work.

17. 22 Duke Street



Turn right off Mill Street to Duke Street. The well-preserved Queen Anne Revival house at 22 Duke Street was built around 1900 for Oscar Ruppel who was in the hardware business with the Weichels. The geometric latticework, brackets and spoolwork under the porch eaves is all original. Notice the irregular floor plan, the variety of window shapes and the lovely stained glass typical of the style. The 1903 photo shows a belvedere and widow's walk at the top of the house and finials on the gables.

18. 24 Duke Street

At the beginning of the 20th century, this Queen Anne revival house was one of the most elegant in Elmira. It was the home of John S. Weichel whose father started a hardware store that operated for many decades. Incorporating some of the more fanciful features of the Queen Anne style, the house originally had a large two-story veranda with double and triple rounded pillars, and a small balcony extended in front of the turreted gable. Some of the former stylishness of the original house is still evident in its numerous irregular angles and the fanciful variety of gable and window shapes. For example, notice the Palladian windows in the attic gables.



This heritage walking and wheeling tour was updated by members of the Woolwich Township Heritage Committee in Summer, 2024, from the compilation completed by Susan Bryant and Bertha Thompson in December, 1985. Additional work was done by Art Gorman in 1989. We thank Stacy Willingham, Archivist at the Waterloo Regional Archives, for her significant assistance.



Heritage Day 2024 Elmira Walking Tour



Legend

▶ Heritage Walking Tour Routes

