



Present day view of 'old Ballarat' with which the first historian of Ballarat, William Withers, prefaces his history.



Mount Pleasant



Mount Pleasant History Group

This brochure is a joint production between the Mount Pleasant History Group, the Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre and the East Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre. It is part of a signage project funded under the Engaging Communities initiative of the City of Ballarat. We wish to thank all those involved in the research and production of the brochure, including Dr Bill Garner, Max Duthie, Mal Jones, Jill McDonald, Kate Owen, Catherine McLay, City of Ballarat, Mount Pleasant Primary School and Uniting Housing Victoria.



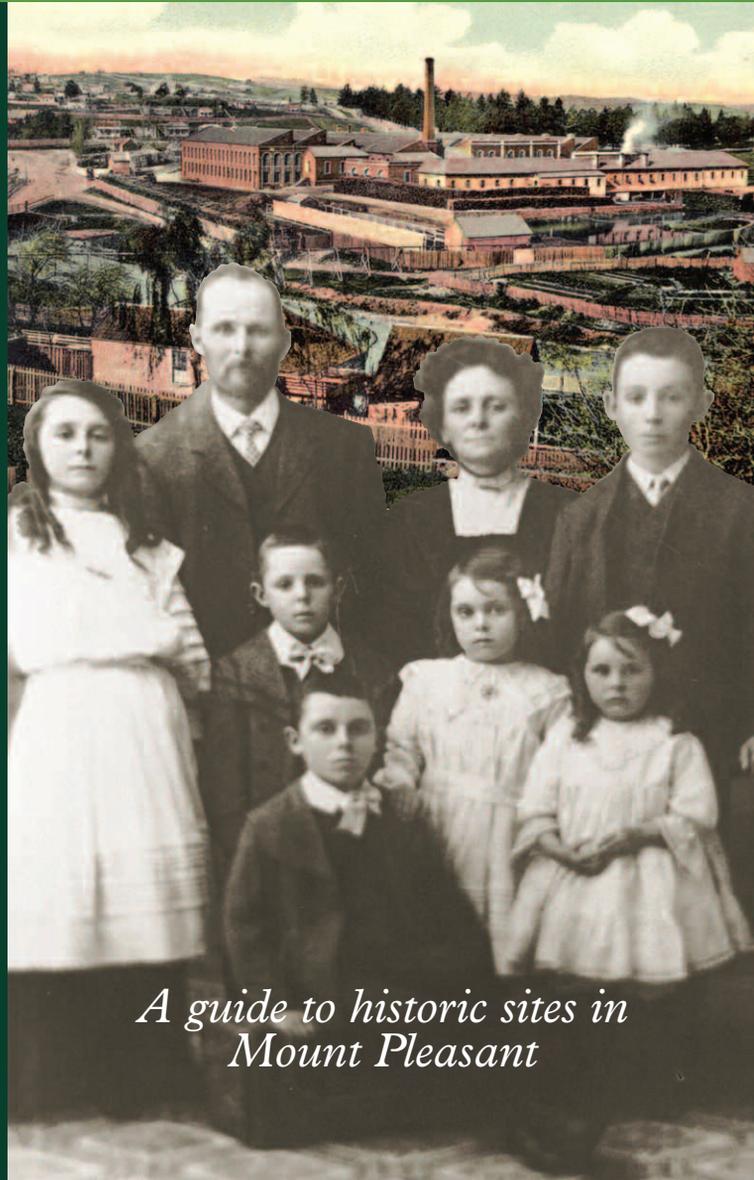
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A guide to historic sites in Mount Pleasant

Discover Historic Mount Pleasant

Mount Pleasant was already known by that name in 1851 when it was identified as a potential gold field that October. Fourteen years earlier, in 1837, the Wadawurrung country around here was taken by pastoralists and the area eventually became part of the Yuille sheep run that reached as far as Lake Wendouree. During those early years a small number of shepherds and woodcutters lived on the White Horse Range and at the small station homestead on the Yarrowee.



Above: *Warrenheip Hills near Ballarat*, 1854, Eugene von Guérard (Source: National Gallery of Victoria)

Cover: *The Coates Family, with Albert at back right*, c1908. (Source: Albert Coates Memorial Trust Collection)

Despite the promise of gold, Mount Pleasant was left undug for several years while all around other diggings rapidly progressed. The pristine quality of the area made it attractive as a refuge for Cornish miners who, in 1853 and 1854, began to pitch their tents here and bring their families with them. Because of this unusual beginning Mount Pleasant can lay claim to being the oldest residential suburb of Ballarat.

As devoted Wesleyans, the new arrivals soon established a chapel, a Sunday School and then a day school. In 1856, the discovery of alluvial gold at the southern end of Mount Pleasant caused a rush to the area. It was quickly named Miner's Right. This influx changed the character and the shape of the emerging suburb, shifting the commercial centre from around the



Above: *Woman and Tent, South West Ballarat, August 1853*, Eugene von Guérard (Source: State Library of Victoria)

church in Morton Street to the Prest Street bridge precinct where several hotels and other businesses sprang up.

As the alluvial rush subsided at the end of the 1860s, deeper quartz mines opened along the top of the range and some leads were chased down the western slope until they disappeared under the basalt escarpment. While other gold communities often declined, the big Redan mines offered regular employment to Mount Pleasant men and helped consolidate the suburb as other industries developed.

The distinctive geographical position of the suburb, caught between the basalt shelf to the west and the steep White Horse Range to the east, meant it was somewhat isolated from the developing city of Ballarat. When the tram was introduced in 1906, Mount Pleasant was the terminus. The only adjoining suburb is Golden Point. Expansion to the south was blocked by the construction of a sewerage treatment works in the early 1920s.

With larger blocks than many suburbs and a considerable amount of open land, Mount Pleasant retained a rural aspect with farms, livestock, orchards and market gardens. It was also a centre of the tanning and woollen industries. From the mid-19th century the physical separation from the city and the continuing Wesleyan dominance combined to create a strong sense of community. Local shops allowed it to remain self-sufficient for daily needs until the shift to supermarket shopping in the 1970s.

While the character of the suburb has changed, the past remains visible in the many old structures still in place and through the stories that attach to them.

Discovery Sites



1 Mount Pleasant Reserve

Corner Barkly and Morton Streets

From 1863 until the early 1930s this was the site of the Mount Pleasant Public Gardens. It was first proposed for that purpose by local residents in 1858, just four years after Cornish mining families pitched their tents here. It shows their determination to build a liveable community.

In 1867 they fought off a government plan to subdivide and sell off the temporarily reserved land. By 1870 the Gardens were fenced and gated and fully planted out with shrubs and trees. This provided an alternative to the long trip to the Ballarat Botanical Gardens.

After half a century the Gardens had deteriorated and during the 1930s Depression 'sussos' (sustenance workers on the dole) were directed to excavate the slope to form the present sports ground.

The Reserve has been home to local cricket, football and baseball teams and has long been a popular escape for children and teenagers.



Above: Sunnyside Woollen Mills Ballarat, postcard, c1875 (Source: State Library of Victoria)

Right: A Mounties baseball team, pictured at Victoria Park, c1965 (Source: The Ballarat Courier)

2 The Tent School Tree

Corner Barkly and Morton Streets

This elm marks the site of the first day school in Mount Pleasant which was opened here in March 1855. The elm was planted in 1932 by two of the original students, Charles Phillips and William Oringe.

The school was conducted in a large tent that also served as a chapel and Sunday school for the Cornish Wesleyans who set up camp here in 1854. As such it marks the foundation of Mount Pleasant as a residential suburb. The tent school was the first in a line of schools ending with the State School (now Mount Pleasant Primary School).

The first teachers at the tent school were Mr and Mrs William McIntosh.



Above: Tent School Tree (Source: Leahna Mayo)

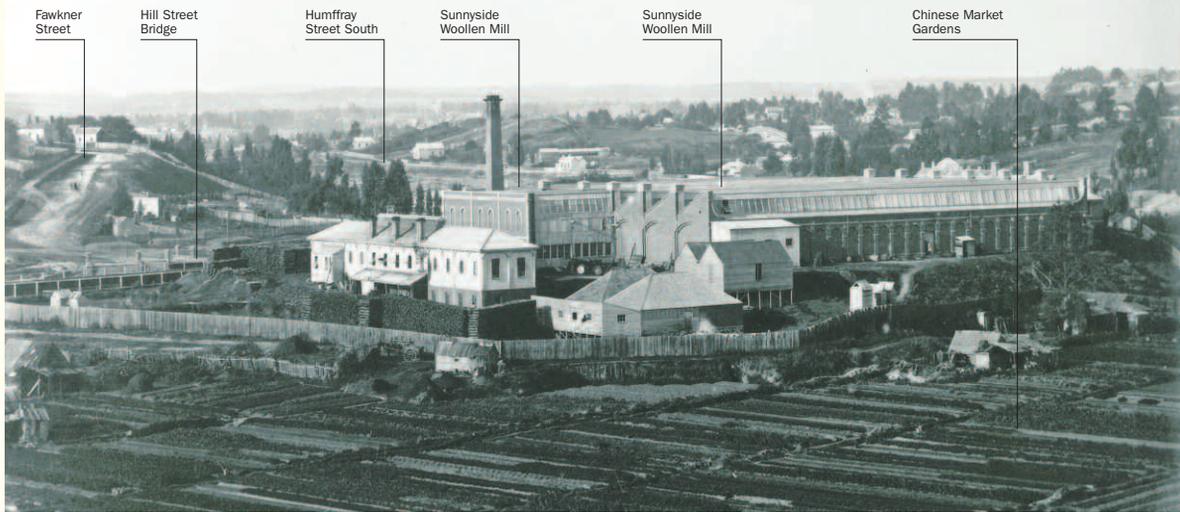


Above: Charles Phillips, c1885 (Source: Mount Pleasant Primary School)

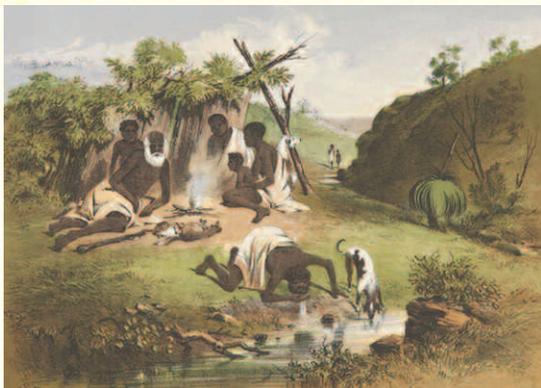
3 Sunnyside Woollen Mills

Corner Humffray and Hill Streets

In 1872 land at Sunny Corner being used as market gardens was bought by the newly-formed Ballarat Woollen Co. Financed locally as profits from gold were declining, the mill began a new era in Ballarat industry. The architect was Henry Richards Caselli, Ballarat's most significant historical architect. In 1874 the building was extended and the Romanesque arched section was added in 1886. Production of flannels, tweeds and blankets commenced in 1873.



By 1875 the mill employed 150 skilled workers on steam-driven looms. It was described as the most perfect mill of its kind in the southern hemisphere. Following a vice-regal visit in 1895 the re-named Sunnyside Mills became a major tourist attraction. During WWI, still surrounded by Chinese market gardens, it became a major supplier to the Australian military employing 500 people at its peak. An avenue of honour commemorating employees who served in the war was planted in Hill Street in 1918. The mill closed in 1981 as a result of the removal of protective tariffs. Subsequently it was used as an indoor sports centre, an auction house and then for warehousing and job training.



Top: Sunnyside Woollen Mill and Chinese Market Gardens
(Source: Max Harris Collection, Ballarat Mechanics' Institute)

Above: *Mia Mia*, S.T. Gill (Source: National Gallery of Victoria)

4 Yarrowee River & Hill Street Bridge

Hill Street

In the long period of Wadawurrung occupation, the waterholes and swamps of the Yarrowee provided fish, duck, and eels. The water was then clear as it meandered through the valley.

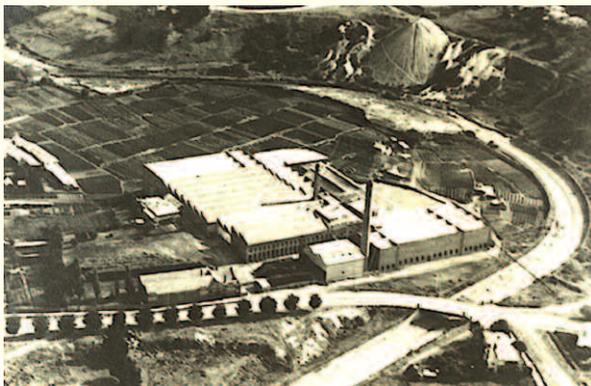
From 1837, pastoralists took its water for their sheep and from the mid-1850s miners turned it to mud as the whole valley was sluiced and dredged. From 1873, the woollen mill used the water for scouring and to dispose of toxic residues from dyeing. Several tanneries also discharged poison into it.

For decades the Yarrowee was the main drain for Ballarat's streets and domestic and industrial waste. Even so, the market gardeners who lined the banks continued to grow the vegetables that fed Ballarat, and local dairy farmers watered their cows at the creek. In 1887, the Health officer declared "I would prefer to be without milk than have it from cows drinking such a liquid".

Raging floods washed away bridges, fences and gardens until the deceptively quiet Yarrowee was tamed by the channelling which by 1916 reached the woollen mill, from behind which it still flows freely. After all of this interference, the original course has been lost. For the first thirty years of the suburb's life the little Sunny Corner footbridge was the only way across the creek at Hill St. A cart bridge with three spans was built in 1886.

The present single-span bridge with a reinforced concrete deck is the result of a realignment in 1916.

Right: Aerial view of the Chinese market gardens, bounded by the Woollen Mill and the Yarrowee. In the foreground can be seen the Avenue of Honour and Hill Street bridge. (Source: Ballarat Heritage Services Picture Collection)

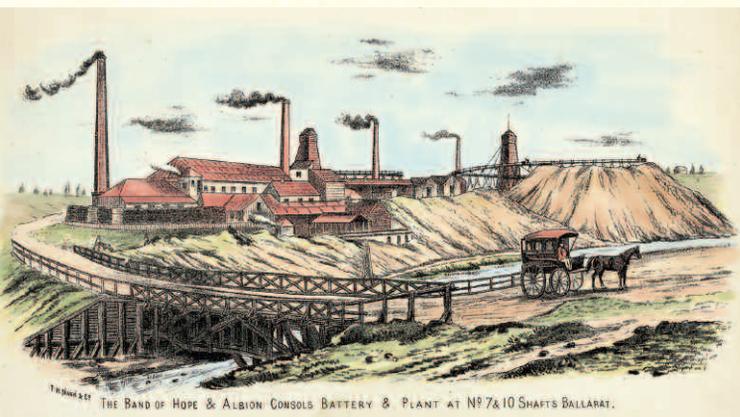


5 Chinese Market Gardens

Hill Street

From this spot you can see the rich land of the floodplain of the Yarrowee. From Humffray Street to the banks of the creek there were neat rows of carrots, cabbages, cauliflowers, beans and lettuces. Market gardens ran all along the crown land beside the Yarrowee from White Flat to the other side of the Prest Street bridge.

Wild floods would wash away bridges, wipe out the gardens and fill the creek with produce. Sitting in the gardens were the huts of the mainly Chinese licensees who supplied much of Ballarat's vegetables into the 20th century. Until about 1960 the last market garden in Mount Pleasant was hidden here behind the mill. Ah Lok, also known as 'Paul the Chinaman', lived in a pretty vine-covered hut in the midst of his garden. He delivered door-to-door around the suburb with a horse and cart.



6 Prest Street Bridge Precinct

Prest Street

In 1856 John Prest opened the Mount Pleasant Hotel roughly on the site of the former Oliver's footwear factory. Also near the bridge were Samuel Elstone's general store and the Red Lion store. Prest was also the first postmaster and the hotel was used for public meetings and coronial inquests. For some years this was the commercial heart of Mount Pleasant. A wooden bridge was built here in 1859. It was first known as the Mount Pleasant bridge and later as the Band and Albion bridge or the Redan bridge.



As the boundary between the municipalities of Ballarat East and Ballarat West ran down the middle of the Yarrowee, there was constant bickering as to which council should pay how much for its upkeep. As a consequence, for decades the bridge and its approaches regularly fell into serious disrepair until the present bluestone bridge was opened in 1897. In 1887 the Swenson family established the Surrey Tannery on Tannery Lane. A quarry operated just behind the site of Prest's hotel. In 1956 Hungarian migrant Alex Suvoltos established a new tannery in the former plaster works opposite the Caltex service station on the corner site. The corrugated iron remnant of another long-running tannery—Nathaniel Martin's—can be seen in the wrecker's yard further along Humffray Street at the bottom of Morton Street.

Left: Prest Street Bridge (Source: *History of Ballarat*, William Withers, 2nd Ed)

Above: Swensons Tannery, foreground, and possibly Mount Pleasant Hotel behind (Source: Federation University Historical Collection)

Right: Ballarat Tanning Co., c.1975 (Source: Alex Suvoltos)





7 Yuille Woolshed Site & Miner's Right Diggings Greene Drive

As you continue along Humffray St South, past the aqueduct and towards the Water Treatment Works you will notice a line of bushes leading towards the Yarrowee. This is the remnant of Woolshed Creek, so named because a woolshed was built there by the Yuilles when they took over the Anderson pastoral run in 1837. The woolshed was opposite a small wooden house built in 1840 by Archie Yuille on the other side of the Yarrowee. As working buildings generally preceded solid dwellings when sheep stations were being established, the woolshed—which no trace remains—was probably the first solid European structure in the Ballarat area. In 1856 there was a rush to a fresh alluvial goldfield here, named Miner's Right. The holes and tents spread south from the Prest Street Bridge area towards Magpie.

If you follow the line of the sewerage pipe along Humffray St South you will pass several commercial sites. The Miner's Right Hotel was on the rise into which the sewerage pipe disappears while another canvas hotel, the Rose of Denmark, was a little further south. Between 1891 and 1909 the floodplain was the site of extensive dredging for gold by the Yarrowee Dredging Company.



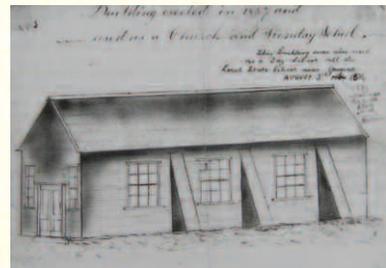
Above: A.B. Yuilles Station Ballarat, 1847, Archibald Campbell (Source: National Library of Australia, nla.obj-147155346-m)

Right: The Yuille Clan, c1935 (Source: Ballarat Historical Society)



8 Former Methodist / Uniting Church Corner Tress and Morton Streets

This collection of buildings was at the heart of Mount Pleasant's spiritual, social and cultural life for more than a century. The first structures here were a large canvas Wesleyan chapel erected in 1855, followed two years later by a wooden church. The first minister to preach here was the Rev Theophilus Taylor, the Wesleyan circuit superintendent. After the bluestone church was built in 1865 the old wooden church was used both as a Sunday School and as a Denominational School and then as a National School. A new building was necessary in 1876 to accommodate the 200 Sunday School scholars and their 20 teachers. This was replaced in 1906 by the red brick building on the corner. Susan Trethowan, whose name can be found on one of its five foundation stones, had attended Sunday School in the canvas chapel in 1855. The modern cream brick church was completed in 1955, a century after the first tent chapel was erected at the Reserve.



Top: Jubilee Teachers & Officers, 1905 (Source: Uniting Church Archive)

Above, right: The first wooden church, 1857 (Source: Peers)

Right: The 1906 Sunday School (left) and the 1865 (centre) and 1955 (right) churches. (Source: State Library of Victoria)





Mount Pleasant

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The magnificent cedar grove, which once surrounded most of the church block, was planted in 1917 by the Independent Order of Rechabites to commemorate local members who served in WW1. The grounds were originally fenced and included a caretaker's cottage at the south-west corner, and, from 1927 until the 1990s, tennis courts. In 1993 part of the land was set aside for parish retirement units. In November 2006, the small remaining congregation decided to disband the church.

9 Tram Terminus and Shops

Corner Barkly and Cobden Streets

Shops appeared at this corner in the 1880s. They became the heart of Mount Pleasant when the tram line from Gladstone Street was extended to Cobden Street in 1906. The corner was the place where the community interacted daily, in the shops and under

the verandahs. Here was the post office and the only public telephone. Shopkeepers lived next door to their shops and employed local people, often for many years. They knew the financial status of everyone in the suburb, extended credit, and in hard times recognised that some

were too poor to pay. The building on the north-east corner, now a hairdresser's, began as Edward Mares' butchery in the 1880s, became Kilby's barbershop and, when Reg Bartle bought it in 1927, a green-



Above: Souvenir Tram Ticket, 1905 (Source: Ballarat Historical Society)

grocers. The Bartle family ran the shop—which expanded with groceries, sub-newsagency, fancy goods, and even a penny library—until 1958.

Next door Tom Hill the boot repairer rented his tiny premises (now gone) from the Bartles for 5 shillings a week. He made a better living on the side as an SP bookie. The shop on the south-east corner was built in 1934 by the butcher Jack Hobill when his premises around the corner in Cobden Street burned down. The business on the south-west corner began as Mrs White's grocery in 1907 and she added the post office in 1912. In 1958 Bill Rees made it one of Ballarat's first cash-and-carry stores. It has also been



Above: The Mount Pleasant tram line was extended to Cobden Street in 1906 after having previously terminated at Gladstone Street in 1905. (Source: Ballarat Tramway Museum)

a milk bar and a fish and chips shop. The premises a few doors down Barkly Street was Watkins Cakes from 1948-62. Mr Watkins, who worked for Davis the baker, died after being kicked by one of the cart horses, leaving behind a wife with two small children. Davis put the widow into the shop. By the 1980s these shops had been closed or re-purposed. For many years the tram was the main means of transport into town and to distant parts of the city. It was a slow trip owing to the use of loops on the single line. But at 4d (2d for children) it was very cheap. The last Mt Pleasant tram ran on Sunday 5th September 1971.

10 Former Store and Lolly Shop

Corner Tress and Cobden Streets

The Tretheway family had a general store here from 1897-1933. In 1940-41 Mabel Taylor ran a tuckshop from the house, serving from a window opposite what was then the school gate.

Opening of Mount Pleasant State School, 1874
(Source: Mount Pleasant Primary School)



Above: Mt. Pleasant State School No.1436 Ballarat (Rural), 1955
(Source: Mount Pleasant Primary School)

11 Mount Pleasant Primary School

Cobden Street

This was the first State School built in Ballarat. State School No. 1436 was officially opened on August 3, 1874. Designed by Henry Bastow, the State Architect, and built by Llewellyn and Edwards at a cost of nearly £8000 it was a monument to free, secular and compulsory education in the colony of Victoria. More than 500 pupils could be squeezed into the original six class rooms. The land had previously been a dairy farm, and before that was mined for gold – the rich Milkmaids lead ran down the northern boundary. The school is the direct descendent of the 1855 Wesleyan tent school (see 2).

A plaque and photographs inside the building celebrate the achievements of the first head teacher, William Nicholls, who established night classes that allowed more than a hundred mature-age students to matriculate directly from this school. The 1918 Honour Board may also be viewed with the names of forty-eight former pupils who died, and 220 who

served in the Great War. The displays may be viewed with permission from the school office.

From 1934 to 1958 a Rural Training School was conducted in a separate classroom modelled on a one-teacher country school. In the 1990s, due to the determination of the staff and the community, the school survived a rationalisation process under which many State schools were closed.

12 Peady Street Reserve

Corner Peady and Trethowan Streets

This pleasant winding walk between Trethowan Street and Cobden Street (just up the hill from the school) is on the line of the Milkmaid Lead and shows signs of mining. In the 1980s the bush landscape was preserved by community action to become an accessible experience of the gullies in which generations of local children played. A more extensive remnant gold mining landscape can be found in the pine plantations on the eastern side of Brittain Street.



13 The Observatory

Corner Magpie and Cobden Streets

In 1885, the School of Mines was granted three acres to establish an observatory at Mount Pleasant.

Henry Evans Baker, a former sea captain, single-handedly constructed a 12.5 inch (31.75 cms) Newtonian reflector telescope on site. This involved setting up a small foundry to cast parts and hand-grinding the mirror. When it was installed in 1886 Baker was appointed the first curator. A cottage, now

gone, was provided for the curator's family. After Baker died in 1891, the observatory went into decline until it was resurrected in 1913 by John Brittain, a lecturer in astronomy at the School of Mines. He became the curator in 1915 and the Brittain

family lived at the Observatory for the next thirty years. From 1890 to 1957 the observatory provided Ballarat's daily meteorological reports. In 1958, the observatory was saved from demolition by the formation of the Ballarat Astronomical Society. It houses historical working telescopes and a number of remarkable stained-glass windows which can be viewed with permission.



Top left: Captain Henry Baker with the 'Great Equatorial Telescope', 1890. (Source: Gold Museum, Ballarat)

Top right: J.B. Brittain, 1933 (Source: Uniting Church Archive)

Centre left: The 1918 Jelbart Building (Source: Federation University Collection)

14 Swimming Pool and Lookout

Magpie Street

Inspired by The Herald Learn-to-Swim campaign, working-bees turned an old mining sludge dam into a swimming pool. Opened in December 1930 and known variously as the Golden Mount Swimming Pool and the Sovereign Hill Swimming Pool, this was the local swimming spot for Mount Pleasant residents. Spectacularly located, the large round pool sat just below the gold mines indicator installed at the Sovereign Hill lookout in the 1930s by local historian John Hargreaves. While the water was always muddy



(the pool had a clay bottom) the surrounds included tiers of brickwork seating and changing rooms with showers.

It was demolished following the establishment of the historical park. The unmarked Sovereign Hill lookout off Magpie Street at the rear of the historical park is still a fine vantage point over the historical Canadian field.



Golden Mount Swimming Pool, 1932, looking south (top) and east (above) over Canadian. (Source: Max Harris Collection, Ballarat Mechanics Institute)



15 Coates House

711 Tress Street

Sir Albert Coates (1895-1977) lived here in his youth. He was a national war hero who, as a prisoner of the

Japanese in WWII in Sumatra and on the infamous Burma-Thailand railway, endlessly performed surgery in the most difficult conditions. For this he was awarded the imperial honour OBE in 1946.

The Coates family has deep roots in Mount Pleasant. His father, Arthur, was a letter carrier (postman) and his namesake, Uncle Albert, served in important positions at the Methodist Church for many years. Aged eleven Albert began work as a butcher's apprentice, and at 14 was indentured to a bookbinder. After service in WWI he returned home to graduate in medicine while working part-time in the post office. He was knighted in 1955.



Above:
Lt. Col. Albert Coates (left) with Lt. Col. Edward Dunlop, Bangkok, 1945. (Source: Australian War Memorial)

16 Oliver's Boot Factory

Gladstone Street between Laurie & Tress Streets

As a centre of the local tanning industry Mount Pleasant attracted the ancillary industry of boot making. The Oliver family generated two companies. The factory that operated here from 1918 to 1933 was first owned by Jack Oliver, son of John Oliver of the bootmaker Oliver & Stephens and from about 1938 was operated by John Oliver himself. In 1946

Top:
Coates House, 711 Tress Street (Source: Albert Coates Memorial Trust Collection)

the premises burned down. The Oliver factories provided employment for generations of local residents. Olivers finally relocated to new premises next to the Prest Street bridge and closed in 2018. Another bootmaker, Paddles (formerly The Emu factory), was located at 616 Barkly Street.

17 Pearce's Park and Band Rotunda

Corner Barkly and Gladstone Streets

This was a barren waste before being transformed into a park. In the late 1850s it was mined and was later the site of John Sawyer's hand-made brickworks. Until the early 20th century it was used as a rubbish

Below:
Pearce's Park, c.1915. (Source: Ballarat Heritage Services Picture Collection)



dump with a wide drain down the middle. In 1913 it was decided to 'beautify' it. A committee of local women under Mrs Hoare, Mrs Stephens and Mrs Ritchie raised the money and worked with the curator of the Ballarat East Town Gardens, Mr Edwards. The women also paid for the band rotunda. The park was named in honour of Cr. Isaiah Pearce, a local resident, benefactor, mining entrepreneur and several times mayor of Ballarat East. It was opened in front of a crowd of several hundred on March 16, 1914.

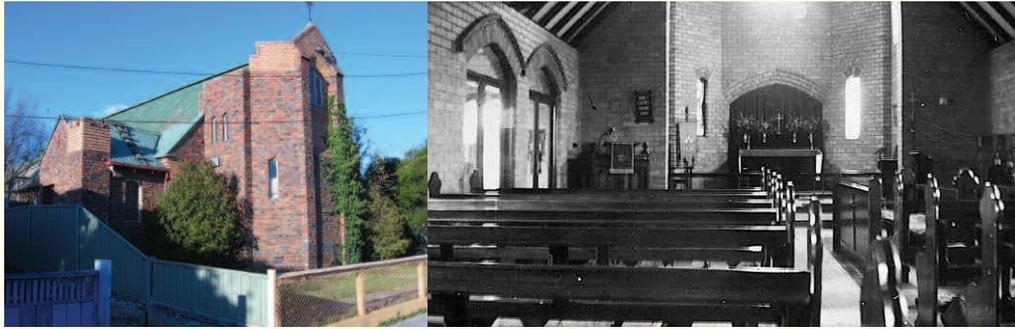
The park was regularly used for patriotic gatherings, recruiting meetings, fund-raisers for soldiers and even for an anti-conscription rally. During the deadly 'flu epidemic of 1919, the Methodist church conducted open air services here. The park became a popular venue popular for fairs, band recitals, community singing, scouting rallies and political meetings.



Above:
Mrs Margaret Hoare (Source: Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 2500)

Right: St Luke's Anglican Church, 2017.
(Source: Bill Garner)

Far right: Interior of St Luke's Anglican Church, 1947.
(Source: Anglican Diocese Ballarat)



18 Shop

Corner Barkly and Gladstone Streets

For much of the first half of the 20th century this was Albert Scadden's grocery shop. Another early store in Mount Pleasant was at the corner of Barkly and Bradshaw Streets. Known as 'The Race Store' in the 1860s, it was run by James Bennett and his wife Mary-Anne Bennett.

Above:
Former shop of
Albert Scadden.
(Source:
Leahna Mayo)

Right:
'The Race Store',
1860
(Source:
Federation
University
Historical
Collection)



Right: Clowance, 2016.
(Source: Leahna Mayo)

19 Former St Luke's Anglican Church Gladstone Street

This is the second incarnation of St Luke's. The first version was opened around the corner in Bond Street in 1892 as a Mission Church. In June 1931 the church hall burned down. The present church and the Sunday School behind were opened in 1933 but curiously the church was not consecrated until 1941. From 1980 to 1995 the Sunday School housed St Albans School, the first parish primary school to be opened in Ballarat for 60 years. St Luke's had a marginal but distinctive social role in Mount Pleasant because the Anglicans, unlike the Methodists, allowed dancing. The church was deconsecrated in the mid-1990s. It was destroyed by fire on March 21, 2019.

20 'Clowance'

518 Barkly Street

This house was built for Isaiah Pearce (see 17) in 1892-93. 'Clowance' has heritage significance as an intact example of a transitional design between Victorian and Federation styles. It later became a boarding house for women and a maternity hospital run by Sister Simpler who also lived there. While it now lies within Golden Point (the present boundary is contested by older residents), Pearce was historically regarded as a 'Mount Pleasant person'.

Below:
Cr. Isaiah Pearce
(Source: Federation
University Historical
Collection)

