

## 10. The John Poole Tett House, c 1896

14 By Street

Here Robert Leech's furniture factory once hummed with activity by the lakeshore. Robert was one of ten Leech sons who later were to found the town of Gorrie, Ontario. Later, James Leggett's tannery was located here. By the late 1800's, change was coming to Newboro; from industry to business, to residences and to tourists. Reputedly completed in 1886, this majestic home predicts the style of the early 1900's. In contrast, it has brick trim characteristic of an earlier period. Note its tall imposing windows and bays and its striking chimneys. From its uniquely-styled front dormer on the 3rd storey, John Poole Tett, and his wife Effie (nee Gallagher) enjoyed a grand and busy view across a lake of commerce and a land of resources. "The Manor" guests of Stirling Lodge now enjoy a more relaxed view of blue water and green forest, of nature recovering.



## 11. The John Draffin House, c 1860

11 New Street



Walk around the bend of New Street where it joins Ledge Street and you will find a handsome and imposing home, the first abode of stone constructed in the village. At the rear of this residence was the original home, once a single-storey farmhouse with ashlars of massive sandstone. It later served as a back kitchen. A fire in 1895 demanded extensive renovations and a second

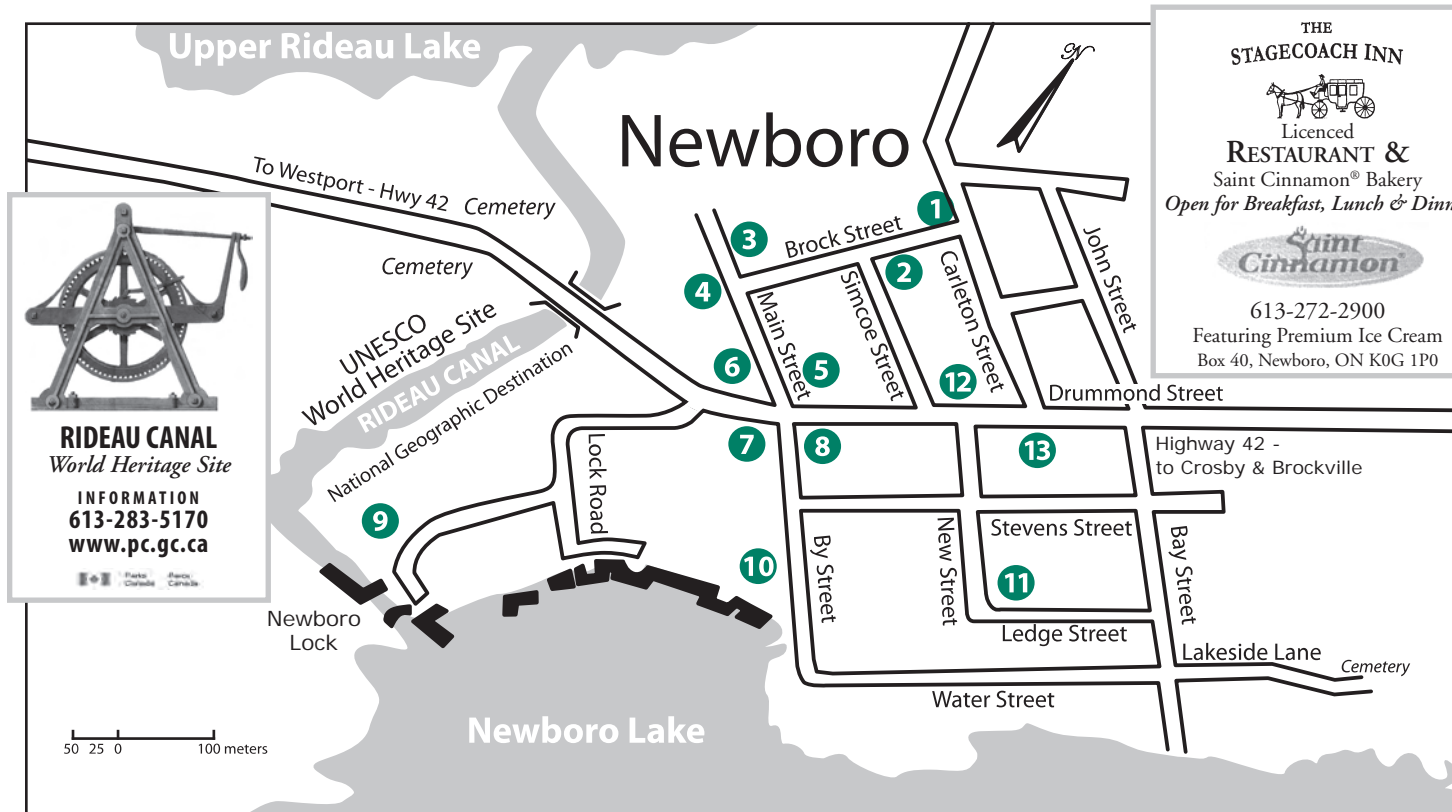
floor was added.

Born in Ireland in 1811, John Draffin came to the Canadas. Prospering as a merchant family, the Draffins added this magnificent 2 storey stone residence to the front of the original farmhouse. The corners of the building are quoined with large ashlars. Elaborate Italianate details on the main house include wide, bracketed cornices and decorative round-headed doors on the upper storey. Once these opened onto a small balcony above a grand front porch. From this balcony, recently rebuilt, Mr. Draffin, wealthy Newboro merchant and his wife, Margaret Bell of Perth, could enjoy a magnificent view over Newboro Lake at a time when intervening forest had succumbed to axe and saw. Grand pines and shrouding ivy now restore nature and privacy to this site. Between 1895 and 1945 this was the parsonage for St. Mary's Church. (1)

## 12. The J.T. Gallagher House, c 1885

7 Drummond Street

The Gallagher house was constructed in Gothic Revival style. It is an extraordinarily tall building, being some two-and-one-half storeys. The 1st storey was constructed of 5 courses of brick, the 2nd, four courses, the 3rd of three and with inner walls of lath and plaster. To offset this dramatic perception of height, a two-storey bay extends out from the front wing. Extensive dripped barge board (a popular addition to Gothic Revival



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buildings) serves to lower the roofline. Locally-quarried sandstone lintels break the vast brickwork. With stylized treillage, the verandah conceals the double-door entrance. Also of interest is the distinctive ornate roofing of slate, unique in the village. Local legend tells of an ostentatious contest between J.T.Gallagher and John Poole Tett, who at the same time was building his home on By Street (10). These two prominent citizens with family connections vied to see who could build the tallest house. Gallagher won when he extended the height of his chimneys by 0.4 m. His son-in-law, Dr. Robert B. King, purchased the home in 1916 and lived here until his death in 1942.

## 13. The Union Bank Building, c 1903

24 Drummond Street

Like many structures in the area, this was built of local brick to house the Union Bank. Now it houses the Royal Bank of Canada. Constructed in 1905 by John F. Graham, the building remains in the Graham family. The interesting cornicing and the flat roof are characteristic of several contemporary banks erected in the surrounding area. Its massive front façade with large arched windows and door imposed a sense of assurance and security to those who enter with surplus shekels to save or loans to seek. This 2-storey building provides banking hall and offices on the first floor. The living quarters of the manager and his family were on the second floor where he could stay "on top of the money". By the early 1900's, Drummond Street was replacing Main Street as the focus of road travel and parallel rail travel. For over a century this fine example of rural "bank architecture" has served Newboro commerce and community.



For more information on heritage life and architecturally significant buildings in the Township of Rideau Lakes, visit any branch of the Rideau Lakes Union Library. Ask to peruse: *Cranworth Chronicles* by Barbara Gibson (South Burgess); *Hub of the Rideau* by Sue Warren (South Crosby Ward); *My Own Four Walls* by Diane Haskin (Bastard and South Burgess Ward); *South Elmsley in the Making* by James Kennedy; and *The Tweedsmuir Book of Newboro*, in the Newboro Library.

Many other resources illustrating heritage life in North Crosby are to be found in the Newboro Library, the Westport Library and the Westport Museum. Also ask about our video "Best Kept Secrets" which highlights some of the folks and facets of our Rideau Lakes Township.

### Disclaimer:

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# Heritage Tour of Newboro

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### Introduction:

For millennia, the moccasined feet of hunters and fishers traversed the isthmus between the Rideau and Mud (Newboro) Lakes. European explorers and missionaries, traders and pioneers followed. But without falling water for power, only a few such as William Buck Stevens pioneered along the isthmus.

During the years 1826-32, the Rideau Canal was built under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel John By and the Royal Engineers as part of British defense strategy in North America. The canal linked the navigable waters of the Rideau River System flowing northward to Bytown (now Ottawa) and the Cataraqui flowing southward toward Kingston. Crossing the isthmus was one of the most difficult tasks undertaken on the canal. The route chosen demanded digging through a hard ridge of Canadian Shield granite lurking beneath the landscape. Many lives were lost to accidents and swamp fever (malaria). Private contractors were bankrupted. Ultimately the 7th Company of Royal Sappers and Miners completed this vital link between 1829 and 1832.

In time, the construction community called “The Isthmus” was superseded by New Borough, then Newboro. Throughout the 19th century Newboro grew and prospered from its location at the keystone of the Rideau arch. Built to defend British North America from American invasion, the Rideau Canal ironically transported vast amounts of produce from forest and farm to the United States, especially to the North during the Civil War. In the latter part of the 19th century, steam tugs towed barge loads of iron ore from local mines to smelters in the U.S.. Cottonbag miners sold their mica to General Electric. Returning barges loaded with coal stoked local railroads.

Newboro became a thriving community at the toll ferry (later bridge) spanning the Rideau. “Main Street” still hints of an era of travel and commerce, lodgings and shops, a bustling streetscape that paralleled the Canal. Warehouses and wharves lined the Newboro cut. There is still a cleat anchor beside the canal attesting to bygone boats and business.

In 1888, the Brockville - Westport & S.S.M. Railroad added a new dimension to Newboro life and commerce. Trade and travel were now year-round. Produce of local farm and forest entered wider markets through Newboro’s cannery and mills. From Newboro Station, local scholars went to and from high school in Athens and Brockville. Soldiers went to far-off Europe to fight in WW I and II. For some Newboro lads, this tragically was a one-way ticket.

Straddling the “town line” between North and South Crosby, feeling economically and politically distinct from both Crosbys, Newboro declared its independence in 1876 and became an “incorporated village”. As such it was one of the smallest incorporated communities in Ontario, small but with great potential and grand hopes.

Surrounded by lakes including the Upper Rideau and many-faceted Newboro Lake, this hub of commerce became a popular vacation centre of the 20th century. From across the world, some come to fish and many come to relax at Newboro’s fine resorts including the Poplars, the Stagecoach, and Stirling Lodge. The ambiance of our fine historic inns continues to attract people from near and far for fishing in summer and dog sledding in the winter.

Like all local communities, Newboro has suffered devastating fires. In just one day of devastation in 1874, the community lost 17 buildings. But many heritage buildings have survived. Today they form the pride and character of this community.

The Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee of Rideau Lakes Township endeavors with this Walking Tour to illustrate a selection of Newboro’s heritage buildings that represent a variety of architectural influences. Where possible, we have used the names of the original owners to identify buildings. Imagine the welcome chime of steam boat bell, the rumble and clang of stagecoach, the toot of railway whistle, the aromas of outer-world spices and local cheddar in grocer shops, business being done, bands playing, sermons being spoken, the laughter and tears of family and village life as it was ten and fifteen decades ago.

## 1. St. Mary’s Anglican Church, 1861

**15 Brock Street (illustration on the cover)**

The devout of Anglican faith held their first meetings in an “upper room” of Benjamin Tett’s home, 1 Main Street. A saddlebag preacher, Rev. T. Tremayn, was their priest from 1839 to 1857. During the year 1849-50, the St. Mary’s congregation built their permanent home of worship. Benjamin J. Tett purchased of land and paid the wages of the workmen and when the last shingle was to be nailed to the roof, the carpenter called for John Poole Tett, Benjamin’s son to swing the hammer. Thus two generations of the Tett family worked on their church.

Built in simple Gothic Revival style, this church has high walls and a belfry with a short spire on a square tower. Beautiful stained glass adorns its windows; one a very unique Tiffany. Inside, there is a simple but beautiful altar with a communion rail circling two sides of it. To the left front is a “rostrum pulpit”; to the right, the organ and choir stalls. Beautiful woodwork attests to the dedicated craftsmanship of the builders and the devoted care of its loyal congregation over the past fifteen decades.

## 2. The Court House, c 1840

**10 Brock Street**

The Newboro Court House, built in 1840, retains its original exterior design. Once used as a school, separate entrances for boys and girls can still be seen on the front façade. Once used as

Town Hall, Court House and jail, the door to the cell was recently located and rehung in the back room of the building. Interestingly enough, Newboro for many years employed an executioner, although it is unclear if his services were ever required. There was one addition to this building, evidence of which can be seen along the west face.

In Newboro on Thursday, November 10th, 1842 Paddy O’Rourke was one of the first persons to be tried in the newly-built Court House. Paddy was angry with the magistrate who had fined him “seven & sixpence” for being intoxicated while trying to board a steamboat without fare. During the night of Nov. 9th, Paddy stole what he thought was a keg of blasting powder from Tett’s Warehouse on the canal and hid it behind the courthouse. The next afternoon when court was in session and the same despised magistrate presiding, Paddy, keg under arm and ambitions of Guy Fox in mind, looked around the courthouse for a basement door. Finding none (for there was no basement), he decided to set the keg against the end of the building, light the fuse and run. When he knocked the bung from the keg, he found to his surprise that it was a keg of rum. This was too good to “pass up”. So sitting beside the keg, Paddy commenced drinking the demon spirits, the forgotten fuse still sticking out of the barrel. Needless to say he was eventually found “passed out” beside the keg, arrested and tried for theft. Each year for many afterwards the youth of Newboro made dummies to represent old Paddy. Each November the 10th, they would wheelbarrow his effigy through the streets shouting “a penny for old Paddy please”.

A popular rhyme of the day was:

*Please to recall, the boozy downfall of Paddy O’ Rourke’s crazy plot.*

*We will remember the 10th of November. In Newboro, it won’t be forgot!*

*- Newboro Newsletter - Nov. 13, 1911*

This site of rhyme and reason is now our Library.

## 3. The Richard Blake House, c 1858

**14 Main Street**

The Blake House is just one of several excellent examples of “Ontario Cottages” in Newboro. The Ontario Cottage is typical of many homes of mid-1800’s; one-and-one-half storeys in height and suggestive of frugal owners. Tax laws from between 1807 and 1853 assessed houses as either one full storey or two full storeys. Customarily, a gable window over the front doorway provided light to a central hallway on the upper floor. Window designs could be pointed Gothic, square-headed Tudor, round-headed, (usually shuttered), circular or large three-sectional. The decorative bargeboard, often called gingerbread, was usually added in the mid 1850’s when more delicate woodworking tools became available to local tradesmen. The verandah became an important feature of Ontario Cottage, generally being added in the latter half of the nineteenth century to provide for summer relaxation and to enhance the appearance.



## 4. The “Dominion House” Hotel, c 1865

**15 Main Street**

Thomas Kenny and his son, James, constructed this fine building along Main Street on property purchased from Benjamin Tett. Originally an inn on this busy thoroughfare, this site once echoed the sounds of horse and harness, the smoke of wood-fired steamers on the nearby canal, of apples being processed in the nearby cannery, the whistle of the B. & W. slowing to station. It is said that Sir John A. MacDonald stayed overnight here at the “Dominion House”.

Now a fine home, it manifests an interesting and authentic example of a semi-elliptical or fan-tailed neo-classic (Loyalist) door. Such portals were popular in houses built during the latter half of the 19th century. But this Adamesque entrance is unique. Over one hundred similar designs have been recorded in the area. Only four such doorways are identical. George Bolton bought the building for his private residence in 1887 and it remained in the family until the 1990’s.

## 5. The R.O. Leggett House and Shop, c 1870

**4 Main Street**



Mr. R.O. Leggett, following his father, Henry, owned a furniture and undertaking establishment here. This L-shaped structure is very typical of late-nineteenth-century commercial-residential structures. Note the intricate treillage work on the verandah posts of home and the large windows of business. As in most local villages during the 1800’s, the trades of furniture making and funerary were closely allied; the skills and tools for making fine tables, chairs and coffins were the same. Mr. Leggett also had a livery with which he taxied travelers from village to village and dearly departed from church to cemetery. For nine decades, the Leggett family served the Newboro community from this home and business on Main Street.

## 6. John Webster House, c 1860’s

**5 Main Street**

Prior to 1860, William Bell had a house that was destroyed by fire. Indeed, Newboro has lost many buildings to the ravages of fire. Sometime around 1860, John Webster is believed to have built this fine home and provided lodging to travelers. This frame structure contains excellent examples of Classical Revival architecture. The entrance manifests a rectangular transom with sidelights. This feature was useful as well as decorative for it let natural light into the central hallway in times before electricity. The bracketed shelf above the door was probably a later addition as were the Doric columns flanking the sidelights. The central window is of unusual interest. Of casement variety with a fanlight transom above it, its style is completely unconformable with the rest of the house. In times when masons and carpenters carried their plans in their heads, they were very clever at mixing and matching. In 1903, George Wrathall purchased the home and operated a jewelry business from it.



## 7 The Col. John Kilborn Home, c 1835

**2 Drummond Street**

This building of mixed styles is believed to be a combination of John Kilborn’s home and George W. Preston’s “Ottawa Hotel” which burned in 1903. The stone component of the building is believed to be material recovered from that fire. The frame structure was Col. Kilborn’s home. A simple frieze runs under the eaves.

In 1828 while living in Brockville, Col. Kilborn was elected to Parliament and when his term expired he declined re-election and moved to Kilmarnock. In 1852 he was appointed postmaster for Brockville from which he later resigned and ran unsuccessfully for Parliament against Mr. Benjamin Tett. He then retired to Newboro. Colonel Kilborn donated the site for the first Wesleyan Presbyterian Church in Newboro in 1850 and he and the five Chamberlain brothers had the church erected. Col. Kilborn and his wife Elizabeth Sherwood had nine children – eight sons and one daughter. This eminent citizen of Newboro died in his 94th year.

## 8 The Stage Coach Inn, c 1855

**4 Drummond Street**

James MacDonald, an early merchant in Newboro built this substantial home and business. In 1872 William O’Connor purchased the building and converted it into “The Ontario Hotel”. Landons then became the owners, changing its name to “Landon House” (1920-1966). In 1966 it became “The Stage Coach Inn”.

Its original design was Georgian. Although the front door has been replaced, it is reminiscent of the original entrance. The transom and sidelights mimic the originals and are most attractive. In the dining room of the Inn is a large painting of “The Ontario Hotel” (1869-1920) as it once graced Newboro. The Stage Coach still does. Still very much a meeting place of many functions, it is now the community post office.

## 9. The Block House, c 1832

The blockhouse was built in 1832-33 to defend this very strategic lock station. Located on this height-of-land, then cleared of forest, it was designed to withstand attack from any direction. The lower section, approx. 6m. x 6m., consists of stonewalls 1m. thick. The top section is constructed of squared timbers (now clappedboarded), dovetailed at the corners and with an overhang of 0.6 m.

Twenty-two such defensive fortifications were planned, but this is one of only four completed. Only once was its militia called out for action, not to fend off a raid by feared and foreign rebels but to quell a local riot. Now in a very different time, peaceful boaters from near and far sail beneath this antique fort’s silent gun slots.

While here, stroll down to the Newboro Lock and watch the boats pass through this, the keystone lock of the Rideau Canal. The Newboro Lock is one of only three on the Rideau System that has hydraulically-operated steel gates. Concerned community action preserved the other locks in the heritage mode of the 1830’s.

