

*“The Work
of Our Hands”*

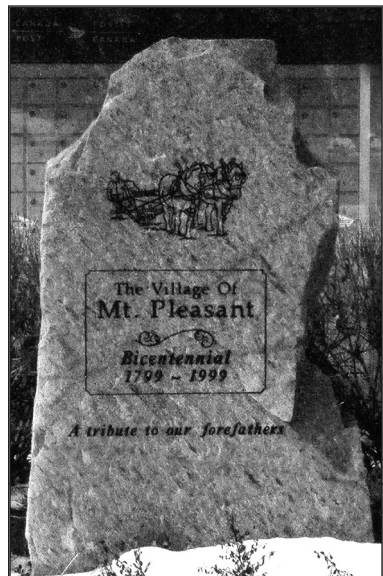
**Mount Pleasant, Ontario, 1799~1899
A History**



A classic farmstead with barn and other outbuildings forming a sheltering enclosure. The barn was built, possibly in the early 1900s, by Alex McDiarmid, son of Diarmid McDiarmid, on the old Allin Ellis farm on Maple Ave. E. (later owned by Hugh MacLachlan, a McDiarmid descendant). Like so many others, the barn fell victim to age and changes in farming, and was demolished, leaving the rural landscape rather empty. Photo courtesy Rick Prescott.

*Into these hills and valleys long ago
Came pioneers of faith with vision clear
Of farms and towns and neighbours living so
That village, home and church might flourish here.*

(From the hymn "Into These Hills and Valleys Long Ago" sung at the 125th Anniversary Service, Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church, October 19, 2003)



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**Mount Pleasant, Ontario, 1799~1899
A History**

**Written by
Dr. Sharon Jaeger
for Heritage Mount Pleasant**

Edited by Delia O'Byrne



“The Work of Our Hands”
Mount Pleasant, Ontario, 1799 ~ 1899: A History
by Dr. Sharon Jaeger

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*The title “The Work Of Our Hands” is a quote from Verse 17
Psalm 90 (King James Version), taken from a document placed in the
cornerstone of All Saints Church in 1845 by pioneers who, in building
the church, expressed the values and spirit of their lives and the
life of this place called Mount Pleasant. The complete line reads:
“...and establish thou the work of our hands upon us;
yea the work of our hands establish thou it.”*

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Dedication

In memory of the courageous and spirited
19th century pioneers whose ideals and accomplishments are the
enduring legacy of Mount Pleasant,

And

Peggy (Margaret) Smyth, 1901-1964
who recorded their stories that we might honour them.



Photo courtesy Mabel Robinson.

A place is a story told many times.

– Kim Stafford

*No place is a place until things that have happened in it
are remembered in history.*

– Wallace Stegner

If you listen carefully you can almost hear their voices.

– Anonymous

In Appreciation

Heritage Mount Pleasant gratefully acknowledges the contribution of the many organizations and individuals who helped make the dream of publishing this history a reality. We thank them all. In particular, we note the following.

The Mount Pleasant Women's Institute who undertook the Mount Pleasant Tweedsmuir History in the 1950s. Their history was never published, but they compiled many invaluable historical records which otherwise would have been irretrievably lost to us.

The late Harold and Patricia Phelps who were entrusted with the safekeeping of those records and photographs, and through their dedication to Mount Pleasant helped keep alive the hope that the village history would eventually be published.

Members of Heritage Mount Pleasant and residents of Mount Pleasant who believed that this history needed to be preserved and told, and who persevered with the project despite many obstacles.

Dr. Sharon Jaeger for her research, scholarship, and especially her personal interest in Mount Pleasant which allowed her to capture the essence of the village and bring its past to life again.

All those who offered encouragement, shared their knowledge and information, and supported our fund-raising efforts. The writing and publishing of this history was made possible in part through the generous financial support of:

All Saints Anglican Church, Mount Pleasant

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Mrs. Helen Brown

The County of Brant

Mr. and Mrs. D. Cunningham

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John and Orla Derus

Robert and Audrey Guest

Mrs. F. Winnifred Grinter

In Memoriam - Dora Carson, from Laurie Widmer Carson

In Memoriam - Patricia Phelps

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Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church

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**THE ONTARIO
TRILLIUM FOUNDATION**



**LA FONDATION
TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO**

Acknowledgements

This manuscript has come to fruition as a result of a great deal of support and guidance from a number of sources. Firstly, the history could never have been written without the meticulous research and inspiring spirit of the late Margaret Smyth. Her research notes and voluminous correspondence laid the foundation for this work, allowing me to synthesise and contextualise her earlier research with new insights and new sources for a 21st century audience. Access to this fine collection of records would not have been possible without the openness and hospitality of Linda Guest. Therefore, this work also owes Linda a debt of gratitude for welcoming me into her lovely home week after week. Hearty thanks also go to Michael and Delia O'Byrne for their constant guidance, and encouraging emails throughout the year of research and writing. Thanks to Gwen and Allan Soll for opening up their beautiful home to allow me to meet many Mount Pleasant residents and immerse myself in the welcoming atmosphere of the community. I would also like to thank Dr. Bob Bell for the initial recommendation and introduction to the Mount Pleasant Heritage Committee.

Resources for this project came from a variety of sources. Helen Mulligan offered not only her hospitality but also her impressive collection of genealogy, local history and photographs. Florence Parker also provided access to her volume of carefully prepared local architectural history. Helen Kennedy of the County of Brant offices offered helpful suggestions and motivation at the beginning of this project and Charly Tremblay was instrumental in providing historical maps of the area. Thanks also to the staff at the Brant County Museum and Archives for accessing records for me, especially to student Shelley Respondek for her personal attention.

Finally, I must thank my family and friends for their constant encouragement of my endeavours. To Lisa and Tina, thanks for your friendship and intellectual stimulation. To my parents and brother, thanks for your abiding concern. And, as always, to David, a mere thank you cannot articulate my gratefulness for your enduring support. Any errors that remain are mine.

Sharon Jaeger

Introduction: From Colonial Settlement to Ontario Village

Local history is eminently valuable in recounting events and chronicling the lives of individual people. But as historian Alan F. J. Artibise argues in the preface of English and McLaughlin's history of Kitchener, local history must go beyond this. The recording of local events and community achievements is unquestionably vital. But for a society to understand itself, local history must relate all the individual parts of a particular community's development to a larger context. In this way local history can guide and even inspire. This local history strives to follow Artibise's ideal.

In the case of the history of Mount Pleasant, local events transpired within the overall context of the county, the province, the country, the continent and even the Empire. Wider occurrences and influences shaped local developments and gave the community a sense of identity and of place. Likewise, larger trends and patterns can be viewed on the smaller stage. They can be personalised and understood on the micro level. In this way, the events occurring in one community and the people living there can illustrate the larger patterns in a country's history as big events writ small.

Mount Pleasant stands out as having experienced most of the important social, economic, military and political events in our nation's history. As an inland settlement, the community's earliest history tells the story of American migration in the late 18th century to lands granted to the natives for loyalty during the American Revolution. The experiences of these earliest Upper Canadian pioneers show the tentative relations between the natives and the American newcomers, but the community's isolation also demonstrates the separateness of the two groups. Early marriages and family events not only showcase the fact that life went on in the midst of opening up the new lands, but also reveal the colonial government's ongoing concern over the presence of so many American settlers in the aftermath of the Republic's successful

revolt. The War of 1812 mustered the local settlers in defence of their new homes against the aggression of their former neighbours across the line. But at least one prominent Mount Pleasant resident vocally acknowledged the likely outcome of the Republic's ambition and garnered himself a charge of "treason." This led to a struggle over lands granted earlier and a local drama mirroring the larger "Alien Question" in Upper Canada.

At the end of the war American raiders plundered and pillaged the village, forcing residents to build their lives anew once again, though the influx of European immigrants after the war, along with the continued flow of American migrants, despite official sanctions against them, made this reconstruction easier. Hard on the heels of the war, Mount Pleasant residents, as representatives of one of the major settlements in the district, recorded their observations and suggestions for improvement for Gourlay's statistical record of the colony. These suggestions, though articulated from a local perspective, encapsulated the preoccupations of the Upper Canadian population: land policies, transportation developments, and wheat cultivation. The colony's wheat culture took hold in the fields of the community, bolstered by advancements in transportation so vital to an inland settlement. Stagecoaches and canals enabled an inflow of both the good and the bad: settlers and an ever increasing array of consumer goods on the one hand, and political unrest and disease on the other. The earlier concerns voiced for Gourlay's report hardened into grievances for some as theoretical political debates and practical concerns erupted into an armed rebellion. Mount Pleasant residents found themselves in the centre of the uprising in the south-western district of the colony. Some settlers aided the rebels while more mustered with the local militia once again to defend the area against armed unrest.

This period of the 1830s also saw the settlement evolve into a village, as it made the transition, experienced across the colony, towards a more settled existence. In Mount Pleasant this shift from transience to permanence manifested itself in many ways. The influx of more and more immigrants meant that their bodies and souls required care. Therefore the village attracted a resident doctor and a resident

clergyman to tend to these needs. The villagers had previously cared for their medicinal needs with the help of local natural healers and native-influenced remedies while their spiritual needs depended on the exigencies of travelling ministers and impromptu services held in private homes, carpenters' shops and even in the great outdoors. By the second generation of settlement in the area, these ad hoc measures no longer sufficed. Through interdenominational community effort, Mount Pleasant residents constructed a communal place of worship to be used by all the Protestant faiths represented in the community on a proportional and rotating basis. The villagers also met the more practical needs of their next generation through the construction of a private non-denominational school, where local children could benefit from a quality education right at home.

With the boom in wheat cultivation, the rise of spin-off mercantile enterprises and the benefits of improved local transportation, Mount Pleasant, along with the new United Province of the Canadas as a whole, reached a level of affluence by the 1840s. Mount Pleasant revealed this prosperity in the most visible and most enduring manner possible. The village's more affluent residents constructed impressive structures utilising the most traditional as well as the most unusual architectural styles of the day. Grand Victorian era mansions and octagonal buildings stood testament to the rich rewards paid as dividends from the booming wheat economy.

This prosperous environment attracted many aspiring migrants hoping to benefit from this economy and reach the social and economic standing of the residents of the village's impressive architectural gems. These migrants cover the spectrum of shifts in human populations. Single men came to the area looking for adventure and wealth, eventually settling down to farming and a trade and intermarrying into the village's older families. Entire families covering many generations transferred their lives to the New World in search of a better life for their children. Women made the journey to Mount Pleasant in the face of the destitution of widowhood to raise their children in the circle of extended family already settled in British North America. All of these settlers added their own skills, cultures and religious beliefs to the make-up of the

village, creating a rich environment within the overall embrace of the Empire.

This shift to permanence, however, also challenged the concept of the previously negotiated communal house of worship. By the mid-1840s individual religious denominations began to assert their independence and identity by forming their own congregations and constructing their own churches. This shift from a communal frame church to several sturdy brick structures took place slowly over a number of decades and mirrored the establishment of churches across the province. This type of transition applied to many other aspects of life in Mount Pleasant, as across British North America. Residents improved their homes over the generations from log shelters, to frame structures, to more substantial brick houses. Businesses also developed and expanded. Some even outgrew their roots, needing to transplant themselves to larger centres such as nearby Brantford, especially with the arrival of the railroad to that community. Social events such as sports also revealed this transition as they shifted from rough and tumble to more organised.

In the context of this shift from an isolated inland colonial settlement to a provincial village, Mount Pleasant would not see its position on the cutting edge of the frontier endure indefinitely. For several generations it constituted an ideological frontier for a flood of immigrants and an economic frontier for the wheat economy. But as the transition to an affluent and elegant village occurred, this frontier inexorably shifted westward and along with it the hinterland for expanding agriculture and population. Each generation in Mount Pleasant's history saw some of the members of its fold leave the community behind in search of wealth or the fulfilment of ambition. This outflow followed the frontier westward, first to places such as Michigan, then to the gold fields of California, and to Manitoba, the Prairies, the Pacific coast and the myriad American urban centres beckoning migrants. This out-migration intensified as the century wore on, with the village left behind, immersed in the maintenance of religious and educational institutions that had become the bedrock of the community.

Some of this migration to the western part of the continent, to the large American cities, and even to small Canadian cities such as Brantford, resulted from the fact that an Ontario village could not fulfil the ambitions of its entire offspring. It also revealed the nation's advancing shift from an overwhelmingly rural to an increasingly urban population. And like every local community, Mount Pleasant nurtured many sons and daughters who went on to individual distinction. All of these individual accomplishments, impressive on their own account, help illustrate, on a personal level, larger forces at work, namely the political, economic and social spectrum of life in the 19th century.

For example, Mount Pleasant son Arthur Sturgis Hardy prepared for his future career as provincial politician and premier in the fine educational institutions in the village. This upbringing shaped his character and as such his political concerns including the land granting system, temperance and preserving rural wilderness. The atmosphere of Mount Pleasant also fostered some impressive inventions in response to a particular set of economic circumstances. The Crimean War, the high price of wheat and a shortage of farm labour, combined with the personal characteristics of the inventors, John and Alanson Harris, for example, led to the conception of the first locally created farm implement, the hay rake.

On the social scene, a mother daughter duo from Mount Pleasant, one born there, the other choosing it as her adopted home, illustrated the strides being made as a result of the women's rights movement. After living a few years as a young wife and mother in Mount Pleasant, Emily Howard Jennings Stowe became the first female doctor licensed to practice in Canada. Her daughter Augusta Stowe Gullen, nourished by her mother's drive to advance the cause of women in the public sphere and by the atmosphere of superior education in Mount Pleasant, became the first woman to graduate from a Canadian medical school. The village also fostered founders and promoters of major educational institutions across the country. Rev. Dr. George Bryce founded Manitoba College in Winnipeg, while Rev. Dr. Samuel Sobieski Nelles served as a lifelong promoter of Victoria College, University of Toronto. These noted individuals

pioneered in their own various domains, in the same way that Mount Pleasant's original pioneer settlers, like other settlers along the British North American frontier, forged a community out of a forest.

This history traces the lives of these and many other residents of Mount Pleasant, following families through the generations as the community evolved from an isolated settlement to a provincial village. This transition mirrored similar shifts from colony to nation across British North America through the 19th century. As such this history does not address the events beyond the turn of the 20th century, but instead focuses on the rich fabric of life in Mount Pleasant throughout the 1800s as a window through which to help understand the larger history of our nation.

Chapter One



“This Is God’s Country”

Early Settlement: 1799 – 1811

The history of a community often begins with violent events in faraway lands. In the case of Mount Pleasant, with its tranquil forests and sparkling creeks, its origins coalesce around the conjunction of geography, a rich native history and the bloody American Revolution. All these factors helped guide the Ellis and Sturgis families, founders of Mount Pleasant, north from the Susquehanna area in Pennsylvania to British North America near the turn of the 19th century.

In 1626, a Récollet missionary, Father LaRoche Daillon had visited the Grand River Valley and noted in his records that the area was “the most beautiful” he had seen in all his wanderings. But the area was not just aesthetically pleasing. It had critical strategic importance as well. The Grand River Valley area was a major native trading district with well-defined trails. Together with the waterways, these trails formed a rudimentary network of transportation routes into the otherwise impenetrable wilderness of the interior of Upper Canada. In the 1790s travellers described these primitive “roads” as no more than narrow earth paths, passable only when covered with snow or dried by the summer sun. During the wet fall and spring seasons they became synonymous with mud. But despite such difficult passage these trails facilitated movement of people and goods north of the Great Lakes, making it possible for settlers to reach the Grand River area. One such old native hunting trail ran through the Six Nations Grand River tract and had been pointed out by Captain Joseph Brant, leader of the Mohawks, to the new settlers as “a southerly course to the lake.” The trail (later known as the Long Point Road) went from the crossing point of the Grand River to Lake Erie.



Frederick Haldimand.
Captain General and Governor in
Chief of The Province of Quebec and
Territories depending Thereon. &c. &c.
General and Commander in Chief of
His Majesty's Forces in said Province
and The Frontiers Thereof. &c. &c. &c.

Whereas His Majesty, having been
pleased to direct, that in Consideration of the early attachment To
his cause, manifested by the Mohawk Indians and of the loss of their
Settlement which they thereby sustained, that a convenient Tract of Land,
under His protection should be chosen as a safe and comfortable Retreat for
them and others of the Six Nations, who have either lost their Settlements
within the Territory of the American States, or wish to retire from them to the
British. I have at the earnest desire of many of these His Majesty's
faithful Allies, purchased a Tract of Land from the Indians, situated
between the Lakes Ontario, Erie, and Huron. And I do hereby, in His
Majesty's Name, Authorize and permit the said Mohawk Nation and such
others of the Six Nations Indians as wish to settle in that Quarter, to take
possession of and settle upon the Banks of the River, commonly called Ouse, or
Grand River, running into Lake Erie, allotting to them, for that purpose, Six
Miles deep from each side of the River beginning at Lake Erie and extending
in that proportion to the Head of said River, which I from and their Posterity
are to enjoy forever.
Given Under my Hand and Seal at Arms, At the Castle of St Louis at Quebec,
this Twenty-fifth day of October, One thousand Seven hundred and Eighty-four,
and in the Twenty-fifth Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Third,
by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, and
so forth.

By His Excellency's Commands,
R. Mathews.

Fred Haldimand

Upper Canada Secretaries Office.
 March 20th 1715. Registered. Lib A. 3.15.4.

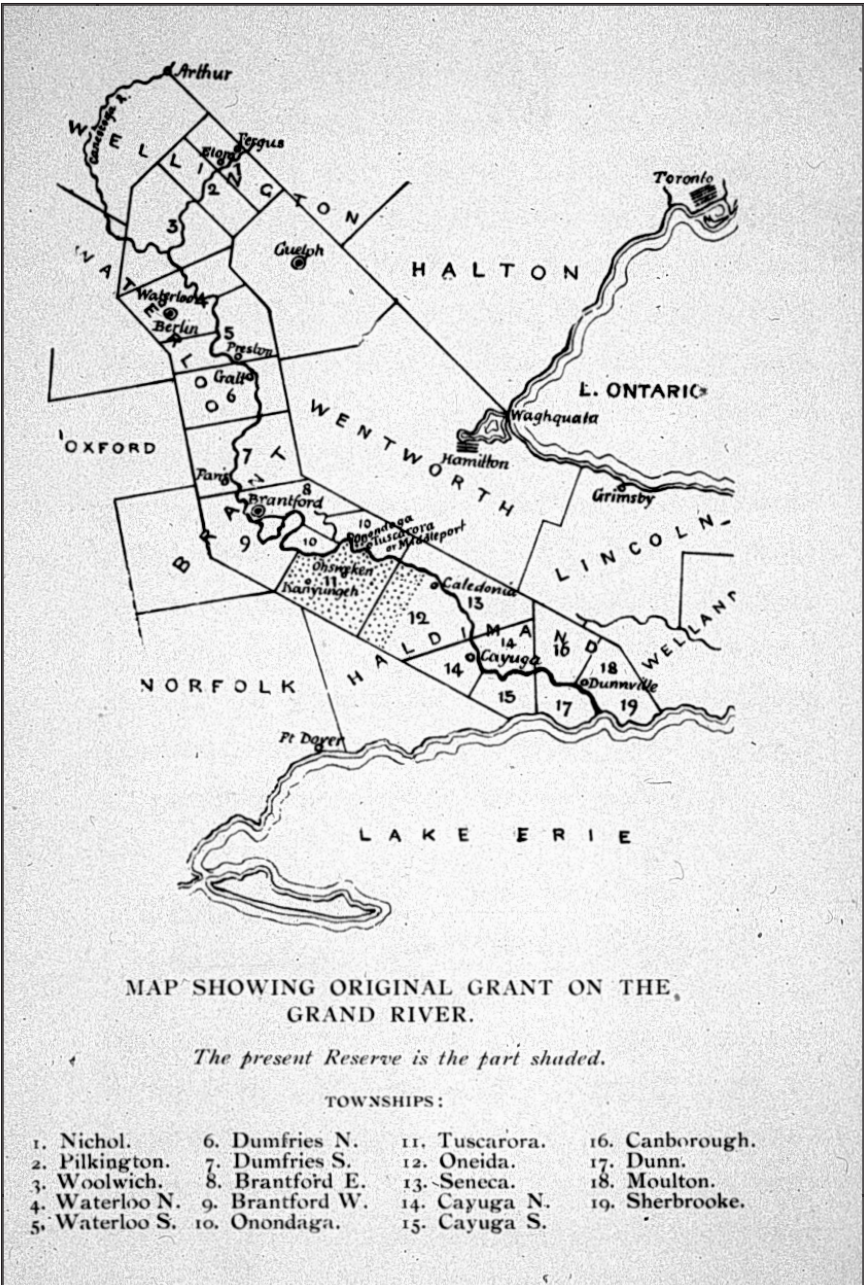
Certified True Copy of the Haldimand Deed.
By Chief William D. Coy,
Speaker, Six Nations Council.
Jan'y 20-1718.

Haldimand Deed. Commander-in-Chief and Governor of Quebec Frederick Haldimand, faced with the outrage of thousands of Britain's First Nations allies stranded at Niagara after being dispossessed of their traditional territories in negotiations for the peace after the American Revolution, offered to find them land - even though the government had no such land to give. There followed a series of poorly documented and controversial agreements with Indian nations ceding to Britain large tracts of land. In 1784 Haldimand granted the Grand River Tract, ceded by the Grand River Mississauga, to the Six Nations Iroquois. Courtesy the Woodland Cultural Centre.

The village of Mount Pleasant began its life five miles south of Brant's Ford or present-day Brantford, where evidence suggests the trail intersected the Mount Pleasant tract somewhere east of the modern road through the village. The tract, a long narrow strip of land surveyed on instruction of Joseph Brant around 1800, was bisected by a central north-south road allowance which divided the 5,000 acre tract into 10 farm lots on each side. Farms fronted on this road allowance, so the settlers abandoned the old trail in favour of the central road space, eventually padding it into the main road, originally part of the Long Point Road, later becoming the Mount Pleasant Road.

The Grand River area gained increased strategic importance after the American Revolution. There was a serious fear of invasion from land hungry residents of New England, so the British envisioned inland transportation routes as a spur to settlement and a deterrent to expansionist American interests in Upper Canada. Such roads became the spinal cords which supported the settlement of the south-western peninsula of the colony. Its first Lieutenant-Governor, John Graves Simcoe, believed that American control of the Great Lakes was a real possibility so he promoted inland routes as the only safe way to transport troops and supplies. Such routes, however, also affected settlement patterns and road development throughout the 19th century. The choice of sites for colonial roads was frequently prompted by questions of vulnerability to attack or suitability for defence. These inland routes ensured the safe, orderly and permanent settlement of the province by guaranteeing easy access for troops and supplies. The key issue for the eventual development of the communities along these roads was the construction of mills at the junction of the roads and any rivers that crossed their path. The inevitable traffic followed as communities grew near the mill sites and the roads provided a means of joining the mills with lake ports which were built to ship the fruits of the colony, particularly surplus grain and timber.

A number of the Iroquois Confederacy had fought on the British side in the American Revolution and they had been so feared and bitterly hated by the Americans that it would have been impossible



Original Six Nations Grand River Tract. Courtesy the Woodland Cultural Centre.

for them to remain in their traditional lands in the Finger Lakes area of New York State. In order to reward the British Crown's loyal native allies during the Revolution, Governor Haldimand of Quebec granted them in 1784 a "tract of land, 6 miles in depth on each side of the Grand River from its mouth to its source." In Haldimand's words, the land was "a safe and comfortable retreat." These lands along the Grand had once been the country of the Neutral Indians and had been uninhabited since the Iroquois decimated Huronia in 1648. Cutting through the centre of the new colony, the survey set aside 641,910 acres for the Six Nations running north from Lake Erie to near present-day Fergus. Mount Pleasant would eventually commence its existence as a settlement for American and European immigrants in the southern portion of this Grand River native tract.

Many researchers interested in the history of Mount Pleasant, such as Margaret Smyth, have postulated that Joseph Brant actively encouraged American settlement to the Grand River grant. But the question remains, Where did Brant get the idea for encouraging such settlement on the Grand reserve? Historian James Flexner suggests that these ideas originated with Brant's brother-in-law Sir William Johnson. As a youth Brant lived with his sister Molly and Johnson, her husband, serving and assisting him in his duties with the natives as Indian Superintendent in New York. Johnson came from Ireland to New York, living with Molly as his native wife from 1759 until his death in 1774. He became an important leader and liaison with North American natives. Of particular significance to Brant's conception of the Mount Pleasant settlement, Johnson envisioned a plan for native-white interaction that has been later referred to as "Johnson's Indian Management."

His idea was to encourage native nations to achieve evolution towards peace and prosperity in a manner different from the way North American frontier history had evolved up to that point. Johnson abhorred the usual manner of settlement where the first destructive wave of pioneers penetrated the forest in advance of stable settlements and slashed both trees and natives down with abandon. Johnson's dream instead was to carry civilisation and its laws into the native country hand in hand with settlement. He

wanted boundaries between land open to white settlers and reserves for natives. He felt his system would mean harmony and peace on the frontier and that it would attract settlers with “spirit, capacity and interest” rather than settlers exhibiting greed, bigotry and hatred. He pressed for this policy in many letters to England though he died before he could see his dream achieved.

Flexner argues that his brother-in-law Brant exemplified Johnson’s hopes for a native character in a white world. Sir William showed through his holdings in the Mohawk Valley in New York that the application of planning, capital and paternalism could create a happy meeting ground between native and settler, as well as make a fortune for the promoter, which happened to be him. Johnson sought a panacea in encouraging his Mohawks to farm on the edge of white settlements. He wrestled with the issue of the future of his Indian friends, who were, he wrote, “really much to be pitied.” Johnson tried to protect them for the present through effective administration, but he realised that long-range planning for their welfare revolved around the question of how far natives should hold on to their own culture, and how far they should abandon it and become more like their white neighbours. He saw merit in the missionaries’ ideas for natives to drop their guns and take up ploughs. But he also knew that the matter required more “serious consideration.” The influence of Molly was evident no doubt in his final conclusion that gave the natives more self-determination by acknowledging that for the plan to succeed, natives needed to “discover superior advantage in our way of living than in their own.”

Joseph Brant clearly shared a similar “vision” for the future of his people. In his “wily” way he saw the lands of the Grand River as key to this vision. He claimed that the Six Nations were not yet accustomed to farming but that a future dependent on hunting was not sustainable in the new lands. He foresaw a future improved by the presence of European and American settlers. They would build grist and sawmills, which would increase the value of the lands and they would pay annuities for the land, which would provide a perpetual income for the natives.

No matter the passion or sincerity of Brant's dream, there remained the question of whether the natives had the right to dispose of the granted land. In the circumstances of the nearly non-existent government in western Quebec, the area that would become Upper Canada after 1791, it was easy for the strong-willed Brant to take the initiative and invite white settlers to the tract, even giving them rough land title. Many of these settlers were friends or acquaintances of Brant from his days in the former Thirteen Colonies. Brant's actions resulted in two-thirds of the land in the original grant being occupied by white settlers by 1798. While these settlers were establishing their communities, the natives were trying to consolidate themselves. By 1792-93 the British government promised to assist the new native settlement at the Grand River by setting up churches and mills. The government also appointed Augustus Jones as deputy surveyor for Upper Canada to conduct a survey to establish the official boundaries of this tract in January 1791. For the natives in the area, the fur trade was in decline, and there were few native "yeomen" or farmers. In fact there were less than 2000 natives in the large land tract.

Therefore Brant's practice of inviting white settlers to the district should not be seen solely as altruistic. From the beginning he was seen as a considerably Europeanised entrepreneur. As such he realised the original grant was too big for the Six Nations and that the ingenuity of and the examples set by the white merchants and farmers would be highly desirable assets to the area. So as Brant County historian C. M. Johnston argues, Brant's "policy of orderly white colonisation" seemed to be wise given the set of circumstances he saw in the Grand River tract. For example, in 1806 at a Six Nations Council at Onondaga the natives sought government aid for implements of agriculture to instruct "our young creatures" because they were finding "the produce of the chace [sic] rapidly decreasing." Others evidently agreed with Brant's vision for his people. However, government officials in the province questioned the legality of Brant leasing native land to settlers, and some natives also disputed Brant's actions for several reasons. They noted the violation of the ancient principle that land was not a commodity to be conveyed. They also distrusted his motives for having whites come to live on the land. In 1788 Sir John Johnson, son of William and veteran of the

Revolution, assured the natives that whites in the Grand River area would be compelled to vacate the lands. But this was not done and once settlement began in earnest, any reversal of Brant's plan would have been impossible. Later investigations confirmed that Brant had the trust of the majority of natives in conveying away large tracts of the granted land.

Many have questioned Brant's motives in the leasing of native lands to American and European settlers. Some accused Brant of wanting personal power or wealth as reasons for his actions. Others concluded his actions "questionable." Yet his supporters countered with arguments that he was an emergent businessman intent on vigorous development. Others asserted that he genuinely cared for the welfare of his fellow natives, and that his actions resulted from a highly realistic assessment of their capacity for improving their huge domain on their own. In the end, the natives failed to gain the dividends promised them and this led to many future problems, making the leases controversial still for many. Above all, in the history of the province, Brant's sale of the lands, as Johnston argues, "heralded the organised settlement of much of the Indian country," and ushered in the inland settlement of Upper Canada.

Perhaps the only person who could have changed the course of settlement patterns in the Grand River Valley was John Graves Simcoe. He became Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada in 1791 when the government divided the old province of Quebec into its western portion, Upper Canada, and its eastern half, Lower Canada in order to accommodate the flood of Loyalists who had been fleeing the United States since at least 1783. Simcoe had tremendous energy and enthusiasm for the new frontier but his personality also dictated that he would endeavour to meticulously manage the affairs of the province. Therefore he clashed with Brant over the disposal of land on the Grand River, positively refusing to permit natives to sell or lease any part of their reserve. He felt that it was a violation of the orders originally given and he feared the natives would be taken in by unscrupulous "land jobbers." Simcoe's paternalism towards the natives was evidently no less ardent than Brant's or William Johnson's before him.

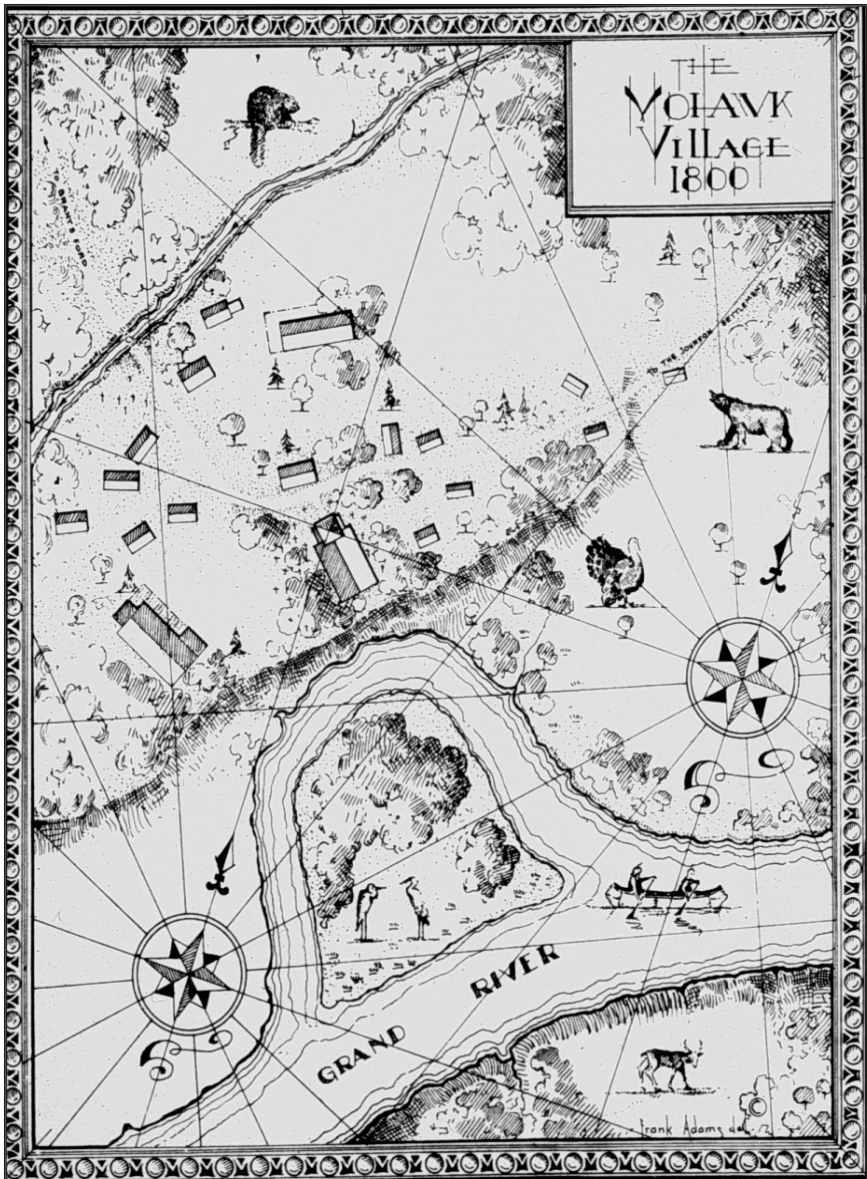
Brant adamantly argued that the hunt was failing, that there was a need for rapid agricultural development of the lands, and that the natives desperately needed the financial compensation that land leases offered. He would act as the agent to negotiate with the government on the sale of the lands. He would not invite suspicious speculators, as Simcoe feared, but rather as S. A. Rammage argues in *The Militia Stood Alone*, the "strong willed" Brant would seek to attract ordinary "sod-busters" who would open up the land as the first step in his long-range settlement plan. He also made an impassioned plea based on the argument that the natives had "bled in your cause," and therefore had forsaken their former lands "of which we were sovereign of the soil."

When Simcoe left Upper Canada due to ill health in 1796 Brant took full advantage of the change in regime to the much less vigorous and sickly Peter Russell by intensifying his campaign to satisfy prospective purchasers of land on the Grand. Brant made it clear that in return for the government paving the way for his plan, he would use his influence to quell the threat of native uprisings on the frontier. In this way he practically coerced Russell to accept the conditions of his unrestricted selling and leasing of lands to Europeans and Americans. Russell knew the colony's military could not handle a native conflict so soon after "losing" the American Revolution. There were also rumours that French and Spanish forces were being marshalled to attack the exposed western flank of Upper Canada. Responding to these pressures, Russell agreed to recognise the sales and leases already made up to 1797, especially upon the urging of Britain to avert a crisis with Brant and a potential native uprising. Consequently in 1798 there was formal recognition of the transfer of lands to the purchasers. Given these circumstances and his own character, Russell was clearly no match for the wily Brant.

This then was the window of opportunity that allowed land in the southern portion of the tract to open up to the Pennsylvania settlers. The other conditions needed to commence settlement of Mount Pleasant were the push factors from the United States and the pull factors to this particular corner of British North America. By 1796 Brant had made his first sale of land to European settlers in Dumfries

and in 1798 native land was surrendered back to the Crown, according to early surveyor Abraham Nelles, for the “Express purpose of being re-granted to such persons as might purchase same from the said tribes.” Some have gone so far as to argue that Brant’s vision for the Grand River lands culminated in a “planned village” in the form of Mount Pleasant. Rammage, for one, describes Mount Pleasant as “one of the earliest planned settlements on the Indian lands.” Margaret Smyth also mounts an interesting argument supporting the idea that Mount Pleasant was an example of Brant’s efforts at town planning. She argues that Brant made this very strategic diplomatic move because he knew that an orderly and planned approach to settlement would appeal to the otherwise difficult Russell, a man very much preoccupied with planning at York at this time and one who was much impressed by outward appearances.

The idea of a planned settlement also brings to mind the idea of pre-selected settlers. One of the main complaints of people such as Simcoe and Russell about Brant’s leasing practices was that he refused to be limited in his selection of settlers to only Loyalists. In fact he welcomed Americans whose loyalty to Britain the government questioned in the recent aftermath of the Revolution. Given this stance, Brant had no problem encouraging his former compatriots in Pennsylvania and New York to settle in British North America, even if some of them had been officers in the Revolutionary Army. The government’s concern over the loyalty and integrity of potential settlers was understandable, especially in such a huge tract of land right in the heart of the province. Nevertheless, these lands for sale attracted attention, especially in Pennsylvania. Many Pennsylvania Mennonites eventually moved to Block 2 in the northern section of the tract. The effects of the American Revolution had reached far into that state and furthermore, as historian Kenneth McLaughlin argues, land prices there had become excessive by the end of the Revolution. Cleared land sold for more than \$100-\$150 an acre and Pennsylvania farms had already been divided several times for previous generations. Like many American colonists, Mennonites and others from Pennsylvania were forced to seek new farmlands for settlement. Some went to the American Midwest but many began to hear of the lands in British territory in Upper Canada. Pennsylvania



Map of Mohawk Village. By the mid-1780s the village contained the Mohawk Chapel, mills, a school, Brant's home, and about 20 other houses and buildings, including a large two-storey building used for council meetings and other village functions. Courtesy the Woodland Cultural Centre.

colonists had settled along the shores of Lake Ontario by 1789 and through family connections and neighbours spread the word back to Pennsylvania of cheap native land available on the Grand River. The Mennonites purchased their land in the northern area of the Grand River Valley for \$1 per acre of undeveloped land, compared to prices over one hundred times that back home in Pennsylvania.

When we think of the trek that these American colonists took to re-establish themselves in Upper Canada we might ask ourselves, Why this particular place? Many have argued that the colonists of New York and Pennsylvania had a much more intimate knowledge of Upper Canada than historians had previously given them credit for. The lively fur trading enterprise carried out from forts at Niagara, Oswego and Detroit, included wealthy traders who entertained travellers and travelled widely themselves, spreading news of the “western” part of the province of Quebec. We also know that in the 1790s Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe held the belief that, even though the Revolution was over, there were still a large number of Americans who were “British at heart” and would respond to inducements to settle once again under the Crown in Upper Canada. To facilitate this, Simcoe issued an official proclamation aimed at American Loyalists, promising them land in return for clearing and improving the property. He advertised this offer in American newspapers, including those in Pennsylvania.

Travellers also publicised their experiences. Alexander Campbell, a British military officer, in his *Travels in the Interior of the Uninhabited Parts of North America* describes his sojourn in the Grand River area. He praises it as “the finest country I have as yet seen...the plains are very extensive...the soil is rich, and a deep clay mould.” Another description comes from the diary kept by Major E. B. Littlehales when he accompanied Governor Simcoe to the Mohawk Village on the Grand in 1793. Littlehales describes the view from the steep hill leading down to Brant’s Forging Place: “a well-built wooden church with steeple, a school and an excellent house of Joseph Brant’s... extensive meadows are spread around it, and the Grand rolls near it with a termination of forest.” Partly as a result of Campbell’s travel



*Brant Crossing the Grand. From a painting, copyright Murray Killman.
Used with permission.*

literature, other descriptions and Simcoe's invitation, the area soon began to attract the attention of settlers.

And so all the conditions were in place for the arrival of the first settlers to what would become Mount Pleasant. In Pennsylvania, as we have seen, the Revolution negatively affected residents there, and this was the case not only for Loyalists such as Henry Ellis and his family but also for those who had supported the republican cause. Ellis family legend says that in Pennsylvania they, like others, were having trouble with the new state government disputing some of their claims after the Revolution regarding damage to their properties. The Ellis neighbours, the Sturgis family, were known by family legend to be "almost destitute" after the Revolution, despite the fact that Amos Sturgis fought alongside Washington in the rebellion against Britain as a captain with the 1st Pennsylvania Volunteers Riflemen. According to his descendants, Amos was a

well-to-do gentleman farmer, with a stone house and stone barn but his land had been destroyed when the Patriot army camped there. These hardships encouraged the families to leave behind their lives on the Susquehanna River and seek re-settlement in British North America.

Like their fellow Pennsylvania settlers, the Mennonites who also went to Six Nations lands further north up the Grand, the Sturgis and Ellis families may have heard of lands for sale inland in British North America while still at home in Pennsylvania or once they arrived on the British shores of Lake Ontario. And particularly for Amos Sturgis, the notion that Joseph Brant welcomed all types of settlers, not just Loyalists, must have made this opportunity to the north look especially welcoming. These neighbours then had experienced circumstances pushing them away from a home that they had come to love, but there were also factors drawing the families together, to embark on such a journey in unison. Although they had supported opposite sides in the Revolution, the Ellis and Sturgis families had their ancestral roots in Wales and both adhered to the Methodist faith. These cultural connections surely linked them in a way that political divisions could never undo. And the experience of the trek itself would cement friendships and common bonds.

The travelling party included Henry Ellis and his wife Margaret Mahan, both in their early 50s. Henry, a weaver, was born in Mount Pleasant, Wales, leaving his ancestral home for Donegal, Ireland where he met Margaret. The two later migrated to America in the late 1760s. On the trip to British North America they brought with them four of their seven children, including sons John, age 19, and Allin, a lad of around 11. Captain Amos Sturgis made the journey with his wife Rachel Randall, both born 40 years earlier in Pennsylvania. The Randalls, prominent Presbyterians in Philadelphia, kept a carriage and dressed in silk attire. With Amos and Rachel came a young son John, age 11, a little daughter Hannah, age 14 and son William, age 19, who brought with him his young wife Rebecca McKinney. Amos' parents Thomas, age 75, who was also born in Pennsylvania and Catherine Roberts, age 69, sold 210 acres of land in Upper Merion County to join the migrants. This group of travellers, including

young and old alike, left their homes at Big Bend in the late summer of 1798, and joined a large wave of settlers making the trek from Pennsylvania to the Six Nations land on the Grand River.

Although the term "late Loyalists" may seem appropriate for this wave of migrants, especially given their difficulties following the Revolution, they are more aptly included in the surge of settlement that occurred around the turn of the century. The fact that such a large number of settlers arrived in the area of the Grand River lands within a year or so of the opening up of the country leads to the conclusion that a careful study must have been made of the possibilities for settlement there. We also know that the timing and circumstances of their migration made it necessary for these settlers to have sufficient funds to secure the success of the venture. Unlike the first refugees fleeing the violence or threat of violence during the Revolution, they were not eligible for the British government's re-settlement land grants, nor could they depend on the government for their supplies. The sojourners would have brought many provisions on their Conestoga farm wagons, including farm equipment, as well as horses and cows in tow behind, in the hopes of beginning a new life with some familiar possessions and the beginnings of a new farm. And like their fellow Pennsylvania migrants, the Mennonites, they would have experienced the harsh trek over the Allegheny Mountains, the terrifying ferry ride across the Niagara River above the Falls and then the hike along Lake Ontario to Dundas.

As McLaughlin describes it, the journey from Pennsylvania was difficult and dangerous for the Pennsylvania Mennonites who travelled to the northern areas of the Six Nations tract. The journey often lasted ten weeks, and it is doubtful that the Mount Pleasant pioneers could have anticipated what lay ahead as they headed out on their trek. Their Conestoga wagons, drawn by a team of four or six horses or if the load was particularly large, by oxen, must have been a sight indeed; they were basically just high boxes with heavy running gear. Over the top of strong elm or ash hoops the travellers stretched a canvas top to protect the inhabitants and possessions from the weather. These laden springless wagons would have carried the settlers on a jolting ride. Huge fires would keep

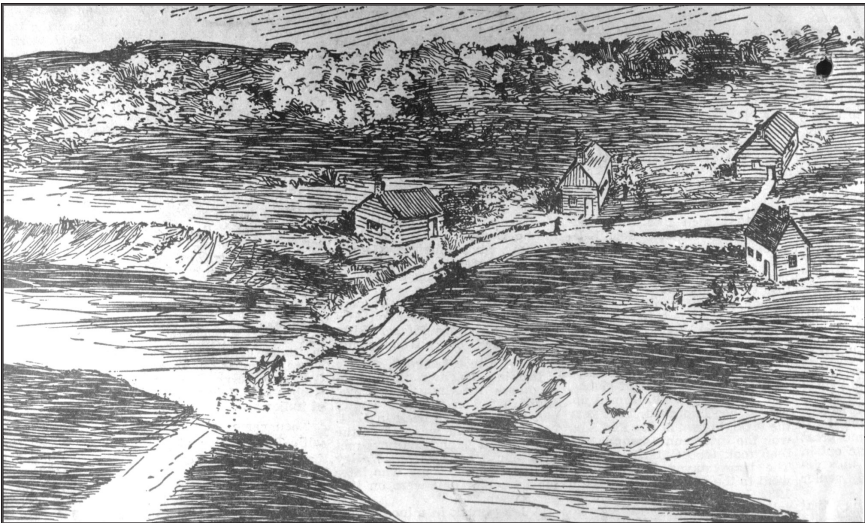
the wild animals at bay at night as the travellers rested on their way through the “Big Wilderness,” as they called the dense forests along the way. The nightly howling of the wolves would have scared young Hannah Sturgis, though the young boys Allin Ellis and John Sturgis undoubtedly regarded the experience as one great adventure.

Once the sun rose again on another day of arduous travel, the young men, including John Ellis and William Sturgis, would care for the cattle and preparations would be made for another day on the perilous journey. The wagons would have lumbered with their heavy burdens over rough roads and steep hills, while rivers would have to be forded and swamps carefully avoided. Behind the wagons followed the cows, sheep, goats and packhorses. The animals would have struggled through the steep mountain passes of the Alleghenies and the wheels would have been continually jarred and jolted by rocks and tree stumps. One contemporary traveller painted a vivid picture, complaining that “sometimes we advanced only a few miles a day. Often a wagon would upset, sometimes in a pool of mud; once or twice a dog was buried in the debris and the howling that followed for a short time was woeful music. Usually, if we came to a nice stream of water in the afternoon, we would camp for the night. Mud, mud, mud over the Allegheny mountains! The roads were awful. During the seventh week we reached our journey’s end.” Past the mountains the travellers still faced the tortuous crossing of the Niagara River by ferry. The Ellis and Sturgis party made this crossing in early October. A point known as Black Rock, near present-day Buffalo formed a natural landing place above the falls. From here the settlers would endure the agonising trip across the river as the high wagons and all their contents wobbled and swayed, threatening to capsize at any moment.

According to Ellis family lore, once they had crossed safely onto British soil, Henry Ellis mounted a stump before his companions and made a speech of loyalty to King George. “This is God’s Country, Let us sing, God Save the King.” Though they had already travelled for over a month, the migrants still had to traverse the swamps and thick forests of the Niagara peninsula to their inland destination. But

that was a trip for the following spring. During the winter of 1798-99, the Ellis and Sturgis families encamped at a place known as the Upper Settlement. This area was well travelled and cleared past Niagara Falls and Queenston by the waves of Loyalists and other travellers who had made the trek before them. In the spring of 1799 they proceeded west to Burlington Bay, now Hamilton, and then on to Ancaster to gather provisions from the general store there. Ancaster represented the last opportunity to purchase goods and it remained an important mercantile centre for inland settlers into the early 19th century.

From Ancaster the group made its way to Brant's Fording Place which was marked by several native camp sites. In their journey into the native lands they would have come across several other settlers. Just outside the eastern boundary of the Grand River Swamp at Fairchild's Creek was the little settlement of the File, Westbrook and Fairchild families. Outside the west boundary was the Burford settlement, which in 1798 contained 100 settlers. From Brant's



Early artist's sketch of the west bank of the Grand River at Brant's Ford. There were no white settlers here when the Ellis and Sturgis families arrived at the crossing in 1799, but by 1805 Captain Thomas Perrin occupied buildings on part of Brant's farm on the west bank. There was a crude ferry near the ford in 1804 and a store which sold groceries and whiskey, mainly whiskey.

viewed the vista that Littlehales had described a few years earlier in his diary. Farther along the trail the sparkling spring creek would have immediately attracted their attention as they thought ahead to practical issues of mills and water power, in the same way that a similar spring attracted Scottish settlers up the Grand at the later community of Galt. They would have also noted the quality of the soils and would have seen the agricultural promise contained in them. But at least one member of the group was not preoccupied with the practical concerns of settling a new land. Henry Ellis, instead, reflected on the past. When he saw the light stand of oak, beech and maple trees on the little elevation, he remarked that the view reminded him of the hills and valleys of his home in Wales that he had left behind 30 years before. In honour of this memory and with the agreement of the rest of the pioneering group, Henry declared the place "Mount Pleasant" after his former home across the ocean.

With the arduous journey behind them, the families set about the no less daunting task of making a new home for themselves at this new place called Mount Pleasant. Three of the men in the group, Henry Ellis, Amos Sturgis and William Sturgis each leased a 200-acre farm from Joseph Brant, who acted as agent for the Six Nations, for a term of 999 years, with the leases dated October 1, 1801. These pioneers, with their farming experience in Pennsylvania and their wagonloads of provisions, would have appeared to be the type of "sod-busters" that Brant envisioned for the settlement. Local legend has it that the annual rent for the leases was one peppercorn or one barleycorn. But given what we know about Brant's desires for the future of his people in the Grand River area, the land was neither free nor a gift. It was leased in return for a certain sum to be paid with interest within a certain period, such as seven years at six percent interest.

These first lots represented some of the best land of the 5,000 acres which had been surveyed into 20 lots and set apart from the native land by Brant as part of his plan to induce American settlement to the area. This original survey, believed to have occurred around the time of the Ellis/Sturgis arrival, has never been found. Speculation says that it occurred at this time, perhaps done by Augustus Jones, Deputy Provincial Surveyor, or by a Mr. Hamlin, as the *County of*

Brant Gazetteer for 1865 notes, and certainly sooner than Lewis Burwell's recognised 1835 map of the Grand River District. Ellis family records contain an 1818 bill of sale that describes the Ellis property exactly as identified in Burwell's much later map and Burwell himself noted in 1833 that there had been earlier surveys. There is also much uncertainty surrounding the first 999-year Brant lease in nearby Cainsville. Jean Waldie speculates that Brant issued it in 1784 since there is a cornerstone with the initials JT, referring to early pioneer John Thomas, planted beside a stake referred to in the Brant lease. As well, later government surveyors used this stone as a starting point in running lines for adjoining lots, indicating that they considered it a valid marker.

The first priority for the settlers was of course a place to live. The first homes pioneers of Upper Canada created were rough, made generally of round oak, cedar, or pine logs, notched at the ends, with the spaces between filled with sticks of wood and daubed with clay. They made the roofs of rough boards and slabs held in place by weight poles reaching across. Planks split from logs served as floors. They lined their large fireplaces with clay or stone, and fashioned chimneys from split sticks, mortared with clay. This was very dangerous for the occupants of these pioneer cabins and fire always posed a real threat. Luckily, the window openings served as convenient escape routes in case of fire since they were covered only with paper made translucent with oil or lard. Of course this made for extremely draughty homes, although the logs themselves provided wonderful insulation against the harsh Upper Canadian winter. Children such as Hannah Sturgis and Allin Ellis would have lain in their beds at night glimpsing the stars through the draughty roofs of their houses and listening to the strange and terrifying noise of the insects burrowing in the drying logs of the walls.

Despite the primitive nature of these log cabins, they were beyond the capabilities of a single family, so pioneer ingenuity dictated that they were usually erected at community gatherings known as work bees. Older residents housed newcomers until the community could gather to make a cabin for the new migrants. Once the Ellis and Sturgis families had their first log homes erected, they could

serve this important purpose for the later waves of settlers that their journey had ushered in. After the bees, the settlers often lingered to socialize, holding dances and joining in other amusements, offering welcome and otherwise scarce opportunities for courting among the young people. Settlers also frequently held religious revivals on these occasions. Religion served a key spiritual, moral and social purpose in the backwoods settlements of Upper Canada, providing important protection against the challenges of pioneer life. Although the land held the promise of the future, there were few amusements and pioneers often found drink to be the only recourse in the face of harsh conditions. Families had few books; in fact the family Bible was often the only one, and it offered much needed spiritual guidance as well as helping sustain literacy and civility. In the case of the Sturgis and Ellis families, according to their descendants, their few books would have been in Welsh and their most prized possession would have been the family Bible, protected throughout the long journey from Pennsylvania. Religious revivals or meetings held in the woods or family cabins, led by missionaries or by pioneers themselves depending on circumstances, fulfilled a spiritual and communal need for diversion, bringing people together and providing a supportive link with the larger community, particularly extended family.

Pioneers experienced such diversions, however, only on rare occasions, especially in the early years of opening up a farm in the impenetrable forest. For the pioneers, the dense forest represented an ominous and gloomy place, not to mention a barrier to development. It needed to be removed ruthlessly to make room for a house, allow sunshine to reach the crops and show an improvement in the land that many land deals required. This necessitated arduous labour, especially to clear the thick underbrush. Trees had to be cut down with the favoured tool of the pioneer, the American axe, and branches had to be cut off and gathered with the undergrowth to be burned to ashes. Besides the satisfaction felt in clearing a lot for a new farm, there were some monetary rewards for this labour. When sold as potash, a valuable commercial alkali, these ashes could be turned into a profitable cottage industry for the pioneer, giving the family much needed currency to pay off merchants or the land

duties. Since there was no market for timber in these early years of settlement, a pioneer could turn several acres of deciduous trees into a tub of potash, which could be easily hauled to market by sleigh or wagon. With hard work a single pioneer could chop and burn an acre of land in three weeks. Constant burning produced wreaths of dense smoke visible in every direction and permeated the countryside with a pungent smell and smoky haze.

It usually took six or seven years for a pioneer such as William Sturgis or John Ellis, the strapping young men among the migrants, to open a small farm and build a better house than the original cabin of round logs. He would cut down all the smaller trees with his axe and girdle the larger ones. This meant notching the bark all

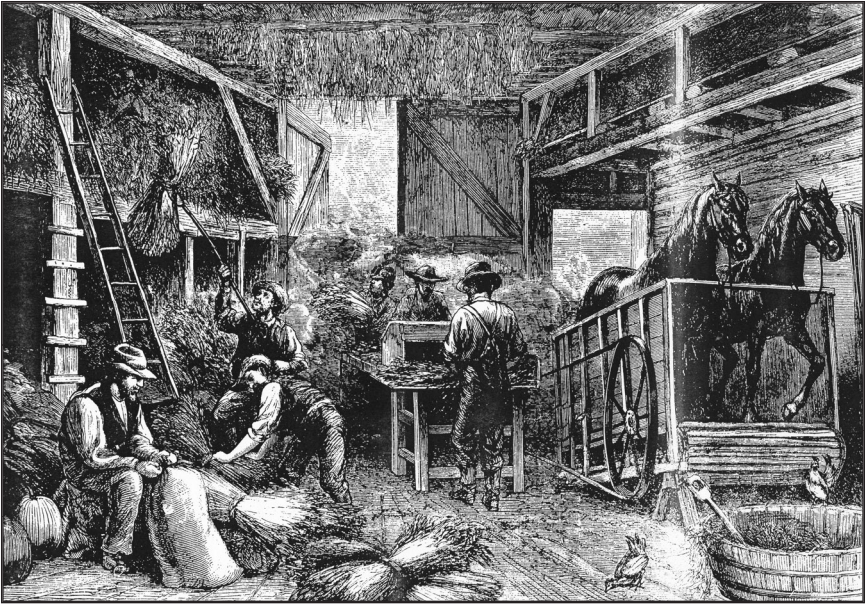


The Backwoods of Canada: A New Settlement. The forests of Mount Pleasant were less dense and comprised more hardwoods than pictured, but otherwise the pioneers would recognise themselves in this scene. Making a clearing for shelter, crops, and a kitchen garden involved years of back-breaking hand labour. Crops were planted among the stumps, and muddy yards were piled with brush and cluttered with garbage. Not until the 1850s-1860s were settlers able to think of beautifying their surroundings or plant gardens as we know them. Canadian Illustrated News, December 5, 1874. Reproduced from the National Library of Canada web site (www.nlc-bnc.ca).

the way around the tree, cutting off the circulation of sap. In this way the large trees eventually decayed and fell down on their own, though this method lengthened the final clearing time to five to ten years. As the pioneers accomplished all this labour they erected long fences made of tree roots around their property, telling evidence of the tremendous exertion used to clear the farms. Early travellers to Upper Canada noticed both the ominous nature of the forest as well as the ruthless efforts to obliterate it. In his 1819 *Medical Topography of Upper Canada*, medical man John Douglas spoke of the "awful silence of the forest." A decade later, military officer George Head, brother of Governor Sir Francis Bond Head, remarked that to a stranger to Upper Canada, hardly a quarter of an hour passes when "a tree is not heard to fall to the ground."

While conventions of the day considered clearing the farm the work of the men of the family, other work kept the women of the household extremely busy. Women such as Rachel Sturgis, who would have had to forget her former life of luxury in Pennsylvania, laboured daily on the multitude of tasks required of a farm wife. She tended the family garden, made cheese and buttermilk from the milk provided by the cattle brought from the United States, preserved foods for the winter, prepared meals with whatever restricted produce the land provided such as potatoes, fish, game, and wild berries, and of course cared for her children.

After the pioneers had met their immediate needs for shelter and food, they turned to other practical matters with a view to the long term success of their new homes. Among other reasons, Mount Pleasant attracted the Ellis/Sturgis party because of its streams with their potential for water power to run grist and sawmills. They could only realise the area's agricultural promise with mills to grind their wheat harvests into flour for export to towns and the United States, but most especially to Britain. Some settlers were even known to haul their own millstones with them on their journey to Upper Canada. In 1801 James Percy opened a gristmill on a creek east of the settlement, at a place called "Mud Holler" for its wet clay soil. The mill instantly became the most important building in the district. Percy sold the mill to Thomas Perrin a decade later. The Perrins,



The Harvest Scene. The earliest settlers threshed their grain by laying it out on the barn floor and beating it with a pounder called a flail. A strong, skilled farmer could thresh 10 to 12 bushels a day using this method. The first threshing machines were horse powered cylinders fitted with spikes. Some machines, as illustrated, operated by tread-mills with the horses walking relentlessly on rollers. These early machines could thresh up to 75 bushels a day, but several men were required to do the job. Canadian Illustrated News, September 20, 1879. Reproduced from the National Library of Canada web site (www.ncl-bnc.ca).

originally French Huguenots, emigrated to Massachusetts and then on to New York before finally settling in Upper Canada. Early Upper Canadian mills included distilleries on the same premises to distil the poor grains unsuitable for grinding into flour and the Mount Pleasant mill at Mud Holler was no exception. Such mills and early stores served their thirsty customers with a keg of whiskey and a cup stored conveniently just inside the door.

The construction of mills went a long way towards ensuring the future success of the new settlement. But if the farmers were to move beyond subsistence farming, they needed transportation routes to outside markets. In the earliest years of Mount Pleasant the most reliable form of transportation proved to be the pioneers' own feet. Although the settlers usually came to Upper Canada in covered wagons, such as the Conestoga wagons used by the Ellis and Sturgis

families, the absence of bridges over the local streams and rivers meant that once the pioneers arrived they had to do all their travelling on foot or horseback. They forded the waterways at great risk to visit gristmills, distant merchants or faraway relatives. Therefore, settlers, along with the few doctors and itinerant ministers in the colony all had to depend on trusty horses, especially ones that were good swimmers. Although the original system of travel along footpaths endured for many years, the pioneers soon benefited from the development of local roads. In 1793 Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe, with his preoccupation with military defence of the young colony, started Dundas Street, called the Governor's Road, from Toronto to London. This major construction project would not benefit Mount Pleasant until some years later, but its beginning served to confirm the hope for the future that the Ellis and Sturgis families brought with them from the United States.

In fact, their settlement in Mount Pleasant served as an important inducement to other hopefuls who flocked to the area after the turn of the century. Village lore depicts Andrew Nelles as the patriarch of the third family to settle in Mount Pleasant in about 1804. With his wife Mary Waggoner, he settled on the west side of the Mount Pleasant Road, above where Mount Pleasant Creek crosses the road at the south end of the village. Originally from France, Nelles' ancestors came to the New World in the early 18th century after moving around Europe due to the religious persecution of Protestants. Eventually the family came to North America from Germany by way of England. There are several connections between Brant and the Nelles family, which may be linked to the later Nelles family settling in the British North America version of the Mohawk Valley. Once in America, the Nelles family became pre-Revolutionary neighbours of Brant in the Mohawk Valley in New York State, but this did not last long as the family fled to Canada during the Revolution. Also, one of Andrew's ancestors served under Sir William Johnson as a lieutenant in the Seven Years War. And Andrew's son Andrew Jr. was said to be a great friend of the Indians and learned the Mohawk language. Andrew Sr. acquired large land holdings, including a prime mill seat on Mount Pleasant Creek, but oddly, despite being a miller by training there is

no evidence that he ever developed a mill. Land dealing was more of an interest.

Andrew and Mary Nelles were not the only new settlers that year. Local records indicate that 1804 also brought the arrival of Gideon Olmstead, John Secord and the Burtch family. The Perrin family also came about the same time, bought a 1000 acres in Mount Pleasant district, and later pursued an extensive milling business. Charles Burtch and John Secord settled at the south end of the tract near the Oakland border. That same year, Brant granted a large tract known as the Phelps Tract to his white secretary Epaphras Lord Phelps who had come with Brant from the Mohawk Valley and as his secretary had drawn up many of the Brant leases.

The Phelps family had deep roots in America, having come to the New World from Tewksbury, England on the *William and Mary* in 1630. Not surprisingly then, given these strong ties to the New World, Epaphras' father Solomon served as a captain in Washington's army in the Revolution, as had that other Mount Pleasant resident, Amos Sturgis. Joseph Brant and Solomon probably also knew each other from their days in Connecticut. In 1798 Epaphras further cemented his relationship with Brant and the Six Nations when he married Esther Hill, a Mohawk woman. The 1804 grant of 1202 acres adjacent to the north boundary of the Mount Pleasant tract celebrated the birth of their second son, Hiram. Their first son, Solomon, named for Epaphras' father, was welcomed into the world in 1799. As the grant stipulated, Brant gave the land "for providing for one of the women of the said Mohawk nation [Esther], and three children born of her, the said woman, by the said Epaphras." As a sign of his trust in and reliance on Epaphras, just before Brant's death in 1807 he gave Epaphras, "my true and lawful attorney," legal power over his affairs in the form of a Power of Attorney.

Around this time, Eleanor Oles also made her way to Mount Pleasant from a nearby community called Little York. Being a widow she sought a new home for herself and her son John born at Little York in 1796. John resided in Mount Pleasant until 1822 when he married a daughter of Isaac Whiting and bought 150 acres in the

neighbourhood from his father-in-law. He later recalled his first impression of Mount Pleasant through the eyes of a 7-year-old lad, noting that they passed "through a wilderness without a track through its forest except the trail known to the Indian hunters, and the nearest white neighbours living in a few log shanties near the mill." Like the Ellis and Sturgis travellers before them, these settlers would have come to Mount Pleasant by crossing the Grand at the ferry at Brant's Ford. The crossing offered limited provisions by this time, including a log hut store run by Andrew Westbrook.

All these new settlers must have made Mount Pleasant a more lively and energetic place. Yet even with all the work and labours involved in carving out new farms from the forest, building mills and beating paths into rough roads, life's usual milestones continued to occur. One particularly sad event touched the community soon after the first settlers arrived. In 1802 Thomas Sturgis died at the age of 80. His long eventful years had been marked with a full life in Pennsylvania marred by wars and uncertainty and capped off with an arduous journey to start over again in another country with his son and family. It is said that Brant set aside a plot of land as a public burying ground on the occasion of Thomas' death. This cemetery now stands at the main crossroads of the community, which, as some observers have noted, seems an odd place for a solemn place of burial. But in the early 19th century the only approach to Mount Pleasant was the native trail east of the modern road. Later land documents from 1819 transferring land near the cemetery from Stephen Burtch to Thomas Perrin and James Racey note that there were conditions on the transfer. Besides a payment of five shillings initially and one peppercorn annually thereafter, the land was to be used for "a Burying Ground wherein all Persons who may depart this life at Mount Pleasant aforesaid and the adjoining or surrounding neighbourhoods (whether such persons shall have been former residents or strangers who shall happen to die there) may be interred free from any charge or Demand as respects Mortuaries or Fees of any kind or nature whatever."

Of course Mount Pleasant residents also enjoyed the happier milestones of life in the early years of settlement. It should come

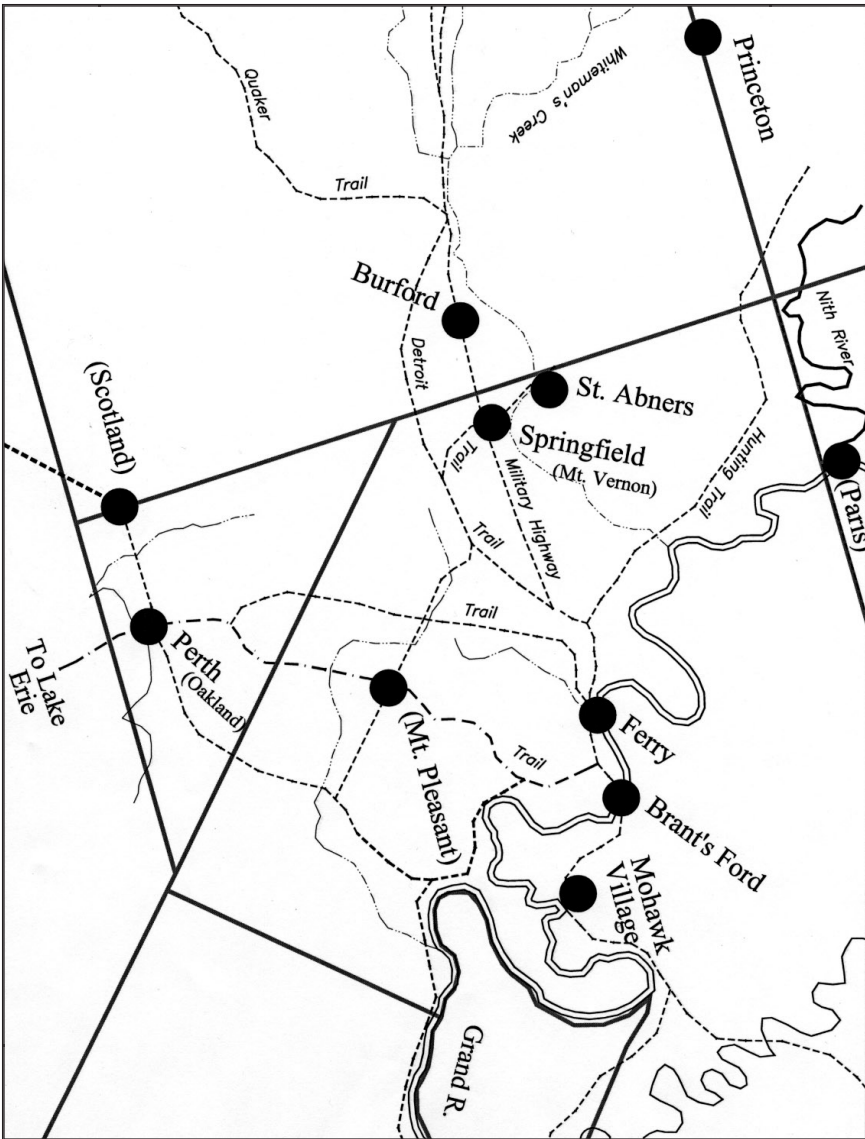
as no surprise that the first Mount Pleasant marriage occurred between two of the young people who had made the adventurous trek together with their families just a few years earlier. Perhaps the love between Allin Ellis and Hannah Sturgis blossomed at the dances and events held after the numerous bees that would have been held as the community began establishing itself. In March 1805 they journeyed to nearby Burford to pledge their love for one another in front of Justice of the Peace William Taylor.

Burford was an older and more established community compared to Mount Pleasant and therefore had the services of a magistrate. The young couple resorted to being married by a Justice of the Peace since there were as yet no settled clergy in the area. And even the religious missions being established along the Grand River by Methodist circuit riders beginning in the 1790s would have been of no use to Allin and Hannah. The government forbade these so-called "saddle bag" preachers from performing marriages. Their travels around the colony fulfilled the spiritual needs of the settlers, giving them a sense of religious community, but the government associated these riders with the spread of American ideas of democracy and republicanism. The Methodists appealed to settlers such as the Ellis and Sturgis families because they would have been familiar with them from the United States. But the government feared their influence and restricted the important social duty of performing marriages to Anglican and Catholic priests, in an effort to promote a type of official state church in the colony. But there were so few of these clergy or even lay people in the area that by 1798 the government opened the way for Lutheran, Calvinist and Presbyterian ministers to perform marriages. Yet even these clergy were scarce in the western portion of the colony. Therefore, as Caniff Haight noted in his reminiscences of life in early Upper Canada, when young people "took it into their heads to get married...parsons were scarce, and it did not always suit them to wait until one came along...therefore a good many called upon the Justice to put a finishing touch to their happiness." The happy union of Hannah and Allin must have been a highlight for life in the area as the community could envision the younger generation establishing itself in the new land.

Later that same year, on the 11th of November, the Sturgis family had more reason to celebrate as Hannah's older brother William and his wife Rebecca welcomed a baby girl, Rachel, named for William's mother. The Sturgis family was setting down deep roots in the new land with the enlargement of families and the establishment of significant family bonds with fellow pioneers, the Ellis family. Allin and Hannah brought even more joy to their families in 1811 with the birth of their son John Randall Ellis, the Randall of course honouring Hannah's mother, Rachel Randall, once again. John Randall was the oldest of what would become a very large family of twelve children. This was not unusual in the new colony as parents with so much land to clear and develop regarded children as an economic asset, and in fact children were inexpensive to feed and clothe in a subsistence farm economy. Allin and Hannah's children would later recall the typical morning competition among the siblings to rush to the back kitchen of their home to see how many natives had slept there the previous night. The Ellis' were known for their hospitality and it was often rewarded with a quarter of venison or a pair of wild geese left behind by the grateful lodger on iron hooks meant for that very purpose.

These frequent encounters with his native neighbours encouraged Allin's knowledge of the value of herbs in treating diseases. He also understood the art of bleeding which was popularly employed in the treatment of many ailments. Allin was not alone in his talents as many pioneer women took hints from the natives in gathering roots and herbs for medicinal purposes, and villagers organised special expeditions in the fall to do this. Although he had no formal medical training, settlers regarded Allin as a doctor due to his natural talent for medicine. He served a vital role in the village, since the nearest doctor lived in Ancaster, not an unusual distance for remote communities such as Mount Pleasant.

Allin's older brother John also established his life in the new settlement. He married Deborah Secord, described by her descendants as "a black eyed, black haired handsome woman." Deborah came with her family from Nova Scotia, though the Secords were originally Huguenots from France. John and Deborah



Compilation study of roads and paths, pre-1830. By 1830 there were many trails throughout Brant County as settlers made their own routes around obstacles such as swamps or lands belonging to absentee landowners who didn't improve their lands or the roads in front of them. The military highway running between the old trails from Brantford to Burford was built in 1810. The earliest inland "road" called the Detroit Trail and a few hunting trails were the only ones shown on a 1793 map by surveyor Augustus Jones - all the others were built by white men. The Quaker Trail through Harley to Norwich was started in 1810, the year Harley was founded. Historical notes and drawing courtesy Clayton Barker.

entrenched themselves in Mount Pleasant, raising their very large family of fifteen children in the close-knit community.

The settlers not only created for themselves in the forests of Upper Canada new lives cemented by marriages and births, but also continued to embrace their connections to relatives left behind in the United States. Even though they and many after them made the fateful decision to leave the young United States and start new lives in British North America, this is not to say that they completely left their old lives behind. For example, in 1807 John Sturgis, son of Amos and Rachel, journeyed back to Pennsylvania. In writing a letter to his brother William, informing him that he was making the journey safely, John imparted family news for William's wife Rebecca McKinney, originally from Pennsylvania, and shared greetings from the Secord family, undoubtedly for the Sturgis' neighbour Deborah Secord Ellis. These families continued to visit back and forth "across the line," as it was called, preserving family ties that transcended national borders. In fact, historians argue that, with the exception of times of war, there was active movement across the border in the early settlement period. For ordinary people, the concept of a border did not play a major part in their lives as they continued "the mingling" of the two populations.

This travel across the border and around the province intensified with the improvement in access to the area. Even after Joseph Brant's death in 1807 the settlement patterns that he had commenced continued. Local farms proliferated and Mount Pleasant slowly emerged as a trading centre where farmers could exchange produce for necessities. Sometime before the War of 1812 Thomas Racey opened the community's first mercantile business as an outpost of an Ancaster store owned by Samuel Hatt. He established the store across from the cemetery at the corner where "a trail to Burford" turned west off the Long Point Road. But despite Brant's initial intentions to foster cooperation and mutual understanding between his people and the European settlers to the Grand River area, these new waves of settlement did not always make relations smooth. The 1809 Proceedings of a Council with the Six Nations tell of some of the hardships. The Mohawk noted that "a number of families have

settled on the road to Long Point [Mount Pleasant]" but that "we receive no advantage whatever from them." The Mohawks proposed that the land be leased to these settlers for a period of 20 years so that "we may get something for them," and that after the expiration of the leases, the land would revert back to the Mohawk. Beyond the issue of land and compensation, the natives noted "we have many difficulties among other white people that are settled in our lands," including disputes over cattle, land ownership and legal redress for wrongdoings. Evidently the process of settling the land and living in close proximity caused tensions for the natives and European settlers alike, far from the original vision that people such as Brant and Johnson promoted.

These waves of settlement would be intensified as a major roadway opened up access to the area further. In 1810 one of Simcoe's transportation projects, the rough but principal road from Hamilton to London, opened in the area. Gangs of workers laid logs crosswise over the marshy spots and settlers began to envision easier travel and more convenient access to supplies. Some even imagined stagecoaches in the not so distant future. With the improvement of roads, settlers finally had an option beyond their own feet or a reliable horse. Stagecoaches would soon ply the local roads, with the big lumbering vehicles drawn by four horses making the ride from London to Brantford and on to Hamilton an unforgettable experience. The coach carried nine passengers on the inside and several more outside. Occupants found it a slow, tiresome and inconvenient means of travel. Since drivers changed horses every 15 miles they could cover only eight to ten miles an hour.

The work on the new Hamilton to London road began an ongoing process to overcome the serious shortcoming for inland settlements all across the frontier of the colony. While primitive roads seemed the most obvious means to conquer the isolation of the inland settlements, many began to appreciate the potential of the waterways such as the mighty Grand River. But it would take another war and the competition of American advancements for such dreams to become a reality. And by this point war with the United States was threatening, an unsettling notion for settlers beginning their lives over again in the aftermath of another not so distant war.

Chapter Two



“We Suffered Terribly”

War: 1812 – 1814

In the early years of the new decade settlers continued the tasks of pioneering: clearing farms, improving houses beyond the first primitive log shelters and tending ever increasing wheat fields. Life as usual preoccupied the settlers. But ominous faraway events, as had occurred previously with the Revolution, began to loom ever closer in the view of the residents of the developing village.

In reaction to American threats of war and invasion, the British began to organise the local militia, sending Redcoats, the regular army, to visit mills throughout the countryside, such as the Perrin Mill, to mobilise resources and men. In July 1812 General Isaac Brock urged each “Canadian Freeholder...to defend the Monarch and his own property...settled not 30 years by a band of Veterans exiled from their former possessions on account of their loyalty.” Although the first settlers to Mount Pleasant did not quite fit

PROCLAMATION.

Province of Upper Canada.

ISAAC BROCK, Esquire, President administering the Government of the Province of Upper Canada, and Major-General commanding His Majesty's Forces within the same.

TO ALL TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: . . . GREETING.

WHEREAS information has been received, that divers persons have recently come into this Province, with a seditious intent to disturb the tranquility thereof, and to endeavour to alienate the minds of His Majesty's Subjects from His Person and Government: I hereby require and enjoin the several persons authorised, to carry into effect a certain Statute, passed in the Forty-fourth year of His Majesty's reign, “An Act for the better securing this Province against all seditious attempts or designs to disturb the tranquility thereof,” to be vigilant in the execution of their duty’ and strictly to enquire into the behavior and conduct of all such persons as may be subject to the provisions of the said Act; and I do also charge and require all his Majesty's Good and Loyal subjects within this Province, to be aiding and assisting the said Persons, in the execution of the powers vested in them by the said Act.

Given under my Hand and Seal, at Arms, at York, this Twenty-fourth day of February, in the year of our Lord One Thousand Eight hundred and Twelve, and in the Fifty-second of his Majesty's Reign.

ISAAC BROCK, President.

By Command of His Honor.
WM. J. DAVIS, Secy.

Brock's Proclamation.

Brock's description of the original Loyalists of the 1780s, they could readily identify with the concept of being forced from a land due to outside circumstances.

Many local settlers responded to Brock's proclamation. Although the male settlers considered themselves farmers first and soldiers second, the strong connection they felt to their adopted land, not to mention the desire to protect their developing property, encouraged many to join the local militia. Henry Ellis, for example, along with his sons, fought in the war against his former countrymen. But as often happened during wartime, it was not the opposing soldiers' guns that threatened most, but the diseases that thrived when men camped in close, primitive quarters. Henry contracted camp fever and had to return home. While he recovered, as a result of the tender care of his wife Margaret, she succumbed to the fever. Henry's son Allin did his part for the war in another way. Besides being a volunteer in the militia, he drove a yoke of oxen at Lundy's Lane, hauling supplies for the troops.

The war not only touched the original settlers but also encouraged new settlers to seek out Mount Pleasant. Many settlers between Burlington and Lake Erie packed provisions and hid in the woods, fearing attacks from south of the border. Some found their way inland to Mount Pleasant from the more settled, but also more vulnerable border districts. Among them, Samuel and Elizabeth McAlister moved to Mount Pleasant from Long Point, just in time for their oldest son Robert to join the local militia. Samuel was born in Ireland of Scottish parents and as a young man he went to Halifax and learned the butcher trade. Elizabeth was from Rhode Island. After the war subsided they became innkeepers in Mount Pleasant, soon gaining a reputation for McAlister hospitality in the village. Even with this economic opportunity after the war, Robert later described the hardships of settlement, recalling that he had to wear high boots to protect himself from rattlesnakes when clearing the family's land and that bears lurked in the woods nearby threatening cattle, not to mention the settlers.

At about the same time during the war, in 1813, Stephen Burtch and his wife Margaret Belingar, of German heritage, moved to Mount Pleasant from Niagara. The Burtch family originally came from England to New York. Stephen crossed the line to British North America after the American Revolution in 1796. Like many other settlers during the War of 1812, Stephen found it necessary once again to flee American aggression, leaving the lakeside areas for inland protection from American attack during the war. Stephen and Margaret had a log home near the Mount Pleasant Creek and acquired substantial land in the village of Burtch, which bears their family name. Despite their introduction to the area in turbulent times, they went on to have nine children, with Stephen being remembered for "a record of good deeds done for emulation by his posterity."

But not everyone responded to Brock's call for loyalty and support in defence of the British colony. While people such as the Burtch and McAlister families moved further inland to escape American attack, some colonists chose to cross into the United States to support the Republic in the war. Many Upper Canadians felt a greater affiliation with the United States, especially in areas of the colony where ties with American family members and friends from before the Revolution were still strong. By 1812 two-thirds of Upper Canada's population were actually Americans, many of them part of the wave of immigrants on the move westward. Some of these colonists demonstrated the strength of such bonds by moving back across the border once the war began. The Upper Canadian government had been unsure of the impact of American influence on the colony from the very start and this led to policies such as the ban on Methodists performing marriages which we saw affected early settlers such as Allin Ellis and Hannah Sturgis.

In fact, Brock feared this large American element in the Upper Canadian population. As part of his July 1812 call for loyalty and support for the local militia, Brock declared: "...the population believe me, is essentially bad – a full belief possesses them all that this Province must inevitably succumb." By his actions Epaphras Lord Phelps identified himself as one such colonist. When the war



Ephaphras Lord Phelps, from an oil painting. Phelps, the schoolteacher son of a Continental Army officer arrived in Upper Canada c1790 at age 20 and taught school at Long Point, Blenheim, and Brant's Mohawk village. An intimate friend of Joseph Brant, he was Brant's white secretary (1800-1812), and in 1807 was given Power of Attorney to act for the Six Nations. His elegant handwriting appears on early Mount Pleasant 999-year leases. The Indians gave him the name "Onasquesakon", "onas" being an Indian word for quill or pen. Phelps located his family in 1802 on what would become the Phelps Tract, and is believed to have established a log school there. Courtesy Linda (Phelps) Guest.

began Epaphras, who had been secretary to Joseph Brant and had Power of Attorney to handle Six Nations business such as issuing leases, vocalised his sympathy with the American cause, believing, as did many, that the new colony of Canada could not withstand American might. Epaphras' father had fought on the American side in the Revolution and Epaphras believed that Canada's weak defences could not prevent annexation by the new and powerful United States. As one of his brothers later noted, Epaphras "was obliged to leave unceremoniously to save his neck." He fled across the border with his young daughter Lydia, with apparent help from the Mohawks, his in-laws, leaving behind his wife Esther and six other children, Solomon, Hiram, Crisena, Amelia, Audelia and Elizabeth. For this action the government charged him with high treason.

As a result of this charge, Epaphras and others were listed in a "Commission to inquire of lands forfeited on an outlawry for High Treason Dec 24, 1817." Thomas Perrin served as a witness to this Commission. The issue remained as to the fate of Esther and her rights to the land granted to Epaphras by Joseph Brant in 1804. William Baldwin acted as attorney for the natives to defend Esther's right to the land. Baldwin argued that she was not a subject of the

King, but in fact was an ally as a result of alliances during the recent wars with the United States. Therefore she was not subject to the Crown's laws, particularly the one that Epaphras had apparently broken. Unfortunately for Esther, the case was decided in favour of the Crown and in the words of the Crown Esther was left "to the care of her tribe." This situation meant that Esther's hold on the land on which she had lived with Epaphras and their children was now questioned. This resulted from an 1814 provincial statute that declared that all people holding land in Upper Canada who had come originally from the United States and who voluntarily had returned to the United States during the war should forfeit their lands. Phelps' abrupt departure from the community left an administrative and leadership vacuum. However this war, as all wars, would come to an end and other leaders would be attracted to the area to step in to help fill this void left by Phelps.

But despite the very dramatic example of Epaphras Lord Phelps, the war experience in Mount Pleasant and across Upper Canada which saw most American settlers remain loyal to the Crown reinforced for the British government and the local citizenry that their initial fears of disloyalty were unfounded. Even other members of the Phelps family joined their local militia units to defend Canada; Private I. Phelps and Private S. Phelps mustered with the 1st Oxford Regiment, and Private David Phelps and Private Othniel Phelps served in John Westbrook's Company of the 5th Lincoln Indian Lands Regiment. In fact, the war experience solidified the beginnings of a nationalist sentiment in Canada.

Nowhere was this sentiment fostered more than in the enthusiastic actions of the local militia across Upper Canada. Captain Thomas Perrin, a "muscular Dutchman," led the independent "Grand River" Company along with Lieutenant Frederick Yeoward, Lieutenant Thomas Racey and their superior officer Major Richard Hatt of Dundas. Hatt was a major in 1st Regiment of the Lincoln Militia and Racey's business partner. These militiamen were settlers from the west side of the Grand River, most of whom came from Mount Pleasant. Settlers on the east side of the river organised into another independent company led by Captain Joseph Westbrook. These

independent companies comprised what would become the 1st Regiment of the Gore Militia. Captain Perrin marshalled men, young and old, from many of the community's homes including the Burtch, Cooly, Ellis, Miller, Nelles, Phelps, Secord, Taylor, Thomas and Sturgis families. The lists of War of 1812 pensioners from Mount Pleasant also tell us who put their lives on the line for the village. For example, Robert McAlister, Asa Secord, and John Sturgis received a monthly pension for their service. All of these men helped comprise the local militia for the defence of Upper Canada. While most of the active service occurred in the border areas, these men played an important role in 1814 when the war extended to a wider sphere and touched the village itself.

In his book chronicling the the local military connection to the war, Rammage describes the attack in early November of a raiding party of Kentucky and Ohio volunteers under American General Duncan McArthur. McArthur came from Detroit with approximately 700 cavalry via the Thames Valley on his way to Burlington Heights and thence to surprise the British who were battling the Americans at Fort Erie. Evidence indicates that McArthur was mainly interested in pillaging any mills he came across, knowing that with winter approaching, this would seriously impair the food supply and weaken both the civilian population and the British army and Canadian militia. McArthur himself admitted in a letter to James Munroe, the American Secretary of War, that his intention had been "to destroy the valuable mills."

To block his advance, local military units took up strategic positions, with the 41st Regiment and Six Nations warrior allies on the east side of the Grand River at the ferry site near Brant's Ford, and the Burford militia at Malcolm's Mills in Oakland. McArthur knew from intelligence reports that there was a concentration of militia at Malcolm's Mills but elected to head for the river and on to Burlington Heights. At the ferry McArthur discovered that the Canadians had put the scow out of commission, and the Americans came under fire, sustaining several casualties. McArthur sent a detachment along the west bank of the river as a decoy, hoping to throw his adversaries into disarray so he could cross the river lower down. But to add to

his problem, the weather and the fickle river did not cooperate. "To my great mortification upon arrival at the river we found it high and rapid from the late and excessive rains." At least two Mount Pleasant men left behind their eyewitness accounts of events that day. John Oles, only 18 at the time, was a substitute in the militia and witnessed the skirmish at the Grand. He noted that a militiaman's aim was so deadly that the Americans became disheartened and so retreated. Oles later bragged that "unaided by the boasted prowess of foreign armies, Canadians defended Canada." John Sturgis later recalled that he was on guard duty at Perrin's Mill when the skirmish with McArthur's troops occurred.

After being turned back at the high river, McArthur received intelligence that the American forces had retreated from Fort Erie, so somewhat thwarted, he pursued his only other option, to head south to engage the militia at Malcolm's Mills and to destroy any local property of use to the British. Not surprisingly, the Americans targeted the infrastructure of the colony for destruction and there were no more important buildings than the gristmills. And so that evening of November 5, 1814 the homesteaders at Mount Pleasant had good reason to feel uneasy. The alarm had already been raised about the skirmish at the Grand. Mount Pleasant, then the principal village in the area, was on the route to Malcolm's Mills and settlers would have realized that McArthur was well aware of the existence of Perrin's Mill. The mill, which Perrin had bought only three years earlier from Percy, was torched. McArthur may have targeted Perrin's property also because Perrin headed a company of the 5th Lincoln Militia which had fought with distinction at Lundy's Lane. Perrin's Company cleared the road for regular troops at battle, and Perrin was known as "Captain Barefoot" for drilling his men in their bare feet.

But to simply destroy the mill did not satisfy the Americans. Before marching on through the village, the consummate plunderers confiscated fresh horses, cattle for food, and set fire to several homes of loyal militiamen who had been mustered. Henry Ellis, who had just recently lost his wife, had insult added to injury when the raiders burned the Ellis home, causing him to lose valuable papers. John

and Daniel Secord lost their leases, as they later explained, “when the house was burned,” and therefore experienced a delay in obtaining property titles when these old documents were later needed. The raiders also stole anything of value in the homes, including Rachel Sturgis’ silk cloak, one of her prized possessions from her old life in Pennsylvania.

The harassed locals breathed a sigh of relief as the cavalry, leaving behind a charred trail of destruction, moved on through the village and crossed the wooden bridge spanning Mount Pleasant Creek towards Malcolm’s Mills where they overpowered the militia and burned the mills. But despite the heartbreaking devastation that now faced them, the villagers were proud of the role they had played in protecting their own lands. They were not regular soldiers being paid for a service, but they had already sacrificed too much to give up easily in the face of invaders from whom many settlers had so recently escaped. The local Mount Pleasant militia had heeded Brock’s proclamation to defend their “liberty” and their “prosperity” and in doing so, as Oles’ reminiscences illustrate, helped fashion the myth of the militia in the history of the War of 1812. Yet as Oles’ memories and the overwhelming local enthusiasm for Perrin’s volunteer call make clear, Mount Pleasant’s contribution to the outcome of the war was certainly more than a myth.

By the time of the war the pioneers had just been getting settled. In fact the “fledgling settlement” had its beginning only 15 years earlier. There is no doubt that true to McArthur’s intent, the war had a demoralising effect on the area. After the raiders cut their swath of destruction through the village there was just enough time to erect rude shelters before the winter. After the war, the western part of the province found itself in an exhausted condition. Grain and provisions were scarce as a result of the raiders marauding throughout the countryside. And in the spring there was debris to be cleared and neglected farms to be reclaimed. But this was not a speedy process. As late as 1824, Amos Sturgis, at 83, was still waiting on his claims for losses, and was barely making ends meet by building an apple mill and doing other odd jobs. As he related to his son John in a letter that year, “I would have been naked if it had not been for

making a few ploughs." Thomas Racey's store was also burned as evidenced by his large claim for war losses, and as a result of being burned out of his home and livelihood he had to live after the war at the Perrin Mill which was quickly rebuilt by Perrin. With the local gristmill, store, homes and fields burned and damaged, weary settlers conceivably questioned if the efforts needed to rebuild what had only been recently created were worth it. A lesser community might have succumbed to the devastation, but the villagers, with the pioneering spirit that brought them there in the first place, eventually rebuilt their homes and lives.

Financial help to accomplish this rebuilding came after the war in the form of the wagonloads of money to pay the soldiers. This must have been a welcomed sight as many officers went into debt trying to outfit their men during the war. Not only were soldiers and officers owed money after the war for their efforts and their out-of-pocket expenses, but settlers also felt they were owed compensation from the government for losses they suffered at the hands of the enemy. According to the "Return of Claims for Losses Sustained during the Late War with the United States of America," many Mount Pleasant families received compensation. Among others, the Biggar, Burtch, Ellis, McAlister, Nelles, Secord, and Sturgis families claimed losses. By the outbreak of the war the Nelles family had managed to accumulate more personal effects than many of their neighbours and their claim reveals something of their relative affluence. Besides losses in McArthur's raid they had supplied the Canadian militia and also Indian allies, thus adding to their total claim of over £345 for horses, other livestock, household furnishings, food and clothing. But even after repeated petitions the family received less than half that amount.

These recorded losses point only to the most obvious areas of destruction to buildings and crops. In the months and years immediately after the war, the villagers not only had to rebuild, but also recover from the psychological impact of the uncertainty surrounding the war in general and the invasion itself on their own doorsteps. Emeline Sturgis, daughter of William and Rebecca, remembered that settlers "suffered terribly" from war. Indeed

the psychological impact of the war was so acute that Upper Canadians began dating every event as having happened before or after “the war.”

But yet again events out of the control of the settlers hampered their recovery and reconstruction. Just two years after the end of the war and the burning of the village the North American continent experienced what came to be known as the “year without a summer.” Settlers referred to 1816 by that notorious title since there was frost every month of the year except August, resulting in poor crops. A volcanic eruption in the East Indies the previous year caused this ecological phenomenon. This summer frost destroyed crops and in a subsistence farm economy, settlers had only one recourse: to eat less. Even potatoes, an important food source for settlers, rotted in the cold wet ground. While there were no reports of death due to starvation, the hardship following so close after the destruction of the war demoralised Upper Canadians even further. Luckily for the future of the community, its residents had much experience in starting over in the face of great obstacles and they would do it once again.

Chapter Three

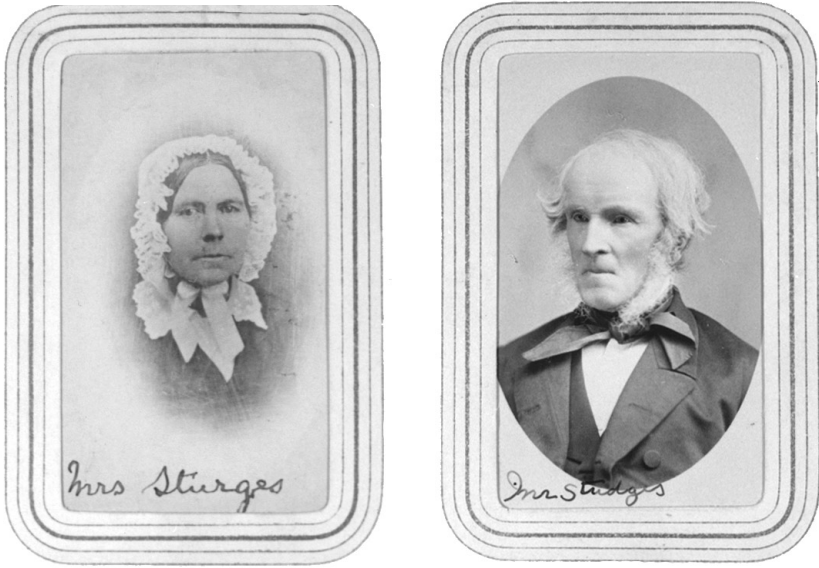


“No Situation Could Make Me More Happy”

Reconstruction: 1814 – 1829

While the settlers of Mount Pleasant could not have known this at the time, the cessation of hostilities declared in 1814 and the final defeat of Napoleon in Europe ushered in an era of peace, the Pax Britannica, that would endure for a century. The War of 1812 not only fostered feelings of national pride in the emerging colonies of British North America, but also firmly ensconced the colonists in a worldwide empire. Through the hard years of rebuilding homes and lives in the post-war era, the residents of Mount Pleasant, like others in Upper Canada, found themselves associated with one of the most dynamic and powerful leaders in the world. The peace and prosperity guaranteed to them under the British Empire gave them hope for the future.

Yet, despite this promise of better times, not every pioneer chose to stay in Mount Pleasant through the arduous ordeal of reconstruction in the years immediately after the war. John Sturgis, son of Amos and Rachel, who had made the trek with his parents as a lad of 11, decided to strike out again to find greener pastures in 1818. His wife, Julietta Brindle, had died and after remarrying in 1816, he, like many other people in the wake of the war, left in search of a new start and cheap land in Michigan with his second wife, 19-year-old Ardillacy Miller of Mount Pleasant. Even after the passage of that especially bad year in 1816, the rest of the 1810s proved poor in the province, discouraging many settlers. As well, with peace, the American frontier advanced further westward compared to Upper Canada, luring young pioneers such as John and Ardillacy. However, John’s decision to leave Mount



Mr. and Mrs. Sturges, most likely William and his wife Rebecca. By the time these photographs could have been taken, both Capt. Amos Sturges and his wife were deceased and John Sturges had left for the United States. M. Smyth notes that when photographs were made Rebecca's portrayed a plain looking woman. According to a descendant, William was "a man of exemplary living, yet affectionate and gentle," and Rebecca "shared this regard." Their home was a "camping place" for visitors, particularly Methodist missionaries. From the Biggar family albums. Courtesy Brant Historical Society.

Pleasant may have had as much to do with family pressure as to a sense of wanderlust. A later entry in a family ledger noted: "Owing to disapproval of his marriage to Miss Miller by his family, John and Ardillacy left Mount Pleasant and went to Michigan."

Like many other trailblazers at the time, John had known no other life than one filled with the hardships of pioneering, so the idea of obtaining cheap land in a new place must have been inviting. John and Ardillacy started their trek in winter, using oxen to haul their household belongings piled high on a sled. With their 1-year-old son William in her arms, Ardillacy walked across the thin ice of the Detroit River, not trusting the heavy sled to carry them safely across. John would go on to found Sturges, Michigan. As his brother William later observed of Michigan in an 1829 letter, "I think it must be a very fine country...I should like to come to that country to see it...but [it is] a great way off." William obviously held some of the

pioneering spirit that drew his younger brother out west, but with his happy and settled life in Mount Pleasant, and the fact that he wrote that letter to his brother, incidentally on his 49th birthday, his pioneering days were gladly over. However, as William well knew, the task of reconstruction fell to his generation. His counterpart in the Ellis family, John, also a young man of 19 during the trek from Pennsylvania in 1798-99, received an added bonus in the hard years after the war. In 1822, his wife Deborah Secord received her long awaited land grant as the daughter of a Loyalist and her brother Asa received his farm just south of Mount Pleasant in 1826.

Despite the loss of people like John and Ardillacy Sturgis, there still endured a sense of future prosperity for the area as the long



A Sturgis house, built c1820, said to be the first brick house in Mount Pleasant, c1960. The plan of two large rooms on each floor and the doorcase with its elegant fanlight date to c1825, but village historian M. Smyth conjectures that the house dates to c1829 when the Erie Canal opened, providing easier transportation for building materials such as brick. The picture shows bricked-in second storey windows. The house was on the William Sturgis farm on Lot 8W and is attributed to the Sturgis family. Eloquent now in its absence, this home was demolished in the 1980s.

awaited land grants made clear. For example, William Dickson, Scottish immigrant, legislative councillor in the Upper Canadian government and prominent attorney at Niagara and Magistrate for Niagara District, had already gained much wealth and prestige at Niagara and was looking for a new outlet for his boundless energy. He believed that with the successful end of the War of 1812 it was a good time to invest in property inland in the province and he believed in the future prosperity of Upper Canada. Dickson already had experience in the area since in 1809 he bought the Township of Dumfries from the natives. In 1816 he went with a native guide and his Pennsylvania-born assistant Absalom Shade to view the lands he had purchased in Block 1 in the southern area of the original Six Nations tract. On the east side of the Grand River they noted there was a “regular Indian trail which in many places a single pony and rider had difficulty making their way along.” Shade’s father had collaborated with Joseph Brant in negotiations with the Iroquois. Absalom was a carpenter and builder; therefore Dickson felt he was a good person with “grit” to help develop his new lands. Shade also had connections to the area as he owned lands in Mount Pleasant and his name appeared on land transaction records in the village as late as the 1850s. While these two important men in the development of the Grand River area are known more for their founding of Galt, farther up the Grand River, their energy and determination spurred development in the southern areas as well.

We also see this sense of optimism and renewal evident after the war in Mount Pleasant. At the earliest opportunity once peace was restored, the Sturgis family welcomed visitors from the Susquehanna who would have been impressed by the improvements made on the land in the relatively short period of time that the former Pennsylvania farmers had been resident in Upper Canada. The Sturgis visitors no doubt took advantage of the new roads that the war made necessary. As we have seen, in 1810 the government opened up a road through the area to connect Hamilton and London, and upon the outbreak of war had spent a large sum of money surfacing it with logs to improve the road for military travel. The idea for a road to London in the first place arose from Simcoe’s preoccupation with military defence, which was understandable in the 1790s in a new

colony created as a result of the flood of refugees from the American Revolution. He envisioned London as a major inland centre, or even the capital, removed from the threat of American access. It seemed that the War of 1812 realised Simcoe's worst fears, though by then he was long gone from the post of Lieutenant-Governor. While London never became the capital of the province, the war reinforced the need for better inland transportation routes.

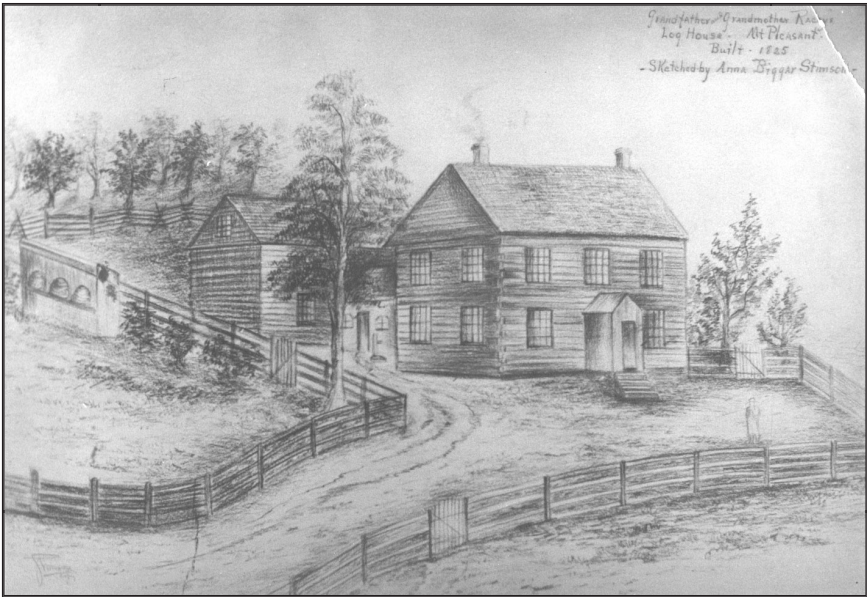
The government's attention to the need for transportation improvements did not end after the war. In 1816 local transportation was improved by a section of new road from Canborough, to "Tutela Town on the Grand River." The road was to be cut "in a straight direction...to be perfectly cleared of all Trees, old Timber, Brush and anything else, which may be on it." As a result of all this work, these new transportation routes attracted many new settlers. Many of these migrants wanted to move further inland from the lakes and borders, which was not surprising in the years when the recent war was still fresh in people's minds.

Other settlers came from overseas. After the British victory over Napoleon in 1815 the British openly supported the migration of Scots and others from the British Isles to Upper Canada. This official support, along with the severe economic and social stress caused by the Napoleonic Wars prompted many to seek out a new start and a better life in North America. Furthermore, with the end of war in the New World, the British had to send ships to collect the regular soldiers no longer needed during peace. Many eager immigrants took advantage of the cheap passage on these otherwise empty ships. Yet, at the same time, much to the chagrin of British officials, Americans continued to be attracted to the rich lands of Upper Canada, in much the same way that the Ellis and Sturgis families had been decades before. As one official put it, Americans were once again "pouring into the Province." Because these American settlers often brought cash with them, there were ways for them to circumvent the barriers to their migration, since hard currency was at a premium in Upper Canada at this time, especially right after the war. In fact William Dickson was one of the most vocal opponents to the government's desire to exclude American settlers. In his capacity

as member of the legislative council, he argued that while he was as anxious as any official to keep Upper Canada a British province, he saw no reason to fear the influx of “hard-working American free-holders.” He believed that the province needed these settlers in the immediate future to help build up the province.

One such settler was Joseph Bowes, Sr. who came to Mount Pleasant in 1815 from Great Bend, Pennsylvania. Joseph’s 18-year-old son Joseph Jr. came with him. As so often happened in choosing a location for emigration, Joseph heard about Mount Pleasant from William Sturgis’ wife Rebecca McKinney who was originally from Great Bend and had been a neighbour of the Bowes family. Once in Mount Pleasant the family connection was reinforced when Joseph Jr. married Rachel Sturgis, the daughter of his parents’ former Pennsylvania neighbours and the first child born to the pioneers in the new settlement. Joseph Jr. and Rachel then went on to have themselves a daughter, Juliet Bowes born in 1826 at Mount Pleasant.

Following the same desire for a new start and new land, young Abraham Cooke also settled in the village in 1815. A 24-year-old bachelor, and plasterer by trade, Cooke came from Dutchess County, New York, like the Burtch and Fairchild families of the area. Cooke also had a connection to Mount Pleasant through the Sturgis pioneers, who also had relatives in Dutchess County. Abraham had aspirations of becoming a merchant in the young village and this was a perfect time for such an opportunity. Thomas Racey, the village’s prominent pre-war merchant, left Mount Pleasant after losing his home and livelihood to the torch of the Kentucky raiders. Cooke immediately settled in as an important part of the community as the 1818 muster roll for the Grand River Independent Company contains the names of Abraham and his brother Andrew. He also firmly established himself as part of the community by soon marrying Eleanor Hardy. The Hardys were Scottish migrants to the area near Philadelphia prior to the Revolution. As devout Methodists they left Scotland for the New World in order to practise their religion freely. But the Hardy family supported the Crown during the Revolution, taking up arms against the Patriots. Thus they became Loyalists, first



Squire James Racey's "Log Castle," built c1825, from a sketch by Anna Biggar Stimson. A common log house was on average 22'x18' with just one room so no wonder this elaborate two-storey version was dubbed a "castle." No trace remains of the Log Castle built on a strip of land on Lot 3W on the ridge overlooking the Mount Pleasant Creek. The entrance was a long lane from a side road off what is now Wetmores Road. No pictures of James Racey have been found, but he was said to be tall and handsome. Mount Pleasant's own representative of the Family Compact was blessed with the three foremost social graces required for his acceptance by Upper Canada's governing elite - firm Anglican, Tory, and "gentleman." The powerful Racey pulled all the strings, with a voice in most district judicial, civic and educational affairs as well as the local Anglican Church. He was also Lt. Col. of the 1st Gore Regiment, postmaster, and cemetery trustee.

settling after the war at lands granted to them at Queenston before coming to Mount Pleasant. Abraham and Eleanor's first child, Alexander Hardy Cooke, came into the world in 1822, bearing his maternal grandfather's name. Besides this familial bliss, Abraham's mercantile dreams soon came true as well. By 1824 he bought the store of Frederick Yeoward, a prominent village merchant and veteran of the militia. By 1827 Cooke had moved on to even bigger ventures leaving the original store to the care of his brother Thomas. According to a November 1827 notice in the *Gore Gazette*, "at the shop formerly operated by Abraham Cook," Mount Pleasant residents



Four generations of Racey family women. The eldest (3rd left) is Ann Hull Racey, wife of Squire James Racey. Others are her daughter, Eliza Phelps Racey (left), wife of Rev. Hamilton Biggar; her great granddaughter Anna Stimson (2nd left); and her granddaughter Anna Biggar Stimson, daughter of Eliza (far right). Ann Hull Racey worked among the Six Nations as a Church of England missionary. She became a great favourite of both the white settlers and the Indians who gave her the name “Skayendeyrie,” meaning “one that has great knowledge.” She managed the family farm, ably fulfilled the duties required of her by her husband’s position, and taught her daughters homemaking skills, including how to mull wine.

could find “for sale [a] general assortment of Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, and Crockery suited to the country market. Most kinds of country produce will be taken in payment.” By the early 1830s Abraham had a “fine new store” in the village.

The end of the war brought other settlers to help fill the vacuum left by those such as John Sturgis and Thomas Racey. For example, Thomas’ brother James also came to the village in 1816. Originally from England, James migrated to the United States where he met and married Ann Hull, also of English background. Their devotion to the British cause during the War of 1812 made it impossible for them to remain in the United States, so they came to Upper Canada, finally settling in Mount Pleasant, which they had heard

of through Thomas. They first lived at the Perrin gristmill rebuilt following the war. It was common that pioneers would live or board with others until the money, supplies and help could be coordinated to build a family structure, usually at a community work bee. For this service, Perrin earned himself the reputation of the village's first innkeeper. The distillery at the mill would have been an added attraction for James Racey who had offended his family's social pride by entering the trades as a vintner.

By 1825 the Racey family had the resources to build a log cabin on a ridge overlooking the creek at the south end of the expanding settlement. The "Log Castle," as locals called it, because they regarded it as mansion in those days, was needed to accommodate the growing Racey family which eventually numbered eight daughters and four sons. The children slept in the loft of the cabin under bearskin robes and quilts. Though James was remembered as a "not very practical farmer," the Racey home was known for the table in the big living room that was always loaded with food and treats for the family and guests. The musical family would entertain these guests in front of the huge fireplace with Ann taking it all in from her chair "made from an empty, large barrel, covered with bright coloured chintz and nicely upholstered, soft, easy and restful." James fulfilled many important duties in the local area including magistrate for the district, Lieutenant Colonel, local squire, Justice of the Peace, district school board member, and trustee for the elementary school. Ann likewise served her community well, beginning missionary work for the Church of England with the Six Nations soon after she arrived from New York State, sharing her wisdom and personal energy. Religious work was often the only public role that society accorded women in the early 19th century and Ann took full advantage of this outlet for her energy and passion, imbuing all her children with this charitable tradition. Above all, Mount Pleasant came to know the Racey family to be exceedingly devoted, loyal, united and loving.

The Biggar family represents another example of new settlers coming to Mount Pleasant after the war. Robert Biggar came to Canada from Scotland in 1806 with his wife Mary Lauder. They initially settled in the Niagara District and then Stoney Creek



(left) Herbert Biggar, Sr., son of Robert and Mary Lauder Biggar. Born in Queenston, Ontario in 1809, he came to his father's farm on Lot 10W in 1816 at age 7. One of the "most successful and honoured" settlers of Brant County, he was a member of the first municipal council of Gore District, which included Mount Pleasant (1842), and served as MPP for South Brant riding in the United Provinces of Canada Parliament (1854-1862). Active in church matters, he was a trustee and class leader of the Mount Pleasant Wesleyan Methodist Church. (right) Jane Ellis Biggar, daughter of Allin Ellis. Jane Ellis and Herbert Biggar were married in 1831 in a ceremony at Salt Springs Church where Rev. Hamilton Biggar, Herbert's brother, was the resident Methodist missionary. From the Biggar family albums. Courtesy Brant Historical Society.



Biggar House with later addition (right), likely built by Robert Biggar, now 571 Mount Pleasant Road, c1960. Upon the death of his father Herbert took over the Biggar family homestead farm which by this time had 1,000 fruit trees. The building date of this hip-roofed Ontario cottage is uncertain, but could be as early as 1825. The brick veneer was possibly applied at a later date. The Biggar home had a reputation for hospitality, and boasted Mount Pleasant's first piano - an icon of taste and sophistication.

during War of 1812 in which three of their sons served. In 1816 they purchased 100 acres of land in Mount Pleasant, attracted as others had been by the fertile lands and economic prospects. But since this was a time when pioneers often had to have an occupation besides farming, Robert also established a tannery in Brant's Ford. Perhaps forecasting the future development in the area, Robert began to acquire a lot of land around the ferry at that emerging community. When a storm carried away the bridge at the ford, Biggar worked hard to have another structure erected, calling it Biggar's Bridge. Robert also began to refer to the place as "Biggartown," after his old home in Scotland. For example, in late 1827 he received a letter addressed to "Robert Biggar Esqr. Biggers Town, British North America."

That same year, when the population of Brant's Ford reached 200-300 people, the issue of officially naming the place came up. Community leaders met and Robert proposed that the name should be Biggartown. Marshall Lewis, a local mill owner, suggested Lewisville and merchant John Aston Wilkes suggested Birmingham for his old land home. It looked like it would be a draw between the three personal names when someone suggested that, since the place was known as Brant's Ford, that title would be most suitable. The suggestion, promising not to offend any of the gentlemen with their own personal suggestions at stake, passed unanimously. The "s" was speedily dropped and the name became Brantford. But Robert Biggar continued to refer to the Ford as Biggartown, as he did in his will, referring to property he owned in a place, "called by me, Biggartown."

Despite Robert's undoubted disappointment in the naming of Brantford, he and Mary had a large family of eleven children, raising them in the faith of the Church of Scotland. Theirs was part of a trend of very large families at the time as parents viewed children as an economic asset in a time when the family farm was the key unit of production. Their children became prominent in the affairs of Mount Pleasant and the county but sadly, Mary would not live to witness this success as she died ten years after the family's arrival in Mount Pleasant. Their son Herbert, born in 1809, assisted his father on the farm in Mount Pleasant for a few years and then pursued

mercantile interests in Brantford with a carding and fulling mill. Herbert is said to have driven the first team across the Grand River Bridge at Brantford, an event which would have made his father proud. He returned to Mount Pleasant to farm the old homestead after Robert's death. Herbert was a staunch Reformer politically, served on township and county councils, was a reeve, and member for Canada West in the Legislative Assembly of Canada (Parliament of the United Provinces) 1854-1862. The Biggars built a fine brick house at the north end of Mount Pleasant around 1825. Known locally as "Tall Trees," the home continues to stand testament to this pioneer family.

The new decade continued to bring new settlers. In 1820 Andrew Eadie, a 26-year-old Scottish cooper, arrived in Mount Pleasant, taking over land from Gideon Olmstead on the west side of Mount Pleasant Road. The next year, 1821, he married Eliza Biggar, daughter of Robert and Mary. Andrew and Eliza would go on to have nine children, beginning with son Robert born in 1823. Andrew had come first to Newfoundland but eventually made his way to Upper Canada. Once in Mount Pleasant he opened an inn called "Speed the Plough." The name came from the saying "God speed the plough, good health and wealth to the farmer." It was a natural job for a cooper or barrel maker to run an inn, which traditionally always had a tavern. And it was certainly a wise investment in the expanding village. The name he chose for the inn is indicative of the community itself: dependent on God and agriculture.

The post-war period also meant families settled back into their routine domestic lives. William Nelles, son of pioneers Andrew Nelles and Mary Waggoner, along with his wife Mary Hardy, sister of Eleanor Cooke set up a home in their frame farmhouse on the east side of the hill overlooking the Mount Pleasant Creek and greeted in quick succession several sons. Alexander Hardy Nelles was welcomed into the world in 1819, also bearing his maternal grandfather's name like his younger cousin Alex Cooke. His brother William Waggoner was born three years later; his brothers Samuel Sobieski, John, Henry and Thomas followed. Daughters Ellen Eliza and Celeste Catherine rounded out the Nelles family. Mrs. Mary Nelles, the mother of this

fine brood, is described as a remarkable woman for her day, of strong and forceful character and of good education. She is said to have taught her sons and daughters herself in their early years, with help from the community where possible.

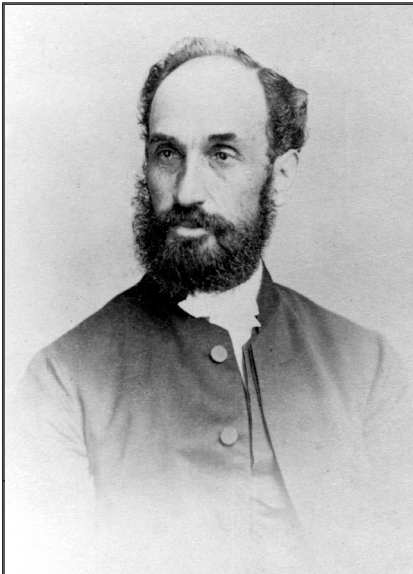
As John English and Kenneth McLaughlin contend in their history of Kitchener, Ontario, communities require an Anglo-Saxon charter group to establish British cultural values and traditions. They conclude that Berlin (Kitchener's original name), with its Germanic character, lacked this charter group. But in the case of Mount Pleasant, we can see clearly that the immigration in the years after the war began the pattern of predominantly American and Scottish settlers which shaped the future development of the village.



William Nelles, Sr. (1788-1864), son of founding settler Andrew Nelles. William's wife was Mary Hardy Nelles, sister of Mrs. Abraham Cooke and Mrs. R. R. Strobridge whose husbands were village merchants, as was her brother, Russell Hardy. William established his homestead in 1816, becoming the patriarch of an accomplished family including Alexander Hardy Nelles J. P., Rev. Dr. S. S. Nelles, Dr. Wm. Nelles, doctors John A. and Henry H. Nelles, Abraham R. Nelles, investment broker Thomas Ransom Nelles, and two daughters who married doctors. Nelles served in Capt. Thomas Perrin's company in the Gore Militia in the War of 1812 and was a member of the governing committee of the Mount Pleasant Chapter of the Upper Canada Bible Society. William left Mount Pleasant in 1854, moving to Woodhouse Township in Norfolk County where he soon had 90 acres under cultivation. Brantford Expositor, Christmas 1892 ed. Courtesy Brant Historical Society.



William Nelles family homestead "Grove Lane Farm," on Lot 3E on the brow of the ridge above Mount Pleasant Creek (Rainbow Hill). The house would have been among the earliest frame houses in Mount Pleasant at a time when others were still log, indicating William's success getting his land cleared and into production - by 1851 his entire 144 acres were under cultivation. It could take up to 30 or 40 years on average for an ordinary farm family to afford a frame or brick house, and even in 1861 forty-seven percent of houses were still log. The Nelles house still stands at 770 Mount Pleasant Road.



Rev. Dr. Samuel Sobieski Nelles (1823-1887), son of William Nelles, Sr., became the most eminent educationist of his day. From 1850 until his death he was the "beloved and honoured" President and Chancellor of Victoria University. His obituaries lauded him for his patient energy, zeal and eloquence, versatility, and Christian character. Fatherly in his dealings with students, he inspired in them an honest love of truth, a measure of tolerance, and a concern for continuity between old beliefs and new knowledge. Nelles, author of a textbook on logic, believed that a "properly conducted inquiry into the world of nature, whether natural or human would reveal the wondrous work of God." Courtesy The United Church of Canada/ Victoria University Archives, Toronto. 76.001P/4834 N



Old Common School, dated variously to 1814, 1819-1820, or even later, on Lot 7E fronting the Mill Road (Maple Ave. E.). Rev. John Bryning held services here until the Bethesda Chapel was built in 1832-1833. The school was used until 1854 when the Nelles Academy became the combined Common School and Grammar School. A litany of complaints about early Common Schools in Upper Canada included poor attendance (children were needed on the farms), parental indifference or interference, lack of discipline, high teacher turnover, and scarcity of books. This school was used as a house, abandoned, and eventually remodelled as the front section of the present house at 214 Maple Ave. E.

This post-war influx of settlers not only helped shape the cultural character of the community, but also necessitated administrative changes as well. The old Niagara District, in which Mount Pleasant had originally found itself, was becoming too unwieldy. In 1816 the government split it in two with the western portion, named Gore District, being made up of the two counties of Halton and Wentworth, where Mount Pleasant fell. The new settlement of Hamilton in Wentworth County became the district town, where fine buildings housed municipal services such as the courthouse and gaol.

Even though Mount Pleasant was not the district town, its residents sought to provide important services for its population. One of the first services to develop in Upper Canadian communities was a place of learning for the children. One can find several dates from the 1810s to the 1820s claiming to be the founding of a school in Mount Pleasant. Understandably the first Mount Pleasant residents found themselves too consumed with the tasks of pioneering to worry

about education, but once the post-war waves of migrants began to populate the village, education became an important concern. In the Upper Canadian countryside “Yankee” adventurers-cum-teachers often brought the first books for schooling. For example, a geography book used at the time of the War of 1812 seemed to be created especially to extol and embellish the United States at the expense of Canada. The State of Rhode Island, for instance, took up more space on the map than Canada, then two provinces, Upper and Lower Canada. These roving teachers represent the American influence in the province at the time, enhanced also by travelling American peddlers and Methodist circuit riders.

Along with this concern with education, the post-war years also witnessed general improvement and development of the village. Besides the reconstruction of pre-war homes and buildings destroyed by the Kentucky raiders, Mount Pleasant residents, new and old, established new enterprises in the growing prosperity and promise of the time. Representing this entrepreneurial spirit, David Burtch opened the first hotel at the end of the war and Frederick Yeoward established a store in 1815, to be soon joined as a village merchant by Abraham Cooke, taking over where Thomas Racey left off. The tremendous waves of settlers welcomed to Upper Canada in the years after the war helped to support and encourage such commercial ventures, making Mount Pleasant by 1820, along with other places like Burford and Oakland, a thriving village where farmers of the district traded and exchanged wheat and other produce for necessities.

Eventually the toil and patience of the settlers began to pay off. For the original settlers, their clearings increased and their dwellings improved. The new settlers in turn could benefit from the existing advancements in the village. In terms of social contact, as more settlers moved in, impromptu gatherings were possible. As W. W. Ellis recounted in his 1916 talk before the Brant County Historical Society, “in those days there was a frank democracy; everybody knew everybody and surprise parties were the order of the winter evenings. On such occasions it was sometimes found, that the family to be surprised had retired for the night, but the old man

would get up, pull on his pants, take down the fiddle, and all hands would join in a good old fashioned hoe down and get home about time to feed the stock in the morning." Allin and Hannah's son A. Wallace Ellis, a popular fiddler, would have been one of those so surprised. Ellis also spoke of apple paring bees as another source of amusement where what was a task meant for one family would be turned into an evening of social enjoyment for the whole village. The younger folks especially found pleasure at apple paring bees, and the dances that followed the work gave them a chance to socialise and even to court.

Once peace was restored and the pioneers turned back to the tasks of daily life, some began to question the way the province was run and sought improvements. Robert Gourlay, a "fiery Scot," a troublemaker to some and a devoted promoter of Upper Canada to others, responded to this desire. He sought to promote mass emigration to Upper Canada but he felt that before this could happen officials needed "a well-authenticated statistical account of Upper Canada." This led him to print pamphlets containing 31 queries and distribute them throughout the townships. On December 11, 1817 Mount Pleasant settlers met in the house of prominent village merchant Frederick Yeoward to answer Gourlay's questionnaire for his "Statistical Account of Upper Canada." The Mount Pleasant settlers were among the many in the province who had much enthusiasm for Gourlay's scheme and their report joined the more than 40 other sets of answers compiled by other communities reporting information on the economic conditions in the province.

As the "Principal Inhabitants of the Township of Haldimand, in the County of Wentworth, and District of Gore, in the Province of Upper Canada," the Mount Pleasant settlers reported on the area. They noted that Haldimand Township, later renamed Brantford Township began at Dundas Street, Simcoe's famed east-west road, which was the southern boundary of Dumfries Township and ran 12 miles wide and 20 miles down the stream including what is now Paris and Brantford. According to Gourlay's report, this area contained 1800 natives, 430 white settlers and 30 black inhabitants. Only 18 of the white settlers lived in Brant's Ford.

The presence of black settlers in Haldimand Township reveals that some fugitive slaves found their way to Canada from the United States and some settlers, including Joseph Brant, brought slaves with them, although upon entering Upper Canada any slaves would have been subject to Simcoe's 1793 law which prevented the further introduction of slaves and limited the term of servitude for those already in the province. And in 1819 the young Attorney General of the province, John Beverly Robinson, declared that "the negroes [are] entitled to personal freedom through residence [in Upper Canada] and any attempt to infringe their rights [will] be resisted in the courts." Clearly Upper Canada's promise of prosperity and advancement applied to all.

Yeoward reported on behalf of the group that there were 60 inhabited houses, not including those of the natives. He noted that there was one established church in the area with a clergyman visiting occasionally. Locally there was one carding machine and one fulling mill. The group also commented on the state of transportation in the area, noting that the roads are "generally good, but capable of improvement, at a small expense." The Grand River served as the main transportation route as it was navigable for "rafts for a considerable distance above this township, down to its confluence with Lake Erie." A great part of this distance was navigable with boats and vessels "of considerable burden." They suggested that the route would be improved by widening and deepening the river in certain places.

Yeoward also described the local lands as composed of a variety of soils, generally sandy loam and "much very fertile." These lands are "usually put in with wheat." Furthermore, the residents noted that tenant farming was not common in the township, although Yeoward noted that there was no land for sale in the area since the "land within this township is granted by the government to the Five Nations of Indians." Some of this land had been leased by their agent Brant, to "the present white settlers" for the term of 999 years at "7s. 6d per acre" for the whole of that period. But currently leases for 21 years "may yet be obtained from the Indians, on very moderate terms." Nevertheless the group concluded that the land granting

situation in the area "retards its improvement" since the natives were prevented from "alienating lands" or actually selling land to the settlers. This resulted from the government's view that the land had been originally granted for the natives' use only, resulting in the unwieldy leasing system. This comment regarding the land granting system was in direct response to Gourlay's final and most controversial query: "What in your opinion, retards the improvement of your township in particular, or the province in general; and what would most contribute to the same?" This issue and others would be addressed in the years to come. These concerns and observations echoed similar reports made across the province and set the scene for the main preoccupations of Upper Canadians in the aftermath of the War of 1812: land, wheat, and transportation.

Transportation had always been a major concern for the inland areas of Upper Canada. As we have seen, completion of the Hamilton and London road and the resultant increase in traffic aided the early development of Brantford. The Great Mail Road, eventually a 300-mile road linking Niagara and Detroit, passed through Brantford, thus promoting its development as well. Yet another type of transportation route helped change Mount Pleasant's economy from subsistence farming to the commercial "wheat culture" of the 1820s and beyond and secured, at least for the moment, the continuation of the village's prosperity and growth. As Bruce Hill explains, the waterways of British Upper Canada had long been prized transportation routes, from the natives to the voyageurs. But by the early 19th century military and economic threats from the United States fostered a vision to improve upon these natural waterways and end the isolation of the inland districts. Such visionaries chartered the Welland Canal in 1824, to bypass the mighty Niagara Falls and connect Lake Ontario and Lake Erie in a way the Niagara River never could. This technological feat promoted for many settlers the potential for power in the province's small streams. The next year the Americans opened their Erie Canal, a technological improvement on the old Mohawk-Hudson River canoe route. It provided a direct route from Buffalo on the eastern end of Lake Erie to New York City and the Atlantic Ocean, and had profound effects on Mount Pleasant's growing grain trade with wheat shipped from

Newport to Buffalo and Montreal and on to Upper Canada's most important wheat importer, Britain. Its spin-off effects throughout Upper Canada included stimulating the development of additional milling operations powered by the local creeks.

As a result of these new economic opportunities, commercial milling operations in the Mount Pleasant area expanded to meet increased demand for wheat and other goods. In addition to the already established Perrin Mill, Elijah Haight arrived from Montreal in 1842 and commenced the local manufacture of textiles at Haight Mill, a carding mill powered by damming the Mount Pleasant Creek and thereby raising a sufficient head of water to develop power to operate the mill. Thomas Perrin, Jr. had expanded his operations by establishing a mill at Mount Vernon, and another mill was in operation east of the modern Cockshutt Road on the Mount Pleasant Creek. Haight did a large and lucrative business serving the local area, but not only for the wheat economy. The pond created by the dam was known as Haight's Pond and was celebrated throughout the district as a trout pond. It was also a swimming place for "the boys of the neighbourhood" who would gather on a Saturday evening after their week's toil on the farm in great numbers to refresh themselves in its cooling waters. That pond was later described as "so dear to the heart of many a Mount Pleasant boy."

The Erie Canal also provided improved transportation to the area. Golden wheat harvests flowed from seemingly inexhaustible land. The wheat was hauled by rough roads to Burtch's Landing, now Newport, where the first steam boats on the Grand landed. These developments meant that farmers and merchants reached a certain state of affluence. Abraham Cooke became a sort of local merchant prince, and as William Sturgis noted to his brother John in an 1829 letter, "Thanks be to God for his mercies, we have very good times here now. Merchandise is very cheap and produce is a good price... this day David [his son] has gone to Ancaster with a load of wheat." Clearly the desolate days immediately after the war had passed, to be replaced with a prosperous economy and happy times. The prosperity brought by the opening of the Erie Canal also made local residents interested in a feeder link between the Welland Canal,



Haight Woollen Mill on Mount Pleasant Creek in 1911 before being demolished to make way for the Provincial Fish Hatchery building presently on the site. Photo from a series of postcards produced by Edwin J. Devlin. An unknown correspondent sent the postcard as a Christmas card, stating "this is a splendid picture of the old mill, keep it, there are no more." The mill site property was first owned by several leading settlers-cum-land speculators and promoters, including James Racey, Andrew Nelles, and Absalom Shade. One reference dates the mill to c1820, but M. Smyth dates it to 1842 when Elijah Haight built it as a carding and fulling mill. By 1870 it had become Potters Gristmill. No pictures of the Perrin Mill at Mud Hollow have survived, but it was said to be similar to the Haight Mill.



Haight Mill and flume. The mill pond was above and to the west of the mill on the ridge. The natural features of the mill site were extensively reconfigured when the fish hatchery ponds were created and the "upper" pond drained.

which opened closely on the heels of the Erie, and the Grand River. This interest would increase to a fever pitch in the next decade.

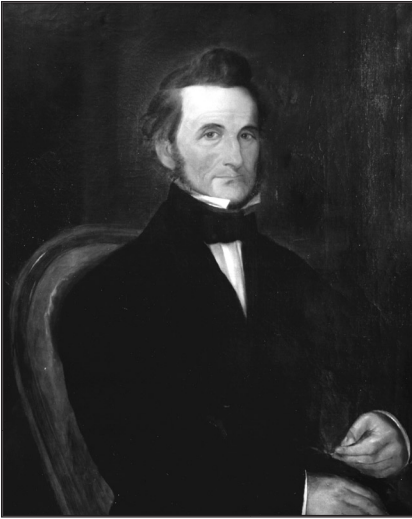
Canals were not the only developing means of travel. By the 1820s the roads were secure from American threat and traffic along them to lake ports was encouraged as commerce for communities with links to the ports began to boom. In these days of the stagecoach, travellers needed taverns, as the horses and people needed rest stops between trips. In a typical tavern in the 1820s on a trip from London to York, if one wanted a bed for the night one had to agree to “a companion” who might also want accommodation. This mirrored Susanna Moodie’s report in *Roughing It In The Bush* on the state of stagecoach travel in this period. “I thought to get a private room to wash and dress in, but there is no such thing as privacy in this country. In the bush all things are in common.” By 1830 locals reported improved roads in the district. Even though nearby Oakland could boast no stores, it touted “a good, gravelled road to Mount Pleasant.”

Even with the improvements in transportation the inland communities remained rather isolated, so settlers often had no way of learning local news except to ask passers-by. Sturgis family legend tells of a story concerning Amos Sturgis during his “sojourn in Ontario.” One day Amos came upon a man riding through Mount Pleasant and asked, “What news have you?” The man gruffly replied, “I am no news carrier,” and impatiently waved the Captain aside and urged his horse forward. Amos stepped forward and stopped the sleigh in which the gentleman was riding and informed him that one of George Washington’s captains was not accustomed to being addressed in that manner. The gentleman happened to be Colonel Thomas Talbot, a lively and courtly aristocrat and ardent promoter of settlement in Upper Canada. Given his desire for loyalty and orderliness and his vocal opposition to American settlers with their “tendency for insubordination and revolt,” it is not surprising that his first encounter with Sturgis was hostile. Yet, Talbot went on to welcome many American settlers to his lands in the south-western peninsula of the province, and family lore has it that he and Amos went on to have a lifelong friendship.

Another American from Mount Pleasant did not experience such a happy ending in the village. Epaphras Lord Phelps' return to the United States at the beginning of the war did not signal the end of his story. In fact after the war the issue of loyalty to Britain among American settlers was a constant worry for the colonial government and the fractious debate surrounding the government's attempts to limit voting and land holding rights of American-born Upper Canadians became known as the "Alien Question". As seems to be the case for so many events in Ontario history, Mount Pleasant had its own example of this debate as Epaphras' native wife Esther, faced with possible confiscation of the Phelps land, appealed the 1817 treason inquiry findings and petitioned to keep the land that had been granted to her husband by Joseph Brant. This would have been especially important since her sons Solomon and Hiram were reaching the age when they could begin to develop the land and re-assert the Phelps name there. In the ensuing court case entitled "The King vs. Phelps" held in 1823, the government declared Epaphras Lord Phelps an "alien." Therefore the land granted to him by Brant in a 999-year lease was claimed by the Crown since he had committed "high treason," as determined by an inquisition before Abraham Nelles, Esquire, and by the oath of William Nelles and others.

While Epaphras' actions at the beginning of the war aroused the suspicion of the governing officials, this charge of treason against him may have been more routine in Upper Canada than one might at first believe. The laws used by the government to claim the original land grant could be interpreted as a means of trying to differentiate American speculators or "land-jobbers" from authentic settlers. One way to do this was to judge the improvements made in the land such as the amount of acreage cleared and the number of buildings erected on the property. Epaphras had not had much time to improve the tract before he fled, and it would have been impossible for Esther to accomplish much in the years since the war with the absence of her husband and with young children to care for.

The Crown also ruled against Esther's claims to the land because, it argued, "she is a foreigner, and consequently no more entitled to hold lands than a Frenchman, or any foreigner, for the Indians are



Hiram Phelps (1804-1877), son of Epaphras Lord Phelps. Hiram was a successful gentleman farmer, Reeve of Brantford Township (1854), and much involved in local affairs. Hiram and his large family lived in the big frame house (now 513 Mount Pleasant Road) on the Phelps Tract. Records indicate that in 1870 Alfred Grantham built the house now at 531 Mount Pleasant Road for Hiram. That date coincides with Hiram selling his farm in 1872 to retire. Courtesy Linda (Phelps) Guest.

bound by the common law.” The court also ruled that even if title to the land were good, as in if Epaphras were not an “alien,” then the land would only be conveyed to him and not to her since she was considered only “chattel.” A man, the court ruled, cannot hold land in trust for his wife. Women evidently had few property rights in this era. Nevertheless, after another inquiry and the influence of the local Six Nations, the court eventually confirmed the family’s right to the land.

This would have been welcomed news, particularly for Solomon and Hiram Phelps, the young sons of Epaphras. Solomon, the older brother who was 14 at the start of the war, would go on to make a life for himself in Mount Pleasant with his wife Francis Dunn, from Nova Scotia. They married in 1829, and by the time of the 1851 census, they were living in a “brick cottage” with their 12-year-old son Arthur, the youngest of four boys including also William, Frederick and Alfred. Hiram, who was only a lad of 10 when his father fled, became a successful farmer with his American wife Maria Smith, from Boston, raising their eight children in Mount Pleasant. Their daughter Emeline, born in 1830, received a first class education in Hamilton and married a Methodist minister. Hiram and Maria’s son Walter, born in 1835, would go on to become the village dentist. Their

son Epaphras, named for his grandfather who he would never know, married Elizabeth Ann Devlin, the offspring of later Irish immigrants and farmed in the village. Their son Charles remained to farm the family land with his wife Frances Ann Guernsey. Epaphras' youngest child Elizabeth also remained in the village, marrying Morris Hardy a local blacksmith, thereby cementing the Phelps name with other important families in the community. The family's retention of their land after the departure of their father at the beginning of the war ensured that the Phelps name would continue to be prominent in Mount Pleasant, as the family continued to live in the village and



Family of Hiram Phelps c1877, possibly on the occasion of Hiram's death. The group includes Hiram's children and widow. Back row, left to right: Charles; Esther (Heath); Thomas Hiram; Epaphras Lord Phelps (2nd); Mary (Mussen). Front row, left to right: Martha (Buckingham); Hiram's wife Maria; Emeline (Preston), mother of T. H. Preston who bought the Brantford Expositor in 1900; Dr. Walter Phelps, Mount Pleasant dentist. The fact that Esther and Mary are not wearing caps indicates that they were unmarried when this photo was taken. Martha's husband was a newspaperman who owned the Simcoe Reformer and the Stratford Beacon, became private secretary to Prime Minister Mackenzie, and later MP for Stratford. Courtesy Linda (Phelps) Guest.



The “big, comfortable frame house” built c1840 by Hiram Phelps on the Phelps Tract not far from his old log house. Not visible is the large back wing or tail with its inset verandah. The Greek Revival style pedimented hood moulds over the lower windows resemble those on the Tennant octagon and the Eadie house (now Idylbrook) built in the same period. The pierced gable bargeboard is in a later style. Now 513 Mount Pleasant Road. Photo 2004 courtesy Jim Butler.

establish their own lives as “pioneers” in the atmosphere of hope and promise after the war.

Another new settler to the village ardently expressed the sense of joy and contentment achieved with the successful reconstruction of lives and property after the war that Esther must also have felt. In 1824 Peter McMullen wrote a letter to his son Peter Jr. near Digby, Nova Scotia, sharing his feelings of happiness at being in Mount Pleasant. The senior McMullen, an Anglican, had recently migrated from that Atlantic colony to Upper Canada in the late 1810s to be reunited with his wife Elizabeth, a Quaker, who had relocated first with some of the McMullen children. It was undoubtedly Elizabeth’s observation that “this is a good bread country” that confirmed Peter’s desire to join his family in Mount Pleasant. Their daughter Eleanor, along with her husband, merchant Frederick Yeoward, shared a comfortable life in the village with their sons Thomas and Richard

as a result of Frederick's mercantile interests. In fact, Peter noted that Yeoward "has left off business for awhile and has a very beautiful situation with lands and other property to maintain him genteelly; he is about 1/2 miles from me." Frederick travelled to the "head of Lake Ontario" to meet his father-in-law on his arrival from Nova Scotia; the entire trip cost him \$44 and included travelling 300 miles through the United States. Their other children in Mount Pleasant included daughter Elizabeth who married John McIntyre, a village cooper, and daughter Mary, whose husband John Fordham was "doing well in the carpenter business." Son George also worked at the carpenter trade, while daughter Maria Charlotte lived with her husband David Perrin on the Perrin family farm.

Once in the village, Peter, a man of an "advanced state of life," about age 75, bought 50 acres of land, of which 30 were already cleared. "I have not done much in the farming line, as I can easily earn two bushels of wheat a day. I have this year 10 acres of wheat and 5 of rye which looks good." He also bragged of the apple orchard of 60 trees on his property, from which he gathered 400 apples the year before. In addition he had a barn and "a good large log house,"



Charlotte McMullen Perrin, c1870. Peter McMullen's daughter Maria Charlotte, much loved in her community, married David Perrin, son of Capt. Thos. Perrin, Sr. Peter McMullen bought Capt. Amos Sturgis' farm and log cabin on Lot 9W, later the Townsend farm. The Perrin family farm was across the road on Lot 9E. Charlotte and David had a family of eight; sons William and Henry are shown as being on the Perrin farm in 1858. Charlotte and David's granddaughter Charlotte was a schoolteacher in Mount Vernon in 1871-72, returning to the community Thos. Perrin, Jr. established when he moved his milling business there from Mount Pleasant.

the entire property costing him “the sum of seven hundred and fifty dollars.” He was able to brag to his son that he now owned the deed since the bounty of the land allowed him to pay in full. “I would not take \$1,500 for my situation. I can stand in my door and see my sons-in-law’s houses on both sides of me...in fact I am like an old bee hive with all my bees around me, no situation could make me more happy or content.”

Peter’s happiness flowed from the bounty of the land and the joy of being surrounded by one’s family. As a result he concluded, “I cannot speak too highly of this country.” Nevertheless Peter had a few small complaints about his new home. “There is no hatter within 20 miles of me” and “the great stagnation of money” also troubled him. Such concerns over currency and luxury goods indicate that the traumatic years of the war and the labour of reconstruction were but distant memories. Settlers could now look to the future buoyed by bountiful wheat harvests and a growing community of families.

Chapter Four



“A Most Hearty Welcome” The 1830s

The 1830s represented a time of evolution for the community, as it did for all of British North America. The decade saw much political ferment, advancing the evolution from colony to self-government. The canals and stagecoach routes developed since the late 1820s provided increasing access for the remote inland settlers to more creature comforts. Perhaps Peter McMullen could finally rest easy with access to a hatter! This easier access also brought floods of immigrants to the area, with Upper Canada’s population doubling over the period from a quarter of a million in 1831 to a half a million in 1843. Many of these newcomers were heartily welcomed to Mount Pleasant. But this ease in communication and transportation also brought political unrest to the area, making for an often turbulent transformation from an isolated Upper Canadian settlement to a Canada West village.

One of these creature comforts would be access to regular medical care. While natural healers such as Allin Ellis and others who borrowed homeopathic remedies from the local natives helped keep the early settlers healthy, the developing village needed the services of a full time trained doctor. Dr. Lachlan MacLean came from Glasgow in 1830, becoming the first resident medically trained doctor in Mount Pleasant.

Another sign of the evolution from isolated settlement to permanent village was the organization of established churches. Religion was establishing itself in the colony and in the village and it signalled the

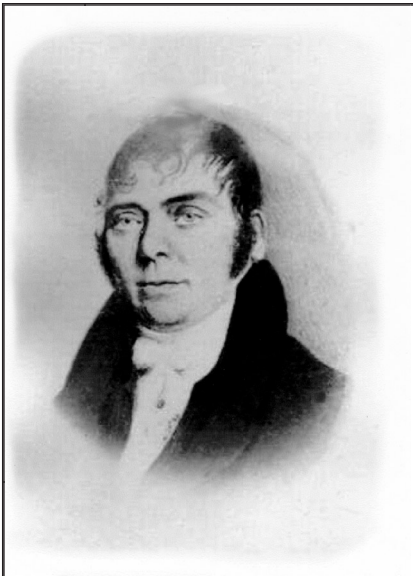
maturation of the community in this period. Still another of these amenities and a sign of more permanent establishment of the village was access to a resident minister. Mount Pleasant residents engaged the services of their first resident minister about 1828 with the arrival of John Bryning. He had earlier come from New Brunswick, then having followed his oldest son to the Long Point area, had been working as a schoolteacher. During his first few years in Canada he suffered from poor health and considered returning to his native England. In his early 50s, he had no formal theological training but his knowledge of the Bible, his firm grounding in the Church of Scotland and his talent as an orator soon created a demand for his services. Therefore, Mount Pleasant residents invited him to live permanently in the village, offering him farmland as an inducement. But he refused firmly, explaining that he was not a farmer, although he did accept enough land to build a house and start a garden. They also offered him the use of the village schoolhouse for services and it was there in 1830 that Bryning was ordained when the United Presbytery of Canada was established. And so he began a ministry of a quarter of a century in the village along with his wife Nancy Lee. Bryning has been described as “a great man in more senses



Nancy Lee Bryning (1799-1881), (undated photo, possibly c1870s). Nancy Lee was born in Geneva NY, daughter of Simeon Lee and Polly Tolles. How or when Nancy arrived in this area is undocumented, but she did have family in Oakland. Her Loyalist grandfather Dr. Ebenezer Lee and one of his sons, Dr. William Hooker Lee settled in Burford Gore (Oakland) in 1797. Following the death of Rev. John Bryning Nancy lived for a time and bought property in Illinois where her son Dr. Samuel Bryning and her daughter Amelia lived. Courtesy Delia and Michael O'Byrne, from Bryning descendants Yvonne Shultis and Kathy Hoenigman.

than one. Physically he was great; well proportioned and muscular." He was also reputed to have been an excellent horseman. But weighing over 400 pounds, he soon needed a carriage, and indeed he was one of the first in the vicinity to have such a luxury. In keeping with his substantial girth, legend also says he could eat a whole leg of mutton at a meal. Adhering to the prevailing social etiquette, the local parishioners would have welcomed him into their homes for special meals, providing him with the two chairs he allegedly needed to sit on.

A resident minister needed a permanent church building, another cultural refinement of the time. Rev. Bryning later described that "At a meeting held at the school house in Mount Pleasant in the year of Our Lord 1832" local residents realised that they needed "united efforts" to establish "a house to praise God in." And by necessity this would be a place of "common worship," called "Bethesda Chapel." The villagers decided that since the Episcopal Methodists and the United Presbyterians "then predominated," they would alternate use of the church on the Sabbath, and others such as the Canadian Wesleyan Methodists, Baptists, Quakers and Anglicans, could use it when not in use by them. And so together, as was the custom of



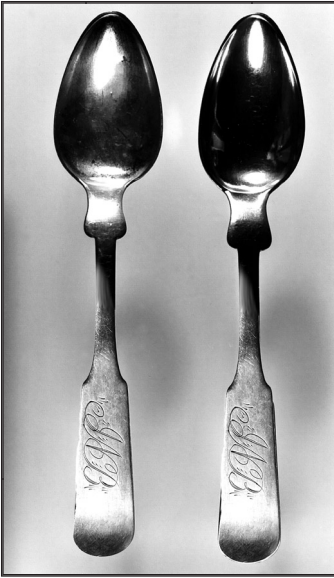
Rev. John Bryning (1770-1853), the "good and dauntless soldier of the cross," from a collotype done in England c1820 before he came to Canada. A man of fine attainments and culture, "gifted with a vigorous constitution and as vigorous a mind," Bryning taught school and organized churches in a circuit which included Forestville, Normandale, Simcoe, Norwich, Oakland, Scotland, Mount Pleasant, Burford, Paris, and Brantford, and played a critically important role in establishing social order in the new settlements. The towering Bryning was an excellent horseman, travelling up to 50 miles along Indian trails to preach every Sabbath at three different places, often without pay. Courtesy Delia and Michael O'Byrne, from Bryning descendants Yvonne Shultis and Kathy Hoenigman.



Bryning Manse, built c1830, pictured in 2002 with 1967 addition (right). Plainly visible on the well-travelled old road to Long Point, this Regency/Gothic board and batten cottage was home to the Bryning family and the symbol of pastoral care as Bryning ministered to his flock. It stood alone on its 8.5 acre lot on the east side of the road across from the Bethesda Chapel until the Tennant (1848) and Bryce (1853) homes were built to its north and All Saints Church (1845) to the south. Its architecture, restrained decoration, and humble scale reflect the essence of Bryning's Presbyterian character. In his waning years and in ill health Bryning sat at the front windows watching the life of the community he had been instrumental in building unfold. Brantford Expositor, photo by Christopher Smith. Courtesy present owners Delia and Michael O'Byrne.

the times, the community laboured to erect the church on land belonging to Abraham Cooke on the opposite side of the road from the land earlier turned over to Rev. Bryning for his manse and garden. The villagers referred to it alternatively as the Community Church and Bethesda Chapel.

A resident minister also, by definition, needed a place to live. The manse commissioned by Rev. Bryning reflected not only the architectural style of the era but also the man himself. It is an example of vernacular Regency/Gothic style, borrowing details from both trends in the transitory era of the 1830s. The numerous large ground floor windows, for example, showcase the popular Regency



Monogrammed Bryning silver spoons made about the time of the Bryning marriage (1826) from silver shoe buckles. Courtesy Kathy Hoenigman.

style of the 1830s, reflecting both the simplicity and graciousness of this style of the British gentry. By this period there were sufficient skilled British craftsmen in Upper Canada familiar with Regency architectural features to be able to execute the style. Yet at the same time, Upper Canadian homes were beginning to feel the influence of medieval Gothic trends, which reached the pinnacle of popularity later on in the 1850s. The pointed arch windows and steep gables of the manse, accentuated by the board and batten siding, illustrate the desire to “thrust always upwards,” particularly in a spiritual manner, while always remaining grounded in reality. The proportions and dignity of the manse reflect Rev. Bryning’s faith, his belief about his place in the community and his connection to Britain.

Rev. William Proudfoot, a pioneer Presbyterian preacher, recently arrived from Scotland, visited the area on his missionary travels in the 1830s. His diary gives us some insight into the pleasures as well as the challenges that Rev. Bryning must have experienced in ministering in Upper Canada in the 1830s. He noted in his diary that in November 1832 he went to Mount Pleasant and preached to a “full congregation” in the school after the meeting of the local Temperance Society, which was the reason for the congregation, and



Sampler stitched in 1842 by Amelia Emilene Bryning when she was 10 and living in the Bryning manse in Mount Pleasant. Embroidery, dressmaking, quilting and knitting were valued crafts among pioneer women, and young girls demonstrated their skill by making a sampler - in fact it was almost a religious duty. The alphabet, numerals, the Lord's Prayer or Bible verses, decorated with other motifs, were worked in different stitches on silk or cotton. The finished sampler, always with the maker's name and age, was then framed, and like this one, frequently became family heirlooms. Courtesy Kathy Hoenigman, great-niece of Amelia Bryning.

he spent the night with Rev. John Bryning. He “received from Mr. B. a most hearty welcome.” Proudfoot also introduces us to Bryning’s wife, Nancy Lee Bryning. Thirty years his junior and his second wife, Nancy was the descendant of a local pioneer physician who came to the area after the American Revolution from Farmington, Connecticut. According to Proudfoot, Bryning’s “partner is a warm



Rare sketch of a Methodist camp meeting. Methodist revivals, lasting a week or longer, were often held in forest clearings. The potent combination of the preacher's fury, huge night-time bonfires, singing, and crowds created a frenzied atmosphere of religious fervour and even hysteria. Some participants attended mainly for amusement or relaxation from toil and isolation. The unorthodox Methodists were often socially ostracized by the Anglican elite, but were unequalled in their educational and missionary work, with the camp meeting being the initial approach. The first camp meeting in Mount Pleasant was led by Rev. Peter Jones in 1825. Sketch of the first camp meeting held at Grimsby Park, Grimsby, August 25, 1859. Courtesy the United Church of Canada/Victoria University Archives, Toronto. 90.162P/2019 N.

hearted, active, smart woman who exerts herself beyond what ministers' wives are required to do in any place I have seen." Nancy had married John in 1826 as a young widow of just 27 with a child after her first husband had been killed in a boiler explosion. Her new role as a minister's wife would have provided her with both security and respectability, valuable commodities for widows in the early 19th century. Proudfoot also commented on the financial situation of the Brynings and of Upper Canadian ministers in general. "The income of Mr. B. from all places does not exceed \$200 in any year. From him I learned that Canadians are most unwilling to pay anything like a competence, and that if they are spoken to on the subject they will run off to other denominations and pronounce the man who asks a

selfish, greedy, money-loving man.” While worshippers cherished the idea of having a resident minister and a permanent church in their community, they apparently continued to be ruled by their instincts for thrift and frugality.

In 1833 Proudfoot once again visited the area. In his diary he complained heartily of the hardships in walking over muddy roads in his journey from the Thames area. Proudfoot was certainly not the first traveller to complain about the state of roads in Upper Canada. Others at the time described them as “notoriously bad” and traversing them in a wagon would result in “marvellous shocks” and inevitably a passenger “covered in mud” and “jarred and strained in every joint and ligament.” Captain Marryat, an Englishman who also visited the Brantford area in the 1830s graphically described the road to Brantford. “I can only say that it is very possible for a horse to be drowned in one of the ruts, and for a pair of them to disappear, wagon and all in a mud hole.” Proudfoot was hardly comforted when settlers chastised him for this complaining saying that the roads had been much improved over the previous decade. Proudfoot was also sceptical about another aspect of the geography of the place. He wondered about the name of Mount Pleasant, which he described as not a mount at all, “really just a ridge...lightly wooded...still all sandy.” Despite Proudfoot’s challenges with the topography of the area, once he “arrive[d] at Mount Pleasant, [Proudfoot once again] received a most hearty welcome from Mr. Bryning.” The Mount Pleasant resident minister then told Proudfoot “many of the difficulties he had to encounter coming into the country.” It seemed that Bryning’s trials in finally finding a place to settle were so numerous that Proudfoot realised that his own problems were small and that he had “no reason to complain.”

Despite the vibrant interdenominational community spirit demonstrated in the creation of the Community Church, ministering to the evolving religious needs of the village was not without its challenges. For example, Hamilton Biggar, son of Robert and Mary, attended one of the Methodist revival meetings often held in the area, and the experience, as explained by a descendant, “greatly quickened his religious life and implanted in him a strong desire

to preach the gospel." And so he converted from his Presbyterian upbringing and became a Methodist minister. As Rev. Bryning had noted in the description of the denominational make-up of Mount Pleasant, the Methodists were the most numerous among the settlers, along with the Presbyterians.

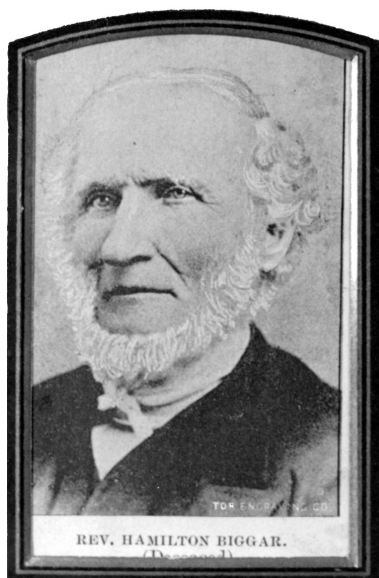
This conversion did not just affect Hamilton and the Biggar family, but would also have a ripple effect in the community. Eliza Racey, daughter of Squire James Racey, a devout Anglican, had also taken to visiting the meetings of the Methodists clandestinely with Hamilton, her beau. Eliza's love for Hamilton caused her to devise a way of surreptitiously leaving her home. She would first toss her bonnet and cape out of the upper window and then appearing below for a stroll, would dart out, pick up the appropriate clothing from beneath her window and leave for the meetings. The Methodists often held these meetings in a local carpenter's shop with Hamilton using the carpenter's bench as a pulpit. After one such occasion, her father met her at the door and said very gravely, "Well, Betty [as she was often called] I see you still have your own way."

Such instances of country courtship had their difficulties, as William Briggs described in his *Pen Pictures of Early Pioneer Life in Upper Canada*. "Sometimes the neighbourhood was startled by the announcement of a runaway marriage, the daughter of some well-to-do farmer eloping, with some...objectionable person of whom her parents disapproved." This is exactly what happened in 1832 when Eliza and Hamilton "eloped." Her young sister Charlotte decorously accompanied the couple to nearby Sour Springs Mission where Methodist minister Reverend Richard Phelps wed the lovers. Because the Racey family was Anglican, Eliza's father James was not happy about this, calling Methodists "Dissenters." But the young couple was soon welcomed to holiday feasts at the Racey Log Castle. Such feasts would have been sorely missed by Eliza and Hamilton if such a reconciliation had not been made. According to one of James' grandsons in a later memoir, "we shall never forget the Christmas gatherings. Such dinners. On festive occasions the tables laden with roast turkey, duck, chicken, beef, plum pudding, mince pie and sweets, old fashioned striped candy, hickory nuts, walnuts and butternuts and, after the dinner,

dear Uncle Henry [Eliza's brother] playing the fiddle adding to our pleasure." Eliza would have also joined in, as her son remembered her as a "sweet singer."

Despite this show of familial understanding fostered by the Racey family's known unity and devotion, denominational divisions continued to solidify throughout the community. By the 1830s, the government's attempts to have the Church of England imposed as the established church in Upper Canada clearly failed as other denominations flourished. Various independent or American dominated groups became linked with local Canadian churches, creating unique and locally authentic denominations. As such, Rev. Hamilton Biggar and his brother Herbert, along with Mount Pleasant wagon maker Alvah Townsend, helped organise the Brantford Methodist Circuit in 1835 in Mount Pleasant to include the newly united Episcopal and Canadian Wesleyan Methodists to form a stronger village congregation.

The egalitarian Methodists, with their emphasis on fellowship, independence, and individual salvation, would have appealed to people such as Hamilton Biggar and Eliza Racey. Travelling



Rev. Hamilton Biggar (undated photo), born Queenston, Ontario in 1806, son of village pioneers Robert and Mary Lauder Biggar. Following his conversion to Methodism in 1827, he preached in a local carpenter shop, then served as a missionary and minister in various posts, including Salt Springs and Rice Lake, until his retirement in 1852. His career included two years as Treasurer of Victoria College and fourteen years as Treasurer of the County of Brant. His son Charles succeeded him as County Treasurer. The Biggar home "Maple Terrace" still stands at 463 Mount Pleasant Road. From the Biggar family albums. Courtesy Brant Historical Society.



Eliza Phelps Racey, wife of Rev. Hamilton Biggar, (undated photo). The spirited Eliza Racey who defied her influential, conservative father Squire James Racey to elope in 1832 with the "dissenter" evangelical Methodist minister is portrayed in her maturity looking decorous and rather prim as the respectable wife of a successful career minister and civic official. She and Hamilton raised their children with a strict sense of duty and frugality. Their prized 3-ply carpet was moved ten times, the last to Maple Terrace, and made to last for over thirty years. From the Biggar family albums. Courtesy Brant Historical Society.

ministers on horseback or on foot, called "circuit riders," had come from the United States with the first Loyalists, and following John Wesley's dictum, "The World is my Parish," they brought the social connection and comfort of religion to many in isolated areas without resident clergy. Their emotional and fervent camp meetings attracted many young pioneers, especially as the meetings perhaps provided something that their own more conservative services did not. This socialising effect helps account for the increasing popularity of Wesleyan Methodism in Mount Pleasant as across Upper Canada. As Amelia Ryerse Harris noted in her memoirs of life at Long Point in the first decades of the 19th century, "Too much cannot be said in praise of the early [Methodist] ministers...they bore every privation and fatigue, praying and preaching in every house where the doors were not closed against them...(receiving the smallest pittance for their labour." Hamilton and Eliza set out on such a life, moving from community to community, spreading their passion in their faith. As they began their new life following Hamilton's ministry from place to place, "privations, sufferings, disappointments and denials" often accompanied them. Yet through it all, as a later *Christian Guardian* article emphasised, Eliza's "economy and self-denial fed the fountain of her benevolence."

By this point, another government policy intended to promote an established church in the colony came into question. The government originally set aside land, known as Clergy Reserves, to benefit the “established church,” but by the 1830s the question arose as to which denominations would benefit from the proceeds of the land. Besides the Anglican Church, the Church of Scotland managed to secure a share but this understandably upset the Methodists and Baptists, for example. Upper Canadians passionately opposed any sort of state control or influence over religious freedoms. This largely theoretical issue became very personal in the community, when Rev. Bryning secured himself a small pension from the Church of Scotland beginning in 1833. The local Presbyterians who remained outside the official Church resented this action, believing that their minister would now have to put the wishes of the church hierarchy before their own needs and desires. Despite the evident love the Mount Pleasant flock felt for John Bryning, some villagers resented him for seeking assistance when no others received any type of social security. The concept of “voluntarism” was highly regarded in this era of self-reliance. Rev. Proudfoot had noticed this when he bemoaned Bryning’s poor income and the parishioners’ charges of greed if he asked for more.

The mainstream Protestant denominations were not the only ones having an influence on the souls of Mount Pleasant residents at this time. In 1833 a group of missionaries, led by Joseph Smith, visited Mount Pleasant on behalf of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and organised the first Canadian Mormon congregation, and it was through this endeavour that the Nickerson family introduced Mormonism to the area. Moses and Freeman Nickerson came to Mount Pleasant from New York State in 1830. The brothers opened a store in the village, capitalising on the thriving wheat economy and the developing transportation systems such as the stagecoach system between Hamilton and Simcoe. Freeman soon married Mount Pleasant resident Eliza McAlister, the daughter of the local innkeepers, Samuel and Elizabeth, and the brothers appeared to be settling down to a happy life in their adopted home in the village.

Three years after settling in Upper Canada, Moses, the eldest brother, journeyed back to New York State to visit his parents, Huldah Chapman and Freeman Sr. on their prominent farm near Buffalo. Moses found that his parents had been recently baptised as Mormons and he "was favourably inclined towards the doctrines preached and requested my parents to have some of the elders visit us in Canada." So the elder Nickersons came to preach as missionaries in Mount Pleasant in 1833 along with Sidney Rigdon and prophet Joseph Smith from the Mormon headquarters in Ohio. According to Smith the visitors preached at the Nickerson's "fine, new store" where they met "a large assembly, at Mount Pleasant...The people have good heed to the things spoken; the people were very tender and inquiring... after which I baptised twelve and others were deeply impressed and desired another meeting." The local mill pond served as an ideal spot for the visiting Mormons for baptisms, as a picnic spot and as a watering hole. After less than two weeks, the visitors returned to New York after baptising upwards of 16 locals including Freeman and his wife Eliza and her father Samuel McAlister.

But not all in the area responded so favourably to the missionaries. A Wesleyan Methodist preacher, Rev. Rose, encountered the Mormons while in Mount Pleasant and related his less than approving experiences in a letter to his brother. "When I reached Mount Pleasant, I found a couple of preachers had been there the day before, who are of the Sect of the Mormonites...But what to you may appear most strange is that 14 persons at this place joined them." What was "most strange" for Rose was that "those miserable imposters," as he called them, could possibly be "taking away some of our members." Rose's words are illustrative of the zeal of the other religious denominations in opposing what they called "Mormonism." Along with the Methodists, the other mainstream Protestant forces in Upper Canada, the Anglicans and Presbyterians, vilified the Mormons for a variety of apparent sins: luring away their own adherents, promoting a suspicious "new" Bible, and spreading "Yankee" or American ideals.

Despite this general disdain in the province and Rose's harsh words, the initial conversion period must have been followed by

sustained religious activity in Mount Pleasant. A few months later, in December of 1833, Moses Nickerson wrote to Smith thanking him for his “labours while in Canada” which “have been the beginning of a good work. There are thirty-four members attached to the church at Mount Pleasant, all of whom appear to live up to their profession.” He also wrote of locals speaking and singing “in tongues.” The new denomination also established local congregations at Brantford and Colborne, near Simcoe.

The attraction of Mormonism to the villagers of Mount Pleasant and area is not surprising given the environment of religious zeal and excitement at the time that produced millennial movements and revivalism. Upper Canadians welcomed the Mormon missionaries and their promises of a new inner spirituality revealed through reappearing prophets on earth. Regardless of the initial success in the area, however, many of the new converts soon left Mount Pleasant. The reasons are unclear but seem to include religious, personal and political motivations. A major tenet of the Mormon religion is the doctrine of the “gathering,” or moving to a designated “Zion.” Freeman’s wife Eliza, only 23, died in 1835, possibly prompting his actions. He sold his store to fellow Mormon convert Richard Strobridge in 1837. Eliza’s death would have also greatly affected her parents, who had recently lost their son Owen to a carpentry accident and also their younger daughter Fanny.

The Nickerson brothers initially moved to Port Dover on Lake Erie but during the 1837 Rebellion moved to the United States because of Moses’ “lively interest in favour of the reform cause.” In fact, beyond Moses’ reputed association with William Lyon Mackenzie and the rebels, which earned him an indictment as a traitor, Mormons in general had been painted as radical religious dissenters with the same brush as Mackenzie’s followers, who had been branded radical political reformers with “Yankee” ideals. Therefore Mormons earned the wrath of not only the established Protestant churches but also the loyal supporters of the British Crown. After moving to the United States, the Nickersons and the other Mount Pleasant Mormons found that “Mormons had been driven out” of many areas so they travelled frequently and widely in Canada and the United States. As a result

of this out-migration and the association of Mormonism with the disloyal and dissenting, the Mormon Church in the Upper Canada region, including Mount Pleasant, declined during the period of the Rebellion. This visit of the Mormons obviously caused considerable disruption in the village and district homes as the local conversions from traditional denominations helped rock the tenuous balance that villagers had struck between the traditional denominations.

But despite this denominational ferment, villagers continued to practise their respective religions and observe the rituals associated with life's great events. In 1831 the government passed an act recognising civil wedding ceremonies such as the first wedding in the area between Allin Ellis and Hannah Sturgis a quarter of a century earlier. This act acknowledged the former shortage of clergy in the province, but now with resident clergy in the area, and religious denominations establishing themselves, it had little impact on most young brides and grooms.

Jane Ellis, the daughter of Allin and Hannah, and Herbert Biggar, the son of Robert and Mary were one such couple. Their marriage certificate, dated April 28, 1831, declares Herbert Biggar "of the Salt Spring Grand River" and Jane Ellis of Mount Pleasant, publicly united in "Holy Banns of Matrimony" by Methodist minister Rev. Joseph Gatchelle. John H. Truman and Robert Biggar witnessed the union. As Caniff Haight noted in his reminiscences of his boyhood days in Upper Canada in the 1830s, "There was but little attempt at display...[in the] manner the young folks wedded. No costly trousseau, no wedding tours. A night of enjoyment with friends, and the young couple set out at once on the practical journey of life." Jane and Herbert commenced this journey by settling in the lovely brick home that earned a reputation of "a place at a table" and "a bed" for any needy passer-by. They also owned the first piano in the village. Their daughter Martha, a talented musician, held choir practice there. Herbert was also known as a staunch Reformer, and the secret exit that was known to be in his home possibly would have been used during the Rebellion of 1837. The marriage between Jane and Herbert further solidified family ties as well as establishing

community ties between original pioneer families and newer, post-War of 1812 settlers.

That same year, 1831, another young Mount Pleasant woman, representing the next generation of pioneer families, was wed. Jane Racey, daughter of James and Ann and sister of Eliza, had what was described as a “high fashion” wedding at her family home, the Log Castle. She married a Hamilton lawyer, Miles O’Reilly, in a lovely Anglican ceremony. According to contemporary writer William Briggs in *Pen Pictures of Early Pioneer Life in Upper Canada*, “Among well to do people [the country wedding] was generally made into the occasion of much merry-making, all the friends and acquaintances of the contracting parties being invited to the festivity.” Following this fashionable event Jane rode away with her young husband to their new home in Hamilton. Her new life could not contrast more dramatically to the life of a travelling minister chosen by her sister Eliza. In keeping with the status of a young urban lawyer on a path towards a judgeship, Jane and Miles enjoyed luxuries such as servants, a governess, and a coachman. As Rev. Proudfoot noted of the elegant class in Upper Canada, “the better class have things just as in Edinburgh, only less of it and not so costly.” Despite the trappings of wealth and society Jane continued the charitable tradition passed down to her from her mother Ann. In her position of prominence in Hamilton, Jane, along with Miles, helped nurse the sick during the cholera epidemic that struck the province the following year, in 1832.

A third couple also joined the ranks of the blissfully wedded in Mount Pleasant in the early 1830s. In 1833 Rev. Bryning united Russell Hardy and Juletta Sturgis in marriage. Juletta was the granddaughter of original pioneers Amos and Rachel Sturgis, and the daughter of William Sturgis and Rebecca McKinney. Russell was one of the Hardy siblings in Mount Pleasant who included his older sisters Eleanor Cooke and Mary Nelles.

These three Mount Pleasant brides, Jane Ellis, Jane Racey, and Juletta Sturgis, although wed by clergy under different religious denominations, had much in common. They represented three of



Mr. and Mrs. McEwen, believed to be Archibald McEwen and his wife Agnes Kinnear from Glasgow whom he married in 1839. This identification fits with the inclusion of these photos in the Biggar family albums because these equally prominent families shared social, political and church connections. Also, the fine 1850s-1860s period dress suggests the wealth and social position enjoyed by the McEwens. Archie was a prosperous merchant, farmer, and landowner with over 600 acres at the time of his death. He was prominent in educational and municipal affairs as Reeve of the Township of Brantford (1857-1863) and Warden of the County of Brant (1862). As described by a descendant, Mrs. McEwen was a "lady" who did no work and was waited on by her husband. They had six sons and two daughters - two sons left Mount Pleasant, the others remained. The two daughters and one son never married. From the Biggar family albums. Courtesy Brant Historical Society.

the pioneer families of the area and their marriages solidified ties with other important families, the Hardys and the Biggars. Yet beyond this, they would have also fretted, as their wedding days approached, like every other pioneer bride, whether they had accumulated sufficient stores of linens and household items to establish the marital home in which to start their families. Household furniture, commonly made of native wood such as the prevalent black walnut of the area, did not come cheaply, as Scottish traveller Adam Fergusson reported for Upper Canada in the 1830s. A high post bedstead, for example, cost £2, half a blacksmith's income for a month. Despite the hardships and discomforts that were surely to come, brides such as these, along with their new husbands, became, as Jean Waldie has put it, "the foundation builders of Ontario."

Juletta Sturgis and Russell Hardy did their part to build up the population of the province. They went on to have eleven children, many of whom would go on to marry into other Mount Pleasant families. Perhaps with this large future family in mind, Russell opened a store in the village the year after his marriage to Juletta and became a country merchant with the family living and working in the same dwelling. As a devout Methodist, Russell often welcomed ministers travelling in the area to stop at his store overnight.

Another indication of the evolution of Mount Pleasant towards a more settled community was the continuing influx of immigrants from the British Isles in response to official government encouragement to migrate to British North America. Archibald McEwen, for example, came to Mount Pleasant in 1830 from Scotland, where he had been a crofter and a sheep farmer. The 25-year-old McEwen had just



Archibald McEwen House, as it appeared c1900. Mount Pleasant builder Jno. Lloyd Jones built this handsome Italianate “show of achievement” for Archibald McEwen on Lot 1W in 1863. Even without the shutters and elaborate verandahs the house still commands attention at 819 Mount Pleasant Road. The McEwens took up where the Cookes of Brucefield left off entertaining the village elite, and in keeping with the social norms of the period, held an annual ball. A descendant stated that the McEwen store built in 1850 was behind the house and that “Gr. Grandmother (Mrs. McEwen) was terrified of the Indians who came in and slept by her there.” Courtesy present owners Janice and Carl Lemke.

landed in Montreal where he met Abraham Cooke, who was in that bustling port city buying stock for his store. Cooke invited the new immigrant to come to Mount Pleasant to go into business with him as a storekeeper. Archibald later married Agnes Kinnear, and together they became involved in the life of their community and raised their large family in the village.

Thomas Grantham was another settler from the British Isles to follow his dream to the New World around this time. He was born in Yorkshire in 1809, came to Canada as a young man of 18 in 1827 and settled at York, learning the blacksmithing trade. After earning enough money to buy his own land, Thomas came to Mount Pleasant in 1832 and worked as a farmer. In 1840 he married Ruth Gurnett Silverthorn, a widow from Sussex, England. His farm quickly prospered and expanded. He would take 30 bushels of wheat to Dundas and sell it for fifty cents a bushel in trade. The trip must have been arduous, taking two days. He also sold potatoes for ten cents a bushel. The Grantham family was among the Mount Pleasant families to attend the First Baptist Church in Brantford. Mount Pleasant merchant Francis Foster and his wife Rachel often accompanied the Granthams on this trip. This was not an uncommon trek, from Mount Pleasant to Brantford, and a well-trodden path stood testament to this journey. Ruth and Thomas had a son Alfred who became a builder in Mount Pleasant. Their daughter Alice married Dugan McEwen, of the McEwen family who were also part of the same early 1830s migration to Mount Pleasant from the British Isles.

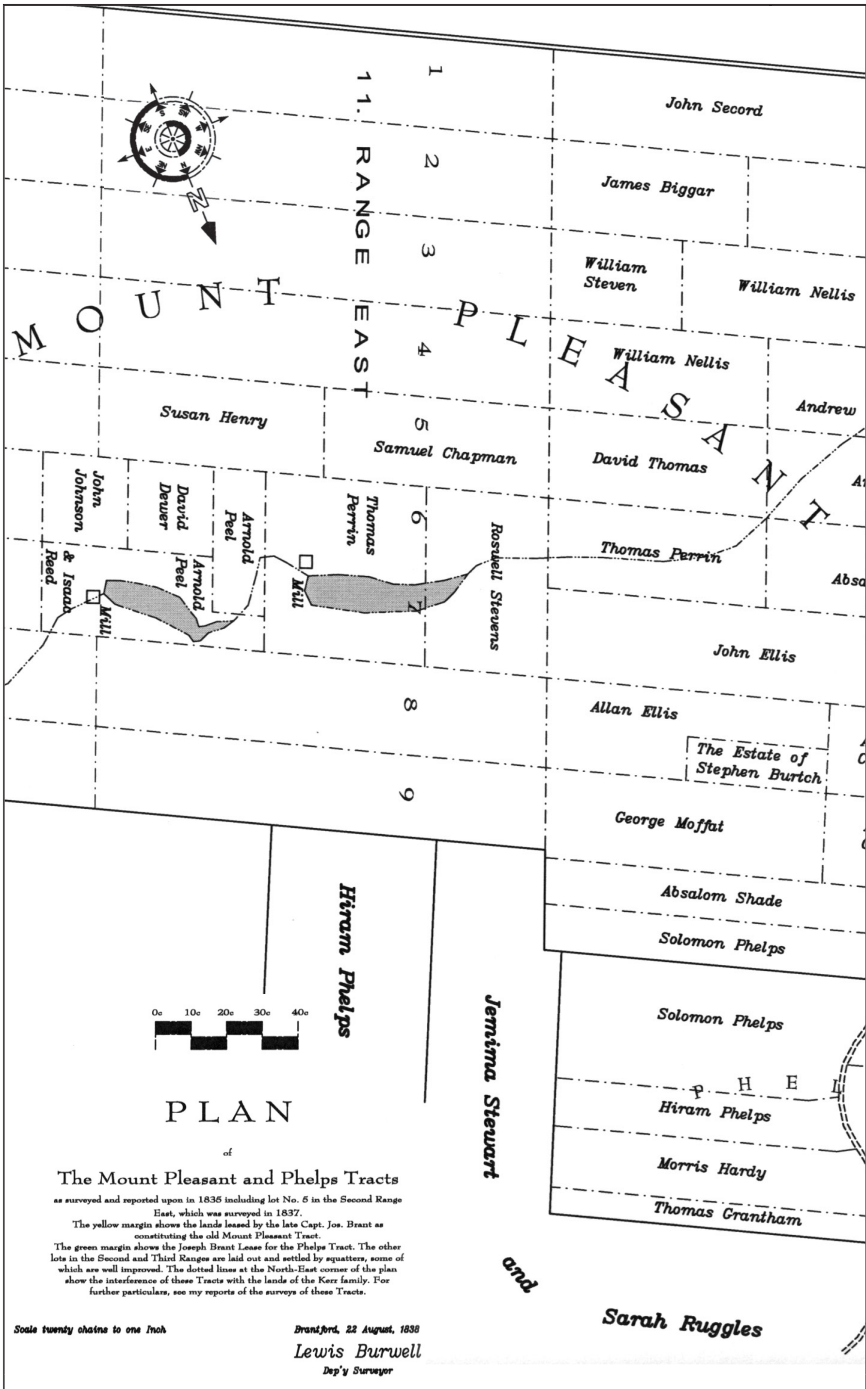
Permanence in the village also came in the guise of more formalised land holdings. New settlers such as the McEwens and Granthams had every reason to desire more regularised property holdings. In 1812 the government launched a formal investigation into the legality of the original Brant leases, finding no evidence to prove that Brant did not have the trust of the majority of the natives in conveying away large areas of land transferred under his sole agency. Regardless of the outcome of such investigations, the intensification of settlement obviously made it too late to set aside the original deeds. The uncertainty surrounding the original leases was made worse as leaseholders died or moved away in the intervening years and families

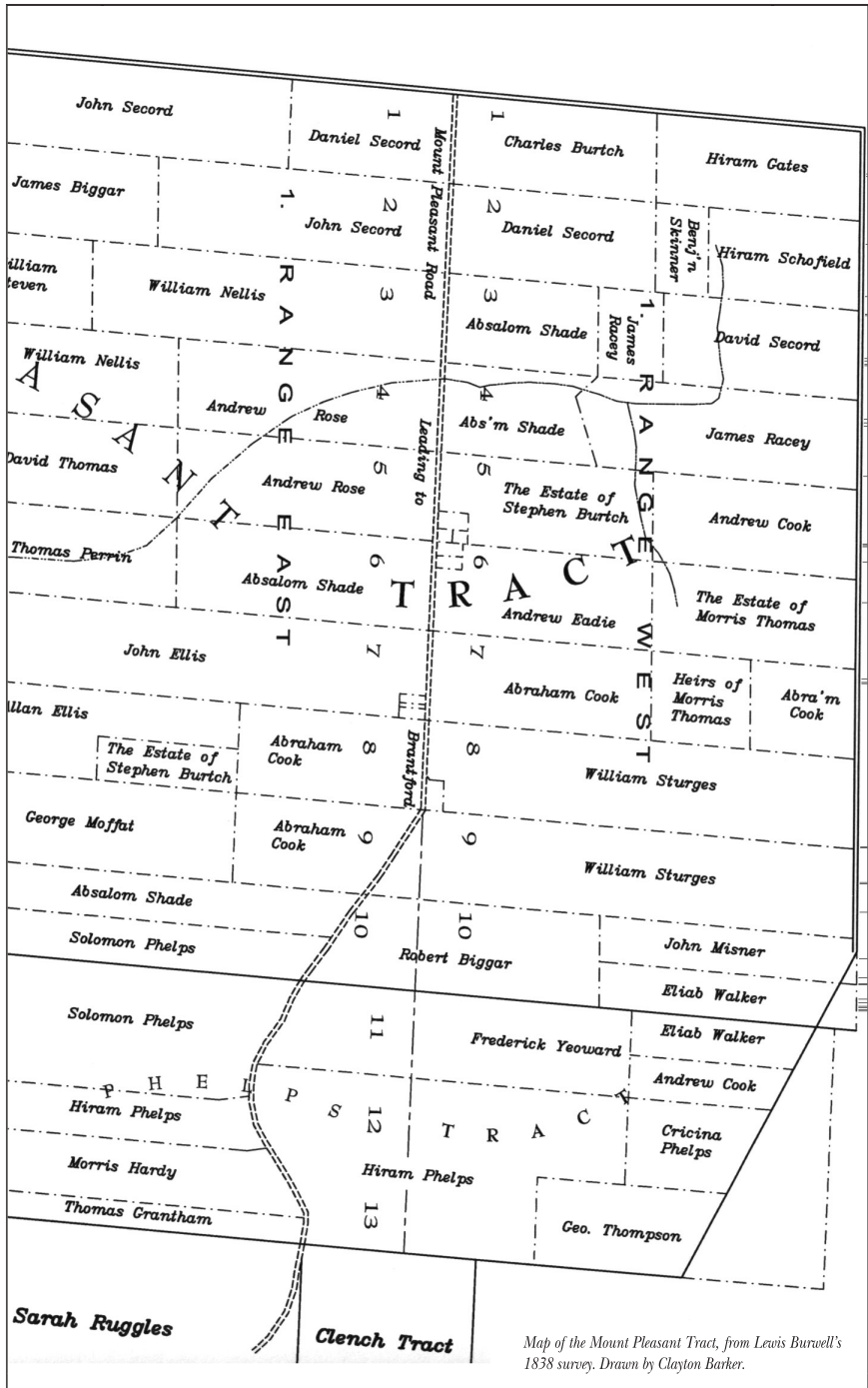
and neighbours disputed the original leases. For example, when Henry Ellis died in 1831 in his early 80s, his sons quarrelled over who should inherit the family farm. Finally the government confirmed these deeds following another investigation. In 1832 the government asked settlers to present claims for ownership in the Grand River lands so that Crown deeds could replace the original 999-year leases issued by Brant. Among the many who did so were two of the settlers who had come to the area as young men. William Sturgis and John Ellis wrote to the government claiming lands leased by Brant in 1801. In the case of William, he had received his 150 acres on the west side of “the road leading to Long Point” directly from Brant, while John had inherited his 200 acres on the east side from his father Henry. By 1835 the Six Nations ceded the land for Brantford Township and so Crown deeds began to be issued.

Understandably, this surrendering of land by the natives has been viewed as controversial, but from the perspective of the overall history of the area, it can be seen as pivotal to opening up the area to rapid settlement and development. Throughout the 1830s the wall of forest that had isolated Mount Pleasant from Brantford eventually disappeared before the pioneer’s axe. With these new deeds settlers now had title to their lands confirmed and any doubt about the legitimacy of Brant’s land grants could now be dispelled. In 1838 and 1840 respectively, William Sturgis and John Ellis received Crown deeds to replace the 999-year leases granted by Brant. This new system of landholding addressed an important concern voiced by the Mount Pleasant respondents to Gourlay’s Questionnaire over 20 years earlier in 1817. As part of this regularisation of landholding, the government instituted a new survey of the native lands. Beginning in 1834 Lewis Burwell, armed with his surveyors chains, not to mention his patience and tact, traced out as best he could the tangle of land transactions that had occurred over 35 years and recorded the various land holdings in a series of maps of the local area. His 1838 map of Mount Pleasant (p. 112-113) reveals orderly plots of land dotted with the names of early settlers and newer migrants, extending out from the “Mount Pleasant Road to Brantford” and traversed by the meandering Grand River creeks.

With this settlement of the landholding issue, the mid-1830s was an opportune time for people like Russell Hardy and Archibald McEwen to invest in the future as merchants. Furthermore, by mid-decade Mount Pleasant merchants were teaming wheat that they bought from farmers east past the Ellis farm down what they called Mill Road (Maple Avenue). They turned north at Mud Holler, then slanted cross-country to Brown's sawmill, to Burtch's Landing, or on to Hamilton. At one time it is said that the horses' noses touched the tailboard of the wagon in front of them. At the river they met the steamboats, which went on to Buffalo or Montreal. The empty wagons could then return to Mount Pleasant filled with goods for the village shops, including some luxury items which villagers did not have access to earlier.

This wheat boom flourished as a result of the major canal projects of the previous decade. As Bruce Hill explains, this canal fever spread to the Grand River area by the early 1830s, simultaneously with the construction of other smaller canals in the province. While the Grand River was a splendid river for traditional canoe travel or for flat-bottomed boats during high water season, it was not navigable between Brantford and Lake Erie for large scale wheat or other mercantile transportation without technological improvements. The Mount Pleasant settlers gathered at Frederick Yeoward's in 1817 had voiced such a problem. Many interested parties, from as far away as Galt and Waterloo to the north, petitioned to have a canal company incorporated for such a purpose. Promoters compared transportation by land and by canal and stunned locals with their findings; shipping one barrel of flour by land from Brantford to Burlington Bay cost three shillings, while canal travel cost only one pence. James Racey distinguished himself as one of the local promoters of this vast improvement in transportation, not surprising given his extensive political and business interests in the area. Although the plan had its critics, and became entangled with land claims by the Six Nations, the Grand River Navigation Company obtained its charter in 1832. Construction of locks and dams to facilitate navigation along the Grand continued through the 1830s with wheel steamers and barges plying the waters between Buffalo and Brantford being the ultimate goal.





The improvement in navigation on the Grand drew business interests to Brantford away from Mount Pleasant, capitalising on the spectacular growth of Brantford in the early 1830s. During that time “the flourishing beautiful town...has increased in a more rapid rate, than any other town in the upper province,” noted the Company’s Board of Directors in 1835. The canal’s development of the entire length of the Lower Grand also sparked growth in neighbouring communities at the locations of the new dams and locks. Nevertheless, Mount Pleasant residents continued to benefit from the convenience of developing transportation routes and new settlers continued to flock to the village, whether it was for the fertile farms or family reunification.

The superior transportation by the roads and canals that were bringing in all these settlers brought the bad as well as the good. A cholera epidemic swept the area in 1834, a local incidence of a worldwide phenomenon brought in by the very settlers who were also developing the place. It was to the north in Waterloo County in late July claiming settlers’ lives. There is no direct evidence that Dr. MacLean helped his local patients cope with the scourge of cholera in Mount Pleasant, though, as Margaret Smyth notes, there are many headstones in the Mount Pleasant cemetery dating from the 1830s that may signal the existence of the plague among the local settlers. Unquestionably they would have feared the coming of the deadly disease, adding to the sense of flux and change going on around them as the area developed.

Despite the prosperity of farms and the developments in transportation, in the early 1830s the United States was doing much better economically than Upper Canada and the area lost settlers to the allure of the American mid-west and economic promise of the many American urban centres. But many at the time forecasted a boom in Upper Canada’s prosperity. Scottish advocate Adam Fergusson did just that on his visit in 1831. Even though he observed “a notable frog-concert outside” when he stayed at a local tavern near “the Ouse,” or Grand River, pointing to the enduring frontier character of the area, he also noted the potential for future development. He later published a book based on his travels and it

tells of his trip with William Dickson from Galt to Paris and on to Brantford at the time when Brantford had just been laid out in town lots. During this trip they examined two such properties for sale, and Fergusson noted that they appeared to consist of good useful land, and were well-watered by copious springs with a limestone bottom. He concluded, "the situation was extremely pleasant," with "tolerable houses," access to both the river and the public road and half the acreage cleared and fenced. The farms, he noted, cost 40s per acre. He also noted other commercial prices while on his trip to this area of Upper Canada: a horse cost £7, a plough sold for £3 and a sofa, surely a luxury for most settlers, was £12. Several Mount Pleasant businessmen took advantage of the opening up of lands in Brantford in order to expand their interests in the area. By this point Brantford had a population of "350 souls" according to Scottish traveller Captain Gilkison. Abraham Cooke and Thomas Grantham purchased lots on Colborne Street, William Nelles bought a lot on Dalhousie Street, and James Racey acquired land on Darling Street.

The continuous improvement in the situation of pioneer families in the village in the 1830s reinforced the potential for prosperity noted by travellers such as Fergusson. Twenty-year-old David Burtch, son of pioneers Stephen and Margaret, established himself in his own right in 1835 when he married Anna Smith. He farmed his father's farm in Mount Pleasant, which was described as "well stocked and under superior cultivation." He also continued to maintain the family's large landholdings in nearby Burtch. David improved the family residence, originally a log house near the creek, by later building a large brick home closer to the village. This improvement in homes by later generations of pioneer families indicated in a public and outward manner that they "had arrived." David also served his community as a Justice of the Peace and an active member of the local Baptist congregation. Sadly, Anna died, leaving David a widower. But he soon found love again, marrying Nancy Ann Clark in 1861. David and Anna's son, Stephen, born in 1840 and named for his grandfather, the original pioneer, lived in the fine brick home and farmed that place, carrying on the Burtch name in the community.

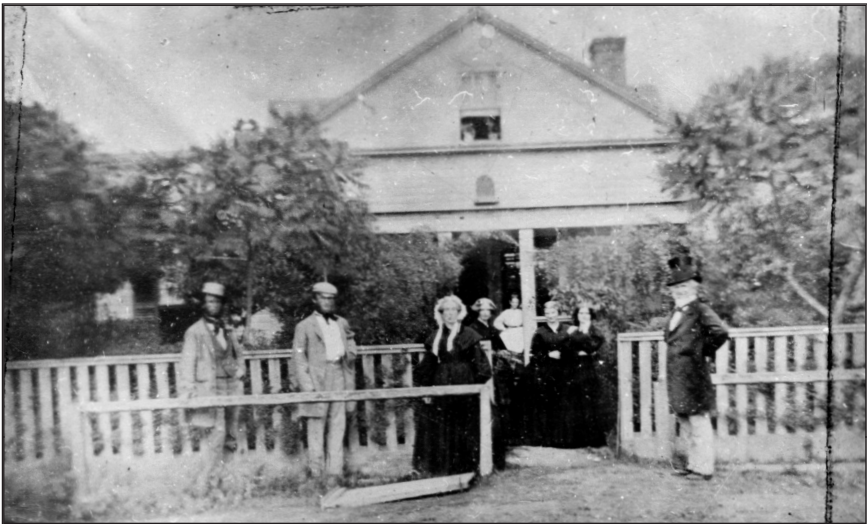
While men such as David Burtch played key roles in the history of the development of Upper Canada, women also played the role of pioneer. In 1837, Isabella MacLean MacDonald, a 31-year-old widow, came to Mount Pleasant from Scotland to join other members of her family, including her sisters Margaret, Martha and Elizabeth, her mother, and another relation Dr. Lachlan MacLean, the first resident medical doctor in the village. After her husband John died she experienced financial problems, so she packed up her sons John Jr. and James, daughter Isabella as well as her orphaned 12-year-old nephew John MacLean and moved to the New World.

Often history emphasises the trials and struggles of pioneer men, yet the women of Upper Canada struggled alongside their husbands, fathers and brothers. Women such as Isabella MacLean MacDonald came to the New World alone and started up new lives for themselves and their children, with the pioneering experience transforming them and their roles in the same way that pioneers are traditionally seen as transforming the physical environment. These pioneering women also suffered privations and difficulties along the way. For example, in 1843 Isabella's sister Martha "died very suddenly" according to a letter written by Mary Nelles, and three years later Elizabeth also passed away. And then in another three years Isabella received word that her son James had died "when his disease took an unfavourable turn" while he was working in Buffalo. Despite the death of her sisters and then her son, Isabella thrived in Mount Pleasant, especially after meeting Andrew Eadie through her sister Margaret. Andrew, described as "a remarkable man," was the town cooper and innkeeper, and the brother of Margaret's husband John Eadie.

All the MacLean sisters had received superior schooling in Scotland, leading Elizabeth to set up one of the few respectable revenue-producing occupations available to widows and single women at that time. She began a dame school for very young children with the assistance of her sister Martha. After both sisters died, Isabella and Margaret took over the duties in the Dame's School. In an 1843 letter to Scotland, Andrew Eadie wrote that the MacLean family lived close by and that the Misses MacLean taught his little girls. Many Mount

Pleasant residents including Emeline Phelps, born in 1830 and George Bryce, born in 1844, recalled attending the Dame's School as young children.

This emphasis on education pervaded the Eadie home. John MacLean, the nephew of Isabella and Margaret, received a wonderful education from his Aunt Margaret and Uncle John, "one embracing a wider course of reading than fell to the lot of a boy." He built on this education, going on to edit the *Hamilton Times* and the *Toronto World* where he was noted for his protectionist views, and some argue that he was the true author of the National Policy designed to stimulate Canadian manufacturing by imposing high protective tariffs. He used his editorials to promote protectionism and eventually his ideas won at the polls with the election of 1878, which saw the triumphant return of Prime Minister John A. Macdonald and the establishment of the National Policy. In 1844 Andrew became a widower, having



Andrew Eadie (2nd left), landowner, innkeeper, cooper, farmer, posed in front of his house on his farm "Black Hill" with family members in an old daguerrotype from the 1850s. Herbert Biggar, in his trademark silk top hat, brother of Eadie's first wife is on the far right. The women are thought to be Eadie's second wife Mrs. MacDonald (left); her daughter Isabella, later Mrs. A. W. Ellis (in background); her stepdaughters (foreground). The Loyalist style Eadie house, dated to c1820, was among the village's earliest frame houses. It may have been the "Speed the Plough" inn, although M. Smyth suggests the inn was a separate building on the same lot. The house later became the home of A. Wallace Ellis.



Eadie/Ellis House in the 1940s when owned by the Sinclair family. Now 693 Mount Pleasant Road. Courtesy Elizabeth Smith, granddaughter of Isabella Ellis Sinclair.

lost his wife Eliza Biggar. He soon married Isabella and the two were able to comfort each other over their respective losses. They settled in Andrew's fine "Loyalist style" home with its fieldstone foundation and centre hall plan, which he had shared with Eliza since 1837.

The early 1830s were a time of evolution in Mount Pleasant as it transformed itself from an isolated inland settlement to an Upper Canadian village. We saw the trend toward more settled populations with the establishment of a resident doctor and clergyman as well as more regularised landholding systems. The new transportation routes such as the canals and stagecoach roads brought waves of immigrants, provided access for the remote inland settlers to many comforts such as trade goods, and boosted the local wheat economy. All these trends mirrored on the local level similar trends occurring all over the province as Upper Canada moved from a colony towards self-government. Yet all this exposure to the outside world also led to the spread of political unrest as settlers moved beyond subsistence survival and began to take a wider view of the world around them and the way it was being run.

By the mid-1830s the political ferment that had been boiling in the province between the conservative ruling oligarchy, the Family Compact, and the reformers over their differing philosophies of government reached a crescendo. For the Family Compact or the Tories, power emanated from the King, religion and history. For the moderate reformers, this was not enough. The political process must rest also on the consent of those governed. And for the most radical, who took their cues from the republic to the south, government should rest solely on the people without any regard to royalty, God or the past. While most local residents preoccupied themselves with the daily tasks of family and farm, these political issues began to spark debate, especially around more practical issues such as those that had been articulated by Frederick Yeoward and the other recorders across the province for Gourlay's Statistical Account. Issues of land policy, particularly the settlement of the Crown deeds, the Clergy Reserves, and government money for roads and schools, for example, sparked diverse opinions, enough at least to justify Reville's description of the political character of the area in his *History of the County of Brant*. "From the earliest days, the village of Brantford and all the surrounding district was a hot bed of political excitement and at the time of the rebellion all were known as either Loyalists or Rebels."

While the radical reformers had a provincial leader in William Lyon Mackenzie, a Scottish radical in the vein of Robert Gourlay, and critic of the Family Compact through his newspaper the *Colonial Advocate*, his local sympathisers had their own leader in the district. Dr. Charles Duncombe, of nearby Burford Township, settled in Upper Canada in 1819 from his birthplace in the United States. Duncombe and other rebels complained of the Family Compact's exercise of power over patronage and the expenditure of public resources without regard for the views of the elected Assembly, of which he was a member. Duncombe and his followers represent the strong Liberal/Reform roots in the area, not surprising perhaps when one considers the importance of local input for issues such as land and transportation for an inland settlement area dependent on the wheat trade. This reform tradition meant that the provincial

event known as the Rebellion of 1837 would have its own unique local footnote.

In December 1837 Mackenzie and 100 armed supporters took encouragement from the ongoing insurrection in Lower Canada under Louis Joseph Papineau and mounted an attack on the provincial capital at Toronto. While government forces had no trouble putting down the poorly armed rebels, this did not deter Duncombe and his men from plotting a challenge to authority in the south-western district of the province to take advantage of the “strong feelings” between Tories and Reformers in the Grand River area. They were in fact particularly bolstered by initial rumours that Mackenzie had succeeded in his revolt at Toronto.

The local militia mustered and the “men of Galt” marched south to join the “men of Gore” in defence of the area. In total 150 volunteers and 100 natives assembled to oppose the rebels. In taking up arms to defend the area from rebels, the local men heeded the call of Lieutenant-Governor Sir Francis Bond Head for “every man to do his duty now, and it will be the last time that we or our children shall see our lives or properties endangered.” Inevitably in the minds of the villagers was the fact that this was the third time since our story has unfolded that their lives had been disrupted by organised violence, first with the Revolution, then the War of 1812 and now with the Rebellion of 1837. As Bond Head articulated, the residents of Upper Canada had been “in a time of profound peace, while every one was quietly following his occupations, feeling secure...and now a band of rebels, instigated by a few malignant and disloyal men has the wickedness and audacity to assemble with arms.”

But not everyone heeded Bond Head’s Proclamation, as not everyone heeded Brock’s Proclamation to loyalty and duty in 1812. There was much sympathy in the area for the uprising, illustrated by the 300 supporters gathered around Duncombe. The poor harvests in the province for the previous two years probably inflamed many of these otherwise peaceful Upper Canadians to support Duncombe in carrying out his rumoured plan to take Brantford. But to achieve such a feat the rebels needed supplies. According to historian Colin

Read, James Malcolm of Malcolm's Mills asked William Thompson, an Oakland blacksmith turned farmer, of Irish origin, to go to Mount Pleasant to secure gunpowder and lead for the rebels. Malcolm and Thompson, along with Charles Chapin, secured 7 pounds of gunpowder and 8 pounds of bar lead from the store of R. R. Strobridge in Mount Pleasant. Though Strobridge claimed that he sold the supplies to the rebels reluctantly, Read argues that he cooperated willingly. That same evening Thompson, Chapin, and Asa Secord secured gunpowder from the store of Abraham Cooke with the help of clerk Jacob Tripp who hid the supplies in a granary, providing the rebels with the required key. Tripp had previously travelled with Strobridge to Scotland to tell the rebels about the gunpowder at Cooke's store. The rebels took the supplies to Scotland, only to later surrender to magistrate Andrew Eadie. Samuel Lount, Mackenzie's staunch supporter in the attack on Toronto also participated in the Duncombe rebellion. While the others made their way to Scotland, Lount is reputed to have hidden in a Mount Pleasant haystack awaiting his opportunity to escape.

Government forces led by Colonel Allan MacNab and supported by the local militia and natives marched through Mount Pleasant in pursuit of the rebels at Malcolm's Mills and Scotland. Village legend says that MacNab saw a light burning at the Hardy store, which was against the martial law instituted at the time. But Juleta Hardy was in need of the light as she was busy giving birth to a son, Arthur Sturgis, who would go on to become a premier of the province. Since he was born in the midst of the Rebellion, journalist Jean Waldie later contended that "it seems as if he had been born into the ranks of Liberalism." MacNab's troops stayed the night, billeted at the McAlister Inn opposite the Hardy store. The commodious building, with its large ballroom, would have been the village's most obvious choice for the troops. Situated on the four corners of the village road, this hotel along with Speed the Plough were the new centres of the community in the stagecoach days of the 1830s.

Now that the soldiers had a place to sleep, they also needed food to sustain them as they prepared to pursue the rebels. In her capacity as "Mrs. Col. Racey," since her husband James acted as Colonel among

the local volunteers, Ann Racey gave Col. MacNab's men a roast goose, which they presumably enjoyed. Ann's son Thomas Racey joined the militia to defend the province. Captain Thomas Perrin Jr., serving in the military footsteps of his father, is known to have been a government spy, using his milling interests as a ruse to obtain information on the rebels. As with the failed Mackenzie rebellion in Toronto, MacNab and his supporters, well provisioned from their stay in Mount Pleasant, had no trouble defeating Duncombe's rebels.

After the Rebellion came the necessary job of sorting out blame and prosecuting the rebels. James Racey in his role as Magistrate presided at the preliminary hearings in Brantford of the Gore District rebels captured in the area. He then went on to assist the presiding Justice in the trials in Hamilton. Ironically, sitting across the room, defending the rebels, was none other than Racey's new son-in-law, Miles O'Reilly. Although Miles proclaimed his attachment to the "Tories," his association with moderate reformer Robert Baldwin conceivably influenced his decision to take on the case of the rebels, not only in Hamilton but in London as well. James feared for his son-in-law's future legal career in light of his defence of the rebels, but Miles eventually earned himself a judgeship in Gore District, safeguarding the lifestyle he had built up with Jane Racey.

Given the fact that the rebels had staged an armed, albeit poorly organised uprising, the punishments meted out were rather moderate. Only two rebels hanged for treason: Lount and his fellow radical Peter Matthews. For their actions, Secord and Thomson received ten months in the Hamilton gaol. In the case of Asa Secord, Colin Read argues that the charges against him, like those against over 40 other rebels, were based on insufficient or contradictory evidence. James Malcolm and Charles Chapin went on to serve on Oakland Township council, illustrating that life went on as usual after the Rebellion.

Another possible connection between the Rebellion and Mount Pleasant concerns James Biggar. In 1838 Charles Biggar sent a letter to his brother James who was in the Hamilton gaol. He was replying



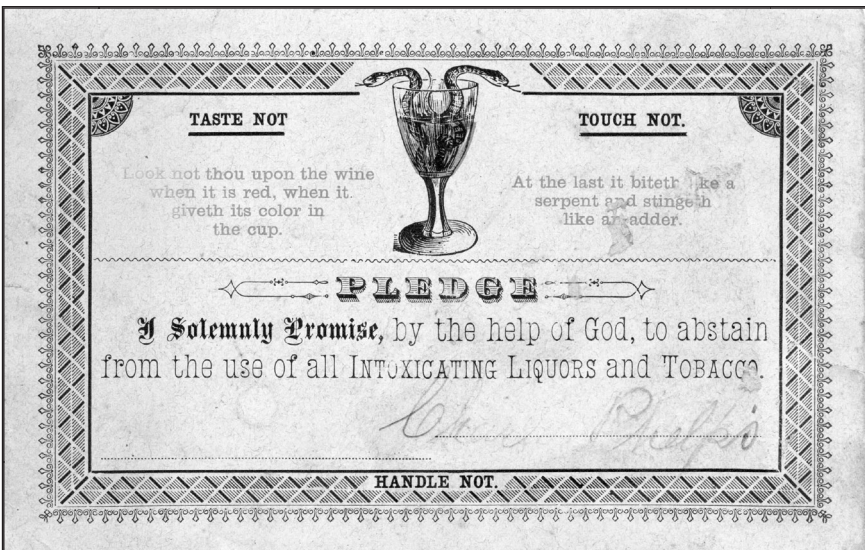
Mr. and Mrs. James Biggar. James was a prosperous farmer with lands on the back half of Lot 2E along the old Biggar's Lane, now Wetmores Rd., (E); his wife was Jane Biggar, his cousin. Their son William was the local representative on the Brantford Township Council (1876) and "one of the village's most respected men all of his days." From the Biggar family albums. Courtesy Brant Historical Society.

to James' earlier letter requesting money to secure his release. Charles signed off "hoping soon to hear of your liberty." Perhaps James had been caught up in the Rebellion since his father Robert and his brother Herbert were known to be Reformers. James did see his liberty as he and his wife Jane Biggar, his cousin, raised their large family in Mount Pleasant. As of the 1851 census seven of their children, age 9 to 35 lived with them at home.

While it is clear that the large majority of Upper Canadians remained loyal during the Rebellion, the uprising contributed to the already contentious times of the 1830s and early 1840s. The village of Brantford experienced many turbulent days and became at times a lawless frontier village. The high tempers between Tories and Reformers escalated with the influence of plentiful and cheap alcohol and the creation of an ever more diverse population. Escaped American slaves came to the area via the Underground

Railroad. Canal digging and other work in connection with the Grand River Navigation Company attracted cheap labour or “rough workers” as they were called, often impoverished Irish navvies and their families. Gangs were known to waylay travellers, making travel “unpleasant.” Similarly volatile situations simmered elsewhere at this time as the province’s canal system was being expanded and would continue across the province with the railway construction boom of the 1850s.

The existence of a Temperance Society in Mount Pleasant in the 1830s, like similar societies all across Upper Canada, reveals that the village, located as it was on a busy main route, was not insulated from the outside world, as much as it may have wished it were. Taverns like the McAlister Inn played a vital role in every community in this



Temperance and Total Abstinence Society card (c1870s) of Charles Phelps, son of Hiram. Whiskey was so readily available in Upper Canada that it became a form of currency. As early as 1802 women of the Six Nations presented the first temperance petition ever made in North America to protest the sale of whiskey despite Joseph Brant's rule that settlers were not to sell it to his followers. In 1853 writer Susanna Moodie described taverns as "sinks of iniquity" and the "frightful vice of drinking" as "the curse of Canada and a great moral evil." Religion was seen as a powerful means to banish this work of the devil. Hotel and liquor interests sought to obstruct temperance societies, even in a few instances forming "intemperance societies." Courtesy Linda (Phelps) Guest.

time of the stagecoach days of the 1830s. Due to the swampy local areas and poor roads drivers considered 20 to 30 miles of travel per day ambitious, necessitating frequent stops for refreshment and a change of horses. Local taverns also catered to travellers going to Detroit via the Great Mail Road from Niagara. Therefore the drinking, socialising and even sometimes violence that occurred in similar establishments in all communities existed in Mount Pleasant, since Upper Canada, as historian W. Thomas Matthews argues, was not a "peaceable kingdom."

The unsettled environment of the Rebellion affected all aspects of life beyond the specific and localised violent events. Travel, for instance, was viewed with anxiety and family members reconsidered unnecessary separations that earlier would have been undertaken with little concern. Samuel Sobieski Nelles grew up in these unsettled times and his parents refused to allow him to go away to Cobourg to the newly established Upper Canada Academy opened by Egerton Ryerson in 1836. Although this would have been a wonderful educational opportunity, his mother Mary, with her forceful character, insisted that he continue his schooling in the village with her and not leave until the political unrest was resolved. But by 1839 she had no hesitations sending the 16-year-old budding scholar away to Lewiston Academy in New York State. A few years later, in a letter written to his brother William who was also away studying in the United States, Mary voiced this maternal commitment to her children's schooling. "You give us a kind of patience to endure your absence believing it to be for advantage and future usefulness. You my dear son have just commence [sic] on a new life."

In this way life as usual did eventually recommence in the area. Navigation advancements along the Grand River supported the thriving mercantile businesses that purchased large quantities of wheat produced with the rebound of agriculture after the Rebellion on the farms of the district. In keeping with the economic development of the village, the government established a post office at Mount Pleasant as early as 1836. Before this mail was carried on foot, in the early days from Ancaster. However, the proud name given to the village by Henry Ellis nearly 40 years earlier

would not grace the letters and correspondence to and from the community. The reason for this is unclear. Some have argued that another Mount Pleasant in British North America must have already established an official post office. Nevertheless, the Upper Canada Mount Pleasant borrowed another proud name, Mohawk, from its local native neighbours. Village merchant Abraham Cooke served as the first postmaster from 1836 until 1857 in the new store he built at the corner of Mount Pleasant Road and the Mill Road, the access route to Burtch's Landing. Another village merchant, young William L. Jones, from Pennsylvania, also established himself about this time, providing competition for Cooke and nourishing the community. This postal development meant that merchants could now send and receive vital business documents in a timely fashion and residents could now correspond conveniently with distant friends and family, thereby linking the once isolated community more closely to other districts in the province, the continent and the world.

The world, it would seem, inched closer to the village each day. With the return of peace after the Rebellion, the unprecedented migration from Europe to the New World continued as it had through the 1830s and into the 1840s. Historian Gerald Craig calls it "the western world's greatest folk movement of modern times." The young Queen Victoria now elegantly ensconced on the throne of England, would symbolise the era of the Pax Britannica with its promise of prosperity and advancement for the Empire welcoming these immigrants.

Chapter Five



“A Home for All”

Mid-Century: 1840s – 1850s

After the Rebellion the natural effects of development and prosperity continued to challenge the tradition of “community” worship in the village. Yet even as an independent spirit emerged between the denominations, the aftermath of the Rebellion in creating anxiety in the village seemed to encourage, at least initially, the interdenominational spirit of the community as the new decade of the 1840s opened.

For example, despite these pressures for independence, the inhabitants of Mount Pleasant formed a branch of the Bible Society on August 21, 1840. At a meeting that took place that day on the occasion of the visit of Rev. James Richardson, agent of the Upper Canada Bible Society, villagers moved and adopted the Society’s resolutions and rules. They set membership fees at two shillings and sixpence per year or one pound five shillings for a lifetime membership. The Society selected Rev. Bryning as the first president, Abraham Cooke as the treasurer, and Archibald McEwen as the secretary. Finally, those at the meeting chose officers for the committee for the Bible Society: Alvah Townsend, Herbert Biggar, Andrew Eadie, Allin Ellis, John R. Ellis, Russell Hardy, Dr. R. Meek, William Nelles, Hiram Phelps and William Sturgis. Members of the Society included prominent adherents of all three dominant religious denominations in Mount Pleasant.

But by Christmas of the next year the spirit of independence became overwhelming, and was particularly devastating for the village’s resident minister. On Christmas Day 1841 Bryning wrote to the Clerk of his Presbytery of the difficulties that had arisen in

his Community Church. Bryning noted that when the church was first built, the Methodists and Presbyterians “preponderated,” but since that time the Presbyterians had become comparatively few compared to the enlarged Methodist presence as a result of the 1833 union of the Episcopal and Wesleyan Methodists. This shift to more local North American denominations as exemplified by the newly united Methodists was in keeping with trends in the area. The Wesleyan Methodist circuit riders were popular in Upper Canada and tended to gravitate to areas of heavy American immigration. The Methodists, now with the overwhelming majority in the village, wished to purchase the Community Church or Bethesda Chapel for themselves.

Another complicating factor for Bryning was that Abraham Cooke, who he had previously described as his “chief subscriber,” had become an Anglican, while Cooke’s wife, Eleanor Hardy and her relatives, the Hardy and Nelles families, were Methodists. At this time Bryning was a member of the Church of Scotland, considered a sort of “official church” in Upper Canada and so he qualified for “a pension from the government” to help in his income. He would have needed that supplement because, since Cooke’s conversion, Bryning explained he was “receiving little or almost nothing for my services.” He felt that he was losing parishioners because this government pension that he was receiving “alienated the minds of several” of his followers. His conclusion fits with Rev. Proudfoot’s observations several years earlier that “Canadians are most unwilling to pay [their ministers] anything like a competence.” Bryning also attributed the decline in the number of Presbyterians to the “late Rebellion,” which, he noted, had added to the problems. The Rebellion had caused a flourishing church in Oakland to sever its ties with his church in Mount Pleasant. As well, the Rebellion had as one of its grievances the issue of the Clergy Reserves. Perhaps some villagers resented him for affiliating with an “official church,” the Church of Scotland and thereby receiving a pension from the government out of the proceeds of the sale of the Clergy Reserves. As Margaret Smyth argues in her *Church History of Mount Pleasant*, “our forefathers were very zealous for the complete freedom of their Churches from any sort of State control or influence.” Many may have viewed Bryning’s

official connection with the Church of Scotland, a state church, as a form of "selling out" to an established church, especially compared to what the Wesleyan Methodists would have considered a more authentic, Canadian denomination.

As a result of all this ferment and bitterness, representative of the state of religious competition in the province in the years before and after the Rebellion, the "united efforts" between the denominations that had been needed in the early years to create a common place of worship had degenerated into an "unhappy plan" and "a source of contention, jealousy and disturbance" in the community. Bryning also noted a difficult administrative hurdle. The Community Church remained in the hands of Abraham Cooke, on whose land it had been built, since it was "never given over in trust." But even though Cooke had "recently joined the Church of England" Bryning believed that "he is disposed to do what is right." The community, as Bryning explained, now witnessed "the feverish excitement" surrounding what to do with the building. The Methodists wanted the deed granted to them, though Rev. Bryning understood this to mean that he would be able to continue to preach there "as usual" during his lifetime. Since he had been responsible for helping to raise the subscriptions for one-third of the cost of the building, he said he felt he should check with the Presbytery first.

As for the Presbyterians in the village, he doubted that the church could ever be secured for their use due to the "divided state of the population with their partial claims as subscribers." The creation of the United Presbyterians of Canada in 1834 caused this division as most of the Mount Pleasant Presbyterians joined the United Presbyterians while others such as Bryning remained Auld Kirk or with the Church of Scotland. So he asked the Presbytery if he should try to get the "best bargain" he could by obtaining compensation for relinquishing his claim "on the house here." He was later advised and authorised to "make the best bargain he could in withdrawing the claims of the Presbyterian population on the building."

Later correspondence indicates that this is exactly what happened. As a result of all of this ferment and the "divided state of the

population,” within the next few years Mount Pleasant had three churches to replace the one communal place of worship: a Methodist church, a Presbyterian church, and an Anglican church. The next year in 1842 the Wesleyan Methodists bought the lot adjoining Bethesda Chapel from Abraham Cooke with the intention of building their own church. They also named church trustees for the purpose including: Herbert Biggar, Allin Ellis, William N. R. Hardy, Robert McAlister, William Sturgis, and Alvah Townsend. Nevertheless the Methodists continued to use the old building, sharing it for several years with the Church of England congregation. In fact they found the situation so convenient that they made no attempt to build a church for nearly 20 years.

The next year, 1843, the United Presbyterians established their own church on Andrew Eadie’s farm opposite the cemetery on the road to Burford. “I have built a good meeting house this season on my own farm,” Andrew wrote, “and last Sunday the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was dispensed in same.” This would have been one of the last major events experienced together by Andrew and his wife Eliza as she died the following year. This frame structure measured 30 feet x 40 feet, erected at a cost of \$700. Rev. George Murray, a missionary from Glasgow served the congregation, and the building, which could accommodate 150 worshippers, met their purposes until the 1870s.

For his part Rev. Bryning continued to live at the Mount Pleasant manse with his family and preached there “for all who would come to hear.” He officiated at most of the weddings in the village and on other public occasions at the Community Church. As such the village had two resident Presbyterian ministers for a time. Marriage records from the mid-1840s reveal “John Bryning, Mount Pleasant Presbyterian minister,” was still an active and integral part of the community. He officiated at the 1842 union of Edward Blacker, widower and Margaret Tomlinson of Mount Pleasant. On October 9, 1844 he joined Alexander Hardy Nelles, son of Mary and William, and Ellen Ellis, daughter of Allin and Hannah, in holy matrimony. Alexander’s young uncle Henry Hardy and Emeline Sturgis, daughter of Hannah’s brother William, served proudly as witnesses



All Saints Anglican Church, the oldest surviving ecclesiastical building in Mount Pleasant c1980. All Saints was erected in 1845 on land donated by Richard McAlister using lumber from the Ferris farm (known to have been at the east boundary of the village but precise location untraced). Founding members representing the early Mount Pleasant "establishment" included Squire James Racey, Abraham Cooke, John Ellis, Richard McAlister, and Frederick Yeoward. Richard and Sophia Guest joined when they arrived in 1860. The original oak pews and other furnishings are still in use! Courtesy Rick Prescott.

to the union. As the oldest Nelles son, Alexander had remained on the family homestead long after his brothers went off to begin their professional careers in medicine, education and the ministry. In staying and starting a new family with Ellen at his own "Elgin Heights Farm" about two miles north of Mount Pleasant, he cemented further links between the village's four old families. Bryning officiated at many weddings during his long tenure, with many of them occurring in his beautiful home. As a result, his children recalled being able to recite the marriage ceremony from memory.

In this emerging spirit of denominational independence, the third major religious group in Mount Pleasant, the Anglicans, also erected themselves a separate building, a substantial frame structure with construction beginning in 1845. As the proclamation read at the

cornerstone ceremony declared, Richard McAlister donated “the land, three fourths of an acre, on which this Church is now being built by voluntary contribution,” as a “free gift.” Bishop John Strachan, the Lord Bishop of the Diocese of Toronto later consecrated the church under the name All Saints. A peaceful Anglican cemetery established at the side and back of the church includes the names of many church pioneers. Ann Racey laid the cornerstone on June 11, 1845. Workers found evidence of this over a century later in 1948 when they excavated the church to install a central heating system. The original builders hid a time capsule in a hollowed-out block of stone. The bottle contained valuable information regarding the building of the church written on heavy white paper and a small four pence coin from 1838 with the newly crowned Queen Victoria on one side and Britannia on the other. The documents listed the building committee consisting of Thomas Cleaver, Abraham Cooke, John Ellis, Richard McAlister, Thomas Racey, Thomas Walters, and Frederick Yeoward. Rev. James Campbell Usher served the congregation as minister that year and Abraham Cooke and James Racey identified themselves as the intended churchwardens.

All Saints also became an important religious focal point for Anglicans from the surrounding district. Thomas Mordue and his wife Ruth Lowes, for example, remembered as the “most outstanding family” of the congregation, travelled to Mount Pleasant with their four sons and four daughters from Pleasant Ridge Road, no matter the weather. In winter they travelled in one big bobsleigh, otherwise they came by horse and buggy. The Mordue children and grandchildren married into many local families such as the Biggars, Briggs, Granthams, and Sinclairs, enlarging All Saints congregation and strengthening ties throughout the community.

The church of course became a permanent location for the celebration of the great life events occurring in the village for the community’s Anglicans. Not surprisingly, the two major benefactors and first churchwardens, Abraham Cooke and James Racey witnessed such events in their own families soon after the church opened. In 1854 Abraham celebrated the baptism of his grandson George Cooke, son of Dr. Alexander Cooke and Mrs. Angelina Cooke.

Likewise, James gave his daughter Charlotte away in marriage in 1857 to Rev. Adam Elliott, missionary of the New England Society on the Grand River. As a young girl Charlotte had accompanied her sister Eliza when she eloped 25 years before. Like Eliza, who chose the life of a travelling Methodist minister's wife, Charlotte chose to be the wife of Rev. Elliot who went on to preach the Anglican faith to the Six Nations for 40 years.

Ironically, it may seem as if the spectacular growth of the Methodists in the period of the 1830s led to the later downfall of interdenominational worship in the village. Yet, as one traveller in the colony in 1833 noted, "there is no sect in this province in its earlier stages, owed more than to the Methodists." He argued that the Methodists, particularly the circuit riders, in fact united populations and brought diverse communities together, preparing the way for the rise of other denominations. This certainly seemed



Charlotte Racey at the Tuscarora Mission parsonage (undated). Following her marriage to missionary Adam Elliott in 1857 Charlotte lived at the Tuscarora rectory "across the field" from Chiefswood, childhood home of E. Pauline Johnson. Johnson's mother's sister was Elliott's first wife. The women pictured are Charlotte Racey, her sister Miss Susan Racey, and their maid Emma Cole. Evelyn Johnson, Pauline's sister, describes the scene: "Evidently the man in charge had the carriage out for the photograph, & there was a ring around the flower beds for him to drive on...Uncle Elliot was very fond of flowers." Courtesy the Woodland Cultural Centre.

to be the case in Mount Pleasant. And above all, there were family ties, which prevented any great interference with the spirit of union among the people of the three churches, a spirit that had been evident from early in the century. Because of their isolation from other communities there was much intermarriage among pioneer families, and therefore a spirit of mutual respect and understanding persevered on a “foundation of Christian charity.”

The importance of the Methodist ministers is evident in the case of one of the old pioneer families. Even after Epaphras Lord Phelps’ departure from Mount Pleasant during the War of 1812, the Phelps family continued to thrive in the area. His 23-year-old granddaughter Emeline Augusta married Rev. James Preston in Mount Pleasant in 1852. Emeline’s brother Charles and her friend Mary Biggar witnessed the ceremony. Rev. Preston, from Lancaster England, was described as “a man of commanding appearance.” As a Wesleyan Methodist Minister, Preston ministered to the Brantford Circuit.

Perhaps as a symbol of the death of one transitional form of worship and the emergence of another more settled form, Rev. John Bryning died in 1853 at the age of 83. He had served the community for a quarter of a century, witnessing the evolution of the community from an isolated collection of log homes to an elegant and affluent village. He had seen the transition from a spirit of communal worship to the rise of independent denominations. By the time of his death, according to the 1851 census, the village had a Wesleyan Methodist ministry that had 200 adherents, as well as United Presbyterian and Church of England congregations that supported 150 worshippers each. Interestingly, Nancy Lee Bryning either sold or otherwise conveyed ownership of the manse property to the Anglican Diocese of Huron, which retained it until 1877. Despite being the wife of a Presbyterian minister, Nancy Lee had not severed her Episcopalian family roots.

After Bryning’s death, the Wesleyan Methodists sought out a resident minister for themselves. Rev. W. S. Griffin, assistant minister in Brantford, came to reside in Mount Pleasant and ministered

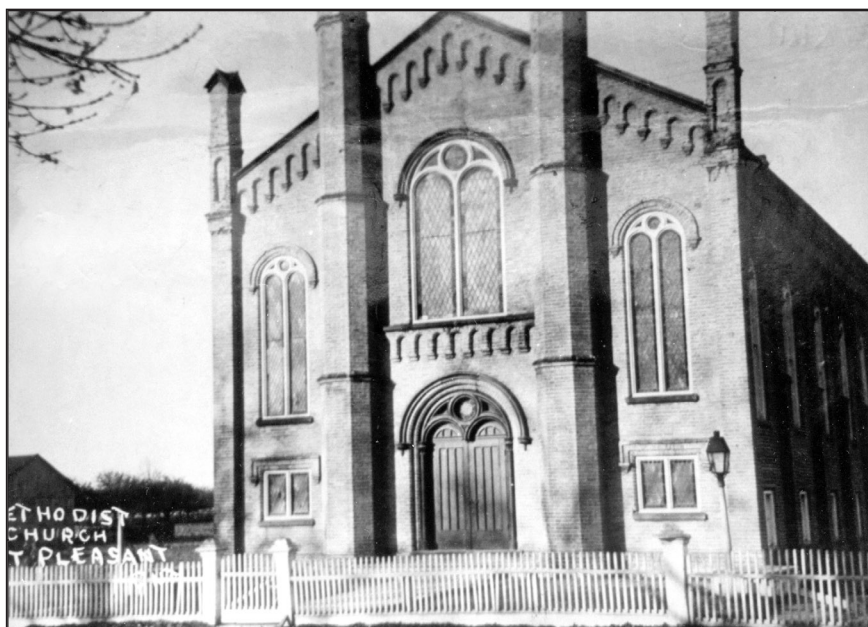
full time to a circuit of 328 worshippers. In 1859, the year Rev. G. Goodson succeeded Rev. Griffin, the circuit included 384 members, being divided into 11 classes, three of which met in Mount Pleasant under the leadership of Herbert Biggar, Alvah Townsend and Abraham Steele. In these early years the Mount Pleasant minister served a wide parish taking in the whole southern half of Brantford Township, most of Burford and part of Townsend Township. Given the size of the ministry, it was little wonder that ministers had a hard time keeping an accurate and up-to-date list of parishioners as Rev. Goodson indicated when he passed the congregation on to Rev. A. Hurlburt in 1858. "There are a number of worthy persons whose names I have marked with pencil; I would have liked to return them also, but I could not consistently do so on account of their neglect of class." The following year, in 1859, another 56 people joined the Mount Pleasant Methodist Church after a camp meeting held that spring.

With the congregation growing steadily the Wesleyan Methodists made plans to replace the old Bethesda Chapel with a new church designed by prominent Brantford architect John Turner, who was also responsible for several Brantford churches and the Brant County Courthouse in Brantford. When workers put the finishing touches on the new building, a "very beautiful and imposing" white brick edifice in the Anglo-Norman style, according to the *Christian Guardian* in 1863, the final construction costs amounted to over \$4,000. By dedication day the congregation owed only \$200 on the bill and the hardworking parishioners raised that with some to spare. Builders designed the church to seat 300 but by 1862 the circuit membership reached 483.

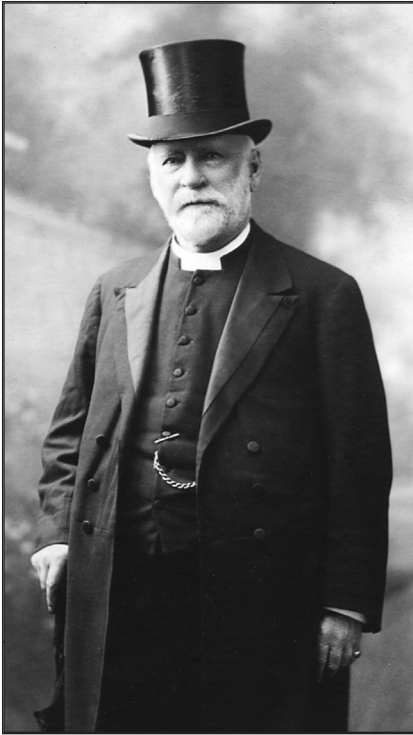
James Ellis, grandson of Henry Ellis and Amos Sturgis (grandson of Capt. Amos) a boy of 8 at the time of construction, recalled playing on his way home from school amidst the ongoing construction of the new church, certainly an intriguing place for a young boy. An older boy, George Cox, remembered being sent by his employer, Hiram Phelps, to the building site as water boy. More often than not, he recalled, it was whiskey that the builders wished in the tin pail. So

young Cox complied, obtaining the lubricant from the village store at twenty-five cents a gallon.

The new Wesleyan Methodist Church held its dedication ceremony in September 1863. According to the *Christian Guardian*, the “day was delightful and the Church was crowded.” Among the “very appropriate, eloquent and impressive sermons” preached by the honoured guests was one by Mount Pleasant son Rev. Dr. S. S. Nelles, President of Victoria College. A tea meeting followed on the Monday after the dedication services, where “the ladies spared no pains to load their tables with the choicest of eatables.” The women raised \$110 for the new church at this meeting, where another



Mount Pleasant United Church in an undated photograph. In 1858 the Wesleyan Methodists commissioned Brantford architect John Turner to design their Italianate style church and later the manse. This photo shows the front facade before 1963 alterations. The prominence of this first brick church reflected not only the appeal of Methodism locally but also prosperity and increased sophistication as the village moved out of the pioneer stage. Six hundred people attended the two day dedication services where Dr. S. S. Nelles preached a sermon “attended by great spiritual unction and power.” A local tall tale says that workers building the church put a bottle of whiskey in the north-east wall to poke fun at their temperance crusading employers. Courtesy Mrs. Melba Merritt.



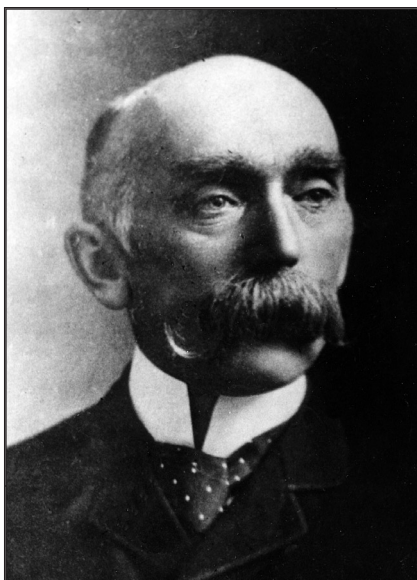
Rev. Dr. George Bryce, born Mount Pleasant April 22, 1844. Extraordinarily gifted in English and Science he graduated from the University of Toronto in 1863 and Knox College in 1871 with numerous honours, then pursued a stellar career as a Presbyterian missionary, educator, traveller, and writer. Noted as founder of United College (1880), now part of the University of Manitoba, he was also moderator of the first Presbyterian Synod of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories (1884), and author of several histories. Bryce seems to have been an independent thinker with a penchant for challenging orthodox views; he was described as an ardent churchman but an enemy of ecclesiasticism. His history of Manitoba (1882) was seen as a vindication of the Earl of Selkirk whose settlement at the Red River led to violence in 1816 when 21 colonists were killed by Metis who saw the colony as a threat to their way of life and economy. Courtesy Archives and Special Collections, University of Manitoba Libraries, from the personality files of the Winnipeg Tribune.

Mount Pleasant son, Rev. Hamilton Biggar, delivered a history of the progress of the Methodist movement in the area, a movement that he was instrumental in advancing.

This happy occasion for the Methodists symbolised the transition that religion had undergone in the village. In the more transitory pioneer years settlers made do with religious ceremonies in private homes, carpenter shops and even in the woods. As the community became more settled the denominations asserted their own independence as the original communal approach, devised in the face of a sparse population, no longer appeared necessary. Resident ministers replaced itinerant circuit riders in the same way that solid brick architecture replaced frame churches. All of these changes pointed to the solid roots established by these religious denominations and their adherents in the community and in the province by mid-century.

In this way, the religious history of the village mirrors the wider experience in the province, with one noted exception. In the 1850s waves of Irish immigrants into Canada West, Upper Canada's new name after 1841, led to passionate, often violent, sectarian tensions between Catholics and Protestants with the Loyal Orange Order established as an important part of most localities. As English and McLaughlin illustrate in their history of Kitchener, that community's unique demographic make-up meant that it experienced little of this debilitating conflict. While Hugh MacLachlan notes that the Mount Pleasant area had a strong Orange Lodge membership, there is little evidence of any religious strife on the scale experienced elsewhere.

As this evolution in the religious life of the village illustrates, waves of settlers continued to come to Mount Pleasant throughout the 1840s and 1850s to help establish these growing congregations. Changes in industrialisation and mechanisation in Europe, for example, pushed immigrants towards the New World. The Bryce family from Perthshire, Scotland represented such immigration. George Bryce, a blacksmith and wagon maker came to Mount Pleasant in 1843 as a young man of 25 with his brand new wife Catherine Henderson, age 22. An descendant later speculated that they came to North America



Dr. Peter Bryce, brother of Rev. Dr. George Bryce, during his tenure (1876-1878) as Professor of Chemistry, Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph, Ontario. Dr. Bryce resigned from OAC to study medicine and became known for his activities in public health affairs. In 1895, as chief officer of the Ontario Boards of Health he investigated Brantford's municipal water supply and a city dairy following a typhoid outbreak, clearing both. In 1907, as Medical Inspector for the Department of Indian Affairs he prepared a controversial report condemning the Government for the high death rate of children in Indian residential schools. The report was suppressed and his position later abolished. Courtesy Archival and Special Collections, University of Guelph Library.



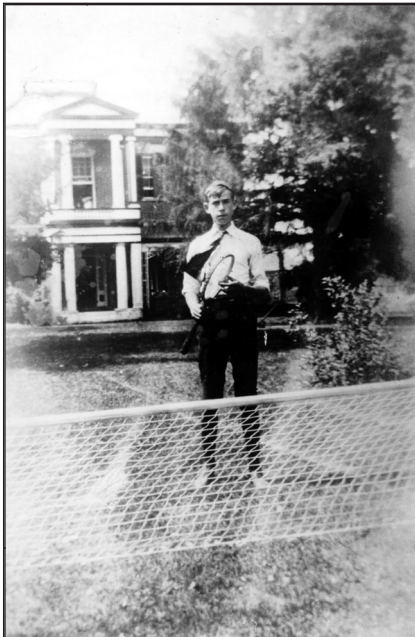
Idylbrook at 756 Mount Pleasant Road., c2000. The house was built into the side of the hill on Mount Pleasant Creek, possibly by Andrew Eadie who obtained the Crown Deed for the property in 1837. His brother Thomas lived here c1850 and then his brother William took it over c1853. The basement floor is stone, the others are stucco over vertical siding. The front verandah is a later replacement of the original.

because “doubtless there was a more promising future for young men in America than in the old land.” George and Catherine joined the local United Presbyterian congregation and went on to have seven children, George Jr., Peter, John, Eliza, Robert, Alexander and Margaret, doing their part for the development in the village. They welcomed their first born, George Jr. into the community in 1844. After an excellent preparatory education in Mount Pleasant, George went on to found Manitoba College in 1871 and serve as a noted historian, educator, and theologian of Knox Presbyterian Church. George formed part of the vanguard of Ontarians moving the pioneering frontier into the Canadian west.

Family reunification also helped populate Mount Pleasant. The same ship from Scotland that carried the Bryce newly-weds to the New World also transported Andrew Eadie’s brothers Robert and William to their brother’s adopted home. This enlarged Eadie circle also helped bolster the Scottish flavour in the village. By 1850 Thomas was living in a fine stone and stucco house, later called Idylbrook, built into the side of Rainbow Hill beside the creek across the road from the Haight Mill. Later he sold the house to William when William married Lucy Burtch.

The world that the Bryce family and Eadie brothers entered in Mount Pleasant at the beginning of the 1840s could not have been more different than the one earlier pioneers entered decades before. By the 1840s the village seemed to have reached an apex in its development as a result of the generous dividends of the wheat economy. This has been described as a sense of “elegance” introduced into the village, most publicly demonstrated by a spate of residential development, including imposing mansions and unusual octagonal structures. These grand homes served as symbols of the owners’ sense of place in the community and outward signs of their wealth and social standing resulting from the prosperity achieved as a result of the wheat boom, the waves of immigration into Canada West and the spin-off mercantile interests.

This could not be represented any more boldly than with the construction of Abraham Cooke’s massive red brick house. Begun in 1840 by builders brought in from Hamilton, the Georgian home with its Greek Revival and Regency details such as its large floor length windows on the ground floor and its treillage decorated verandahs



Abraham Cooke’s “Brucefield,” built c1840, Mount Pleasant’s most palatial house ever. Cooke had seen Col. MacNab’s “Dundurn Castle” and “The Willows,” the imposing Greek Revival mansion of Squire Racey’s son-in-law Miles O’Reilly, and, not to be outdone, copied Georgian, Regency, and Greek Revival elements from those grand Hamilton houses to build his own extravaganza. Brucefield’s renown for lavish events attended by the area elite lasted until the mansion was sold by Dr. Alexander Cooke to Hartley Hartley in 1876. Hartley was a farmer with no interest in entertaining but his dressmaker daughter made gowns for village belles attending parties elsewhere. This photo, taken during the tenure of the McAlister family in the early 1900s shows architectural details since removed. The tennis player is an unidentified guest of the McAlister family who were great fans of the sport.



Brucefield c2003. Courtesy Jim Butler.

would have been considered stylish and showy in the 1840s. The combination of these styles, not to mention their expensive and therefore exclusive details, would have been quite a sight in a rural village in British North America. The 1851 census described it as a “2 storey brick castle,” while an Ellis descendant in 1916 called it “a palatial residence for those days... beautifully appointed and was justly esteemed as now one of the show places of the district.” The house showcased a grand winding staircase in the great hall, six fireplaces, two huge pillars supporting the second storey, and a kitchen in the rear, equipped with ovens capable of baking 50 loaves of bread. Finally, a widow’s walk adorned the top of the house. It provided a “view of Brantford” and Abraham permitted the local school children to view it once a year as a special treat.

It was without doubt a home suited to a gentleman of Cooke’s stature. As Byers and McBurney explain in their history of the Governor’s Road, locals described Cooke with “parochial hyperbole” as “Mount Pleasant’s Merchant Prince,” probably because of his imposing house. As we have seen, Cooke had achieved for himself a prominent position in the community as storekeeper, postmaster and



The original Abraham Cooke house with flanking wings (date untraced). What a contrast to Brucefield! The house became the All Saints parsonage in 1872. At some point the wings were removed and used in two small houses around the corner on Maple Ave.(west). Now 645 Mount Pleasant Road. Undated photo courtesy Florence Parker.

benefactor first of Bethesda Chapel and then the Anglican Church. He solidified these connections with the community through his marriage to Eleanor Hardy, sister of Russell Hardy and Mary Nelles. According to an Ellis descendant, the Cooke home became known as a great social centre where Abraham and Eleanor celebrated many festivities showcasing their “bountiful hospitality.”

Perhaps the most festive occasion occurred in September 1849 when the Cookes opened their home to entertain the new Governor General, James Bruce, the eighth Earl of Elgin with a ball during his tour through the province. The ball became a week-long house party, with guests riding in from great distances, including officers from the London garrison, distinguished guests from Toronto and a young man from Cobourg who would later become Chief Justice Armour. The Cookes erected tents on the lawn and in the orchard to accommodate so many guests. The dashing young Governor General who was only in his late 30s would have enjoyed the country drives and picnics during the day and the dancing and feasting at night. No

doubt the hungry revellers kept the kitchen's huge brick ovens filled to capacity.

At the end of the affair Lord Elgin showed his appreciation to his hosts by requesting that he be able to bestow his family name on the as-yet unnamed mansion. The Cooke home thereafter became known as "Brucefield." The revelry enjoyed in Mount Pleasant must have been a welcome diversion for the "care-worn" Governor General beleaguered by the tense politics of the day. He recently had passed the Rebellion Losses Bill, an act that compensated property owners for losses during the Lower Canadian Rebellion. While his compliance on the bill assured responsible government in the province, many Tories opposed the compensation, seeing it as rewarding treason as many of those compensated would have been rebels themselves. Their anger exploded in the spring when Elgin passed the bill and angry mobs burned the parliament buildings for the United Canadas in Montreal. While feelings never reached these extremes in the Grand River area, Lord Elgin's visit in September rekindled the bitterness and hostility between local factions of loyalists and reformers that had existed since the Rebellions. In fact



William Winer "Willie" Cooke, privileged son of Dr. Alexander Cooke, grandson of Abraham Cooke, professional soldier. Lt. Cooke, dressed here in the uniform of the United States Seventh Cavalry, was the epitome of military glory. Always ready for action, he was an excellent athlete, an expert sharpshooter, a ladies' man, and very noticeable for his bushy side whiskers which drooped as far as the third buttons on his tunic. Years after the Battle of the Little Bighorn, a Cheyenne Indian called Woodenleg said he remembered scalping long thick whiskers from the cheek of a soldier (Cooke). He allegedly fastened them to an arrow shaft as a battle trophy and presented them to his grandmother. Courtesy Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, D. F. Barry, B-206.



Custer hunting party, 1875. Willie Cooke's rakishness, general lack of deference to authority, and loyalty endeared him to General Custer and his clan, and he often joined the Custers for outings and other pastimes. Cooke is 2nd from the right (foreground). This carefree scene is a poignant contrast to the devastation of the battlefield a year later. Courtesy Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, D. F. Barry, B-424.



Little Bighorn battlefield site. Minutes before his death Cooke scribbled a last desperate call for help on a scrap of notepaper and sent it off with the only member of Custer's troop to escape. Cooke's body was found near Custer's, buried in a shallow grave at the site, and later brought home for reburial in Hamilton, his mother's family home. Cooke's name is inscribed on the battlefield monument. Until at least 1992 someone decorated his grave each May with a spray of silk flowers and a sprig of pine. Courtesy Randy Townsend, descendant of Alvah Townsend.

when rumours of threats against Elgin circulated in Brantford and the local vicinity, local reformers joined the Governor General's escort at Mount Pleasant to see him safely through the district.

The divided opinions evident in the province revealed themselves in the newspapers of the day that were never reluctant to voice their opinions on political figures. As Byers and McBurney point out, Elgin's support of the Rebellion Losses Bill caused "a storm of Tory opposition and bombastic editorial comment in the press." The *Hamilton Spectator* reported that, "Since...this week the Governor General has emerged from his seclusion at the Falls and made a dash into the country by the Grand River...his Lordship has taken all the villages on his route and carefully avoided the cities and towns...at Mount Pleasant His Excellency lodged with Mr. A. Cook, an ultra-Radical of course, and in the morning His Excellency, with great condescension, named Mr. Cook's nameless residence "Brucefield" – a silly piece of egotism which can only excite the pity of sensible men...the world is tolerably well satisfied that Lord Elgin is no more a descendant of the Bruce than is the gentleman whose house he named." Another version of the same events reported in the *Provincialist* illustrates the great divide of opinion. "His Excellency slept on Tuesday night at the house of Abraham Cooke Esq. of Mount Pleasant...Indeed we understand that the Tories of Brantford appeared in full dress and acted like gentlemen on the occasion." The Hamilton paper referred to Cooke as a radical, no doubt since his clerk had provided gunpowder to the rebels during the Rebellion, thereby giving him a reputation by association. As Colin Read indicates in his study of the Duncombe revolt, Cooke "supplied rebels from his store." As a result the officials questioned him, though they promptly released him having found no reason to detain him.

Soon after the Cookes moved into their new home, they welcomed two more sons into their family, Abraham born in 1841 and Charles, born in 1843, to join older son Alexander, who was already a teenager. Soon after, Alexander established his own family with Angelina Augusta Winer in the Cooke family's original single storey clay and plaster house. Angelina was from a prominent German

family in Hamilton and with her “fashionable” friends she and Alec continued the tradition of entertaining as Abraham and Eleanor had done at Brucefield. Alexander became a medical doctor and although he maintained a drug store in Brantford, he and his family continued to live in Mount Pleasant. By 1851 the young doctor and his wife, both 28-year-olds, had a growing family of three children. Having lost their first son Rolph in his first year of life, their oldest surviving son was William, born in 1846. William, or Willie as he was called, was good pals with fellow Mount Pleasant lad George Bryce, son of George and Catherine. George later wrote that one of his highlights was seeing Lord Elgin in 1849 as a young child at the home of his neighbours. The boys went to school together in Mount Pleasant and when they had graduated on to high school in Brantford, the two friends would often travel the five miles together in a sleigh in winter. One of their great boyhood preoccupations was wrestling. It seems the Mount Pleasant boys earned a reputation among the “town boys” for their impressive and unheard of wrestling holds.

But after that the boys would take very different paths as they developed into young men. While George would go on to the University of Toronto to become a minister, Willie, as Steve Arnold explains in his work on William, reputedly experienced some troubles when he was 16 and was sent to live with relatives in Buffalo. The next year he lied about his age in order to join the United States Cavalry. He fought for the Union Army as a lieutenant in the American Civil War, being wounded by shrapnel in June 1864 at Petersburg, Virginia. He was among the estimated 40,000 Canadians who enlisted in the American army during the Civil War. He later died at the massacre at Little Bighorn in 1876 under the ill-fated General Custer when nearly his whole command was wiped out by the Sioux Indians under Sitting Bull. His body was later returned to Canada to be laid to rest in his mother’s hometown of Hamilton. In a letter to his mother Angelina, a captain who was one of the fortunate few to survive the battle described Willie. “Your boy was the handsomest officer, the best rider, the fleetest runner and excepting ...myself and possibly General Custer...the best shot in the regiment.”

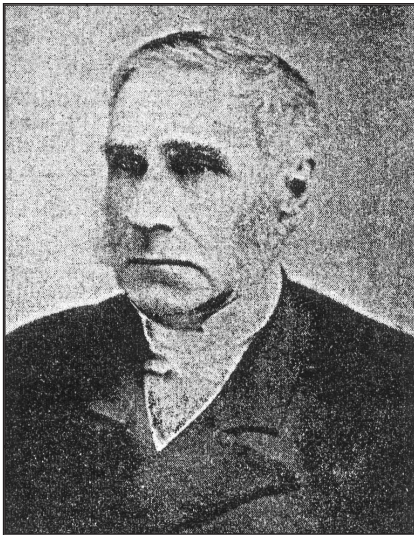
William Cooke continued the military tradition in Mount Pleasant evident from the time of the very first pioneers.

Not surprisingly, Abraham Cooke's display of wealth and prominence with his red mansion prompted other affluent leaders in the community to emulate and perhaps even endeavour to surpass this expression of importance. Carriage maker and blacksmith Alvah Townsend was just such a person. Townsend had come to Mount Pleasant from New York State with his wife Sarah Jane Deviney who was originally from Ireland. A prominent businessman and active member of the local Methodist Church, in 1848 Townsend commissioned the same Hamilton builders to construct an impressive Georgian mansion for his family in keeping with his social position. He intended his home to copy some of the stylish features of Cooke's Brucefield. But according to local legend, when Townsend discovered that the builders had not constructed the same type of grand curved staircase in his house, one of the more spectacular attributes of Brucefield, he was understandably upset. Besides making a grand public statement of his prominence in the community, particularly in response to Cooke's clear status declaration, Alvah Townsend needed such a sizeable house to accommodate his growing family of eventually eight children. In 1851, 46-year-old Alvah and 40-year-old Sarah had seven children ranging in age from 18 down to 2. By the time of the 1871 census Alvah and Sarah continued to live in the magnificent home, along with six of their grown children ranging in age from 17 to 33.

Evidence of affluence in Mount Pleasant at this time could be illustrated in ways other than built forms. In September of 1850, for example, local merchant Ignatius Cockshutt married Elizabeth Foster of Mount Pleasant. For their wedding trip they went to New York City, leaving by boat at Burtch's Landing and making their way to the American metropolis by way of rivers, lakes and canals. They came home via the Atlantic so they could stop in the important commercial centre of Montreal. This way Cockshutt could creatively combine business with pleasure on the trip. Their honeymoon illustrates that one could reveal one's wealth and prominence in ways



Alvah Townsend's Georgian mansion, now 597 Mount Pleasant Road, c2000. By 1848 Townsend had amassed sufficient wealth from his carriage making business to build this classic Georgian style mansion on his large acreage, an architectural monument befitting his status as one of Mount Pleasant's leading citizens. The restrained elegance of his home suggests a style-conscious man with refined, conservative taste, given that the Georgian style was no longer the most fashionable among his wealthy peers. The front porch may be a later addition. Photo by Brian Thompson, Brantford Expositor.



*Alvah Townsend. Brantford Expositor
Christmas 1892 ed. Courtesy Brant
Historical Society.*



Emily Townsend House, now 637 Mount Pleasant Road. Land records show that this property, originally part of the William Sturgis holdings, was purchased c1860 by Alvah Townsend who built this house for his daughter Emily. She lived here until the property was sold to Alfred Grantham in 1894 for \$760. Grantham held the property until 1903. The spool work adorning the wrap-around verandah, the defining feature of this quintessential rural house, replaces earlier decoration in a different design.



An old shoe found between the walls of the Emily Townsend house when the present owners were doing renovations. Putting a shoe (most often a child's shoe) in a wall was a custom believed to bring good luck. Such charms of all sorts were popular in this era predating modern medicine and science. This one is rather worn so perhaps it simply got left behind somehow? Courtesy present owner Brenda Azzopardi.

other than architecture. Elizabeth's decision to marry a merchant was in keeping with her own background. Her father, Francis Foster had brought his wife Rachel and the family to Mount Pleasant in 1844 from England, and went into business with Russell Hardy at his store. In fact, for a time, the Foster and Hardy families lived together in the lodging part of the store.

The residents of the village also displayed the prosperity of the era through more non-traditional architecture. The community boasted three octagonal buildings by the 1850s, influenced by eccentric American phrenologist Orson Fowler who inspired similar structures throughout Ontario and his home state of New York. He travelled through Canada in the 1840s promoting his architectural theories, published later in his book *A Home for All*, which praised the clever advantages of eight-sided buildings. Noting that most things in nature were spherical, he argued that these structures let in more light, that the many windows allowed the winds to cool the house in summer, and the dimensions allowed for surprisingly large square footage. Besides these structural benefits, Fowler promised good temper for the occupants of octagonal buildings.



Elizabeth Foster who married Brantford merchant, industrialist, and philanthropist Ignatius Cockshutt on September 9, 1850 from her father's store (the Hardy store until acquired by Francis Foster in 1844). Cockshutt founded the Cockshutt Plow Co. in 1877, founded the Brantford Board of Trade, and financed entirely the construction (1856-1859) of the Brantford-Oakland plank toll road, now the Cockshutt Road. In 1857 Elizabeth's sister Alice married William Buck, a tinsmith, foundry owner and manufacturer of Buck stoves in Brantford.



The Nelles Academy, built c1846, torn down c1900, as it appeared c1893. The Academy, one of only about 50 octagonal buildings in Ontario was on the site of the modern Mount Pleasant Public School. It started out under its first teacher Dr. William Nelles as a private school providing a classical education for the sons of aspiring families. Dr. Ninian Holmes, who married Libbie (Elizabeth) Townsend, took over in 1859 after Dr. Nelles left for New York. The choice of an octagon for a school must have seemed right given the theory that their shape, spaciousness, and natural light provided significant health benefits for young charges vulnerable to virulent diseases. The wide room angles allegedly prevented them from being cornered by the devil, no doubt improving discipline.

While Fowler's architectural philosophy applied most appropriately perhaps to private residences, this did not stop ingenious builders from adapting the concept to other uses. Mount Pleasant had an octagonal schoolhouse and a carriage shop as well as a private home. The village boys who attended the Nelles Academy, a private school "for young gentlemen," begun around 1846 on Abraham Cooke's land, would have benefited from the light and fresh air facilitated by the eight-sided school. It had three storeys, with the first and second used for classrooms. Professor W. W. Nelles, "a

most scholarly man,” ran the Academy. After teaching in the United States and Canada Professor Nelles, one of the sons of William and Mary, returned to Mount Pleasant and became headmaster, where his reputation attracted students from a wide area. The Academy averaged as many as 75 students with boys coming to Mount Pleasant from the surrounding district. It gained a reputation as an excellent educational facility, especially for a village of its size. The Academy was privately supported but it did not have an official religious connection, like some of the other private secondary schools in the area. As we have seen, Mount Pleasant residents had previously shown their willingness to put aside denominational differences to support enterprises deemed important for the common good. And even though religious independence surged in the village in the 1840s, the non-denominational Nelles Academy flourished.

Many sons of the Mount Pleasant families laid the foundation for their later college years at the Nelles Academy. George Bryce recalled studying Latin at the school before heading off to found his own university in Manitoba. A. S. Hardy, born during the Rebellion, also prepared for his political career as member of the provincial parliament and premier at the Nelles Academy. As well, Walter Phelps studied there before going off to dental school. Canadian historian John Charles Dent also attended the Academy, later noting that Mount Pleasant schools had “a deservedly high reputation in those days and there was probably no other village in Canada so well provided in that respect.” In fact the sons of many of the families of the district would have spent some time gazing out of the large arched windows of the Academy instead of concentrating on Professor Nelles’ lessons, including: the Biggars, Chattersons, Cookes, Eadies, Ellis’s, Fosters, Granthams, McEwens, Nelles’s, Phelps’s, Raceys, Secords, Townsends, and Yeowards.

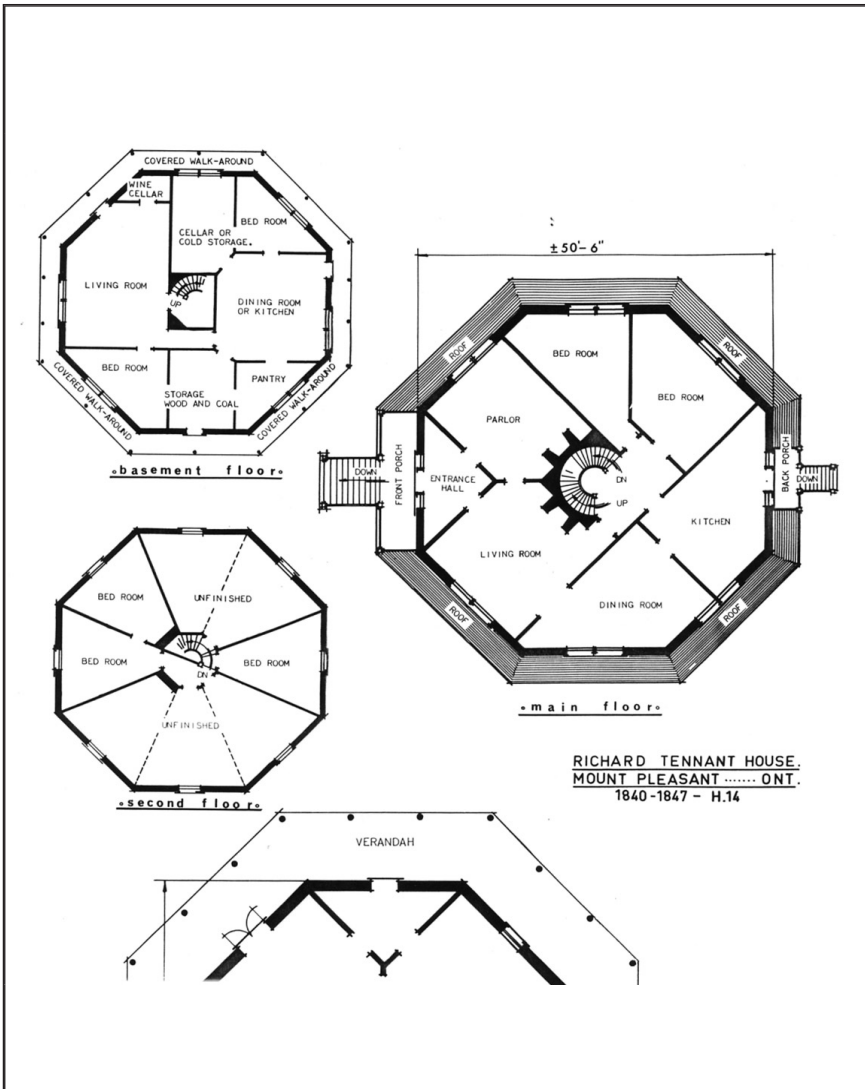
With the construction of the Nelles Academy, Mount Pleasant’s old frame schoolhouse became a common school, the name for elementary schools, in the 1840s. Now local students could begin their education as young children at the Dame’s School, go on to the frame common school and then, for the boys at least, continue on to the Nelles Academy for their junior high school grades. By the 1850s,

once the octagonal school was completely finished, local residents, including John Tennant and Hiram Phelps, who had succeeded Herbert Biggar as Brantford Township Reeve, lobbied the new Brant County Board of Education to make the Nelles Academy a publicly funded Junior Grammar School, or junior high school. They touted the "successful operation" of the Academy, which was "wholly sustained by its patrons." Finally, in 1860, Abraham Cooke sold the Academy and the lot to the Trustees of School Section #5 and it became a County Grammar School, largely as a result of the persistence of Archie McEwen, the Warden of Brant County Council that year. This was a victory for the village since it had been battling for the Academy's survival throughout the previous decades against the aggressive urban growth in Brantford. Now lads such as George Bryce and Willie Cooke, who had gone on from the Mount Pleasant schools to attend Brantford High School as was the custom for pupils going on in education, could complete their entire schooling at home. As mercantile interests continued to shift away from Mount Pleasant with developments in transportation, the high character of the Nelles Academy helped the village develop a reputation for academic excellence.

While the boys of the village received a superior education at home, parents wanting the same for their daughters had to send them away for their schooling. Eliza McAlister, daughter of Robert and Ruth, Emeline Phelps, daughter of Hiram and Maria, Ellen Nelles, daughter of William and Mary, and Mary Biggar, daughter of James and Jane, were the first Mount Pleasant girls to go away to school at the Burlington Ladies' Academy in Hamilton, affiliated with the Methodist Church, in the late 1840s and early 1850s. In 1847 the *Christian Guardian* boasted that "nowhere on this continent can there be found an Institution better conducted than the Burlington Ladies' Academy." Although the *Guardian* may have exaggerated its praise, the Academy played a crucial role in the development of superior education for females in Canada West. As Bert DenBoggende points out in his work on the Academy, while wealthy parents could afford private tutors and common schools were open to girls of more modest means, middle class parents argued that the Ladies' Academy "stood alone in the province" as



Tennant House (undated photo), built 1840-1848 by shoemaker Richard Tennant in the popular Gothic and Greek Revival styles. Tennant also built a barn to match his “queerish architectural gem.” A Tennant descendant recalled a three-foot stone wall in front with an iron picket fence atop, a large double iron gate, a gravelled drive hedged with privet circling the house, and an old-fashioned garden. The verandah wrapped around the house with steps in front of the main entrance. Albert Goold, son of second owner Col. James Goold had no romantic notions about the house, stating: “That house may interest this generation but I don’t want anything to do with it. That was the coldest damn house in the village. We had to keep three fireplaces going full blast to keep it warm.”



*Tennant House floor plan. The basement is mostly above ground with 8' ceilings so it makes sense that main living areas would be in the basement. These rooms were servants' quarters or informal family rooms, with formal "public" rooms on the main floor. Tennant's beliefs burnt into the wood over the fireplace suggest why he built an octagon: "Short on gladness - learn to fake it, Long on sadness - go and shake it, Life is only what you make it - Anyway." The building has been much altered over the years, adapted as a Legion Hall, restaurant, and presently a spa. From *Building With Wood and Other Aspects of Nineteenth Century Building in Ontario*. University of Toronto Press, 1967. With permission.*

one of the few schools offering the educational opportunities that they desired for their daughters. As one student of the Academy wrote in 1848: “there are those...who... are not contented to educate their daughters for kitchenmaids alone; nor yet for parlour furniture; but aim to have their minds invigorated and stored with varied and useful knowledge...such is the kind of education our beloved parents have aimed at imparting to us, in sending us to this school.” The McAlisters, Phelps’s, Nelles’s and Biggars were such “beloved parents” and they obviously valued the education not only of their sons, which they definitely fostered, but also of their daughters. Ruth McAlister, for example, in a letter to Eliza in 1848, urged her daughter not to come home from Hamilton for a visit during the school term. “We should be very much pleased to see you but should not wish you to lose any time from your studies as you have so short time to stay.” In promoting education equally among their offspring, these parents continued the strong educational spirit in the village for all Mount Pleasant sons and daughters.

In the 1840s Richard Tennant, a young shoemaker from Yorkshire, England, built the village’s octagonal private residence which became known as “Grey Gables” for himself and his wife Caroline Heaton also from Yorkshire, and their young son William. Not surprisingly the large three-storey house took eight years to construct. Tennant finished the outside with a grey cement made from the water lime concrete brought over as ballast in sailing vessels from Scotland, eventually unloaded at Newport on the Grand. Tennant designed the eight bedroom home to be topped off with a lantern, a sort of observation tower overlooking the eight gables on the third storey. Each gable housed a pie-shaped bedroom. A piazza accessed by about a dozen steps stretched across the front wall. A spiral stairway, which would have inspired the envy of Alvah Townsend, reached from the ground floor up to the third floor. Two fireplaces graced the second floor while the ground floor housed the main kitchen and dining room, wine cellar and maid’s room. The Tennant family lived in the grand and unusual house for over a quarter of a century until Richard’s death in 1878 at the young age of 53.

The Tennants and Heatons formed part of an English influx into the village in the 1840s and 1850s, a boom in immigration which helped boost the population of the province to one million by 1853. As William Sturgis observed in 1850 "we have...English and Irish by the 100." This influx further promoted the connection with the Empire felt in Mount Pleasant. The Tennant and Heaton families also worked actively in the local Anglican Church, further strengthening this tie. These families also brought with them strong family ties, which they incorporated into the fabric of the village. Caroline Heaton's brother Crossley also lived in Mount Pleasant, owning a general store next to Richard's shoe shop. And Richard's brother John Tennant, a tailor, was married to another sister Ann Amelia Heaton. All of these family connections lead us to the third octagonal building in Mount Pleasant, the Stowe Brothers Carriage Shop.

A third Heaton sister, Alice, also part of this English influx, came to Mount Pleasant in 1843 with her husband John Stowe at about the time her brother-in-law Richard was building his octagonal house. So John built another one with living quarters on the upper floor for his wife Alice and sons John Jr. and William, a wagon shop on the first floor, and a blacksmith shop in the rear. With his two sons he ran a successful carriage shop, which later became known as the Stowe Brothers Carriage Shop.

But this particular octagonal combined house and business is perhaps best known for its connection to Emily Howard Jennings Stowe after she married John Jr. and entered into this close-knit Mount Pleasant family. Emily's mother Hannah Howard came from Dutchess County, New York to Norwich, Upper Canada where she met and married fellow Quaker, Solomon Jennings. Emily was born there in 1831. Quakers believed men and women were equal and should share rights and responsibilities equally, very unusual ideas for the 1830s. The Jennings raised Emily and her five sisters to rely on their own abilities and to believe women could do whatever men could. Emily began teaching at age 15, not an uncommon prospect for a single girl in the late 1840s, but she really wanted to go to university. However, the University of Toronto turned down

her application because she was a woman. So instead Emily went to Normal School or teacher's college in Toronto, motivated by the sudden demand for teachers created by the 1850 law establishing free schooling in Canada West. Emily excelled at college and went on to become a public school principal at Central School in Brantford, the first woman to hold such a post in Canada, and a remarkable feat for a young woman of 23.

Emily soon met John Stowe, Jr. of Mount Pleasant, a carriage maker who would have found many reasons to frequent Brantford. John has been described as "a liberal-minded man" and Emily could always count on him for "sympathy and assistance." As such, the principal and the carriage maker wed in 1856 and lived in a frame house near the octagonal shop. Their home became synonymous with the promotion of education, enhancing the reputation of the village. Mrs. Herbert German of St. George recalled being sent to board at the Stowe home as a small child from her home at Howell's



Dr. Emily Howard Jennings Stowe (1831-1903). This 1868 photo of Dr. Emily Stowe speaks volumes about her character - uncompromising and determined in her quest for equal rights for women, although a niece who lived in Mount Pleasant described her as "gentle, fair-minded and charitable in her judgments." Her story is a series of firsts: first woman school principal in Canada; first woman recognised to practise medicine in Canada; founder of the Toronto Women's Literary Club (1876), Canada's first suffrage group; principal founder and first president of the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association. She would have needed much courage because both men and women ridiculed her efforts. Emily Stowe came to Mount Pleasant in 1856 after her marriage to carriage maker John Stowe, Jr. and lived in the tall narrow board and batten house he built for her, now 636 Mount Pleasant Road.

Mills because her parents considered she must have the advantages of schooling in Mount Pleasant.

After their marriage Emily did what many women were compelled to do; she gave up her job as principal in Brantford and began a happy busy life as wife and soon-to-be mother of three. Augusta came into the world in 1857, John Howard in 1861 and Frank Jennings in 1863. But the family's happiness was shattered when John contracted tuberculosis, a common and often deadly disease in the mid-19th century. With John ill, the carriage business suffered and the Stowe family found it hard to make ends meet, especially with expensive medical bills. So after the birth of Frank in 1863, Emily returned to teaching to support the family, this time teaching in Mount Pleasant where she had been offered a position at the Nelles Academy even though she was married. At this time there was a general taboo in society against married women working, particularly as teachers. But Emily was frustrated by the low rate of pay that she saw as discriminatory to women, so by 1865 she made what some have described as "a shocking decision." As a result of many factors, her Quaker background, John's illness, her desire to further the cause of women, the emphasis on education in the village, and her interest in natural remedies, Emily realised that she wanted to become a medical doctor. She may have discussed entering medical school with Rev. Dr. S. S. Nelles who was President of Victoria College, Cobourg, later to become part of the University of Toronto. Not surprisingly, the University of Toronto turned down her application, again citing her gender as the reason. Emily is noted as replying, rather prophetically, "Your senate may refuse me entrance, but the time will come when you will be compelled to open your doors to women students." So she instead turned to the United States.

It was not that American universities were any more open to women. It was that in the United States women had set up their own separate medical schools. And so, with John in a sanatorium, Emily left her young family, 8-year-old Augusta, 4-year-old John, and 2-year-old Frank in the care of her sister Cornelia, and went to study at the New York Medical College for Women. She graduated in 1867,

returned home and in 1880 earned the right to practise medicine in Ontario, becoming the first woman in the country to do so.

By this time John had recovered from his illness and the entire family settled in Toronto. Not everyone wholeheartedly supported Emily's dream to become a doctor or believed it was even possible. A former Mount Pleasant schoolteacher and Toronto druggist, Dr. Ninian Holmes, who was married to Libbie, a daughter of Alvah Townsend, commented on her situation in a letter written in 1871, probably typical of the opinion of professional men at the time. "As regards Mrs. Dr. Stowe doing well. I do not believe she will ever be able to establish herself there [Toronto]." Despite his prediction Emily distinguished herself as an important figure in the history of Canada and though Norwich residents count her among their famous daughters, her pivotal years in Mount Pleasant helped shape her path in life.

Chapter Six

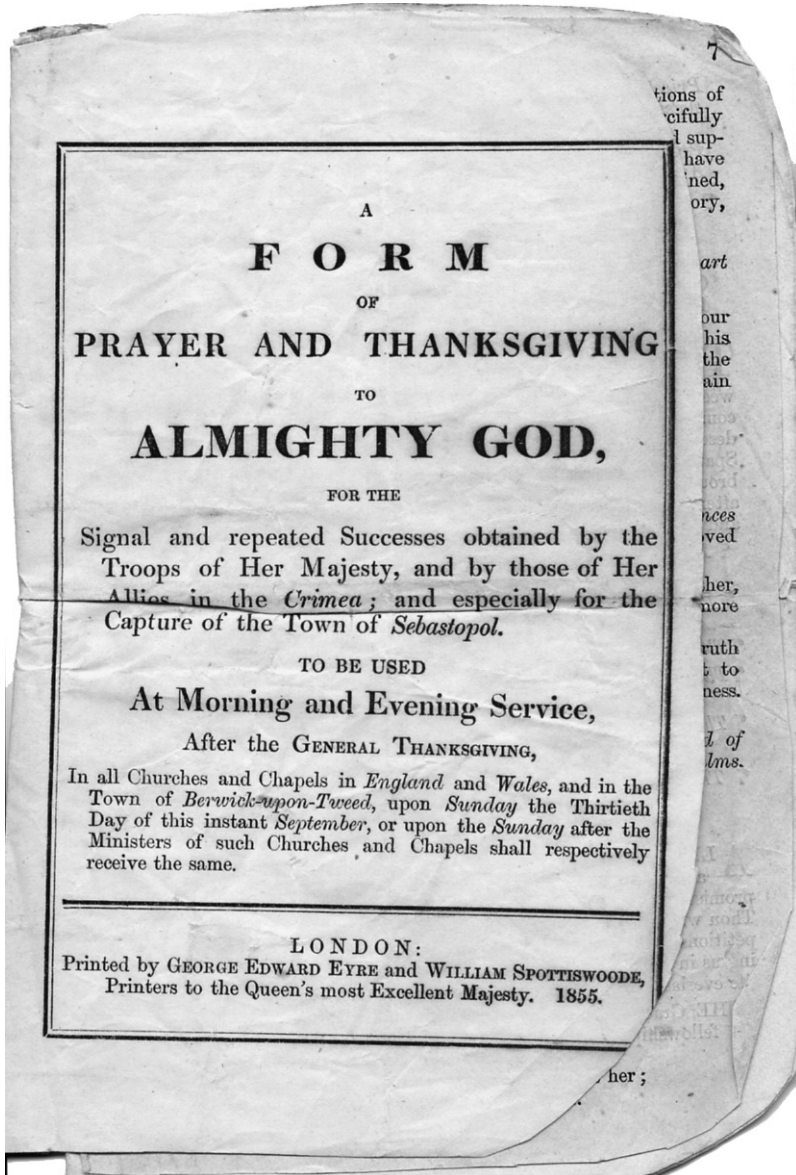


“Wheat Was King”

The 1850s

The elegance revealed through the impressive architecture of the village in the 1840s and 1850s flowed primarily from one thing: wheat. The wheat boom flourished, as has been the case throughout the history of the province, due to advances in transportation technology. By 1848 workers completed the St. Lawrence canal system, reducing wheat transportation costs by half, but new railroads in the United States between the St. Lawrence and the lower Great Lakes to various ocean ports and western markets overshadowed the canal milestone. Also greatly affecting the wheat trade, England, Canada’s biggest wheat importer, continued the evolution towards distancing herself from British North America by repealing the Corn Laws in 1846. This meant that the colonies, especially Canada West, that great producer of wheat, no longer had the protected market of England. Instead farmers had to compete on the open market, particularly against the strong American economy. As a result, flour mills and lake ports stood idle, and the following year Canada West experienced a widespread recession. Mount Pleasant had no special immunity against such outside pressures, particularly as wheat was such a primary staple in the community’s fields. This situation encouraged the invention of implements of husbandry to give farmers an advantage over their competitors in the United States.

Luckily for the farmers of Canada West, the price of wheat increased in the mid-1850s due to European crop failures and the Crimean War from 1854-56 which caused a decrease in Russian



Church of England Order of Prayers for a service celebrating the fall of Sebastopol, August 1855, during the Crimean War. These prayers for the victorious British troops express typical sentiments about the war held throughout the Dominion, including Mount Pleasant. The British press was violently anti-Russian, and this, combined with pride of Empire and adoration of Queen Victoria resulted in war fever seizing a new generation of British youth after the Napoleonic Wars. The war was a fiasco for all participants and the euphoria ended as the glamour waned and cholera raged.

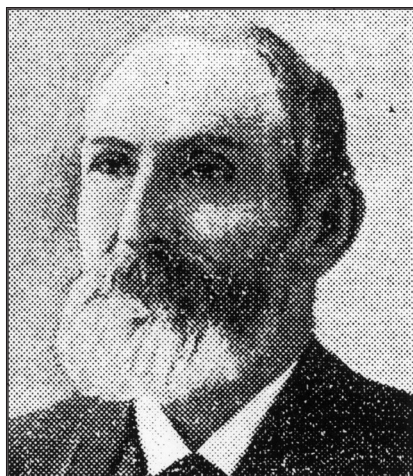
wheat production. This price hike stimulated the economy which had been in general recession since the 1840s. Therefore, as the saying of the time went, "Wheat was King" once again. Locally, the June 28, 1856 edition of the *Brantford Courier* noted that according to the printed returns to Parliament, the Township of Brantford was the largest wheat producing township in Canada.

Outside events such as the Crimean War not only had an impact on the agricultural economy of the village, but even personally affected and inspired village residents. The news of the European war captivated audiences across North America, and one young Mount Pleasant boy in particular. An 1856 edition of the *Brantford Courier* carried stories of the "the British Army in the Crimea" and "Miss Nightingale of the British Soldiers." In response to these and other such stories, 12-year-old George Bryce ventured to a Brantford bookshop with a small sum of money with the mission to buy a book about the far away land of the war. And that is how *Turkey, Past and Present*, found its way into the Bryce family library.

On a more practical note, the increased price of wheat stimulated by the Crimean War and other factors led to a desire on the part of farmers to plant more acreage, thereby increasing the demand for further mechanisation in the fields. Mount Pleasant provided the perfect environment to foster this type of invention. Rev. John Harris, a Baptist minister, came to Mount Pleasant around 1839 with his wife Catherine and their son Alanson, a young man of 23, who soon married Mary Morgan. The Harris family originally lived in Niagara but left the area after the War of 1812, moving to Ingersoll with the family who would lend its name to that community. A daughter of that family became Mrs. Laura Secord of War of 1812 fame. Like most new settlers to Mount Pleasant, the Harris family settled into a life of farming. But unlike most of his neighbours presumably, the elder Harris disliked farm work, preferring the life of a pioneer minister. According to Marcus Van Steen's 1962 *London Free Press* article, John was "a powerful preacher with a splendid gift for exhortation who regarded the cultivation of men's souls as being more important than cultivation of his soil."

His neighbours admired the man and enjoyed his preaching so much that they often helped with the chores around the Harris farm located on the “back street” (now Pleasant Ridge Road) west of the village. Nevertheless, the bulk of the work fell to Alanson, prompting his father to experiment with ways to ease the laborious chores on the farm. Consequently in the Harris barn in Mount Pleasant he produced the revolving hay rake, the first farm implement to be invented in Canada. Up to that time, manufacturers copied machines first made in the United States. But there was a hefty duty on American farm machinery, therefore providing a further incentive for the manufacturing of implements in Canada. Inspired by the Crimean War and the high price of Canadian wheat, Alanson began to successfully manufacture his father’s hay rake and other farm machinery beginning in the 1850s under the company name A. Harris, Son & Co.

Margaret Smyth adds a sad note to this otherwise inspiring story. Alanson soon took his family away from Mount Pleasant to Beamsville, where he further developed his manufacturing business. Part of the reason why he did this may have been to escape the sad memories of losing four young children within seven years in the late 1840s and early 1850s, and to be close to his in-laws, the Morgans, who lived in that community. He also realised that the forests of the Mount Pleasant area were being depleted and this did not bode well for the



Alanson Harris. From “Massey Harris Celebrates 90 Years of Progress,” Brantford Expositor, 1937. Courtesy Brant Historical Society.

family's other business, a sawmill close to Burford on Whiteman's Creek. Then in 1871 he moved his farm implement company to Brantford from Beamsville because he felt Brantford afforded a larger scope for the growing establishment. Once in Brantford he built a large factory and in 1892 merged with Hart Massey. Massey-Harris then became one of the world's giants in the farm implement field. According to historian Randall White, small farm machinery inventions such as Rev. John Harris's revolving hay rake "marked a turning point in the early history of industrial manufacturing" in the province. Although business interests took Alanson away from Mount Pleasant, his grandson Morgan E. Harris rekindled the family connection to the village when he acquired Brucefield and renovated it in 1930s.

John and Alanson may have also been motivated in their push for labour-saving farm mechanisation by the labour shortage experienced in the province sparked by the California Gold rush beginning in 1848 and the readily available jobs in the lumber camps. The quest for riches to the west attracted local people such as "Mr. Soules" and Joseph Ellis, as William Sturgis explained in a letter in 1850. They made the trek to the Pacific coast by way of New York and Cape Horn, but as Soules warned everyone when he returned from his ordeal, "these large stories we see in the newspapers are not true." While the departure of people like Soules and Ellis continued an ongoing trend of local residents going off to greener pastures, the return of at least some of them emphasised the continuing allure of Mount Pleasant's prosperous wheat economy.

We see this importance of farming in an October 1858 *Expositor* article reporting on Mount Pleasant's first ploughing match. With the "weather fine" the "ploughing match [was] a novelty in this vicinity [attracting] a large number of spectators" to Andrew Cooke's farm. In their history of Brant County, Files and Lefler reinforce the mid-century importance of agriculture in the area with their description of a typical threshing event in Mount Pleasant. "Each fall, fields of golden grain awaited harvest time." They add that harvesting required gangs of local farmers to visit each farm to thresh the grain that had been cut and tied into sheaves and left in the field to dry.



(photos above & right) Threshing, c1905 with men, boys, dogs, and one little girl assembled in a period portrait of farm labour. Gathering for the threshing retained the flavour and purpose of pioneer “bees” when rare and generally unaffordable mechanized equipment was hired out around the community. Good machines had a capacity of 500 bushels a day and could be amortized in a few years. Steam powered threshers first made their appearance in Upper Canada in 1861. The picture includes: A. Goold; A. Cutcliffe with daughter Constance (left wagon); Trevor Goold (boy with white hair, left); Ernest Goold (in fedora beside team with load); A. Liscombe (holding horses). It is evident from the clothes who was working and who was there just for a photo opportunity.

The threshing gang would gather the sheaves and bring them to the threshing machine by horse-drawn wagons, where a conveyor belt would feed the sheaves into the threshing machine, separating the grain from the straw. The grain was stored in the granary in the barn and the straw was blown into a large stack. All the while the men were hard at work threshing in the fields, their wives and daughters and mothers toiled inside preparing a meal of roasts, vegetables and pies for the hungry workers. The process would then be repeated again and again until the entire village had harvested its grain. But this did not end the labours of the wheat economy. One Mount Pleasant resident recalled “the days when Mount Pleasant was bigger than Brantford...where one could stand on the tailor’s steps and see strings of sleighs hauling grain to the river boats, horses’ noses to the



tail board of the sleigh ahead." Margaret Franklin of Burtch, born in 1843, remembered witnessing men load the grain scows to be towed down the Grand River at the flourishing town of Newport "before the days of the steam railroads."

The advent of these steam railroads would go a long way toward addressing the ongoing problems of reliable transportation routes, which proved to be the greatest challenge for the Grand River area, as it was for every other inland settlement in the province. First the settlers relied on poor roads. Then canals brought navigation via the waterways. These early forms of travel sustained the wheat economy of Mount Pleasant and other Upper Canadian communities, but by the middle decade of the century, technology made it possible to envision an even more efficient and powerful form of transportation. In fact it was becoming clear that access to the new technology of railroads could make or break a community. For example, the village of Berlin, present-day Kitchener, established in the northern section of the Grand River Six Nations tract, welcomed the Grand Trunk Railroad in 1856 and as English and McLaughlin argue, it "seemed to signify that the village had come of age." Mount Pleasant,

like many other villages, on the other hand, never did gain all the benefits inherent in this type of transportation link.

Brantford got its rail connection when the railroads came to the area in 1854 in the form of the Buffalo, Brantford and Goderich line. This new type of fever, railway fever, helped spell doom for the canal system, which for the local area meant the demise of the Grand River Navigation Company. Squire Racey's wealthy son-in-law Andrew Kerby, who was married to Mary Racey, left his family destitute by his losses when the Navigation Company failed. It was hard to imagine that anything could supersede the canal system, which in its heyday of the 1830s had proven astronomically more efficient than overland travel. Yet this is exactly what the railways promised. A journey from Brantford to Buffalo that took 24 hours by boat could now be completed in just four hours by rail, a fraction of the time. With the advantages of the canal at Brantford many businesses had been attracted to Brantford over Mount Pleasant, and this trend accelerated with the railroad in the mid-1850s.

However, even with the advent of railroads, the river and the local roads still provided the primary transportation for movement around the local district. The Grand River provided easy access to transportation, yet it could also be a barrier. Enterprising interests had constructed a toll bridge over the river at the ford, with charges that many considered excessive. Thomas Grantham was one such man. He spearheaded a drive to raise money to build a free bridge across the Grand and when it opened in 1851 Herbert Biggar drove the first team across. Unfortunately, a spring flood in 1854 swept away both the toll bridge and the free bridge, causing residents to resort to the old practice of ferrying goods and passengers across the Grand. Eventually an iron bridge which was free to all was erected and Grantham prided himself on achieving his goal of free transportation. Befitting his community spirit and his desire to advance the agricultural interests in the area, Thomas was very active in the South Brant Agricultural Society. Calling on the same community enthusiasm he roused in the drive to build a free bridge, Thomas helped raise money to enlarge the fair grounds for the annual Brantford Township Agricultural Show. In 1860 the Society

purchased the new grounds, and in the process Thomas earned himself a lifetime membership in the Society.

The advances in transportation across the province helped boost the influx of immigrants in the 1840s and 1850s. The population of Canada West doubled in each of these decades to reach an impressive one million by the 1850s. Overcrowding in the British Isles, the Irish potato famine, peace in Europe and official promotion by Canadian settlement organisations encouraged this immigration. This population explosion necessitated a reorganisation in political boundaries and the establishment of local autonomy and responsibility through local government. In 1842 Gore District had its first council elections and its first taste of municipal government, selecting Herbert Biggar to be the Reeve of the first council for the Township of Brant. By this time Squire James Racey was undoubtedly happy to turn the reins of responsibility over to a younger man, particularly his son-in-law's brother. Through his position in various posts over the years, Racey had settled legal issues especially over lands, inheritance, and the transition from 999-year leases to Crown deeds. James died in 1851 at the age of 70. Widowed at the age of 61, the indefatigable Ann would live another 29 years until 1893. After James' death, Ann lived with her older children in the village and pursued her active role in the Anglican Church.

The evolution toward more authentic local government, a parallel development to the responsible government ensured at the provincial level by Lord Elgin and his controversial Rebellion Losses Bill, necessitated the division of the province into counties and the selection of county seats or capitals. In 1849 counties succeeded districts as the organizational unit for municipal and judicial purposes, and the process of establishing new boundaries began. An 1851 Act of Parliament temporarily united the proposed counties of Brant, Wentworth, and Halton, and made provision for dissolution when the county seat had been determined and a Courthouse and gaol built.

The county seat was a very important designation in terms of the future growth, prestige and transportation facilities such a

role promised. As Kenneth McLaughlin explains in his history of Cambridge, the community of Galt (then part of Halton) to the north, with its population boom nearly qualifying it for a town, expected the area to be divided with itself at the centre as the county seat. Further south however, powerful Brantford Township politician David Christie, MPP for East (later North) Brant riding, had the ear of the Hincks government and he lobbied for Brantford to be the centre of its own jurisdiction. To make this happen the government divided the the area of Dumfries lying between Galt and Brantford in two with the northern half falling in with the newly created Waterloo County and the southern half falling in with the new Brant County. The Galt elite loudly opposed this division of their traditional fiefdom filled with fellow Scots. In fact, their cries irritated the Hincks government so much that it passed over Galt, the logical choice for the Waterloo County seat, and bestowed the honor on the village of Berlin to the north. This turn of events, as McLaughlin argues, left other local areas such as Preston to languish despite their earlier promising development. With the location of the county seat for Brant settled as Brantford, the United Counties organization was dissolved. In 1852 the new Brant County, one of the last organised under the new municipal government format was created from parts of three other counties: south Dumfries from Halton, Burford and Oakland from Oxford, and the remainder from Wentworth.

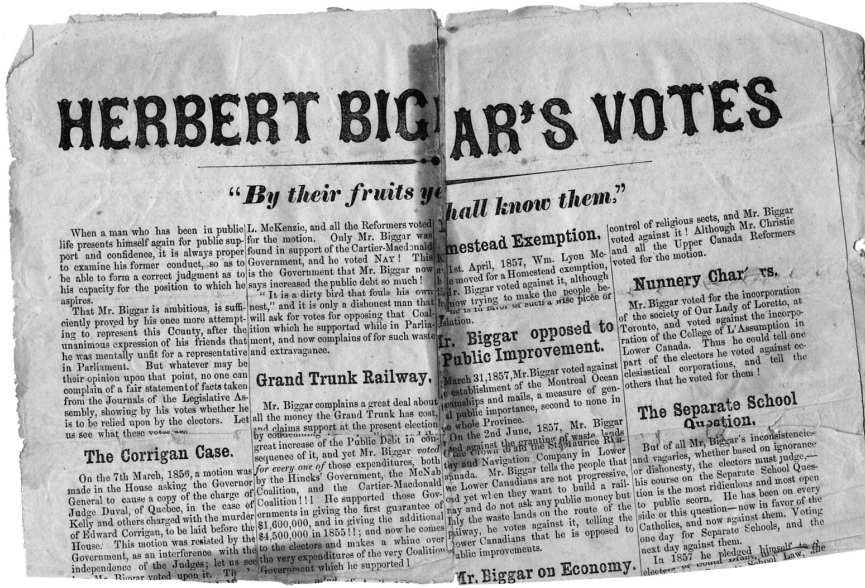
When the government named Brantford the county seat in 1852, historians such as Myers and McBurney argue that, similar to Berlin, it outstripped all the nearby communities (including Mount Pleasant), and especially the lake ports which had grown in importance when the Grand River was the primary transportation artery. But the choice of Brantford over Mount Pleasant or any other community in the district could not have been difficult with Brantford's population totalling over 3200 by 1850 compared to just over one-tenth of that in the older village of Mount Pleasant. The 1850s began an inexorable shift of mercantile pursuits away from the village in favour of the new county seat with all its benefits. In 1859 Russell Hardy bought a dry goods store in Brantford, setting up in competition with the Fosters, R. Strobridge, and Abraham Cooke who were among the increasing number of Mount Pleasant merchants with interests in Brantford.

However, Mount Pleasant did manage to retain some prominence. The next year, in 1853, local electors chose Herbert Biggar as the first MPP for West (later South) Brant riding.

Herbert remained a resident of Mount Pleasant, thus ensuring that the village would continue to have a voice in local and provincial politics.

Intensifying this voice, his older brother the Rev. Hamilton Biggar, who by this time had retired from his Methodist ministry, became the new County Treasurer. His new job meant that a permanent family residence was now possible after years of travelling the countryside. Hamilton moved his family, including wife Eliza Racey, to their Mount Pleasant Road farm called "Maple Terrace." Their son Dr. Hamilton Fisk Biggar described the 60-acre farm with its "very comfortable house," as a "dear old place, with its beautiful large old maples in the front yard and its terraced approach to the house." He also recollected the family's cream coloured pony, Sporter, a great pet and a comfort to Hamilton and Eliza as they went on their outings. In his very practical way, Hamilton sold his bullseye watch for a cutter, saying the watch was an extravagance while the cutter was a necessity. In the winter he buckled two German silver bells to Sporter's collar when he took the cutter out on excursions. After a hectic life with a travelling ministry, Hamilton and Eliza no doubt enjoyed a happy and more settled time at Maple Terrace.

Unfortunately, the immigrant flow that prompted the establishment of municipal government in the province also brought with it cholera, or ship fever as it was called. In 1847-48 it spread to the local area and over the whole route to the London area and westward. In 1850 William Sturgis told of a recent local tragedy in 1848 that may have resulted from this epidemic. In a letter to his brother John in Michigan, William broke the sad news of "The breach in the Allin Ellis's family. Allin himself and three daughters all gone to their graves." This misfortune left William and John's sister Hannah widowed, and her three children at home, Wallace, Ulrey and Eliza, fatherless. Despite the tragic loss, William noted that "They are all comfortably situated."



Excerpt from an 1857-58 general election broadsheet purporting to be a "fair representation of facts" showing by Herbert Biggar's votes "whether he is to be relied upon by the electors." It then roundly castigates Mr. Biggar for voting against his fellow Reformers in the Upper Canadian Parliament and for voting inconsistently on issues. The broadsheet reflects the political acrimony and volatility of the period as parties jockeyed for power in the union government of Upper and Lower Canada between 1841 and the 1867 Confederation. Herbert retained his seat in this election.

This flood of immigrants helped to increase the concentration of settlement in the province and would intensify what William also described to his brother at mid-century. "Mount Pleasant," he wrote, "is still increasing slowly. We have 3 stores, 3 blacksmith shops, 2 taverns, 2 wagon shops, 2 tailor shops, 4 shew [sic] shops and 2 cabinet shops and 1 doctor. Yet William caught himself from describing his neighbours to his brother, who had been away from the village for over 30 years. "The old settlers are principally all dead or moved away." The exception he noted, besides himself, was John Ellis, who also came with his parents to Mount Pleasant in the late 18th century. And those early settlers who remained, such as "Old Squire Racey," who was suffering terribly from "cancer of the face," were quickly fading away. In fact, James Racey died from his illness the next year. This realisation that the village had changed

considerably since those early pioneer days must have been what caused William to reflect back on his deceased relatives. "I am about fitting up the graves of grandfather and grandmother and mother and am going to get headstones put up to them." Of course the grandfather to whom he was referring was Thomas Sturgis, the very first burial in the community. Although William would not know it at the time, he too would be resting in that cemetery near his relatives by 1852. But not everyone was looking back nostalgically. As William noted, some Mount Pleasant residents continued to experience that wanderlust and sense of adventure for the future that had taken John to Michigan so many years before. As we have seen, he related the stories of "Mr. Soules" and Joseph Ellis, who tried their luck in the California gold rush. But as we know, Soules soon returned after bitter disappointment in the so-called gold fields of the west.

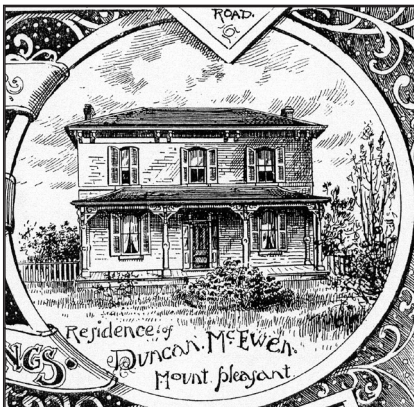
The improved local transportation and the booming wheat economy attracted not only Mount Pleasant residents back to the safe prosperity of the village, but also many overseas immigrants as well. Typical of this group, Eliza Marquis (nee McDiarmid) accompanied by her brother Duncan emigrated to the New World from Scotland in 1852 via New York to be near her brothers Donald and Diarmid McDiarmid who were already settled in Mount Pleasant. In fact Eliza and her children arrived on a steamer which made its way up the Brantford canal. The village also offered the attraction of other Scottish families such as the Bryces and the Eadies. Eliza made the decision to leave her home after her husband John, a cobbler, died. As a new widow she packed her possessions in a 3 foot x 3 foot x 5 foot wooden chest, and emigrated with her children, 11-year-old son Duncan, and three daughters, Ellen, the eldest at 12, Julia, 7 and Catherine, a toddler of 4. Duncan attended school in Mount Pleasant, preparing his way to graduate from Victoria Medical College in 1865. Duncan's attendance at Victoria College was not an unusual education path for Mount Pleasant students. With Samuel Nelles the university's professor and soon to be principal, president and then chancellor, the tie between Samuel's university and his brother William's Nelles Academy meant that a significant number of Mount Pleasant students went on to complete degrees at Victoria College. After attending university, Duncan married Elizabeth

Bryce, the daughter of fellow Scottish immigrants and the sister of Rev. George, further tightening the bonds within the Scottish community in the village. By the end of the decade of the 1850s officials reported that the “Scotch” were still “most numerous in this county.” Duncan’s sister Catherine later became a schoolteacher in Mount Pleasant. According to a Marquis descendant, Eliza decided to come to Canada West because she felt the “children might have more opportunities.” She later married Francis Fairchild, a local farmer, and settled into a happy life with him in the village. Eliza’s decision to journey to the New World on her own with her young children illustrates the devastating effect that widowhood could have on 19th-century women who were dependent on male breadwinners. As with Isabella MacLean MacDonald before her, the promise and security of a family connection was tremendously alluring to Eliza, even across the ocean.

Elizabeth’s brother Diarmid, in Mount Pleasant since at least 1844, was married to Annabella Dawson. They belonged to the Presbyterian Church and would go on to have eight children and raise their family in the village. And their daughter Eliza, who was born in 1865, would marry Alexander MacLachlan, another immigrant from Scotland, near the end of the century, further cementing the Scottish ties in the community. Archibald McEwen, who had also come from Scotland to Mount Pleasant, though much earlier, in 1830, persuaded his brother John and his cousin Peter to come in 1854. These new McEwens, including six children, endured the six-week Atlantic crossing to start new lives in the village.

All of this immigration boosted Mount Pleasant’s population to 400 as recorded in W.H. Smith’s 1852 publication *Canada*. He described the “long village” as a “fine settlement and a pleasant situation,” though with “not much of a mount to it,” as earlier recorders such as Rev. Proudfoot had noted. The village rested in the southern portion of Brantford Township, which boasted a total population of just over 6000 in an area of over 78,000 acres. Prolific local journalist Jean Waldie would have concurred with Smith’s assessment, as we can see in her retrospective snapshot of the village a century later.

According to Waldie, a stroll through Mount Pleasant on any afternoon around 1854 would reveal “the little white Methodist meeting house,” still referred to as Bethesda Chapel. Near the chapel stood the modest frame farmhouse of the Ellis family. A conglomeration of country stores also greeted the stroller, including William L. Jones’ dry goods and general store, and Abraham Cooke’s store and postmaster’s office on the corner adjoining Grey Gables, the octagon house. The noise of hammering emanated from the other nearby octagon structure as brothers John and William Stowe laboured in their carriage shop, with father John no doubt supervising. The village stroller could stop at the local inn for a rest and a drink and perhaps a chat with innkeeper John Bingham or his wife Hannah. Or alternatively our stroller could listen to the lively tunes at Fiddler Anne’s Tavern, so named for proprietor O’Dell’s “gay young” wife Anne Phillips who loved to play the fiddle. The colourful Anne carried a pistol and was an expert horsewoman who drove a team of grey horses as well as any man and better than most. Village lads such as George Bryce and Willie Cooke studied hard at the Mount Pleasant schoolhouse. George later remembered that at the time the last of the Tutelo Indians lingered in the area “like a ghost about the Heights. Stalwart, straight as an arrow, never tasting strong drink and honest.” “Old Tutelo” as George and the local boys used to call him, would sell the bows and arrows he had made to them for a small cost, giving the boys hours of fun.



Duncan McEwen House, now 28 Biggar's Lane. Duncan, son of John McEwen, married Anne Middleton Meggait in 1871 and built this house sometime later on the east boundary of Mount Pleasant. The house is still readily identifiable even with a modified front door surround and without the front verandah. It later became a Biggar property. From the Brantford Expositor, Christmas 1892 ed. Courtesy Brant Historical Society.

Waldie paints us an idyllic picture of Mount Pleasant. But another event of 1854, recorded in detail in the *Expositor*, reminds us that even a small village could experience the threat of violence more common in the larger urban centres. One cold cloudy evening in mid-November that year, 48-year-old William Robertson was murdered as he walked home to his farm near Mount Pleasant where he lived with his wife Sarah and their children. William's death numbered among the 10 murders in Brant County in the 1850s. Sarah's parents Thomas Averill and Lois Ramon had settled in Mount Pleasant in 1805. William had spent the day in the village transacting business. After pausing at Raines' Tavern, William met his son William Jr. and the two started for home about 7:30 in the evening. The son walked ahead of his father and the two became separated. William Jr. heard footsteps running behind him and became worried for his father, so he went to William Eadie's house nearby and the two gathered weapons and along with John Harris, who also lived in the vicinity, went to look for William Sr. With the aid of a lantern, they soon found William's body with a fatal stab wound to the chest. His murder generated tremendous local anxiety and was reported in newspapers across the province. Speculation abounded that perhaps robbers had waited for him to conclude his business in the village and then were disappointed to find that Robertson had little money with him. Others postulated that the murderers were army deserters who thought that William would turn them in. His murder however, remained a mystery and reminds us that despite the image of a tranquil and affluent village overwhelming in Mount Pleasant history, pre-Confederation Canada could be a very rough-and-ready place with drinking, gambling, brawling and raucous behaviour an integral part of the popular culture. The same year, 1854, for example, the town of Brantford had issued 43 liquor licenses for inns and 10 for shops, all for a population of less than 4,000 inhabitants. As historian W. T. Matthews contends, Canada West, like its forebear Upper Canada, was most decidedly not a "peaceable kingdom."

The local press, not surprisingly, disseminated the news of Robertson's murder with all the journalistic zeal characteristic of the media in the mid-19th century. A local son played an important role in developing the newspaper business in Brant County. Henry

Racey, son of James and Ann, auctioneer, merchant, clerk of the division court, and bookseller, a real man of all trades, founded the *Brantford Expositor* in 1852. The 30-year-old Henry had a dispute with Major Thomas Lemmon, the owner of the Brantford newspaper *The Courier* over a small issue. According to Reville, Thomas told "the Major in language more forceful than considerate, that he would show him there were others who could run a Conservative paper as well as himself." So on October 12, 1852 *The Conservative Expositor* appeared. The newspaper, published on Tuesday mornings at the Racey and Mair's bookstore on Colborne Street in Brantford, described itself as "a new weekly family journal, devoted to Politics, Literature, Agriculture, Commerce, Provincial and American Intelligence, General and Foreign News, & c." Henry had carefully targeted the interests of the local readers.

Newspapers of the mid-19th century did not just carry news and reports though, and in fact often comprised more advertisements than actual news. In a typical issue the *Brant County Herald* from March 1855 touted the services of local physician, coroner for the County of Brant and issuer of marriage licenses, Dr. A. H. Cooke. Alexander Cooke had recently succeeded A. Higinbotham in the "Old Established Medical Hall" on Colborne Street in Brantford. He announced: "Advice given to the poor, gratis," and he assured customers that he prepared prescriptions "with care." His wholesale department promised to fulfil every need with its paints, oils, varnish, turpentine, brushes, and wood dyes. He also proclaimed that he was receiving "an extensive supply of DRUGS, CHEMICALS and the most approved patent medicines in use." *Brantford Courier* ads from July 1856 confirm this as they promote him as the premier agent for patent medicines in the area, including "Ayer's Pills" and "Sweet's Celebrated Medicines," touted to cure everything from coughs and sore throats to weak eyes, nervousness and even ailments in horses and cattle. Doctors such as A. H. Cooke hawked similar remedies all over North America as a cure-all in the days before modern medicine. The majority of the patients tended to be women and the contents of the magic tonics, pills or oils tended to be overwhelmingly alcoholic.

With the exception of the Crimean War, the one issue that thankfully had not been in the press was military conflict. But despite the long peace of the Pax Britannica, military defence remained an important tradition in Mount Pleasant as across the Empire. In the 1850s A. Wallace Ellis, son of Allin and Hannah, organised a local company of volunteers. He built a shed on his property between the Bingham Inn and Andrew Eadie's home to allow the militia to drill, thereby continuing a long tradition of local military support as far back as his grandfathers, village co-founders Henry Ellis and Amos Sturgis. In 1856 Ellis was made an ensign in the 3rd Battalion of the Regiment of Brant, formed from the 6th Battalion, Wentworth Militia. His military portrait shows a proud man in his splendid uniform, cradling a sword in his left hand.



Henry Racey. Son of Squire James and Ann Hull Racey, born in Mount Pleasant April 30, 1822, best known as founder of the Conservative Expositor (1852), which became the Brantford Expositor. "Dear Uncle Henry" played the fiddle after family visits at the Log Castle. He led the victory celebration in Brantford at the end of the Crimean War, assembling the crowd in front of the Courthouse to enjoy an "intellectual treat of speeches." Courtesy the Brantford Expositor.

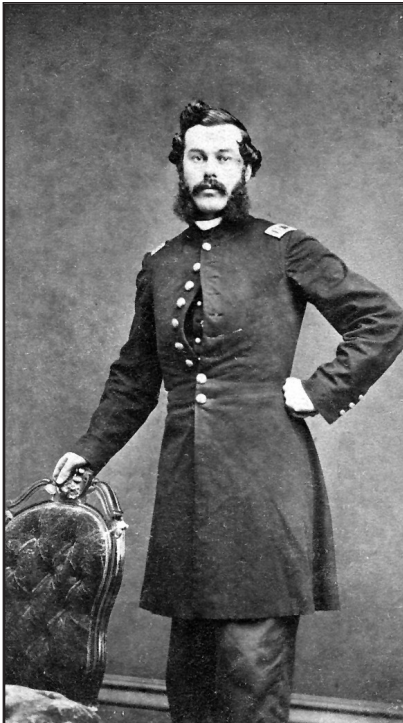
But Wallace's love for the volunteer militia must have been a side event compared to his personal life. In 1852 Wallace Ellis married his neighbour, Isabella MacDonald, the daughter of Andrew Eadie's second wife, Mrs. Isabella MacDonald who had come to Mount Pleasant from Scotland after the death of her husband. Isabella's

correspondence with her sister-in-law Sarah, wife of Isabella's brother John MacDonald, shortly after her marriage to Wallace, gives us some indication of the difficult transition into married life. "I do not feel at home," she wrote. "You know, Sarah I have been my own mistress too long to bear the thoughts of having to ask everything that I must do." At age 26 Isabella would have been considered a mature bride. A few weeks later, she wrote again saying, "How I wish to see you all. Wallace tells me that I am quite homesick. I am not satisfied with my home I suppose that is the cause." But a year and a half later though, Isabella's correspondence reflects the preoccupations of a contented young mother. "You must wonder why I did not send you the pattern of the cloak before this...it is this winter's fashion, they are trimmed with velvet or watered ribbon. I send you a piece of mine. My baby has had a very bad cold but is better. She grows [sic] fast and fat." Even though Wallace had plans to visit John and Sarah MacDonald in St. Mary's in Perth County, Isabella admitted "I can't come with him for it would be too far to take the baby and her so young in such cold weather."

Isabella and Wallace became the parents of eight children, and would later welcome Wallace's mother, Hannah, the first bride in the village, into the fold after she was blind and widowed. They would also welcome Isabella's mother, Isabella Eadie into their home after Andrew died and she was also widowed, for the second time in her life. This was not an uncommon state for Ontario women. Married women at all ages were more likely to become widowed than were men. Isabella for example lost her first husband as a young woman of 31 and Nancy Lee Bryning was widowed for the first time while in her 20s and then again at the age of 54 with the death of Rev. John Bryning. Hannah, Isabella, and Ann Racey lost their husbands in their early 60s. As historian Michael Katz put it quite bluntly, in the 19th century "most married women could expect widowhood." Women tended to outlive men, but widowhood was not just a matter of living to an advanced age and losing a husband, or in the case of Isabella, two husbands, along the way. As if this were not enough, at all ages according to historian Donald Gagan "widows were the least secure group in the community." In the days before the welfare state, widows such as Hannah, Isabella and Ann were lucky to have



Wallace Ellis, owner of the Wallace Ellis store, here in militia uniform c1863. Ellis was an ensign in Lt. Col. Thos. Perrin's (Jr.) 3rd Battalion, received his commission in 1857, and as a lieutenant applied for permission to raise a Volunteer Company in Mount Pleasant during the Trent Affair. Authority was granted by order on June 30, 1863, naming Capt. A. W. Ellis, Lt. Wm. Phelps, and Ensign Robert Eadie as officers.

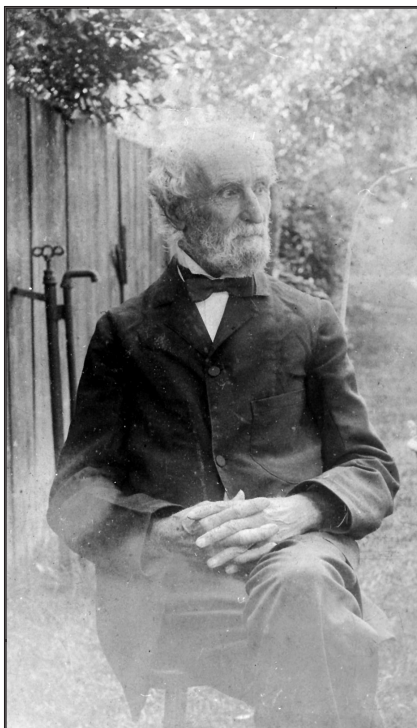


Capt. James Ellis, son of Henry Ellis, great-grandson of village co-founder Henry Ellis in a Civil War uniform in New Orleans. His brothers Edward and Wallace also enlisted; Edward died of fever during the war. Like the Ellis brothers, many other young Canadians, some seeking adventure, others escaping economic depression, enlisted in the U. S. military during the Civil War, most in the Army of the Republic. Dr. Ninian Holmes, teacher at the Nelles Academy, was very unpopular for supporting the Confederate cause.

close family connections to rely on. Isabella and her mother-in-law Hannah, and her mother Isabella, represent the continuities of motherhood and family through the successive generations in Mount Pleasant.

As we have seen, the spectacular homes built in the 1840s and 1850s along with its growing reputation for academic excellence lent an air of elegance and sophistication to the village. At the same time though, the emerging generations and the other newcomers to the village also needed places to reside. Wallace Ellis' older brother John Randall played an important role in helping to create "a home for all" in the same way that Fowler's philosophy inspired the construction of the octagonal buildings. In 1853 Ellis built a house for George Bryce, who had come to the New World a decade earlier just when the prosperity of Mount Pleasant was beginning to show in its architecture. In the intervening years, as a result of his skills as a blacksmith, George accumulated the \$310 needed to build his house. According to a bill of work dated March 5, 1853, John Randall Ellis set out the specifications for the 28 foot x 40 foot home: "the hall and parler [sic] to be finished like or similar to H. Biggar's...[with] a veranda in front 6 feet by 40 feet finished like Mr. Jones's." He concluded the bill by explaining, "I expect to bord [sic] myself and do the work mentioned above if all be well and materials at hand by say the 1st of October 1853 for sum of...three hundred and ten dollars and that will do." This fine home, like others of the era, was built close to road at a time when winter access to the roads was important. Though modified by a raised roof in a different style than the original and with J. R. Ellis' verandah missing, the Bryce home still stands at 670 Mount Pleasant Road.

John Randall Ellis was a cabinetmaker, settled in his career at this point in his life in his early 40s. He lived on the family farm until he came of age, and then learned the trade of carpenter and worked at it for some years, building homes for locals such as George Bryce and Herbert Biggar. He had a carpenter shop next to his home which he shared with his wife Janet Carlyle and their children. Janet had come to Brantford Township with her parents John and Margaret from Scotland via New York State as a young woman in 1843. She



John Randall Ellis, son of Allin Ellis, grandson of village co-founder Henry Ellis. J. R. Ellis built coffins, houses and furniture for some of Mount Pleasant's "best" families. He built the George Bryce house and made elegant furniture from local walnut for Archibald McEwen which was sought after when the McEwen household effects were auctioned in 1935. M. Smyth tells of a village youngster overcome with morbid curiosity peeking into Ellis' coffin room, only to see a corpse move. The victim was truly dead however - the body was only settling as the ice used as a preservative melted underneath. An inscription on a salvaged floor board from one of Ellis' buildings lets us hear his voice: "This board was layed [sic] by John R. Ellis on the 21 of December at eighteen minutes of the clock 1842. Now it is probable [sic] before this is seen again I may be beneath the clods of the valley and I pray God that I may pass through death tryumphat [sic] and home." His prediction came true. Brantford Expositor, Christmas 1892 ed. Courtesy Brant Historical Society.



Ellis/Carlyle House (undated photo, possibly early 1900s), now 707 Mount Pleasant Road. A good example of the typical 24'x40' frame houses with bedroom loft, which frequently replaced log houses in the 1820s and 1830s. Refinements here included a false mantel in the dining room, a formal parlour, and a prominent front door with a big brass key. Mrs. J. R. Ellis was the daughter of John Carlyle, halfbrother of historian Thomas Carlyle.



A picturesque example of a typical mid-19th century rural Ontario house with architecturally defining 1½ storeys, centre-front gable trimmed with fanciful bargeboard, and decorative porch or verandah. Building a 1½ storey house was a clever ploy to gain needed space while avoiding the higher taxes of a 2 storey house. The thick walls of this house are filled with a mixture of mud and straw. The original exterior plaster is underneath the later wood siding. Innkeeper Jno. Bingham lived here c1856. Now 722 Mount Pleasant Road. Photo 2004 courtesy Jim Butler.



A simple Gothic vernacular cottage, overall remarkably similar to the Bryning manse. The swagged verandah is a grace note now lost to the ravages of time, a common fate of such high maintenance features. Other period details include the shake roof, exterior plaster (now under wood siding), and the absence of foundation plantings. Possibly built in two stages c1836 and c1848, the house was owned by James Cox in 1850. Now 708 Mount Pleasant Road. Undated photo courtesy Florence Parker.

was descended from Thomas Carlyle, a notable Victorian historian, biographer and social critic. John Randall, as one of the offspring of Hannah Sturgis and Allin Ellis, represented the intimate connections which joined these early pioneer families. As a “joiner” of a different sort, John Randall, through his carpenter skills, helped develop the village in ways that were just as important to the advancement of Mount Pleasant, ways which endured as the village graduated to its place in a new province and a new country.

Chapter Seven



“Charmed With Its Loveliness”

Late Century: 1860s – 1890s

As the new decade opened, the residents of British North America welcomed the heir to the throne, Edward Albert, the Prince of Wales on the first ever royal visit to the colonies. From St. John's, Newfoundland to the south-western peninsula of Canada West, the dashing 18-year-old son of Queen Victoria charmed subjects of the Empire wherever he went. He opened bridges, danced at royal balls and laid the cornerstone for the new parliament buildings at Ottawa. The Queen welcomed the visit to recognise the growth of British North America and it definitely marked the coming of age for the colonies. As journalists covering the visit via the new technology of telegraph noted, even ten years before the visit would have been impossible. But since then the development in roads, steamships and railways permitted the Prince to see much of the country and it allowed many ordinary subjects to gaze upon their future monarch. In mid-September 1860, near the end of his visit, the Prince of Wales toured the Brantford area. Henry Racey, Mount Pleasant son and owner of the *Brantford Expositor*, greeted the Prince in his role as marshal of the official procession, no doubt sharing the joy of other Mount Pleasant residents at being a part of such a grand empire.

The advancements in transportation that made the royal visit possible brought others from England as well, though for a more permanent stay in the rapidly growing colony, soon to be a country. Richard and Sophia Thomas Guest immigrated to Canada from Gloucestershire, England that same year in 1860. They were both in their early 20s, not much older than the future king. They settled on a Mount Pleasant farm and made a home for what would become



Guest Brothers Butchers, one of many thriving commercial enterprises in Mount Pleasant before Brantford became the centre of economic activity. Shown are James (Jim) and Charles Guest, who took over the business from their father Richard Guest who acquired the money to buy his farm in 1863 by working for Thomas Racey's Rosebank Nursery at the front of Lot 3W. Floyd Ferris is in the middle, with the original Guest home in the background. The house and abattoir were located on the west side of Mount Pleasant Road at the present day North Street corner. The wagons appear to be decorated for a parade, flying the Union Jack and the Canadian Red Ensign which was the dominant flag in Canada. Courtesy Linda (Phelps) Guest.

a large family of six daughters and five sons. Richard became the village butcher and both he and Sophia joined All Saints Anglican Church, serving their parish as active members, a role continued by their descendants to this day. Richard and Sophia died within three days of each other in July 1903, and their headstone notes this with a touching tribute: "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives and in their death were not divided.

By the mid-1860s the developing village needed the services of a butcher. The *County of Brant Gazetteer* for 1865 gives us a snapshot of Mount Pleasant similar to the one Waldie painted of the settlement

a decade earlier. The same visitor on a stroll would have noticed the increased population in the now bustling village of 600 residents. One of the most noticeable additions would have been the sparkling white brick Methodist Church built just a few years before. Our stroller might have waved to pastor Rev. John Mills as he stood out front admiring his imposing new church. Over at the Presbyterian Church Rev. William Peattie served as pastor while George Bryce was superintendent of the Sabbath School and librarian of the church's 400 volumes. At All Saints Rev. Mr. Clotworthy oversaw the spiritual growth of the district Anglicans.



Mount Pleasant Creamery Co. stock certificate, 1920. Several creamery and cheese companies operated in Mount Pleasant. One was on or near the property now at 497 Burtch Road; that building was converted to a house which later burned. A business directory lists a steam powered cheese and butter factory operated by a W. W. Smith in 1898. That may have been the "old creamery" promoted by a Lou Cox, situated on the Mount Pleasant Road across from the present fire hall. It went broke. Another creamery opened on the property where the fire hall stands; it was taken over by Malcolm Condensing, St. George. Courtesy the McAlister family with historical notes from Bob Guest.



Osborne's Garage, c1925. This combination carriage works, blacksmith shop, and garage with a foot in both the 19th and 20th centuries, was built in 1912-1913 by Charles L. Osborne. The cluster of three buildings was located across from the present Community Centre between 716 and 720 Mount Pleasant Road. All three buildings burned down. A second blacksmith shop operated just north of the old post office, possibly the drill hall which was a blacksmith shop by 1910. Courtesy the Osborne family.

The village's three wagon makers, Samuel Farr, the Stowe Brothers and Alvah Townsend did a steady business, being located in the centre of "one of the best wheat growing sections of the country in Canada." The Stowe Brothers, still boasting that name even with John sick, advertised "Carriages of the latest and most improved style made to order of the best material and by first class workmen," while Farr, a "manufacturer of carriages, wagons, ploughs," promised "all work made of the best material and warranted." The village's farmers, including Andrew and John Eadie, William and Robert Murray, John McEwen, Hiram Phelps, William Ray and John Walters would have benefited greatly from the craftsmanship of these manufacturers. The three general stores provided all the supplies needed by the local residents. John McGeary, "General Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, Ready Make Clothing, Boots, Shoes etc," offered "Cash for grain and wool. Other produce taken in exchange." One could buy butter for 17 cents per pound, apples for 50 cents a bushel, potatoes for 30 cents a bushel or eggs for 20 cents per dozen. Crossley Heaton

fulfilled the dairy needs of the district while Robert Eadie dealt in dry goods and Thomas Racey, son of the Squire, supplied the gardening needs for the district from his nursery. Tailors J. W. Tennant and G. Shurman, along with shoemakers George Bingham and John Raw kept the villagers well outfitted in the fashions for every season and for every occasion.

The village received its mails daily at 10:00 p.m., dispatching all outgoing correspondence at the same time at the store of merchant William Jones who took over as postmaster from Abraham Cooke in 1857. Cooke, the "merchant prince" of the village for the past decades, would not be in the village to greet our stroller. He died the year before in 1864 leaving behind his wife Eleanor and their children and grandchildren to carry on his enterprising work for the economic, social and religious well-being of Mount Pleasant. As the village cabinetmaker John Randall Ellis might have constructed Abraham's coffin, an unfortunate but necessary job that usually fell to a community's carpenter, although the task might also have fallen to Mount Pleasant's other cabinetmaker, John Soules, who lived with his wife Eliza and six children in the village. Abraham's son, Dr. A.H. Cooke cared for the medical needs of the community. The village's union grammar school, the new name for the Nelles Academy, established in 1860, averaged about 75 pupils, taught by Walter Briggs since 1863. Walter's brother Albert also served as a respected teacher in Mount Pleasant. Their musically inclined younger brother Alexander delighted worshippers at All Saints as the church's first organist. Walter's counterpart in the junior department of the school, Miss E. Wray, taught the younger students.

Our stroller might also have noticed the new house built for farmer and merchant Archibald McEwen in 1863 by J. Lloyd Jones. McEwen had emigrated from Scotland more than 30 years before, being welcomed into the village and into business by Abraham Cooke. In much the same way that Cooke welcomed McEwen decades before, the village welcomed Irish immigrant John Devlin and his wife Sarah Jarden in 1863. The Devlins, in their late 40s, had first settled at Oakland and now set up a farm in Mount Pleasant for their family. Finally, our stroller could stop at the "Mount Pleasant Hotel," also

known as Canada House, run by proprietor Solomon Sayles, with its “Excellent accommodation for travellers,” and sample some of its “choice wines, liquors and cigars, good stabling and attentive hostlers,” before catching one of the daily stages outside its door “along the Brantford and Simcoe route.”

Soon after the young Prince’s tour of British North America, loyal subjects residing in towns and villages just like Mount Pleasant, honoured his mother Queen Victoria on the occasion of her 45th birthday on May 24, 1865. Resplendent in their best finery tailored by Mr. Jno. Tennant or Mr. Shurman or the young dressmaker Jane Sayles, Mount Pleasant residents would have celebrated the milestone of their monarch with picnics by one of the nearby streams or with carriage drives into the country. Others intent on a more adventurous type of celebration went carousing at Haight’s Pond as generations of Mount Pleasant young men had done for years on the anniversary of their queen’s birth. But the very next year Fenian raiders from the United States shattered the idyllic calm over the Empire’s northern colonies, threatening their very existence and once again mustering Mount Pleasant residents to attention in the face of outside aggression.

The Fenian Brotherhood was an Irish nationalist freedom organisation, determined to free Ireland from British control by invading British North America to distract and perhaps even threaten the imperial government. Many Fenians received military training in the United States during and after the Civil War from 1861-1865 and used the United States as a base from which to launch their attacks, predominantly in the Maritimes and Niagara area. The nearby Niagara invasions particularly alarmed residents of Mount Pleasant. A report from May 31, 1866 informed local residents that “The Fenians have crossed at Buffalo and are now in possession of Ft. Erie. More of them are still arriving.” That evening a local newspaper announced: “the bugle is now calling our worthy volunteers to arms and the men as usual are responding with alacrity, pleased to think that their country has need of their services.” As in the War of 1812 and the Rebellion of 1837, Mount Pleasant sons heeded the call to



The no-nonsense house built c1869 by devout Methodist lay preacher John Devlin who basically copied the Methodist Church manse, obviously using his position on the manse building committee to advantage. The porch shown (now removed) replaces an earlier swagged verandah. Now 660 Mount Pleasant Road. Undated photo courtesy Dorothy and Allan Guest.

protect not only their own lands and families but also the integrity of the colony as well.

Soon after the news of the 800 invaders at Fort Erie reached Mount Pleasant, reports of another column of Fenians crossing at Windsor and marching on London spread rapidly. The threat to London was mostly exaggerated rumours as it turned out but the fact remained that Canada West was most assuredly being invaded. Wisely the government had made defence preparations at the height of the American Civil War in 1863, feeling threats from that armed nation, and organised its voluntary militia. This Militia Act of 1863 created a local company of infantry under Captain Crossley Heaton headquartered at Mount Pleasant and it was one of seven district companies ordered out for active service due to the Fenian raids. But voluntary military organisation was nothing new in Mount Pleasant. Captain A. Wallace Ellis originally organised the Infantry Company in 1856 and with Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Perrin, Jr. the local men drilled in the shed built by Ellis. During the *Trent Affair* in 1861,



Canadian General Service Medal with bar "Fenian Raid 1866" awarded to Cpl. J. Liscombe, Mount Pleasant No.1 Company. This first General Service Medal to be authorized by the Canadian government was awarded to military personnel involved in any aspect of military service during the Fenian raids. This is a rare surviving example from the Mount Pleasant militia. Courtesy Rick Shaver, Canadian Military Heritage Museum, from his personal collection.

a tense military stand-off between the Americans and the British over events that took place in neutral waters on the British steamer *Trent*, Ellis applied for permission to raise a volunteer company in Mount Pleasant. In 1863, under the new legislation, the government granted permission for the company, which included Lieutenant William E. Phelps and Ensign Robert Eadie.

So in the face of this new threat, the local troops hastily got together to meet the emergency. Richard Guest remembered receiving the bugle call that woke him in the night to muster for the Fenian Raid defence. But before Guest and the others could see any action the British regular troops successfully pushed the Fenians out of British North America and the volunteers returned to their regular civilian lives satisfied that they had been ready to do their duty. The Royal troops brought their captured Fenian prisoners to Brantford under strong military escort and lodged them in the local gaol. Crowds of loyal locals met the Fenians with hostility. After the Fenian trouble subsided the government stationed regular British troops at Brantford until 1867.

According to Steve Arnold, William Cooke also took part in the organisation of defence troops during the scare surrounding the Fenian raids. After the American Civil War William returned home to Mount Pleasant, a place he had left as a young lad. He helped out on the family farm, though, as often happens with returned soldiers used to the danger and adrenaline associated with battle, he found the pastoral serenity of the village quite dull. Serendipitously for William, the British North American provinces were about to be invaded by the Irish freedom fighters. Capitalising on his recent military experience, he helped form a troop of cavalry in the village in 1866, putting them through drills and marches. His father, Dr. Alexander, even wrote to the Adjutant General of the British Garrison in Canada to offer their services in defence of Canada and the Queen. Even William's old friend George Bryce was active in the surge of military feeling which was sweeping the area.

George, who was studying to become a minister at the University of Toronto, was a junior officer in the university's company of the

Queen's Own Rifles of Toronto. He also took part in fighting the Fenians at Ridgeway. When the Fenians were successfully repulsed, George's was among the companies to act as guards for the 65 prisoners confined to local goals. As noted earlier William went on to enlist in the Seventh Cavalry of the American army, charged with clearing the Western Plains for immigration. In battling with the Sioux and the Cree under Custer in this endeavour, William died at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. George also followed his calling westward. After graduating as Rev. Dr. George Bryce, he went to the Canadian north-west as a Presbyterian missionary and a pioneer, where he founded Manitoba College in Winnipeg. Both Mount Pleasant lads, connected by a childhood in an Upper Canadian village, played a part in the expansion of the North American western frontier in the 1860s and 1870s.

By the end of the year 1866 though, life in the village continued on as usual. On New Year's Eve, 1866, the *Expositor* noted that "a fine Christmas entertainment was presented in the Academy Hall at Mount Pleasant." The coal oil lamps that were available for the



Unidentified militiamen wearing pre-Confederation uniforms of the 38th Dufferin Rifles which the Mount Pleasant unit was affiliated with. Courtesy Rick Shaver from his personal collection.

first time that year in Mount Pleasant shops added to the enjoyment of the Christmas season during the long cold dark winter. And the village had more reason to celebrate in that new year. By summer 1867 the four colonies of Canada West, Canada East, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia joined together in a Confederation to form the new Dominion of Canada, at least partly, as historians note, due to the military insecurities revealed with the recent Fenian raids. The presence of Royal troops in the local area just after the raids would have given a pomp-and-circumstance atmosphere to the Confederation celebrations. Adding to this atmosphere, the new Prime Minister John A. Macdonald visited the county on July 26, rousing voters to support his party in the upcoming vote in South Brant.

These Confederation celebrations would have coincided with the popular forms of recreation of the day. The *Expositor* noted in June that year that "bathing in the Grand River has become the favourite pastime of our youth." The 1860s also saw horse racing on Biggar's Lane, where every Saturday afternoon locals watched the races or entered their own horses in the contests down the sandy road. But the locals would surely have made certain that their valuable horses were not in any danger during the races. Even the summer heat, though enjoyed by the spectators, could pose a risk to the animals as an *Expositor* report from July 1868 revealed. "It was hot; very hot in Brant County...A horse attached to the Simcoe stage fell at Mount Pleasant and died of heat exhaustion." There is a story of a race horse being stolen and returned a year later with a \$1,000 pinned to its bridle as the rightful owner's share of the year's winnings.

Now a village in a new province in a new country, Mount Pleasant families continued to intermarry with one another, further binding families in the community, while also bidding farewell to some individuals choosing the pioneering life out west. As a result, the population of the village "on Spring Creek" dropped from a peak of 600 as we saw in 1865, to 500 as reported in the local *1869 Gazetteer*. This decrease mirrored a provincial trend as Ontario's population stagnated after Confederation with the opening of the Prairie west.

The Chatterson family and its various relations illustrate this pattern of inter-family unions in the village. Solomon Chatterson came to Mount Pleasant from Wentworth County in 1845 as a young man of 21. His mother was from England and his father from New Jersey. Solomon owned 395 acres of superior farming land on Mount Pleasant Road, served as a Justice of Peace, was a dedicated Methodist, and his career through life was one of “probity and honour.” He married Eliza McAlister, daughter of Robert and Ruth, after she returned from her schooling at the Burlington Academy. Eliza and Solomon had five children, though only three survived to adulthood, a son Almanzar, born in 1850, and two daughters Alceona, born in 1851, and Arrinthia born the year after. But as happened too often for young women in Upper Canada, Eliza died at age 24 in 1855. Solomon lived as a widower for 16 years and watched his children marry and settle on neighbouring farms of their own. Almanzar married Sarah Mott, Alceona married Henry Romaine Hardy, the son of Morris Hardy and Elizabeth Phelps, and Arrinthia married Harry Fryer. Once Solomon was assured that his family was contented, he married 25-year-old Sarah Calista Terhune in 1871. Solomon and Sarah went on to have six children, with the Chatterson family intermarrying further into the local community with names such as Houlding, Burtch and McDiarmid being intertwined as the community grew and developed.

William Houlding was the patriarch of one such family. He came from Lancashire, England, as a young man of 25 in 1831 with his older brother Thomas, and began what would become a prosperous life of farming near Newport. Near the end of the century William would turn to civic service, serving as Deputy Reeve for Brant County. William married Betty Birkett and began a family. Their son Thomas, born in 1842, proceeded to do what so many Ontarians did in the late 19th century; he packed up his wife and two young sons in 1880 and set out for Manitoba and then Saskatchewan, working as a building contractor for the Canadian Pacific Railroad (CPR). The CPR reached Manitoba by 1881, bringing with it many Ontarians like Thomas Houlding and his family. In fact the Ontario frontier, that had been originally pioneered by families such as those that developed Mount Pleasant, appeared to have moved west, with over a

third of the adults in the new province of Manitoba born in Ontario. Where Upper Canada had earlier attracted immigrants from Europe and other parts of North America for its "good bread country" as Elizabeth McMullen called it in the late 1810s, by the end of the century immigrants rapidly settled the prairies, now making it the country's wheat basket. Ontarians like Thomas Houlding brought their central Canadian traditions and culture, not to mention their well-developed pioneering heritage, to help shape the future of the Canadian west.

Thomas' sister Ann Houlding, instead, put down a foundation in the local community, marrying Stephen Burtch, from a family with long-standing roots in Mount Pleasant. Of their five sons, three of them, Henry, Charles and Clarence followed in the footsteps of their uncle Thomas, pursuing that same pioneering spirit westward to British Columbia near the end of the century as trailblazers in the Okanagan Valley. This pioneering spirit sprang from a strong tradition in the Mount Pleasant area. Not only did it bring the original settlers from Europe and the United States but it also inspired people such as John Sturgis to emigrate westward to Michigan in the late 1810s. Another son of Stephen and Ann, Herbert, farmed in Oakland Township while William stayed in the



Herbert Burtch, one of the sons Stephen Burtch and Ann Houlding Burtch.

area, marrying Emma Chatterson, daughter of Solomon and Sarah Chatterson at the turn of the century and putting down roots on Pleasant Ridge Road. The community had been equally affected by the dynamic of pioneers pushing into and pulling out of the area, giving it energy and vitality.

Some members of the new generation who chose to leave the village did so not to pioneer new lives far away on some frontier, but to advance new frontiers in the economy. In the tradition of Alanson Harris before him, J. F. Ellis, for example, son of John Randall Ellis and Janet Carlyle, left Mount Pleasant after teaching school in Brant County for awhile. He pioneered the invention in Canada of commercial production of paper from pulpwood and headed the Barber-Ellis Paper Mill in 1869 with factories in Georgetown, Toronto and Brantford. The promotion of such inventions as pulpwood paper and the hay rake necessitated relocation in larger urban centres of the country. This revealed the rapid increase in Canada's urban population in the last decades of the century, at the expense of the rural districts. In fact, Canada's urban population increased at roughly three times the rate of the general population. As John Bullen argues in his study of the late 19th-century Ontario family economy, this caused alarm and even despair among many rural communities.

The Townsend boys, sons of Alvah and Sarah, also spent much of their time away from Mount Pleasant in the late 1860s and early 1870s, working in Petrolia in the new coal-oil fields there. As their youngest sister "Mat" explained in a letter to sister Libbie who was away in Toronto, even during the Christmas season of 1871 "Albert, Elmer and Alvah were home for about two hours" despite the many party invitations extended to the young people. As Margaret Smyth suggests, these letters exchanged between the Townsend sisters over that season made it seem as though all the families in the village such as the Phelps, Devlin and Ellis families took turns throwing parties. Fashion seemed to preoccupy the minds of the young ladies attending such Christmas parties, a timeless concern of those of courting age. Mat lamented to Libbie that she wore her "blue merino" to one occasion, and "it was only the fifth blue dress



McAlister family (undated). The gentlemen are brothers Owen McAlister (left); Arthur McAlister (centre); Robert (Bob) McAlister (right), sons of Wellington McAlister, grandsons of pioneers Samuel and Elizabeth McAlister. The young women are not identified, but are thought to be their sisters. Courtesy the McAlister family.

there.” Mat’s blue dress, evidently popular at the time, would have had a fashionable bustle, which was all the rage for stylish ladies in the 1870s and 1880s.

As the village settled into its quiescent existence by late century, with economic development concentrated more and more in the province in urban centres such as Brantford, as we saw with the Barber-Ellis mill, it focussed more and more on religious and social life. All Saints Anglican Church, for example, endeavoured to maintain its clergymen and wardens as it had since its construction at mid-century. But as with the case of Rev. Bryning years before, there was the challenge of keeping its ministers furnished with a comfortable living as churches were now faced with paying for the ongoing costs of the spate of church construction that had taken place in the previous years.

Clergy at this time still received very little money for their services, living on what they could produce on their own small acreage and on donations of produce from the congregation. Rev. William Clotworthy served the parish from 1865-1870 and confided in Dr. Holmes, a former teacher and struggling druggist in Mount Pleasant that he only “got from the congregation, seventeen dollars during his last year” at All Saints. This would have been a struggle for his successor, 54-year-old Rev. George Salter, originally from England, who began leading the parish the next year, 1871, with his wife and ten children to support. Unfortunately the roof of the parsonage had begun to leak. But several events had recently eroded the finances of the church: the economic depression of the 1870s, and the loss of two of the parish’s most generous supporters,



Family of Owen McAlister (undated). Left to right: Owen McAlister; daughter Ethel, age 11; son Albert McAlister, age 2; Owen’s wife, Mary Jane Houlding. Ethel married Earl St. Elmo Burtch on April 22, 1908 in a ceremony at Brucefield, then the McAlister home. As reported in the Brantford social columns in the typical style of the day, “The south parlours of this historic residence were tastefully decorated with flowers...The bride was daintily gowned in white embroidered net over cream silk with a hand bouquet of cream roses... Sixty four sat down to an excellent wedding breakfast.” Gifts from numerous friends “spoke eloquently of the esteem” in which the bride was held, and “heartiest wishes made the event one of the happiest of its kind.” Courtesy the McAlister family.

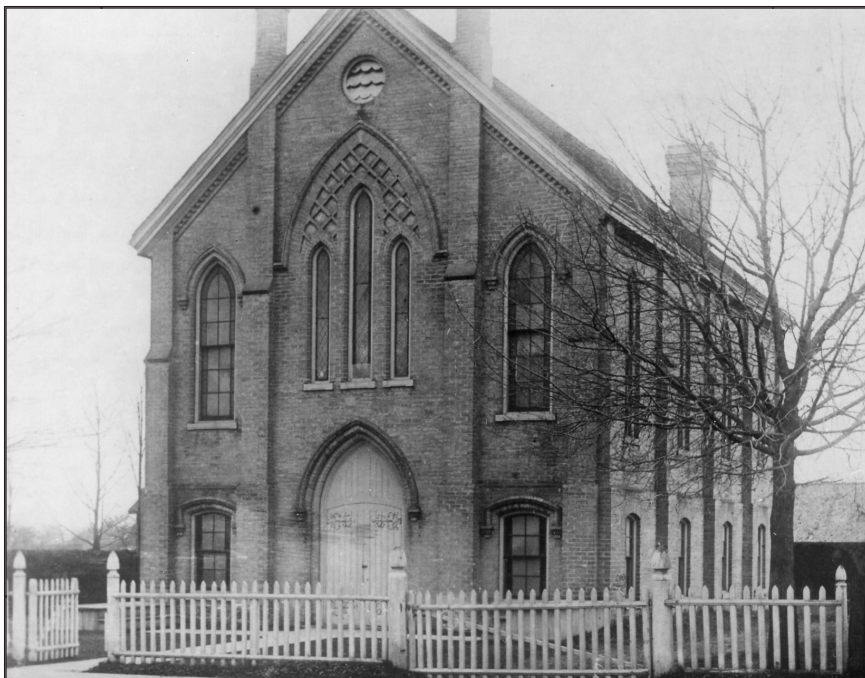


Phelps/McAlister House, 641 Mount Pleasant Road. Built c1870 by Epaphras L. Phelps, grandson of Brant's secretary. Epaphras married Elizabeth Ann Devlin. Their white brick Regency style house is an addition to an earlier frame structure which might be the Abraham Cooke store. Cooke received a Crown deed for 5 1/2 acres on this corner site on Lot 8W in 1836 and established his store there. The McAlister family acquired the house and farm acreage in 1918. Present owners are direct descendants of Samuel and Elizabeth McAlister.

James Racey in 1851 and Abraham Cooke in 1864. The minutes of the 1871 Vestry Meeting reveal the sacrifice endured by Rev. Salter and his family. "Proposed by Colonel Perley and seconded by Mr. Tennant that the thanks of this Vestry are due and hereby presented to Mr. Salter, for his services, without a stipend for the past year. Carried." However, as the economy began to rebound by the late 1870s things did improve. In 1878 the Vestry thanked Walter Phelps and Frederick Yeoward upon their retirement as churchwardens for "the zealous and effective manner in which they had discharged their arduous duties and for the perseverance and energy displayed by them in successfully accomplishing the entire liquidation of the parsonage debt, which had pressed so heavily on the Church for so many years."

It was not only life's happy events such as marriages, baptisms or even debt retirement that occupied the village's churches. Death also touched the local families, and was especially devastating when it hit the young. Abraham Cooke would thankfully not be witness to the burial service held at All Saints for his daughter-in-law Martha Biggar, wife of his son Dr. Charles Cooke. Local residents remarked at being "really shocked" at 33-year-old Martha's death in 1872. A neighbour described her as "Talented and accomplished above the majority of her associates, she married a fine looking man, the choice of her heart." Charles would later move to Toronto following Martha's death, but his older brother Abraham, a lawyer, would have comforted him as he had lived with Charles and Martha and their infant daughter Jane, along with their servant Mary from Africa in the year before Martha's death.

The Anglicans were not the only ones dealing with the responsibilities of maintaining independent houses of worship. The Presbyterians built a new church in 1878, a neat white brick structure with a capacity for 150 worshippers on land purchased from David Burtch for \$200 adjacent to the home he shared with Nancy Ann and the rest of the Burtch family. This new house of worship with its solid brick walls signified the transition from the transience of the pioneer frame church erected by Andrew Eadie in 1843 to the settled community of the late 1870s with its enduring structures. The Presbyterians represent the last of the community's major congregations to make that transition. Young John Marquis, a lad of 5 laid the cornerstone for the church. He was the son of Dr. Duncan Marquis and Elizabeth Bryce and the grandson of George Bryce, who had come to Mount Pleasant with his wife Catherine the same year that Andrew Eadie built the original independent Presbyterian Church on his farm. The Eadie, Marquis and Bryce families typify the long tradition of Scottish immigrants in the community and their enduring support for the Presbyterian Church. To honour the opening of the new church Miss Agnes Meggait donated the Pulpit Bible in 1878 in memory of her mother who died that year. The Presbyterians added to their more established existence in the community by building a manse (since demolished) in about



Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church, c1915. Built in 1858 in an unusual version of Victorian Gothic style, this is the second Presbyterian church to serve the local congregation. The first was on Andrew Eadie's farm across from the cemetery facing the road to Burford (Burtch Road). The church cornerstone was laid by 5-year-old John Marquis, son of Dr. Duncan Marquis and grandson of George Bryce, Sr. whose family epitomized Presbyterianism in Mount Pleasant. Dr. Peter Bryce recalled that his father would line up the four Bryce brothers on their lawn across from the Methodist Church and make them recite the Presbyterian Shorter Catechism during the Methodist service. Note the shed for horses and carriages at the right behind the church.

1885 during the incumbency of Rev. R.G. Sinclair. To beautify the surroundings Rev. Sinclair planted maple trees around the manse and the church.

Social events also preoccupied the village residents. The Christmas parties described by the Townsend sisters in the early 1870s continued. By the early 1880s an annual ball became the highlight of the season, hosted by the McEwen family in their big white brick house. The children of Archie and Agnes, especially daughters Mettie and Dolly (Annabella), enjoyed entertaining their friends

at these events. In this way the villagers were able to maintain the atmosphere of elegance premiered at Brucefield in the 1840s after Dr. Alexander Cooke sold his father's impressive mansion to the Hartley family in 1876.

Education proved to be the other constant in the village, of equal importance as religion and social events to its residents. The 1871 School Act created the position of county education inspector and at that time as well public schools became the new name for Common Schools and High Schools became the new name for Grammar Schools. Therefore the old Nelles Academy, which had previously ceased to be private when it became a Grammar School, was now referred to as Mount Pleasant High School. The sons of Rev. Alfred Andrews, pastor of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, remembered living in the new Mount Pleasant Methodist parsonage



Mount Pleasant young people. This group considered themselves quite elegant, select and anything but dull as they struck a pose c1870s. By then young women of means were wearing fashionable dresses they made at home from the fine fabrics now available in Brantford's department stores, and the competition for appearance was fierce. In the picture are: Robert Bryce (middle front, on chair); "Mettie" (Marion) McEwen (to his right); Robert Devlin, later a Brantford merchant (cross-legged on floor); Isabella Ellis (at table); Elmer Townsend (to her left); "Dolly" McEwen (far left, back row); Herbert Biggar, Jr. (2nd from left, back row). The others are not identified.

Gentennial Old Boys' Re-union

Mount Pleasant :-: May 25th, 1908

BORDERLAND

An Original Drama in Three Acts, by Chas. Townsend

CHARACTERS—CASTE

Jack Ralston, a guide and scout	J. A. ELLIS
Joe Dempsey, alias Baron Hereford, alias "Old Ben"	W. JOYCE
Hon. Patrick McFadden, a New York politician	A. T. BRIGGS
Mr. Lester, a banker	D. H. SMITH
Cyrus, his servant	W. H. BIGGAR
Kidder, Dempsey's pal	P. GORDAN
Charley, a young terror	D. D. CAMPBELL
Mary Lester, a New York belle	MRS. CUTCLIFFE
Polly, her sister	MISS JENNIE BIGGAR
Miss Spriggins	MISS HAZEL RUTHERFORD
Winona	MISS ANNABEL McEWEN

SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS

ACT I—Mr Lester's House in New York—The "honest" politician—Ralston's arrival. His adventures—Opinion of New York—Polly and Charlie—"Recite your lessons"—The proposal—False colors—The story of a murder—The bashful scout—"Her fortune is mine!" Face to face—The exposure—"Dempsey, the renegade!"

ACT II—Ralston's ranch in Arizona—A pleasant trip—"Those dreadful children."—McFadden and his dog—An astonished Irishman—"Snakes"—Two brave men—The Indian girl—A modest lover—"Old Ben" and Kidder—Plotting—A surprise party—Kidder escapes—Dempsey's triumph.

ACT III—In the Mountains—Mary a captive—Dempsey's threat—McFadden and Cyrus—The "babes in the wood"—On the trail—"Time's up, Joe Dempsey"—Death of Winona—Kidder on hand—Man to man—The duel—"Saved."

WARD & CO. PRESS, BRANTFORD

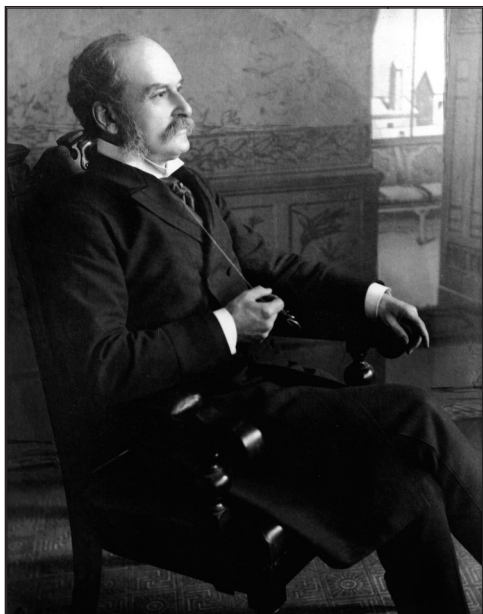
Playbill. "Borderland" was first performed by Mount Pleasant young people about 1892 and repeated at the Old Boys' Reunion in 1908 because it was so popular. Lectures, concerts, recitals, and performances of all types enjoyed great popularity from the 1890s to the beginning of WWI. How earlier pioneer generations would have envied entertainment such as this amateur theatrical made possible by fine education, leisure time, and prosperity.

in the 1870s, built by community volunteers with generously donated materials. They also recalled an earthquake in 1870 that rocked the octagonal school, knocking books off the shelves and causing school to be dismissed early for the day. That would have been a perfect opportunity for the boys of the village to run to get their bows and arrows in search of the flocks of migrating wild pigeons that often darkened the sky in those days.

The school experience definitely entailed more than playing outdoors, especially given the stellar academic accomplishments noted for Mount Pleasant students. An *Expositor* article from 1872 highlighted some of these successes from the classes of Mount Pleasant High School that year. For mathematics, Latin, history, and chemistry A. Bryce brought home the honours. In botany, grammar, physiology, and geography S. E. Young received top marks. For drawing, R. Salter gained the best standing while C. Jarvis earned first place in punctuation. Finally, D. Sager achieved distinction for “Good Conduct.” While all this hard work made Mount Pleasant parents proud, by 1876 the Grammar School or old Nelles Academy ceased to be a high school and became a public elementary school. Up to this point the quality education in the village allowed young people to prepare for their later university years close to home.

But as the 1870s advanced it seemed the village was in a continual state of goodbyes as young people left to pursue lives, education and careers elsewhere and the older residents settled into retirement. The *Expositor* also announced in 1872, for example, that Hiram Phelps “one of the oldest residents of Mount Pleasant has sold a large part of his farm to Mr. Foulds and will retire.” Hiram died five years later though Daniel and Ellen Foulds, English immigrants who had earlier settled at Tutelo Heights, brought their young family to Mount Pleasant and benefited from Hiram’s productive land.

Another young man benefited greatly from the fine educational preparation he received in Mount Pleasant. And though his legal and then political career took him away from the village, like so many others, he continued to hold a dear place in the hearts of the residents. Arthur Sturgis Hardy, son of Russell and Julietta, came into the world in the troubled time of the Rebellion of 1837. After a sound education in Mount Pleasant he went on to law school and was called to the bar in 1865. He began his legal career in Brantford at about the same time that fellow Mount Pleasant resident Dr. Emily Stowe began hers in Toronto, though at the time neither knew that they would later lock horns over issues such as suffrage. But as Jean Waldie argues, it was as though A. S. Hardy was destined for a political life as a Reformer with his birth during the Rebellion. So in



Arthur Sturgis Hardy, 4th Premier of Ontario, born Mount Pleasant, 1837, son of Russell and Julietta Sturgis Hardy, posed in his office c1896-1899 at the pinnacle of his brilliant career looking every inch the political aristocrat. His demeanour gives credence to a contemporary account that "he was daring and had fire and unusual mental alertness," qualities he needed in his battle with Emily Stowe over women's rights which he did not support. He introduced 150 government bills, of which nearly every one passed, evidence of his "skill, versatility, and breadth of interest." Archives of Ontario, RG4/10005341.jpg.

the tradition of Herbert Biggar, the area's first MPP, Hardy served the constituency of South Brant for the Liberals for over a quarter of a century, beginning in 1873, contesting seven elections successfully and serving in various cabinet posts. He became Premier in 1896 when Premier Oliver Mowat went to Ottawa to sit in Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier's cabinet.

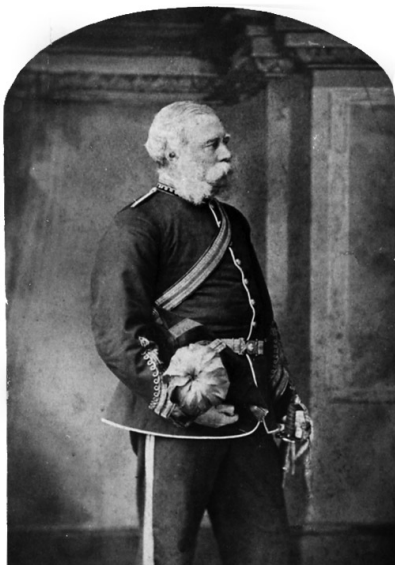
Hardy became known as "Little Thunder" for his impressive duels in court with fellow politician E. B. Wood, who was known as "Big Thunder." During his time as MPP Hardy introduced 150 public and private bills, including legislation improving the efficiency of division courts and creating Algonquin and Rondeau provincial parks. He also spearheaded legislation regarding granting land to settlers, dealing with Crown domains, fisheries, and timber. Hardy worked extensively on the Crooks Act designed to curb liquor licensing in the province and promote temperance. Given his background in Mount Pleasant these policy interests are no surprise. Hardy also gained a reputation as a cunning practitioner of the black arts of politicking. In 1877, for instance, he sent the whiskey detectives into Brantford to enforce Liberal prohibition legislation which Brant

County voters supported, but which tavern keepers sabotaged by handing out free drinks on election day to get out the Conservative vote. Over 100 charges were laid, a riot ensued, and the mob drove the detectives out of town. Hardy cleverly defused the situation by offering plea-bargains, satisfied that he had demonstrated his ability to use the machinery of government for partisan advantage. In his quest to achieve greater representation for his local area at all levels of government, Hardy pressed Laurier to appoint local MP William Patterson for South Brant to cabinet as Minister of Customs. This appointment of a successful businessman to this post (Patterson had a successful candy factory in Brantford) symbolised the Liberal Party's move away from its traditional support for the free trade doctrine. It also helped win the support of the country's businessmen, and the Liberal Party therefore emerged as a genuine second party on the national political stage. After only one term as premier, Hardy retired from office in 1899 due to ill health. Sadly he died two years later at age 65. He represented his fellow residents in Mount Pleasant and Brant County with a sensitivity to the issues that mattered to the people who helped keep him in office.

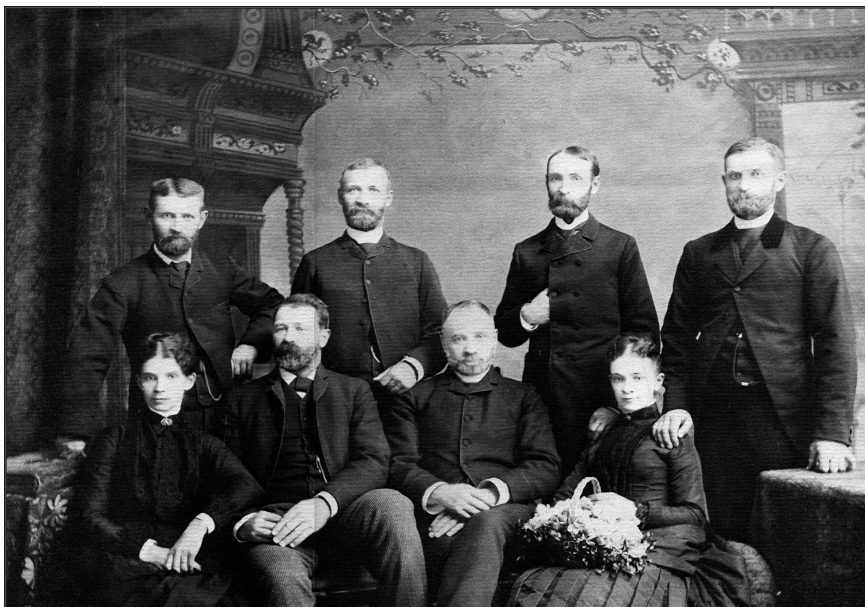
The unusual architecture of the old Nelles Academy, that helped mould leaders such as Hardy, and the village's other octagonal buildings continued to attract the interest and curiosity of onlookers. Grey Gables, described in the *Globe and Mail* as "this queerish architectural gem...near Brantford, the strangest house I ever had seen," captured the imagination of many. After the death of its builder, Richard Tennant in 1878 at the age of 53, his widow Caroline sold it to Colonel James Knight Goold. Goold, an officer in the British army, noticed the octagonal home when visiting his family in nearby Brantford. He became so attached to the quaint house and the surrounding scenic view that he bought it from Caroline, treasuring it through its "lovely maturity." Goold would have been a familiar figure to passers-by with his long white beard and a blanket over his knees as he sat outside on the piazza on warm days. His dignified presence and loving attention to his special adopted home contributed to the air of graciousness in Mount Pleasant that had begun decades before. Col. Goold's son Albert carried on the Goold

family name in the village and the family enterprises including shipping grain and operating a feed and coal supply store.

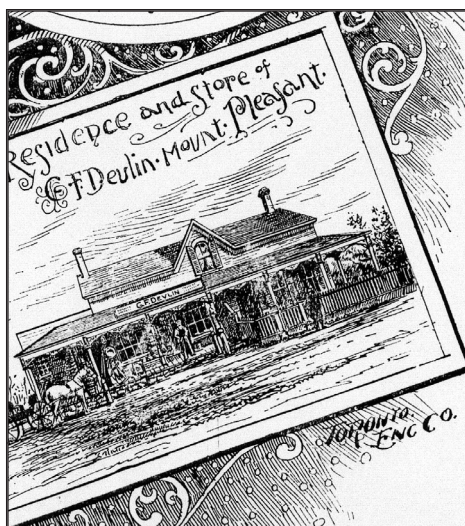
The village continued to play an important role in the economic lives of its residents, even with many commercial interests moving to larger urban areas such as Brantford, which earned the status of city in 1877. The local general store endured as a constant fixture in Mount Pleasant. The mercantile business that had at one time been in the hands of the Foster family, the Hardy family and the Eadie family was finally sold to a new family in the village, the Devlins. George Devlin, a young man of Irish descent living with his wife Cecelia Silverthorn in Mount Pleasant, was a clerk in the Hardy store and eventually purchased it from its owner in 1879. In buying the store in his early 30s he set up a prosperous future for himself and his family. George's brothers Hugh and Robert also helped him with the store in the early years, though Robert and his wife Margaret Brunton later established their own grocery in Brantford. Their sister Elizabeth married Epaphras Phelps, grandson of the original Epaphras, and lived nearby. A copy of a bill from the Devlin store in 1897, long after George had established the enterprise in his own right, advertised that he was a "dealer in goods, ready made clothing,



Lt. Col. James Knight Goold, Senior Paymaster of the British Army, second owner of the Tennant octagon. Goold is said to have been a guest at the house when in Mount Pleasant on military duties and declared he wanted to retire there, which he did in 1882, Tennant having conveniently died in 1878, leaving the property to his widow. This picture of Goold is reproduced from a card he sent to his wife, Charlotte de Moll Berczy, daughter of the first postmaster at York (Toronto). Goold was "a splendid type of the old school, courtly in his bearing, affable and generous." He died at age 93, and is buried in All Saints Cemetery.



Devlin family siblings (undated photo, c1870s). Back row, left to right: George F. Devlin; Jim Devlin; John Devlin; who became a dentist in Chicago; Robert Devlin who became a Brantford grocer. Front row, left to right; Elizabeth (Phelps) Devlin; Hugh Devlin who emigrated to the U. S.; William Devlin; Sarah Devlin.



Devlin's Store in a sketch from the Brantford Expositor, Christmas 1892 ed., before the front was altered and much period architectural detail removed. This combination store and residence, built by Russell Hardy in 1834, was the birthplace of Arthur Sturgis Hardy. George F. Devlin purchased it in 1879. Still in the Devlin family, the building survives today as a restaurant. Courtesy Brant Historical Society.

boots and shoes, groceries, flour and feed, hardware, coal, oil, patent medicines and small wares." He also set down strict policies to ensure the continued success of his business with "interest at 8 percent per annum charged on overdue accounts."

Even with transportation and communication advantages stimulating urban growth in areas such as Brantford, Mount Pleasant was not without its links to the outside world. The Brantford, Norfolk and Port Burwell Railway (BN&PBR), helped sustain commercial activities such as Devlin's store in the village. First incorporated as the Norfolk Railway Company in 1869, the name was changed to the BN&BPR in 1874 with authorization to construct a 50-mile line from Port Burwell north-east to Brantford via Tillsonburg, which opened for traffic in 1878. An 1879 advertisement for the line touted it as the "The New Short Route," and the quickest for shippers, who could "order all goods from the east" including Montreal, Quebec, Liverpool, Glasgow, London, New York and Boston. Passengers could make connections at Brantford with the Grand Trunk and the Great Western Railway. The line ran from the station in Brantford, then crossed the "back street" (Pleasant Ridge Road) about a mile north of the village, en route to Burford and Tillsonburg. At secondary stops such as Mount Pleasant the "trains stopped only when signalled or to let off passengers." Villagers could catch the train as it passed through eastbound at 9:00 in the morning and westbound at 5:50 in the evening.

Besides this rail access to the outside world, the "Mohawk" post office endured in Mount Pleasant and served as the communication centre for the village. In 1871 William Eadie took over as postmaster from William Lloyd Jones as well as assuming the duties at the store attached to the post office. Four years later in 1875 Thomas Racey assumed the duties of postmaster for one year. The local dairyman Crossley Heaton took on the post for seven years and then passed it on to J. R. Ellis in 1882. But as Mount Pleasant residents soon realised, the written communication of the post, so vital for business and family connections, was soon to be surpassed by a new revolution in communication. And Mount Pleasant would play a key role in allowing this revolution to come to fruition.



Devlin's Store in 1909. The modern era in Mount Pleasant was beginning but the motor car had not yet made its presence felt in this scene - note the hitching posts in front and the buggy at the far left on the Burtch Road. The pole visible on the left is for telephone or telegraph - hydro did not arrive in the village until 1925. The picket fence enclosed the private living quarters and garden.



The Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo Railroad, built through Mount Pleasant in 1895. A spur served Wm. Biggar's coal and grain business on the east side of the track where it crossed the Station Road (Burtch Road). Mount Pleasant residents boarded a 9:00 a.m. train for Brantford for a day's shopping and came back about 4:30 p.m. Everyone nearby watched to see who came down Station Road - the shoppers, visitors, and commuters.

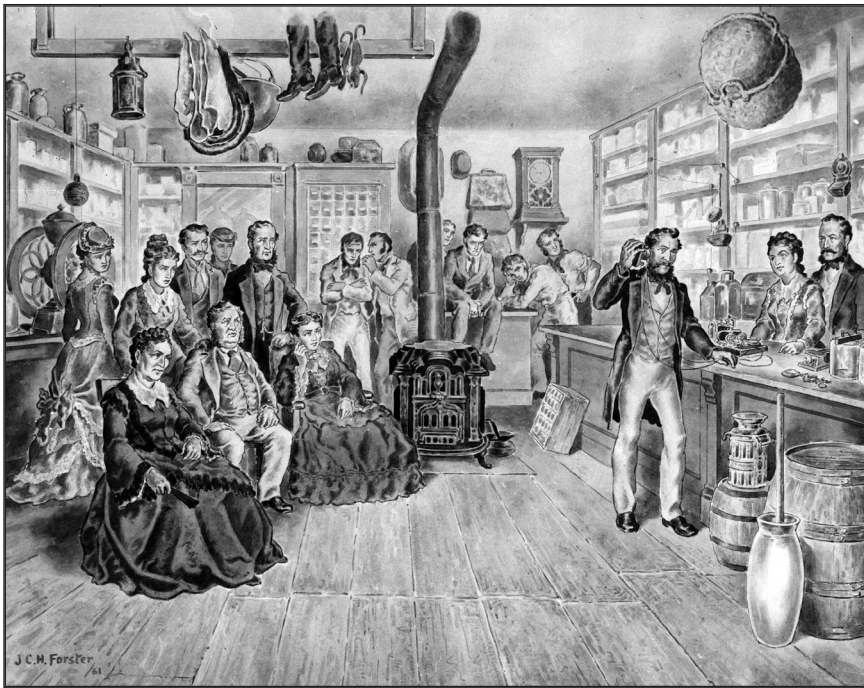


Mount Pleasant Post Office, c1910, demolished 1980s. This post office, one of several as postmasters changed, was on the north-west corner of the junction of the Mount Pleasant Road and Burtch Road, the site of the first store opened by Thomas Racey in 1812 and burned in 1814. The building began as an inn, probably kept first by Capt. Thos. Perrin, then becoming the Bingham Inn (1850) prior to being sold to Solomon Sayles in 1866. The building was also known as the Mount Pleasant Hotel and the Canada House. It became the post office when bought by John McLaren, postmaster after John Randall Ellis. The Orange Lodge operated out of the second floor rooms. The post office and general store were the destination of many a rural drive. The buggy driver is Mr. McLaren's daughter, Mrs E. Lloyd Jones, the child on the sidewalk is her daughter Anna. When not busy, Mr. McLaren sat under the chestnut tree at the left smoking his pipe and visiting.

Up to 1876 the telephone represented only a scientific gadget that could convey a human voice but a few feet. Therefore, its inventor Alexander Graham Bell of nearby Tutela Heights, needed to conduct experiments of his new form of communication over longer and longer distances. Home from teaching in Boston in the summer of 1876 he was ready to try his equipment on the telegraph line between the Dominion Telegraph Company in Brantford and A. Wallace Ellis' store, the local telegraph agency, in Mount Pleasant. He strung wire along the fence posts from his homestead to the store. On August 3 Alexander went to Mount Pleasant while his Uncle David Bell stayed in Brantford. At this time the technology allowed only one-way communication, therefore they set a certain time for Uncle David to recite a passage from Shakespeare for the

experiment's witnesses assembled at the Ellis store to hear. Bell later recalled during a 1906 speech for the Brantford Board of Trade that he sat in Mr. Ellis' store and waited "with the receiver and my watch in my hand." Suddenly he heard a preliminary cough, and then the words, "to be or not to be." "Gentlemen," exclaimed Dr. Bell, "it was to be...and for the first time between Brantford and Mount Pleasant." For this important experiment Bell needed the assistance of Ellis' 23-year-old daughter Isabella, named for her mother and grandmother. As the telegraph operator in her father's store she could keep in communication with David in Brantford to tell him whether they were receiving his voice in Mount Pleasant.

This would have been an exciting event for young Isabella, or Belle to her friends, who a descendant described as a "heroic personality." And it would have similarly interested many people in the community. Isabella's mother as well as her uncle John Randall and aunt Janet would have witnessed the event in the family store. Neighbours such as George Bryce, Sr. and Duncan and Annie McEwen, who lived nearby, would also have been there that evening. Isabella's young 12-year-old brother W. Wallace Ellis later recalled distinctly the events in his father's store. He remembered Professor Bell driving out to Mount Pleasant to have dinner with the Ellis family first before going to the store for the experiment. He also remembered that the people of the vicinity thought it was a foolish idea that the human voice could be heard over a stretch of wire four miles away. James Biggar, also a boy of 12, marked it as a red-letter day in his life. He recalled going to witness the experiment in the Ellis store with his father, Township Councillor William Biggar. Recollections vary about who exactly was present that evening. Margaret Smyth speculates that Isabella's friends Dolly and Mettie McEwen, Lizzie Mussen, Tatie (Sarah) Biggar and others were probably driven to the store as to a party by the young men of the village including Fred Yeoward, Robert Devlin, the McEwen boys, Herbie Biggar, Jr., Ben Townsend and the Phelps boys. Without a doubt the event made a stir in the community and attracted many onlookers even if some of them may not have appreciated the gravity of the event at the time.

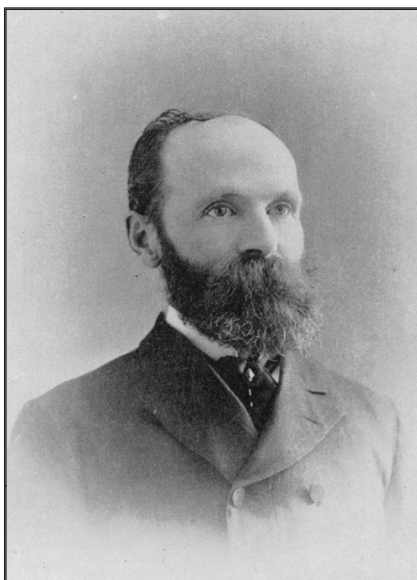


Alexander Graham Bell receiving the first successful telephone call between two communities, August 3, 1876, from Brantford to the to the Wallace Ellis store in Mount Pleasant. Behind the counter are Isabella Ellis who was the telegraph operator, and her father A. Wallace Ellis. Interested spectators dressed in their finery for this momentous event but looking rather sceptical are Dolly and Mettie McEwen, Lizzie Mussen, W illiam Biggar and family, Mr. and Mrs. H. MacKenzie, the Bryce and Devlin boys, and Messrs. Phelps and Townsend. From a watercolour by J. C. H. Forster, 1962. Courtesy Bell Canada Historical Collection.

This first successful test encouraged Bell to demonstrate his telephone between Brantford and the Bell homestead on Tutela Heights the next evening, particularly since his previous tests in the United States had failed. And after the success of that experiment he arranged for a third test a week later over a much longer distance, between Brantford and Paris. That experiment is now recognised as the world's first long distance telephone call. Although the first successful test of the telephone in Mount Pleasant has often been overshadowed by the milestone test associated with Paris, the experiment in the Ellis store has been credited as the pivotal test that

allowed the later achievements to occur, and for the telephone to ultimately achieve its ubiquitous existence today.

Despite the excitement of that evening at the Ellis store, life in Mount Pleasant continued to revolve predominantly around education, career and family. The life of Duncan Marquis illustrates this pattern. After graduating from Victoria Medical College in 1865, Dr. Marquis set up a practice in Mount Pleasant. To further cement his future in the village of his boyhood, he married Elizabeth Bryce from that fellow Mount Pleasant Scottish family on May 11, 1870. Duncan and Elizabeth set up household in a white frame house on the east side of Mount Pleasant Road three houses south of their parish, the Presbyterian Church. Dr. Marquis had a flourishing practice, attracting patients from the city of Brantford and from the surrounding districts. His peers regarded him as a specialist in many diseases of the day and he visited major hospitals in New York. In 1883, as a sign of the prosperity of his medical practice and his place in the community, Duncan purchased the mansion of Alvah Townsend to the north of the village for \$12,000. In this way Duncan and Elizabeth continued the tradition of elegance and social standing in the community which signified how far their families had come



Dr. Duncan Marquis, described by M. Smyth as "probably the most beloved doctor the village ever had," although she notes that his successors Dr. Thomas Mott and Dr. Carl Apps were also Mount Pleasant "boys." Dr. Marquis was the progenitor of several generations of esteemed doctors in Brantford. From The Canadian Album, Bradley, Garreston & Co., Brantford, Ont., 1891. Courtesy Brant Historical Society.



Duncan Marquis House (undated photo), now 726 Mount Pleasant Road. Dr. Duncan Marquis set up his practice here in the mid-1870s after his marriage to Elizabeth Bryce. The house had a side wing, most likely used as the dispensary, which separated a little grove of evergreens from a garden at the back. The Marquis family moved up to grander quarters when they acquired Alvah Townsend's house and acreage in 1883 for \$12,000.

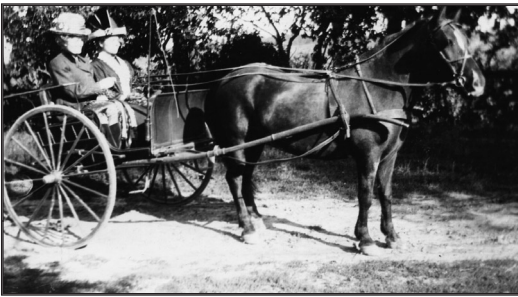
in the decades since they had emigrated from Scotland. Their son George was a coachman and he later recalled hitching a fresh horse to his father's buggy after each visit to a patient. Sometimes the horse would find its own way home with the overworked doctor asleep in the buggy after some late night house call. In 1888 Dr. Duncan's reputation earned him an appointment to serve at the Ontario School for the Blind in Brantford. However, illness precluded him from accepting the position but his son John who had followed in his father's medical footsteps substituted for him. That same year Duncan and Elizabeth located to Brantford, leaving behind the Georgian mansion "Marquis Hall" that had been the scene of great family occasions, if only for a short time.

Duncan and John were not the only medical men from the village. In fact a large number of Mount Pleasant sons went on to medical school. Elizabeth's brother Peter H. Bryce also followed the medical calling. He headed the first provincial health department in Toronto and later recalled, "I cannot forget that I was born in the pretty old village of Mount Pleasant, surveyed in 1800 from the end of Hiram

The Role of Women



Dr. Augusta Stowe Gullen, born Mount Pleasant, 1857, daughter of Emily and John Stowe, Jr. A pioneer of women's medical education in Canada, Stowe Gullen was the first woman admitted to the Toronto School of Medicine, graduating in 1883 with Mount Pleasant's Rev. Dr. S. S. Nelles participating in the ceremony. She ran a private practice out of her home and was the first female staff member of the fledgling Ontario Women's Medical College. An ardent champion of women's causes, she was a founding member of the National Council of Women, and eventually succeeded her mother as president of the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association in 1902.



(above) Mrs. James Biggar (driving) and Mrs. George Houlding on their way to a Women's Institute meeting in the early 1900s. The Mount Pleasant Women's Institute was organized in 1903 with Mrs. Houlding as its first president. As well as being a means to educate rural women about domestic issues, meetings were an important aspect of women's social lives, and evidently a smart turnout of horse, buggy, and clothes was a matter of pride.

(right) Phelps household ledger, 1890s. A page taken from the household ledger of William Epaphras Phelps provides a glimpse of the domestic life of one Mount Pleasant family. Expenditures on social outings, clothing, domestic services, and small luxuries indicate a level of comfort far removed from the log cabin days. Typically the women maintained the household ledgers and accounts, and in meticulous detail. Courtesy Linda (Phelps) Guest.

1895	June 15 95	6	00
4	Garden Party Eng		10
5	Suit Cloth		8.00
	Cook & feed		1.50
	Stabling		1.50
	Paints, varnish etc	1	15
10	Land paper		10
10	Garden Party		30
13	Hairdresser		50
	Shoes	1	15
	Comest		10
	Wine feed		10
20	Garden Party		20
22	Horse Stabling		25
	Hair cut		15
	Treats, fees		20
	Foot Ball Club		25
	Transport		5
	Paints, varnish		50
	Corn feed		50
28	Stamp		9
30	Foot Ball Club		50
31	Balance		23.79

Phelps' tract to the southern limit of the Reserve before Brantford officially existed." Rev. Bryning's sons Samuel G. and Joseph V. also became physicians. Samuel settled in Fulton, Illinois while Joseph set up his practice in Atchison, Kansas. Their sister Hattie, a teacher, followed Joseph to Atchison where she married one of her brother's medical colleagues. But it was not just Mount Pleasant sons who aspired to medical careers.

We have already seen how Emily Howard Jennings Stowe became the first woman in Canada licensed to practise medicine, achieving this only after an arduous period of practising illegally and enduring abuse in attending licensing classes. She was an untiring worker in the long struggle for the admission of women to the University of Toronto after being turned down for admission twice herself. In the mid-19th century many men even opposed girls entering high school. Stowe's drive to further the public role of women should come as no surprise to us given the context of Brant County in the last half of the century. In nearby Paris, the Penman Manufacturing Company had a workforce of 400, two-thirds of whom were women. These women, employed at the hosiery mill, created a female-centred workplace culture that challenged traditional views of women and work. In her struggles in the first-wave women's movement, Emily befriended American suffragist Susan B. Anthony and struck up a lively correspondence with her, illustrating the continental nature of the women's rights movement that transcended national borders. Fred Gullen, the nephew of Emily's son-in-law, Augusta's husband Dr. J. B. Gullen, noted that Anthony and Emily used to visit back and forth between Toronto and New York, and that Emily had a book on the history of suffrage that Anthony had inscribed "with love and gratitude."

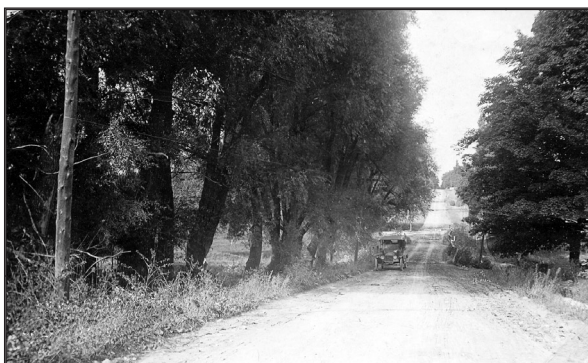
On the domestic front, Emily battled with Premier A. S. Hardy over women's suffrage. In the last year of the century he moved an amendment against a suffrage bill, arguing that as "the bill pointed to a complete extension of the franchise to all women, a privilege which might prove disastrous to society and the country [he would have] to refuse its assent." That action gained him Emily's scorn and a press headline quoting her as blaming "Those horrid men."

Emily went on to denounce Hardy's inability "to see the force of the arguments advanced...great Liberal though he is supposed to be, he is unable to separate himself from the habits and thoughts that traditions have given him." Interestingly Hardy had lived in the same community with the same traditions as had Emily and her family. Obviously her outlook as a woman, and his as a man, determined their differing opinions.

Emily also forecast that "The day will dawn when woman will equal man not only in the medical profession but in every other position in which she is qualified to excel." Emily had the pleasure of witnessing at least a partial fulfilment of this prophecy with the achievements of her and John's daughter, Augusta Stowe, born in Mount Pleasant in 1857 would follow in her mother's footsteps, footsteps that had been made somewhat easier in which to tread because of her mother's struggles and triumphs. Augusta attended Toronto School of Medicine, Victoria College, in Cobourg. It is conceivable that Emily used her connections with another Mount Pleasant son to get Augusta admitted, one who perhaps turned out to be less "horrid" than A. S. Hardy, at least for her purposes. Rev. Dr. S. S. Nelles was president of Victoria College at this time, a position he would hold for over 30 years, and he was present when Augusta graduated with her medical degree in 1883, being the first woman to do so in Canada. The *Globe's* May 18 coverage of the graduation ceremony quoted Rev. Dr. Nelles joking lightheartedly of Augusta's popularity among her classmates. Not surprisingly, Augusta was also a suffragist and a feminist, and along with her mother she worked tirelessly to advance the place of women in education and public life.

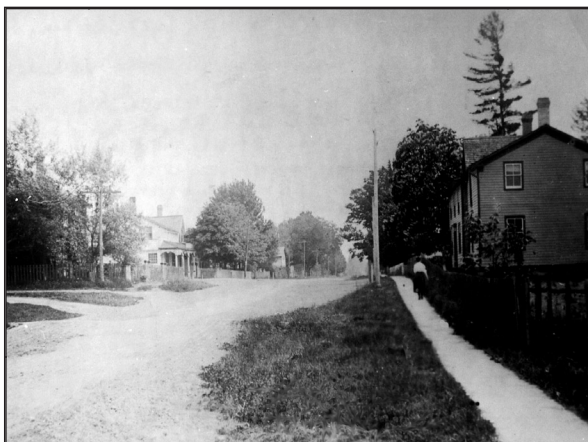
The entire Stowe family had indeed recovered from its earlier struggles. John, healed from his bout of tuberculosis, went to school to become a dentist and the family set up their various healing practices in Toronto. This history has told the story of many pioneers. Emily and Augusta represent the pioneering struggles of women in the 19th century in the same way that pioneers such as Henry Ellis and Amos Sturgis and so many others struggled with the land to begin new lives for their families.

Street Scenes



Main Street, early 1900s view from "Rainbow Hill" looking north. The motor car has arrived. The poplars lining the road were part of an early tree planting program begun after settlers realised that clear cut communities were not ideal.

Main Street, c1912-1914, looking north from the Presbyterian Church. The front of the manse is just visible at the left. Proceeds from the Old Boys' Reunion were used for this first cement sidewalk in 1908, replacing a wooden one. Charles Rutherford is driving the buggy along the sandy road from his home at the top of "Rainbow Hill." From postcard by E. J. Devlin



Main Street, c1909, looking south with Devlin's on the left and the old post office on the right. The unidentified building hidden in the trees to the left of Devlin's could be a hotel. The front of the Dame's School (now 712 Mount Pleasant Road) is visible in the distance past Devlin's. The telegraph line, said to be "the oldest telephone line" was moved to the west side of the street after 1909.



Main Street, 1912, west side looking south from cemetery. First: John Randall Ellis house. Second: John Randall Ellis cabinet shop and post office when Ellis was postmaster. This was probably the Nickerson store (1831-1837), then the Strobridge store (1837-1850). Ellis bought from Strobridge in 1850. Third: Hotel. An old hotel on this site was thought to be a stagecoach stop in 1876. Next: Presbyterian Church. Far distance: home of dentist Dr. Walter Phelps. Burtch family farm fields were frontage between the Presbyterian manse and Dr. Phelps. From postcard by E. J. Devlin.

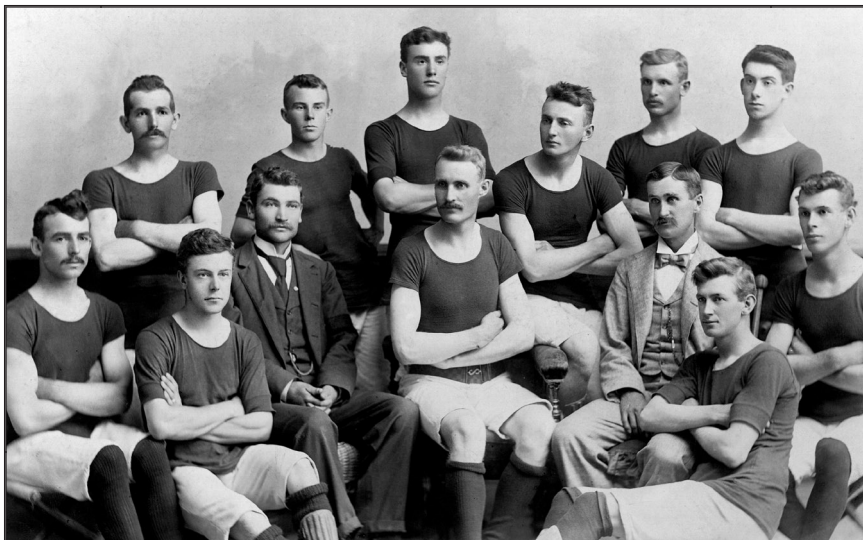
Even with the limited opportunities for education for women in Mount Pleasant as across the province, both Emily and Augusta benefited from the atmosphere that encouraged higher educational achievement in the village. This atmosphere continued to envelop Mount Pleasant towards the end of the century, even as the Nelles Academy ceased to be a place where students could fulfil their entire preparation for university. Archibald Sinclair, the son of Rev. Sinclair of the Presbyterian Church came to Mount Pleasant with his father in 1885 and recalled wonderful memories of schooling in his new home. Archie went to the octagonal school where a Miss Munro taught the younger children downstairs and the principal, John A. Dale, instructed the older students upstairs. The Dickens novels in the school's library helped inspire students to dream of faraway places. Archie recalled that Mr. Dale "had the gift of inspiring." An *Expositor* from 1891 revealed the winning results of this inspiration reporting

that: "the following pupils of Mount Pleasant school" successfully completed the "late entrance examinations:" Lizzie McEwen, Mary Ash, Arthur Devlin, Annie Ash, Bessie Fryer, Lena Morrison and George Sinclair, Archie's younger brother. For superior results Lizzie McEwen won a silver medal and Mary Ash, a volume of poems. "Master Devlin, although absent from school for three months of the year through illness, and entering into the competition only at the last moment, came only one mark behind Miss Ash for the second prize." Finally, as the newspaper reporter noted, "Hon. A. S. Hardy has kindly remembered the home of his boyhood and has generously donated \$10 in prizes to the school."

Like his provincial representative, Archie went on from the octagonal school to higher education, graduating from the University of Toronto in 1896. But before this could happen, Archie, and the other Mount Pleasant students aspiring to further education at that time had to go to high school in Brantford. They walked six miles along the sandy road to the city, but "we thought little of it," as Archie recalled, harkening back to the days before stagecoaches or rail and revealing how little some things had changed in the century of European settlement in the area. In order to make this trip even more of an adventure, in the warmer weather most children went to school without shoes. But Mrs. Sinclair did not approve of this for her son so Archie left the Presbyterian manse with his shoes on like a good boy and then took them off and "hid them under the sidewalk," the wooden planks that lined the main road.

For younger children, such as Archie's younger brother George, an expansion of rail transportation meant that they would no longer have to endure that long walk to high school in Brantford. In 1885 the Brantford, Waterloo & Lake Erie Railway was incorporated and construction from Brantford through Mount Pleasant to Waterford commenced in 1888. This line connected with the Canada Southern Railway, a major route through to Windsor and Detroit. In 1892 the company was acquired by the Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo Railway (TH&B) who completed the line to Hamilton in 1894. Passenger service between Mount Pleasant and cities served by the TH&B commenced in 1895. In fact in return for a line into downtown

Sports



Mount Pleasant Football Club, early 1900s. Left to right. Back row: A. McDiarmid, goal; H. V. Grantham, half back; J. A. Briggs, half back; A. T. Briggs, centre; J. B. Scott, left wing; J. E. McLaren, half back. 2nd row: C. Baldwin, back; W. H. Biggar, back; Rev. A. B. Farney, captain; H. Thomas, half back; H. McFarlane, right wing. Front: A. S. Goold, left wing; Bruce Laird, right wing.



The Mount Pleasant Bowling Club c1915, looking swell in their “bowler” hats. According to M. Smyth, the first bowling green was established c1900 on the lawn of the Wallace Ellis property, between the present 693 and 695 Mount Pleasant Road. It was used by the Tennis Club after the Bowling Club moved to its new green behind the old post office building at the Station Road (Burtch Road) corner. A windmill supplied the water for the grass.

Hamilton the railway guaranteed passenger service to the city "in perpetuity." For the residents of Mount Pleasant, perpetuity meant a vital rail connection to the major centres of Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo for freight as well as for passenger service. As for the schoolbook set, the local rail connection meant that they could now run from the cemetery at the corner while the "cheerful TH&B conductor" waited the train for them to climb the steps of the car. Although, some students recall one less tolerant conductor, dubbed



Mount Pleasant baseball team, c1926, playing in a tournament, possibly in Brantford. By the turn of the century baseball was the game of the continent and Mount Pleasant caught the fever. Only three of the team are identified; Jeff Goold, a butter maker who worked for the Malcolm Condensing Co. in the village (far left); team manager "Doc" McCormick, a farmer who had been a medic in WW1 (3rd from right); and Albert McAlister, a farmer (far right). Courtesy Themma Goold, and Reg Goold, grandson of Jeff Goold.

a "grouch" by neighbourhood students. Construction on Mount Pleasant's third railway, the Lake Erie & Northern, began in 1912 with the whole line from Galt to Port Dover in service by 1917.

On his travels walking around Mount Pleasant Archie recalled seeing his neighbours, including George Bryce, "then one of the leaders of the village." Another neighbour, "Mr. Phelps," who lived with "his wife" near the manse, held a certain fascination for young

Archie. He recalled that Walter, the village dentist, pulled teeth for his neighbours at “25 cents” a tooth. In order to earn their own money, the boys of the village, including Archie, worked as farmhands in the summers, usually in Paris “greening potatoes.” Besides work and school, sports played a vital role in the lives of young people in Mount Pleasant. In the early 1890s Rev. A. B. Farney, the popular clergyman of All Saints Church coached the Mount Pleasant “Football” Club, a local soccer team. This team included the following young men: A. McDiarmid, H. V. Grantham, J. A. Briggs, Alexander Briggs, C. Baldwin, W. H. Biggar, H. Thomas, H. McFarlane, Albert Goold and Bruce Laird. This evidence of organised sports, complete with coaches and equipment, provides another illustration of the transition occurring in the village from early to late century. The rough and tumble games of the early years evolved into organised teams, mirroring the other shifts we have traced in places of worship, architecture and transportation.

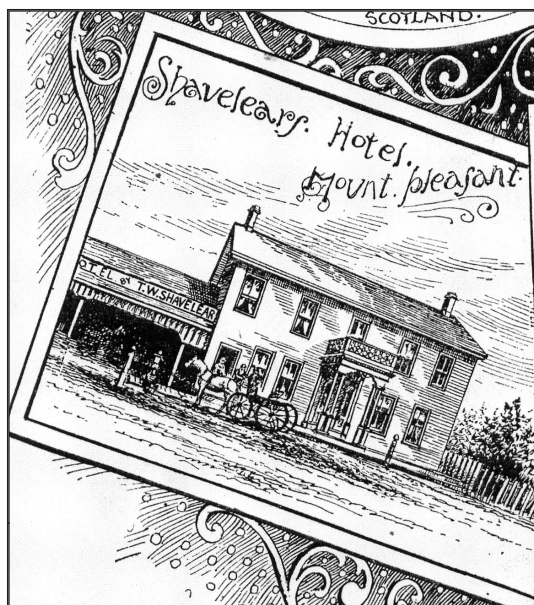
After returning from university in Toronto, Archie married Isabella Ellis, daughter of Isabella and Wallace, joining the oldest pioneer families and the new ones. Although the Sinclair family did not live in Mount Pleasant during the historic Bell telephone test in her father’s store in 1876, Belle would have regaled her new husband with the exciting story. Such reminiscing would have been especially poignant once they moved to Paisley, Ontario on the Bruce Peninsula and recalled their early years in Mount Pleasant. They went on to have their own children, among them Bella, carrying on the proud name of strong women for at least four generations.

Although Belle and Archie established their own family in a more settled era, compared with their parents and grandparents, complete with modern communication and transportation technologies, the future for them was no less uncertain. In Canada the decade of the 1890s represented a time of economic flux. The growth of major urban centres such as Toronto and other smaller cities adversely affected the prosperity of smaller communities. A late-19th century depression intensified the trend that had been occurring since the 1860s with the industries of the local communities surpassed by urban competition. Control over finance passed to larger communities and

smaller ones became satellites. The economy underwent a transition from production for the local markets to industrial production for the national level. Finally, a long agricultural depression also encouraged young people to drift away in a movement of population from country to city. Many of these young people migrated to the United States following the same sense of wanderlust and desire for a fresh start that had been evident in the village since John and Ardillacy Sturgis left after the War of 1812.

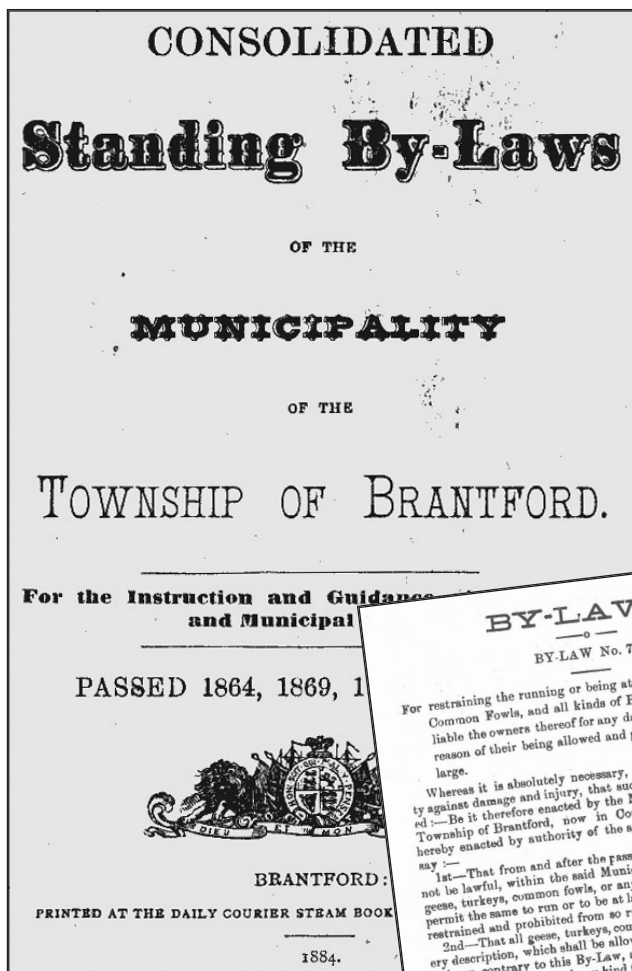
By the end of the century nearly every family in Mount Pleasant had a loved-one south of the border, and this was hard for all concerned whether the separation resulted from hardship or ambition. The California Gold Rush had attracted migrants in the 1840s. Isabella Eadie lost her son James MacDonald first to Buffalo and then to disease in 1849. Professor William Nelles went to New York City in the late 1850s attracted by its superior teaching opportunities. Amelia E. Bryning married a blacksmith and carriage maker and emigrated to Rockton, Illinois in 1856. The United States also offered opportunities for medical doctors. Amelia's brothers Samuel and Joseph hung their shingles as physicians in American cities. Crossley Heaton, Jr. practised medicine in New York and then Michigan in the 1870s and Hamilton Fisk Biggar, son of Hamilton and Eliza moved to Cleveland that same decade and eventually became the personal physician to J. D. Rockefeller. John Bryce went to Erie, PA. and set up a practice as a veterinary-surgeon. The village lost Libbie Townsend in the early 1870s when she went to Missouri to join her husband Dr. Ninian Holmes. Later in the century W. R. Ellis, son of John Randall and Janet, established a hat making business in Detroit and Archie McEwen, Jr. became a stock dealer in Texas. These and many other Mount Pleasant sons and daughters helped form the Canadian-born population living in the United States by the turn of the century, a group that numbered nearly two million or twenty-two percent of Canada's population.

All of this out-migration and economic flux resulted in a sense of profound uncertainty in the country, which manifested itself in different ways depending on the character of the community. In communities with a more diverse and divided religious make-up this

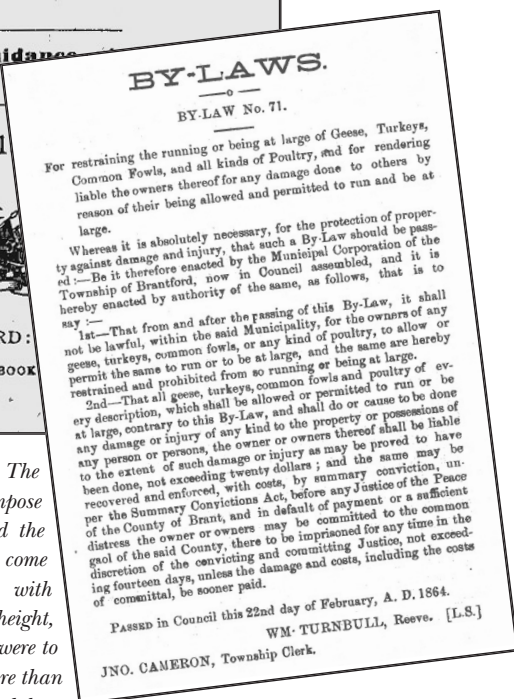


Mount Pleasant hotel in a sketch in the Brantford Expositor, Christmas 1892 ed. As a busy stop for travellers and locals conducting business, Mount Pleasant provided needed amenities, liquor, and entertainment in several inns and taverns. Shavelear was one of the proprietors of this hotel which might have stood on the lot now occupied by the Community Centre. Courtesy Brant Historical Society.

uncertainty resulted in religious animosity and even violent unrest especially between ultra-Protestants and ultra-Catholics. Fortunately for Mount Pleasant, this did not seem to be an issue. In part, this resulted from the character of the waves of European immigration into the area over the decades. As Glenn Lockwood notes in his study of temperance societies in Ontario, by the early 1870s the area around Brantford Township had a very low population of Irish ethnic origin relative to other parts of the province. As a result, instead of struggling with ethnic and religious-based strife, Mount Pleasant residents turned to concerns of social aid and social reform within their own churches. For example, in 1895 interested parties organised the Ladies' Social Aid Society of the Methodist Church in Mount Pleasant. According to reports of its first meeting "the object of this organisation is to give financial aid and assist to give prosperity to the church." The local ladies decreed that "Any person may become a member of this society by paying a fee of 10 cents a month." They also appointed a committee to "purchase a parlour carpet for the parsonage," and they collected fees amounting to \$3.20. Those present included Rev. A. Hamilton, Mrs. Hamilton, Mrs. Preston, Mrs. Steele, Mrs. G. Devlin, Mrs. Dale, Mrs. Phelps,



Township of Brantford By-Laws, 1884. The By-Laws reveal a Council trying to impose order on a rural area that still lacked the organization and polish that would come later. Councillors were preoccupied with animals running loose and the type, height, and maintenance of fences; rail fences "were to be 5' high with the first three rails no more than 4" apart." One By-law covers statute labour ranging from four to seven days assessed against all property owners for road maintenance before it was paid from general taxation. Another regulates the wax-works, menageries, circus riding, natural or artificial curiosities, exhibitions of "legerdemain," and other such popular mass entertainment of the period, not surprisingly mainly to ensure that the Township tax was paid.



Miss N. Biggar, Mrs. Grantham, Mrs. Secord, Mrs. Mott, and Mrs. Chatterson, representing many of the local Methodist families.

In another expression of their anxiety over the well-being of the community, the Methodists also concerned themselves with social reform. And the pre-eminent social reform of the era, particularly as far as the Methodists of Canada were concerned, revolved around the consumption of alcohol. Temperance societies had existed since the early days of Upper Canada. We know Rev. Bryning organised temperance talks in Mount Pleasant in the early 1830s during the visits of Rev. Proudfoot. Locals described Rev. Richard Hobbs, who served Mount Pleasant Methodist Church in the mid-1880s, as a colourful and dramatic exponent of temperance. Sometimes he became so enthused during his bombastic sermons against the evil demon rum that he would descend from the pulpit and parade the aisles of the church.

It seems that the community felt it needed the passionate work of temperance crusaders such as Rev. Hobbs and that his work was far from done when he left the church in 1885. In the early 1890s the Mount Pleasant correspondent for the *Expositor* was “sorry to report a tavern open in the old stand which has been for some time vacant. It is not licensed, and yet from the road can be seen the display of bottles and drinking apparatus. Any such house is a curse and not a blessing to the community.” Shavelears Hotel, emblazoned in the souvenir edition of the newspaper in 1892, existed at this time in village. Although as we have seen, hotels and taverns served a key social and economic service in the village, as in any community, by the late century residents of Mount Pleasant felt considerable anxiety surrounding the unlicensed, and even the licensed, sale of intoxicants. Public order in general concerned residents in this unsettling period of flux and change. Even religious services, it seemed, required police surveillance and security. On Halloween 1890, the local press reported that the Methodist Church in Mount Pleasant appointed a special constable “with authority to enforce order during public services.”

RECEIPT FOR TAXES.
Municipality of the Township of Brantford,

Received from M. A. Howe the sum of 82.23 being in full of his Taxes as they appear on the Collector's Roll of the above named Township for the year 1887

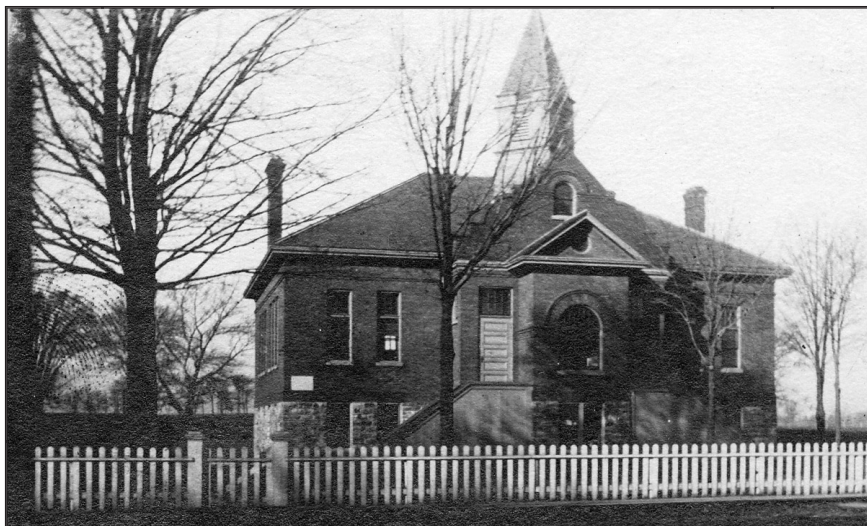
TOWNSHIP TAX,	\$ 1.20
SCHOOL TAX,	1.00
SPECIAL SCHOOL TAX,	
TOTAL,	\$ 2.23

M. A. Brown
Collector of Taxes

Township of Brantford tax receipt, 1887. Taxes were not onerous but were resented then as much as they are now.

Despite these rumbling concerns over public order, the religious foundations that had always supported the community remained solid. For example, during Rev. Hobb's pastorate the Methodist Church made an addition to accommodate the new pipe organ and choir loft. Enthusiastic congregation member Solomon Chatterson helped promote the addition. Yet even within the anxious times of the late century we can see the limits of solemnity and a hint of the spirit that had always endured in the village. "A gay village wit" nicknamed the bulge in the church that resulted from the addition as "Solomon's Bustle."

We also witness this spirit and sense of abiding grandeur in the 1892 "Golden Wedding" celebrations for George and Catherine Bryce. The couple came to Mount Pleasant as newlyweds in 1843 and in the intervening 50 years added their Scottish and Presbyterian heritage to the evolving community. George's blacksmith business contributed to the economic development of Mount Pleasant and their children became part of the next generation who reached adulthood as Canadians and did their own part to develop the community and the country. "Older folk, grey bearded, and pitching horseshoes" made up the bulk of the celebrants at the 50th anniversary party. George included in that number his two brothers from the United States who had also sailed to the New World in 1843. Those in attendance at the event undoubtedly looked back, as is natural at anniversary parties, to past grand social events, such



Public School. Mount Pleasant's first brick school built on the same property, replacing the Nelles Academy octagon. This school was demolished in 1976.

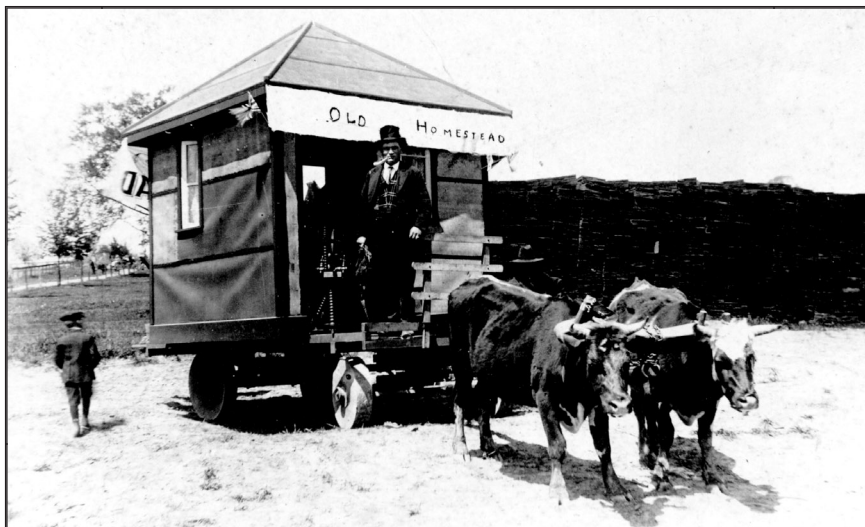
as Lord Elgin's ball at the Cooke mansion, just a few years after the Bryces settled in Mount Pleasant.

Another social event of the early 1890s signalled the continuation of this elegance and sense of occasion. Wallace and Isabella Ellis celebrated the marriage of their youngest child Julia to Ashton Bluett Cutcliffe, a veterinarian whose parents John Cutcliffe and Susan Bluett had come from England in the early 1870s. The Cutcliffes also brought to Mount Pleasant John's widowed mother Emma who helped raise Ashton and his four brothers and two sisters on their farm in the village. The Cutcliffes had joined All Saints though that fine church would not be the setting for Ashton's marriage to Julia. Friends and family gathered at the Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church on a cold late November afternoon to help mark the "unusually pretty and interesting wedding," as reported by the local press. Rev. Sinclair, the father-in-law of Julia's older sister Isabella, presided at the ceremony, as Alexander Briggs delighted the guests with Mendelssohn on the organ. The bride "looked sweetly charming in white with a long veil and orange blossoms," while the bridesmaids, sisters of the couple, carried bouquets of

chrysanthemums, appropriate for the fall season. Adding to the festive occasion, Hon. A. S. Hardy delivered a speech highlighting the happiness of the event. Finally, as if to signal the social status that the couple would follow in their married life in Brantford, Ashton gave Julia "a magnificent piano" as a wedding gift before they headed out by train on their honeymoon to New York. Julia set out on a life in the new century with more security, and only a touch of the apprehensiveness that accompanied her grandmother Isabella MacDonald on her pioneering new life in Mount Pleasant nearly 60 years before.

By the turn of the century residents must have been feeling that unique combination of nostalgia towards the past and apprehension about the future brought on by the self-conscious realisation of passing from one era into another. For a community so proud of its educational system, an event in 1900 must have given many residents cause to pause and reflect. That year one of the steep gables of the old eight-sided schoolhouse collapsed while principal Walter Joyce taught his pupils in the elementary school. Fortunately no one was hurt, but the accident revealed the decay of the over 50-year-old building, causing officials to condemn the school. While this paved the way for the construction of a modern new building in the new century, many must have felt a deep sense of loss not only of the unique architecture of the old Nelles Academy, but also of the spirit of educational achievement that its airy structure symbolised. The next year A. S. Hardy, one, among many, who embodied the community's educational spirit, died. In fact Reville calls Hardy Brant's "most brilliant son." Hardy's Queen, who had been his monarch for his entire life, and the monarch of an entire empire, also died that year. In the midst of the mourning, almost simultaneous in Canada with a new Atlantic telegraph cable, Victoria's son, the young man who had visited the area over 30 years before, became King Edward VII.

Beyond these noted passings, perhaps the feelings of an end of one era and the beginning of a new are best illustrated by the actions of Mount Pleasant residents themselves. They buried a time capsule in 1901 during the construction of their new school in



William Holmes Biggar in the Old Boys' Reunion parade. An Old Boys' Reunion seems to have been held in Mount Pleasant in its 1899 centennial year, and in Brantford in December 1908. The sentimental reunions were organised to mark the closing years of the 19th century and bring back "scenes of long ago" which "were fast becoming shadowy memories." Special trains ran to Mount Pleasant for the reunion staged in a field adjoining Brucefield. Courtesy Brant Historical Society.

order to let the future residents know what life was like in the first year of the new century. In fact this very action itself tells us that despite the depression and sense of disquiet that had been weighing so heavily in the last years of the old century, a sense of optimism in "Canada's century" had nevertheless set in. Workers uncovered this time capsule in the 1970s during renovations to the school in much the same way that workers found the precious documents purposely tucked into the cornerstone of All Saints Church in the 1840s. The 1901 time capsule revealed the preoccupations of the day: Boer War casualty lists, small pox in Hamilton, and debate over the 1901 census figures making the country look less prosperous than it actually was. To anyone familiar with the previous 100 years of history in the village, these preoccupations were nothing new. War and armed conflict had already rocked Mount Pleasant residents more times than they cared to remember. Disease had stolen away their loved ones and threatened the quality of life for others. And

farmers and merchants throughout the years had always kept a keen eye on the political and economic developments around them, not only those revealed through population figures but also those manifested by transportation technologies, agricultural implements and educational opportunities.

All this concern about the future aroused by the birth of a new century resulted in a sense of nostalgia and romanticism about the past and those pioneers who helped create the country. For example, Ontarians fostered the legend of the hardy Loyalists who escaped a Revolution to eke out new lives on a virgin frontier. In 1884 communities held centennial celebrations to commemorate their coming to British North America and in 1896 United Empire Loyalist Associations began popping up all over the province to deify these romantic characters. Some less nostalgic folk looked around the province at the turn of the century with regret over the impact that the first pioneers had on the landscape. W. F. Munro, in his 1881 book *The Backwoods of Ontario*, bemoaned the "monotonous appearance of the country...not a tree relieves the eye except the uniform belt of woods in the rear of the clearings." These clearings of course represent the attitude the first pioneers held towards the dense forest. For them, trees on one's property after a generation of settlement represented laziness. Thus pioneers cut ruthlessly at the forest in order to achieve an orderly and tame environment of settlement. By the 1880s Ontarians seemed to have rediscovered the beauty of trees with the rise of tourism in the still-wild north and government sponsored planting of maple trees beside country roads. In a local version of this initiative, the Township of Brantford encouraged the planting of species such as oak, beech, sassafras, butternut, pine, and spruce, offering an incentive of 25 cents for every tree still "alive, healthy, and of good form" three years after the planting, as certified by the Inspector of Trees appointed specifically to ensure that the many regulations about the program were carried out. Such bureaucratic control, especially the threat of fines for damaging or removing said trees, seemingly did not sit well with independent-minded farmers who did not rush to plant. Regardless however, Mount Pleasant became sheltered by many graceful trees lining its roads and enclosing houses and yards.

As for Mount Pleasant, the village correspondent for the *Expositor* eloquently summed up the romanticism felt towards the residents' forebears by 1892. "Mount Pleasant is an old place and the birthplace of some of the most eminent men in the country. On that beautiful road leading from the city of Brantford to Mount Pleasant, in addition to being charmed with its loveliness as it winds in and out among groves of beautiful trees, the traveller is carried back to a century ago when this very road was the trail of that great Indian chief, Joseph Brant, marching at the head of his stalwart braves. This accounts for the crookedness of the road, the Indian making his trail to suit the exigencies of the case, walking around a hilltop rather than climbing over it. Here is Brant's road, leading on to Brant's Ford." It was this "loveliness" that charmed this journalist in the 1890s that first attracted Henry Ellis and the other migrants in the 1790s. Geography and native history set the foundation for generations of wheat harvests and family events while the hard work of the pioneers and their children and their children's children made sure the community grew and developed into a place that could still charm with its loveliness a century later.

APPENDIX A

A Chronicle of Land Transactions in the Mount Pleasant Tract

The Mount Pleasant Tract was divided into 10 lots numbered 1-10, beginning at the south end of the Tract at the Indian lands boundary (now the Oakland - Brantford Township boundary line). The north boundary of LOT 10 is approximately 4 miles or 6.4 kilometres from the Grand. The old "southerly course" was changed to follow the central road space at LOT 9 but picked up again at LOT 1 where it curved past toward Burford Gore (Oakland). The modern Burtch Road divides LOT 5 and 6; Maple Ave. divides LOT 7 and 8. The road space further divided the strip into 20 farms of approximately 200 acres, 10 on the east side and 10 on the west side, hence the nomenclature LOT 1E, LOT 1W, etc. Lots are also identified by Ranges, a surveying term for a series of Lots in a given block of land. Lots in the original survey are in Range 1, the adjacent series are in Range 2, and so on. The Range 2 boundaries are the present Biggars Lane on the east and the Pleasant Ridge Road on the west. As the village grew individual Lots were again divided into smaller farms, often front and back, or the frontage was sold off for commercial and other buildings.

Land transactions reveal the role that land played in the development of the village. The large holdings of the Nelles and Phelps families show that Brant looked kindly upon those who had served with him or were related to families that resided near him in the United States. It is also apparent that Brant gave property to tradesmen who assisted with the commercial development of Indian lands. Equally evident is the fact that despite Brant's intentions the tract attracted entrepreneurial land speculators, Absalom Shade being the best local example of a speculator who gained title to large parcels. There is no evidence that Shade ever resided in Mount Pleasant. As wealth increased and new immigrants arrived, the rise of substantial farmers, merchants, and tradesmen is easily traced

through names such as Cooke and McEwen. Wheeling and dealing in land and settling disputed claims kept many players busy.

Errors creep into the trace of land transactions because of variant spellings of names, use of initials only, missing documents, and unreliable memory. The “best effort” selective compilation below was derived from the land records research of Smyth and several benchmark survey maps.

Person/ Building	Property Notes * CD = Crown Deed	Present Street Address (Extant Buildings)
Bethesda Chapel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S.E. corner of LOT 7W-R1, owned by Abraham Cooke • Site of present United Church Christian Education Wing 	
Biggar, Rev. Hamilton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 acre farm and home known as Maple Terrace located just north of the Phelps Tract, 1852 	463 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Biggar, James	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 2E-R1 (back); 92 acres; Brant lease 1824; CD 1849; Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 • LOT 3E-R1 (front); Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 • LOT 2E-R2 by 1875 	58 Wetmores Rd.
Biggar, Robert, Sr. Biggar Herbert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 10W-R1; 91 acres; 1816; CD 1844 to Thos. Biggar; Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 • 8 acres at Brant's Ford (now West Brantford) • Herbert Biggar shown holding LOT 9E-R1 (back) on Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 • Home known as Tall Trees on LOT 10W 	571 Mt. Pleasant Rd
Bingham, John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 6W-R1; 1850; Bingham Inn on S.E. corner • Bingham lived in (and perhaps built) the "mud" house on LOT 5E-R1 c1856 • House at 702 Mt. Pleasant Rd. also attributed to Bingham as his inn 	722 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Bryce, George	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wagon shop and first home on frontage of LOT 7W-R1 between present United Church and manse adjacent to north boundary of LOT 6W-R1 • House on frontage of LOT 7E-R1, 1853 • Shown owning south half of front LOT 6W, 1875 (part of original Andrew Eadie holdings) 	670 Mt. Pleasant Rd.

Bryning, Rev. John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of LOT 6E-R1; 8.56 acres; deed from Absalom Shade 1850 • Manse built c1830 • Part of LOT 6W-R1; 1/2 acre on N.E. corner from Andrew and William Eadie in 1829 for church (never built); Deed 1850 (?) • Part of LOT 7E-R1 from John Ellis; Deed 1850; possibly site of old Common School 	676 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Burtch, Charles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 1W-R1 (front); 101 acres; CD 1844 • LOT 1W-R1 (east half of back) from Hiram Gates in 1804; CD to Gates 1836 (land dispute) 	
Burtch, David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 3W-R1 (back); 157 acres; Brant lease 1808; sold to Gideon Olmstead • LOT 6E-R1 (back); sold 124 acres to David Thomas 1809 • LOT 7W-R1 (back); December 1808 	
Burtch, David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parts of LOT 4E-R2, 5E-R2, 4E-R3, 6E-R3 (at Burtch); Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 	
Burtch, Stephen (Burtch, Margaret)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 5W-R1 (front); 102 acres; CD 1849; shown as David Burtch on Tremaine map 1858; as Steven (Stephen ?) Burtch on County Map 1875 • Site of Presbyterian Church and Pioneer Cemetery • Burtch brick house • LOT 8E-R1 (N.E. corner); 30 acres; 1813; CD 1849 to Margaret Burtch (land dispute) • Farm at Burtch, P.O., 1815 	729 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Chatterson Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joseph Chatterson on LOT 1W-R1 (back); Tremaine map 1858; adjacent LOTs in Oakland Township • Solomon Chatterson on LOT 1W-R1 (back); County Map 1875; LOT 4W-R2, Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 • Other Chatterson farms in Range 2W and in Oakland Township adjacent to the Mt. Pleasant Tract 	

Cooke, Abraham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 7W-R1 (front); 103 acres, 1833; CD 1836; Tremaine map 1858; Dr. A.H. Cooke 1875 • Bethesda Chapel on S.E. corner • First Cooke home and 5 acres sold to All Saints Church for rectory 1872 • Brucefield centred on LOT 7W • Nelles Academy on LOT 7W south of Brucefield • Yeoward Store on N.E. corner • LOT 7E-R1; 10 acres (?) by 1835; CD 1850? • LOT 8E-R1 (front); 85 acres; CD 1836; store and post office on S.W. corner 1834; burned 1884 • LOT 8W-R1 (front corner); 5 1/2 acres; 1831; CD 1836; Tremaine map 1858; site of another Cooke store • LOT 9E-R1; 76 acres; CD to Cooke 1836; later CD to Thomas Perrin whose father had Brant lease in 1801 (land dispute) 	<p>645 Mt. Pleasant Rd.</p> <p>657 Mt. Pleasant Rd.</p>
Cooke, Andrew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 2W-R1 (back); Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 • LOT 3W-R1 (back); Tremaine map 1858 • LOT 5W-R1 (back); 102 acres; CD 1836; Tremaine map 1858 • LOT 8W-R1 (half of back); 50 acres; Tremaine map 1858 • Homestead on LOT 8W-R2 	
Cutcliffe, J.C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of LOT 9E-R1; 1872 • Red brick home on property renovated by Cutcliffe 	610 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Devlin, George	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frontage on LOT 5E-R1; Devlin store 1879 	704 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Devlin, John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 7E-R1 (Henry Ellis farm); 1866 • Built yellow brick house similar to United Church manse 	660 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Dolph, Hiram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 3E-R1 (back); 1836; CD to Jonas Heaton 1849 	

Eadie, Andrew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 6W-R1; from Gideon Olmstead c1820; CD 1836; front half only on Tremaine map 1858 • Site of first store (Thomas Racey) on S.E. corner, c1812 • Site of first Presbyterian Church c1843 • Site of Speed the Plough Inn • Site of Andrew Eadie home • 1/2 acre LOT to Rev. J. Bryning, 1850 	693 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Eadie, John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 2E-R2; claim January 15, 1836 • LOT 6E-R1 (front), Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 	
Eadie, Robert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchased or operated Hardy/Foster store 1858 on LOT 5E-R1 • Gothic vernacular style house with exterior plastered walls on lot adjoining store attributed to him (c1847) by Smyth 	708 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Eadie, Thomas Eadie, William	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 4E-R1; CD 1837 to Andrew Eadie, then to Thomas Eadie in 1850 • Stone and stucco Loyalist style house, presently known as Idylbrook, residence of Wm. Eadie (1853), may have been built by Andrew Eadie • Wm. owned or operated Hardy/Foster store c1870s; also W.L. Jones store 	756 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Earle, John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 5W-R1 and LOT 7W-R1; Brant lease 1806 • Land given by Brant in "consideration of labour done. . .about the erection of a certain gristmill" (Earle was a blacksmith) • LOT 5W sold to G. Olmstead before July 10, 1810; LOT 7W sold to D. Burtch December 1808 • May have owned LOT 8E-R1, 1801-07 	
Ellis, A. Wallace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 6W-R1 (south half of front); County Map 1875; • Site of A. Wallace Ellis store and first telephone call; Smyth states store "replaced" by present house at 683 Mt. Pleasant Rd. 	

Ellis, Allin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8E-R1 (back), except 30 acres on N.W. corner sold to D. Burtch 1813; CD 1843; strip at east end of LOT 8E to J.R. Ellis • LOT 8E as A.W. Ellis on Tremaine map 1858, as D. McDermot (McDiarmid) on County Map 1875 • Allin Ellis house still extant on site 	133 Maple Ave. E.
Ellis, Henry Ellis, John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 7E-R1; 203 acres; Brant lease October 1801; paid in full September 30, 1808; CD 1850; Tremaine map 1858; to John Devlin 1866 • Site of Old Common School • Site of Tennant octagon 	214 Maple Ave. E. 646 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Ellis, John Randall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House and shop on frontage of LOT 5W-R1; from Strobridge 1841 • J.R. Ellis house still extant • Strip at east end of LOT 8E-R1; Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 	707 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Fairchild, Isaac	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • c1799 was "clearing a new farm a mile or so south of the Kerr Tract just outside the [Indian] lands boundary"; N.E. corner of Fairchild farm abutted S.W. corner of LOT 1W • Now south end of Pleasant Ridge Road on west side (Oakland Township, R4) • Site of Fairchild cemetery 	
Fairchild, Stephen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 10W-R1 (south half of back); Tremaine map 1858 • LOT 11W-R1 (back) on Phelps Tract, 1875 map 	
Fairchild, Timothy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 8W-R1 (back); deed from Wm. Sturgis 1838; Tremaine map 1858 • LOT 9W-R1 (back); deed from Wm. Sturgis 1838; Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 • Log school built on Fairchild property (LOT 8W); sold to Trustees of S.S.#4 in 1857 • Stone house built by T. Fairchild 	220 Pleasant Ridge Rd.

Gates, Hiram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 1W-R1 (back); Brant lease 1804; CD 1836 • East half sold to C. Burtch 1804 • West half in dispute with C. Burtch 1830's • To A. McEwen by 1858 	
Grantham, Thomas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 acres on extreme N.E. corner of Phelps Tract, CD 1846; Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 	
Guest, Richard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of LOT 4E-R1, 1863 • Operated a butcher business • Original Guest house believed to be incorporated into a section of red brick house now on the site 	734 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Haight Mill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On LOT 4W-R1; property owned jointly by A. Shade, A. Nelles, J. Racey in 1820's • On site of present Optimist Nature Park (Old Fish Hatchery) 	
Hardy, Morris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 101 acres on LOT 13E of Phelps Tract from his wife Eliza Phelps, 1835 	
Hardy, Russell Hardy Store	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Store on frontage of LOT 5E-R1; leased 1834; CD to Russell Hardy 1836; to Francis Foster, 1844 • Purchased LOT 4W-R1 on flatlands near Haight Mill from Miles O'Reilly (son-inlaw of James Racey), 1847-1850; Tremaine map 1858 	704 Mount Pleasant Rd.
Harris, John (Elder John Harris)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 5W-R2, 1839 • Harris double cottage still extant on site 	333 Pleasant Ridge Rd.
Heaton, Crossley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Store on frontage of LOT 8E-R1 1850's- 1860's; Tremaine map 1858 • Purchased small holdings of A. Cooke, on 7E, 8E, 8W, 9E in 1850 	
Heaton, John B. (Jonas?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 3E-R1 (back); 61 acres; August 1842; CD 1849 	
Jones, W.L.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 7E-R1; 1 acre frontage for combined store and house c1831; CD 1836 • Possibly also owned Devlin store after Foster 	

McAlister, Owen (son of Samuel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 3W-R1 (front); 77 acres; claim January 24, 1833 • LOT 4W-R1 (front); 70 acres; from Andrew Rose 	
McAlister, Owen (son of Wellington)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owned Brucefield early 1900's (sold 1918) • LOT 8E-R3, County Map 1875 	
McAlister, Robert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 9W-R1 (part); deed from Wm. Sturgis 1839 • LOT 5W-R2 c1835 	
McAlister, Samuel McAlister, Richard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settled 1811 on land between Kerr Tract and T. Fairchild • LOT 6E-R1 (front); 92 acres, excluding 8.56 acres of Rev. J. Bryning; CD to Absalom Shade 1836; McAlister under mortgage to Shade until 1838 • Site of McAlister Inn • Land donated from LOT 6E by Richard McAlister for Anglican Church, 1844 • House attributed to Richard McAlister 	501 Burtch Rd.
McDiarmid family (McDermid)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel McDermid on LOT 2W-R2; paid 3 installment on lease 1841 rd • Donald McDiarmid on same LOT, Tremaine map 1858 • John McDiarmid on same LOT, County Map 1875 • D. (Dermid, Diarmid?) on most of LOT 8E-R1, the old Allin Ellis farm, County Map 1875 	
McEwen, Archibald	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First store on frontage of LOT 7E, 1840 • LOT 1W-R1 from C. Burtch c1850; Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 • Site of new McEwen store and house • Holdings on LOT 3E-R3, County Map 1875 	849 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
McEwen, Duncan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 4E-R2 (front); County Map 1875 • LOT 5E-R2 (front); County Map 1875 • D. McEwen house still extant 	28 Biggars Lane

McEwen, John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of LOT 13 on Phelps Tract; Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 • Italianate yellow brick house attributed to him 	495 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
McGeary, John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frontage on Lot 5E-R1 (south of Hardy store) 1850 • Site of McGeary store 	
McIntyre, John W.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 10E-R1 (south half); from Absalom Shade 1835; Tremaine map 1858 • J. and N. McIntyre on LOT 1E-R2, 1835 and 1875 	
McMullen, Peter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 9W-R1; 50 acres; from Capt. Amos Sturgies c1817; CD 1824; later to A. Townsend 	
Misener, James	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early blacksmith shop on LOT 3W-R1 	
Misener, John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 10W-R1 (back); 66 acres; from Thomas Sturgis, Jr., 1815; CD 1837 • 112 1/2 acres of LOT 11W in Phelps Tract from E.L. Phelps c1817; sold in 1816 to John Fordham; sold by Fordham to F. Yeoward, 1816 	
Moffatt, (Honorable) George	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 9E-R1 (back); CD 1839 • Montreal businessman, and MP, appears to have been an absentee owner - land was "set aside for him" 	
Mud Hollow mill site (Perrin/Racey Mill)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mill site on LOT 6E-R2 (present War Road) • Creek land around mill site leased to E.L. Phelps December 20, 1806 by Joseph Brant • Transferred May 19, 1807 to Thomas Perrin; on same day Perrin resold 114 acres back of mill, LOT 7E-R2, to Roswell Stevens, a Burford carpenter • Identified as Racey Mill, 1818 • Owned by Cumin Bros. by 1855 	

Murray, Wm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursery business on LOT 3E-R1 (back); Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 	
Nelles Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 7W (frontage) on LOT adjoining north side of Bethesda Chapel; LOT from Abraham Cooke 1846 • On site of present Public School 	
Nelles, Andrew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held Brant leases for 649 acres in 1805, including most of the creek land • LOT 3W-R1; 40 acres • LOT 4E-R1; LOT 4W-R1; pioneer cabin on LOT 4W; 1805 • LOT 5E-R1 (front), LOT 6E-R1 (front) • All of above to Absalom Shade 1823; family "disinherited" • LOT 3E-R1 (front); 200 acres; Brant lease 1805; to William Nelles • LOT 7E-R1 (back); sold to Thomas Perrin 1810 	
Nelles, William	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 3E-R1 (front); 145 acres; CD 1839 • LOT 4E-R1 (back); 104 acres; 1805; CD 1836 	
Nickerson, Freeman Nickerson Store	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 5W-R1; 5 acres adjacent to Pioneer Cemetery; 1831 • Claimed in 1830's by Margaret Burtch; CD to Nickerson 1836 • Sold in 1837 to R.R. Strobridge 	
O'Dell, W. H./ Fiddler Anne's Tavern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tavern shown on various maps as just outside the S.E. corner of LOT 1W on south side where the Mt. Pleasant Rd. turns toward Maple Grove and Oakland 	
Olmstead, Gideon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olmstead more a land speculator than a settler • LOT 3W-R1 (back) from D. Burtch after 1808 • LOT 6W-R1; 196 acres; Brant lease 1801 • 2 acres sold to Thomas Racey c1812 for a store; balance of 6W to Andrew Eadie c1819 • LOT 8E-R1; 203 acres • 80 acres of LOT 8E to Capt. Thomas Perrin, 1806 	

Perrin, Capt. Thomas and Perrin, Capt. Thomas Jr.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holdings of over 1,000 acres in the district • LOT 5W-R1 (back); 200 acres • LOT 6E-R1 (back); 125 acres from A. Nelles, 1810; CD 1849 • Bought Percy Mill c1813 • LOT 8E-R1; Brant lease paid in full November 15, 1804 • LOT 9E-R1; Brant lease October 1, 1801 • LOT 9E claim disputed in 1830's; east half to George Moffatt, 1839; west half to A. Cooke, 1839, eventually returned to Perrins who occupied it for more than a century • Thomas Perrin Jr. laid out village lots in Chequered Shades (now Mount Vernon) 1829; Perrin Mill in Mt. Vernon, Tremaine map 1858 • Thomas Jr. married 1st Mary Ellis,, daughter of Henry; 2nd to Mary Peet, daughter of Arnold Peet, owner of mill on Peet's Creek (east of Cockshutt Rd.) 	
Perrin, William, Hiram, David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 9E-R1 (front); Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 • Perrin frame house 	602 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Phelps, Epaphras Lord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 6E-R1 (back), 1806 • LOT 10E-R1 • Phelps Tract; 1202 acres; grant from Joseph Brant 1804; now LOTs 11,12,13 	
Phelps, Charles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built house known as Evergreen Lodge on Phelps Tract (LOT 12E) c1859; County Map 1875 • LOT 12W (south half); County Map 1875 	538 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Phelps, Hiram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 12E, 12W, 13W on Phelps Tract 1852; only north half of 12W by 1875 • Hiram Phelps frame home still extant 	513 Mt. Pleasant Rd.

Phelps, Solomon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 10E-R1 (north half); 103 acres; Brant lease 1805, CD 1835; Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 • LOT 11E on Phelps Tract; 206 acres; Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 	
Phelps, William E.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 5E-R1 (back); Tremaine map 1858 • Stone Gothic Revival house built for him by Andrew J. Rouse 	382 Burtch Rd.
Racey, James	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 3W-R1, 32 acre strip up the middle of the LOT; acquired before 1823; CD 1836 • Site of Racey log castle • LOT 4W-R1; 153 acres from A. Nelles before 1823; held 235 acres 1830; CD 1849 to son-in-law Miles O'Reilly • Later site of Haight Mill 	
Racey, Thomas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 6W-R1; 2 acres on S.E. corner, site of Racey store, c1812 	
Racey, Thomas (son of James)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 3W-R1 (front); Tremaine map 1858; established nursery business • Thomas Racey house still extant 	781 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Rose, Andrew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 4E-R1 (front); 104 acres; 1829; CD 1836 • LOT 5E-R1 (front); 102 acres; 1829; CD 1836 • Site of Rose's blacksmith shop, Hardy store, Dame's school • Holdings on LOT 3W-R1, 4W-R1, 1829 	
Rouse, Julius	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 6E-R1 (east half); 1850; Tremaine map 1858 • Built square stone house still extant 	395 Burtch Rd.
Rutherford, D.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of LOT 10E-R2; County Map 1875 	
Secord, Daniel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 1E-R1 (front); 75 acres; original Brant lease; CD 1836 • LOT 2W-R1; 200 Acres; 1818; CD 1836 	
Secord, David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 3W-R1 (back); 200 acres; CD 1836 	

Secord, John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 1E-R1 (back); 133 acres; original Brant lease, burned in fire, replaced January 1, 1810; CD 1848; Tremaine map 1858 • LOT 2E-R1 (front); 113 acres; original Brant lease; CD 1846; Tremaine map 1858 (J. Secord originally held all of LOT 2E, sold back half to J. Biggar, 1824) 	
Shade, Absalom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A major land speculator, mainly in Dumfries (Galt); A. Nelles acreage, 1823 • LOT 3W-R1; 75 acres; CD 1836 • LOT 4W-R1; 70 acres; CD 1836 • LOT 6E-R1; CD 1836 • 8.56 acres of LOT 6E deeded to Rev. J. Bryning 1850; balance to S. McAlister • LOT 10E-R1 (south half); 104 acres; CD 1836; sold to J. W. McIntyre 1835 	
Stiles, Siley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 10W-R1 given to Stiles by Brant in 1806 for "work done on the Indian Mill"; sold to Thos. Sturgis, March 14, 1806 • Stiles was a millwright 	
Stowe, John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 8E-R1 (frontage); 1850 • Site of Stowe Bros. carriage works 	
Stowe, John, Jr.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frontage on LOT 8E-R1 • Home of Emily Stowe; birthplace of Augusta Stowe Gullen • Board and batten Stowe house still extant 	636 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Strobridge, R.R.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bought Nickerson store on LOT 5W-R1, 1837 • Sold store to J.R. Ellis, 1841 	
Sturgis, Capt. Amos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 9W-R1; 210 acres; Brant lease October 1, 1801; CD 1838 to Wm. Sturgis 	
Sturgis, Thomas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 10W-R1; Brant lease from S. Stiles 1806; renewed lease on back 118 acres January 1809; by 1818 property belonged to R. Biggar and J. Misener 	
Sturgis, William	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 8W-R1; Brant lease October 1, 1801; CD 1838 • Built a new house in 1815 (untraced) • LOT 9W-R1; 210 acres; CD 1838 	

Tennant, John Tennant, Richard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 acre LOT on N.E. corner of Ellis Farm LOT 7E-R1; site of Tennant octagon 	646 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Thomas, David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 5E-R1 (back) • LOT 6E-R1 (back); 124 acres; November 4, 1809 from John Durrel and David Burtch 	
Thomas, Morris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 6W-R1 (back); 108 acres; lease April 21, 1809; purchased from G. Olmstead; CD 1836; Tremaine map 1858 • LOT 7W-R1 (back); 51 acres; from D. Burtch and L. Cooley 1809; CD 1836; Tremaine map 1858; • Thomas was a Welsh blacksmith 	
Townsend, Alvah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOT 8W-R1 (part) • LOT 9W-R1 (part); from Wm. Sturgis c1835; Tremaine map 1858; County Map 1875 • Townsend Georgian mansion on LOT 9W • Carriage works on LOT 9W south of mansion, in front of yellow brick cottage at 599 Mount Pleasant Rd. 	597 Mt. Pleasant Rd.
Yeoward, Frederick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 acre LOT on N.W. corner of LOT 7E-R1 from Henry Ellis, 1818 • 5 acres on N.E. corner of LOT 7W-R1; opened a store c1816; sold by the Sherriff, November 1822; became the Abraham Cooke store by 1824 • Store on LOT 7E also, possibly built by Yeoward or by a later owner • 112 1/2 (or 160?) acres on LOT 11W of Phelps Tract from John Fordham 1816; CD 1836: E Yeoward on Tremaine map 1858; F.C. Yeoward on County Map 1875 	

APPENDIX B

A Compilation of Commercial and Trades Enterprises in Mount Pleasant

The self-contained frontier settlement of Mount Pleasant was served by diverse and vibrant small businesses which provided most of the goods and services required for both domestic life and agriculture. As noted by Dr. Jaeger, these gradually began to fade away as Brantford developed, until by the early 20th century not much remained of what had been a bustling commercial centre. This compilation helps present residents and visitors visualize the level of activity which once filled the main street with shoppers, farmers, and travellers going about their business. The village population was recorded as approximately 200 in 1851-52, and 500 in 1869-70, though the figure for 1851 seems low.

Names, dates, and population have been taken from several sources, including Smyth's work, the Tremaine map of 1858, and directories and gazetteers, namely the *Canada Directory* and the *County of Brant Gazetteer*. The dates given indicate only that a business was here at that time, not the span of years it was in operation.

Many of the people listed also farmed. Others combined related businesses. Carriage makers and blacksmiths also manufactured farm implements - George Bryce made ploughs and Samuel Fear made Kenny's patent "Ontario Harrows" and Bruce's 1st prize cultivators.

Person	Occupation	Dates
Baldwin, George	Coach maker	1840, 1851-52
Beemer, George	Shoemaker	1869-70
Biggar, Herbert	Grist and woollen mills	1869-70
Bingham, George	Shoemaker	1858, 1869
Bingham, John	Innkeeper	1850-51-52, 1858
Bingham, W.C.	Innkeeper	1858
Briggs, Alexander	Innkeeper	1869-70
Bryce, George	Blacksmith	1843, 1851-52, 1858, 1869-70
Carlisle, J	Gardener	1869-70
Chapman, G.W.	Shoemaker, Miller (Haight Mill)	1851-52, 1858
Collett, C.	Tailor	1851-52
Cooke, Abraham	Merchant, J.P., Postmaster	1831, 1851-52
Cox, James	Cooper	1850
Cummin, John & Robert A.	Brothers who owned Perrin Mill	1855
Devlin, George F.	Merchant	1878
Eadie, Andrew	Innkeeper ; Cooper	1820, 1830, 1858
Eadie, Robert	Merchant (Foster's Store)	1858, 1869-70
Eadie, William	Merchant (Foster's Store & Jones Store)	1870s
Earle, John	Blacksmith	1806
Ellis, A. Wallace	Merchant	1860, 1870
Ellis, Henry	Weaver	1801
Ellis, John Randall	Carpenter, Cabinetmaker	1840, 1853, 1858, 1869-70
Fear, Samuel W. (var. Farr)	Carriage maker (New Dominion Carriage Factory)	1869-70
Fordham, John	Carpenter	1816, 1836
Foster, Francis	Merchant (Hardy store)	1844, 1851-52
Gamon, George	Cooper	1869
Grace, James	Nurseryman	1858
Guest, Richard	Butcher	1863
Haight, Elijah	Textile mill operator, cloth dresser	1842, 1851-52, 1858, 1869
Hardy, Russell	Merchant	1834
Hargrave, A.	Shoemaker	1851-52
Heaton, Crossley	Merchant	1844, 1858
Hurd, Chas. E.	Carriage maker	1858

Jones, Wm. L.	Merchant, Postmaster	1831, 1851-52, 1858, 1869
Kelsey, D. B.	Nurseryman	1858
Lloyd-Jones, John	Builder	1860s
McAlister, S. & R.	Innkeeper	1830s-1840s
McFarlane, J.	Shoemaker	1869-70
McGeary, John	Merchant	1840, 1858, 1869-70
McIntyre, John	Cooper	1835
McMullen, Peter	Military tailor	1818
Misener, James	Blacksmith (on Lot 4W above Haight Mill)	
Murray, William	Nurseryman	1858
Nickerson, Freeman	Merchant	1831
O'Dell, W. H.; also R.	Innkeeper	1858
Peet, Arnold	Miller (Peet's Mill - east of Perrin Mill)	1816
Perrin, Thomas	Miller	1801, 1812, 1837
Phelps, Hiram	Farrier & Blacksmith	1869
Potter, George	Miller (took over Haight Mill)	1869-70
Racey, Thomas	Merchant	1812 or earlier
Racey, Thomas (son of Squire)	Nurseryman (Rosebank Nursery)	1858, 1869-70
Raines, Thomas M. Raines, Mrs.	Hotel keeper (may have taken over McAlister Inn?- lived on same property)	1850s
Rose, Andrew	Blacksmith	1820s-1830s
Rouse, Jabez	Merchant	1869-70
Rouse, Julius	Merchant (at Hardy store)	1858
Sager, John	Innkeeper (Canada House Hotel)	1869-70
Sayles, Solomon	Hotel keeper (Bingham Inn after 1866)	1866, 1869
Shavelear, T.W.	Innkeeper	1890s
Sky, George	Shoemaker	1851-52
Smith, W. W.	Cheese & butter maker	1898
Soules, J.	Cabinetmaker	1851-52
Soules, Wm. D.	Carpenter & Cabinetmaker	1840s
Stevens, Roswell	Carpenter	1807, 1830s-1840s
Stiles, Siley	Millwright	1806

Stowe, J. & W.	Carriage makers	1858, 1869-70
Strobridge, R. R.	Merchant	1837-1850
Sturgis, Wm., Jr.	Carpenter	1851-52
Tennant, John W.	Merchant tailor (shop near McEwen Store in Oakland Township)	1851-52, 1858
Tennant, Richard	Shoemaker (12 employees in 1850s)	1851-52, 1858, 1869- 70
Thomas, Morris	Blacksmith	1809, 1858
Thompson, George	Shoemaker	1833
Townsend, Alvah	Blacksmith & Carriage maker	1840, 1851-52, 1858, 1869-70
Wray, William	Butcher	1869
Yeoward, Frederick	Merchant	1816

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*Author Sharon Jaeger.
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