

DOWNTOWN LONDON, ONT



THE CURSE OF PEG-LEG

FALL 2018

STOPS

01 OLD COURTHOUSE

The tour begins with the story of Marion Brown at 399 Ridout St. N.

02 418/430 RICHMOND

In the 1890s, London's main media sources were divided along political party lines, causing there to be great variety in the way some incidents were reported.

03 RAIL STATION

A peg-legged vagrant stirs up trouble on the tracks of London's Grand Trunk Railway station.

04 215 DUNDAS

An old concert hall becomes the site of confrontation.

05 OLD COURTHOUSE

Returning to the old Middlesex County Courthouse you will hear a story about one of the most expensive trials in London's history.

06 COURTHOUSE GAOLS

Walk around to the back of the Courthouse to learn more about the Middlesex County Gaol and its gallows.

07 MUSEUM LONDON

Explore the myths and realities of a local legend.



DIRECTIONS

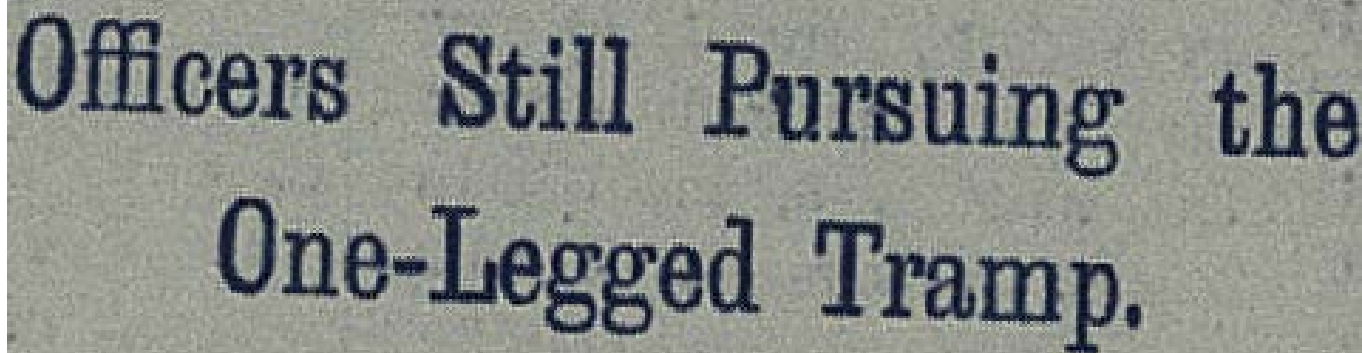
The tour begins at 399 Ridout Street N., the old Middlesex County Courthouse and ends across the street at 421 Ridout St. N., Museum London. The tour runs on a 2.1km loop.

This pamphlet was designed to complement an audio tour to provide additional information on each tour stop.

Once you have arrived at 399 Ridout Street N., dial:

1-819-201-6686

Once dialed, you will be prompted to enter the number that corresponds to your current stop. The tour begins with Stop 1.

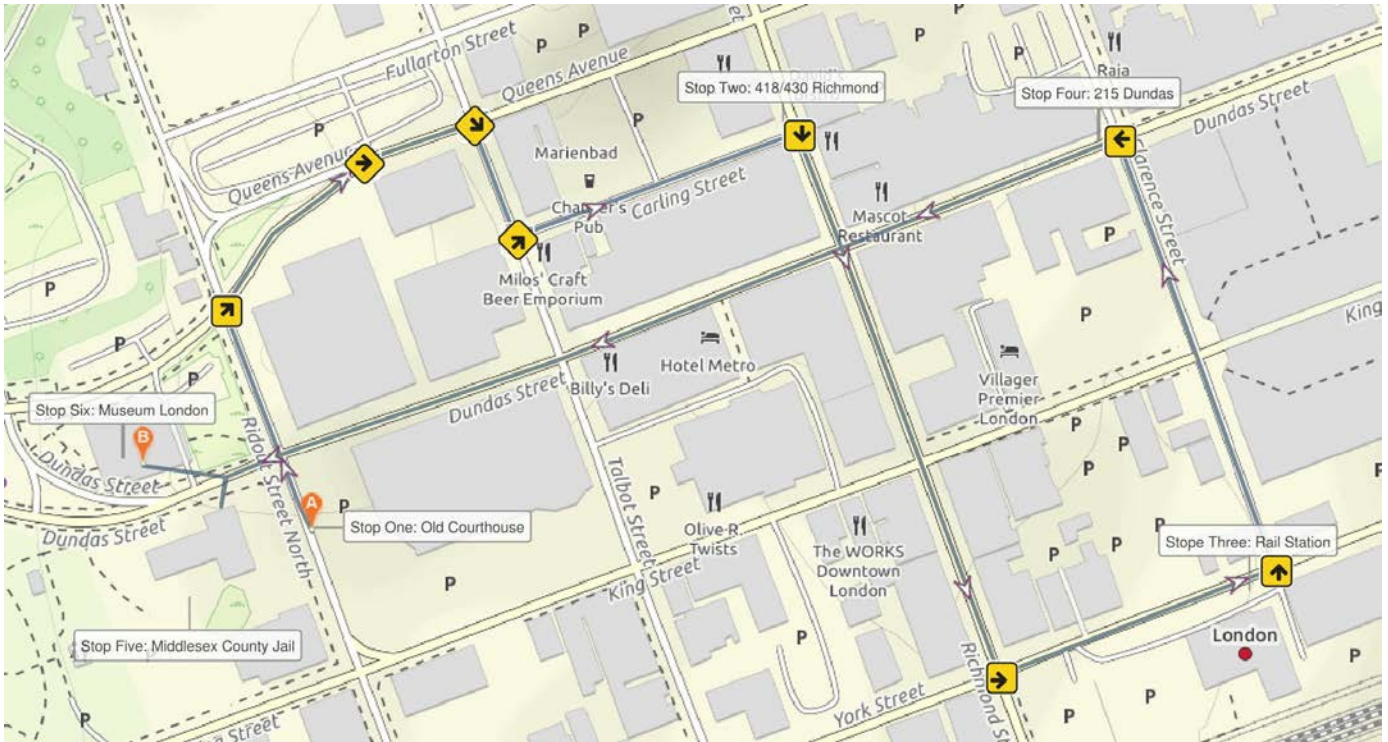


Officers Still Pursuing the
One-Legged Tramp.

GUIDELINES

- For your safety, please follow the tour path and directions.
- When listening to the audio or stopping to read, please be aware of your surroundings and stop only where it is safe.
- For directions between stops, refer back to the Tour Map page.

TOUR MAP



| Km | Turn | Directions |
|-------|------|--------------------------------------|
| 0.000 | | Start on Ridout Street North |
| 0.018 | ↗ | Turn right onto Queens Avenue |
| 0.251 | ↗ | Turn slight right onto Queens Avenue |
| 0.277 | → | Turn right onto Talbot Street |
| 0.351 | ← | Turn left onto Carling Street |
| 0.589 | → | Turn right onto Richmond Street |
| 0.690 | ← | Turn left onto York Street |
| 1.111 | ← | Turn left onto Clarence Street |
| 1.158 | ← | Turn left onto Dundas Street |

After Stop Four at 215 Dundas, the tour will return to the Courthouse on Ridout St. N. Please walk around to the back of the building for Stop Five before proceeding across the street to Stop Six: Museum London.



OLD COURTHOUSE

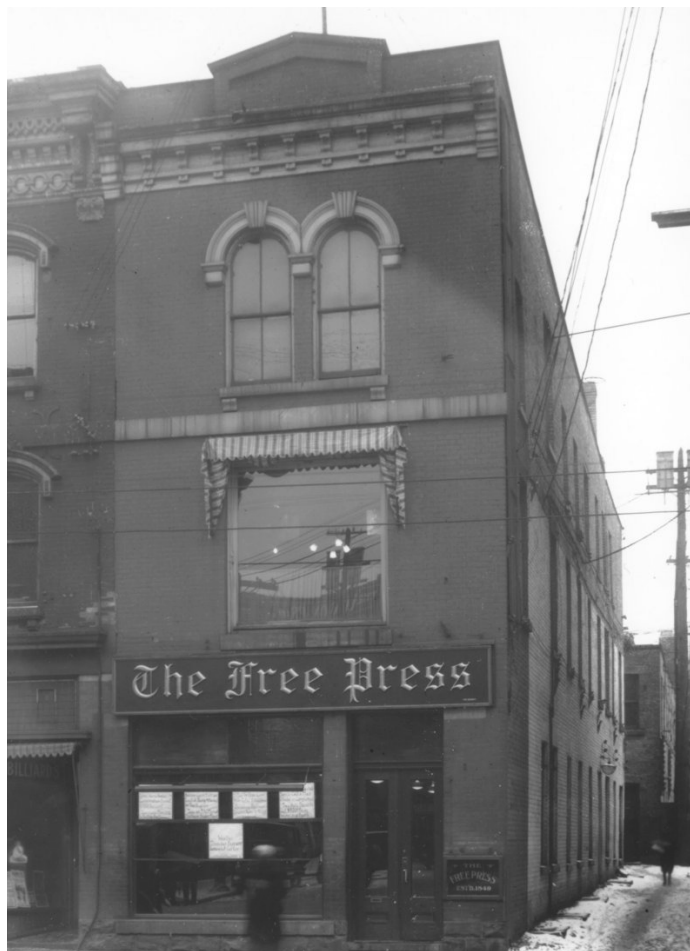
WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH
CARBONNEAU

The year was 1898. Marion Brown, also known as Madie or Peg-Leg, was a 25-year-old American man. Originally from San Sabo County, Texas, he was the multi-racial son of a Texas-Mexican frontier desperado. As his nickname suggests, Brown only had one leg. He had a history of stealing rides on trains, and one such ride resulted in his being thrown from a car. The severity of his subsequent injuries caused him to lose his left leg.

The wooden peg leg he wore afterwards became something of a trademark, and did not seem to hinder him at all in his later criminal exploits.

LONDON'S TIMBER-LIMBED VAGRANT

After robbing a store in Round Rock, Texas, Brown was imprisoned in nearby Georgetown. He escaped the jail on June 7, 1898, after several inmates staged a fake fight in the cells. He arrived at the Grand Trunk Railway station in London on June 24, 1898, following seventeen days of "riding the rails." The events that followed would cement Brown's place in London as a local legend and criminal celebrity.



418/430 RICHMOND

WRITTEN BY KATHARINE
ANDERSON

The original location of the London Free Press was at 430 Richmond Street. Today, the Free Press is located at 369 York Street, but resided in this location from 1868 until 1931. English journalist Josiah Blackburn began the Free Press in 1855 at its first location on Carling Street, currently the Marienbad Restaurant. Down the block, there is a Scotiabank at 420 Richmond Street which also covers the 418 lot where the Free Press' main competitor, the

London Advertiser, once stood. Started in 1863 by John Cameron, it was the main news rival and liberal counterpart of the Free Press until it closed in 1936. Both papers reported in detailed length about the case of Marion "Peg-Leg" Brown.

LONDON'S NEWS

The liberal-bent Advertiser also reported on the social problem of "tramps" and vagrants as the streets of London became "infested". One reporter declared on July 5, 1898, "The tramp business is becoming an intolerable nuisance."



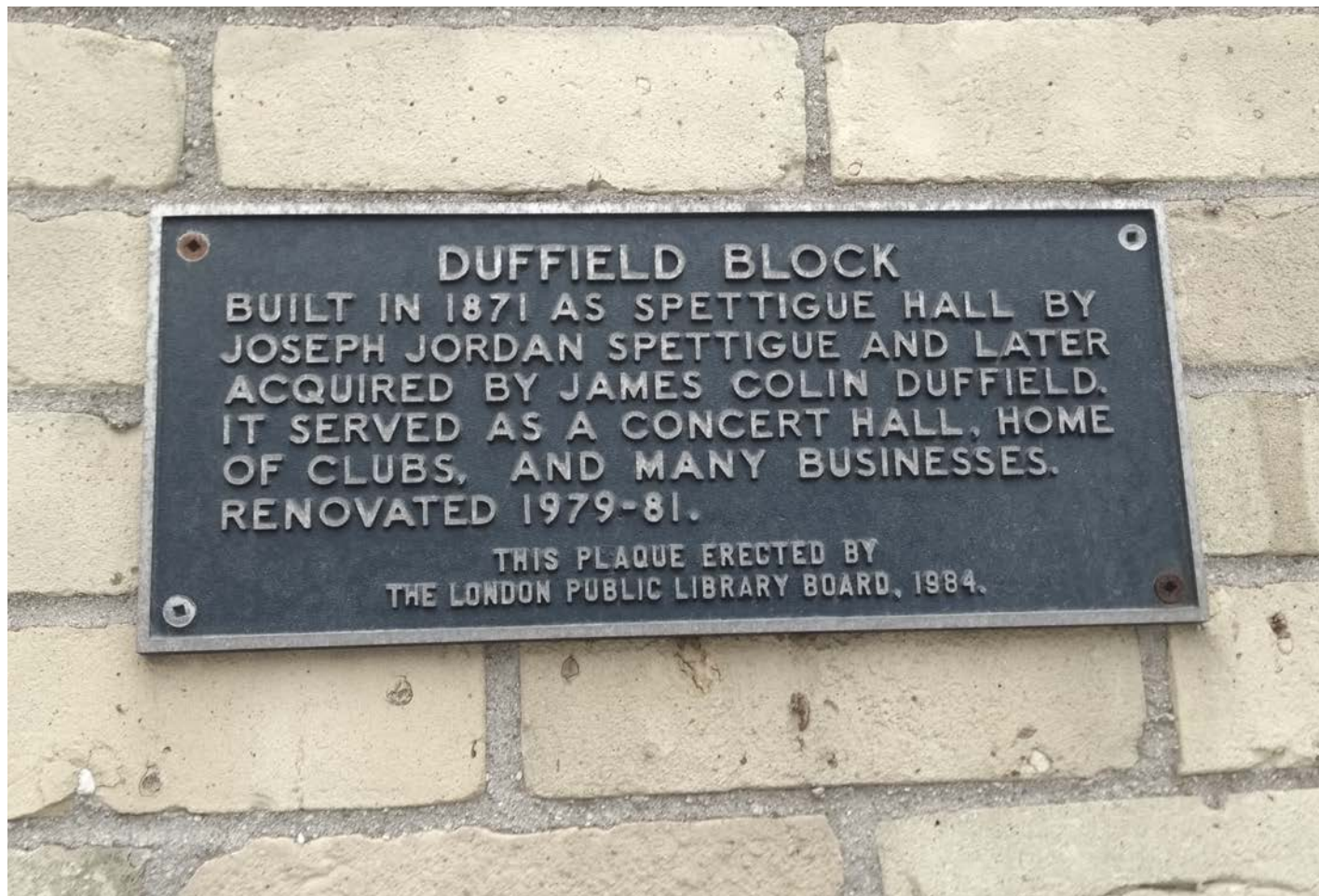
RAIL STATION

WRITTEN BY LEANNA TRAN

Today, the Via Rail Station, located at 205 York St. serves as the major interchange for all Via Rail Trains. The first passenger train was completed in 1853 and this location continued to serve as a station even after 1882, when it was amalgamated into the Grand Trunk Railway. On June 24, 1898, Peg-Leg arrived at the London station of the Grand Trunk Railway after 17 days of "riding the rails." At the station, James Ross, a watchman, noticed a mystery man walking along the tracks, which was a violation of the station's rules. Calling out to the man, Ross received no response. Approaching the man Ross was punched so hard

that he fell to the ground unconscious. Many station workers witnessed the incident and ran to Ross' aid. The man escaped, but workers provided a description of the mystery tramp to police and a search began for the mystery assailant with a wooden peg leg and a black slouch hat. Officer P.C. Toohey was on patrol that night. He quickly learned of a man fitting the description, heading West on Ontario Street. Toohey pursued the man for five blocks, arresting Peg-Leg at the corner of Elias and Ontario. However, he managed to break free of the cuffs and a struggle ensued. Toohey called to a man nearby to get help. When the man returned, Toohey was dead, having been shot twice. Peg-Leg was nowhere to be seen, but in the commotion he left his black slouch hat.

Image Source: Ivey Family London Room.
"Grand Trunk Railway Depot, London, Ontario."



215 DUNDAS

WRITTEN BY HEATHER
WILSON

The murder of Officer Toohey sparked an international manhunt for the “peg legged tramp” believed to be responsible. Brown evaded arrest in London and fled south to Michigan, leaving a trail of crime in his wake. The morning of the 28th, he held woman at gunpoint, demanding breakfast, in her home near Watford. He carried a six shooter revolver, which he reportedly abandoned after engaging in a brief gun battle with two officers that same

morning. Many one-legged men were mistakenly arrested and later released across North America during the months of searching for Toohey's murderer.

THE ARREST

Brown was finally arrested in October of 1898 at an opera house in North Yakima, Washington, and was positively identified through the black slouch hat left behind at the scene of Toohey's murder. On October 8th US Marshall Dilley and London Detective Thomas Nickel returned Brown to London, amongst some political controversy, to stand trial.



OLD COURTHOUSE

WRITTEN BY KATRINA
BJORNSTAD

On March 22, 1899, the trial for Officer Toohey's murder began. A crowd of 300 gathered outside the courthouse hoping to witness the proceedings. Marion "Peg Leg" Brown had become notorious in the papers which caused some complications for the trial. Many potential jurors had been swayed by reporting meaning the outcome could have been unfair. There were also people who believed the London Police Force was trying to cover up the fact

that the real criminal was still at large. The Crown's Counsel still attempted to provide as much evidence as possible, even calling 80 witnesses.

THE TRIAL OF PEG-LEG BROWN

Despite the moral dilemma the jury found Brown guilty and he was sentenced to hang on May 17, 1899.



COURTHOUSE GAOLS

WRITTEN BY SKYLEE-STORM
HOGAN

While awaiting his trial and sentence, Peg-Leg Brown resided in the Courthouse Gaol. Located in the basement, each cell was only three feet wide, a cot and sanitary pail were the only furnishings. A block of six cells would look in on a small common area. On death row Brown converted to Christianity. Becoming close with a local Presbyterian pastor, Brown was often reading the bible and singing hymns in the common area.

A large crowd had gathered around the jail yard on the morning of May 17th, Rev. Johnson and legal officials accompanied Brown to the scaffold and 30 seconds past 8 a.m. Peg Leg Brown was hung out of public view. Rev. Johnson believed so adamantly that Brown was innocent that, in the days before the hanging, he travelled to Ottawa to seek an appeal. The pastor was unsuccessful.

A CROWD HAD GATHERED

When all was said and done, the trial of Peg-Leg Brown had become the most expensive to have ever been tried in Middlesex County, totalling around \$4500.



MUSEUM LONDON

WRITTEN BY RACHEL
DELLE PALME

Marion "Peg-Leg" Brown has become part of local legend in London, Ontario. Rumours of his ghost haunting his former jail terrified and fascinated prisoners and tourists for years. In 1885, while doing construction in the Old Court House's yard, the former location of the gallows, a skeleton was uncovered. It was quickly determined that the remains belonged to Brown. His remains were taken to the University of Western Ontario to be examined

and they are still there to this day. Brown's peg-leg, chains from his handcuffs, and the bullet that killed Officer Toohey rest in storage as part of the collections of Museum London.

A PEG-LEG & A BROKEN LINK

A timber-limbed vagrant or an innocent man convicted of a crime he didn't commit? The story of Marion Brown produces more questions than answers. One thing is for certain, the legacy of Marion "Peg-Leg" Brown will not soon be forgotten.

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**ANOTHER
INNOCENT MAN
HAS BEEN
CONVICTED.
THE FACT THAT
NO GRASS
SHALL FORM
ON MY GRAVE
SHALL PROVE
MY INNOCENCE.**

“



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UWO MA PUBLIC HISTORY, CLASS
OF 2019

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***IN PEG-LEG
WE TRUST.***

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