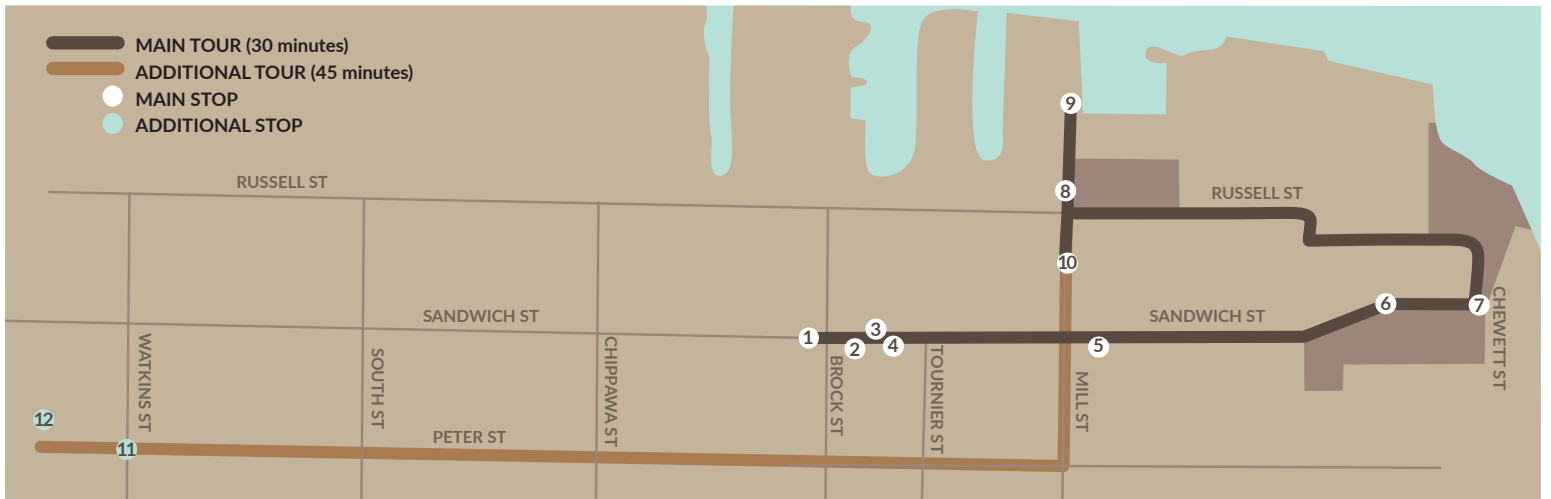


Across the River to Freedom



Across the River to Freedom Walking Tour of Historic Sandwich



Welcome to the Across the River to Freedom walking tour. This tour will let you explore Black history in Old Sandwich Town, one of the final stops on the Underground Railroad, and Windsor's most historic district. You will learn about the people of African descent who built this community and how they fought against racism and injustice. The main part of the tour covers approximately 2 kilometers and takes about 30 minutes.

To learn more visit the Across the River to Freedom website.
www.collections.uwindsor.ca/across-the-river/welcome

1. Saint John's Anglican Church and Cemetery

3305 Sandwich St. at Brock, Windsor, ON N9C 1B2, Canada
St. John's Anglican Church and Cemetery has tombstones dating from 1793. Some of Sandwich's earliest Black residents, both enslaved and free, attended this church and are buried in the graveyard.

2. Mackenzie Hall Cultural Centre

3277 Sandwich St., Windsor, ON N9C 1A9, Canada
Built in 1855, this previous courthouse and jail has now been transformed into a cultural space.
This location saw several important cases related to slavery and the Underground Railroad including that of Lucie and Thornton Blackburn which established a precedent legally protecting future freedom seekers from extradition. Note the historic plaque discussing this building's history.

3. William Dummer Powell Plaque

3277 Sandwich St., Windsor, ON N9C 1A9, Canada
William Dummer Powell was the first trained lawyer appointed a judge in Upper Canada. The plaque does not mention Dummer Powell was an enslaver, nor mention controversial and deadly decisions he made such as sentencing Joseph Cutten, an enslaved man, to death for stealing some rum and furs.

4. Mary E. Bibb Park

3261 Sandwich St., Windsor, ON N9C 1A9, Canada
This park honours Canada's first Black female journalist, Mary E. Bibb, a teacher, entrepreneur, and a key figure in the abolition movement. Along with her husband Henry Bibb, she established the anti-slavery newspaper Voice of the Fugitive. The Bibbs also founded a school for Sandwich's Black population and administered the Refugee Home Society which provided opportunities for the formerly enslaved. The Bibbs' national historic plaque is located here.

5. Prosperity Place

3193 Sandwich St., Windsor, ON N9C 1A7, Canada

This small park contains plaques describing Sandwich's Indigenous, Black, French, and English histories. Look for those describing the lives and legacies of Henry and Mary Bibb and Caroline Quarlls Watkins, all of whom spoke out against enslavement and racism toward the Black community in Canada.

6. Paterson Park Murals

3064 Sandwich St., Windsor, ON N9C 1A4, Canada

These murals by local artists Jermaine and Darrell Baylis depict key figures from this region's Black communities, including two from Sandwich's the Black community: Howard Watkins who was a descendant of Caroline Quarlls and Allen Watkins and the second Black detective in Canadian History and Henry Bibb, a prominent abolitionist who, with his wife Mary Miles Bibb, established the Voice of the Fugitive, the first successful Black newspaper in Canada.

7. The Sandwich Archway

Sandwich St. at Chewett St., Windsor, ON N9C 1A5, Canada

Plaques on the Sandwich Town Arch honour the town's history and the people who made it what it is today. Three of these plaques are about the Black community: Caroline Quarlls, Mary and Henry Bibb, and Sandwich First Baptist Church.

8. The Sandwich Mill

134 Mill St, Windsor, ON N9C 2R2, Canada

Those fleeing into Canada by the Detroit River would have been greeted by many flour mills like this one scattered across the riverbank. Mills like these, located in Black settlements, ensured prosperity and the ability to market goods to other communities.

9. The Detroit River at Queen's Dock

90 Mill St, Windsor, ON, Canada

Just a mile wide and populated on each side by networks of anti-slavery activists, the Detroit River was one of the best points to cross into Canada and to freedom. In the 1850s, the number of freedom seekers crossing into Sandwich, ranged from fifteen per week to as many as sixty-five in one day.

Though the formerly enslaved were free as soon as they crossed into Canada, bounty hunters were known to try to kidnap and re-enslave freedom seekers. Refugees from slavery also faced considerable racism and segregation once in Canada, including lack of access to schools.

10. The Duff-Baby House

221 Mill St, Windsor, ON N9C 2R1, Canada

Windsor's oldest building, the Duff-Baby house was built in 1798 by the Duffs, one of the founding families of Sandwich. In 1807, the home was sold to the Baby family. Both the Duffs and the Babys held enslaved individuals but after Emancipation, Blacks were employed as servants. In 1830, the Babys rushed home from church to successfully fight off the attempted abduction of one of their servants, Andrew, by a bounty hunter.

Note the "Russell Street" sign. One of multiple streets in Windsor named after former enslavers, Russell Street and nearby Peter Street are named after Peter Russell, the Speaker of the Upper Canadian Legislative Council, who famously opposed Sir John Graves Simcoe's attempts to abolish slavery in Upper Canada.

Additional Stops

11. Watkins Street Sign

Windsor, ON N9C 2X9

Named after Black businessman Homer Watkins, a descendant of Allen Watkins and Caroline Quarlls, this is the only street in Windsor named after a family of African descent. Members of the Watkins family have lived on this block since the early 1850s and some still reside here.

12. Sandwich First Baptist Church

3652 Peter St, Windsor, ON N9C 1J7 Canada

Sandwich First Baptist Church is a National Historic Site and one of the oldest continuously active Black churches in Canada. This building is the only remaining structure in Windsor erected by Black residents during the Underground Railroad era. It was built in 1851 with bricks made by the Black residents with mud from the Detroit River. The church still has spaces underneath the floorboards where freedom seekers hid when bounty hunters were in town.



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