

Namesakes

Road signs and other street furniture remind us of the variety of place names in Brighton. Some of their origins have been lost over the years but many have sound documentation, with a few exceptions.

Brighton received its name, officially, on 26 March 1814, when the New York State Legislature separated the town of Smallwood into two entities – Brighton and Pittsford. Tradition holds that William Billinghamurst, formerly of Brighton, England, supplied the town's new name but how that was accomplished is unknown. Perhaps the gathered townspeople put their suggestions into a hat and William's was the lucky draw.

Allen's Creek is another old name. Timothy Allyn, an early settler on 500 acres that he purchased in 1790, built a log cabin near the creek on his land and stayed for one summer. He is said to have become discouraged with his prospects for success, so he returned to Geneva and purchased land there, becoming one of the leading citizens of that city. His name, though altered, lives on in east Brighton, over two hundred years after his decamping to Geneva.

West and East Henrietta Roads are important Brighton streets, both emanating from the town of Henrietta to the south. Henrietta was named for Countess of Bath, Henrietta Laura Pulteney, the daughter of Sir William Pulteney, a land speculator in western New York. She never visited the United States.

Edmunds' Woods, a stand of old growth forest near Brighton Town Park on Westfall Road, was named for the Edmunds family that farmed the land nearby for over one hundred years. One can still find traces of their ownership in the trails and occasional fence posts in the woods.

French Road, French Court, and French Meadows are named for Francis French, an early settler to the Edgewood Avenue area of Brighton. He was a contemporary and friend of James Edmunds, memorialized in the latter's diary on 20 February 1874 in the line "French and I swore off drinking anything but cider for one year."

Ellison Park, located in Brighton and the town of Penfield, is named for Nathaniel Ellison, father of Frank T. Ellison, donor of 210 acres of land to Monroe County in 1926. It was to be the county's first "wild park," that is, it would not have formal flower beds and plantings. Over the years the county has added acreage to Ellison's original gift.

Shannon's Hill in east Brighton is named for the Shannon family of Landing Road North. Long term Brighton firefighter, Barney Shannon, worked out of the Number 3 firehall at the corner of Blossom Road and Clover Street, not far from his house on the old Dugway Road overlooking Ellison Park.

The Browncroft subdivision in the city and in Brighton were given their names by Charles Brown who operated a very successful nursery near the corner of Winton Road North and Atlantic Avenue. When residential development looked like a more lucrative profession, Brown sold off his nursery land in lots for home-building.

Towpath Lane, a short street off Clover Street on the east side of Brighton, was named for its proximity to the former location of the Erie Canal that ran through Pittsford into Brighton. Nearby was a widewaters near Clover and Monroe where canal boats could moor or turn around.

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