



Street, Parks and Facility Naming

Research Guide: 20

Most Recent Update: February 2019

Getting started

Historically, streets, parks and facilities have been named or renamed for many different reasons. With some notable exceptions, they are named through enactment in a By-law, however the reason for the name change is rarely found in those records. For questions about the origin of the name of a particular street, park or facility, the City of Ottawa Archives has a number of resources that can assist with this research.

For information about current commemorative naming proposals and related policy, please see the relevant pages on the City's website, ottawa.ca.

For records of this kind pertaining to the former Rideau Township and its predecessors, North Gower and Marlborough Township, please see the City of Ottawa Archives Research Guide No. 211.

Primary resources

- Council and Committee Minutes and By-laws (Ottawa and its former, pre-amalgamation municipalities)
- Historical registered plans available on microfilm

Secondary resources

- The Archives has an in-house database of street, park and facility name changes, when the changes were made, and, if available, why the names changed. Please note that the list is a work in progress and is not comprehensive.
- A finding aid for name changes in the former City of Ottawa is available in the Reference Room at the Archives.
- The Reference Room Library has several books that have indices of street names and the background information about the name. There are also historical studies of individual townships that may provide background information on naming.

- Newspapers, such as the Ottawa Journal, Bytown Packet, Ottawa Citizen, etc. See Research Guide 4: *Newspaper Collections* for more information on the Archives' newspaper holdings.

How are streets named?

If the street name under review was at one time in a township, the name of the street, though not documented, is often that of the landowner whose land abutted the road. The landowners built and paid for the materials of the first roads in the townships and were given the right to name the street as a result.

Other early roads were named for their directionality. For example, Montreal Road was so named as it was the road that connected Ottawa to Montreal. Richmond Road connected the Town of Richmond with Bytown/Ottawa.

For more modern roads, street names are most frequently selected by the developers of the subdivisions, and no rationale is provided for their choices. The subdivision plans are then submitted to the Planning Board, which historically has approved the subdivision application in total.

Registered plans can sometimes provide clues as to the origins of street names, such as the name of the developer, superseded names (prior names for a street), and other useful information on the area in which it was constructed. Many historical registered plans are available to consult in the Reference Room on microfiche. To view those plans not in our holdings, researchers can request a copy through the process for accessing Building Code records. For more information, see the following webpage: [Access to building permit records](http://ottawa.ca/en/residents/building-and-renovating/compliance-reporting#access-to-building-permit-records) [http://ottawa.ca/en/residents/building-and-renovating/compliance-reporting#access-to-building-permit-records]

When are street names changed?

The most common reason for street name changes has historically been and continues to be duplication. In the past, many name changes followed annexations and amalgamations. Currently, the main reason to change the name of a street is to resolve a public safety concern, as the elimination of duplicate, similar sounding and physically disconnected streets removes a significant impediment to timely emergency response. For more information on this process and the criteria for street naming, please see the following webpage: [Street name and address changes](http://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/public-consultations/municipal-addressing/street-name-and-address-changes) [http://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/public-consultations/municipal-addressing/street-name-and-address-changes].

How are parks and facilities named?

There are several reasons behind park and facility names. They can be named for the street or school next to them; for the district in which they are located; to describe the

landscape; to honour local citizens who have greatly contributed to their communities; and to honour citizens for their contributions on a national scope.

Additional services

We do not provide research services; however, our reference staff are willing to assist. Researchers may telephone, write by mail or email, or visit the City of Ottawa Archives in-person. Please note there may be a delay in accessing certain materials, so it is recommended to contact Reference Services well before the date of your intended visit.

Central Branch

Tel: 613-580-2857

Fax: 613-580-2614

Email: archives@ottawa.ca

Address: City of Ottawa Archives, 100 Tallwood Drive, Ottawa, ON K2G 4R7

Hours:

Tuesday to Friday: 9 am to 4 pm

Saturday: 10 am to 5 pm

Website

For information about the Archives' holdings, as well as access to research guides and other customer service materials available through the City of Ottawa Archives, please access our website, ottawa.ca/archives.