

Town of Elmira Street Names

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I am frequently asked about the history of street names and homes in West Elmira and how they were named and who lived there. Some street names are obvious like Hendy Avenue named after John Hendy, the first settler in the area and Water Street which runs along the Chemung River. Some streets were named after the families that owned property/farms near where the street is located. Lovell Avenue is named after the Hiram Gray Lovell whose farm was located behind the original farmhouse at 1648 West Water Street and the home is still owned by the Lovell family descendants. Just south of the Lovell family home is Curran Drive named after Will Curran who had a farm located in that area. Carrolton Avenue is named after Charles Carroll whose farm house was located at 931 West Water Street. Evergreen Avenue was named after the “The Evergreens” which was a large house in the 1600 block of West Water Street once owned by William T. Post in 1872. Demarest Parkway is named after Mark Demarest who had a farm from the river up the hill to the Our Lady of Lourdes Church area and bordering to the west the property of Judge Hiram Gray. Gray Street is named after Judge Hiram Gray who lived in the Cobblestone House located between Cobbles East and West.

Cleveland Avenue is one of West Elmira’s oldest streets with some of the oldest homes dating to 1893 and was named after President Grover Cleveland who was president of the United States at that time. One of the early businesses in the town, Elmira Ice Company, was located at the foot of Cleveland Avenue. As a young boy my family lived on Cleveland Avenue and I remember finding remnants of the business near the river at the foot of the street during the many hours we spent playing down near the river. Church Street opened to the point from Wall Street in 1899 and was named after Phillip Church, the surveyor who first mapped Elmira. Some street names were selected by drawing names from a hat. Westmont Avenue and Lexington Avenue names were selected in this manner. Roricks Glen Parkway was named after the Roricks Glen theatre that was located on the south side of the river and was a popular tourist destination in the late 1800’s.

Information for this article was taken from articles in the Town of Elmira 1792-1992 the 200th anniversary book on the town.

Writer’s Note: I continue to look for historic subjects (people, places, homes, historic events, old schools, family history, etc.) about the Town of Elmira to write about. I would be very interested in writing about families that these streets were named after. If you have any suggestions or information you would like to share for future articles please e-mail them to me at demingsw@yahoo.com or call me at home 607-732-1177.

