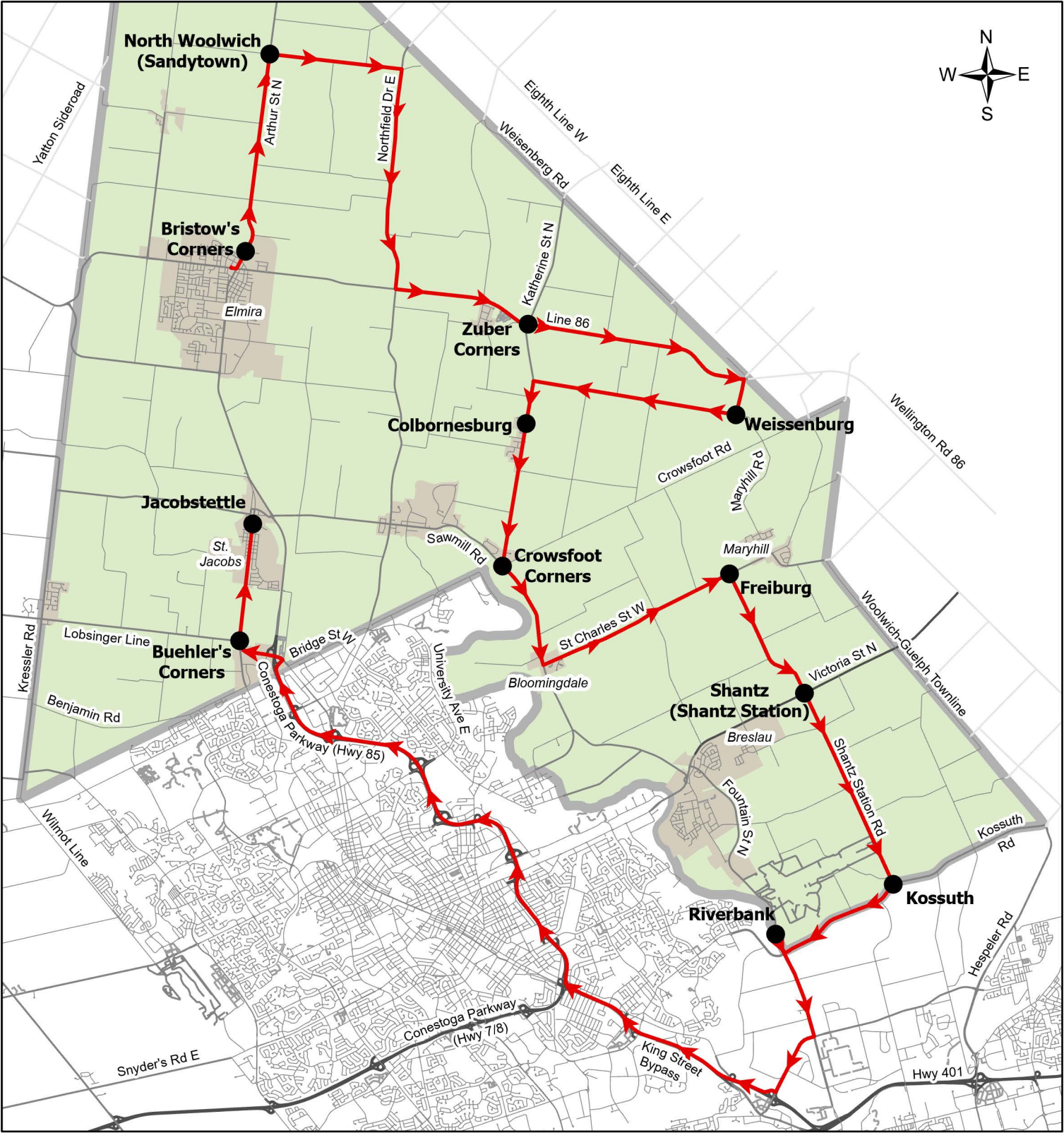


Ghost Communities Driving Tour Route



Legend	
	Ghost Community
	Driving Route



Map Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 17N
 Last Updated: 2024-07-22

Ghost Communities in Woolwich Township Driving Tour

*At points along this tour or close to it, you will find a few sites noted that may interest you if you want to take a break. They are highlighted in **blue**.*

Once thriving, these long-lost communities in Woolwich dwindled into non-existence over decades. Some vanished entirely or were absorbed into newer settlements. While there's not much to look at now, we'll learn about our communities past offering a glimpse of what these abandoned places once were.

Begin in Elmira at Church and Arthur St. Incidentally, this is the site of Bristow's Corners, a settlement that later was named Elmira. Go north on Arthur St (Route 21) to Sandy Hills Rd (Township Rd 3). Turn right. This is the location of North Woolwich (Sandytown).

If you are hungry, you may want to turn left on Floradale Road before you get to Sandy Hills Rd. You will find Bonnie Lou's Café just a bit down the road at 2238 Floradale Road in Floradale. "Take a break from the busy city life and come by Bonnie Lou's for a home cooked meal. Enjoy a hearty breakfast, warm lunch, or a homestyle dinner..."



North Woolwich (also Sandytown)

GPS Location: 43.648749, -80.547012

Located at the junction of present-day Arthur Street North and Sandy Hills Road in Woolwich Township, North Woolwich was the location of a short-lived post office, secured for that area by William Lyon Mackenzie King, the Member of Parliament for Waterloo North in 1908; the post office closed in 1913. A Mennonite meetinghouse, a Baptist church and an Evangelical Association church (later United Church of Canada) were in the area from the 1850s. Nearby Sandytown, also a short-lived hamlet, supplied some amenities to residents of the North Woolwich area.

Continue on Sandy Hills Road 3.3 km to Northfield Rd. Turn right, go 5.6 km to Line 86 and turn left. Continue 3.5 km to Zuber's Corners at the intersection with Regional Rd 23.

Zuber Corners (also Zuber's Corners)

GPS Location: 43.586870, -80.466570

Established in about 1870, Zuber Corners was located slightly to the east of West Montrose at the intersection of present-day Line 86 and Zuber Road (Road 23) in Woolwich Township. The Zuber family was one of the founders of New Germany in the 1830s. Zuber Corners and areas to its east was settled by Roman Catholics. It was the location of an inn/general store and a stone school built in 1874 to replace the one at West Montrose which was subjected to yearly flooding. The school remained open until

1967.

You may want to visit Lost Acres Variety at 12 Covered Bridge Drive in West Montrose, which will take you across the covered bridge (Kissing Bridge) which has a very interesting history. Lost Acres has wonderful baked goods... and a little of everything else.



Continue 5.7 km to Weissenburg at the intersection with Side Rd 16.

Weissenburg (also Weissenberg, Weissenburgh)

GPS Location: 43.574088, -80.399088

Established in about 1875, Weissenburg (“white hill” in German) was located at the present-day crossroads of Line 86 and Sideroad 16. The population of Weissenburg was about 100 in 1910, and it had daily stage-coach service. Pioneer farmers and wagon drivers travelling between Woolwich Township and Guelph would stop at Weissenburg to water their horses and refresh themselves (“wet their whistles”) at one of the two hotels, or to visit the blacksmith shop. Weissenburg’s main industries included the tavern, blacksmith shop, grocery store, two hotels and a school. A post office operated from 1875-1913.

Head south on Side Rd 16 for 950 m toward Township Rd 54. Turn right. Drive 5.2 km and then turn left onto Katherine St N (Waterloo Regional Rd 23). Go 1.4 km to Colbornesburg.

Colbornesburg

Colbornesburg, established about 1830 near today’s Winterbourne, was the first black settlement in what would become Woolwich Township. These black settlers, mostly from Ohio, had fled from the threat or actuality of being enslaved in the United States.

After two unsuccessful petitions for land to the Executive Council of Upper Canada, the Ohio group, led by Paola Brown and Charles Jackson, arrived at Crook’s Tract, near Winterbourne. After some difficulty, they managed to buy some undeveloped land. By 1832 Colbornesburg was a 34-person community in nine households.

Within two years, most of the settlement from Colbornesburg, including Paola Brown, left for other areas in the province. Several families moved to the Queen’s Bush, the southern periphery of unclaimed government land that lay 29 km north of the village of Waterloo and south of Lake Huron. Over time, settlers spread along a 13 by 21 km area on the boundary of modern-day Wellesley and Peel Townships, and established centres in Hawkesville and Wallenstein.

(Colbornesburg was east of the Grand, near Crook’s Tract and north of Cox Creek. There is no precise GPS location.)

Continue south on Katherine St N for 3.5 km to Crowsfoot Corners.

Crowsfoot Corners

GPS Location: 43.532035, -80.475117

Located on the township line between Woolwich and Waterloo Townships, Crowsfoot Corners sat on a main north-south road though Breslau and Bloomingdale to Elora in Wellington County. At the township line, another road forked off north-west toward the village of Conestogo. This intersection was Crowsfoot Corners, mainly known as the site of Ebenezer Chapel, one of the earliest United Brethren churches in the county. The church was later relocated to Bloomingdale. The settlement boundary is still recognized on many township and regional maps to this day.

If you wish to visit the village of Conestogo, turn right on Sawmill Rd. You will soon find The Crowsfoot restaurant at 1872 Sawmill Rd on your right. It offers “a menu that combines the community’s rich culture with classic Southern-style smokehouse barbecue.”



Or, for a less hearty breakfast or lunch, or just coffee or tea, you will find Rumbletum Café and Gifts on the left at 1895 Sawmill Rd.

Turn left (southeast) on Sawmill Rd (Regional Rd 17) for 2.8 km. Turn left onto St Charles St W (Regional Rd 26). Go 5.2 km to the intersections with Shantz Station Rd (Regional Rd 30). This is Freiburg.

Freiburg

GPS Location: 43.529654, -80.403968

A crossroads hamlet just west of New Germany (Maryhill) in the former Waterloo Township, Freiburg (“free hill” in German) was at the junction of present-day St. Charles Street West and Shantz Station Road. Established around 1840, it was originally called Rumbach Corners after the first entrepreneur in the area, Ferdinand Rumbach. For a couple of years he carried stock of mercantile effects (needles, pins, and other odds and ends) in a large box strapped over his shoulders. He later owned a two-storey brown log hotel called the Temperance House, a store and an assembly hall on the north side of St. Charles St. W. A post office operated here from about 1847-1852 when it moved to New Germany. Freiburg gradually declined as New Germany grew larger.

Turn right on Shantz Station Rd (Regional Rd 30) and drive 3.6 km to Shantz Station at the intersection with Highway 7.

Shantz (also Shantz Station)

GPS Location: 43.502796, -80.380798

Located in present-day Woolwich Township on Shantz Station Road near the intersection with Victoria Street North, Shantz was on the farm of Samuel Y. Shantz. Samuel, his wife Esther and their twelve children lived on the farm between 1846 and 1867. Shantz was laid out in 1855. The Grand Trunk Railway was built through the Shantz farm in 1856 but hopes for a railway station did not materialize. Also, plans for a village to be built alongside a proposed railway station (Shantz Station) never materialized. An early post office there was operated from 1859-1863. There was a hotel for a few years, a Lutheran church, and two stores, including Schilling's, which lasted many years. Three schoolhouses were successively in use, starting with log buildings in 1843 and 1853. A stone building followed in 1894, with a second room added in 1955. The schoolhouse closed in 1965 for general education classrooms, but it held special education classes until 1968 when the building was closed.

Continue south on Shantz Station Rd (Regional Rd 30) for 5.3 km to Kossuth.

Kossuth

GPS Location: 43.459127, -80.353548

The settlement of Kossuth in Woolwich Township is usually said to have been named after Louis Kossuth, a nineteenth century Hungarian patriot who was widely acclaimed as a champion of liberty in Europe and abroad. However, Tremaine's 1861 map of Waterloo County indicates that a Mrs. Kossuth owned two properties in the settlement, suggesting a more immediate source. Located a little to the north of Hespeler, along the road from Preston to Guelph, Kossuth sat at the present-day junction of Kossuth Road and Shantz Station Road. Its crossroads function was most important during the construction of the Grand Trunk Railway in the mid-1850s. Its hotel served teamsters hauling loads of limestone from the Speed River and other construction supplies. When railway building concluded, Kossuth lost significance but remained to serve the needs of a large rural population. A distinctive industry was the manufacture of sulphur matches by the Zyrd family. The town also boasted a tavern, two grocers, a pottery, a post office, a hotel, a shoemaker, a saddler and a blacksmith.

The post office closed in 1921 and by then the only remaining business was the shoemaker. A log school was established in 1842, replaced with a stone structure in the 1870s (also known as Reist's School and Waterloo Township S.S. No.16). Somewhat fittingly, the Kossuth school was purchased by the Hungarian Canadian Club when the school was closed in the 1960s.



*Waterloo Township S.S. No. 16,
Reist's School, Kossuth, Ontario*

Turn right onto Kossuth Rd (Regional Rd 31) and travel 3.3 km to the intersection with Fountain St N (Regional Rd 17). This is Riverbank.

Riverbank

GPS Location: 43.448809, -80.390581

One of the earliest schools in Waterloo County, Riverbank School was established in 1832 at the present-day junction of Riverbank Road and Fountain Street. In its early years, it was called the High Banks School, and later, Waterloo Township S.S. No. 15 school. A log structure was replaced by a frame building, and later by a stone schoolhouse around 1870. The school closed amid some controversy in 1960, and for a brief time was used as the headquarters of the Waterloo County Library.



*Waterloo Township S.S. No. 15
Riverbank School, ca. 1970.
DHC X.961.034.001*

Go south for 5.2 km on Fountain St N (Regional Rd 17). Merge onto Highway 8W (ON 85 N). Drive 18.1 km to the Regional Rd 15 exit. Use the left 2 lanes to turn left onto King St N. Drive 1.3 km to Buehler's Corners.

Buehler's Corners (also known as Wagner's Corners, Wakeford Corners)

GPS Location: 43.515137, -80.557504

Located in Woolwich Township at the junction of roads leading to St. Jacobs, Heidelberg, and Waterloo, Buehler's Corners (after the family who had a property at the corner) was an area settled by Pennsylvania-German Mennonites in the 1830s. Although there were a blacksmith shop and a sawmill to the west along the Heidelberg Road, there was no real settlement at the corners.



Mr. and Mrs. Abe Buehler at Wagner's Corners, 1912. DHC Research Files



*Wagner's Corners, ca. 1960
The Record Photo Collection,
University of Waterloo*

Continue north for 2.8 km on King St N to St. Jacobs. Though not technically a ghost community because it became St. Jacobs, this is the site of the older community of Jacobstettel.

Jacobstettel

Jacob C. Snider, of Swiss German descent, built a sawmill, a flour-mill and a woollen-mill by 1852, after having built a dam. These features helped to attract others to the small community. When the settlement became a village, it was named Jakobstettel (Jacob's Village) in honour of Snider. The *St.* was added to the name Jacob simply to make it sound more pleasing; the pluralization was in honour of the combined efforts of Jacob C. Snider (1791–1865) and his son, Jacob C. Snider, Jr. (1822–1857).

An 1851 report indicated that the village itself had a flour mill owned by Benjamin D. Snyder, a hotel, a blacksmith, a general store and a cooperage. The first post office opened in 1852, called St. Jacobs, and the village was incorporated in that year. By 1855, the population was 400 and by then, there were four hotels, including Benjamins which still stands. The school then had 66 students. There was only a single church (Evangelical Association) built in 1850.

Industry in 1867 included a flour mill, a tannery, a harness shop, a wagon maker, a woollen mill, a barrelmaker. There was also a distillery, several general stores and two hotels as well as artisans and tradesmen. John Ortwein produced the burned limestone that was used in the construction of various buildings. In 1869, the population was 500. A rail line was not built here until 1891. Even that did not help to boost the population and St. Jacobs remained a small village, with virtually no growth until the 1950s.

The Home Hardware company, founded in 1963 and still operating, can trace its roots all the way back to the 1880s in St. Jacobs. That's when a tinsmith shop was opened and was later sold to Henry Gilles who added a blacksmith shop and hardware store. It

changed hands several times and in 1938, Walter J. Hachborn began working for the store. Hachborn and two partners then founded Home Hardware in 1963.

There are many shops and eating establishments to explore in St. Jacobs!

If you wish to return to Elmira, continue north on King Street through St. Jacobs. Follow the signs for Highway 85 North and proceed to Elmira.