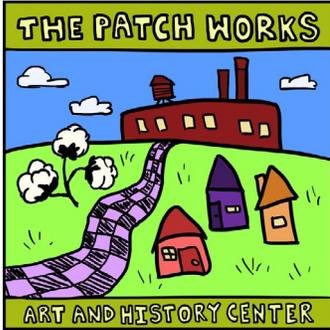


# BLAME THE BRITISH FOR BEING JERKS

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**Last month, we left y'all with a heart-pounding, white-knuckle Cliffhanger ending (psych!).** Well, unclench those fists! In this Chapter 9 - Part 2, we'll finally reveal – with Commodore-64-like logic and olympic jumps of conclusion that surpass even Jesse Owens – the potentially possible truth about how Cabbagetown got its name.



During this Time of Reckoning, when populations across the planet grapple with the Sith-side of human history, it's worth noting the original meaning behind "Cabbagetown." Firstly, please understand that this nickname did not originate inside the Mill Village. It came from outside.

Initially, "Cabbagetown" was intended to be anything but kind and certainly didn't conjure up images of shiny, happy people. "Bumpkin" might be the closest positive association with the nickname, but that relatively mild slur doesn't begin to approach the nickname's earliest unpleasant connotations. Plainly put, it was an insult... one that derided the mill-town families, many of whom came from Appalachia with Scotch-Irish ancestry.

Also worth noting, however: our little village wasn't the first in North America to be branded as a "Cabbage Town." In the 1840s – a solid forty years before Fulton Mill Village was a glint in Young Jacob's eye – another working-class community settled near the Don River, just east of Toronto. This village was called Don Vale, and it was teeming with Irish immigrants.

Well, Toronto's British elite didn't cotton to a bunch of potato-eating, cabbage-stewing Irish folk living so uncomfortably close to them, and soon – perhaps over Earl Grey and jammy crumpets – the snooty-snoots labelled this Blarney-Stone-kissing community... (Need we say it?)

The Potato Famine encouraged Irish immigration to Don Vale; post-Civil War despair encouraged Appalachian migration to Fulton Mill Village. Both neighborhoods were defined by people fleeing hardship, and both populations had similar ethnic composition. We believe, therefore, that Don Vale (aka Cabbagetown #1) became the unwitting Gran-Pappy for Fulton Mill Village's nickname. Why??? Answer: Because of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century newspaper article... and a parody at that.

Our investigative reporters discovered (immediately after someone else discovered it first) an article written in 1897 for a newspaper out of Buffalo, New York. This defamatory gem is called ***A Cracker's Kick, The Georgian Who Protested That Prices for Postage Stamps Were Upheld by a Monopoly.***

Before we delve into the article, let's first chat about 1897. It was an infamous year for Fulton Bag & Cotton Mills (one of many). It was a year when The Mill made national headlines... and not for good reasons (many of many). It's the year that Jacob hired African-American women, resulting in white mill workers walking off the property in protest. All of them.

With 1896's Plessy vs. Ferguson Supreme Court decision, racists everywhere were empowered to flex any and every prejudiced muscle in their body, and sadly the white mill workers found an opportunity to display their discriminatory souls to the entire world.

Accordingly, most newspapers not-below-the-Mason-Dixon-Line really let 'em have it. It's quite possible this 1897 article appeared because of the strike, which may have compelled the author to ridicule the white workers by invoking the dull-minded, hillbilly stereotype. Also, with Toronto's Cabbagetown just a hockey puck's slap shot across Lake Ontario, the author probably recognized a demographic kinship between both communities and cunningly borrowed a page out of the Highbrow British Handbook.

Right off the bat, the author deftly sets the stage by suggesting that the story – a fictitious conversation between two people at "the Cabbagetown post office" – originally appeared in the Atlanta Constitution. Boom... context. He then proceeds to make short work of painting the story's protagonist a fool: a crotchety geezer arguing with the postoffice clerk about the price of stamps. The opening dialogue pretty much sums it up...

***"What's two-cent stumps wuth?"***

***"Two cents."***

From there, the story is filled with fantastical, Mark Twain-ian gibberish: a nearly incomprehensible tirade spewing from the protagonist, who's outraged that two-cent stamps cost two cents. Ipso facto, he's an idiotic hillbilly. Now, whether or not this 19<sup>th</sup>-century lampoon was warranted (considering the strike), the author applied this dumber-than-dirt sentiment to the entire neighborhood, implying that the community was irreversibly backwards.

Soon thereafter, in the early 1900s, numerous Tall Tales about the naming of our "Cabbagetown" materialized, many of them as ridiculous as that 1897 article. Y'all prolly heard the Depression-era myth about the overturning cabbage truck/train/goat cart; or how the neighborhood stank of cabbage; or that locals only ate cabbage (they actually enjoyed all sorts of food... read Cabbagetown Families, Cabbagetown Food).

Some accounts had enough believability to contend for Truth status (e.g.: vendors sold produce to mill workers on payday; taxi drivers gave nicknames to Atlanta neighborhoods; Sister Keel at the Savannah Street Mission used "Cabbagetown" to solicit donations). Even if there's some accuracy to these stories, they only legitimized the judgement made by the 1897 article: the neighborhood was full of Scotch-Irish rubes.

***By the 1940s, "Cabbagetown" gained enough traction that some Mill Villagers accepted the nickname.*** But many never did. As Effie Dodd Gray proudly exclaimed, *"It's not called Cabbagetown!"* Like Effie, plenty of locals fully understood the meaning behind the nickname and refused. In time, however, younger residents came to embrace using "Cabbagetown," and by doing so, it could be argued that they eventually stripped the nickname of its derisive power.

In 1974, Maynard Jackson established Atlanta's NPUs, whereupon the City named the neighborhoods. "Cabbagetown" was popular enough to stick... forevermore. Today, our sister, North-American Cabbagetowns hardly resemble their similar 19<sup>th</sup>-century roots; both are fully gentrified and heterogenous (but perhaps with one or two Irish peeps still milling around). Nonetheless, remember the neighborhoods' histories. And love the once-hateful name "Cabbagetown!" But still blame the British for being jerks...