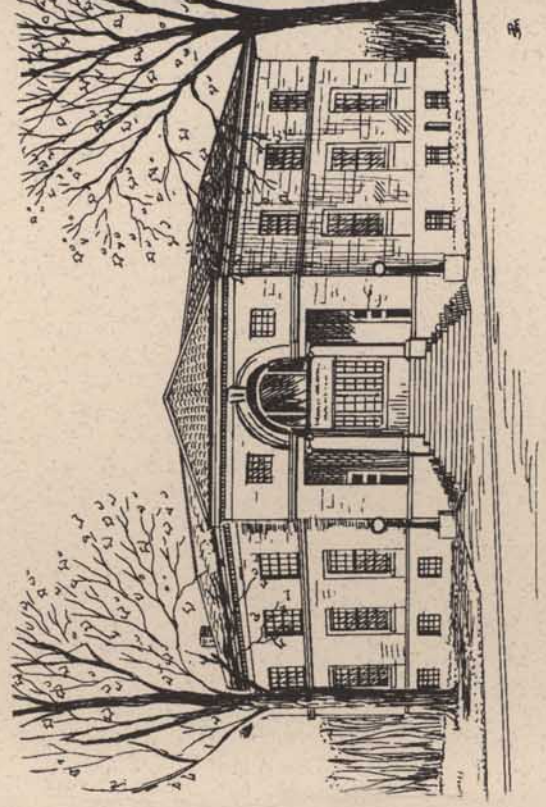
Mount Pleasant Historic District



WASHINGTON, D.C.

Airy Castle, home of Captain A. J. Hayward, the Bird Man of Mount Pleasant. In the 1880s this one-armed Union Army veteran lived here in the pure, fresh air of 'the most healthy suburb,' as a cure for tuberculosis. He charged admission to curiosity seekers, built a dance pavilion, and lived into his eighties. Courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washingtoniana Collection.

D.C. Historic Preservation Office
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Mount Pleasant Historic District

Roughly bounded by 16th Street on the east, Harvard Street on the south, Rock Creek Park on the west, and Piney Branch Park on the north. Includes approximately 1100 buildings c.1850-1949. Included in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites and listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

- A cohesive residential district illustrating the growth and development of one of Washington, D.C.'s first suburbs in its transition from rural to urban context.
- Through use of a common vocabulary, regard for scale and proportion, sensitivity to the hilly terrain and respect for the streetscape, the work of many different architects and builders from many different periods of time has blended to create a unique and harmonious sense of place.
- Retaining a substantial portion of the architecture extant during its development in the early 20th century, Mount Pleasant has an ambience that is human in scale and rich in historic precedent, natural beauty, and fine architectural massing.
- Includes three individually listed National Register properties–Ingleside (Stoddard Baptist Home), 1818 Newton Street, N.W. (ca. 1850); north side of the 1800 block of Park Road, N.W. (1892-1911); and 1644-66 Park Road, N.W. (1906).

Restoring or renovating your Mount Pleasant property? Call the D.C. Historic Preservation Division. An historic preservation professional can assist you with technical information. 202-442-4570

SUGGESTED READING:

The Records of the Columbia Historical Society. Edited by Maud Burr Morris. "Mount Pleasant and Meridian Hill." by Fred A. Emery V 33-34 pp 187-223,Washington City: CHS, 1932.

Proctor, John Clagett. *Washington & Environs: 1928–1949.* "Mount Pleasant: Its Early Residents." pp 351-355. Washington D.C.: published by the author, 1949.

Washington At Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital. Edited by Kathryn Schneider Smith. "Mount Pleasant: Community in an Urban Setting." by Linda Low and Howard Gillette, Jr. pp 131–137. Washington, D.C.: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1988.

On the cover: Mount Pleasant Branch Library of the District of Columbia. Courtesy The Friends of the Mount Pleasant Library.

Opposite page: The Walbridges at Ingleside. This view shows the original entrance facade with unobstructed view south toward Washington City. That portion of the Mount Pleasant Historic District between Mount Pleasant Street and Rock Creek Park was once primarily the grounds of Ingleside. Photo courtesy The Atheneum at Philadelphia, (mid-19th century).

The scenery in and about the village and along Rock Creek needs but little description. Many persons go miles away seeking lovely scenery and picturesque landscapes, while a jaunt along Rock Creek and a stroll over the green hills around Mount Pleasant reveal to the surprised visitor beauties unthought of.
The Evening Star, 1879

Mount Pleasant! The name so perfectly suits the location that it has endured for more than two hundred years as the area evolved from wilderness to country estates to village to streetcar suburb to urban neighborhood. High above the city, the historic district is nestled between the grand avenue created by the extension of Sixteenth Street in 1901 and the primeval woodland preserved by the creation of Rock Creek Park in 1890. Its views of the National Cathedral, sited west of Rock Creek upon its sister height, Mount St. Alban, are spectacular. The Smithsonian's National Zoological Park lies below the historic district, and the calls of exotic animals and birds resonate mysteriously in the evening air as residents enjoy the peaceful beauty of their porches and gardens.

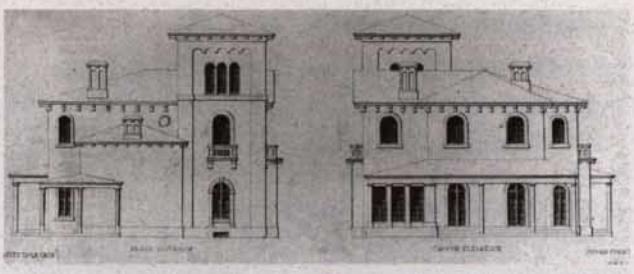
Here, in the steep terrain of the Rock Creek and Klingle valleys, Native Americans had quarried the stone for manufacture of implements of hunting and

Ice skating in Rock Creek Park, ca. 1900.
Courtesy National Zoological Park.

everyday life for 10,000 years before European settlement. To the east stretches a high, level terrace formed by the swollen waters of melting Ice Age glaciers. This land, extending from the heights above Rock Creek to Georgia Avenue, was patented in 1727 to James Holmead, a vestryman of Rock Creek parish. By 1740 a log cabin, the beginning of Holmead Manor, had been built here near the road linking the Port of Georgetown with Rock Creek Church (Rock Creek Church Road & Webster Street, N.W.) and Maryland beyond. The family lived at Holmead Manor, later 3517 13th Street, until about 1930, replacing the original house with a new one in the 1890s. Robert Peter, the first mayor of Georgetown, had assembled a number of parcels of land in the Meridian Hill area by 1760. At the time of the survey for the Federal City in the 1790s, Holmead's land was called Pleasant Plains and Peter's, Mount Pleasant.

In 1802 the Washington Jockey Club, under the leadership of Virginia Colonel John Tayloe of Octagon House, leased part of Pleasant Plains, including part of what became Mount Pleasant Village, for a race course. The popular mile-long circular track was centered on the present 14th Street along the Rock Creek Church Road, which was then called Tayloe's Lane Road (Columbia Road) between Georgetown and the track. The 14th Street Road was built to its gate, providing direct access from Washington City. In 1826 James Eslin established a well-known inn here near the race course at the intersection of Piney Branch (Mount Pleasant Street) and Tayloe's Lane Roads. Cock-fighting, gaming, and oyster suppers were among its attractions. The Baptist Columbian College, the predecessor of George Washington University, was established in 1820 on 49½ acres of Peter's Mount Pleasant estate south of the Tayloe's Lane Road and west of the 14th Street Road. The streets here were named after scholars, colleges, and universities, and some of these names, such as Harvard, still survive.

When the Civil War began in 1861, Mount Pleasant was still a rural area of farms and large estates with orchards and fields. Several mills had been built along Piney Branch and Rock Creek, and the Pierce Mill Road (Park Road) connected the largest of these with the 14th Street Road. In 1850, William Selden (1791-1874) built a large house on 73 acres of Holmead land north of the Pierce Mill Road. He was



Ingleside elevations signed by Thomas Ustick Walter, 1852.
Courtesy The Atheneum of Philadelphia.

a Virginian who served as Treasurer of the United States from 1839-1850 and as Treasurer of the Agricultural Society, the Smithsonian-associated first national horticultural society. In 1851, Philadelphia architect Thomas Ustick Walter (1804-1877) designed a notable residence in the Italian Villa style for T. B. A. Hewlings' Ingleside estate, between Selden and Rock Creek at the present 1818 Newton Street. Walter, then designing the U.S. Capitol dome and wing extensions, considered Ingleside one of his most important works. The grounds are thought to have been designed by landscape architect Alexander Jackson Downing, then in Washington working on his design for the National Mall. Ingleside's grounds included portions of both the Holmead and Peter lands, conveyed to General Hiram Walbridge in 1854.

A NEW ENGLAND VILLAGE IN THE CAPITAL OF THE REPUBLIC

In 1862, Southern sympathizer William Selden was forced to sell his property at a very low price and return to his native Virginia. The buyer was shipbuilder, lumberman, and businessman Samuel P. Brown. Coming to Washington in 1861 with an appointment as a naval agent, he took advantage of depressed wartime land values and became one of the city's foremost real estate speculators. The Selden estate was occupied by the Union Army during the war and the house used as a hospital. At war's end in April 1865, Brown claimed the property, naming it Mount Pleasant, and moved his family into the house. He

Samuel Peters Brown (1816-1898), founder of Mount Pleasant.
Courtesy Library of Congress.

immediately improved, subdivided, and auctioned that part of the estate which lay between the Piney Branch and 14th Street Roads, establishing Mount Pleasant as one of Washington's earliest suburban developments.

Patent attorney John Sullivan Browne bought lots 4 & 5 on Park Street in Mount Pleasant in 1865. His residence, constructed 1867-68, is now demolished. Browne served on the Board of Trustees of the D.C. Public Schools. One of the first telephone lines in the world ran from his house to the Columbia Road house of Emil Berliner, inventor of the loose-contact telephone transmitter (microphone) and the gramophone.
Courtesy Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

Brown laid out the streets in the Mount Pleasant subdivision parallel to the line of the old Pierce Mill Road (Park Road), creating an unusual street and lot pattern which still persists. The lots sold at auction and privately in 1865 were on Park and Sheridan (Monroe) Streets. The following year a group of government clerks bought a parcel of land in Mount Pleasant in a cooperative venture. Brown added Howard Avenue (Newton Street), Brown Street, Centre Street, Meridian Avenue, and Oak Street to the Mount Pleasant subdivision. In 1871 he acquired an additional tract of land below Park Street and added Grant (Lamont), Pine, and School (Hiatt Place) Streets to the subdivision. Brown founded the horse-drawn Metropolitan Street Railroad in 1864. Appointed a member of the Board of Public Works (1871-74) by President Grant, he was accused of using his position to improve his real estate investments. In 1879 the *Star* observed that Mount Pleasant's roads "are neatly laid into streets, are macadamized and are kept in good condition the year round, making one of the finest suburban drives adjacent to the City."

The first residents of Mount Pleasant Village were from New England and New York State. Some had come during the war to work for the government. Some had fought for the Union and later found government employment, primarily in the Treasury Department. Many were outspoken congregationalists who espoused political reform, including abolition and temperance, with evangelical fervor, and were

J. W. Buker House, 3423 Oakwood Terrace (1871), is one of three houses built by S. P. Brown in 1871. Originally it occupied a much larger site, fronting on Brown Street. A native of Maine, Buker moved to Mount Pleasant in 1867. He served as a trustee of the county schools and as a member of the Legislative Council.
Courtesy DCSHPO (1987).

members of the First Congregational Church, organized in Washington City in 1865. One of the initial acts of this congregation rooted in New England tradition was to persuade President Andrew Johnson to set aside an annual Thanksgiving Day as a national celebration. With General O. O. Howard among its incorporators, the First Congregational Church also played a leading role in the establishment of Howard University for the education of emancipated African Americans. The church building, erected at 10th and G Streets, N.W. in 1867-8, became a meeting house for the city in which both political and religious matters were debated by residents of all faiths. This mingling of political activism with religious diversity and social intercourse was characteristic of the cohesive community established in the new Mount Pleasant Village.

During the winter of 1867 the villagers, isolated by bad roads and weather, organized a Bible class in one of the newly completed homes. This was soon supplemented by evenings of music, dancing, and simple refreshments that rotated through the community on a regular basis. A public school with thirty students was opened in 1869 on Oak Street. The small frame building became the focus of community activity, also housing a Sunday School and religious and social gatherings. A platform was built on the school common to allow speakers to address crowds. Political debate concerning the pending reorganization of the District government were held here and led to the formation of a vigorous citizens association, the Mount Pleasant Assembly, in 1870. The latter was open to all responsible villagers who met regularly and "fearlessly discussed all questions grave or gay, political or religious, historic or scientific, and put the American Congress to shame by its more frequent and tenacious discussions on questions of order."

The accomplishments of the Assembly were impressive. The members organized their own omnibus company in 1870, an African American Sunday School in 1871, and the Christian Association in 1872.

Mount Pleasant School, built in 1871 on the School Street (Hiatt Place and Lamont Street) lot donated by S. P. Brown, was one of a group of prize-winning schools exhibited by the D.C. Public Schools at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. Each of the four school rooms was heated with a coal stove. When the fires mysteriously went out, school was dismissed at noon. A skating party often followed. Courtesy Charles Sumner School Museum & Archives, Alexander Gardner,

In 1871-2 a new school was built on School Street for the rapidly growing community. In 1874 the Union Hall Company was organized, and united with the Christian Association to build a public hall rather than a church for all village uses, religious and communal. The hall was located on Newton Street just east of the present 16th Street. In 1875, the Mount Pleasant Division of the Sons of Temperance was organized and at one time included almost every person in the village.

Union Hall, Newton Street, Mount Pleasant Village (1874, razed). Courtesy Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ, Mount Pleasant Congregational Church Archives.

Mount Pleasant continued to grow in the '80s and '90s as the city expanded into the countryside. Many of the large old lots were subdivided, including the remainder of the S. P. Brown property west of Piney Branch Road. Episcopalians and then Roman Catholics joined the Congregationalists, organizing and worshiping in Union Hall. The Mount Pleasant

Intersection of Mount Pleasant Street and Park Road, ca. 1895. Courtesy Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

Congregational Church, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, and the Roman Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart all built their first churches on or near the 14th Street Road. In the early days a commercial area had developed here as well. The horse-drawn bus of the Assembly's Omnibus Company took commuters from the S. G. Emery store at the northwest corner of 14th Street and Park Road to the Treasury in the morning and brought them back in the evening. By 1892 the Capital Traction Company was operating an electric car line up 14th Street.

The National Zoological Park was opened to the public in 1891. By 1894 there were 30,000 visitors a day. Courtesy Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

MOUNT PLEASANT IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

In 1888, haphazard subdivision of land outside the L'Enfant city, including S. P. Brown's 1865 Mount Pleasant subdivision, prompted Congress to plan a uniform extension of the grid streets with city water, sewer, and street lights into the expanding suburbs of the District. When this plan was adopted in 1900, Mount Pleasant would be changed forever. Old 16th and 17th Streets became Mount Pleasant Street; old Piney Branch Road, 17th Street. The 14th Street Road was straightened and the portion along the northern boundary of Mount Pleasant became Ogden Street. Monumental Sixteenth Street was extended from the L'Enfant city straight through Mount Pleasant

Newly cut 16th Street at Irving Street in 1906. Courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washingtonian Collection.

Village, physically dividing the community with its great breadth, creating awkward angular sites, and destroying many homes. In 1900, the Metropolitan Railway established a line via Columbia Road and Mount Pleasant Street to Park Road. Infrastructure improvement led to intensive suburban development. Since Mount Pleasant west of the new 16th Street was still largely rural, streets could be laid out there to conform with the city grid as closely as the steep terrain and existing old roads would allow, and this is where new development was concentrated.

The City Beautiful movement, inspired by the design for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, was eagerly adopted in Washington during the city's Centennial celebration. Simplicity, order, historical allusion, and healthful environment were the ideal qualities stressed in the design of the new residential communities built outside the L'Enfant city in the early twentieth century. The Progressive era was in full swing. Electricity and the automobile had arrived. Suburban life, now boasting the convenience of city services, was glorified as the antidote to the dark, crowded, unhealthy urban centers of the 19th century. The 'good life' could be achieved through planning, reaffirmation of the values of our Revolutionary fore-fathers, and a healthful environment far, but not too far, from the congestion and pollution of the inner city. It was an ideal which would persist throughout the new century with continuous suburban expansion and the emergence of entire new towns like Reston, Virginia and Columbia, Maryland.

'Fighting Bob' La Follette of Wisconsin, leader of the Progressive Party. Senator La Follette lived in Mt. Pleasant at 3320 16th Street from 1913-1921, and at 3157 18th Street from 1922-1923, commuting by trolley to Capitol Hill. Courtesy Washingtonian Room, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washington Post Collection.

Mount Pleasant, with its beautiful setting and close-in location, was considered one of the most desirable suburban locations. Its proximity to monumental 16th Street, then developing under the influence of Mrs. John B. Henderson as the 'Avenue of the Presidents,' a street of embassies, churches, and mansions, added to its attractions. Scenic drives, picnic areas, and other improvements in Rock Creek Park enhanced Mount Pleasant's appeal and made it a model for other suburban developments. A commercial center developed along the new trolley line on Mount Pleasant Street south of Park Road as apartment buildings and shops replaced the earlier single-family residences. Soon, 16th Street was acknowledged as the eastern boundary of Mount Pleasant. The new Mount Pleasant, between 16th Street and Rock Creek Park, developed quickly and intensively in the first quarter of the twentieth century as a diversified, balanced urban community with shops, institutional buildings, apartment houses, and single-family, semi-detached, and rowhouse residences.

William Munsey Kennedy, one of the Kennedy brothers who built many Mount Pleasant homes, at the wheel of his first Cadillac, the first in Washington, at his 3409 Mount Pleasant Street home in 1905. Courtesy Ellen Kennedy.

ARCHITECTURAL EXCELLENCE FOR THE MIDDLE CLASSES

Subdivision of the Ingleside estate began in 1890 when it was sold by the Walbridge heirs to Chapin Brown, son of S. P. Brown. Brown's subdivision of his father's property between the old Piney Branch Road (17th Street) and the Ingleside estate (18th Street) above Park Road had been developed in the 1880s and '90s with single family homes as an expansion of Mount

1735-45 Park Road (1900).

3162-68 17th Street (1907).

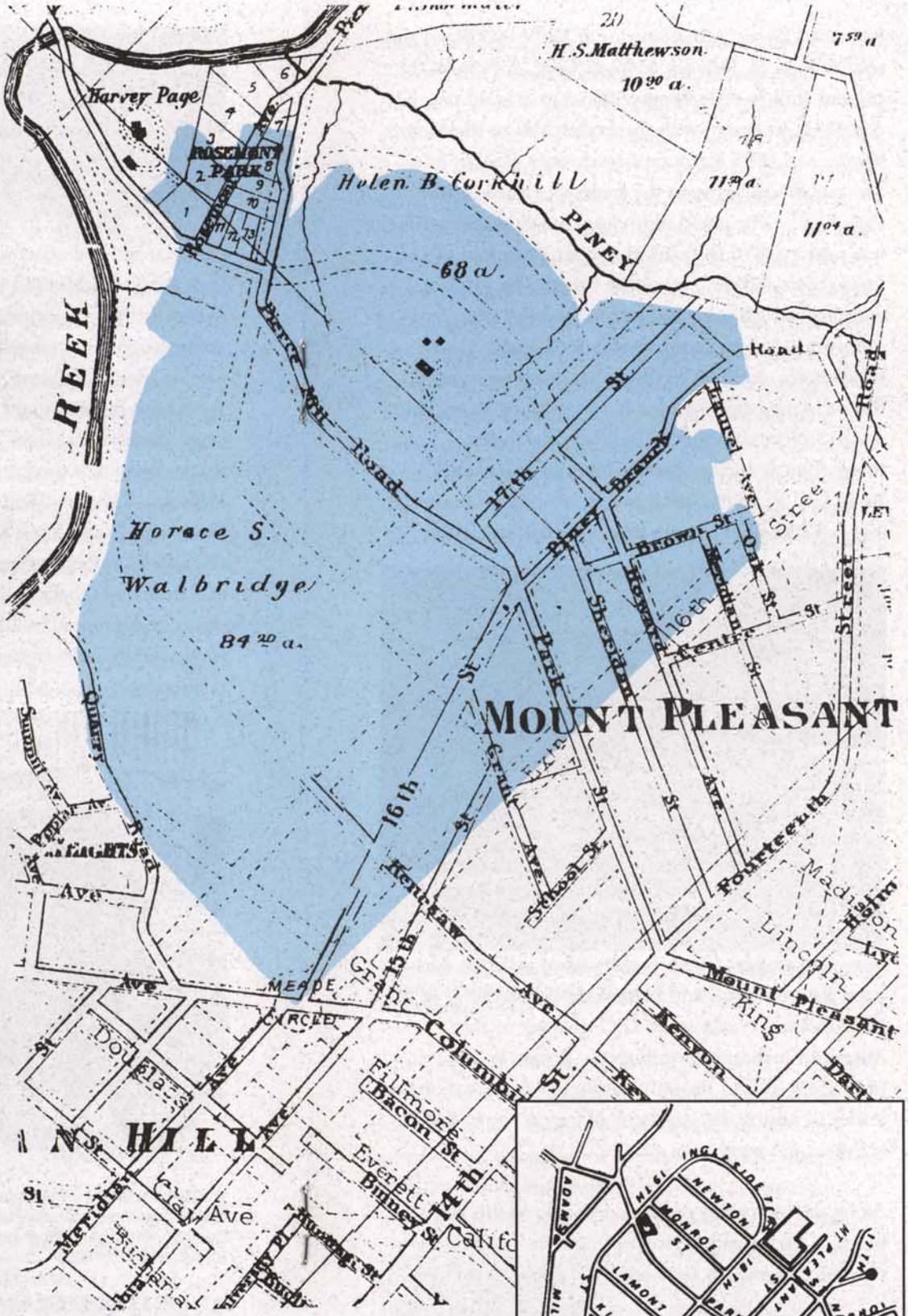
1742-52 Lamont Street (1908).

1826-30 Park Road (1908).

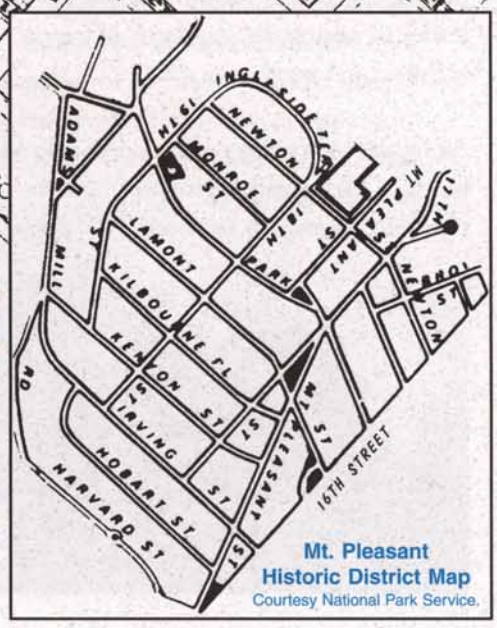
2025-33 Park Road (1912).

1629-31 Harvard Street (1921).

1750-38 Irving Street (1927).



Mount Pleasant in 1887, showing planned extension of 16th Street and undeveloped Ingleside estate west of old 16th and 17th Streets. 1887 G.M. Hopkins *Map of the District of Columbia*. Shaded area depicts historic district boundaries. Courtesy National Archives.



Mt. Pleasant Historic District Map
Courtesy National Park Service.

PRINCIPAL STREET NAME CHANGES SINCE 1887

School St.	Hiatt Place	17th St.	Mt. Pleasant St.
Kenesaw Ave.	Irving St.	Howard Ave.	Newton St.
Grant Ave.	Lamont St.	14th St. Rd.	Ogden St.
Sheridan St.	Monroe St.	Pierce Mill Rd./Park St.	Park Rd.
Old 16th St.	Mt. Pleasant St.	Piney Branch Rd.	17th St.

Builder housing (at left) in the Mount Pleasant Historic District.
Photos courtesy DCSHPO (1987).

Pleasant Village. A building lot at 1809 Park Road was sold to John H. Jolly for $100 in 1892. Jolly built the present shingle-style house with wrap-around porch, consistent in design with the earlier Mount Pleasant houses. In 1895 a group of rowhouses was built on Monroe Street between the Ingleside mansion and Park Road. The grand old house, sadly deteriorated, was sold in 1896 to Frank B. Noyes, president of *The Evening Star* and the Associated Press. The original entrance, which once had overlooked the city, unfortunately now faced an alley in the new subdivision. Architect William J. Marsh remodeled the building extensively for Noyes, placing its entrance at 1818 Newton Street. The Walbridge heirs themselves developed Mount Pleasant below Park Road, and in 1899 built a row of speculative houses at 1711–17 Lamont Street. These duplex residences

1700 block of Lamont Street. Glen Brown duplexes at right.
Courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washingtonian Collection, (ca. 1906).

were designed by Glenn Brown, who, in 1887, had been the 'moving spirit' behind the organization of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Brown became a proponent of City Beautiful aesthetics and a national leader in raising the standards of excellence in the architectural profession.

Along the high ridge on the north side of the 1800 block of Park Road, a group of nine fine single-family residences was built between 1902 and 1911. The

1843 Park Road (1907), center, A.M. Schneider, Architect. 1841 Park Road (1906), right, C. A. Didden & Son, Architects.
Courtesy Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

design of these houses was the work of some of Washington's most talented young architects, including Frederic B. Pyle, Harding & Upman, Appleton P. Clark, T. M. Haislip, and C. A. Didden & Son. Expansive in scale and proportion, these houses were designed in the Georgian and Colonial Revival styles, using classical vocabulary in a new way, looking forward into the new century. The use of dormers and broad, columned porches with roof-top balconies exploited the unparalleled views and vistas, clean air, variable grade, and proximity to parkland which comprised the genius of the Mount Pleasant site. Large windows filled interiors with light, merging indoor and outdoor living areas. The design of new homes complemented that of earlier Mount Pleasant residences including 1809 Park Road (1892–3) and 3423 Oakwood Terrace (1871), one of three original houses built in Mount Pleasant by S. P. Brown. Ingleside, with its tower, arcaded porches and balustraded verandas integrated into an informal landscape plan by A. J. Downing, had established the design precedent for Mount Pleasant. Architecturally, the transition from gentleman's country estate to affluent suburb was gentle.

17th and Kilbourne Streets (1906). Construction scaffolding for row at right in place. Courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washingtoniana Collection.

The City Beautiful aesthetic that produced monumental Washington was adapted to create an ideal suburban community in Mount Pleasant. An extraordinary number of architects worked here in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Some made Mount Pleasant their home, as did builders Lewis Brueninger and the Kennedy Brothers. The architectural fabric which they wove used a consistent stylistic vocabulary in endlessly imaginative ways for a variety of residential, commercial, and

1770 Park Road. Residence of developer Lewis Breuninger.
Courtesy Historic Mount Pleasant, Inc., (1907).

Sculptor John J. Earley, Jr., 'the man who made concrete beautiful,' lived in Mount Pleasant. Some of his most important works, Meridian Hill Park, the Shrine of the Sacred Heart, and the Reptile House at the National Zoo, are nearby. This innovative house at 1710 Lamont Street was designed by his friend, architect Waddy Wood in 1904. It includes residential use of his decorative technique, an interior courtyard, a recreation room with dance floor, and a small basement swimming pool with a canvas harness to allow swimming in place. His daughter Frances is shown here in the courtyard as 1928 May Queen at the Academy of the Sacred Heart. Courtesy John Earley Kuhn.

institutional building types. Rowhouses became the dominant building type in Mount Pleasant. Some, like1814-1864 Ingleside Terrace (1900), provided cost-effective, healthful housing for government workers who commuted by trolley. Others, like 1735-43 (1902) and 1745-61 (1904) Park Road, designed by architect Frederick Pyle, were as grand and substantial as the single-family houses. Respect for streetscape and topography is a dominant theme in Mount Pleasant, extending from residential into commercial areas. Street trees, fences, gardens, and porches have received careful consideration as has the communal nature of alleys.

Carriage houses in alley behind North side of 1800 block Park Road. Photo Tanya Edwards Beauchamp, (1999).

The years between the turn of the century and the beginning of World War I comprised Mount Pleasant's prime period of development. The highest sites with the best views were developed, often with architect-designed houses which established the ambience of the neighborhood. After the war, in the 1920s, there was an additional building spurt as odd lots were developed in the older sections and rows of smaller houses were constructed on Kenyon, Irving, and 19th Streets; Rosemont Avenue; Klingle, Pierce Mill, Adams Mill, and Hobart Roads, and the lower side of Ingleside Terrace. The design of these primarily vernacular houses followed the earlier precedents. Columned porches, carefully stepped siting adapted to the variable terrain, light colored brick, and textured slate and tile roofs extended Mount Pleasant's agreeably cohesive character.

APARTMENT HOUSES IN MOUNT PLEASANT

Apartment houses were an essential part of Mount Pleasant rather than a later intrusion. Concentrated along Mount Pleasant and 16th Streets, they shelter the community's eastern boundary. Stylistically, their design is consistent with that of single family residential housing in the historic district. Verticality also is an architectural element first introduced in the Ingleside tower, and repeated often in the towers of later houses. The Kenesaw, designed by architect George W. Stone, Sr., was constructed (1903-1905) on the prominent triangular site created by the intersections of Mount Pleasant, 16th, and Irving Streets. F-shaped in plan, this luxurious 7-story limestone and buff brick building afforded views over the city from all of its 65 units. Like many of the houses in Mount Pleasant, all facades were finished and equal in design. The building included a lobby, two public dining rooms, two public parlors, a café, and three shops opening onto commercial Mt. Pleasant Street. The apex of the triangular site was donated to the city as a public park. An equestrian statue of Francis Asbury (1745-1816), the first Methodist bishop in the United States, was erected here in 1924.

The Kenesaw (1903-1905), 3060 16th Street. Courtesy Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

Statue of Richard Francis Asbury, 16th and Mount Pleasant Streets at Irving Street. Courtesy Library of Congress.

The Embassy (1915), 1613 Harvard Street. Courtesy DCSHPO (1987).

In 1910 the Park Regent was constructed at the intersection of Park Road and Mount Pleasant Street. The buff brick U-shaped building is imaginatively sited on its difficult trapezoidal site through the extension of one wing. A bold bracketed cornice and paneled brickwork crown the Beaux-Arts style building. At 3420-3426 16th Street, developer Harry Wardman built the elegant Northbrook Courts in 1911. Distinguished by French windows opening onto stone balconies, these buildings feature expansive open space toward 16th Street. The Argyle Apartments, 3220 17th Street, were built south of the Park Regent at the intersection of Park Road and Mount Pleasant Street in 1913. The U-shaped transitionally-styled building was designed by architect A. H. Sonneman for developer Kennedy Brothers, Inc. In 1915 the Embassy Apartments, 1613 Harvard Street, was designed by architect B. Stanley Simmons for developer H. R. Howenstein, to relate to Harvard, Mount Pleasant, and 16th Streets. The design excellence of the pre-World War I apartment buildings was continued in later buildings, including architect Henry Warwick's Randall Mansions, 1900 Lamont Street (1923) and the Al-Roy Apartments, 1615 Kenyon Street (1926).

Intersection of Mount Pleasant & 16th Streets, 1925. The Immanuel Baptist Church housed their first pastor in the Kennesaw Apartments across 16th Street and met in a frame house on the site while beginning construction of their church. Consecration of the unfinished Bible School House on January 1, 1909, the first step in their building program, was illuminated by automobile headlights. They provided their pastor with an automobile, the 'Gospel Car,' to make his rounds. Upon receiving a better offer from another church, he noted: "How can I leave a people who love me enough to give me a Christmas gift of a Ford Touring Car." He did leave, however, shortly thereafter. Courtesy Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

'CHURCH HILL'

Monumental 16th Street soon became the location of national churches as well as downtown churches following their congregations north into the suburbs. The organization of Immanuel Baptist Church in 1906 reflected the changes taking place in the community. Although the founders' original intention was to erect their church on 14th Street near the earlier Mount Pleasant churches, an astute re-evaluation led to selection of an awkward but prominent building site on newly-cut 16th Street at Columbia Road. Their Bible School House, the first phase of their building program, was constructed in 1909. In 1916 planning began for completion of their building and its dedication as the National Roger Williams Memorial to religious liberty unifying the Southern and Northern Conferences of the Baptist Church. Ground was broken by President Warren G. Harding in 1921 and the building, designed by Egarton Swartout, completed in 1926.

West side of 16th Street between Park Road and Irving Street, 1932. Francis Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church, South (now the Meridian Hill Baptist Church). Designed by Speiden & Speiden, 1916. Courtesy Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

The Mount Pleasant Methodist Episcopal Church, South, organized in 1909 on 14th Street under the leadership of U.S. Senate chaplain Dr. Forrest J. Prettyman, was built at 16th and Irving Streets in 1916. The Neo-Classical building, designed by Speiden & Speiden, was known as the Francis Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church, South. In 1920 Gurley Memorial Presbyterian Church united with the Gunton-Temple Memorial Presbyterian Church at 16th & Newton Streets. Both had vacated earlier 14th Street buildings under the onslaught of commercial development and relocated along monumental 16th Street in

Gunton Temple Memorial Presbyterian Church 3400 16th Street (now the Canaan Baptist Church). Designed by Delos H. Smith in 1920. Courtesy DCSHPO (1987).

Mount Pleasant. Their stone Romanesque Revival building was designed by Delos H. Smith.

The Roman Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart moved from its 14th Street location to its present location at 16th Street and Park Road in 1923. The vaulted basilica Shrine of the Sacred Heart was designed by Murphy and Olmsted in the northern Italian Romanesque style. It was enriched with Byzantine ornamental details carried out by John Earley. The historic All Souls Unitarian Church, relocated to 16th and Harvard Streets in 1924. The design was by Henry Shepley, grandson of H. H. Richardson, for the Boston firm of Coolidge & Shattuck. St. Stephen's Episcopal Church joined the Church of the Incarnation in 1926, building in 1928 at 16th and Newton Streets, near the earlier site of Union Hall where St. Stephen's was founded. The late English Gothic style building was designed by New York architect Robert Tappan and houses many of the works of art created for the historic Church of the Incarnation, 12th & N Streets, N.W., in 1868. In 1932-33 the Washington Chapel, Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints (now the home of the Unification Church), was built at 2810 16th Street. Its design, by Don C. Young, Jr. and Ramm Hansen, recalls the Mormon temple in Salt Lake City.

CIVIC IMPROVEMENT

Mount Pleasant Street and Park Road, 1950. Courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washingtoniana Collection.

Founded in 1910, the Mount Pleasant Citizens Association worked to bring civic improvements to the rapidly developing Mount Pleasant neighborhood west of 16th Street. One of the first projects of the Association was the creation of the park where the trolley turned around at the intersection of Mount Pleasant Street and Park Road. A school and library were next on their agenda. The 1872 Mount Pleasant School had been expanded on its Lamont Street and Hiatt Place site by the construction in 1895 of the Andrew Johnson School, and, again, in 1910 by the modern C. F. Powell Elementary School. The growth of Mount Pleasant in the early twentieth century was such that although the school building had been

Bancroft Elementary School (1924), 1735 Newton Street. Courtesy DCSHPO (1987).

doubled in size in 1917, it was so overcrowded by 1921 that portables and half-day attendance were necessary. In 1924 the Bancroft Elementary School was built in Mount Pleasant, west of 16th Street, at 18th and Newton Streets. Designed by Municipal Architect Albert L. Harris in the Spanish Colonial style, its important entrance facade fronts directly on Newton Street while its grounds extend northward into the Piney Branch Valley. Expanded first in the 1930s and later in 1965, it was appropriately named for American historian George Bancroft, author of the 12-volume *History of the United States from the Discovery of America to the Inauguration of Washington.*

The Mount Pleasant Branch Library, Lamont and 16th Streets (1925), was built with funding from Andrew Carnegie on land donated by Mrs. John Henderson. Designed in the Italian Renaissance style by New York architect Edward L. Tilton, it was described in the Library Journal in 1924 as resembling "an exclusive club rather than a library. Long windows draped with heavy curtains, arm chairs, floor lamps, fireplaces and a large sun parlor are among the architectural features which break away from conventional library practice." A second-story children's room features an outside entrance and reading niches with animal band murals painted by artist Aurelius Battaglia. Bas reliefs depicting the legend of Paul Bunyan were carved by sculptor Julian Lee Rayford. Recently restored, these artistic enhancements were a Works Progress Administration project in 1934. The Carnegie Foundation had granted $100,000 each for the Takoma Park (1911) and Southeastern (1922) branch libraries. Mount Pleasant resident Frank B. Noyes is credited with obtaining a double grant of $200,000 from the Carnegie Foundation for construction of the Mount Pleasant Branch Library. His brother, Theodore W. Noyes, editor-in-chief of the *Star*, had promoted establishment of the Public Library of the District of Columbia and served as president of the library board. The library became a meeting place for community groups, assuming the role that the Union Hall had earlier fulfilled.

New construction declined in Mount Pleasant in the 1930s and '40s. The demographics of the community changed as older residents died and their children left, often for newer suburbs. Many houses were subdivided into rental units to meet the housing crisis of World War II. Mount Pleasant became home for war refugees from Czechoslovakia and other embattled countries. In the 1950s and '60s this tradition was continued as many emigrés fleeing Communist oppression settled here. At the same time, increasing numbers of African Americans moved to Mount Pleasant from older neighborhoods below Florida Avenue. More recently, the community has become home to many Latinos and Asians. The growing cultural diversity enriched the emerging urban neighborhood. By the mid-'70s this ambience had attracted young professionals who moved to Mount Pleasant and restored many of the fine early 20th century residences to single-family use.

Mount Pleasant festival, 1999. Photo by Nestor Hernandez.

The Mount Pleasant Neighbors, active in the 1970s and '80s, embraced the community's new diversity and worked for better housing, education, and improved economic conditions. The group presented and sponsored many recreational and cultural events. In the late 1970s, they successfully opposed the proposed demolition of 1801 Park Road, Ingleside, and other historic properties. In 1985 Historic Mount Pleasant, Inc., a non-profit community organization dedicated to the preservation of the architectural heritage of the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, was incorporated. This group was the primary force behind Mount Pleasant's recognition as a historic district in 1986. The Historic Mount Pleasant, Inc. Records (1926-1986), including the records of the Mount Pleasant Citizens Association and the Mount Pleasant Neighbors, are archived at the Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

The white-columned porches of Mount Pleasant. Courtesy Historic Mount Pleasant, Inc.

THE MOUNT PLEASANT HISTORIC DISTRICT

by

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Sponsored by

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON, D.C.

With Special Thanks To

Linda Low, Mount Pleasant historian and

HISTORIC MOUNT PLEASANT, INC.

for support of the printing costs of this brochure

Mount Pleasant community organizations concerned with the preservation and revitalization of historic Mount Pleasant:

Historic Mount Pleasant, Inc.

Latino Economic Development Corporation

The Mount Pleasant Historic District Brochure has been funded with the assistance of a matching grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, through the D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Historic Preservation program, under provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. This brochure has been financed in part with federal funds from the National Park Service, Department of Interior. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Interior. This document was developed by the Historical Society of Washingon, D.C., in consultation with the D.C. Historic Preservation Office, District of Columbia Government. Anthony Williams, Mayor. Printed 2000.

This program receives federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, and Section 504, National Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The U.S. Department of Interior (and the District of Columbia), prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, age national origin, or handicap in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program activity, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240