A road into history

A new book on Singapore’s street names offers an intimate look at the country’s pioneers

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What you know as Dover Road today could well have been called “Singapour” if the names had retained their French roots, according to the latest edition of a book on Singaporean names.

This was just one of many new nuggets that its two authors gleaned when they spoke to more than 30 descendents of Singapore pioneers, after whom some streets were named. These include Dr. John Charles Laycock, the British colonial civil servant who was the first president of the Straits Chinese Club, and his wife Arabella, a socialite and philanthropist. They also spoke to Bahtsir Norwood, a former Singapore journalist and historian, who has written extensively on the city-state.

The book, titled “Singapore’s Street Names,” is a comprehensive guide to the city-state’s street names from its colonial past to modern times. It is the latest in a series of books by the same authors, who have been researching and compiling data on Singapore’s names for over a decade.

The new 4th edition book contains more than 7,000 entries, including maps and photographs of each street and its history. It also includes a section on the evolution of the city’s streets and neighborhoods.

Its authors, Mr. and Mrs. Laycock, are both well-known figures in Singapore’s cultural and heritage circles. They have written extensively on Singapore’s past, including its street names and the people who named them.

“Singapore’s Street Names” is available at bookstores nationwide and online. It is also available for preorder on the authors’ website, singaporestreetnames.com.sg.