

“Unusual” Township Names

By Allan Day

If you were to look at a map of the North Channel of Lake Huron and the North Shore of Lake Superior prior to 1974 you would see a series of townships in the Algoma, Sudbury and Thunder Bay Districts that were designated by a number, township number and range, letter or a number followed by a letter.

Jeff Ball, Geographic Names Specialist, at the Ministry of Natural Resources Geographic Names office here in Peterborough told me what the procedure was used to obtain names for these townships for consideration and how the final decision was made for the name. This is his reply. “Names were put forward by an All-Party committee of the provincial legislature. Suitable names from the All-Party committee were submitted to the Minister of Natural Resources for approval by the Premier and government”. The final approval for the names of these townships was given June 27, 1974.

The following is a list of some of the names I find “unusual” and intriguing. The order in which the townships are listed has no significance.

Kamichisitit (Twp 168) named for an Ojibwa who was converted by Jesuit missionaries at Sault Ste Marie and greatly assisted work against his people.

Keesickquayash (Twp 25 Range 24) named for Jasper Keesickquayash, Head Councillor at Cat Lake Reservation.

Nebonaionquet (Twp 28 Range 22) named for D Nebonaionquet, Chief of the Whitefish Lake Reserve.

Running (Twp 24 Range 15) named for T C Running Reeve of Prince Township in the Algoma District.

Way-Wright (Twp 24 Range 14) named for T C Way-Wright Reeve of Chapeau Township.

Root (Twp 4D) named for John Root MPP of Wellington-Dufferin.

Timmermans (Twp 161) named for Arie F Timmermans, RCAF, FL of Blind River who was killed in 1945 during World War II.

Buckles (Twp 144) named for Henry R Buckles, a Canadian mining engineer.

Gunterman (Twp 149) named for Karl G Gunterman, a prospector from Sault Ste Marie who first discovered evidence of radio-activity south of the Elliot Lake area resulting in the discovery and mining of uranium and put Elliot Lake on the map.

Cowie (Twp 27 Range 25) named for Robert A Cowie, Jr. of the Hiawatha Indian Band. (my Mother’s maiden name)

D’Avaugour (Twp 23 Range 23) named for Louis D’Avaugour who was the procurator for all the Jesuit missions in North America in the 17th century.

Beebe (Twp H) named for A L Beebe the Mayor of Sioux Lookout in 1974.

Tweedle (Twp 2A) named for Charles A Tweedle RCAF, PO who was killed during in 1943 in World War II.

Snow (Twp 3G) named for J W Snow MPP for Halton East and Minister of the Ministry of Transportation and Communications.

Oshell (Twp B) named for M J Oshell who in 1973 was the Mayor of Powassan.

Yaremko (Twp W) named for John Yaremko MPP¹ for Bellwoods² in 1974.

Tabobondung (Twp 26 Range 20) named for Flora Tabobondung, Chief of Parry Island.

Nadjiwon (Twp 24 Range 23) named for Wilmer Nadjiwon, Chief of Cape Cocker which is located northwest of Shoals Provincial Park.

Mandamin (Twp 124) named for Henry E Mandamin, Canadian Army Rifleman from the Manitoulin District who was killed in World War II in 1944.

Shingwaukonce (Twp 195) (Indian for “Young Pines”) named for an Indian Chief at Sault Ste Marie who fought with General Brock and Tecumseh at Queenston Heights during the War of 1812.

Druillettes (Twp 37) named for Gabriel Druillettes who was a Jesuit priest at a Sault Ste Marie mission in the 17th century.

Dambrossio (Twp 30 Range 27) named for Canadian Army Corporal Dominic Dambrossio of Thunder Bay who was killed in action in 1944.

Assef (Twp P) named for the Mayor of Thunder Bay W M Assef.

Brothers (Twp 72) named for Sergeant Monty H Brothers RCAF killed in 1942.

Priske (Twp 84) named for Sidney P Priske RC, Navy, Navy PO.

Tuuri (Twp 81) named for Albert W Tuuri RCAF, PO from Thunder Bay District killed in 1944.

Albanel (Twp 169) named for Charles A Albanel a Jesuit missionary sent by first Intendant of New France **Jean Talon** to Hudson Bay.

La Verendrye (Twp 24 Range 11) named for Pierre La Verendrye an explorer who reached the Sault area on his way West in the 1730’s.

Gaiashk (Twp 137) Named for Canadian Army Private Alphonse F Gaiashk who was killed during World War II.

Yesno (Twp 87) named for John Yesno a resident of Fort Hope on the Albany River.

Redsky (Twp 29 Range 21) named for Herbert Redsky a resident of Shoal Lake.

Roy (Twp 27 Range 21) named for Michael Roy a Chief at Wikwemikong.

Solski (Twp 114E) named for M Solski, Mayor of Nickel Centre.

Walsh (Twp 80) named for William M Walsh, Canadian Army Pte from the Thunder Bay District who was killed during World War II.

Wiggins (Twp 88) named for Thomas H Wiggins who was a surveyor/geologist in the late 1800’s.

Goodwillie (Twp 29 Range 17) named for J Goodwillie who was the Reeve of the Township of Red Lake in 1974.

Braithwaite (Twp 9B) named for Leonard A Braithwaite, MPP for Etobicoke.

Adanac is not in this area (Cochrane District) but it’s interesting. It’s Canada spelt backward.

No article on “Unusual Township Names” wouldn’t be complete if I didn’t mention the “Township of the Dancing Pig”. Ken Matthews of the firm *Kim Husted Surveying* in Tillsonburg told me that there was such a township down near them called the “Township of the Dancing Pig”. I asked him what he meant. He replied “Walsingham”, of course. (*groan*)

This article is by no means complete. It is just a random sampling of townships that I happen to find of interest. Maybe in the next issue of the magazine I’ll write about more townships or towns in the province with “unusual names” such as the townships of “Tiny”, “Tay” or “Flos”. These township names are often attributed to ‘Lady’ Elizabeth Simcoe, wife of Governor John Graves Simcoe. In reality they were the names of three pet dogs of Lady Sarah Maitland, wife of Lieutenant-Governor Sir Peregrine Maitland or the Town of Kenora named by using the first two letters of the District of Keewatin and the first two letters of the towns of Norman and Rat Portage. 

The information in this article was obtained from a 3 volume set of books which I have in my library entitled “Places In Ontario” published by Mikki Publishing Company, Belleville, ON. The information on John Yaremko was found on Wikipedia.

Allan Day worked in the Office of the Surveyor General, Ministry of Natural Resources for 28 years as a Survey Records Information Officer. He now owns a survey and research business in Peterborough. E-Mail surveyresearch@cogeco.ca

¹ He was the first Ukrainian-Canadian member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. He was initially elected in the 1951 provincial election as a Progressive Conservative Member of Provincial Parliament. He served the riding of Bellwoods from 1951 until 1975. Yaremko served in the provincial cabinet as Minister Without Portfolio in 1958, Minister of Transport from 1958 to 1960, Provincial Secretary and Registrar from 1960 to 1966, Minister of Public Welfare from 1966 to 1967, Minister of Social and Family Services from 1967 to 1971, Provincial Secretary and Minister of Citizenship from 1971 to 1972 and Solicitor General from 1972 to 1974.

² Bellwoods was an Ontario provincial electoral district in the old City of Toronto’s west-end. It was represented in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from 1926 until 1987, when it was abolished and redistributed into the Dovercourt, and Fort York districts. The district was named after Trinity Bellwoods Park, where the original Trinity College campus was located. It was created in 1926 from the Toronto Southwest and Toronto Northwest ridings. The boundaries varied over its 61 years, with its most northern boundary being the city limits just north of St. Clair Avenue. The eastern boundary went as far as Bathurst Street, and its western boundary eventually ended at Dovercourt Road. Bellwoods was demographically a mainly working class district, with a significant immigrant population. As of 2011, the area that Bellwoods represented is divided among the current Davenport, St. Paul’s and Trinity—Spadina electoral districts.