



Lawrence Township Street Names



One popular town myth about Allen Lane is it is laid out exactly east to west to aid farmers in keeping their calendar, since they could track how the sun rose and set in relation to the road, with the sun square to the road opening on the fall and spring solstice.

On May 27, 1919, the Mercer County Board of Freeholders designated a piece of highway in north Lawrence, from Van Kirk to Rosedale Roads, as Carter Road in honor of Austin P. Carter, the sole Lawrence resident to be killed in action during World War I. Carter died in France on September 17, 1918 and according to newspaper accounts prior to his service, was a rather popular resident in the Bakersville section of town. The naming of a street after a war hero is not uncommon in the United States and is certainly one of the more popular street-naming traditions in Lawrence Township. It is perhaps one of the oldest and most consistent traditions, with streets named after veterans or casualties of almost every war in which the United States has been a participant. The largest cluster of such street names in the township is in Lawrence Square Village, where almost every street is named in honor of a Lawrence native who lost their life in war. Names such as Drewes Court (Richard C., Vietnam), Gilpin (Nicholas, Civil War) and Mendrey Court (Stephen R., World War II) are some examples of the nearly two dozen servicemen honored in the complex. This clustering is by design, to afford the township a history lesson, according to an article that appeared in the *Trenton Times* (August 11, 1985). The names were chosen after members of the township's Historic and Aesthetic Committee, led by former Township Historian Bob Immordino, objected to the use of names reflecting general United States history, such as Constitution Avenue, when Lawrence history could be the focal point.

One reason for the objection to general United States history-related street names was the fact that Lawrence already had a large number of such names. For example, most of the housing developments along Brunswick Pike, from the Brunswick Circle to Texas Avenue, were named by the developer, the Colonial Land Company, to reflect an early American or colonial theme. Hence, the area has street names such as Pilgrim, President, Puritan, Nathan Hale, Valley Forge, Mayflower, and Bunker Hill. Likewise, the streets off of Texas Avenue on the other side of Brunswick Pike, behind Lawrence Shopping Center, sport presidential names such as Hoover and Coolidge, indicating the time period of their development, around 1930.

Another history lesson that can be learned from looking at Lawrence Street names is a who's who of the town's founding families. Particularly in the Lawrenceville village section of town, streets named after the Reed, Smith, Stevens, Phillips, Green, and Titus families dot the map. The practice of naming streets after landowners was common into the early 19th century and Lawrence is no exception to that practice. Bakers Basin, Fackler Road, Whitehead Road, and Denow Road are all examples of streets named after land owners. Even Allen Lane, originally Allen's Lane, is believed to be named after a pair of early land owning brothers.

A similar practice of naming streets came about in the late 19th/early 20th century, to name the streets after either previous owners or the developers of the subdivision. For this reason there are streets named after Slack, Graf, Darrah, Bainbridge, Haveson, Fawcett and Eldridge. By the mid-20th century, builders were also naming the streets in their subdivisions after their wives, daughters or mothers. Hence, there are a fair share of streets with female names, such as Ashleigh, Jill, Helen, Rita, Lynn, Abby, Valerie, Edith, Shirley and Theresa. Not to be left out, there are a few boys' names, Eric, Dustin and Andrew, in the mix as well, and these are presumably named after a developer's father or son. A third way builders gave the streets in their developments a personal connection to themselves was to name them after places they had lived or had some other fondness for, such as Bennington, Landover, Wexford, and Texas.

Aside from veterans and land owners, other Lawrence natives of historic importance are honored with a street name. Colonel Edward Hand, a prominent Revolutionary War officer; David Brearley, signer of the United States Constitution; William Alburtus, the first Italian American to settle in New Jersey; Fred Vereen Jr., civil rights and affordable housing advocate; and Anthony

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Pilla, one of the founders of the Lawrence Township First Aid Squad are all honored with street names.

Some streets, Hopewell, Hamilton and the since renamed Trenton, simply reflect names of neighboring towns while a street such as Lawrenceville-Pennington Road has maintained a long-time name that goes back to early settlement, when a road was named more for its purpose than as an honor or vanity. In this case, Lawrenceville-Pennington was the road you would take to get to Pennington from Lawrenceville and vice-versa. A street one might associate with an incorrect historical or proximity link is Nassau Drive in the Estates at Lawrenceville. The street name is not a reflection of proximity to Princeton University's Nassau Hall, but is named after Dr. Robert Hamill Nassau, who was a Presbyterian medical missionary and founder of the mission station in Kangwe (Lambarene), Gabon, that was later used by Dr. Albert Schweitzer for his medical work. Nassau was a graduate of the Lawrenceville School and lived briefly in Lawrence. Perhaps most noted for his book, *Fetishism in West Africa* and the 40 years of work he did as a medical/theological missionary in Africa, Nassau is buried in the Lawrenceville Cemetery.

Of course not all streets in town are named after people but still relay historical significance. Meadow Road is one example, as it was the road used by the earliest settlers to get to the town's Great Meadow. The Great Meadow was an open field that was used by farmers for livestock grazing when the town was settled in the 1600s, with the farmers each having some land and bringing the livestock to the meadow each day by walking them from the village down Meadow Road. Today the road is designated as an historic landmark and remains a dirt road, leading to the 1761 Brearley House. Lawrence Station Road is named after the one-time station on the Pennsylvania Railroad line, tracks that are now used by Amtrak. Tiny Mill Road, off of Franklin Corner Road, is Lawrence's other preserved, semi-paved road and was once part of the road that led from town to the grist mill that was near what is now the Lawrence Station Road and Youngs Road intersection. The rest of the road is still there, we just know it as Franklin Corner Road. Other roads, such as Princessville, Franklin Corner and Federal City, reflect the name of the area of town in which they are located.

Province Line Road may be the most recognizable street named for an historic reference, as the original was literally the dividing line between

Naming streets after early landowners is a nice touch for keeping ties to the town's early history, but after time some of the names take on a different pronunciation. One example is Denow Road, which is commonly pronounced De-now today, but may have been pronounced Dee-no by the family. Evidence of this is scarce, but it is noted in a footnote by John S. Eberhardt in a history he wrote about the Ewingville-Federal City Road area in 1996.

the provinces of East and West Jersey that were established by the Duke of York when he divided his land between two separate proprietors, Sir George Carteret and Lord Berkeley of Stratton. The line was moved several times as Carteret and Berkeley squabbled over the borders of their land, but while British rule and a divided New Jersey are long gone, Lawrence still has the old colonial border on prominent display on today's maps.

Some more abstract historical references also exist in township street names. Many streets in the Norgate, Pine Knoll and Nassau developments indicate the area's history as the Ribsam Nursery. Names such as Dogwood, Rosetree, Carnation, Lotus, Balsam, Pin Oak and Crab Apple are a reference to the types of trees or flowers that may have been grown in the nursery. Some of the tree varieties can still be seen today, as the developers, Hampton Estates and

Uassan Land Corporation, repopulated the area to reflect the heritage as a tree farm and, perhaps, the street names they chose for the neighborhood. Tree names were also popular naming devices, even without an historic link, so we see Holly, Elm, Palm, Willow, Maple, Oak and Cherry Tree on the map.

Corporate names also show up on the town map. While Squibb, ETS, Assessment, Research and Chauncey may be obvious to most residents, some long-gone companies have left a legacy with street names such as Lenox Drive, which was once home to the pottery company's world headquarters, or Marroe Lane, which once led to the Marroe Inn. The Johnson Avenue in Eggerts Crossing was named after the trolley that once ran through the area.

Some curious names come with legends and much debate, such as Cold Soil Road. Early references to the road note it as Coal Soil Road. The real reason behind the name may never be proven, but two alternative explanations exist. In some sources, the area is noted as having darker, or coal-like, soil while other sources point to the "cold" soil that would not support farming ventures. The latter seems to be less likely, given the area's current use as farmland. Another myth that may or may not be true is the story that Rosedale Road was named by a wealthy landowner because she liked how the name sounded so she started calling the area and the road Rosedale and it stuck.

— Laura Nawrocik

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