

What's in Chicago street name? Lot of history

By Rudolph Unger

WHAT'S IN A NAME . . . a Chicago street name?

Well, for one thing—a wealth of history.

To know the origins of the names of the city's 1,936 streets is to know much of how the village on the prairie grew into the "stormy, husky, brawling city of the Big Shoulders" of Sandburg's recollection.

It is to know the Windy City's beginnings, struggles, tragedies, triumphs, epic moments; its heroes, leaders, teen-aging ethnic masses, neighborhoods; its quaint, ironic, and humorous moments.

ITS BEGINNINGS, of course, were with Father Marquette, who in 1673 canoed down the Chicago River into Lake Michigan, and he is justly honored with two streets, not one, on the city's South Side—Marquette Road and Marquette Avenue.

His compatriot, Louis Jolliet, however, never was honored with a street name in Chicago.

A street in the heart of the Loop is perhaps the next in historic order—Clark Street. It was named after George Rogers Clark, who in 1778 wrested the Illinois country from the British.

The first non-Indian resident of Chicago, Jean Baptiste Du Sable, put down his roots the following year by building a cabin on the north bank of the Chicago River near today's Tribune Tower.

BUT THO the big, handsome man from Santo Domingo lived here for 17 years he never had a street named after him.

In 1964, four years before South Park Way was changed to Martin Luther King Drive by the City Council, the council had rejected naming the broad thoroughfare Du Sable. He has had to settle for a quarter-block-long square on the Near South Side.

The French trader, Le Mai, to whom Du Sable sold his cabin in 1796 is commemorated with a street on the city's Far Northwest Side, and the man to whom LeMai sold the cabin in 1804 John Kinzie, is honored by a street running past where the cabin stood.

The adjoining Hubbard Street was named for Gordan S. Hubbard, fur trader and merchant who came to Chicago in 1818.

BUT THE MAN who surveyed and laid out Chicago, gave it its first streets, and named them, has never been honored by a street name. He was James Thompson, a surveyor for the Illinois-Michigan Canal, who in 1830 platted what is today Chicago's downtown and gave most of the streets the names they still bear today.

He honored Presidents Washington and Jefferson, and many other downtown streets were named after Presidents in later years.

He also honored Benjamin Franklin, John Randolph, and Charles Carroll, all signers of the Declaration of Independence, and included the great French explorer, La Salle.

Other streets were named for Maj. Gen. Henry Dearborn, Jefferson's secretary of war after whom Chicago's fort had been named, and Capt. William Wells, who was killed in the 1812 massacre at the fort.

THOMPSON'S MARKET Street was changed in modern times, along with much of South Water Street, to Wacker Drive.

State Street had its origins a few years later, in 1834, when it became part of the state road that was laid out between Chicago and Vincennes, Ind.

Michigan Avenue, which once had been the city's lakeshore, was not given that name until much later in the 19th Century; the exact date of its appearance is not known.

South of the river, it was long known as Michigan Terrace and north of the river it was known as Pine Street and Lincoln Park Blvd. until the opening of the Michigan Avenue bridge in 1920.

THE ROADWAY that borders today's lakefront was not formally given one name—Lake Shore Drive—until 1946.

Before that time, it bore that name only on the North Side, while in the downtown area it was known as Field Drive and on the South Side it was called Leif Erickson Drive.

In 1950, the City Council turned its attention to nine Loop alleys and put up

street signs bearing the original names given the alleys in the Loop subdivision of 1837.

They include Calhoun Place, named after John Calhoun, editor of the Chicago Democrat, the city's first newspaper; Garland and Holden Courts, and Marble, Arcade, Court, Benton, Colch, and Haddock Places. The council then added Ziegfeld Court in honor of Florenz Ziegfeld of show business fame.

MOST OF THE great diagonal streets that radiate like spokes from downtown were originally Indian trails and later farm routes and most are named for Chicago pioneers.

Ogden was named for the city's first mayor, William B. Ogden. Archer is named for Col. W. B. Archer, a member of the Illinois-Michigan Canal Commission; Clybourn for Archibald Clybourn, a Virginian who settled in Chicago in 1823; and Elston for Daniel Elston, a soap manufacturer and alderman in the 1840s.

Attempts to change long established street names invariably produce heated and prolonged debates, and the classic case is the changing of Crawford Avenue to Pulaski Road.

It began in 1933 when newly elected Mayor Edward J. Kelly, seeking to thank a staunch woman supporter from the Polish National Alliance, replaced the name of the pioneer farmer, William Crawford, with that of the Polish-American war hero, Casimir Pulaski.

THE FIGHT lasted for 20 years and went to the Illinois Supreme Court twice before Kelly's decision was left standing.

In 1942, then Ald. Paul Douglas sought unsuccessfully to have Balbo Drive in Grant Park, named after the Fascist general who led the historic air flight from Italy to Chicago during the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition, changed to Garibaldi, the Italian revolutionary hero.

Another big fight occurred in 1932 when a group of businessmen tried unsuccessfully to have Broadway extended to the city's south boundary by renaming Clark Street, Wentworth Avenue, part of Archer Avenue, and Vincennes Avenue.

The angry spirit of "Long John" Wentworth, the city's giant pre-Civil War mayor, looming over City Hall was rumored to have helped squelch the entrepreneurs' endeavor.

IT MAY WELL have been the kindly spirit of Father Marquette, the Jesuit pioneer, that persuaded the council in 1927, after heated debate, to change Robey Street to Damen Avenue in honor of Father Arnold Damen, founder of St. Ignatius College, which became Loyola University.

Ald. John [Bath House] Coughlin rose eloquently in the council in 1936 and blocked another proposed change, saying, "I played baseball with the late Charles Comiskey on Lytle Street and that street is dear to me."

But attempts to have 35th Street renamed Comiskey Road failed, as did endeavors to have streets named for Czech President Masaryk, Bishop Frederick Barga, the Lithuanian dissenter Sima s Kudirka, and John T. McCutcheon, late Tribune cartoonist.

No trouble was encountered in naming streets for Francis Cabrini, slain Mayor Anton Cermak, and the legendary squatter George Streeter.

Dwight Eisenhower was but the latest in a long series of military heroes honored that include Pershing, Fremont, Sheridan, Logan, McClellan, Meade, Mulligan, Lawler, Shields, Barry, and Perry. But numerous proposals to name a major street for General Douglas MacArthur have failed to clear the City Council.

EDENS is named for William G. Edens, banker and pioneer road developer; Achsah Bond Drive, which leads to the Planetarium, honors the wife of Illinois' first governor, Shadrach Bond; and Coles Avenue is named for the state's second governor, Edward Coles.

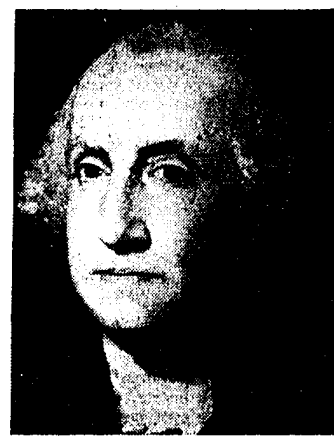
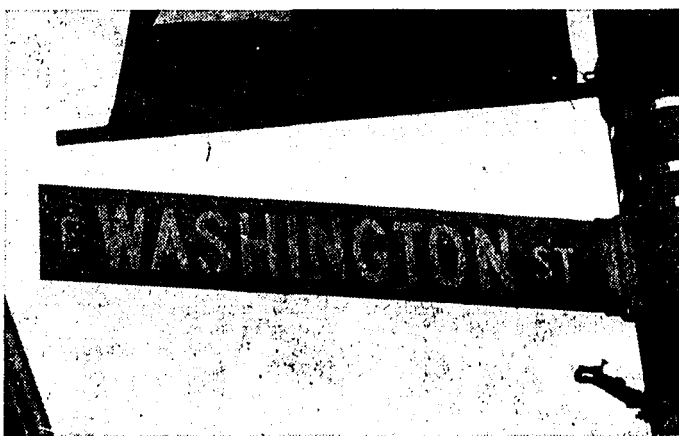
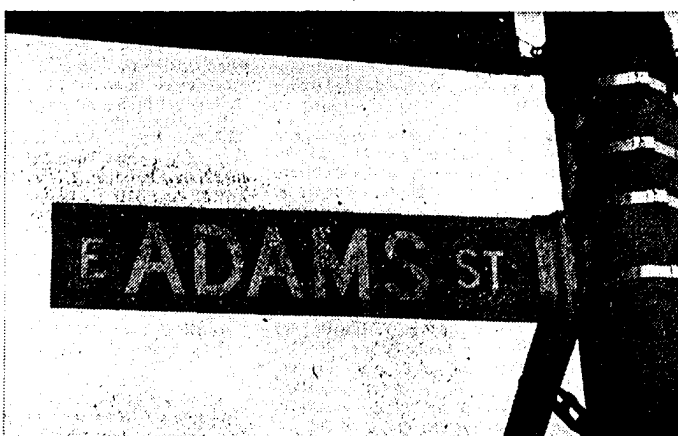
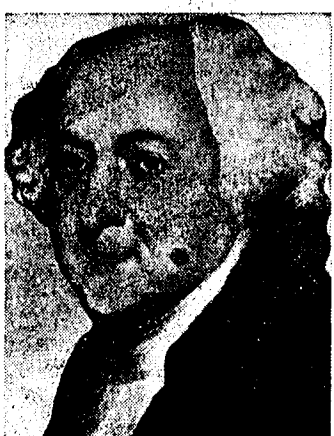
Colfax, Blackstone, Jeffery, and Stetson are all in memory of Illinois Central Railroad executives.

Ardmore, Bryn Mawr, Berwyn, Rosemont, and Devon all were named after suburban stops on Philadelphia's Main Line by a developer who came to Chicago from the "City of Brotherly Love."

Brokers on La Salle Street may consider this a bull story, but it is a historical fact that George Street was named after Sam George, who killed a bear at the corner of Adams and La Salle in 1834.

BRIDGEPORT, FIRST home of Chicago's Irish and headquarters for Peter Finley Dunne's eloquent tavern keeper, Mr. Dooley, is filled with numerous tiny, sidewalk wide streets.

Among them are Keeley, Corbett, Grady, Hoey, McDermott, Farrell, and Quinn; a couple of girls named Eleanor and Mary, and a lad known as Arch. Somehow a fellow named Elias was also



Tribune Graphics

remembered. And also a chief justice of the United States Supreme Court—Melville Fuller.

The area's early history is reflected in other streets such as Iron, Lumber, Lock, Levee, Canalport, and the not too recently departed Salt and Quarry.

The city's great Indian heritage is well remembered in the Edgebrook district on the Far Northwest side where the main thoroughfare, Caldwell, honors the half-breed Billy, who helped bring peace between the white man and the Indians.

OTHER TREE-LINED residential streets bear the names of Hiawatha, Tahoma, Lightfoot, Tonty, Chicora, Minnetonka, Minnehaha, Mankato, Keola, Navajo, and Sioux.

The city's German influence is reflected in such streets as Germania, Goethe, Schiller, Schubert, and Mozart, the Beethoven was eliminated.

Two small Chicago streets—Brodman and Brennan—are named for two men most responsible for the City Council's simplification of street names in the 1930s. They persuaded the council to revise 300 street names by eliminating duplications and giving a street that runs intermittently one name instead of several.

They were Howard Brodman, long head of the city's map department and Edward P. Brennan of the City Club. It was Brennan who in 1901 originally had suggested that State Street and Madison Street be made the base-line streets for the city. The City Council adopted his idea in 1908.

Also in 1908, began the practice of using an alphabetical sequence to name

streets west of Pulaski Road (then Crawford).

HALSTED, WHICH once was called First Street, is named after the two New York brothers who financed development west of the Loop.

Ashland, once named Reuben Street, is for the Kentucky home of statesman Henry Clay.

Fullerton and Kedzie are named for prominent pioneer Chicago attorneys; Burley for the man who organized the city's first fire company; and Bonfield for the man who led the police detachment at the Haymarket Riot.

Palmer, is for Potter Palmer, the merchant who started State Street's development as one of the world's great shopping centers; Medill (Joseph) for the founder of The Tribune who was mayor during the rebuilding of the city following the 1871 fire, and McCormick (Col. Robert) is for his grandson who was editor of The Tribune.

EDUCATION IS honored in the city streets of Oxford, Cambridge, Cornell, Yale, Harvard, and Princeton.

We also have a Gettysburg, Concord, and Lexington. There's a Lee and a Grant. We have a Commons, Noble, Court, Congress, and Governor's.

We have sister cities commemorated in Milwaukee, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, Miami, Spokane, and Portland. And not to be overlooked are London, Paris, Geneva, Lucerne, Genoa, Naples, Nassau, and Manila.

California is well represented with California, Francisco, Sacramento, Berkeley, and Stockton.

THE DUTCH influence is seen in Hol-

land, Harlem, Leyden, Vanderpoel, and Van Vlissingen.

Literature is honored with Cicero, Shakespeare, Dante, Homer, Blake, Browning, Byron, Dickens, Hawthorne, Poe, Sandburg, and Ibsen.

We have an East End and West End, and a Long, Short, and Broad. We have an East River and a Hudson. There are Ford, Pontiac, and Monterey. And a Niagara and Victoria. Also a Merrimac and Monitor.

Spiritually, there are Luther, Wesley, Knox, Moody, and a host of saints—from George to Paul.

THERE'S A NAPOLEON and a Bonaparte but there are also a Waterloo and a Wellington.

Of course, there has to be a Hollywood and a Vine. But there are also Gilbert and Sullivan, Rogers and Hart, Mercer, and Foster.

We even have Burton, Taylor, and Todd. There are Hooker and Tooker. And would you believe Bittersweet and Bliss, Berry and Cherry, Clover and Dover?

There's Green, Orange, and eveh Purple.

Of course, we have an Abbot, Baker, Barber, Bishop, Butler, Miller, and Packers.

And naturally, a Brewery, Depot, Railroad, Church, Seminary, School, Nursery, and Orchard.

THERE ARE numerous folks from Anthony to Willard and from Ada to Virginia.

So now, we'll leave you on this nostalgic trip thru Chicago's streets and history, at a little Northwest Side street known as Memory Lane.