

A Short Walking Tour of

# **The Yates Street Heritage District**

produced by:

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The Yates Street residential district was developed in the late 1800's and early 1900's along the banks of the Twelve Mile Creek on land originally owned by the Hon. William Hamilton Merritt. Soon after he moved to St. Catharines, Merritt began building a mill along the shores of the creek. It was there that he discovered an artesian well, mineral water flowing from a deep cavity in the earth. This water could be boiled leaving behind salt residue, a valuable commodity at the time. In later years, it was discovered that drinking or bathing in the mineral water could cure a variety of ailments. This prompted the development of two spa resorts on Yates Street, the Stephenson House and Springbank Hotel, allowing invalids and vacationers from far and wide to test the healing powers of the mineral waters.

In the early to mid 1800's, many mills were constructed along the Twelve Mile Creek, all of which needed a reliable source of water. As well, the Erie Canal was being designed in the United States, a waterway that would divert vessels away from their businesses in Upper Canada. Hoping to solve both of these problems, Merritt formed the Welland Canal Company in 1824. The Company was made up of many investors, one of whom was John B Yates, an entrepreneur from the United States. Yates Street was named in his honour. The Canal was finally finished in 1829, bringing vessels through the Twelve Mile Creek on their way to the Great Lakes beyond.

In the following years, many important businesses made their home on the banks of the Welland Canal. These included the Taylor and Bate Brewery, Shickluna Shipyards, and St. Catharines Wheel Works. Yates Street was located very close to the new businesses so many of the mill owners and The bridge was named for William Bartlett Burgoyne, owner of the St. Catharines Standard and mayor of St. Catharines in 1903, 1916, and 1917. Many civic improvements were introduced while he was mayor including better street lights, an extended sewer system, and concrete sidewalks.

managers chose to reside there. They were all very wealthy men and therefore wanted large, elegant homes. A lot of them were constructed in elaborate styles such as Georgian and Tudor which are rarely seen in other parts of the city due to the large size and elaborate detailing required. Over the years the home owners have wisely saved many of the grown trees on their property, creating the beautiful tree lined streetscape we see today. Although the mills and other business ceased operation after a new route was chosen for the canal, the elegant residences remain creating a beautiful neighbourhood.

Our tour starts in Memorial Park, a newly created park on land that once contained some very prestigious buildings. A map for the tour can be found at the back of this booklet.

1. Memorial Park was created after the construction of the Burgoyne Bridge. It is a small park focused around the large cenotaph commemorating soldiers who died in World War 1, World War 11, and the Korean War.

2. Burgoyne Bridge was constructed in 1914 to improve transportation links in the city. The dashed lines on your map indicate the approximate location of the streets before the bridge was built. Unfortunately, the location chosen for the bridge forced several important buildings to be destroyed. One of these was the residence Dr. Theophilus Mack, who founded the Springbank Hotel (62-66 Yates Street), as well as the General and Marine Hospital on Cherry Street and a training school for nurses. Known as "Sunnyside", the Mack residence contained twenty-two rooms.

3. 12 Yates Street was constructed in 1860 for the Hon. William Hamilton Merritt. In addition to his milling operations and involvement in the Welland Canal, Merritt was the driving force behind the construction of the Welland Railway and the

suspension bridge over the Niagara River. He also served St. Catharines in both the legislature of Upper Canada and the cabinet of the United Canadas. After Merritt's death in 1862, his son, Jedediah P. Merritt, lived here. J.P. Merritt held the position of postmaster in St. Catharines for almost twenty years. Like his father, he owned extensive property, this time in Lincoln and Welland Counties. The younger Mr. Merritt had a great interest in history and wrote a biography of his father.

Known as "Oak Hill", Merritt's house was built in the Italianate style as shown by its hipped roof, stucco finish, bracketed eaves line, and round headed windows. The first floor windows are partially covered by wrought iron railings. Classical details were added in small pediments over the first floor windows and the large entrance portico, also with a pediment. The original gate posts along Yates Street and the brick coach house to the rear of the building can still be found. In 1938 the building was purchased by Silver Spire Broadcasting Co. for use as a radio station. It now houses the C.K.T.B. Radio (97.7 FM), owned by Niagara District Broadcasting Co. Ltd.

4. Oakhill Park was originally the extensive terraced gardens of the Merritt residence, "Oak Hill." The Merritt family donated the land to the city for use as a park in 1923. Over the years the park has fallen into disrepair. However, the original stone fence and terrace walls are still in existence. From the garden, Mrs. Merritt could look down the hill to the Welland Canal and the many mills and other businesses that were located there. At the base of the hill was the large Taylor and Bate Brewery along with several smaller mills, some of which were owned by her husband. On the other side of the Canal was the famous Shickluna Shipyards, the largest shipbuilding operation in Canada during the mid-1800's.

5. 20 Yates Street was built in 1904 in the Georgian style. Georgian features include the long facade with setback wings, hipped roof, end chimneys, and entrance portico.

6. 23 Yates Street is a Neo-Tudor style home built in 1923. Common features of this style used on this house include several types of exterior finishes in shades of brown (this house has shingling, stucco, and half-timbering); multiple paned windows with heavy sills and lintels; exposed beams, and shaped shingles covering the high-pitched gable roof.

You will now turn right onto Trafalgar Street. The name of this street commemorates the British Naval Victory over French and Spanish fleets in 1805 at Cape Trafalgar, near Gibraltar.

7. 15 Trafalgar Street has been owned by several important men over the years. It was originally constructed in 1870 for Calvin Brown, who would later become the first Mayor of St. Catharines. Four years later, Brown sold the house to James Taylor of the Taylor and Bate Brewery. Taylor sold the house to William Bartlett Burgoyne in 1890.

The architect of this house was mainly influenced by Classic Revival architecture as seen in the elaborate mouldings around the door (called an entablature), rectangular windows with thick frames and shutters, and gabled entrance projection.

8. 14 Trafalgar Street looks to be a very old house at first glance but was actually constructed in 1990. The owners chose a historical design to reflect the nature of their new neighbourhood. It has a Classical Revival design with a gabled roof, prominent entablature, and rectangular windows with heavy sills in a regular arrangement. The gable ends are topped by low walls along the roof line, called parapets.

**9.** 24 Yates Street has many of the same architectural features as 14 Trafalgar but was built almost 150 years earlier. The owner at the time of its construction, Dr. William Chace, was the proprietor of the Stephenson Hotel, a popular spa resort located further down Yates Street. The Chace family, however, only lived here for a few years before selling to John Woodward in 1847.

**10.** 27 Yates Street was originally owned by Henry N. Bate, of the Taylor & Bate Brewery. The house remained in the Bate family from the time of its construction in 1912 until 1954. The architectural forms used on the house indicate that the builder was influenced by Georgian architecture. Features of this style include the hipped roof with inset chimneys, dormer windows, and projecting front entrance porch.

**11.** 26 Yates Street was built in 1937 for Mr. Peter Grammar, owner of a popular cafe on St. Paul Street called Diana Sweets. It was built in the Neo-Classical style as shown by the symmetrical facade, plain eaves, and entrance portico.

**12.** 29 Yates Street was constructed in 1854 for Thomas B. Bate, also of the Thomas & Bate Brewing Company. It was owned by the Bate family until 1935 when it was purchased by Henry T. Taylor, a descendant of Bate's partner James Taylor. The house has contained several apartments since that time. It was built in the Classic Revival style as shown by its detailed eaves line and rectangular windows with shutters. The entrance portico, however, is distinctly Italianate, projecting from the facade of the building. It has been enclosed recently with curved doors matching the arched opening.

**13.** 28 Yates Street was constructed in 1938 with many interesting architectural features. The roof line is very complicated consisting of a central cross gabled section with

several dormers and a hipped roof on the attached tower. The projecting entrance portico displays a unique bellcast roof. The most interesting feature is the covered driveway on the side of the building under two additional storeys of the house.

**14.** 29 ½ Yates Street has had many owners over the years including members of the Bate family. The architect created a unique interpretation of the Queen Anne Revival style in this house. Queen Anne characteristics include the steep, irregular hipped roof, numerous bay windows and rounded tower at the north-east corner. The porch is a newer addition and is covered in modern stone.

**15.** 30 Yates Street was once the home of Henry J. Taylor, also of the Taylor and Bate Brewery. Built in 1910, the house is a good example of a Georgian Style home with its wide facade, hipped roof with dormers, classically detailed entrance portico, and rectangular windows with operating shutters..

**16.** 31 Yates Street is the oldest building in the area, built around 1840. It was constructed in a smaller version of the Georgian style with a hipped roof and four chimneys, rectangular windows with shutters, and classic entablature.

**17.** 33 Yates Street was originally part of a four unit row house which extended along Yates to the west (now 35 Yates). Constructed around 1870, this remaining unit is a good example of Classic Revival architecture with its prominent entablature, rectangular windows in a regular arrangement and gabled roof with brackets and frieze.

**18.** 35 Yates Street was built in 1928 for Arthur Bate by prominent local architects Arthur Nicholson and Robert Macbeth. It remained in the Bate family until 1954 when it was sold to the present owners. It is a very distinct house

displaying Spanish Colonial influences. These include its clay tiled roof and very irregular window placement.

19. 37 Yates Street was originally owned by Amos McComb, proprietor of Peninsula Press and remained in the McComb name until 1971. Built in 1906, the house has a unique gambrel roof, a large projecting dormer and inset porch. The two different roof pitches have been defined by contrasting asphalt shingles.

20. Former site of the Stephenson House Hotel - The Stephenson house was one of two spa hotels in the Yates Street area. It was founded by Dr. William Chace, who originally discovered the healing powers of the mineral waters. Chace, however, was unable to build a hotel resort until he sold his land to E.W. Stephenson. The Stephenson House Hotel finally opened in 1865, attracting invalids and vacationers from all over eastern North America who believed that the mineral waters could cure a variety of ailments. In the mid 1890's, fewer and fewer visitors were coming to the spas, and the hotel closed. DeMill Ladies College, Ridley College, and Puccini Macaroni occupied the building successively until it was demolished in 1933.

You will now turn right onto Norris Place. Originally called Ann Street, Norris Place was named for Captain James Norris, who resided at no. 9.

21. 18 Norris Place was constructed in 1860 for James Taylor, founder of the Taylor and Bate Brewery. Since the time of initial construction, an addition has been added creating two architecturally distinct sections. The main section has a gable roof with two gabled projections while the addition is topped by a mansard roof. The second story windows on the main section have triangular tops, mimicking the gable edge.

22. 9 Norris Place was home to Captain James Norris; a sea captain, businessman, former Mayor of St.Catharines, and Member of Parliament. Norris also donated extensively to

the local hospital. The house remained in the Norris family for over one hundred years, until 1977.

Built sometime before 1852, the house was designed in the Classical Revival style as shown by its elaborately trimmed eaves, rectangular windows with heavy sills and lintels and gabled roof. Queen Anne details have been added including the rounded verandah that wraps around the west side of the house and elaborately trimmed bay window to the east. The Norris coach step can still be found to the front of the building near the street.

23. 10 Norris Place was purchased two years after its 1876 construction by Captain James Norris for his daughter, Annie. She was married to Henry A. King, manager of the Norris Flour Mills and mayor of St.Catharines from 1885-1886. The house is a good example of an Italianate style residence with a hipped roof, round headed windows and verandahs on both storeys.

24. 7 Norris Place was constructed in 1854 for W. Greenwood, proprietor of a carriage making business. The house remained in the Greenwood family until 1904 when it was sold to the Evans family, who have owned it since that time. The house has a unique design, dominated by a wide verandah wrapping around the side of the house. The verandah has been painted in a contrasting colour, distinguishing it from the rest of the house. The "parapet" walls lining the ends of the gable roof are also unique features as is the wrought iron fence with concrete posts.

25. 105-111 Ontario Street is a set of two row houses constructed separately sometime before 1875. They were built in the Neo-Classical style with a gabled roof and plain eaves, regularly placed rectangular windows with shutters, and central entrances.

**26.** 103 Ontario Street is the St.Thomas Church Rectory. Built on land donated by Col. Leonard, the building was designed by Robert Macbeth, in the Neo-Tudor style.

**27.** 99 Ontario Street is St.Thomas Anglican Church. The church was designed by architect M.C. Beebe of Buffalo in the Richardson Romanesque style and built between 1877 and 1879. This style was typified by arched openings, rough stone exterior, trim in contrasting stone, and heavy, horizontal structure.

**28.** 113-115 Ontario Street is a double house constructed in 1865 in the Italianate style. Italianate features include the hipped roof, rectangular plan, and front verandas. Notice the differences between the two separate units.

**29.** 125 Ontario Street was built and owned by Newman Brothers Contractors, a prestigious firm that built many of the homes in the Yates Street Area. Constructed in 1905, this house is a good example of the Queen Anne Revival Style. Queen Anne characteristics include the irregular plan and roof line, the wide curved porch wrapping around the side of the building, and several types of exterior finishes. Before this house was built, the property was owned by Elias Smith Adams, mayor of St.Catharines from 1852 until 1859 and brother-in-law of W.H. Merritt.

**30.** 127 & 129 Ontario Street is an interesting double house constructed in 1874. The architect chose elements from all of the most popular architectural styles to create a unique design. The entrance mouldings are distinctly Classical with projecting cornice, frieze and columns. Additional classical features include the dormer windows, parapet along the roofline, and gabled projections. The gingerbread moulding along the gable edges, however, has been taken from Gothic Revival architecture. The roof style, called mansard, is a common feature of the French Regime

Style. The windows have curved tops, typical of the Italianate Style.

You will now turn left onto College Street. This street was named for Ridley College, a prestigious private high school, which occupied several different buildings in the Yates Street area before moving to its present location on the opposite bank of the Twelve Mile Creek.

**31.** 2a College Street is a good example of an Italianate home. Features of this style include the hipped roof, wide front verandah, dormer window, and symmetrical facade. Unfortunately, large trees obscure many of the architectural features.

**32.** 4 College Street was owned by the Gilmore family of Gilmore and Company, automobiles, baby carriages, bicycles, phonographs and sporting goods at the time of its construction in 1910. It was built in the Classical Revival Style as shown by its' front gable plan, rectangular windows with heavy lintels and sills, and classically detailed porch. A second storey addition was added at a later date.

**33.** 7-9 College Street is a unique semi detached house built in 1911. The two units look like separate houses but are attached by a connecting section setback from the building facades.

**34.** 10 College Street was built in 1900 on lands once owned by Ridley College. The design shows many characteristics of the Shingle Style, an American interpretation of the Queen Anne Revival style. Common features of this style include the numerous projecting window sections, wood shingle exterior, and simplified ornamental trim.

35. 75 Yates Street was built in 1941 on land that was once home to Col. Reuben Leonard. The Colonel was a very prosperous engineer involved in the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. He chaired the National Transcontinental Railway Commission, founded the Royal Institute of International Affairs and served on many boards including those for local hospitals and the Art Gallery of Ontario. The stone walls and gate opening enclosing the Leonard Residence are still visible at the end of College Street.

The existing house was built for William H. Gale, president of Stokes Seeds, a downtown business that still operates today.

Like many houses in the Yates Street area, this house was designed in the Neo-Tudor style.

36. 68 Yates Street is an interesting Queen Anne Revival style home built in 1912. Queen Anne characteristics included on this home include the irregular plan and roof line and textured stucco finish. Bay windows span both storeys, creating a tower-like effect.

37. 62-66 Yates Street was once part of the Springbank Hotel, reputedly the laundry. Like the Stephenson House, the Springbank Hotel was an elegant spa resort taking advantage of the mineral springs on the banks of the Twelve Mile Creek.

Founded by Dr. Theophilus Mack, the hotel opened in 1865 and immediately attracted tourists and invalids from across the continent. In addition to the spa facilities, the Springbank had fine dining, elegant rooms, and entertainment for the prestigious guests. Guests came from far and wide, usually during the months of May to November. Many became regular customers, returning year after year. During the off-season, from December to April, the spa facilities were available to local residents.

By the late 1800's, spa resorts were no longer fashionable vacation destinations as improved railroad transportation links made other options possible. When the Springbank closed in

1889, the building became the first home of Ridley College. The structure you see today is the only part of the building remaining after a fire destroyed the old hotel in 1903. It was extensively renovated in 1980 and bears little resemblance to the original structure. For many years, it was owned by the Newman Bros. General Contractors and members of the Newman family.

38. 60 Yates Street was originally owned by James Taylor, who probably rented it out to workers at the Brewery. Built in 1875, the house was designed in the Classic Revival style as shown by its regularly placed rectangular windows and gabled roof with thick cornice and returned eaves.

39. 59 Yates Street was once owned by William Burgoyne, son of William B. Burgoyne, owner of the St.Catharines Standard and former Mayor of St.Catharines. It is a Neo-Tudor style home dominated by an interesting stone projection with a very steep gable roof and stone chimney.

40. 53 Yates Street was constructed in 1906 in the Classic Revival Style. Classical features include the elegant cornice with a wide frieze, rectangular windows, offset entrance, and classically detailed entrance portico. The roof, however, is distinctly Queen Anne with a central gablet section and projecting gable.

The Yates Street area was once home to many of the wealthiest and most important citizens in St.Catharines. Their homes have stood the test of time and now form an important historical district. For a different historical experience, visit the downtown commercial area on and around St.Paul Street where specialty shops and restaurants abound. In addition, the St.Catharines Heritage Committee has prepared walking tours of the "Old Town St.Catharines", the Queen Street and Welland Avenue area, and Old Port Dalhousie.