

History and Heritage of Erin Village

Welcome to the historic downtown district.

This self-guided tour takes less than an hour, allowing you to see fascinating brickwork and window designs from the Victorian era, and learn about the mill industry that helped establish a thriving local economy here in the 1800s.

Start the loop tour at any point and feel free to explore.

The village is located on the West Branch of the Credit River, known for its pure cold water and trout fishing as it flows towards Lake Ontario.

With significant lands in the Greenbelt, Erin helps preserve its natural heritage in vast areas of forest and wetlands, as well as prime agricultural land. The long, rounded hill just to the west is a drumlin, deposited by a glacier 12,000 years ago.

With a lively economy, a strong arts and sports culture, a high level of safety and a plan for moderate growth, the Town of Erin has been identified as one of the Top 100 Places to Live in Canada.

Please visit our shops, get to know our friendly people and admire the small-town architecture that is being preserved for generations to come.

Find out more

This Walking Trail brochure is a joint project of the Town of Erin Trails and Heritage Committees.

The Trails Committee promotes a trails network for access to natural areas, transportation links and fitness benefits. The Heritage Committee promotes public awareness of the Town's heritage, maintains an inventory of properties of heritage value, and advises Town Council and property owners on conservation issues and heritage matters.

The committees offer their thanks to local property owners and members of the Business Improvement Area (BIA) for their support of this Heritage Trail project.

Special thanks to Wellington County Planning for technical production of this brochure. Please feel free to visit:

Town of Erin: www.erin.ca (PDF copy available)

County of Wellington: www.wellington.ca

Erin Village BIA: www.villageoferin.com

Greenbelt Foundation: www.greenbelt.ca/foundation

Look For Additional Series: Hillsburgh Village Walking Trail and Town of Erin "Off the Beaten Path" Driving Tour Trail



LOTS TO EXPLORE!
Nearby trails are gateways to Erin's natural charms. Hike to the top of the Water Tower Trail or follow the Rotary Trail at the south end of the village. The Woolen Mills Conservation Area to the east has beautiful views of the river. Or head north to the Elora Cataract Trailway, once the route of Credit Valley Railway and now part of the Trans Canada Trail, putting Erin village, Hillsburgh and Orton on one of the world's premiere scenic routes.



DOWNTOWN ERIN HERITAGE WALKING TRAIL



Experience the Charm!

Downtown Erin Heritage Walking Trail

See Erin's fascinating architectural history on a self-guided tour that takes less than 1 hour.

1. Founding of Erin

Check out the historical plaque next to the West Credit River by the McEnery property – a family that farmed locally from 1837. Settlement of Erin Township had started in 1820, but the village was not incorporated until 1880, when the Credit Valley Railway arrived. The township and village were amalgamated in 1998 as the Town of Erin.



2. All Saints Anglican 81 Main Street (photo#2)

The church was erected in 1867 on land provided by William Cornock, prominent business entrepreneur and distiller. The lancet windows with pointed arches are in Gothic Revival style, imitating medieval design. The square bell tower was added in 1910 and for many years the bell served as the village fire alarm.

3. Erin Grist Mill

Built in 1849, Daniel McMillan's final dam was powered by a lengthy millrace from the upper pond on the other side of Main Street and intended to supply grain to Britain. It was rebuilt twice after fires in the mid 1870s and in 1946.

4. Erin Village Alliance Church 103 Main Street

Many pioneer families worshipped at what was originally a Church of Christ Disciples, built in 1873 by Duncan McMillan, with decorative brick designs at the corners and over the rounded windows.

5. McMillan Park

Named for Daniel McMillan, an entrepreneur who with his family built five dams that powered the village's agricultural economy in the mid-1800s. The original village name was MacMillan's Mills, later changed to Erinsville, then simply Erin.

6. Erin United Church 115 Main Street

Built in 1870 by the Wesleyan Methodists to replace an octagonal church that had burned. Became part of the United Church in 1925.

7. Gear House 119 Main Street

The Edwardian mansion of Dr. Harry Gear, built in 1905 with an octagonal tower, limestone accents, stained glass and an audio tube from the porch.

8. Burns Presbyterian Church 155 Main Street (photo#8)

Built in 1881 to replace an older (1848) Union Church, this building features four spired buttresses topped with arrow finials, and lancet windows. Rubblestone walls behind it mark the drive shed area.

9. Victorian Homes (photo #9)

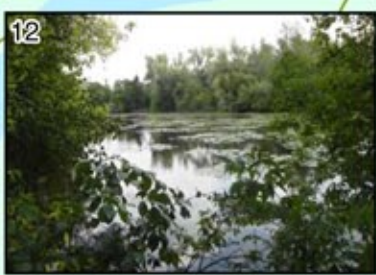
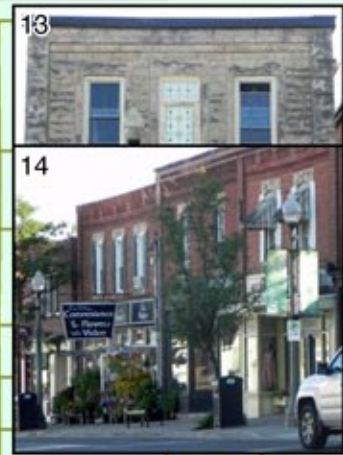
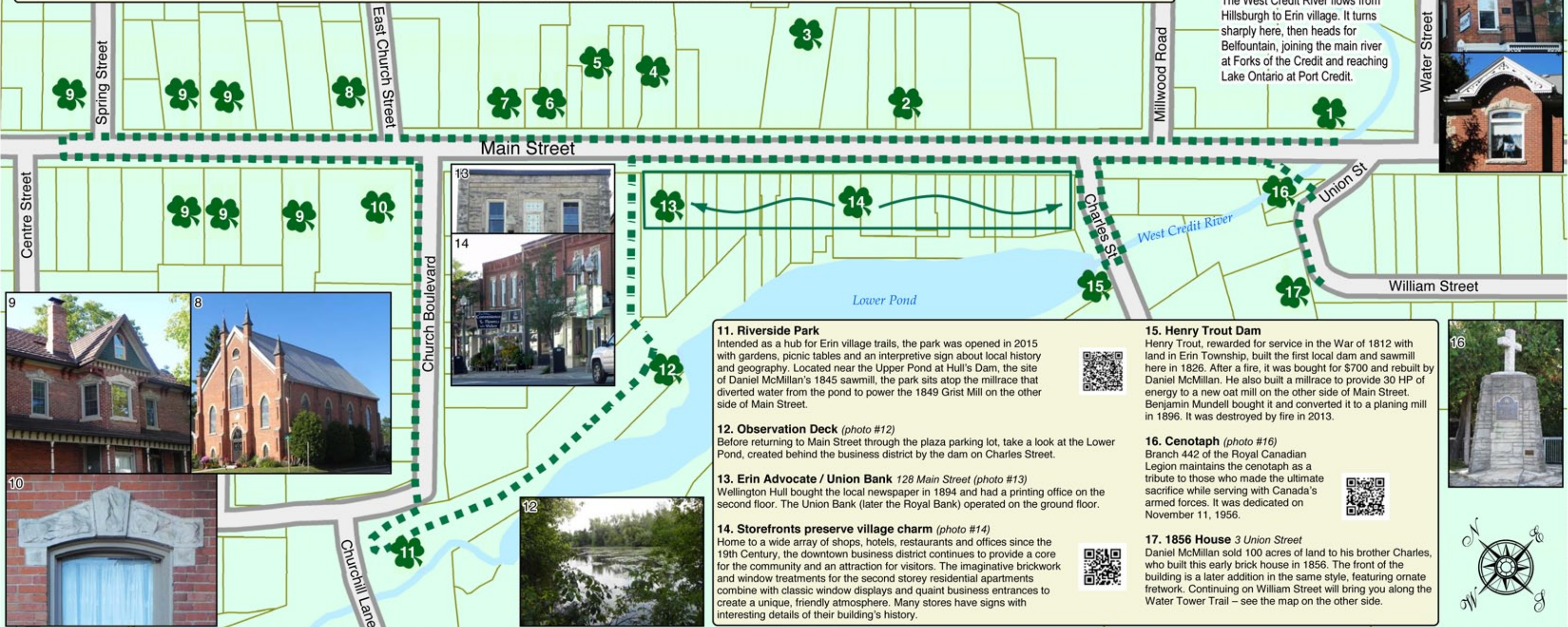
Several homes in this area feature a two-tone brick design popular in the late 1800s, with distinctive stone or brick lintels above the windows and decorative wood trim accents in the roof peaks.

10. Busholme Inn 156 Main Street (photo #10)

Intended as a hospital when it was built about 1886, the building was instead used for doctors' offices, then converted to a hotel in 1924. The arched lintels with a central keystone, unique to the Erin-Hillsburgh area, were made with sandstone from the Credit Forks quarry.



The West Credit River flows from Hillsburgh to Erin village. It turns sharply here, then heads for Belfountain, joining the main river at Forks of the Credit and reaching Lake Ontario at Port Credit.



11. Riverside Park

Intended as a hub for Erin village trails, the park was opened in 2015 with gardens, picnic tables and an interpretive sign about local history and geography. Located near the Upper Pond at Hull's Dam, the site of Daniel McMillan's 1845 sawmill, the park sits atop the millrace that diverted water from the pond to power the 1849 Grist Mill on the other side of Main Street.

12. Observation Deck (photo #12)

Before returning to Main Street through the plaza parking lot, take a look at the Lower Pond, created behind the business district by the dam on Charles Street.

13. Erin Advocate / Union Bank 128 Main Street (photo #13)

Wellington Hull bought the local newspaper in 1894 and had a printing office on the second floor. The Union Bank (later the Royal Bank) operated on the ground floor.

14. Storefronts preserve village charm (photo #14)

Home to a wide array of shops, hotels, restaurants and offices since the 19th Century, the downtown business district continues to provide a core for the community and an attraction for visitors. The imaginative brickwork and window treatments for the second storey residential apartments combine with classic window displays and quaint business entrances to create a unique, friendly atmosphere. Many stores have signs with interesting details of their building's history.

15. Henry Trout Dam

Henry Trout, rewarded for service in the War of 1812 with land in Erin Township, built the first local dam and sawmill here in 1826. After a fire, it was bought for \$700 and rebuilt by Daniel McMillan. He also built a millrace to provide 30 HP of energy to a new oat mill on the other side of Main Street. Benjamin Mundell bought it and converted it to a planing mill in 1896. It was destroyed by fire in 2013.

16. Cenotaph (photo #16)

Branch 442 of the Royal Canadian Legion maintains the cenotaph as a tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving with Canada's armed forces. It was dedicated on November 11, 1956.

17. 1856 House 3 Union Street

Daniel McMillan sold 100 acres of land to his brother Charles, who built this early brick house in 1856. The front of the building is a later addition in the same style, featuring ornate fretwork. Continuing on William Street will bring you along the Water Tower Trail – see the map on the other side.

