

On this self-guided walking tour of Mount Pleasant, historic markers lead you to:

- A pre-Civil War country estate.
- Homes of musicians Jimmy Dean, Bo Diddley and Charlie Waller.
- Senators pitcher Walter Johnson's elegant apartment house.
- The church where civil rights activist H. Rap Brown spoke in 1967.
- Mount Pleasant's first *bodega*.
- Graceful mansions.
- The first African American church on 16th Street.
- The path President Teddy Roosevelt took to skinny-dip in Rock Creek Park.



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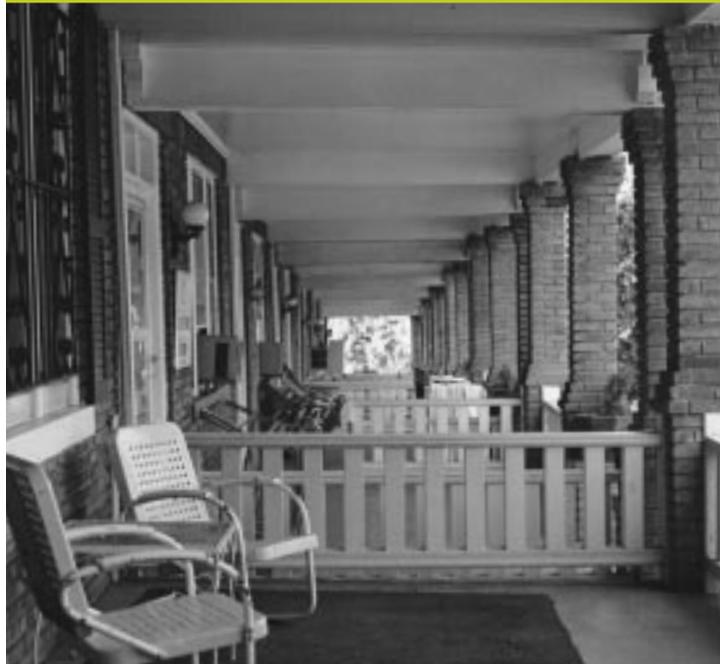
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# Village in the City

## MOUNT PLEASANT HERITAGE TRAIL



Originally a bucolic country village, Mount Pleasant has been a fashionable streetcar suburb, working-class and immigrant neighborhood, Latino *barrio*, and hub of arts and activism. Follow this trail to discover the traces left by each succeeding generation and how they add up to an urban place that still feels like a village.



# Welcome.

Visitors to Washington, DC flock to the National Mall, where grand monuments symbolize the nation's highest ideals. This self-guided walking tour is the seventh in a series that invites you to discover what lies beyond the monuments: Washington's historic neighborhoods.

Founded just after the Civil War, bucolic Mount Pleasant village was home to some of the city's movers and shakers. Then, as the city grew around it, the village evolved by turn into a fashionable streetcar suburb, a working-class neighborhood, a haven for immigrants fleeing political turmoil, a sometimes gritty inner-city area, and the heart of DC's Latino community. This guide, summarizing the 17 signs of *Village in the City: Mount Pleasant Heritage Trail*, leads you to the sites where history lives.

A joyous moment at  
Rosemount Center, 1973.

*Collection of House of Mercy*

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As you walk this trail, please keep safety  
in mind, just as you would while visiting  
any unfamiliar place.

# • Village in the City Mount Pleasant Heritage Trail

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# Introduction

Library of Congress



Mount Pleasant  
founder  
Samuel P. Brown.

The village's four-room  
schoolhouse, 1876.



Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives

WITH ITS MAIN STREET, town square and distinct boundaries, Mount Pleasant still feels like the village it once was. Although over time Mount Pleasant has experienced the same changes that have remade dozens of DC neighborhoods, dedicated residents have been more successful than most in preserving its village character.

Just after the Civil War (1861–1865), a group of New Englanders attracted to the hilly, sylvan area—then well outside the city—built wooden houses on large lots. The original settlement stretched between today's 17th and 14th streets, and eventually extended as far east as Seventh Street. Villagers kept cows and chickens and raised some of their own food. They purchased other supplies from a handful of stores at the commercial center, where Park Road met 14th Street. Beyond the village limits lay several large estates, farms and woodlands, and a string of mills on Rock Creek.

Along the Piney Branch tributary of Rock Creek, where Native Americans once fashioned quartzite into tools, villagers now quarried Potomac bluestone to use in building walls and houses. Today you can find local bluestone and the lighter-colored Kensington tonalite on nearly every DC residential street.

From the first, civic spirit ran deep in the village. The Mount Pleasant Assembly lobbied the city government for roads, sewers, and other improvements, organized transportation downtown, and built a school. Meetings, as well as religious services and parties, took place at a village hall. Eventually the Assembly evolved into the Citizens Association.

Mount Pleasant's first developers opted to ignore Peter C. L'Enfant's original city plan, designed in 1791 with a regular grid of streets and diagonal avenues. Instead they used existing farm roads or laid out new ones that followed the contours of the land. Soon the U.S. Congress decided that the resulting "inharmonious subdivisions" interfered with the logic and the grandeur of L'Enfant's design. In 1893 Congress passed a law requiring new subdivisions to conform to "the general plan of the City." Thus, Mt. Pleasant Street and the streets to the east of it, all laid out before 1893, are off-kilter from the streets to the west.



The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

Crossing Rock Creek at the Kingle Rd. ford, around 1915.

The intersection of Mount Pleasant and 16th sts., 1952.



Washingtoniana Division, D.C. Public Library

In 1903 the city extended and widened 16th Street toward the Maryland line, and the section east of 16th Street eventually became part of Columbia Heights. At the same time, electric streetcars began running on Mt. Pleasant Street. Businesses and apartment buildings sprouted where the line ended. Along the side streets, developers built spacious rowhouses to the tastes of well-to-do entrepreneurs and politicians and simpler versions for middle-class families. Elegant apartments, churches, and mansions rose along 16th Street. The Citizens Association lobbied successfully for a new school and library. It also promoted covenants on housing to keep the population white.

Change came with the Great Depression and World War II. Washington's population boomed as the U.S. Government staffed up to handle the emergencies. A housing shortage resulted, leading



The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

The Fristoe family house, 3309 17th St., about 1898.

Collection of Alan Darby



Byron S. Adams's delivery truck, around 1920.

many homeowners to take in boarders or convert their properties into rooming houses, apartments, or institutions. By the 1950s, this once-fashionable suburb was a firmly working-class urban neighborhood, with pockets of immigrants and African American migrants from the South. The end of race restrictive covenants (1948), school desegregation (1954), and the development of new suburbs in Virginia and Maryland led many white families to move out and African American families to take their places.

Collection of Leonard Koenick



Jimmy Dean, on accordion, and his band, 1952.



From left, Marina Rodríguez, a boarder, with landladies Ebrouka and Malvina Brown and neighbor Lily Jones, 1954.

The riots of 1968 following the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which devastated the nearby 14th Street corridor, frightened many more residents into leaving. The resulting low housing prices attracted a diverse mix of young people, artists, musicians, and families fleeing political and economic turmoil in Central America, Southeast Asia and elsewhere. By the 1970s Mount Pleasant and nearby Adams Morgan were recognized as the heart of the Latino



Latin American Youth Center muralists at work, 1988.

immigrant community and centers for group houses and counter-culture politics. More recently, the neighborhood, like other inner-city areas, has experienced higher housing prices and the loss of rental housing to private ownership.

However, some constants remain: Mount Pleasant’s signature Colonial Revival mansions, early apartment buildings, and rowhouses are remarkably intact. The bordering Rock Creek Valley, preserved since 1890 as parkland, continues to lend the area the “beauties unthought of” and “healthfulness” noted in 1879 by a newspaper reporter. Residents continue to visit on front porches and stoops, and shop and greet each other on Mt. Pleasant Street. And they still hear the roar of the lions at the National Zoo.



From left, Steven, Beulah, Robert, Richard, and Bobbette Hardy at their home, 2024 Pierce Mill Rd., 1965.

# 1

## Fashionable 16th Street

16TH AND MT. PLEASANT STREETS NW



The luxurious Kenesaw contained a pharmacy and a café.

*The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.*

SIXTEENTH STREET, from the White House to Silver Spring, Maryland, is one of the city's key gateways. But through the 1890s, it jogged left where Mt. Pleasant Street runs today and then dead-ended at the edge of today's Rock Creek Park.

After decades on the city's wish list, 16th Street finally was straightened in 1903 and extended northward to Spring Road. This improvement, coupled with the arrival of the electric streetcar, made airy Mount Pleasant an attractive location for residential building. Suddenly it was easy to commute downtown and back.

Two decades earlier, Mary Foote Henderson, socialite developer and wife of Missouri Senator John Henderson, had begun working to make 16th Street the city's most fashionable. The couple lived in Henderson Castle (now demolished) at 16th and Florida Avenue. Mary Henderson lured embassies from France, Spain, Mexico, Cuba, Lithuania, Italy, and Poland to 16th Street. In 1913 she also had the street re-named Avenue of the Presidents, but that lasted only one year.

When the Kenesaw Apartment House across Asbury Park opened in 1906, it led a wave of luxury apartment building here. The Kenesaw housed members of Congress and other prominent Washingtonians. Legendary Washington Senators pitcher Walter Johnson and his family lived there in 1916, while their house at 1843 Irving Street was under construction.

In 1913 the Kenesaw owners donated land next to the building for a city park. President Coolidge dedicated the sculpture of Francis Asbury, the first Methodist bishop in America, in 1924.

# 2

## Upheaval and Activism

16TH STREET BETWEEN IRVING AND  
LAMONT STREETS NW



An after-school snackbar at  
the Wilson Center, 1991.

*Photograph by Rick Reinhard*

BEGINNING IN THE LATE 1950s, Mount Pleasant's leadership shifted from the exclusive Citizens Association to an array of new players. The first alternative group, Mount Pleasant Neighbors Association, organized festivals and grappled with local poverty. It brought Barney Neighborhood House — a social services agency — to 3118 16th Street after urban renewal forced it out of Southwest Washington. Neighbors' Consejo, another social services agency, succeeded Barney House in 2000.

Tenants with limited incomes also led the way. By the mid-1970s, the once-elegant Kenesaw Apartment House had slid into near-ruin. After receiving eviction notices, the residents worked with local activists to buy the building. Their neighbor, DC Councilmember David Clarke, co-sponsored legislation ensuring tenants the first right to purchase their building when it is offered for sale. Thanks to this 1980 law, tenants with limited incomes purchased 3149 Mt. Pleasant Street and 1611 Park Road, among other buildings across the city.

In the mid 1970s, the Wilson Center, now a charter school where 15th Street meets 16th, became a hub of Latino community organizing. The center's name honors President Woodrow Wilson, who worshipped there when it was Central Presbyterian Church. The Latin American Youth Center, formed by young Latino activists, moved next door on 15th Street. Its services range from education to emergency housing.

As you proceed to Sign 3, don't miss the small wooden house at 3130 16th Street. From 1927 to 1945 this was the home of John Ernest White, chauffeur to Presidents Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

# 3

## Mount Pleasant Library

16TH AND LAMONT STREETS NW



Aurelius Battaglia's library elephants preceded his *Dumbo* artwork.

*Photograph by Malini Dominey*

WHEN THE MOUNT PLEASANT LIBRARY opened in 1925, crowds flocked to the Classical style building. Many had campaigned long and hard for this community centerpiece. The Carnegie Corporation, funder of DC public libraries in Mount Vernon Square, Southeast, and Takoma Park, spent extra on this branch so that it would fit in with the mansions and churches lining 16th Street. The city hired noted New Yorker Edward L. Tilton, architect of Carnegie libraries nationwide and the Ellis Island immigration station. The library continues as a learning and gathering space, especially for immigrant residents enjoying its foreign-language collections.

During the Great Depression (1929–1941), local artist Aurelius Battaglia dressed up the children's reading room with "Animal Circus," murals funded by President Franklin Roosevelt's Public Works of Art program. Later Battaglia worked for Walt Disney Studios on *Dumbo* and *Pinocchio*.

The church at 3146 16th Street opened in 1916 as the modest brick Mount Pleasant Methodist Episcopal Church, South. A decade later the congregation enlarged the building in the Classical style to match the new library and renamed it Francis Asbury Methodist Church. After 40 years, the church followed the majority of its members to the Maryland suburbs, and Meridian Hill Baptist Church relocated here from Adams Morgan.

In the park across from the library is a memorial to Guglielmo Marconi, co-winner of the 1909 Nobel Prize in physics for his important contributions to the invention of wireless telegraphy. Marconi's innovations led to the development of modern radio.

# 4

## Sacred Heart Academy

16TH STREET AND PARK ROAD NW



Sacred Heart second graders  
Juan Canales, Phuong Nguyen,  
and Elly Tsckericlis, 1963.

*The Washington Post*

SET BACK FROM THE STREET at 1621 Park Road is an elegant old house, once the all-girls Sacred Heart Academy. The Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters of Wisconsin founded the academy in 1905 and went on to operate it with Sacred Heart parish, adding a co-ed grade school in 1930. Lay educators took over in the 1990s. In addition, the school housed GALA Hispanic Theatre from 1985 to 2000.

While the school always served diverse nationalities, African Americans were excluded until 1951. Washington's Catholic schools actually began desegregating in 1949, five years before DC Public Schools.

The Park Monroe Apartments, at 3300 16th Street, occupy a site where Wisconsin Progressive Senator Robert M. La Follette lived with his family between 1913 and 1921. The senator and his wife, Belle Case La Follette, worked together for world peace and human equality. Just across 16th at 3321 was the home of movie theater mogul Harry M. Crandall. Tragedy struck Crandall in 1922, when the roof of his Knickerbocker Theater at 18th and Columbia Road collapsed during a blizzard, killing 98 and injuring scores. At the time, Crandall was planning another theater at 14th and Park Road using the Knickerbocker's architect. In shock, he hired another designer, and the Tivoli opened in 1924.

Mary Foote Henderson and architect George O. Totten built the mansion at 3224 16th Street in 1920. From 1939 until 1969 it housed the Capitol Radio Engineering Institute, teaching radio and TV electronics. CREI later became Maryland's Capitol College.

# 5

## Avenue of Churches

16TH AND NEWTON STREETS NW



Rev. M. Cecil Mills en route to Canaan Baptist Church's new home, 1963.

*Canaan Baptist Church*

THE RELOCATION of Canaan Baptist Church here from Georgia Avenue in 1963 was the fulfillment of Rev. M. Cecil Mills's dream to preside over the first African American church on this grand avenue of churches. The congregation celebrated the new church for an entire month.

Canaan Baptist replaced Gunton-Temple Memorial Presbyterian Church, whose white congregation had moved to Bethesda, Maryland. Like many white Washingtonians in the period following World War II, they left because of school desegregation and also because the suburbs offered newer housing.

Across 16th Street is St. Stephen and the Incarnation, known as the first racially integrated Episcopal church in the city. During the controversial tenure of Father William Wendt (1960–1978), St. Stephen's also became known for its political activism. Father Wendt came under fire in 1967 for inviting civil rights activist H. Rap Brown to speak in the church. In 1974 he was censured by Episcopal Church leaders for permitting a woman to celebrate the Eucharist before the practice was accepted. During the riots following Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination in 1968, St. Stephen's distributed emergency food and supplies.

The Northbrook Apartments across Newton Street were built in 1916 by prolific developer Harry Wardman, known for his blocks of substantial rowhouses and grand apartment buildings.

As you walk to Sign 6, be sure to notice two of Mount Pleasant's original wood frame houses: 1626 and 1640 Newton Street.

# 6

## Village Life

17TH STREET AND OAKWOOD TERRACE NW



Edward Fristoe biking at Park Rd. and 17th St., around 1898.

*The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.*

SEVENTEENTH STREET was the original western edge of Samuel P. Brown's Mount Pleasant Village. At 3423 Oakwood Terrace is "Oakwood," an original village house built in 1871 for city politician J.W. Buker. Brown sold lots from 17th Street east to today's 14th Street, reserving the land west of 17th Street for his family estate.

Early villagers established the Mount Pleasant Assembly to discuss the issues of the day and address community concerns. They organized an omnibus company, which ran a horse-drawn coach from 14th Street and Park Road to the Treasury Department downtown in the morning and back in the evening. The Assembly also built Union Hall on Newton Street for meetings, worship services, and parties, and a four-room school on Hiatt Place.

In 1883 Samuel Brown's son Chapin began subdividing the family estate as well. You'll see the subdivision's first house — 1701 Newton Street — as you walk to Sign 7.

Even before the National Zoo was founded in 1889, and Rock Creek Park was set aside in 1890, the wild woodlands bordering the village were a happy part of daily life. The young sons of developer Luther Fristoe and his wife Caroline, who moved here in 1887, often played at the creek and the zoo. Others came from farther away: Theodore Roosevelt, president from 1901 to 1909, rode horseback, hiked, and even skinny-dipped in Rock Creek Park. He arrived so often via 17th Street that Washingtonians dubbed it the Roosevelt Entrance.

# 7

## Twenty-seven Little Flags

NEWTON AND 18TH STREETS NW



Bancroft Elementary School sixth  
grade graduates, 1955.

*Collection of Michael Najarian*

JUST LIKE MOUNT PLEASANT, Bancroft School is known for its ethnic and racial diversity. “At one of the spring fairs in the early 1970s, we asked people to bring native dishes, and I bought 27 different little flags to mark the food,” parent Gloria Mitchell remembered.

The original eight-room Bancroft Elementary School was built on this corner in 1924, after a building boom added hundreds of rowhouses to Mount Pleasant. On the day it opened, Bancroft was already too small. Nine years later a new 17-room wing stretched down Newton Street, soon followed by an auditorium and main entry. The school honors George Bancroft (1800–1891), a historian, former secretary of the Navy, and founder of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis. About 1970, Mount Pleasant Neighbors Association launched a neighborhood festival on the Bancroft playground, and dozens of other community events have enjoyed the school’s accommodations.

In the summer of 1962, R&B star Bo Diddley lived with his wife Kay and baby Terri in an apartment at 1724 Newton Street, across from Bancroft School. The neighborhood’s central location, affordable rents, and nearby music clubs on Mt. Pleasant and 14th streets all attracted artists and rising performers. Diddley connected with some neighborhood teenagers whom he’d heard “singing on the corner — at least we thought we were singing,” recalled former area resident Arthur Wong. “He encouraged us” and invited the boys to talk music and occasionally ride in his red Lincoln Continental convertible. It was an experience they never forgot.



# Mount Pleasant Heritage Trail

Roads to Diversity:  
Adams Morgan Heritage Trail

The **Mount Pleasant Heritage Trail**, *Village in the City*, is composed of 17 illustrated historical markers. You can begin your journey at any point along the route. The walk should take about 90 minutes.

Each marker is capped with an **H**. Sign 1 is found on 16th Street just north of its intersection with Columbia Road, three blocks from the Columbia Heights station on Metro's **M** Green line.

# 8

## The Oldest House

NEWTON STREET BETWEEN 18TH AND  
19TH STREETS NW



Ingleside's original arched entryway,  
around 1860.

*Athenaeum of Philadelphia*

INGLESIDE, THE GRAND HOUSE at 1818 Newton Street, once anchored a 139-acre estate. Thomas Ustick Walter (1804–1887), architect of portions of the U.S. Capitol, designed Ingleside in 1851. Today it is Mount Pleasant's oldest structure.

New York Congressman Hiram Walbridge bought Ingleside in 1854, and his family kept it for more than 30 years. Among the estate's residents were Hiram's stepdaughter Helen and her attorney husband, George Corkhill, known to history as the man who prosecuted President James Garfield's assassin in 1881.

The Walbridge heirs sold the house and some acreage in 1889. When Frank Noyes, the powerful editor of Washington's most important newspaper, the *Evening Star*, bought the house, an alley ran where the front lawn had been. So Noyes switched the front of the house for the back. Later the Presbyterian Home for Aged Women and then Stoddard Baptist Home occupied Ingleside.

Also on this block are two houses that were moved here in 1902–1903, when the city extended 16th Street. The owners of 1821 relocated from what is now the intersection of 15th, 16th and Irving streets. The house at 1886 came from the northeast corner of 16th and Park.

In 1913 art dealer and real estate speculator Fred C. Hays constructed 1833, 1835, and 1837 Newton Street (still in the family in 2006). As you proceed to Sign 9, notice that some of the rowhouses on 19th Street become narrower. They were part of a new phase of affordable residential building after World War I ended in 1918.

# 9

## Czech Row

PARK AND KLINGLE ROADS NW



Sandy White in a traditional Czech costume, 1970.

*Collection of Dagmar Hasalova White*

LIKE THE LATINO IMMIGRANTS of recent times, Europeans left the political and economic hardships of home for a better life in the United States. Following the 1948 communist coup in Czechoslovakia, an enclave known as “Czech Row” (or “Prague Road”) developed in the 2000 block of Park Road. Among its exiles were a four-star general and a former ambassador to Turkey. American Sokol, an offshoot of a Czech fitness movement, offered activities for all neighborhood children. Sokol had particular meaning for Czech expatriates as it was banned in Czechoslovakia during both the Nazi and communist eras.

Czech Row’s residents reveled in their tall trees and lush views of the park, recalled Dagmar Hasalova White, the general’s daughter. Other European newcomers found a touch of home in this setting. Women from Armenia and Greece made stuffed grape leaves from vines in the alley behind nearby Irving Street, recalled former neighbors Mike Najarian and Bill Katopothis. Ruby Pelecanos, who lived on Irving Street in the 1940s, recalled the other Greek families living nearby who attended “Greek School” at St. Sophia’s Greek Orthodox Church. Ruby’s father immigrated to Washington in 1908 and operated a number of small restaurants downtown and in Chevy Chase. Her son George grew up to write thrillers set in Washington.

During the 1960s, Mount Pleasant, like Dupont Circle and Adams Morgan, offered affordable housing that appealed to political activists, artists, and unconventional family groups. Blue Skies, a group house devoted to anti-war work and social justice, owned and occupied 1910 Park Road in the early 1970s.

# 10

## Voices at Vespers

ROSEMOUNT AVENUE AND KLINGLE ROAD NW



House of Mercy residents exercised in the courtyard, around 1920.

*Collection of House of Mercy*

THIS SECLUDED BUILDING on the edge of Rock Creek Park was built as the House of Mercy. It provided, as its founders wrote, a “refuge and reformatory for outcast and fallen women,” especially unwed mothers and girls entangled in prostitution. The home, a mission of St. John’s Episcopal Church, trained the young women in domestic skills to prepare them to earn an honest living. Neighbors remembered seeing groups of expectant mothers taking walks in the neighborhood. “At 4 pm every afternoon, the girls would sing at vespers,” recalled Honora Thompson, who grew up nearby. “Their voices were lovely.”

By 1972 the maternity home had closed, and the facility became the bilingual Rosemount Center/ El Centro Rosemount, offering early childhood education and family support. The new name honors the old “Rosemount” estate. Its manor house, once located in the trees beyond Rosemount Center, was demolished around 1890 as Rock Creek Park was created.

Leading into Rock Creek Park, along Klingle Road, is *Canto a la Esperanza* (“A Song for Hope”), a mural designed by Jorge Somarriba and painted by Latin American Youth Center members in 1988. The mural, featuring regions of the world and hopes for world peace, covered a wall of graffiti. Until recently, you could see the remnants of an old ford in the creek just south of Klingle Road. Drivers remember the pleasures of splashing through the water on this paved roadway. It was removed to help fish navigate the creek more freely.

# 11

## Defying the Restrictive Covenants

PARK ROAD BETWEEN 18TH AND  
19TH STREETS NW



The Deane family elders at  
1841 Park Rd., about 1950.

*Collection of Sharon Deane*

IN 1948 THE U.S. SUPREME COURT ruled that covenants prohibiting the sale of houses to individuals of certain races or ethnicities could not be enforced. Two years later, Dr. Robert Deane became the first African American to purchase a house in Mount Pleasant that carried the old covenant. But it wasn't easy.

The Deanes bought 1841 Park Road from Lillian Kraemer Curry. Curry had inherited the house, built in 1906, from her father Charles Kraemer, a German immigrant wine and spirits merchant. In the 1920s the all-white Mount Pleasant Citizens Association began promoting a covenant binding homeowners never to sell their houses to "negroes." Kraemer and most of his neighbors signed it. Even though the Supreme Court had outlawed this practice when Kraemer's daughter sold the house to the prominent black gynecologist in 1950, a small group of neighbors sued to stop the sale based on the old covenant. The neighbors lost in court, and Dr. Deane owned the house until his death in 2001.

Although 1841 remained a single-family home, beginning in the 1930s housing shortages and tight budgets led some families to take in boarders. During the 1950s, Malvina Brown's Armenian-born parents rented rooms in their Park Road home to newcomers from Greece, Mexico, Turkey, and Venezuela.

As you continue to Sign 12, notice the Kensington tonalite wall in front of 1833 and the Potomac bluestone wall in front of 1827 Park Road. Both locally quarried stones are found in walls and buildings throughout the city.

# 12

## Changing Fashions

18TH STREET AND PARK ROAD NW



The mansion at 1801 Park Rd. was saved from demolition in 1978.

*The Washington Post*

AROUND 1900 this successful suburb attracted successful business leaders, who set a grand standard for home building. Printer Byron S. Adams commissioned architect Frederick Pyle to design 1801 Park Road in the Colonial Revival style. Pyle also contributed 3303 18th Street, and developer Lewis Breuninger built 1770 Park Road for his family. Completing the luxurious landscape was the large house at 1802 Park Road (since demolished). This enclave was short-lived, however.

During the Great Depression of 1929 – 1941, the houses at 1801 and 1802 Park Road became homes for the elderly. At mid-century, 3303 18th Street became a rooming house. Twenty years later, social service providers operated from dozens of Mount Pleasant's houses, large and small. More recently some of these well-built, convenient buildings have gone back to single-family use by people of means returning to in-town living.

After World War II, Mount Pleasant enjoyed a brief heyday as a “hillbilly” (country) music destination. Singer (and later sausage salesman) Jimmy Dean found fame hosting a local TV show, *Town and Country Time*, but Mount Pleasant knew him first as Jimmy Dean and the Texas Wildcats, the house band at the Starlite Restaurant (1419 Irving Street). Neighbor Fred Hays remembered delivering the *Washington Daily News* to Dean in his rented rooms at 3303 18th Street. Charlie Waller, founder of the Country Gentlemen bluegrass band, grew up in his mother's rooming house at 1747 Park Road. When country gave way to rock 'n' roll in the 1960s, local clubs followed suit.

# 13

## War and Peace

### TRIANGLE PARK

PARK ROAD AND MT. PLEASANT STREET NW



Mount Pleasant Hospital near 14th St. and Park Rd. during the Civil War.

*The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.*

THE MANSION OF SAMUEL P. BROWN, Mount Pleasant's founder, once stood at 3351 Mt. Pleasant Street. During the Civil War, Brown bought 73 acres here from William Selden, a former U.S. treasurer. Selden believed the Confederacy would win the war, so he sold off his holdings and retreated home to Virginia. Brown planned to sell Selden's land as building lots once peace arrived.

As the war raged (1861–1865), Union camps and hospitals filled these hilltops. Brown regularly hosted convalescents from Maine, where he had been a state legislator.

The Union's wartime occupation of Washington left the city in terrible shape. Congress debated moving the nation's capital to St. Louis or another heartland location. Fortunately, after Alexander "Boss" Shepherd's Board of Public Works rebuilt and improved the city, the government decided to stay. Well-connected land speculators such as Brown, who was also a member of the Board of Public Works, profited as a result.

In 1906 a group of neighbors purchased this triangle in order to stop commercial construction here. The group then sold the property to the city for use as a public park. In the process they also revived the Mount Pleasant Citizens Association to bring community concerns to the three presidentially appointed commissioners then governing Washington, DC.

During the early 1960s, the triangle park was a favorite hangout for area teenagers. "You could always find your friends there or at the Argyle drug store," recalled former resident Bob Sciandra.

# 14

## Main Street

NORTH END OF LAMONT PARK NW



William, Louis, and August Heller,  
around 1952.

*Collection of Heller Family*

IN 1903 A STREETCAR LINE ARRIVED ON Mt. Pleasant Street, and so did new businesses. In this block were Sophia Weiss's notions shop, Domenico Pappalardo's shoe shop, and Lee Sing's laundry. The block's first commercial building (3215) was completed in 1906, designed by the prominent African American firm J.A. Lankford & Brother.

There has been a family-run bakery here since 1922, beginning with Bohemian immigrant Frank Novotny's shop at 3215 Mt. Pleasant. German immigrant Paul Riedel owned it next. Then in the early 1930s, brothers August and Ludwig Heller, who had learned the family trade near Frankfurt, Germany, acquired the business. About 1940, Heller's moved to 3221, where some family members lived upstairs.

Everybody in the extended Heller family worked in the bakery. Even the children assembled white cake boxes or cracked eggs. Soon Heller's drew customers from all over. Heller's outlets sprouted across DC, but a multinational workforce operating around the clock still did all the baking here.

By 1960 many of the neighborhood's European immigrants had moved on, including the Hellers. But the family continued to bake here until they sold the business in 1983. Subsequent owners have retained the name and many original recipes.

Mt. Pleasant Street's businesses included nightclubs. In the 1960s, the Fox Lounge at 3253, with its discreetly covered-up windows, quietly catered to Washington's gay community. The Crosstown Lounge at 3102 and the Oasis at 3171 drew citywide audiences for rock 'n' roll.

# 15

## Streetcar Suburb

LAMONT AND MT. PLEASANT STREETS NW



The number 40 streetcar  
at Lamont St., 1961.

*Collection of Richard Kotulak*

LAMONT PARK, across from the number 42 bus stop, was once the turnaround for the numbers 40 and 42 streetcars. Back in the 1940s, “when the conductor called ‘end of the line,’ passengers stepped out onto a yellow wooden platform,” recalled former resident Elizabeth Slattery Clare. “Then, to turn around, the car proceeded slowly through a small park that we called ‘the loop.’”

Starting in the 1870s, a horse-drawn streetcar carried villagers downtown from Mount Pleasant’s first commercial center, 14th Street and Park Road. In 1903 an electric streetcar line opened on Mt. Pleasant Street, spurring another commercial center and denser residential development. Soon this part of Mount Pleasant transformed from village to suburban neighborhood. In 1961 residents mourned the streetcars’ replacement by buses.

Elizabeth Walbridge, an heir to the old Ingleside Estate on Newton Street, owned property here when the streetcars arrived. She did well selling building lots. Architect Glenn Brown, a planner of Rock Creek Park, designed 1711–1713 Lamont with their unusual Potomac bluestone pillars, as well as 1715–1717. Walbridge and her family lived in 1717.

Some neighborhood businesses came under assault here in April 1968, when rioting broke out around Washington in response to the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Nearby 14th Street suffered the heaviest damage, but looters hit a few shops here too.

Over the succeeding decades, Lamont Park attracted illegal activity. In the early 1990s residents persuaded the city to restore it as a family-friendly, outdoor community center.

# 16

## The First *Bodega*

MT. PLEASANT STREET AT KILBOURNE PLACE, NW



Francisca Marrero Diloné, left, visits with Carmen Rivera, around 1991.

Photograph by Nestor Hernandez

THE 1960S SAW THE NEIGHBORHOOD develop a Latino presence, and Mt. Pleasant Street became its Main Street. The storefront at 3161 once housed Casa Diloné, the first *bodega* (grocery) here. From 1962 until 1998, Casa Diloné sold products familiar to immigrants and embassy staffers from Latin America and the Caribbean who lived in the area. It was a social center for Washington's Spanish-speakers and attracted other Latino businesses.

Francisca Marrero Diloné and Félix Diloné lived above the store with their six children, who also worked in the *bodega*. Customers eventually moved on, but many returned for Francisca's holiday specialties.

Washington's Latino community was small in the 1940s when Francisca immigrated from Puerto Rico and Félix from the Dominican Republic. The late 1950s brought Cubans, followed by Central and South Americans in the 1960s and 1970s. Most of the recent arrivals fled war, economic disruptions, or other political turmoil. By the 1980s, Mount Pleasant was known for its Salvadoran community. In fact, campaigning for Salvadoran elections became a regular event here.

In 1990 Salvadoran émigrés Haydee and Mario Alas operated Trolley's Restaurant at 3203 Mt. Pleasant Street, where, 20 years earlier, customers had lined up out the door for the Loop Restaurant.

In 1974 the activist, ecumenical Community of Christ moved to 3166 Mt. Pleasant Street from Dupont Circle. Many congregants, dedicated to a simpler and more communal existence, moved here as well. The group's La Casa provided space for community activities and the Life Skills Center, founded by a church member.

# 17

## The Urban Village

MT. PLEASANT AND KENYON STREETS NW



At the Mount Pleasant Festival, 1974.

*Photograph by Wolsey Semple*

HARRY TOWNSEND, who passed away at the age of 102 in 2004, had lived in the 1700 block of Kenyon Street since 1956. A well-known local figure who worked in construction, Townsend was still helping neighbors with repairs at age 90.

Mount Pleasant's reputation as "a little U.N." attracted Jeff and Marshall Logan to establish their tailor shop at 3125 Mt. Pleasant Street in 1964. The African American couple, who met in tailoring school, often led activities designed to bring together Mount Pleasant's shifting populations. They helped promote a neighborhood festival in part to bolster a community shaken by the disturbances that followed the 1968 assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Another disturbance rocked the neighborhood in 1991. On the evening of May 5, 1991, violence broke out when a rookie police officer shot and wounded a Salvadoran man during an arrest for disorderly conduct. Local TV stations reported the incident, causing crowds to gather. Angry young men from around the city clashed with police for three days, burning vehicles and public property. All told, 230 people were arrested and 50 were injured. Soon after, a government investigation led to improvements in the DC Police Department's treatment of the city's Spanish-speaking population.

On the east side of Mt. Pleasant Street are Italianate apartment buildings, constructed after the streetcar line arrived in 1903. Many Mount Pleasant apartments have sheltered immigrants, ranging from the Greeks and Italians of the 1940s through the more recent refugees from Southeast Asia and Latin America.

# Sources



An old streetcar idles on Mt. Pleasant St., photographed around 1935.

Collection of Richard Kotulak

THE PROCESS OF CREATING a Neighborhood Heritage Trail begins with the community, extends through story-sharing and oral history gathering, and ends in formal scholarly research. For more information on this neighborhood, please consult the resources in the Kiplinger Library/ The Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and the Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library. In addition, please see the following selected works:

Francine Curro Cary, ed., *Urban Odyssey: A Multicultural History of the Nation's Capital* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003).

Jimmy Dean and Donna Meade Dean, *Thirty Years of Sausage, Fifty Years of Ham: Jimmy Dean's Own Story* (New York: Berkley Books, 2004).

James M. Goode, *Best Addresses: A Century of Washington's Distinguished Apartment Houses* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988.)

Constance McLaughlin Green, *Washington, 1800–1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962).

Mark Opsasnick, *Capitol Rock* (Xlibris, 2002).

LeRoy O. King, Jr., *100 Years of Capital Traction; the Story of Streetcars in the Nation's Capital*, (College Park, Md.: Taylor Pub. Co., 1972).

Gail Spilsbury, *Rock Creek Park* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

# Acknowledgments



**Cultural Tourism DC (CTdc)** strengthens the image and economy of Washington, DC, neighborhood by neighborhood, by linking more than 185 DC cultural and neighborhood member organizations with partners in tourism, hospitality, government, and business. CTdc helps residents and tourists discover and experience Washington's authentic arts and culture. For more information about CTdc's Neighborhood Heritage Trails program and other cultural opportunities, please visit [www.CulturalTourismDC.org](http://www.CulturalTourismDC.org) or call 202.661.7581.

**The Mount Pleasant Heritage Trail Working Group** is an ad-hoc, diverse coalition of neighborhood residents, business owners, activists, scholars, and others organized to develop the Mount Pleasant Heritage Trail in cooperation with Cultural Tourism DC.



**Historic Mount Pleasant** is a nonprofit community organization dedicated to the preservation of the architectural heritage of the Mount Pleasant neighborhood. The group's mission is to bring diverse neighbors together in an appreciation of the unique history and architecture of the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, and to maintain the qualities that make Mount Pleasant a historic district. HMP is a volunteer organization with membership open to everyone.

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