

Georgetown's History

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Kennedy, the first settler here and after whom the town was re-named in 1837 following its original name of "Hungry Hollow." Kennedy Street is in the area of the Morris Kennedy farm and Morris Street is likely named after the same person. He was George Kennedy's brother.

On a Georgetown map of 1854 in the County Registry Office at Milton, five streets are shown running parallel with each other: Harriet, Elizabeth, Sarah, Elgin and Union. The first two were eliminated when the cemetery was established in its present location and only stub ends of the others remain. The first three names could possibly be children of the George Kennedys. It is recorded that Harriet, their daughter, was the first white child born in Georgetown. The Kennedys had nine children in all and maybe Sarah and Elizabeth were among these. Of these three feminine street names only Sarah remains. If I'm not right about the Kennedys, there is one other possibility and that is about Sarah Street. John R. Barber senior had a sister whose name was Sarah and there might be other sisters of which I haven't any record. Union Street was originally planned to join Guelph Street and might possibly have been so-named because it united King Street with the old "Toronto and Guelph Plank Road."

Elgin and Durham Streets, I'm sure, represent Lord Elgin and Lord Durham who were prominent figures and effectively left their marks on the history of Canada before Confederation in Georgetown's early days. The Earl of Dufferin, Governor General of Canada from 1872 to 1878 and the Marquis of Lorne who followed him from 1878 to 1883 are identified by Dufferin Street and Lorne Street respectively. McNab Street, I surmise, is named after Sir Allan Napier McNab who was prominent in politics at the time and became Prime Minister under Lord Elgin for a short time in 1854. He is famous for his exploits during the insurrection of 1837-38 for which he was knighted.

Queen Victoria began her reign in 1837, the same year that Hungry Hollow became Georgetown. Victoria Avenue, Crescent and Street identify with her and Albert Street with her distinguished husband and consort, Prince Albert. Nearly every town and city in Canada has a Queen Street and a King Street. We have ours.

John Street gets its name from John Dayfoot, I'm sure, whose property extended over most of the area along that Street. The Dayfoot name was an important one for almost a century and was associated with its tannery and boot and shoe industry. The factory and dam were located where Silvercreek passes under John Street. Employees lived in houses along the street built by the firm and the street was often referred to by its nickname, "Tannery Street."

Ewing Street, I think, is named for the Rev. Robert Ewing who was the second minister of Knox Presbyterian Church from 1862 to 1876. Wesleyan Street received its name from the Wesleyan Methodist Church at its head, now the Odd-fellows, Rebekah Temple, Chapel Streets, East and West, derive from the location of the Episcopal Methodist Church and Cemetery now occupied by St. John's United Church and Church Street for the location of Knox Presbyterian Church at the corner of Main, since 1867 when its first red brick church building was erected, and the Congregational Church, at the corner of Market Street, erected in 1877, which has been our Public Library since 1913.

College Street and Academy Road remind us of the Georgetown Academy (or Canadian Collegiate Institute) which existed in that area for a few distinguished years from the middle 1850's on. Market Street records the public market bordered by Factory Street (now Park Ave.) Edith Street, Church Street and Market Street. This was probably a very busy thoroughfare, especially on market days and it is likely that traffic moved up Mill Street and turned at Market Street, an easy direction to the public market. I think we should save this little quirk, where Mill Street ends at Market Street and Young Street begins and continues to Charles Street.

Mill Street simply led everyone down to the mills and factories on Water Street where industry was first established in Georgetown. The mill pond along Water Street and extending over to Guelph Street was made by the Barber Brothers to run their woollen mill machinery and was a beautiful sight in the centre of the town for some seventy-five to eighty years, judging from old photos I've seen of it. In its latter days it was a recreational area for boating in summer and skating in the winter.

I can understand the slight confusion in the three Victorias and would suggest that, perhaps, Victoria Ave. be extended down to John Street and at the same time re-name Victoria Street. Part of John Street, either east or west could be called Dayfoot. Caroline, Rosetta and St. Michael Streets are delightful street names and come down to us from the earliest days of the town, as do all of the others mentioned here. I hope I can find out about them and several others to accumulate more information to add to the origins of the town's street names and thereby add interest to our present day community.

Going over these names is really delving into Georgetown's history and thinking about any one of them conjures up the thought that there could be a story behind each of them.

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Bruce M. Harding

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