



Heritage Week

February 17-23, 2025

Town of Cobourg Heritage Hunt



Instructions

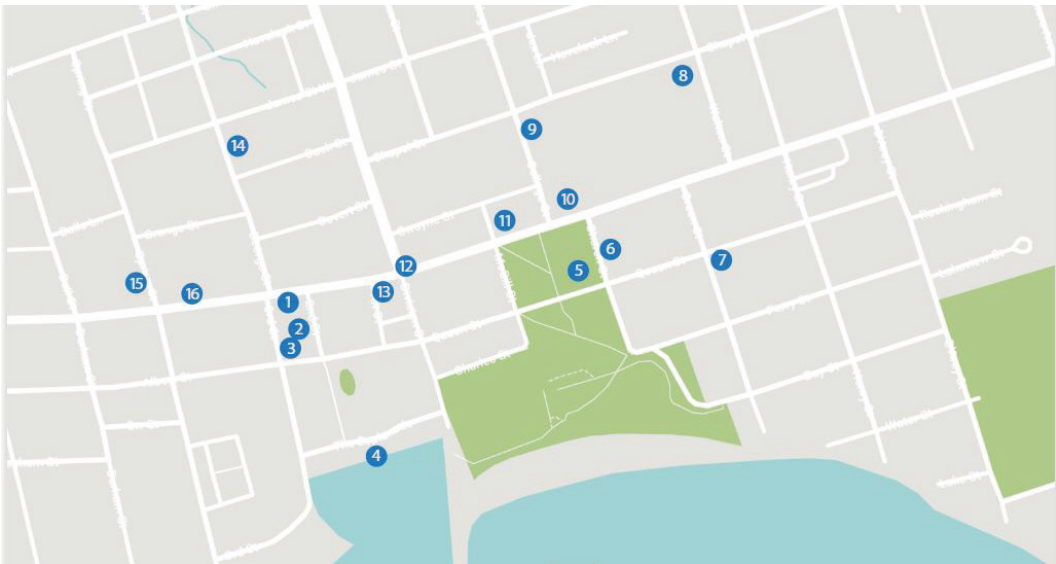
The Town of Cobourg's Inaugural Heritage Hunt is a chance to learn a little about the history of the town, explore its gems, and have the chance to win great prizes doing it!

Explore all sixteen sites, answer a question about each, recording it at the back of this booklet.

Cobourg is filled with unique and fascinating heritage buildings and sites - the sixteen in this booklet are only a small sampling of what the town has to offer. Why not take a little detour to explore? The map below lays out the sixteen sites in the suggested order, but you are free to create your own adventure!



Please remember to respect private property and keep to the public realm while exploring. Answers to all questions can be identified from the public realm through careful observation. The one exception to this is Victoria Hall during working hours.



Cobourg: A Brief History

The area now occupied by present-day Cobourg was home to Indigenous peoples for thousands of years. Around 1695, the Mississauga Nation moved southward from their former homeland north of Lake Huron to take advantage of the growing fur trade. The seven First Nations signatories to the 1923 Williams Treaties include the Mississauga of Scugog Island, Alderville, Hiawatha, and Curve Lake, and the Chippewas of Rama-Mnjikaning, Georgina Island, and Beausoleil First Nations. The land occupied by present-day Cobourg is in the traditional and treaty territory of the Anishinaabeg (the Mississauga) and the Chippewa Nations.

European settlers first started arriving in the area in the 1780s. Cobourg, originally several smaller villages including Amherst and Hardscrabble, was founded in 1798 by United Empire Loyalists and was later named Hamilton. In 1818, it was renamed Cobourg in recognition of the marriage of Princess Charlotte Augusta of Wales to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld.

By the 1830s, Cobourg had become a regional centre due to its harbour on Lake Ontario. From the 1840s to the 1860s, Cobourg's future seemed exceedingly bright – some even believed in might be a contender for the capital of Upper Canada. However, these outsized ambitions led to the community overextending itself in investments and infrastructure. An economic downturn in the 1860s and 1870s led to a drop in the town's population and prospects.

Luckily, the development of the harbour, the short-lived railway, and the resulting trade in iron ore with the U.S. led many Americans to discover the delights of summering in Cobourg.

In addition to tourism, Cobourg's harbour was the site of industry for much of the 20th century. After several decades of coal and oil shipments in and out of the harbour, a decline in demand for coal and other changes led to an ambitious plan to reimagine Cobourg's waterfront into a boating and recreational centre. In addition to this, the residents of Cobourg and the town worked hard to preserve Cobourg's built heritage. Today, both things contribute to Cobourg's unique character and sense of place.



SITE
no. 1

*What was the final
cost of building
Victoria Hall?*

Victoria Hall

55 KING STREET WEST

Begin the Heritage Hunt in historic Victoria Hall, one of Canada's most beautiful public buildings. Its size and opulence reflect the ambitions of mid-19th century Cobourg, when the town aspired to rival the urban centers of Kingston and Toronto. The building was designed by Kivas Tully, an architect who designed many important buildings throughout southern Ontario. The cornerstone was laid in 1856, and construction ended four years later in 1860. Victoria Hall was declared a National Historic Site in 1959, but this unfortunately did not stop it from falling into decline. After decades of neglect, local residents came together with a fundraising campaign to stop the building from being condemned and torn down. One of the leaders was local resident Lenah Fisher, whose outspoken advocacy helped save the Hall and for whom the foyer is now named. The campaign ultimately led to the complete restoration of Victoria Hall in 1983 to its original appearance.

Fire Hall

At maximum capacity, how many fire engines could the Fire Hall hold?

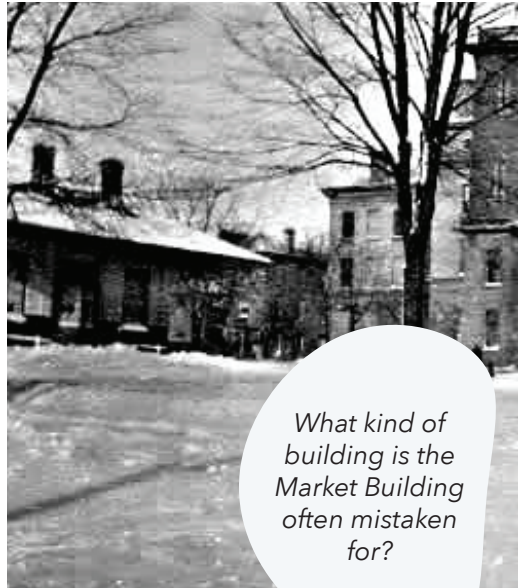


Known as the Second Street Fire Hall, this buff (yellow) brick building originally had a tall hose tower which was reduced to half its height in 1950 due to structural problems. The Fire Hall housed Cobourg's fire department from 1883 to 1977. The bottom floor held the fire engines while the upper storeys were the brigade quarters.

SITES
no.2 & 3

Market Building

This Classical Revival building, designed by Kivas Tully, was used for markets for many decades. A traditional roof with wide over-hanging eaves protected farmers and customers from the elements while they bought and sold wares. The architecture complements that of Victoria Hall but is distinct in order to separate marketplace from municipal government.



What kind of building is the Market Building often mistaken for?



Cobourg Harbour

SITE
no.4

Since Cobourg had no natural harbour, extensive efforts were undertaken to construct artificial breakwaters and piers, beginning in 1830. Just 20 years later, Cobourg had transformed into a major shipping port, crowded with commercial vessels, and a regular stop for Lake Ontario steamships. The town was also a centre for shipbuilding, including the steamboat Cobourg and the 107' racing yacht Countess of Dufferin, which competed in the America's Cup Race of 1876. Ferry service from Cobourg to Rochester, New York, began in 1907 and ran until 1950.

What were the names of the two vessels that carried cars and passengers between Cobourg and Rochester?

Victoria Park

QUEEN STREET

SITE
no.5

Just east of the harbour is this lovely lakefront park. Victoria Park has been used as a public space since the early 19th century. Earliest records of the park date back to 1824, when it was used as a campsite for the numerous British and Irish arrivals. In 1894, Victoria Park was officially established, and in its centennial year, Mayor John D. Hayden convinced Cobourg Council to purchase all the land between the beach and Queen Street for Cobourg's first public park. Band concerts and theatrical events were held to raise funds for landscaping and beautification. At the time, the area between Queen and King, Church and McGill Streets was occupied by three of Cobourg's most fashionable summer hotels – the center of the Town's turn-of-the-century social whirl. As these hotels were abandoned and demolished over the years, public-spirited citizens of Cobourg raised funds to expand Victoria Park to its present boundaries.

What botanical attraction can be found in the south-east corner of the park?





Mulholland House

202 CHURCH STREET

SITE
no.6

Built by wealthy merchant Robert Mulholland, this splendid residence is the best example in Cobourg of Italianate style architecture. Like a typical Italianate villa, it is built in an asymmetrical L-plan with a short square tower. Note the striking doorway with its elaborate woodwork and etched glass. The porch was lost sometime during the 20th century, but recently restored based on historic images.

In what year was Mulholland House built?



SITE
no.7

What group of immigrants from the British Isles was Corktown (and therefore the school) named after?

Haskell House

174 GREEN STREET

This modest seeming building has a lengthy past. It was built by Reverend Alexander Bethune (Anglican Bishop of Toronto) as a theological college. Later, the institute became integrated into Trinity College in Toronto. As Cobourg grew, the building was purchased by the Cobourg School Board and became the Corktown School, as it was informally known. With the completion of the Central School, this one became obsolete. In 1906, Mrs. Haskell of Chicago bought it as a summer home and added a second storey and back wing while retaining many of the original exterior details.

Nearby:

202 GREEN STREET | 172 QUEEN STREET

From 1929 till 1951, this Gothic building at 202 Green Street was known as Hatfield Hall, an exclusive girls' private school. The Cornell stables, east of the Hall, were designed by Buffalo architect E.A. Kent, who later went down with the Titanic. As part of the school, they housed a gym, dormitories, and a chapel.

Jackson Houses

CHAPEL STREET

Reuben Jackson was a local builder who came to Cobourg as a young craftsman. He was immediately hired for the demanding task of laying the rounded corners of the Armory Building in 1904. In 1909 he built the first of his houses on Albert Street. Jackson devised an unpretentious two-storey brick house design that was characterized by one-and-a-half storeys, a gable-end facing the street, two upper-storey windows, and a simple front verandah. The plan proved so popular that Jackson stuck with it for 40 years, building approximately 71 houses in Cobourg. The houses are now a ubiquitous feature that define the architectural character of Cobourg. Chapel Street likely contains the highest concentration of these sought-after cottages.

How many Jackson houses are on Chapel Street between College and Walton Streets?

(Hint: there are a number of Jackson lookalikes - but not all of them were built by Jackson!).



SITE
no.8

York Cottage: Merchant's home of the 1850s in classical style

By Peggy Wright

The cottage located at 284 College St. was lived in by the same family for over 80 years. It was built around 1850 for the York family, one of the few black families of middle-class status recorded in Cobourg during that era.

William York and his wife Margaret McGuire had at least seven children, all named on the family tombstone at Union Cemetery. It is thought one or two more may have been buried elsewhere.

York Cottage, as it was known, was a far cry from the homes of

other black families in the area. Covert Street was known at the turn of the century as "nigger alley."

The York family had a store on King Street. Historian Rob Mikel says the business was probably a bath house and shaving parlour when it first opened. It later became a very fine tobacconist shop.

Cobourg resident Madeline Rooney can remember that the store had a "first-class" reputation.

The house is a fine example of the classical revival style of architecture and features a beautiful front entrance. The single-leafed door has Greek Revival details similar to a handful of other homes in Cobourg and is situated within a classically styled portico.

It is single-storey dwelling, sitting high on a full basement. A low-pitched hip roof with wide eaves and boxed cornices enhance the classical feeling of the house.

It has a crushed marble exterior which is not believed to be original.

There are porches on the front and back, the latter called a "charming Regency glazed porch/sun room" in files of the local architectural conservancy stored at Cobourg Public Library.

A small wing has been added on the south side, the date of which is unknown.

The house is surrounded by a beautiful wrought iron fence with a cobblestone base and posts. The fence once ran further to the south, to include property which has since been sold and

post can still be seen on the south property.

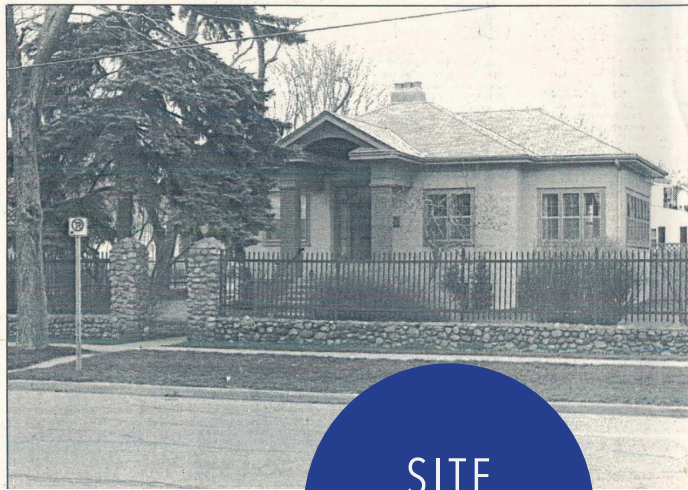
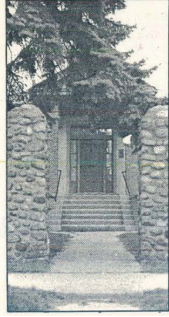
When the property finally left the York family in 1937, the new

owners replaced the front windows and exchanged the large classical fluted columns on the front porch with brick ones.

These changes perhaps give the house a more turn of the century look.

The original windows are still

contained on the north and south sides of the house. They are double-hung, with four panes, plain surrounds and wooden lugsails.



York Cottage 284 COLLEGE STREET

This house was built by merchant William York and his wife Margaret McGuire, who had at least seven children. The York family, one of the few recorded black families of middle-class status in Cobourg at the time, lived in the same house for over 80 years. Their bath house and shaving parlour business on King Street later became a first-class tobacconist shop. In 1878, the Cobourg Sentinel carried their advertisement: "York's New Barber Shop & Bath Rooms! – These elegant rooms are now open to visitors at the following pries viz. = Single Bath \$0.20 Seven Baths \$1.00 Barber Fares – Twelve Shaves 50c Hair Cutting 15c Shampooing 15c".

Beginning with a smaller structure, York Cottage was renovated and enlarged in 1870 and the elegant gabled portico entrance was added. The property itself was originally larger, bound by the cobblestone wall to the south.

What fixture is suspended from the roof of the portico?

St. Peter's Church

240 COLLEGE STREET

The church standing today is the third to stand on the site, with the first one built in around 1819. The very first services at St. Peter's were held in a wooden building that also served as a courthouse and jail. The congregation kept on growing, and so in 1851 the church standing today was built. Kivas Tully, the architect who later designed Victoria Hall and many other notable buildings in Cobourg. To minimize inconveniencing the congregation, the new church was built around the existing one and then the old building was removed. The church continued to expand with the construction of the Rectory in 1877 and the parish hall in 1888.

What style did Kivas Tully build the church in?

SITE
no.10



Nearby: COLLEGE STREET

The construction of St. Peter's attracted wealthy residents who wanted to live close to their place of worship. There was once a foundry just north of the St. Peter's Church, and small worker's housing. When the foundry relocated in 1871, these cottages were gradually replaced by the large, grand structures found along College Street today. Victoria College was constructed between 1832-1836, and was the second institution in Canada to grant university degrees.

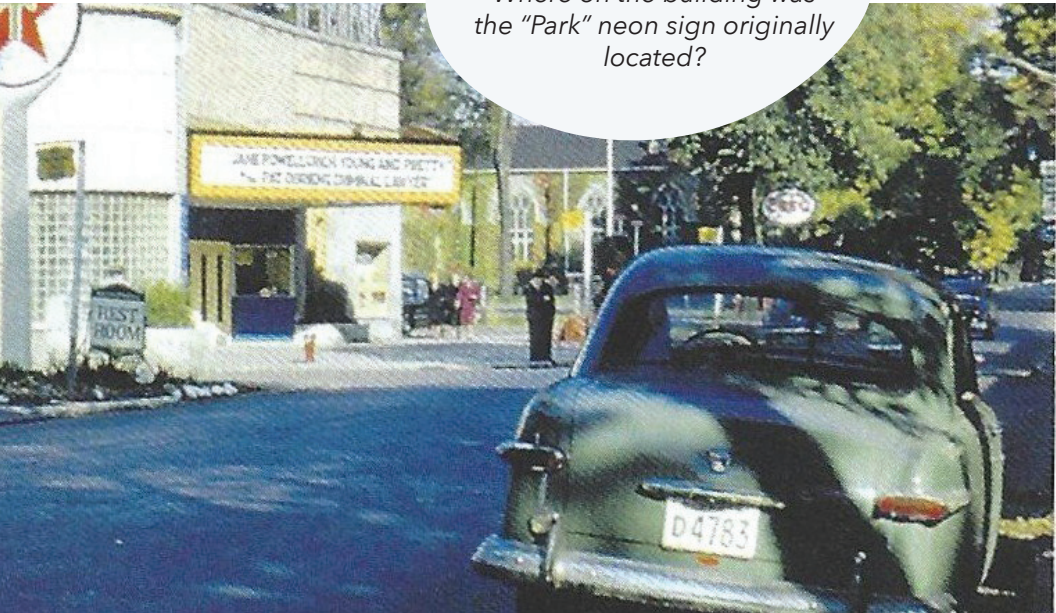
Park Theatre

60 KING STREET EAST

SITE
no.11

Arguably one of the most interesting post-war buildings in Cobourg, the Park Theatre dates to 1948. It was built just as television was beginning to undermine the golden age of movies. Note the Art Moderne influence in the curved façade, glass block, chrome details, and original neon sign. Art Moderne is a streamlined, optimistic style that evolved out of Art Deco. Considered futuristic, it made its North American appearance at the Chicago Exhibition in 1934. In 1948, the local paper described the Park Theatre as “the last word in modern design, both from an aesthetic and scientific aspect”. It sat 750 and boasted the latest sound equipment and a unique feature at the time – air conditioning.

Where on the building was the “Park” neon sign originally located?



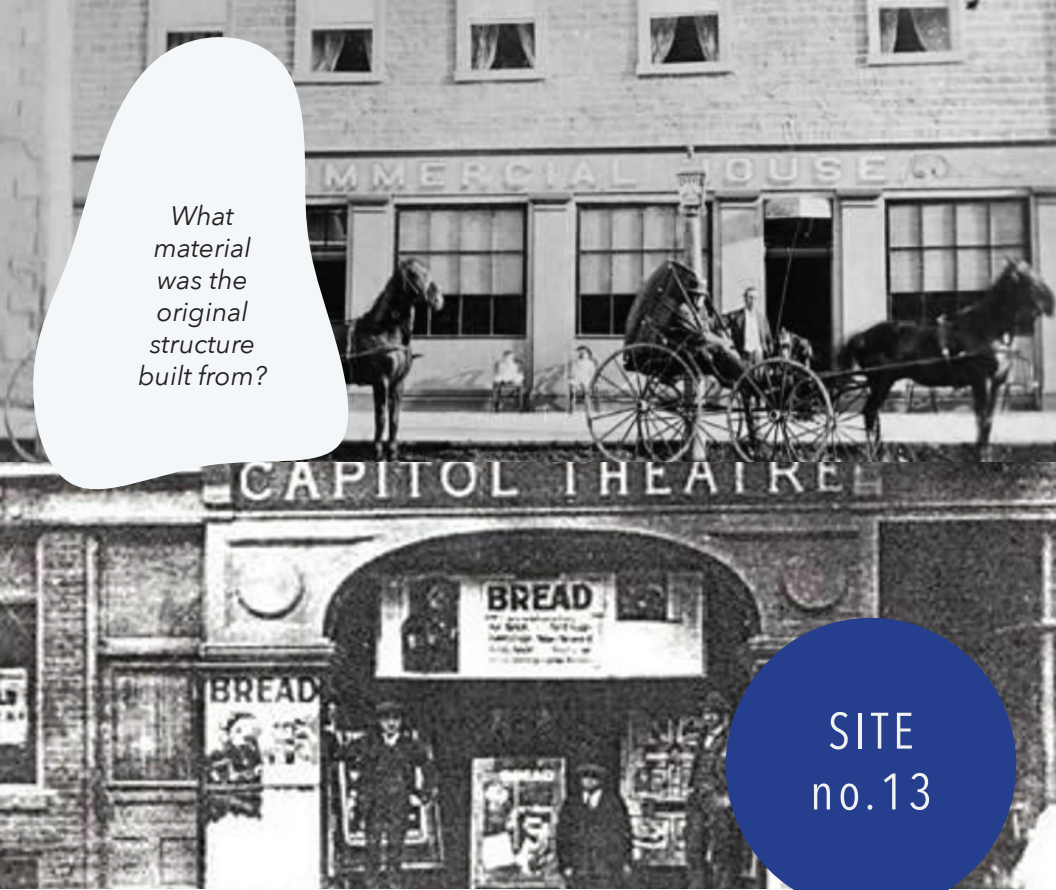


SITE
no.12

Four Corners

Once the main hub of town, this intersection was known as the four corners. On the southeast corner stood a very handsome Classical Revival stone building that housed the Bank of Montreal and later the town's post office. Its height and design made it the perfect complement to Victoria Hall. Sadly, it was torn down in 1960 to make way for a Woolworths store. Fortunately, the grand building on the northeast corner stands to this day. Known as the Phoenix Block, when it was built in 1881 it was the third building on the site. The two previous buildings, the first of which was built in the 1840s, both burned down. When it was rebuilt for the third time, it was named Phoenix Block after the mythical bird which continually rose from its own ashes. 2013 marked the beginning of extensive restoration work on the façade, including the removal of grey paint to reveal the two-toned brick underneath.

*How many windows does the
Phoenix Building have?*



What material was the original structure built from?

SITE
no.13

9-11 King Street West

While it might not be obvious, this building dates to the mid 19th-century. Originally called the Commercial House and probably built from local material quarried from the shoreline, this hotel served as a resting place for travelers and visitors to Cobourg. In 1918, the building was made into a movie house which was leased to Jules Allen, one of two brothers who had established the first Canadian movie chain called the Allen Theaters. In 1951, the movie theatre moved to the newly-constructed Park Theatre, making way for another type of entertainment. In 1951, the building was converted into a six-lane bowling alley.

Martin Jex Residence

322 - 324 GEORGE STREET

Martin Jex was a well-known contractor at the turn-of-the century, and like Reuben Jackson, popularized a style of house that was eventually named the “Jex” after him. In 1895, Jex established Martin Jex and Company, which quickly became one of the largest construction companies in this part of Ontario. The company built all types of buildings, as well as infrastructure including roads, bridges, sewers and sidewalks. Jex formed close working relationships with others in the building-trades – for instance, prominent Kingston architectural firm Power and Son. It’s no surprise, then, that Jex turned to Power and Son when he built his own house. The surprising part is that Jex built a semi-detached house for himself instead of a single one.

How many stained glass windows can you spot?



SITE
no.14

Battell Cottages

261 SPRING
STREET

Between 1830-1850, the Battell family built many frame houses near the corner of King and Spring Street. One of these was 271 Spring Street, built by William Battell Sr. It was decorated with whimsical, distinctive woodwork. It was sadly demolished in the 1980s, but its cousin at 261 Spring Street survived the redevelopment of the area and is currently home to a professional office. While most of the frame houses are gone or altered beyond recognition, rumour has it the Battell woodwork from 271 Spring Street was bought and removed – and that it is now being stored in a barn north of Cobourg.

*How many columns
hold up the front
verandah?*

SITE
no.15



Nearby:

SPRING ST. RAIL

Spring Street was once an active rail line. The Cobourg and Peterborough Railway was one of the first lines to be built in Central Ontario in 1854. It was meant to bring goods from the burgeoning area around Peterborough and Rice Lake to Cobourg's port. Unfortunately, it was plagued with problems from the start and did not succeed in transforming Cobourg into the urban centre it aspired to become. It did have a second life, though, bringing iron ore to port from the Marmora mines.

Commercial Terraces

74 - 84 KING STREET WEST

These terraces were built in the 1850s in the Georgian style. All six survive to this day, creating an uninterrupted streetscape evoking the mid-19th century commercial heart of Cobourg. Though similar to the earlier brick terraces of the 1840s, these are taller with longer windows and more ornate brickwork, reflecting the growing taste for longer proportions and showier, more ostentatious buildings – fitting for a town with big ambitions.

74 KING STREET W


For over 100 years, this was the site of a butcher store starting with the Webster family in the 1870s. It was still operating in 1970.

82 KING STREET W

During the late 1800s, this was the site of the Saturday Morning Post. For much of the 20th century, it was a bookshop.

84 KING STREET W

Carpenter Thomas Rettalick occupied this terrace and may have built several others in this block. Over its life, the building housed a tailor shop and tinsmith.



What two colours of brick were used to build the terraces?

Answers

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TEAR OFF HERE



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