



History in Asphalt: The Origin of Bronx Street and Place Names

John McNamara

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When John McNamara was a young boy he walked the streets in his Bronx neighborhood and often wondered how the streets got their names. He began to ask the people in the area questions and researched maps and books. Later, he traveled by bicycle, kayak and auto to collect more and more information. Eventually, he visited every street in The Bronx at least once.

When he grew up, John met others who had similar interests in history and they formed The Bronx County Historical Society, all the while adding to his collection of street name histories. Many years went by until the new executive director of the Bronx County Historical Society persuaded him to compile his extensive collection of notes as a book. Eventually History in Asphalt: The Origin of Bronx Street & Place Names was published. People all around the country bought it, and it has since been revised and reprinted 3 times. In 1985, The City of New York bestowed a great honor to the penultimate Bronx historian and named John McNamara Square at Calhoun and Randall Avenues. The circle of history marches on.

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