

Mount Pleasant Historical Context Statement

AN INTRODUCTION TO MOUNT PLEASANT'S PAST

Native Mount Pleasant

For the last 10,000 years, Mount Pleasant's natural ecology of plants, birds and animals such as deer, bear, beaver, cougar and small herds of elk were a rich resource hinterland for First Nations peoples. On its northern edge was a shore of the Pacific Ocean, lined with grasses, willow, and crabapple trees, and its beaches were a source of shellfish such as clams and crab. Running down both its western and eastern borders were substantial creeks draining the forests directly northwards to the salt waters of False Creek where sturgeon, flounder, sole, perch and smelt were abundant. Down the centre of Mount Pleasant's land mass ran one of the largest salmon and trout creeks in Vancouver, which formed a ravine up to 40 feet deep as it cascaded down the hillside to the ocean. For the local First Nations this creek would have been a source of fresh water, salmon and trout, numerous useful plants and animals, and it would have provided access to the upper reaches of Mount Pleasant where the different ecology of swamps provided more useful flora and fauna. The creek was later named Brewery Creek and was in effect Mount Pleasant's first Main Street, the street that came later and followed the same route up the hill.

While an old growth forest normally supports few if any plants at the sunlight-deprived ground level, a creek's ravine and its upper flatter swampy areas were typically open to the sky, and so a whole variety of useful plants grew there and were an important source of medicines and other resources especially useful to the First Nations. Brewery Creek ravine and its swampy areas were lined with deer fern, licorice fern and spirea, as well as the more challenging but useful devil's club, skunk cabbage and stinging nettle. Brewery Creek would have been a natural congregating point going back thousands of years as First Nations peoples harvested its abundance.

In the spring small flowers such as yellow violets, twinflowers, mayflowers and pigeon-berry blossoms would appear. In the summer a succession of berries provided a harvest: blueberries, blackberries, red huckleberries, salal berries, thimbleberries, black caps, and red and yellow salmonberries. In the eastern shallows known by the local Squamish people as Skwahchays, flocks of mallard, teal, butterball and pintail ducks and other birds using the Pacific Flyway between Central America and the Arctic would stop to feed. Grouse, partridges, swans and some ducks preferred the fresh water ponds and swamps behind the local beaver dams.

Most of Mount Pleasant was covered in a dense rainforest of huge fir, cedar and hemlock, which was diagonally bisected by an ancient First Nations and animal trail, the future Kingsway. At its southern edge near 16th Avenue and spanning between Main and Fraser streets was an unusual opening in the dark forest where a large beaver dam backed up Brewery Creek forming a huge swampy lake open to the sky. Here in the rich organic soil of the swamp grew a variety of berry bushes, and many other useful and unusual plants such as Labrador Tea. With 10,000 years of local knowledge of these plants, the First Nations had an amazing number of uses for every local plant. For example they used Labrador Tea, which they called me'xwuchp, as a flavouring for meat. They found its high tannin content was helpful for treating wounds or sores. It was also used as treatment for gastrointestinal problems or coughs, and because of its mild narcotic effect, it was a drink useful to relieve pain during childbirth.

Pioneer Mount Pleasant

The Gold Rush beginning in 1858 resulted in a sudden rush of non-Native fortune seekers to the sandbars of the lower Fraser River. Although the First Nations had occupied the area for about 10,000 years, for some reason in the 1850s the land was no longer considered to belong to them. As part of the British effort to control the new and mostly American presence in British Columbia, the ancient trail through the future Mount Pleasant was upgraded by Colonel Moody's Royal Engineers in 1861. The purpose was to provide better access between Moody's new military base by New Westminster and the new British naval reserves that had been set aside on English Bay. The landmark swamp in Mount Pleasant was soon being called the Tea Swamp after its Labrador tea, a small plant used by British pioneers to brew tea. Travellers making the long trek from New Westminster to Gastown through the dark forest might stop at the Tea Swamp to enjoy a drink of tea in the sun. Since they were coffee, not tea drinkers, Americans did not really make their mark here until 1993, when the first Starbucks in Mount Pleasant was opened at 14th Avenue and Main Street—precisely on the site of the beaver dam that had caused Brewery Creek to back up and form the Tea Swamp.

In 1867 Captain Stamp's sawmill became Vancouver's first modern industry, Gassy Jack's saloon became the first small business, and A.T. Julius Voight became the first non-Native settler to establish himself in Mount Pleasant at a Squamish First Nations site known as Khiwah'esks. Here he built a small cabin and vegetable garden at the tip of a finger of land protruding into False Creek. Voight was born in what is now Germany and was educated in a Prussian military academy. He might even have been the first modern settler in Vancouver, since he claimed that he lived in a house near Musqueam for a few years starting in the summer of 1858. In the 1860s the waters of the creek running down the middle of Mount Pleasant became the first piped water supply in the pre-Vancouver days as the creek was dammed and the water flumed across False Creek to Gastown and Stamp's sawmill.

In 1869 the visionary Henry Valentine Edmonds, the clerk of the municipal council in New Westminster, acquired District Lot 200A—all of the wilderness land north of today's Broadway in the future Mount Pleasant. He was speculating that Vancouver's unusually fine natural harbour would someday become home to the terminal of a transcontinental railway, since he had witnessed first hand the pandemonium that ensued when San Francisco had been declared a transcontinental railway terminal. During the 1870s a rickety bridge was built across the narrows on False Creek where Julius Voight had settled, firmly establishing the route south from Gastown that would later become Main Street, and the Hastings Sawmill acquired most of the remaining land in the Mount Pleasant area and chopped down the heavy timber for use in its lumber mill.

In the early 1880s the only commercial building in Mount Pleasant was the Junction Inn by the northeast rim of the Tea Swamp, at the intersection of today's Kingsway and Fraser Street, the first intersection of two roads in the future city outside of Gastown. The Junction Inn was one of a series of stagecoach roadhouses on the ancient trail (now Kingsway) to New Westminster that was further upgraded in 1884 and renamed the New Westminster Road. Fraser Street was the first street heading south to connect Gastown to its food supply, the farms on the north arm of the Fraser River.

In 1886 German-born Jacob and Mary Grauer became the parents of the first child recorded as being born in Mount Pleasant, and only the ninth child recorded as being born in the newly created city of Vancouver. Their son George Grauer was born in a cabin on the bushy banks of the large creek at what is now the corner of 10th Avenue and Main Street. In 1910 the family had a much larger house built at 364 W. 10th Avenue, which is now officially a heritage building known as the Grauer Residence. George Grauer's son Dal Grauer grew up to become a Rhodes Scholar, the Chancellor of UBC and the well-known President of the BC Electric Company.

If you worked in Mount Pleasant in the mid-1880s when it was simply known as "False Creek," and later "the Hill," it was most likely you were working for a real estate developer

cutting down trees, clearing stumps and building roads in anticipation of the arrival of the railway being built across North America from Montreal. By removing the necessity of having to use either horses, canoes or just one's own feet to get across Canada and over the Rocky Mountains, it seemed certain that more settlers would soon be on their way to the Pacific coast at Vancouver.

In 1887, as Edmonds had foreseen, the railway arrived and created spectacular growth in the newly named boomtown of Vancouver. In 1888 a new bridge was built south across False Creek and Edmonds began to build streets in earnest. He named the new hillside subdivision "Mount Pleasant" after a village just outside of Dublin, Ireland, the birthplace of his wife Jane Edmonds. With co-owner Dr. Israel Powell, Edmonds began with the portion of Mount Pleasant north of Broadway. Dr. Powell was an important figure in the history of British Columbia. As a member of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly, he was the person who introduced the law that established the first system of free public schools in BC. He was also one of the early proponents of the idea that the British colony of British Columbia should sever its direct ties to Britain and form a new country called Canada. This was not yet a popular idea, and he lost his seat in the BC Legislature in the 1866 election as a result. But in 1871 Dr. Powell was one of the key people who negotiated the entry of British Columbia into the country of Canada that had been created in 1867. In return, Canada agreed to build the Canadian Pacific Railway across thousands of miles of wilderness to the Pacific coast. Powell bought his extensive acreage in the future Mount Pleasant expecting to make a fortune in real estate after the railway that he negotiated arrived. He did make a fortune.

Powell went on to become the first chancellor of the University of British Columbia in 1890 and he supported the establishment of the Masons in British Columbia and became the organization's first Grand Master. Powell's grandparents were United Empire Loyalists—the group of Americans who supported Great Britain's King George against the American Revolutionists who then defeated Britain in the American War of Independence. The Loyalists, being on the losing side, became refugees who left everything behind and fled to the British Colonies (now called Canada), where their large numbers were to change the area from a French-speaking to an English-speaking British colony. American influence had a somewhat low profile in many parts of Canada for generations afterward.

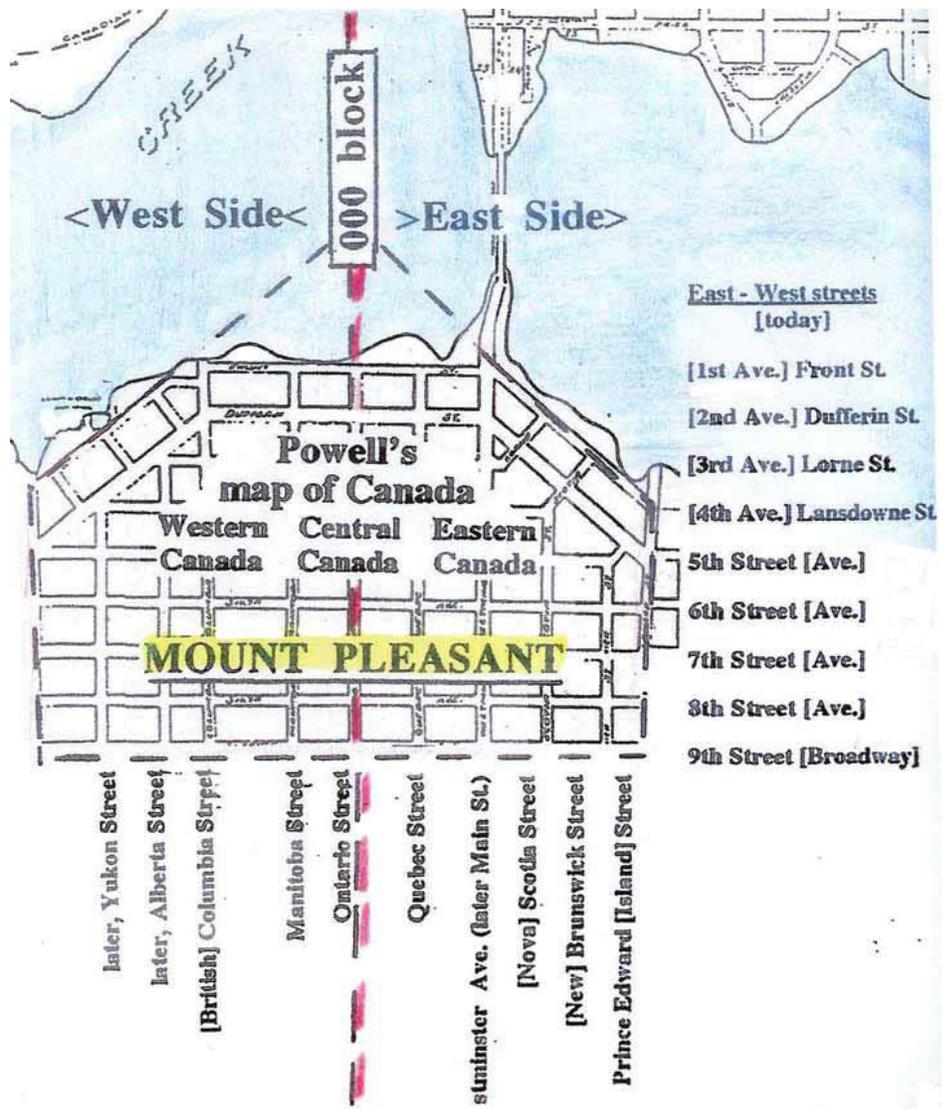
Mount Pleasant's Map of Canada Streets

The city of Vancouver was in many ways a creation of people associated with the Canadian Pacific Railway and other eastern Canadian interests, and with the completion of the railway people and goods from the east began to pour into what was then a remote area. Locally, some of the British-born or long-established elites in Victoria and New Westminster who owned much of economic structure on the BC coast viewed the newcomers, "the Canadians" as invading foreigners from the east. In Vancouver's first civic election the battle was between the local British-born sawmill owner, and a newly arrived Canadian-born land speculator from Ontario. The Canadians won, and their influence grew as more poured in to overwhelm the local British and British Columbian-born population. This divide spilled over into the naming of the new streets being built in Mount Pleasant.

The first street in Mount Pleasant had originally been an ancient First Nations and animal trail, now known as Kingsway, the only diagonal street that breaks the modern rectangular grid system. In 1888 the super-Canadian and Ontario-born Powell named all his streets in Mount Pleasant after Canada's provinces to create a representation of the map of Canada. He began naming from the west with the names of the western provinces: (British) Columbia Street, Manitoba Street (Albert and Saskatchewan did not yet exist), Ontario Street, and ending with the eastern provinces, Quebec Street, (Nova) Scotia Street, (New) Brunswick Street and Prince Edward (Island) Street. The centre street of Vancouver's grid system is Powell's Ontario Street, in the 000 hundred block going east-west, probably since Ontario is known as central Canada, and it was Powell's own birthplace. The western Canadian streets are west of Ontario Street, and the eastern Canadian streets are east of it.

The 1888 layout of streets in Edmonds' and Powell's District Lot 200a, showing the remarkable symmetry of the original part of Mount Pleasant, and

into False Creek where Julius Voight settled by the future Main Street



Just as the governor-general of Canada has influence right across the whole country, Powell named the east-west streets after successive governor-generals of Canada. Since the numbered grid system was in place elsewhere and the first street (now 1st Avenue) was already named Front Street, he named the 2nd, 3rd and 4th streets after the 2nd, 3rd and 4th governor-generals after BC joined Canada. These streets were Dufferin Street, Lorne Street and Lansdowne Street, named after the Marquis of Dufferin, the Marquis of Lorne and the Marquis of Lansdowne. Dr. Powell, after whom Vancouver's waterfront Powell Street is named as well as the town of Powell River; lived long enough to build the Ashnola Apartments on 6th Avenue at Main Street in 1912.

The original map of Canada street name system in Mount Pleasant was later extended to include two new north-south streets after a new province and a new territory were formed:

- Alberta Street, in the 300 block west (Alberta was formed in 1905)
- Yukon Street, in the 400 block west (the Yukon Territory was formed in 1898)

The redevelopment of Mount Pleasant's former False Creek industrial lands into the Olympic Village in 2010 presents another opportunity to extend the map of Canada street names.

Current candidates to add to the map of Canada streets in Mount Pleasant are the following:

- Northwest (Territory) Street (the Northwest Territory was formed in 1870)
- Saskatchewan Street (Saskatchewan was formed in 1905)
- Newfoundland Street (Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949)
- Nunavat (Territory) Street (Nunavat Territory was formed in 1999)
- A new east-west street could be named after the current governor-general.

It has often been said “history is written by the victors,” and the history of Mount Pleasant has been written in its street names. In Mount Pleasant there are no First Nations street names, despite the fact First Nations have been living in the area for about 10,000 years. The two known local Squamish names were Kihwah'esks, the name for the original finger of land in north Mount Pleasant, and Skwahchays, the original name for the East False Creek Flats. Both these names could seriously be considered for use as new street names in the redevelopment of those areas.

The victors in Mount Pleasant can be described as the 81% of its 1891 non-Native population that was born in Canada, England, Scotland and Ireland. These four groups all are neatly represented in the original naming of Mount Pleasant's streets. The 54% of the group that were born in Canada were well represented by Powell's map of Canada streets that make up the western half of Mount Pleasant. In 1901 roughly half of all the people living on Ontario Street were actually born in Ontario. It is interesting to note that Quebec is the most Catholic part of Canada, and the large Catholic school complex, St. Patrick's, is located on Quebec Street.

Originally the eastern part of Mount Pleasant in District Lot 264A had almost all Scottish-named streets, and here the local church was Presbyterian (the Church of Scotland) at 10th and Scott Street, now renamed with another Scottish name to Fraser Street. The streets in the middle between the groups of Canadian and Scottish streets were the two very English streets St. George Street and Victoria Street. Because of confusion with Victoria Drive in Grandview, Victoria Street was later renamed Guelph Street, since Guelph was Queen Victoria's last name. In addition, the first two main streets in Mount Pleasant, Westminster Avenue and Westminster Road, were thoroughly English names since Westminster was the seat of power of the British Empire. The Anglican Church (the Church of England) in Mount Pleasant

was located on the English-named Guelph (Victoria) Street, at Broadway. At 8th Avenue and Guelph Street is the 1912 Connaught Apartments, named after the Duke of Connaught, a son of Queen Victoria who was the Governor-General of Canada at the time. At 11th and Guelph Street the 1911 Nightingale Elementary School was named after one of the most famous English women of the Victorian Age, Florence Nightingale.

Originally the most westerly street in the Scottish series was Carolina Street, Carolina being a Latin form of Charles, another word for King Charles I, the last Scottish king of Scotland. Next was Scott Street (now Fraser Street) named after the greatest Scottish novelist, Sir Walter Scott. The yellow brick Ivanhoe Apartments at Carolina and 7th Avenue was likely named after Sir Walter Scott's famous novel, “Ivanhoe.” Next was Burns Street (now Prince Albert Street), named after the great Scottish poet, Robbie Burns. Glen Drive, which ran down the route of the valley of China Creek, retains its original name, “glen” being the Scottish word for a small valley. The last street named in this series was Keith Drive, named after, or perhaps by, James Cooper Keith, a local Scottish-born landowner who was the president of the Bank of BC, a president of the Vancouver Board of Trade, and the reeve of North Vancouver. The first road built across North and West Vancouver, Keith Road, is named after him. Inevitably, Scottish people were drawn to this part of Mount Pleasant, and the local church in this area was a Scottish Presbyterian church at 10th Avenue and Scott (Fraser) Street. By the early 1990s this Scottish church had declined to only six elderly members, whose Canadian children appear not to have joined the church. The church then disbanded and the building was sold to a group of Jewish people who converted it to a synagogue.

In the south of Mount Pleasant in District Lot 301, Ireland-born H.V. Edmonds originally named almost all the streets after his Irish relatives, such as his wife Jane Fortune Kemp (he named his sections of 17th, 16th and 11th Avenues as Jane Street, Fortune Street and Kemp Street) and his sister Sophia (the first street east of Main Street). Edmond's land was where the most famous Irish family in Mount Pleasant settled, the McGeers.

During the great boom years around 1910, local businessmen envisioned that Mount Pleasant would become the centre of a great metropolis, and so proposed renaming two of Mount Pleasant's main streets with two classic modern American street names. Accordingly 9th Avenue was renamed Broadway, after the famous commercial strip in New York City, that city's oldest and longest street, and the colonial British name “Westminster” Avenue was changed to Main Street. Being physically so much closer to the United States than Great Britain, ever increasing American influence was not surprising.

Eventually the Scottish street names on the eastern side of Mount Pleasant were changed in an effort to simplify the naming system, but the name changes of the Scottish, English and Irish street names also parallel the absorption of those foreign immigrants into Canadian culture. The map of Canada streetnames remain unchanged. Today the original British culture of Mount Pleasant has faded away as the second and third generations of the original immigrants have become thoroughly Canadian. This is a common situation among ethnic groups arriving in a new country whose children then grow up without direct exposure to their parents' original country and culture. It illustrates the important lesson that ethnicity is really cultural, not racial. The majority of the first settlers in Mount Pleasant were immigrants born outside of Canada, or who had parents born outside of Canada. Nevertheless, the ways of the old country are quickly lost as the children of the new Canadians become thoroughly Canadianized, a situation that probably applies today to the new members of the Chinese, Filipino and Vietnamese minorities of Mount Pleasant.

Rural Mount Pleasant

In 1888 Englishman Charles Maddams purchased a whole city block at 900 East 7th Avenue, part of what now forms China Creek Park. Here he built the first substantial home and farm in the northeast sector of Mount Pleasant. Maddams originally came to Canada as a servant of the Marquis of Lorne, the Governor General of Canada, and his Princess Louise Caroline Alberta, who was a daughter of Queen Victoria. The place Maddams picked was an ancient Native site on the ocean, at the mouth of a huge ravine already being farmed by four Chinese vegetable farmers and two Chinese pig farmers, Pien and Duck Fo. Records show in 1886 this land was rented by W.E. Barnes, while Charles Barnes and George Roy owned the only Pork Market in Gastown. The Chinese farmers may have worked for them in 1886 or before, and may have been the first modern settlers of Mount Pleasant.

The Maddams family created a 5-acre farm called Maddam's Ranch, and they named the creek "China Creek" after their Chinese neighbours. Using the rich soil of the China Creek delta and the manure from the two slaughterhouses at the mouth of Brewery Creek, the Maddams were able to grow and wholesale tons of rhubarb, apples, pears, prunes and plums as well as loganberries, raspberries, strawberries and currants. They also raised pigeons, a dozen breeds of purebred chickens and produced cider and wine. By the time Charles Maddams died in the 1920s, he was the last farmer in Mount Pleasant, which by then had become almost entirely residential.

The Rainier Brewing Company of Seattle tried to buy the Maddam's property to build a brewery there, but it was prevented from doing so by the already established local breweries. The deep creek ravine near the Ranch eventually became the site of Empire Oval, a heavily-banked bicycle racing track surfaced with yellow cedar that was built for the British Empire Games of 1954. Eventually the oval was torn down, and in its place was built the King Edward Campus of Vancouver Community College that is there today.

At the place where a tributary of China Creek crossed the Westminster Road, Nova Scotia-born Samuel Garvin and Welshman Joseph Jones established dairy farms, the Garvin Dairy and the Jones Milk Ranch on either side of Jones Creek. Irishman James McGeer, a former cub reporter with the Manchester Guardian, established another milk ranch in a corner of the Tea Swamp further west on the Westminster Road. During 1888 the False Creek School, soon renamed the Mount Pleasant School, was opened with just a few students at today's Kingsway and Broadway, and now the site of the Kingsgate Mall. The school was not open long before the principal had to shoot a bear that was alarming the children.

This 1890 photo shows a Mount Pleasant pioneer in his horse-drawn sleigh, turning south of Broadway onto Kingsway. Just behind him you can see the Kingsway bridge over Brewery Creek and further to the left the foot bridge. Above the two bridges in the distance you can see the Mount Pleasant Bandstand.



The census of 1891 shows that the young Mount Pleasant had a population of about 1,400 people, with a median age of only 24 years, 60% of whom were males. At this time there were so many young couples getting married and buying the less expensive lots on the edge of town out in Mount Pleasant that for a while it acquired the nickname "Honeymoon Hill." Fully 87% of the people were born somewhere in the British Empire, the largest group being the 25% born in Ontario. Apart from the large British group, 7% were born in the USA, 2% were born in Italy, 1% were born in China and 1% were born in Germany. The 1% Chinese were those living on China Creek, and the four people whose occupations were listed as "brewer" were all born in Germany, and all were working in Brewery Creek breweries.

These were the pioneers of Mount Pleasant, virtually all of them having arrived in the previous three years. Of the 550 who earned income, the census lists roughly 180 labourers, 80 carpenters, as well as 20 farmers, 15 blacksmiths, 2 artists and 1 capitalist. In general, 45% of workers were unskilled labourers, 36% were skilled labourers and about 20% were white-collar professionals or proprietors.

In terms of religion, 98% of Mount Pleasant residents were some form of Christian. The brave pioneers here consisted of one American-born family of Universalists, two Agnostics, one Spiritualist, one Unitarian, and one claimed Infidel, carpenter George P. Phillips.

If you were a man living in Mount Pleasant in the 1890s, most likely you were a British Empire-born Christian who was working in the construction industry. If you were a woman, you were most likely British-Empire born and a newly-wed.

A Streetcar Village Surrounded by 1890s Victorian Homes

While a few farmers were settling in Mount Pleasant, Westminster Avenue (Main Street), the only street heading south from downtown Vancouver, was extended through the stumps from 7th to 13th Avenue. At the crest of the hill a hub was formed where Kingsway branched off and Main Street was bisected by 7th Avenue, the first east-west through street south of False Creek. Just about a block away Brewery Creek crossed, in succession, Main Street, 9th Avenue (Broadway), Kingsway, 8th Avenue and 7th Avenue. From this unique intersection Mount Pleasant developed into Vancouver's first suburb, while most of the rest of Vancouver outside the downtown core was an empty logged-over forest marked by old logging roads.

Looking south down Main Street at 7th Avenue where Kingsway branches off and the Mount Pleasant Bandstand is visible. Note the 1889 Depencier House on 8th Avenue behind the Fairview Beltline streetcar, and to the right of it e hall on Broadway from which many pictures were taken.



The 1899 Depencier House when it still faced Main Street [LGN 1052 CVA]

Remarkably, Mount Pleasant still has many of the buildings that were built at this time during the reign of Queen Victoria, who died in 1901. No attempt has yet been made to systematically identify Mount Pleasant's Victorian buildings. In 2008, historian Bruce Macdonald researched on his own a number of older buildings within a block of Mount Pleasant's original intersection where 7th Avenue, Main Street and Kingsway intersect. He found some of the oldest buildings in the city. Just east of Main Street at 151 East 8th Avenue on the lane is the 1889 Depencier House, the oldest occupied single family residence in outside of the downtown area.





Around the corner at 2313 Main Street near 7th Avenue is the 1892 J.F. Clark Building, the oldest commercial building outside of the downtown area. It is so old it has a western front like the typical small town buildings in the old western movies. Just one block north at 139 E. 6th Avenue is the oldest building in Mount Pleasant, carpenter James Lindsay's house that was built in 1888, the year Mount Pleasant was named. It is currently boarded up and ready for demolition.

Going south down Main just across Broadway, the first building on Watson Street on the west side is a small square building at the back of an old restaurant facing Main Street. This is the last of three identical 1895 homes built on the land originally owned by the Grauers, and where they became Mount Pleasant's first recorded parents in 1886. The houses originally fronted on Main Street. J.W. Horne, the well-known landowner and MLA, once owned this last house. Horne built the Yale Hotel in Yaletown and the Horne Block in Gastown. In the 1990s the punk rock group D.O.A. used this forgotten house for rehearsing. Finally across Main Street at 166-170-190 East 10th Avenue is the Mason Block, a cast concrete building consisting of three unique two-storey town homes, each with their own entrance. This building dates from 1905-07 and is probably the oldest cast concrete building in Vancouver, and likely the city's first set of concrete condominiums. Clearly further research on Mount Pleasant's unique heritage buildings needs to be done.

This 1907 photo shows the square roof of the Horne House on Main Street on the left, and on the right, the recently-built Mason Block, at the corner of 10th Avenue and Main Street [DIST P142 CVA]



In 1891 the arrival of streetcar service provided a new spur to general growth. Before the arrival of the streetcars the only way to navigate Mount Pleasant's usually muddy and hilly streets was by foot, by horse-drawn carriage or on horseback. The new streetcars of the "Fairview Beltline" struggled up the Main Street hill from downtown, turned west on to Broadway and looped back downtown over the Granville Bridge. One pioneer has recounted how mischievous young boys would sometimes grease the rails on the Hill, leaving the streetcars to spin their wheels and irritate the adults.

Photo Looking South Up Main Street

Pioneer Gladys Schwesinger described life in the 1890s near the foot of Mount Pleasant Hill this way: "In time Westminster Avenue (Main Street) boasted a wide sidewalk and a few years later a bicycle path that went as far south as Ninth Avenue. Beyond Sixteenth Avenue an old logged-over corduroy road straggled, on which mothers could not push baby carriages. This feature probably encouraged the mothers to cluster at the foot of the hill where they could settle themselves on the stray logs and stumps and stones that bordered the first sidewalks. There the mothers did their talking while they tended their babies in the open on sunny days. The men preferred as their meeting-place the old brewery located on the point where "Brewery Creek" crossed Sixth Avenue. Evenings the oldtimers would gather in what was chumily called the "Mount Pleasant Parliament" where they would review the happenings of the day. Brewery Creek, well supplied with trout, offered sport for any one who wanted fishing. Also it provided an attractive old swimmin' hole for the boys, being filled with clean, pure water from which a stream escaped to gurgle its course down to Front Street (First Avenue) where it emptied into a larger body of water known locally as "False Creek."

Workers from Vancouver Brewery enjoying a beer on the side of Brewery Creek in their version of the Mount Pleasant Parliament [LGN 1052 CVA]



A second major streetcar line connected Vancouver with New Westminster and was partly owned by H.V. Edmonds. It angled off Main Street onto Westminster Road (Kingway) where Edmonds happened to own all of District Lot 301. Here he named most of the nineteen streets after his friends and relatives, but the only two remaining names today are Sophia Street, named after his sister, and John Street, named after Edmond's brother-in-law John Webster, the original grand landowner of southwest Mount Pleasant, District Lot 302.

Pioneer Businesses of Mount Pleasant

During the late 1880s and 1890s the waters of Brewery Creek serviced a string of small industries gathered in a dozen blocks along its banks. On both sides of the mouth of Brewery Creek at 1st Avenue were slaughterhouses and on the creek bank at 12th Avenue was the Vancouver Tannery, where leather was made from the animal skins produced by the slaughterhouses. The hides were tanned with wagonloads of hemlock bark brought up from forests to the south along the only through street, the dirt road that evolved into Fraser Street. In the blocks between the slaughterhouses and the tannery were the German-born Reifel brothers' San Francisco Brewery (later called the Red Star Brewery), and the Lion Brewery (later called the Lansdowne Brewery, then the Stadler Brewery). The most successful was Charles Doering's Vancouver Brewery, "the largest on the Pacific Coast" when it was built, and next door was Thorpe & Company Soda Water Works, producers of Ginger Beer, Kola Champagne, Iron Brew and Sarsaparilla. Doering dammed Brewery Creek and flumed the water to a forty-foot diameter water wheel that powered a grain-grinding mill. Today the only noticeable survivor of this period is the unique 1903 brick and stone Vancouver Brewery building at 6th Avenue and Scotia Street. In 1993 it was renovated into the first official artists' live/work studio building in Vancouver, the Brewery Creek Building.



The Vancouver Brewery on 7th Avenue just east of Main Street of delivery trucks in 1910

Apart from Brewery Creek, in 1887 there was also a pioneer brewery at 10th Avenue and Columbia Street, on the next creek to the west, Columbia Creek. This was Robert Reisterer's Mainland Brewery. Reisterer moved his operation to Nelson in 1893, calling it the Nelson Brewing Company, today still the area's most successful brewery. Today we only have the R & B Brewery at 54 East 4th Avenue, a successful microbrewery established in 1997.

Doering's 1896 advertisement consisted of the following:

Follow our Advice:

WHEN YOU FEEL BLUE 'cause Bis is bad,
 And all the world seems raging mad,
 When war is humming in your ear,
 Don't pine and think,
 But quickly drink
 A glass of **Alexandra Beer**.
 Then clouds will vanish, life seems brighter,
 The sorrows gone, the burdens lighter,
 And Albions sons and Deutschland's Kaiser
 Their quarrel cease
 And live in peace
 For Lager Beer has made them wiser.

VANCOUVER ALE
 Non-Intoxicating

There were also other soda water companies in Mount Pleasant, most notably Cross & Co. Soda Water Works, at 38 East 4th Avenue, founded in 1913. Later came the Pacific Dry Company at 225 East 5th Avenue, which held the first Pepsi Cola franchise in Vancouver. This long and extensive beverage history makes Mount Pleasant the logical place for an annual micro-brewing festival.

In its early days Charles Doering's Vancouver Brewery ran a variety of interesting advertisements, including one quoted below from 1896. This was when the rapid economic rise of Germany was a concern to those supporting the older British Empire. Of course Germany was the birthplace of Charles Doering and the other founders of Brewery Creek's breweries.

The "non-intoxicating" claim is interesting in light of the fact the poem is a description of a person getting drunk. Perhaps it was designed to address concern about the rising Temperance movement, a major problem for the business interests of Mount Pleasant's brewers. In the 1890s the anti-drug movement of the day was mainly directed against alcohol. In Mount Pleasant there was a Temperance Hall on the edge of Brewery Creek at 10th Avenue and Main Street during most of the 1890s. In 1898 Prime Minister Laurier held a national plebiscite in which the majority of Canadians voted in favour of the prohibition of alcohol. The movement eventually did help to succeed in making alcohol illegal in British Columbia from 1916 to 1921. The Temperance movement in Mount Pleasant was an important way for women to express themselves politically on a number of issues since they didn't get the right to vote in elections until 1917.

With electric streetcars providing greatly improved mobility since they were the new rapid transit system of the day, Mount Pleasant grew quickly to become a well-formed small town with its own stores, a fire hall, greenhouses, fruit tree nurseries, and new wooden Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist churches. Mount Pleasant even had its own newspaper, the Mount Pleasant Advocate, founded in 1899. At this time Fleet Street in London was the location of the greatest newspapers in the world. A 1907 issue of the Mount Pleasant Advocate illustrates the strong British nature of the local culture with the claim in its masthead that it had an "English Office" at 30 Fleet Street, London, "where a copy of the Advocate is kept for visitors." Also in the 1907 issue was an ad from the Vancouver Breweries for "Cascade Beer; THE BEER Without a Peer; Tel 429;" which was "For sale at all first-class Saloons, Liquor Stores and Hotels or delivered to your home." An article on the Mount Pleasant Band tells about its new uniforms and boasts that it is "the largest Band in the city." There was also an ad on the front page from H.O. Lee, who then operated a small grocery store next to the current Lee Building site. Lee's ad read: "For Sale or Rent, the old Mt. Pleasant Methodist Church Building." This was just before Lee replaced the small wooden church at Main and Broadway with his relatively huge landmark Lee Building, the largest building outside of downtown area. This leap by Lee from small-time to big-time illustrates the nature of the tremendous boom going on at the time.

Mount Pleasant.
11. Waiting for the street car.
Vancouver, B. C.



The streetcar stop at Main and Broadway defined the development of the community. By 1901 the area within a radius of five blocks of easy walking distance of the stop was filled with hundreds of fine new Victorian homes. As the original gateway to “mainland” Vancouver from the almost “island” of the downtown area, Mount Pleasant was a natural transportation hub, and so it was the home of the streetcar barns from 1890 until the demise of the system in 1955. Many of the streetcar operators were strong union men who lived in Mount Pleasant and in those days many went onto local political careers. Six streetcar operators became parks board and city councilors, two became Members of the Legislative Assembly and Angus McInnis went on to become a long-serving socialist Member of Parliament.

In 1901, the year that marks the end of the Victorian era and the beginning of the Edwardian period, there were almost no houses or development in the rest of Vancouver south of False Creek. As a result, today Mount Pleasant has a unique collection of Victorian homes while the rest of Vancouver outside of the downtown area has virtually none. To this day Mount Pleasant maintains a popular village feel, since it developed before the arrival of the automobile allowed everything to spread out beyond walking distance.

Brewery Creek at the turn of 1900 still had its wild sections. Gladys Schwesinger described her childhood years playing in the Brewery Creek ravine this way: “Day after day, once school was let out, and on weekends—except in inclement weather—my sisters and I would repair to our Ravine for play. This was our special preserve, our forest retreat, our playground, and my own personal conception of a fairyland on earth! In the spring time we gathered violets, mostly yellow ones; also may-flowers, twin-flowers, pigeon-berry blossoms, ferns and mosses. We ate “sasky” and “muck-a-muck” (the succulent new shoots of the salmon-berry and the thimbleberry bushes). We waded in the stream of the brook, and climbed back and forth over the many logs which had conveniently fallen across its deeper pools, joining rock to rock, and affording walkable bridges. We met our young friends in the Ravine. We played house there. We made up stories and told them to one another. We exchanged confidences, and we dreamed dreams of the future.

Waiting for Streetcar in 1908- Mount Pleasant citizens waiting for streetcar coming up the Main Street hill, while another streetcar has just turned west onto Broadway. This picture also shows the original Mount Pleasant Methodist Church, and just above the women waiting for the streetcar you see Lee's small grocery store with its Tetley's Tea sign and the word “Lee” just below it. [Dist P144 1908 CVA]

In summer time, we sampled fully of the crops which the Ravine so generously provided for our delectation. We hunted out the buried liquorice root and chewed it assiduously. We coloured our lips with the juice of salal berries. We ate the yellow and red salmon berries, the thimbleberries and the wild raspberries. Also we picked bucketsful of blueberries, red huckleberries, black caps and blackberries to take home to Mother for pies or winter preserves. True enough, we often had to fight the devils clubs and skunks cabbages and stinging nettles that grew up thickly from the lush, black earth; but in time, we learned how to cope with these annoyances. We climbed trees on the higher levels of the woods and shooed away the crows from their trees. When we found robins' nests, with their tiny blue eggs inside, we carefully left them there, untouched! In places, the brook bed produced tall clumps of spirea, which we loved to pick and present to our friends. I recall gathering many armfuls of this showy flower, together with long green ferns, and decorating the Methodist Church on the occasion of the double-wedding of the Glover girls, both school teachers, one of whom married Mr. Dobson, the other Mr. H.H. Stevens [later an M.P.] I would guess the date to be the end of June, 1906."

In Victorian Mount Pleasant the centre of the intersection at Kingsway and Main Street was marked by a permanent covered bandstand where the Mount Pleasant Band played on Sunday afternoons to Christians observing the Sabbath in the days before the automobile. Children on their way to the Mount Pleasant School at Kingsway and Broadway would sometimes see beavers at work building a dam in the Tea Swamp, or bears feeding on blackberries. In 1912 people were still catching salmon and trout in local creeks and shooting grouse in the Tea Swamp. The only settlement between the outer edge of town at 16th Avenue and the Fraser River, kilometres away, was one small group of houses at 18th Avenue where a couple of families by the name of Hicks lived. The sophisticated residents of Mount Pleasant referred to the area as "Hicksville."

Church Hill

In Victorian times, the church played an even more central role in a spiritual, social and ethnic gathering place than it does today in Mount Pleasant. In both downtown Vancouver and Mount Pleasant the skylines were originally dominated by church steeples, not large commercial buildings. By 1900 Mount Pleasant had three wooden churches centered on Main Street by 8th Avenue. At some point this led to the area being nicknamed Church Hill, since by 1910 the small churches were replaced with a cluster of three large new churches on 10th Avenue just west of Main Street. This created a distinctive skyline with church spires that until very recently made the centre of Mount Pleasant easily identifiable from miles away. Here there were eventually five churches on just three city blocks. There were more churches nearby, including the St. Patrick's Catholic church complex which later covered almost three city blocks. Besides the church, the St. Patrick's facilities eventually included a convent, an elementary school and Notre Dame High School, the second largest Catholic high school west of Winnipeg. Another signifi-

cant church complex was the Anglican St. Michael's Church a few blocks to the east down Broadway between Prince Edward and Guelph streets.

In addition to the prominence of Mount Pleasant's churches, a unique feature of the landmark buildings that made up most of Mount Pleasant's historic skyline was that many of them were built of yellow or brownish brick or stone. Unlike the distinctive red brick structures of Gastown and Yaletown, the yellow-toned bricks were from the historic Clayburn Brick Plant by Abbotsford, BC.

The landmark yellow or brownish-toned brick and stone structures situated right on Main Street include the Lee Building and the old Bank of Montreal at Broadway, Heritage Hall at 15th Avenue, and the Ashnola, Belvedere, and Wenonah apartment buildings. Just one block west on Quebec Street are Quebec Manor on 7th Avenue, the Mount Pleasant Methodist Church building (now the Cornerstone condominiums) and the H.H. Stevens Building at 10th Avenue, followed by the entire St. Patrick's complex. There are two mansions across from City Hall on 11th Avenue in the west, the Ivanhoe Apartments on 7th Avenue at Carolina in the east and the Florence Nightingale School on 12th Avenue at Guelph in the south. Many recent structures have deliberately continued this style.

Generally speaking women in early Mount Pleasant did not have very many opportunities to express themselves in writing. In 1913 the Golden Rule Mission Band produced a cookbook, which was "Lovingly Dedicated to the Women of Mount Pleasant Methodist Church." Apparently some local married women saw this as an opportunity to express themselves on the subject of Mount Pleasant husbands. Under the title "How to Cook a Husband" the following advice appears in the cookbook:

"A good many husbands are utterly spoiled by mismanagement. Some women keep them constantly in hot water; others let them freeze by their care and indifference... Some keep them in a pickle their whole lives. It cannot be supposed that any husband will be tender and good, managed in this way, but they are really delicious when properly treated. In selecting your husband, you should not be guided by the silvery appearance, as in buying a mackerel, nor by the golden tint, as if you wanted a salmon..."

"Tie him in the kettle by a strong silk cord called comfort. Make a clear steady fire out of love, cheerfulness and neatness. Add a little sugar in the form of what confectioners call kisses... a little spice improves them, but it must be used with judgment. Do not stick any sharp instrument into him to see if he is becoming tender. Stir him gently; watch the while, lest he lie too flat and too close to the kettle, and so become useless. You cannot fail to notice when he is done."

Two pioneer businesses did well and expanded beyond Mount Pleasant's borders. Thorpe and Company Soda Water Works established branch plants in Victoria and Nelson, BC. The Womans Bakery on Main Street near Broadway that started in about 1905 expanded to a chain with ten locations in the 1920s, including one in Victoria, BC.

Watson Street

While Brewery Creek dominated the area between 1st and 8th Avenue roughly one block east of Main Street, another unique feature of Mount Pleasant village was the continuation of this corridor; the lane to the east of Main Street between Broadway (9th Avenue) and 16th Avenue. Now called Watson Street, it was known as Howard Street from 1899 to 1950. Watson Street was one of the only lanes in the city that could be considered to be a residential street. Perhaps this occurred because Watson Street, not Main Street, was the boundary between John Webster's District Lot 302 and H.V. Edmonds District Lot 301. The original houses on Watson Street were modest workers' homes, but they had some unusual features: they faced and hugged the lane and had no front yard, but rather featured a shed roof over a landing with stairs sideways down to the lane. This created a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere, in contrast to the experience of walking in most back lanes, and provided a quieter alternative route for anyone having to walk along busy Main Street.

Although most of the old Watson Street houses have been torn down, new developments have been encouraged to build some units facing the lane and the redevelopment has allowed the introduction of sidewalks, better pavement and other amenities. This is an improvement over having dumpsters, large flat windowless walls and no sidewalks. As a result of recent initiatives by the Vancouver Planning Department, we now have half a dozen new developments along Watson Street that have oriented a number town homes to the lane, and some have been landscaped with dry creek beds and native plants as a nod to Brewery Creek. On the west side of Watson Street, between 13th and 14th Avenue is the very last remaining original Watson Street house. When it was built in 1907, it was the only building on the block, including the side facing Main Street. It is a classic Watson Street house and it features the typical one-storey

sloped-roof house with a basement and the classic front porch with stairs paralleling the lane. It was home to a streetcar operator for years, and stands as a reminder of the importance of Mount Pleasant's working class in the early days.

The Early Decades of the 1900s

In the boom times leading up to World War I, the population of Vancouver became 5 times larger than it had been just 15 years before. In Mount Pleasant there were many successful new businesses such as Calladine's Grocery, described below by local historian Claude Douglas. Douglas actually played in Brewery Creek as a child and worked for "Old Man Thorpe" in the Thorpe Soda Water Works. He was born in Mount Pleasant in 1911 and grew up at 117 West 10th Avenue, a house that later became one of the famous Davis Houses, Mount Pleasant's best-known cluster of restored heritage homes. Claude Douglas was even directly connected to Church Hill—his grandparents built and owned the oldest church there.

In the 1980s Douglas reminisced about Calladine's Grocery on Main Street (now 2331 Main), describing the "sawdust covered floors, great sacks of meal, potatoes, sugar and beans. The crunching sound of the old fire engine red coffee grinder and its permeating aroma. The great rounds of cheeses, so mellow. All shepherded by clerks in chaste white aprons." This was in the days before customers were allowed to serve themselves in grocery stores, when the Safeway chain in Vancouver still went by the name Piggly Wiggly. Next to Calladine's was the Mount Pleasant Pool Hall, where Douglas "misspent" many of his teen years, and then McCallum's hardware, which Douglas described as being "...so advanced for its day, employing floor to ceiling ladders that rolled from the front to the back of the store, on which I had many thrilling rides." All three of these pioneer Mount Pleasant buildings still survive in the middle of the block, on the west side of Main Street, between 7th and 8th Avenue. Calladine's is now part of the Goh Ballet Building, while the pool hall and hardware store are in the Fraser Building, now housing the Broadway Rooms. A little further along is an oddity, what looks like an old house with a western front facing Main Street. This is the oldest business building in Mount Pleasant, and the oldest one outside of the downtown area, the 1892 J.F. Clark Building.



The 2300 block of Main Street between 8th and 7th Avenue looking pretty much as it does today. This picture was taken before 1922, when people still drove on the left side of the road as they still do in Great Britain. From the left, the Royal Bank, Calladines, the Mount Pleasant Pool Hall, McCallum's hardware store and on the far right, the 1892 Clark Building.

All together this group of old buildings on this one block contains the most heritage buildings in Mount Pleasant, from the 1889 Depencier House at the south end, to the 1892 J.F. Clark Building and the bay-windowed Williams Block by the lane on 7th Avenue. Of course this block faces downtown Mount Pleasant's original intersection of Kingsway and Main, the triangle block formed by it and the old clock where the bandstand used to be.

During World War I, progress brought the loss of half of Mount Pleasant's oceanfront land and the elimination of the mouths of Brewery Creek and China Creek, as the tidal flats of False Creek were filled in from the Main Street Bridge eastwards a dozen blocks to Clark Drive. The new section of flat land provided a site for the construction of two large railway terminals and rail yards right at the end of the great railway-building era. There was no denying the prosperity of the times as the tall landmark Lee Building at Broadway and Main soared skyward in 1912, followed in 1916 by the grand new post office at 15th and Main. This unusually glorious building marks the southern extremity of Old Mount Pleasant and is probably the most unique building south of False Creek. It is now called Heritage Hall, the home of community organizations and a meeting hall for local events. By the 1920s the formerly distinct village of Mount Pleasant became absorbed into the urban sprawl being made possible not just by an extensive streetcar system, but by the mobility of the newly popularized automobile.

Construction of a large new concrete streetcar barn on Main Street between 13th and 14th Avenues began in 1911 but was not finished until 1921 because of delays caused by World War I. It housed a total of 123 streetcars, half of them on its roof. Employing hundreds of streetcar operators called "railway motormen" it is not surprising a number of them lived just across Main Street on Howard (now Watson) Street. The last remaining Watson Street house was home to a number of streetcar company employees. When the whole streetcar system was suddenly eliminated in 1955, the heavy concrete structure was converted to a shopping centre, now called the Centre Point Mall, with car parking on its roof. The large uncaptioned photomurals that completely rim the large food store there today were made from photos supplied by Claude Douglas. Most people would probably be surprised to learn that the unfamiliar photos all display scenes of Mount Pleasant from not very long ago.

The Industrial Heart of Vancouver

In the early decades of the 1900s it was common for most Mount Pleasant women to stay in the home as housewives, except for a few who might get jobs as nannies, nurses or school teachers. Typically the working men would ride the streetcar down "the Hill" to work in the logging industries jammed around the perimeter of False Creek. This was the Industrial Age, with thousands employed in sawmills and shingle mills, in metal fabricating plants making chains, steel cables and other logging or industrial equipment, or in yards storing and distributing sawdust, wood, coal, salt, gravel and cement. Some of the large buildings from this era that survive are the distinctive pink 1918 Opsal

Steel Building on 2nd Avenue where metal hooks, pulleys and other rigging equipment for the logging industry were made, and the 1931 Vancouver Salt Building, where industrial salt was unloaded for use mainly in the fishing industry.

During the First World War, 2,000 workers at Coughlin's Shipyard on the Mount Pleasant waterfront laboured in great noise, fire and smoke to produce the largest tonnage of steel ships in the British Empire. The Second World War had an even larger industrial impact. At Western Bridge 5,000 men and, for the first time, even women were employed in and around the huge three-acre steel fabricating plant later called the Canon Building. This one site produced 55 Liberty ships for the war effort, each made of 10,000 tons of steel. In all, Mount Pleasant workers at the north foot of Ontario Street eventually fabricated the steel for about 8,000 different jobs, including most of Vancouver's downtown buildings, and many other large steel structures, such as the Lions Gate, Capilano, Granville Street and Port Mann bridges.

At this time the sawmills and heavy industry on False Creek generated so much smoke that heavy fog readily formed in the moist and dirty air near the water on more than 100 days each year. The residents of Mount Pleasant got accustomed to the constant drone of foghorns in the fall and winter months. One of Vancouver's most famous writers, Ethyl Wilson, wrote a short story entitled "Fog" that was set in Mount Pleasant. In post-industrial times today, the absence of industrial smoke combined with the ban on backyard burning has resulted in a reduction to a little more than 10 days of fog per year as well as the demise of the foghorn.

A few Notable People from Early Mount Pleasant

Mount Pleasant was the birthplace of one of the city's most colourful mayors, Gerry McGeer, who made sure the new city hall constructed during his term in 1936 was built in Mount Pleasant at 12th and Cambie. McGeer, also a Liberal MLA, MP and a senator, grew up on the McGeer Milk Ranch by the old Tea Swamp near the Junction Inn, where he had tended his father's dairy cows as a barefooted youth.

Another well-known local activist was Suffragette Suzie Lane Clark. Clark had been tutored by the famous American Suffragette Susan B. Anthony, and was the president of the Mount Pleasant Suffrage League, a force in the fight to get BC women the right to vote. Suzie Clark lived at 233 East 13th from 1910 to 1955, a time when it was common not to move or change jobs for decades. The site of Suzie "Lane" Clark's house was kitty-corner across the Watson Street lane to what is now the last remaining Watson Street house.

From its founding in the 1930s the CCF party (now the New Democratic Party) was well-represented in working class Mount Pleasant by streetcar operator turned Member of Parliament Angus McInnis, and then by his wife Grace McInnis who became BC's first woman Member of Parliament in 1965. The ground level storefront in the small heritage apartment building

on 7th Avenue just west of Main Street was home to the CCF office for years.

One of the most nationally prominent federal politicians of this era was long-serving local Conservative Member of Parliament H.H. Stevens, who lived not far from the Chinese farms on China Creek, and who eventually formed his own national political party. In his youth Stevens drove a stagecoach, prospected for gold and was a fireman on CPR locomotive 374, which brought the first train to Vancouver in 1887 and is now in the Roundhouse Museum in Yaletown. He is still remembered by the large yellow-brick government building at 10th Avenue and Quebec, the H.H. Stevens Building, which was built ten years before he died in 1973.

Another nationally known figure was Percy Williams, the sprinter who put Vancouver on the world's sports map for the first time by coming from 'no where' to win an unprecedented two gold medals in the 100-metre and 200-metre races at the 1928 Olympics. This is still the greatest achievement by a Canadian in international track and field competition. Williams lived for many years at the southeast corner of 12th Avenue and Columbia Street, where he used to train in the front yard.

Although Chinese people settled in Mount Pleasant right from its beginnings in the 1880s, minorities and First Nations residents were not treated the same way as the dominant British ethnic group. For one thing they were effectively banned from becoming professionals. This unfair situation persisted even into the 1940s, when it was still extremely difficult for foreign-born minorities to enter professions such as law, accounting or pharmacy.

A pioneer professional in the Chinese community who lived in Mount Pleasant was architect W.H. Chow. He built his own home on Lorne Street in 1904, but faced a constant struggle to be accepted as an architect. Surprisingly, he was able to overcome many obstacles and work as an architect on a number of buildings in the boom leading up to World War I, such as the 1914 Ming Wo store at 23 East Pender and the Yue Shu Society Headquarters at 33-37 East Pender. It is apparent from the advertisements in which he included a picture of himself that he had the self-confidence of a true pioneer.

W. H. CHOW
CONTRACTOR, BUILDER
AND
TIMBER DEALER

Estimates
Furnished
First-Class
Workmanship

360 FRONT ST. EAST

Home of Mr. W. H. Chow

Advertisement for WH Chow [Courtesy Donald Luxton, *Building The West: Early Architects of British Columbia*]

During the 1930s, Dennis Meade was a child growing up just off 5th Avenue on Scotia Street, where the Artiste live/work studio rental building is today. He lived in the middle of three identical houses where the rent was \$10 per month for each house. He reports that in the immediate neighbourhood there was only one family who owned a car. It was a very socialist neighbourhood then and Dennis recalled that the owner of the car lot at 5th and Main used his marquee not to advertise cars but rather socialist slogans. Although it was the Depression, wages were low and work was scarce, he enjoyed his childhood in Mount Pleasant. "We were poor but we didn't know it back then."

Because Mount Pleasant is one of the oldest communities in Vancouver; it is not surprising some of its businesses and business buildings have achieved relative longevity. For example, in 1938 Bains Chocolates opened on Main Street next to the Broadway Theatre, which then occupied the site where the parking lot is today at the southeast corner of Main and Broadway. One of its first employees was Campbell Munro. When developer Ben Wosk built a new triangle building on the triangular lot formed where Kingsway meets Main Street, Bains Chocolates became the first occupant at the tip of the triangle in 1946. In 2004 Campbell Munro was still there running Bains 66 years after he started at Bains. Every working morning he would get up at 5am and make the chocolates in the old house just across Main Street on 8th Avenue at the lane. This old house, the 1889 Depencier House, is now the oldest occupied home in Vancouver outside of the downtown area.

The Mid-Decades of the 1900s

A special Vancouver Social Areas census done in 1941 reveals that 82% of the 15,000 people living in Mount Pleasant listed their racial origin as being from the British Isles, a small decrease from the 1891 census. Despite being next door to Chinatown, only 1% of the population was ethnic Chinese, a percentage unchanged since the 1891 census in part because of the effectiveness of the Chinese Exclusion Act. The surprise revealed by the 1941 census is that the largest non-British ethnic group in Mount Pleasant was the Japanese at 1400 people, almost 10% of the population. In 1941 the Japanese population of Vancouver was larger than the Chinese population, and the largest group of Japanese outside of Japantown on Powell Street was the group in Mount Pleasant.

By 1941 they had established themselves mainly along 4th, 5th and 6th Avenues near Main Street. The Japanese School and the Mikado Club were at 154 West 5th Avenue. At this time, Japanese residents of Canada and other ethnic groups were still treated as second-class citizens and were not allowed to vote in provincial and federal elections. Not long after the Japanese military attacked the United States in late 1941, all the Japanese families of Mount Pleasant were arrested and put into internment camps hundreds of miles away from the coast. Government trustees then sold off their houses, businesses and the possessions they were forced to abandon. They were interned for seven years and not allowed to return to the coast of BC until 1949. In Mount Pleasant the former Masuda home at 498 East

5th Avenue and the Edamura home at 473 East 6th Avenue still stand as reminders of those unfortunate days in the history of Mount Pleasant.

In 1946, Mount Saint Joseph's Hospital was opened at 14th Avenue and Kingsway on a site where sheep used to graze in the earlier years. Originally established in the Strathcona neighbourhood as Saint Joseph's Oriental Hospital and staffed with some Catholic missionary Sisters that had served in China, it was relocated to Mount Pleasant to serve Chinese Canadians and expanded to become a general hospital a few years later.

Up to the 1950s, Mount Pleasant retained its mix of heavy industry near False Creek and its commercial zone on Main Street surrounded by houses and churches. According to long-time Vancouver Sun columnist Denny Boyd, Mount Pleasant was the hot spot for jazz in the city for a time. The first address on Watson Street at Broadway was the Cellar, now known as a "legendary jazz joint" where Charles Mingus and Cannonball Adderley played, and Wes Montgomery and his two brothers recorded a live album, "The Montgomery Brothers in Canada."

The Cellar, like many successful small jazz clubs in general, was in the basement of the building. The reason this building has a full basement, unlike most buildings in Mount Pleasant, is that it was built right in the Brewery Creek ravine. This is also true of the yellow brick Wenonah Apartments at Main and 11th Avenue. The Remembrance Hall of the Canadian Legion across 11th Avenue from the Wenonah and paralleling the lane also has a basement built in the Brewery Creek ravine, and it too was a well-known downstairs jazz joint for a time in the 1970s, the Glass Slipper.

Brewery Creek was even a part of the music scene into the 1990s, when Vancouver's most famous punk rock group D.O.A used the old 1895 Horne House, across Watson Street from the Cellar, as a rehearsal space. Below the south side of this building one can still observe a narrow slice of the ravine of Brewery Creek. Before the current new building on 10th Avenue was built in the ravine, it was a large open space with cat-walk bridges going from the Watson Street lane over the ravine to the backs of the buildings facing Main Street and the Horne House. Joey Keithley and D.O.A. worked with Vancouver music legend Terry Jacks on a version of his song "Where Evil Grows" as part of an anti-pollution fundraiser for Environmental Watch that included Brian Adams, BTO and Barney Bentall. Afterwards D.O.A. shot a rock video of the song down in this remnant of Brewery Creek ravine. It debuted on MuchMusic in 1989.

Another part of the basement next to where the Cellar was located became a gym set up by Doug Hepburn, the famous Vancouver weightlifter who was catapulted to fame by winning gold medals in superweight weightlifting at the World Weightlifting Championship in 1953 and the British Empire Games in 1954. He eventually established eight world records in the press category and earned the title of the Strongest Man in the World. Hepburn later sold his gym to a friend, Mount Pleasant strong-

man Ray Beck, whose own weightlifting had won him the title of Mr. Pacific Northwest. At the street level on Broadway, Beck later opened the Shape-Up Shop, the first fitness store in Canada that grew to a local chain of seven Apple Fitness Centres. Beck frequented the Cellar and later became the first chairman of Mount Pleasant's Hot Jazz Society, which ran a jazz club down the Hill on Main Street.

During the 1960s low-rise apartment buildings replaced most of the houses in the north-east sector and False Creek industry almost completely overran the residential part of the northwest sector. This speeded the shift of Mount Pleasant from a community of long-term homeowners in single family houses well aware of their past, to a district of predominantly short-term tenants in suites and apartments with very little sense of what had gone before.

When Mount Pleasant was founded, it had as many blocks of pedestrian-accessible ocean beaches as Kitsilano now has, but today Mount Pleasant has none. Unfortunately half of Mount Pleasant's beachfront was lost to industry and the other half was lost when the east end of False Creek was filled in with the soil excavated to form the Grandview Cut. The 1950s brought the addition of an outdoor swimming pool, in effect Mount Pleasant's only beach, to the Mount Pleasant Community Centre development on 16th Avenue at Ontario. The pool has always been a favourite with families in the summer, but its future is uncertain as a new high-rise community centre is being built on Kingsway at Main Street, due to be completed in 2008.

By the 1960s many of the buildings in Strathcona and Mount Pleasant, Vancouver's two oldest neighbourhoods, were reaching 60 or 70 years of age and looking worn out. It is interesting to contrast the solution to what was then labelled 'urban blight' in the two neighbourhoods. In Strathcona in the 1960s, old homes became the target of 'urban renewal', then being promoted by city planners all over North America. This called for the clearance of older 'slum' buildings in favour of new development—often to achieve public housing in new concrete high-rise housing projects. In Strathcona, 3,350 people on about 10 city blocks had their homes torn down, and there was a proposal to evict 3,000 more people and bulldoze about another 10 city blocks as part of a plan to build a six-lane freeway through the neighbourhood. For the first time in the history of Canada, people were provoked enough to rise in protest against this imposition of modern infrastructure, and through a landmark series of events the freeway project was halted. Many of the homes that survived the 'slum clearance' are today very desirable and expensive homes. Meanwhile, in Mount Pleasant, a different approach to neighbourhood renewal was being implemented by a small group of complete amateurs.

The Davis Houses

In 1973 four members of the Davis family did something seemingly ordinary today, but quite unusual for the time. They purchased and began renovating a very old and deteriorated house on 10th Avenue in West Mount Pleasant. Research revealed it to be the oldest known house in Mount Pleasant, and



Five Davis Houses

it became the very first building of hundreds that later received a City of Vancouver heritage plaque. Meanwhile a group of four old and ill-maintained homes that were ready for demolition as a probable future apartment building site came up for sale next door. The Davis family again did something exceptional for the day—they not only bought the four houses, but they beautifully restored them, all in the day before any government programs or subsidies were available.

By the 1980s the Davis' group of adjoining Victorian and Edwardian homes in the 100 block of West 10th Avenue were firmly established as the "Davis Houses," and they were inspiring people all over the city to restore heritage homes. The actions of the Davis family had many ripple effects. One of the houses turned out to be the 1890s Queen Anne home that Claude Douglas had grown up in. In the 1980s the work of the Davis family helped to make Claude Douglas Mount Pleasant's first local historian, while their sidewalk encounter of Bruce Macdonald was an important factor in encouraging him to write his map-based history of Vancouver; Vancouver: A Visual History.

At their own time and expense the Davis family worked on numerous neighbourhood improvement and heritage projects, including the installation of heritage street lighting and the preservation the block's old boulevard trees. The award-winning 2006 dramatic film "Mount Pleasant" gives a glimpse of how they responded when their neighbourhood became beset by street-corner prostitutes, and they invested two solid years of effort trying to deal with it. Besides working to save significant heritage buildings, the Davis family also worked hard to save two rare sections of the old-style of street paving, the granitoid concrete paving at 10th Avenue and Columbia, and the red-brick pavement at 10th and Alberta.

The total affect was a very exceptional city block, well appreciated by everyone who saw it. The Davis houses have been painted and drawn many times by well-known Vancouver artists Barb Wood, Michael Kluckner and Robin Ward. By the 1990s busloads of urban planners from other cities were visiting the Davis Houses to try and understand what they had done. One thing the Davis family has made clear is that one of the best strategies for saving a heritage building is to buy it yourself, preserve it and cherish it.

In 2000 the Davis family became the first winners of the Most Beautiful Block award in the City of Vancouver.

Recent Decades in Mount Pleasant

The renewed interest in Mount Pleasant's past also resulted in the participation of Claude Douglas and Charles Christopherson in the Brewery Creek Urban Study in 1985, and their founding of the Brewery Creek Historical Society in 1988, during Mount Pleasant's centenary. With City Councilor Carole Taylor, Claude Douglas co-chaired the Mount Pleasant History Project to record interviews with Mount Pleasant's old timers, and the Mount Pleasant Business Association sponsored a bus shelter at the corner of Broadway and Kingsway that was a replica of one

of the original Mount Pleasant streetcars. In 1989 local business people formed the Mount Pleasant Business Improvement Area, one of the first in the province.

People of Chinese ancestry were pioneers in Mount Pleasant from its start and have averaged over 10% of Mount Pleasant's population since the 1970s. In the 1980s the ethnic mix in Mount Pleasant became more Asian when the proportion of Filipino and Vietnamese immigrants went from zero to 10% of its population. In 1985 the presence of Native people in Mount Pleasant once again became more prominent with the opening of the Native Education College on 5th Avenue at Scotia, near the former edge of Brewery Creek. This building is worth a visit, since its central hearth and huge wood columns and beams are an important reminder of the majesty of the First Nations' culture that flourished in the rich natural environment here for thousands of years. It is important to remember that during the same time period most of the people in Britain and Europe lived in tiny shacks and cottages often under very harsh conditions.

The 1990s finally brought to downtown Mount Pleasant the groundswell of rebuilding that had already happened around the rest of False Creek. In Mount Pleasant, the first of Vancouver's artist live/work studios in the city began to appear in the early 1990s. Today the upgrading of homes to much higher standards is still spreading eastwards from the more prosperous western section. The changing nature of the neighbourhood was illustrated by the census of 1996, which showed over 70% of households had moved since 1991.

In the 1990s Mount Pleasant also experienced a resurgence of community spirit. Residents banded together to address local concerns, resulting in the creation of Vancouver's first neighborhood crime prevention office in 1994, a Mount Pleasant Area Network and a new Mount Pleasant Neighborhood House. Agriculture in Mount Pleasant made a resurgence when groups of residents got together to establish a number of community gardens where renters and others could access small garden plots to grow vegetables and flowers. Mount Pleasant now has over 200 community garden plots in four different parks: Jonathan Rogers Park, Robson Park, Sahalli Park and Tea Swamp Park. Other residents became involved in gardening traffic circles and corner bulges through the city's Green Streets program, which originated in Mount Pleasant in 1985.

The western section of Mount Pleasant south of Broadway become revitalized with the restoration of many Victorian and Edwardian heritage homes, and with numerous historic plaques along the Mount Pleasant Walkway. In 1996 the City of Vancouver Planning Department adopted the Brewery Creek Guidelines, which allowed the city to request developers to recognize and commemorate Brewery Creek in return for granting relaxations benefiting their proposed new developments near the route of the creek. Meanwhile the old business core received heritage revitalization funds and Main Street was dressed up with features to emphasize its heritage, including an old-style cast-iron clock and a series of bronze Brewery Creek cairns with plaques.

A section of the old streetcar line along the waterfront was resurrected and a vintage 1905 Interurban car restored for use on weekend demonstration runs.

In the mid 1990s the Mount Pleasant Business Improvement Association invited a top shopping centre consultant to speak at their annual general meeting. The consultant first explained that over his career in British Columbia he had been hired by the owners of over 100 proposed shopping centre development projects. His job was to advise them on all the important decisions that had to be made: site location, project size, type of anchor tenants and so on. He began his speech by making a bold announcement about his line of work. He stated, "There will never be another large destination shopping centre development built in BC." He explained, "No one wants to get into their car and drive for half an hour to go to a shoe store or to buy groceries. They want to live in a small village and walk to do their normal business." Then he surprised everyone in the room by adding, "If I had money today, I would invest it in Mount Pleasant. In the future this will be a very popular place to live." He was right. In 2008 Harpers magazine reported that the number of new enclosed shopping centres being built during the year in the whole United States was zero.

Brewery Creek Artists Enclave

The presence of numerous artists living in the community became apparent in a number of ways, such as the founding and development of Vancouver's annual Fringe Festival in 1985 and the funding of a community artist in residence. Perhaps it all began in 1973 when a group of eight visionary artists purchased the old Knights of Pythias Hall at 8th Avenue and Scotia, a unique building that had been constructed right over Brewery Creek in 1922. These cutting-edge artists noticed the western-front style face of the building and set up the Western Front media and performance facility. Their idea was to live and work in the building and "promote the role of the artist in determining the cultural ecology." The Front is one of the founders of the artist-run centre movement in Canada, and has since earned a national and international reputation as a venue for showcasing video art, sound art, performance art, new music, installation and other art forms. The Front maintains an extensive digitized archive of work from the last 30 years, has an artist-in-residence program and produces over 100 events per year.

The idea of allowing an artist live/work building was not officially adopted by Vancouver City Hall until the 1990s. With new rules, the first official artists' live/work studio was created in 1993 in a renovated heritage building on 6th Avenue, two blocks directly down Brewery Creek from the Western Front. This was the 1903 Brewery Creek Building, the last remnant of the Vancouver Brewery complex on Brewery Creek, at one time the "largest on the Pacific coast."

The presence of artists and live/work studios in the neighbourhood led to the opening of the first eclectic coffee-restaurant-bar hangout in 1996, the Whip, in Dr. Israel Powell's Ashnola Apartment building on 6th Avenue just west of the Brewery

Creek Building. In 1998 Oscar-nominated David Paperny directed a CBC TV special "Brewery Creek" on the lives of two people living in the Brewery Creek Building. The two residents playing themselves were world famous singer/songwriter Sarah McLachlan and cinematographer Jarred Land.

The idea of combining living space with working space was a big success and almost 1,000 live/work units have been built in new buildings along the route of Brewery Creek, including Artech at the mouth of Brewery Creek on 1st Avenue, Main Space and Da Vinci at 2nd Avenue, Art Works, Watershed and Mecca on 4th Avenue, and The Artiste and the Granite Block on 5th Avenue.

Also begun in 1973 was the artist-run Video In Media Arts Centre for media activists, on Main Street at 4th Avenue. This non-profit facility is a popular state-of-the-art centre for media production, exhibition and distribution.

Another successful group of artists on the edge of Brewery Creek is the Public Dreams Society, Founded in 1985, the same year the Vancouver Fringe Festival was started in Mount Pleasant, Public Dreams brings art and celebration to communities by creating participatory events, traditions and rituals such as the annual Illuminares Lantern Procession and the Parade of the Lost Souls. Thanks to the generosity of the owners of the Artiste Building at 5th Avenue between Brunswick and Scotia Street, the Public Dreams Society now has a permanent home in the building, right next to the Brewery Creek Native Plant Park, which was also donated to the people of Mount Pleasant by the owners of the building in 1997. This parkette is a partial resurrection of the section of Brewery Creek that was filled in at that site, and it features a dry creek bed, old stumps and logs, and many of the native flowering plants and native berry bushes that used to line Brewery Creek as documented by Gladys Schwesinger. The original planting included trees such as vine maple, crabapple and red alder; flowers such as mayflower, twinberry, violets and bunchberries, ferns such as sword, liquorice root and deer ferns, and berries such as wild raspberry, thimbleberry, salal, black cap and salmonberry. It is maintained informally by volunteers from the neighbourhood, as a kind of community garden of plants native to Brewery Creek.

The presence of artists in the community also resulted in the Karen Jamieson Dance Company creating a major performance piece "The River" that spanned four consecutive nights in the summer of 1998 and the entire length of Brewery Creek, from its source near 49th Avenue to its mouth at 1st Avenue. This dance-based celebration involved hundreds of performers and over a thousand audience members. In 2000 Rick Scott, a world-renowned children's performer who lived in one of the live/work studios built right over Brewery Creek, included a song "Brewery Creek" on his fourth album. In general the presence of artists has resulted in a vibrancy that has led to the establishment of numerous artists-led cafes, restaurant-bars, boutiques and galleries.

Claude Douglas died in 2000. In 2001 a new apartment building was named after him, Claude Douglas Place. Appropriately, it is on 10th Avenue, the street where he grew up in one of the Davis Houses, and where his grandparents had their church on Church Hill. Claude Douglas Place also faces onto Watson Street, and overlooks Brewery Creek at precisely the spot where George Grauer was the first recorded birth in the City of Vancouver's future Mount Pleasant, in 1886.

Mount Pleasant Today

In contrast to the Mount Pleasant workers of almost a century ago, today a worker is most likely to be working quietly at a computer in a business, an office or at home, instead of labouring in smoke and noise on the shores of False Creek. Instead of speaking only English as a first language, today 14% speak Chinese, 7% speak Filipino and 5% Vietnamese. Although the First Nations presence is relatively low profile today, their approximately 10,000 year presence in this area means three different First Nations claim Mount Pleasant as part of their traditional territory: the Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil'waututh First Nations.

Mount Pleasant with its significant amount of rental housing and location near the centre of the city has made it a convenient entry point for immigrants. The Chinese community is prominent in local small businesses and in the new Saint Francis Xavier School on Great Northern Way. The Filipino community is prominent in Saint Patrick's Church, while St. Michael's Anglican Church has recently moved in a more multicultural direction, with a congregation of mainly Filipino, Japanese, Chinese and African peoples. It also rents out church space to an Ethiopian group and a same-sex congregation.

The increase in Asian immigrants over the last three decades has slowed recently and their numbers have recently begun to drop as many have gone from using Mount Pleasant as an immigrant entry point, to a stepping stone to a more established presence elsewhere.

A look at the 2001 census shows that, compared to the rest of Vancouver, Mount Pleasant has notably more single and young people with higher education levels, and fewer families and seniors. This reflects Mount Pleasant's higher density, with more apartment units and renters and relatively fewer single-family homes. It is not surprising these facts also mean the average income is a bit less, and a larger portion of the working population takes transit or rides a bicycle to work.

One unique feature of Mount Pleasant is that it is the only community in Vancouver that is half in the West Side and half in

the East Side of the city. The city's East Side was mostly surveyed into 33-foot lots that were mainly purchased by individual wage earners. The West Side was mostly surveyed into 50-foot lots, often developed into sub-divisions with more money invested and selling for significantly higher prices. While most of Vancouver's neighbourhoods are mainly residential, today Mount Pleasant is divided into four distinct quadrants. The north-west sector is almost entirely industrial, the north-east is almost entirely apartment buildings, while the south-west is mainly well-maintained houses and the south-east with its smaller lots and houses is mostly more affordable homes. In the centre is Main Street, the main street that divides the East and West Sides. This diversity makes for an interesting place.

Echoes of the original Mount Pleasant are still visible in the landscape today. The escarpment along Great Northern Way marks the old shoreline of the Pacific Ocean where Skwahchays (the old False Creek Flats) was filled in. The jog in Main Street at the foot of the Main Street hill marks Kihwah'esks, the slightly tilted point of land that jutted into False Creek where Julius Voigt became the first modern immigrant settler. The lone ancient trail through the original forest is remembered now as the sole street to seriously violate the grid system, Kingsway. In New York City the point where the oldest trail (Broadway) intersects the grid system at 7th Avenue is the most famous intersection in the world. In Mount Pleasant just off Broadway the oldest trail (Kingsway) not only intersects 7th Avenue, but also Main Street, at the crest of the Hill overlooking downtown Vancouver, in front of the new Mount Pleasant Community Centre and by an old-style cast-iron clock. This convergence also forms a great intersection, eminently suitable for public gatherings and New Year's Eve celebrations.

In Mount Pleasant the only streets that deviate slightly from the perfect grid system are the streets that form the old edges of the four large district lots comprising the area of Mount Pleasant that were originally staked out by four pioneer land speculators: Columbia Street, Prince Edward Street and Fifteenth Avenue east of Prince Edward Street.

Although Brewery Creek is not readily visible to most people today, it lives on in the landscape and even as a metaphor for how the past influences the present. The route of Brewery Creek is obvious because it is usually at the low point of the east-west streets, while the streets in the Tea Swamp such as 16th and 17th Avenue east of Main are lumpy and bumpy because of the mushy soil. The route of Brewery Creek north of Broadway was once marked by industries but is now marked by the large live/work studio buildings that have taken over at the same locations. Half a dozen of the new buildings along the route

of the creek recognize Brewery Creek in some way, most often by marking the stream in concrete pavements, in sidewalks or in landscaping, or by the series of bronze cairns. At 5th and Brunswick the parkette resurrecting the Brewery Creek ravine is the most visible celebration, but like most of the other attempts to recognize the creek, unfortunately it is not identified or explained by any kind of plaque or sign.

The creation of about 1,000 live/work studio apartments in the last 15 years on half a dozen city blocks just east of Main Street has had a noticeable effect on downtown Mount Pleasant. The nearby low-rise triangle block that marks the original centre of Mount Pleasant and the surrounding blocks are now home to a number of new eclectic artsy-run businesses, from unique coffee shops and restaurant hangouts, to the Jem (Just East of Main) Gallery and the Antisocial Skateboard Shop with its mini-ramp for indoor skateboarding. Mount Pleasant happens to be home to one of the oldest skate facilities in the world. The China Creek skate park was built in the ravine of China Creek in 1979, just two years after the Florida skate park that currently holds the world record. In the years after 2000, a number of large new buildings began to reshape Mount Pleasant's skyline, including a new Mount Pleasant Community Centre at 1 Kingsway, where Kingsway begins at Main Street. Nevertheless, the landmark Lee Building retains its status as the feature that continues to mark the centre of the community for miles around. The origin of Mount Pleasant as a pre-automobile age village within walking distance of major public transit in a commercial zone still makes it one of the most desirable places in the city to live. Most major amenities are within walking distance for its residents, as well as interesting shops, restaurants and coffee shops. Uniquely situated at the top of a hill, centrally located on the 'Main' street and straddling both the West and East Sides of the city, Mount Pleasant still has many of the oldest heritage buildings in the city outside of the downtown, and continues to enjoy a long and interesting evolution.