

## THE CREATION OF NEIGHBORHOODS

By Robert Williamson for HMHS

The urban world we live in is made up of boundaries such as Wards and Constituencies. Whether they be geographical or administrative, these lines govern almost every aspect of our lives. Few people realize that these boundaries began as neighborhoods. Hamilton's first neighborhoods were; Central, Beasley, Corktown and Durand. Each neighborhood had a distinctive personality. Central was the business and administrative core. Durand was where the upper class lived on the lower slopes of the escarpment. Corktown was an Irish community and Beasley, the western gateway, was the haunt of politicians like MacNab. Today there are 200 neighborhoods, 63 of them are on the Hamilton mountain.

You may wonder how neighborhoods were created. They are based on the original rectangular grid survey of Barton Township by Crown Surveyor, Augustus Jones, c. 1793.



*Survey Team 1793 sketched by D .F. Thomson for an 1897 art calendar.*

He is shown here with his survey team, accompanied by Indigenous bearers, working in the dead of winter to avoid the hindrance of foliage, bogs and mosquitos. His job was to divide the township into 1,000 acre allotments composed of 10 x 100 acre lots, an area of approximately four square kilometers. Thus the general size and shape of most neighborhoods was established. Since the base line of the survey ran east and west along the south shore of Lake Ontario, our road pattern is aligned with the four points of the compass. No one should ever get lost in Hamilton. If the sun is on your back at midday, you are facing north. If it is on your left shoulder, you are facing west, and so on.

Initially, neighborhoods were identified on the survey maps by numbered Concession and Lot coordinates. But as the city grew, residential neighborhoods acquired individual names by tradition, geography or just common usage, such as a building contractor's name. A central mountain neighborhood with all its streets named for birds became Birdland or Cardinal Heights, the former name of the recently demolished community school. But the unused official name of the neighbourhood is Bruleville, in honor of Étienne Brulé the first explorer to see the Lower Great Lakes in 1615.

After annexation of Barton Township in 1960 the growing demand for names had to be taken in hand by the Planning Department. New names were chosen to recognize people involved in our heritage, i.e. the founding and early growth of Hamilton. Whenever possible, names were ascribed to the locality with which they were associated.

For that reason, our Mountain Memories column has used these names to provide heritage theme stories about the Hamilton Mountain. They include:

Fessenden, Trenholme, Southam, Buchanan, Sackville Hill, Yeoville, Rymal, Gilkson, Bonnington, Balfour and Terryberry. If you missed any of these stories you will find them on the Hamilton Mountain Heritage Website <<http://www.hamiltonheritage.ca>>

Mountain Memories by Robert Williamson