

ESSAYS FROM THE EAST SIDE: Naming Aurora

By Corrie Clark

What's in a name? The new subdivisions on the east side of Aurora have taken shape and are adding about 3,000 new residents, and many new streets, so it's probably worth a discussion as to how the old greets the new in naming Aurora.

Town Hall has a list of approved names, but new street names are sometimes left up to the developer with approval. You can apply to have a name put forth and added to the list. There is a commitment to heritage in Aurora, and the names that are put forth are usually significant people, events or subjects related to Aurora's history.

I have a book titled "Naming Canada" by Alan Rayburn. It's a fun reference about naming our country and the mysteries behind the monikers.

Queen Victoria appears over 300 times on our maps. We became the "Dominion of Canada" partly because Victoria didn't like "Kingdom of Canada". Whew!

William Fitzwilliam Owen named many of the "1,000 Islands" after stuffy British Military men in the war of 1812. I wanted personal stories about the place names of Aurora, so I asked the question in the open forum of Facebook.

I got great answers from local citizens. One of my favourite names is "Loring Doolittle CT." Loring Doolittle is being inducted to the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame in November. His daughter, Cathy Dye, tells me he was born on Catherine Ave, playing all kinds of sports. He was an Umpire for minor leagues and then an NHL linesman for years.

Her love and pride for her Father is evident in her words.

Many streets are named for soldiers who fought in both World Wars, politicians and businessmen.

Dr. Crawford Rose is very worthy of the street he's honored with as he brought local babies into the world, like John Anderson, and "Stitched me up when I did something stupid at Town Park" and he made old-fashioned jokes and put you at ease.

He also stitched up Derek Bunn's father's band saw injury, with "no numbing, hand stitched, and nice work".

He did house calls caring for his community.

Mr. Bunn said Thompson Drive is named after Thompson's Funeral Home as his Dad lived behind it. One day Bill Thompson was in his yard wearing a white dress shirt and his Dad called him to the hole in the fence. His Dad threw a tomato at the hole and got the white dress shirt all covered leaving the Thompson housemaid unimpressed.

Glass Drive was named after his Dad's childhood friend Reg. Reg's wife would make huge cardboard castles, at Christmas for her children, with a drawbridge and turrets. The castle would house all the children's presents.

Mr. Dunning was a police officer, he recalls, and his Uncle Arthur borrowed his police outfit on Halloween and started to stop cars on Yonge Street. He opened trunks and checked under seats as a Halloween prank. Not the kind of hijinks you could get away with today. These small stories give the street and the town layers of presence and personality.

Derek Bunn thinks his family deserves a little place of their own. Howard Bunn was a town councilor, others in the RCAF, aunts who worked at Scanlon's bakery and Cousins Dairy, so there's a lot of good Bunn history here.

He's put his name in Town Hall. Stories give great essence to Aurora.

So, what's in a name? Find out. It's more than just a street sign for directions or the street where you live. It's an honour bestowed on someone worthy, giving you a sense of home, and one could hope, perhaps quirky and unusual history in the community.