

British Inspired Names in Bangalore City: Collection & Analysis

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ABSTRACT:

Bengaluru, is celebrating as India's Silicon Valley, a city of speed, youth, and innovation. Yet, the working spaces and buzzing cafes, lie traces of a different legacy. The names of some of the city's busiest streets, most visited parks, and oldest markets still reflect a colonial presence. From Fraser Town to Infantry Road, Cunningham Road to Richmond Road, the streets of Bengaluru honour British officials, army divisions, and administrative functionaries. These names became a tool of power and memory. Each of these individuals played a major role in shaping the colonial administration, so their names fixed in the Bangalore's map. In 2014, though the city's name officially changed back to "Bengaluru". Some of its areas still retain British-inspired names, such as Cox Town, Richards Town, Fraser Town, Austin Town etc. which were named after the British officials. An attempt has been made here to collect and analyse the importance of such names.

KEYWORDS:

Cantonment, Colonial rule, Renaming, British officials, Town, Street, Park.

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Etymology of the name Bangalore

The name 'Bangalore' originates from "Bengaluru, " with the earliest known reference, in an 890 CE hero stone inscription of Western Ganga dynasty, found at Begur, which mentions a battle. This proves the name existed as a place,

A popular folkloric story attributes the name to the 12th-century King Veera Ballala II, who supposedly named the place "Benda-Kaal-Ooru" (town of boiled beans) after being served the dish by a poor woman.

Suryanath U Kamath, suggests the name comes from the Kannada term "benga, " referring to the Pterocarpus marsupium (Indian Kino Tree), which grows abundantly in the region.

The name is derived from the Tamil "Venkaaloor, " meaning "town of white clouds, " as V and B transformations are common between the

languages.

In 1537 CE, Kempe Gowda I founded the modern city and named it Bengaluru, possibly after his mother's birthplace, which was an older village of the same name. On the basis of this we can say, the name existed in its Kannada form, "Bengaluru," for centuries before the British arrived. The British anglicised the name to "Bangalore" a phonetic version that was easier for them to pronounce. Later they named many towns, parks, streets, markets, Hospitals etc., in the names of British personals.

Early history of Bangalore

Bangalore is one of the ancient cities of Karnataka. Its early history goes back to the stones ages. Historically the Western Gangas, Cholas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagara Empire, minor rulers ruled here Kempe Gowda I and his successors continued to develop the city. Later Adil Shahi's, Mughals, Marathas, Mysore Wodeyars, Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan, British ruled here.

Establishment of a cantonment at Bangalore

Bangalore was the strongest fort of Tippu Sultan. During the Third Anglo-Mysore War, Lord Cornwallis captured the fort. Later, the Madras Pioneers, went on to make Bangalore their permanent home. The British found Bangalore to be a pleasant and appropriate place to station their garrison and moved to Bangalore and established their cantonment.

The origin of the word cantonment comes from a French word *canton*, means corner or district. Cantonment was a well-defined and clearly demarcated unit of territory, for quartering and administering of troops. The cantonment covered an area of 13 square miles (34 km), extending from the Residency road in the west to Binnamangala in the east. From Tannery Road in the north to AGRAM (Army Group Royal Artillery Maidan) (Maidan means Ground) in the south. By area, it was the largest British military cantonment in South India. The Bangalore Cantonment was directly under the administration of the British Raj, while Bangalore City itself was under the jurisdiction of the Mysore King. Cantonment was established to serve the needs of the British military. Unlike the older Pete area the Cantonment represented the colonial vision of urban planning of wide roads, European architecture, military barracks, churches, and clubs.

The Parade Ground

The heart of the Bangalore Cantonment was the Parade Ground. The Civil and Military Station (CMS) grew around the Parade Ground. The Bangalore Cantonment attracted a large number of people from Tamil Nadu and other neighbouring states. Bangalore rapidly became the largest city in the Mysore state. In 1831, the capital city was moved from Mysore to Bangalore. In the 19th century, Bangalore Cantonment had clubs, churches, bungalows, shops and cinemas. The Bangalore Cantonment had a strong European influence with public residence and life centered on the South Parade, now referred to as MG Road. The area around the South Parade was famous for its bars and restaurants and became a one-stop shopping area.

Commencement of the naming for the Bangalore localities.

Much of the naming pattern can be traced back to the establishment of the Cantonment. They started to give British names to the Bangalore localities to honour British officials, army divisions, and administrative functionaries. These names became a tool of their power and memory. Each of these individuals played a major role in shaping the colonial administration, so their names were given to the localities. We will go one by one.

Russell Market

Russell Market in Bangalore is named after T. B. Russell, the Municipal Commissioner who initiated the market's construction. The market was built in 1927 and inaugurated in 1933 under his leadership to organize the cantonment area's markets. The market was built to provide a central location for various vendors, including fruit, vegetable, and meat sellers.

Brigade Road, Infantry Road and Cavalry Road

Brigade Road and Infantry Road in Bengaluru were named in memory of the British army units (brigades and infantry) that were stationed in the cantonment area during the British Raj. Which also included names like Artillery Road and Cavalry Road (now Kamaraj Road), all derived from military nomenclature. Infantry Road was the home to the military barracks and parade grounds for the Army's foot soldiers. Brigade Road derives its name from the various military brigades. A prominent War Memorial stands at the junction of Brigade Road and Residency Road,

dedicated to the officers and soldiers who died in the First World War.

Lavelle Road

Lavelle Road is named in the memory of Michael F. Lavelle, an Irish soldier, later became a resident of Bangalore and a pioneer of modern gold mining in India. In 1873, he applied to the Mysore government for a license to mine for gold in the Kolar (KGF). His efforts were instrumental in attracting attention to the Kolar Gold Fields, which later became a major gold-producing area. After making a fortune from this venture, he became popular among the English residents in Bangalore. The British commandant of the Bangalore Cantonment honoured him by naming the road where he lived after him. His house on the road was named "Oorgaum House" after the town of Oorgaum in Kolar district, where he had sunk his first shaft. His legacy lives on through the name of this prominent Bangalore road.

Sydney Road

Sydney Road was named after the British official Sydney. The road was renamed in honour of the Indian independence leader, Kasturba Gandhi.

Residency Road

A residence to the Mysore King, Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV lived within the cantonment area was called as the "Residency", hence the name Residency Road become popular.

Grant Road

Grant Road in Bengaluru was named in the memory of Sir Robert Grant, who served as the Governor of Bombay from 1835 to 1839. The road was also referred to as "Jail Road" in the late 19th century, because it led to the central jail, which is now Freedom Park. Now this road's name is changed as Vittal Mallya Road, named after the former chairman of United Breweries, Vittal Mallya. This renaming occurred in the 1980s after the UB Group reached an agreement with civic authorities to maintain this road.

Plaza Theatre

Plaza was a film theatre located in Bangalore. It used to be on M. G. Road in the Bangalore Cantonment area. It was built in 1936 and mostly screened Hollywood movies.

Austin Town

Austin Town is a locality of Cantonment, named after a British Collector and Municipal President of the Civil and Military Station, Sir. James Austin. Located in the suburb of cantonment. This suburb is famous for producing some of India's best football players. Austin Town was established in 1920 by the building of a number of small cottages for the benefit of lower income groups, and rented out for a nominal sum. The Collector Austin was the encouragement for this project, and hence the suburb was named after him. These cottages were in great demand by poor Indians and Anglo Indians.

Football in Austin Town

Austin Town is considered as the birthplace of Football in Bangalore. The origins of the game can be traced back to the Italian soldiers who were kept as prisoners of war during WWI in the Bangalore Cantonment. The Italian POWs passed on the game to the natives. The very first Olympians – Anthony, Kannaiah, Raman and Shanmugham – who represented the Indian Football team in the Olympic Games of 1948 and 1952, were from Austin Town.

Austin Town and Murphy Town are still considered gold-mines of football talent. One of Austin Town's legend and local hero T Shanmugham, led India to victory in Football in the 1951 Asian Games. Almost every house in the lower-middle-class families of Austin Town have football players. In the age of IPL, the dream of the children of Austin Town to play football is very important.

Murphy Town & Knox Pete

Murphy Town & Knox Pete, is a suburb located near Cantonment. It is one of the oldest planned suburbs of the Cantonment. In the early 1900s the suburb was called as Knox Pete, named after Lt. Col. Stuart George Knox, who served as Resident of Mysore and Coorg, between 1921 & 1922. The houses at Knox Pete had poor sanitation facilities and generally poorly built, and resembled a slum. The Bangalore Plague of 1898, resulted in the government deciding to demolish, rebuild and re-settle the suburb. Later, the suburb was renamed as Murphy Town, after W H Murphy, MBE – Executive Engineer, Municipal Council, Bangalore. Later this Murphy town is renamed as Hoysala Nagar. It is located in the north of Halasuru.

Cox Town

Cox Town, is a neighbourhood of the Cantonment, located in the central part of the city and named after the last Collector and District Magistrate of Bangalore, called Alexander Ranken Cox, an ICS officer.

Cooke Town

Cooke Town, established in 1900 AD as a suburb of Cantonment. Cooke Town is named after G H Cooke, President of the Bangalore Civil and Military Station Municipality, between 1928 and 1934, with this the Mayo Hall also constructed during his tenure.

Fraser Town

Fraser Town is an elite locality, located in the Central part of the City spread over 4 km. It was established in 1906, named after Stuart Mitford Fraser, the tutor and guardian of Krishna Raja Wadiyar IV. Fraser Town was established to de-congest the growing Bangalore Civil and Military Station.

Richmond Town

Richmond Town, is a neighbourhood of the cantonment, established during 1883. It is named after Thomas Richmond, a barrister in the British India government. "He was an Anglo-Indian philanthropist and the president of All India Anglo-Indian Association.

Benson Town

Benson Town was named in memory of Dr. P. H. Benson, who served as the chief surgeon to the Mysore Durbar. He was a prominent figure in the Bangalore Cantonment area's colonial history. Current official name of Benson Town is Kadamba Nagara.

Blackpally

The Blackpally is a disputed origin. The most plausible theory is that, the British used this name to refer to the "black town, " or "native settlement", where non-white people lived, in contrast to the "white" areas of the cantonment. Generally it is a tribute to a British engineer named John Blakiston. The area was officially renamed as Shivajinagar in 1956.

Cleveland Town

Cleveland Town is named in the memory of General John Wheeler Cleveland of the British Army. Cleveland was a senior officer in Her Majesty's Army who served for 75 years and died in 1883 at the age of

92. Around 1883 the area of Cleveland Road and Wheeler Road, was developed as an extension of the Cantonment and named in his honour. He was known for his liberal charities. He and his wife are buried in the Kalpalli Cemetery. The locality's official name has since been changed to Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar Nagara by the BBMP, but it is still popularly known as Cleveland Town.

Langford town

Langford town is named in the memory of a British officer, Colonel Langford, who lived in a large bungalow here. The area developed by the British, after their victory over Tippu, many streets are named after British officers and soldiers, such as Wellington Street, Berlie Street etc. Historical research suggests as "Col. Langford" was associated with a large property in this area, lead to the name "Langford Road" and "Langford Town".

Richards Town

Richards Town was named in memory of F. J. Richards, the president of British cantonment. Richards Town was established in early 1900s as a European-style town with broad and tree-lined avenues, around Richards Park.

Tasker Town

Tasker Town established in the mid-1800s, now a part of Shivajinagara. It was named in the memory of a British person's surname. Historical sources indicates that, the area was formed with land set aside by the military, for people hired by the army for various jobs or "tasks" (e.g.,carpentry, housekeeping, gardening etc.) Which ties into the occupational meaning of the surname "Tasker". The area is now officially known as Swami Shivanandapura, but it is still widely referred to as Tasker Town by locals.

Victoria Layout

Victoria Layout is named in the memory of Queen Victoria, the long-reigning British Queen and Empress of India. Many public institutions and places were named in her honour, during the time of her Diamond Jubilee in 1897 and her death in 1901. For ex: An iconic heritage hotel that existed on Residency Road was named after her.

Whitefield

Whitefield is named in memory of David Emmanuel Starckenburg White. He was the founder and first president of the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association of Madras. In 1882, he petitioned the Maharaja of Mysore, Sri Chamarajendra Wadiyar IX, for land to establish a self-sufficient agricultural settlement for the Anglo-Indian community, which was granted around 4, 000 acres of land on favourable terms. This settlement eventually grew into the modern Whitefield.

Williams Town

Williams's town is a residential sub locality within Benson Town, known primarily as the location of the iconic Pottery Town.

Cubbon Park

Cubbon Park is named after Sir Mark Cubbon, the long-serving British Commissioner of Mysore. Initially, the park was called Meade's Park after Sir John Meade, the acting commissioner who founded it in 1870. It was renamed in honour of Sir Mark Cubbon in 1873 when Meade left the position. Later, in 1927, the park was renamed as Sri Chamarajendra Park to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of Sri Krishnaraja Wodeyar's rule.

Coles Park,

Coles Park is located in Frazer Town, named after British Resident Arthur Henry Coles. It is one of the city's most visited green spaces. Popular among families, joggers, and nature lovers. It offers well-maintained walking paths, children's play areas, and ample seating spaces.

Hudson Circle

Hudson Circle is named in memory of Reverend Josiah Hudson, a prominent Wesleyan missionary and educationist. Rev. Josiah Hudson served in the Karnataka region for over 30 years and was a key figure in the Wesleyan Mission's work. His significant contributions to education by starting numerous Kannada (Canarese) schools in the Bangalore. Leading the Wesleyan Mission centre and serving as the pastor of the Canarese chapel, which eventually led to the construction of the larger Hudson Memorial Church in his honour. The church building, which is a major landmark at the circle, was dedicated on September 23, 1904, after his death, the area around the church came to be called as Hudson Circle.

Sankey Tank

Sankey Tank was built in 1882 by Colonel Richard Hiram Sankey, the Chief Engineer of the Mysore State Public Works Department, to meet Bangalore's water supply needs during a drought. It was built by collecting rainwater from 2.5 square mile area. Initially it is called as Gandhadha koti kere, due to the nearby sandalwood depot.

Epilogue:

Naming the local places after British officials of administrative and military significance was a colonial practice. The practice of naming streets after British officials was rooted in the desire to honour those in positions of administrative and military significance. Incidentally, most people, including long-time residents, are unaware of the original names of places or roads. The locals have grown up with these names and never questioned their origins or alternatives. For them, Russell Market is Russell Market, and Brigade Road is Brigade Road. The names were part of the city's spoken style, convenient and familiar. Some roads or places were rechristened after India gained Independence, but Bengalureans prefer the familiar names, for the sake of convenience.

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