

The school tent tree

This is the site of the foundation of Mount Pleasant.

In mid-1854 a number of Cornish mining families who had been living at Canadian began pitching their tents here. Attracted by the absence of diggers at Mount Pleasant, they came to escape the drunken mayhem of the Main Road diggings. As devout Wesleyans the establishment of a chapel was a significant step in establishing the new community. Money raised by Miss Susan Trethowan purchased a 7 x 3.5 metre tent from Canadian. Moving from place to place, this tent had a significant history as a Wesleyan chapel on the goldfields. Towards the end of 1854 the determined congregation was recognised by the Wesleyan circuit superintendent Theophilus Taylor who first preached at this location on 8 October that year.

The first school

In March 1855 the tent was pressed into further use as a day school. This was the first school in Mount Pleasant. The teachers were Mr and Mrs William McIntosh. At the instigation of John Hargreaves, the first historian of Mount Pleasant, an elm tree commemorating the school was planted in 1932 by two of the original students, Charles Phillips, 92, and William Oringe, 90.

Charles Phillips

As a boy of nine he witnessed the burning of Bentley's Hotel and the building of the Eureka stockade. After starting in the tent school at the reserve he followed the school when it moved to the church reserve further up Morton Street. Leaving school he worked as a miner but when off-shift he attended the new State school as a mature-age student. Here he trained as a teacher under the legendary headmaster William Nicholls. He was a leading member of the Mount Pleasant Old Scholars Association. Charles Phillips died in 1937.