

Behind the Name: Acton's newest street once site of farm, shoe factory

Streets have often been named after someone or something but the historical significance isn't always clear, as that information was either poorly recorded or just simply lost to the hands of time. Thankfully, that isn't the case with Acton's latest street, Braida Lane, which has quite the history behind its name.



Eugene Braida was born November 6th, 1887 in Altaretto, Gravera, in the Piedmonte region in the Alps of northern Italy. He was the eldest son and the second oldest of five children to Battista Brayda and Maria Beltrando.

According to records held by Eugene's daughter and son-in-law, Rena and Ray Arbic, Eugene was raised on a farm where they had chickens, rabbits, cows, and a couple of donkeys, and also grew hay and tended their vineyards where they would harvest the grapes to make wine and sell it locally for cash.

When Eugene was 12, his father passed away, leaving Eugene, his older sister, and mother to provide for the family. By 1907, as a young man, Eugene could not see much of a future for him and his siblings if they were to stay in Gravera, so he decided to head for Canada.

Upon his arrival to Canada, he began his new life in Muskoka, Ontario where he worked a couple of years at lumber camps, eventually working at Beardmore's tanneries in Bracebridge and Huntsville. It is also believed that Eugene had moved to the Muskoka area as his future wife, Teresa Gugliermo and her sister Modesta, also from Gravera, had immigrated a year earlier to work at a linen mill in Bracebridge.

Eugene and Teresa returned to Gravera to be married on Sept 21st, 1912. A few weeks after the wedding, the newlyweds returned back to Huntsville. It was in Bracebridge where three of the couple's children, Elma, Norman, and Nino were born, before returning back to Italy, once again in 1922. The decision to do so was mainly due to the pleading of his mother Maria, who was living alone at home.

During their return to Italy, it was on April 3rd, 1925 when their daughter Rena was born. Later that year, Eugene applied for a passport to go back to Canada. The family moved to Huntsville, where Eugene resumed working at the tannery until being transferred to Acton in 1926 to work at the Beardmore Tannery.

Their first Acton home was at 173 Main Street South, later moving a few months after to a two-storey block house on Main Street and lived there until relocating to Park Avenue in 1931.

By 1939, Eugene announced to his family he had purchased the Kenney Bros. Shoe store at 19 Mill Street East. He hired a man to run the store while continuing to work in the rolling room at Beardmore until 1941 when he quit to work full time at the store, along with Rena.

In 1945 he again announced to his family of another purchase, this time of a farm at 284 Queen Street that was purchased from Fred Cooper. This farm was owned by many since being transferred from the Crown in 1836, including train mogul Sir Donald Mann.

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