



Mount Pleasant Group
of Cemeteries



Our History

A brief history of Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries

The history of Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries (MPGC) is almost as long as that of the community it serves. Indeed, the growth of MPGC largely reflects the population growth of the ever expanding city, from its origins as the settlement of York ("Muddy York", as it was known to its inhabitants) to today's major urban centre.

Origins and early history

1900-1950

1950-2000

Origins and early history

In the early 19th century, the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches operated the only two cemeteries in town. These were closed to many new immigrants, who were of neither faith. In addition, even though the population numbered less than 2,000 in the 1820s, the lack of cemetery facilities became critical, partly because of the rapid growth of the community and partly because such diseases as cholera, smallpox, scarlet fever and tuberculosis were rampant.

Community leaders resolved to remedy the situation by finding the land to develop a non-sectarian cemetery. At a town meeting on Monday, November 14, 1825, it was reported that a suitable, six-acre plot had been located, "on Yonge Street, about a mile from town." The recording secretary for the meeting was William Lyon Mackenzie, later Toronto's first mayor and leader of the 1837 rebellion, who is buried in the Toronto Necropolis.

- On January 30, 1826, an Act of Parliament permitted the purchase of the plot of land, located at what is today the northwest corner of Yonge and Bloor streets. This first public cemetery for "all classes and sects" was named the York General Burying Ground, but soon became known as Potter's Field.
- By 1855, the population had exploded to more than 30,000 and the city had expanded far enough to surround Potter's Field. The government ordered the trustees of what was now officially the Toronto General Burial Grounds to close the site, allowing them to sell the land once all remains had been removed. Anticipating the problem, the trustees had already purchased the Necropolis, a second non-sectarian cemetery founded in 1850, from its owners. (Today, some of the remains from Potter's Field are in the Resting Place of the Pioneers in the Necropolis and in Mount Pleasant Cemetery.)
- In 1876, Mount Pleasant Cemetery opened on another Yonge Street plot of land, at the time far north of the city limits.
- In the 1880s, the Toronto General Burial Grounds introduced the idea of "perpetual care" in Canada. The concept of setting aside money to fund the

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ongoing maintenance of cemetery properties finally became a legal requirement in Ontario's Cemeteries Act of 1955.

- In 1890, [Prospect Cemetery](#) opened on St. Clair Avenue West to serve the city's burgeoning west end.

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1900-1950

At the beginning of the 20th century, Toronto was a thriving urban centre with a population of about 200,000. Over the next 50 years, that population would grow to more than 1.1 million. The demand for cemetery services grew accordingly, and became increasingly complex.

- In 1917, the Toronto General Burying Grounds, in partnership with the Great War Veterans Association, developed and opened the first Veterans' Burial Plot, in Prospect Cemetery. (Every cemetery established since this time has included a designated section for Canadian and Allied veterans and their spouses.)
- In 1920, the Toronto General Burying Grounds opened its first community mausoleum in Mount Pleasant Cemetery to provide affordable, above-ground entombment.
- In 1928, as the city expanded eastwards, [Pine Hills Cemetery](#) was established on the northwest corner of St. Clair Avenue East and Kennedy Road.
- In 1933, the Toronto Crematorium, the first cremation facility in Ontario, opened at the Necropolis (now called the Toronto Necropolis).
- In 1948, [York Cemetery](#) was established on Senlac Road in North York.

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1950-2000

The latter part of the 20th century was marked in particular by the fast development of the communities around the fringe of the city itself. The period also featured the rapid multicultural diversification of the population. Today, with the population numbering about five million, the Greater Toronto Area is Canada's largest and most diverse urban centre, and the fifth-largest urban region in the U.S. and Canada. The pace of MPGC's growth, both in the number of facilities it operates and the range of its services, accelerated alongside that of the community it serves.

- In 1965, [Beechwood Cemetery](#) was established in the Jane Street and Steeles Avenue area to provide burial space for the rapidly developing northwest area of Metropolitan Toronto and the Town of Vaughan.
- In 1967, a crematorium and chapel were added to Prospect Cemetery to provide for the increased demand for cremation facilities in the Metropolitan Toronto area.
- In 1973, the organization, now operating under the name Toronto Trust Cemeteries, opened its third crematorium, in the mausoleum of Mount Pleasant Cemetery. Further crematoriums would be built at Meadowvale Cemetery (1981), Thornton Cemetery (1984) and Elgin Mills Cemetery (1986).
- In 1979, at the request of the Town of Richmond Hill, Toronto Trust

Cemeteries opened [Elgin Mills Cemetery](#) to serve the town and its surrounding communities.

- In 1981, [Meadowvale Cemetery](#) opened to serve communities in the Brampton and Mississauga areas.
- In 1984, at the request of Oshawa City Council, Toronto Trust Cemeteries opened [Thornton Cemetery](#) to serve the city and surrounding communities.
- In 1990, Toronto Trust Cemeteries changed its name to Commemorative Services of Ontario.
- In 1993, [Duffin Meadows Cemetery](#) opened in Pickering.
- In 1996, Commemorative Services of Ontario joined the Korea War Veterans Association to establish the Wall of Remembrance, Canada's national Korean War memorial. Located in Meadowvale Cemetery, it was dedicated the following year.
- In 1998, the name of the organization changed once again, to Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries. The first Garden of Remembrance in Ontario was opened at Mount Pleasant Cemetery, and the first Visitation, Chapel and Reception Centre in the Greater Toronto Area was opened at Pine Hills Cemetery.
- On January 30th, 2001, Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries celebrated 175 years of continuous, non-sectarian cemetery services to Toronto and the surrounding region.

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