



## METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

Metropolitan Historical Commission  
Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission  
Sunnyside in Sevier Park  
3000 Granny White Pike  
Nashville, Tennessee 37204  
Telephone: (615) 862-7970

To: Metropolitan Council  
From: Metropolitan Historical Commission, Staff  
Date: September 18, 2020  
Re: Ordinance No. BL2020-450

An ordinance to amend the Geographic Information Systems Street and Alley Centerline Layer for the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, by changing the name of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue N., and Opry Place to “Rep. John Lewis Way N.” and by changing the name of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. to “Rep. John Lewis Way S.” (Proposal Number 2020M-004SR-001).

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Originally named Summer Street, Fifth Avenue is one of the earliest thoroughfares in Nashville. Apart from the building of the northern interstate loop, its route has remained relatively unchanged for over 150 years. Although the expansion of the road outpaced the expansion of Nashville’s corporate limits, a majority of Summer Street was contained within the city limits by 1865; the city limits included the full length of Summer Street by 1905.

In April 1784, the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina established the Town of Nashville and set out a plan for designating the corporate limits:

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, that the directors or trustees hereafter appointed, or a majority of them, shall, so soon as may be after the passing of this act, cause two hundred acres of land, situate on the south side of the Cumberland River, at a place called the Bluff, adjacent to the French Lick, in which said Lick shall not be included, to be laid off in lots of one acre each, with convenient street, lanes, and alleys, reserving four acres for the purpose of erecting public buildings, on which land, so laid off according to the directions of this act, is hereby constituted, erected, and established a town, and shall be known and called Nashville, in memory of the patriotic and brave General Nash.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> H. W. Crew, *History of Nashville, Tenn., With Full Outline ...* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1890) (Nashville: Reproduced from the 1890 original in 1970 by Charles Elder) 110.

Through the act, Samuel Barton, Thomas Molloy, Daniel Smith, James Shaw, and Isaac Lindsay were appointed as directors, or trustees, of the town, and Samuel Burden was appointed its treasurer. The group directed the survey of the town's two hundred acres into lots of one acre each. Reserving four acres for public buildings, ownership of the remaining 165 lots was determined through the drawing of ballots. The fee paid by each new owner was earmarked for the purpose of building a courthouse, prison, and stocks on the public lots.

As one of the first roads in Nashville, Summer Street appears on the "Plan of Nashville, as the town was originally laid out by Thomas Molloy (1789)" (Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> Thomas Molloy is credited with completing the first survey of lots in the new town in 1784. Reportedly, the original copy of the survey was lost, and Molloy completed another survey in 1789 for Hon. John Overton. On this map, Summer Street runs from Broad Street to Locust Alley/Line Street, about one block north of Gay Street. According to Morton B. Howell, a former mayor of Nashville and "accepted authority" on the city's history, natural features likely inspired several of the street names, but "Cherry and Summer were mere fancies."<sup>3</sup>



Figure 1: Plan of Nashville, as the town was originally laid out by Thomas Molloy (1789). Source: Tennessee State Library and Archives. Summer Street circled in red.

Nashville's corporate limits expanded to the south in 1824, to the north in 1830 and 1838, and again to the south in 1854.<sup>4</sup> By 1860, Summer Street's northern terminus was Clay Street, at the

<sup>2</sup> "Plan of Nashville, as the town was originally laid out by Thomas Molloy (1789)," Tennessee State Library and Archives <<http://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15138coll23/id/9013>> Accessed 10 September 2020.

<sup>3</sup> "Nashville Loses Useful Citizen," *The Nashville American*, 24 January 1909. Morton M. Howell, "First Streets of Nashville," *The Nashville American*, 18 February 1902.

<sup>4</sup> City Planning and Zoning Commission, "Territorial Growth of City of Nashville Tennessee, 1784-1952," date unknown. R.B.C. Howell, "Map of Nashville, Tennessee [1903]," Tennessee

edge of property owned by Dr. D. T. McGavock, even though the corporation line would not reach Clay until after the city's boundaries expanded northward in 1865 (to just north of Monroe Street) and again in 1890.<sup>5</sup> Also by 1860, Summer Street reached its final (and current) southern terminus at Oak Street at the edge of the Nashville City Cemetery.<sup>6</sup>

The final northern segment of Summer Street, running from Clay Street to Cass Street, was platted in 1887 by the *Subdivision of Lot No. 1, Cantwell's Subdivision of the Whiteside Tract*.<sup>7</sup> In 1905, northward expansion of the corporation line included this last segment of Summer Street between Clay Street and Cass Street.<sup>8</sup>

The City of Nashville changed the name of Summer Street to Fifth Avenue by Ordinance #090, on December 22, 1904.<sup>9</sup> This was part of an extensive campaign to create consistency with street names.

The City of Nashville changed the name of Fifth Avenue North, between Broadway and Commerce Street, to Opry Place by Ordinance #62-412 on September 18, 1962.<sup>10</sup>

Presently, Fifth Avenue North runs from I-65 to Commerce Street, Opry Place runs from Commerce Street to Broadway, and Fifth Avenue South runs from Broadway to Oak Street.

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State Library and Archives

<<https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15138coll23/id/9868/rec/1>> Accessed 10 September 2020. Nashville annexed South Nashville (incorporated November 18, 1851) on June 15, 1854.

<sup>5</sup> "Territorial Growth" and "Map of Nashville." Haydon and Booth, "City of Nashville and Edgefield (1860),"

<<https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15138coll23/id/249/rec/1>> Accessed 11 September 2020.

<sup>6</sup> "City of Nashville and Edgefield."

<sup>7</sup> *Subdivision of Lot No. 1, Cantwell's Subdivision of the Whiteside Tract*, Plat Book 57, page 73, recorded May 4, 1887. The Whiteside Tract was one of the lots created by the Subdivision of Dr. D.T. McGavock's lands recorded in Plat Book 57, page 10, on December 18, 1879. The eastern segment of Cass Street, running east of Darmstadt (Sixth Ave N) to meet up with Summer Street, was unbuilt by the 1889 publication of the Hopkins Atlas. G.M. Hopkins and Co., "Nashville. Plate 14 from G.M. Hopkins' Atlas of Nashville (1889),"

<<https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15138coll23/id/9827/rec/55>> Accessed 11 September 2020.

<sup>8</sup> "Territorial Growth" and "Map of Nashville."

<sup>9</sup> Minute Book 11, page 390. G.M. Hopkins and Co., "Atlas of the City of Nashville, Tennessee: from official records, private plans and actual surveys [1908, Plate 23],"

<<https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15138coll23/id/9779>> Accessed 11 September 2020, and Marshall and Bruce, Co., "Revised map of Nashville showing new ward boundaries [1915],"

<<https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15138coll23/id/9993/rec/1>> Accessed 11 September 2020. These maps show the northern terminus of Fifth Avenue North at Cass Street.

<sup>10</sup> Council Minute Book 35, page 149.

