



Browne's Addition



Browne's Addition - Days of Yore

In 1878, two men, J J Browne and A M Cannon, arrived in Spokane Falls looking for adventure and fortune. They saw the potential of the raging river and the natural resources to support a larger population than the 54 hearty pioneers that inhabited the little town. They decided to invest. With a down payment of \$50, they bought $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Spokane Falls town site from James Glover, the founding father of Spokane. Later on, they each laid claim to 160 adjoining acres west of town for development as Browne's Addition and Cannon Addition.



By 1880, the population had grown to 350 people. The plethora of Chinese railroad laborers and servants were not included in that number. In spite of tremendous racial enmity toward Asians, the Chinese had an important role in Spokane and in Browne's Addition. Their cemetery was situated at the west end of the neighborhood, overlooking the confluence of Latah Creek and the Spokane River. Chinese funerals brought a parade of Chinese through Browne's Addition with their noise-makers and bright colorful banners to scare away evil spirits. The bodies were later exhumed and sent to China, leaving behind the only vacant lot in the neighborhood, at the end of Pacific Avenue.

The Northern Pacific Railroad reached Spokane Falls in 1881 and by the end of that year, the population had grown to 1,000. By 1883, Browne and Cannon had platted their land and were selling lots. They set aside almost 10 acres straddling their adjoining land for a park. In 1891, Coeur d'Alene Park in Browne's Addition became the first park in the growing city of Spokane. The neighborhood was on its way to becoming a highly desirable and prestigious residential community.



Throughout the eras of history from then until now, Browne's Addition has mirrored the development of Spokane in its architecture and residents. In the early years, families moved into Queen Anne and Folk Victorian style houses. They were often built from blueprints and instructions that could be easily purchased. After the big fires of 1889 until the turn of the 20th century, the economic growth of the city was reflected in the many architect-designed houses. With the continued building boom, brought on by entrepreneurs in successful lumber, real estate, and mining ventures, wealthy homeowners commissioned leading architects and builders to design and erect opulent homes and carriage houses in a variety of styles -- Colonial, Tudor Revival, Neoclassical, Craftsman, and Mission Revival. Such first-rate architects as Kirtland Cutter, W.J. Carpenter, Albert Held and Loren Rand showcased their talent in architectural wonders from traditional to exotic eclectic interpretations. Following the frenetic building of extravagant mansions, after the turn of the century, smaller houses and luxury apartments were built throughout the neighborhood. The Westminster, built in 1905, became the largest luxury apartment block in the area with large suites, rooms for the families' servants and a formal dining room. Before the Great Depression, Browne's Addition was the place to live.



The Browne's Addition Neighborhood Council meets monthly on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

mybrownesaddition.org



From the 1930s to the 1980s, many residences were demolished to make way for smaller dwellings and modern commercial intrusions. Many of the elegant mansions were altered as apartment houses. The neighborhood became run down and crime was rampant. The 1980s and 1990s brought a resurgence of community interest when a small group of residents formed the Browne's Addition Steering Committee. With the influx of money from the city's Neighborhood Community Development Program and other federal monies, the Steering Committee worked with the city to prepare a "Browne's Addition Design Plan" which mapped out a strategy for neighborhood identity.

Many of the historic houses were rehabilitated; a traffic circle was constructed in the middle of the small business intersection; and, a gazebo was built in the park, using the original design from the one built in the early part of the century. The Victorian theme from an earlier era is evident in lights and street signs. This renewal brought a re-energized interest in historic preservation and education as the 21st century approached.

Life in Browne's Addition - Today

Browne's Addition's close proximity to the center of the city of Spokane has brought new residents who are interested in an urban lifestyle in a diverse neighborhood. One recent new resident remarked that he walked every street in the neighborhood before deciding to move. He loves the historic character and the diversity of buildings and lifestyles.



The historic mansions and stately homes from an earlier era still hold their character and infuse the neighborhood with a sense of pride and tradition. The traffic circle in the middle of the neighborhood boasts popular and diverse eating experiences while other businesses, like hair salons, dentist offices, and a grocery store support the dense population of modern times. People of all ages, cultures, incomes, and backgrounds give Browne's Addition a dynamic, changing personality. Everything seems close, making the historic community quite walkable, with a new look on every block. Transportation options exist with convenient transit routes and multiple bicycle routes running through and connecting to other destinations.

The American Planning Association selected Browne's Addition as one of the "Great Neighborhoods" in their "Great Places in America" annual selection in 2009. They stated:

"The most culturally diverse neighborhood in Spokane, Browne's Addition is a mosaic of past and present. Stately mansions are juxtaposed with low-rise apartment buildings and condominiums. Residents appreciate the neighborhood's proximity to downtown and its recreational opportunities and physical beauty. An increasingly vibrant pedestrian realm has created a strong sense of community and provides opportunities for neighbors to mix and mingle."



Browne's Addition - Treasures

Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture

The Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture (MAC), situated in Browne's Addition, is one of the key historical and cultural resources in the Inland



Northwest. It showcases the best of regional history, art, and American Indian cultures. In a recent review on Trip Advisor, one visitor wrote:

“The MAC is one of the most successful local cultural centers to adjust to the needs of the 21st century. The MAC has embraced opening up the museum for a wide variety of activities that include free museum cruising and live music on a monthly basis as well as sponsoring author and artist readings as well as hands-on craft activities for kids. Instead of wishing for days of generous patronage, the museum has recognized a need to appeal to a broader audience and has a host of activities to engage people of almost every interest in the community. Well-worth an afternoon or evening of cultural engagement with the exhibits and events occurring on a rotating basis.”

Coeur D’Alene Park



This 10-acre piece of land in Browne’s Addition is the centerpiece of the neighborhood. In early summer, residents of the region crowd into the park for ArtFest, which features the art of local artists as well as music, food and activities for children. In July and August, people spend their Thursday evenings listening to local bands of every genre. On even the hottest days, the park is a cool place to sit or play with its many trees, both coniferous and deciduous, that give it a canopy of shade and beauty. The gazebo in the middle of the park has been recently renovated and reflects the fresh, proud attitude of the neighborhood residents. The splashpad, basketball and tennis courts are popular places for people of all ages to play. The Friends of Coeur d’Alene Park work behind the scenes, doing fund raising and spearheading improvement projects, based upon the park’s comprehensive plan.

Overlook Park



Far into the neighborhood, at the western edge, one can stand in Overlook Park and gaze out over Latah Creek into the horizon. Along this narrow strip of green space, are historic signs that tell the story of the early years and later development of the area. It’s a small, pleasant place to spend a few quiet minutes reading, thinking or chatting with friends.

Neighborhood Eateries

The traffic circle at Pacific and Cannon is a very popular place to enjoy a quick snack or an evening of fine dining. This intersection hosts the Elk Public House, El Que Tacqueria, Italia Trattoria, Caffè Capri, Pacific Pizza, and Browne’s Tavern. During ElkFest in June, the streets are closed so that people can enjoy a weekend of local bands, beverages, and food. At other times, diners enjoy inside entertainment and even an occasional movie night in the secret garden behind the tavern. This intersection is the year round gathering place for the neighborhood. Coffee drinkers can also find good coffee and creamy ice cream at Cannon Coffee and Cone on the edge of the neighborhood.

Community Building in the Neighborhood

During the summer months, neighbors gather on the yard of the Emmanuel Lutheran Church to tend their community gardens while they swap advice about growing vegetables. This is the place to watch nature develop from the dry debris of winter to the lush green of spring and summer. Unique art pieces adorn the plots of various gardeners who show their own special kind of creativity.



Two free libraries have shown up in the front yards of residents who are interested in sharing the joys of reading with the neighborhood. Residents can be seen browsing the selections and swapping out new books with ones they've read.

Browne's Addition - Natural & Built Identity

The December 2009 edition of Planning Magazine had this to say about Browne's Addition:

"The 176-acre, historic Browne's Addition in Spokane, Washington (pop. 210,000), lies directly west of the city center, overlooking the confluence of the Spokane River and Latah Creek. In this culturally and architecturally diverse neighborhood, 19th century mansions coexist with low-rise apartment buildings and condominiums. Among its amenities: spectacular views of the nearby rivers and distant mountains; a design by Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects dating from 1907; and 10-acre Coeur d'Alene Park (the city's first park). The neighborhood has also successfully emerged from a long period of decline. All but 43 acres were designated a National Historic District in 1976. Virtually every residential style fashionable in the Pacific Northwest from 1880 to 1930 is found here."



Browne's Addition - Neighborhood Tales

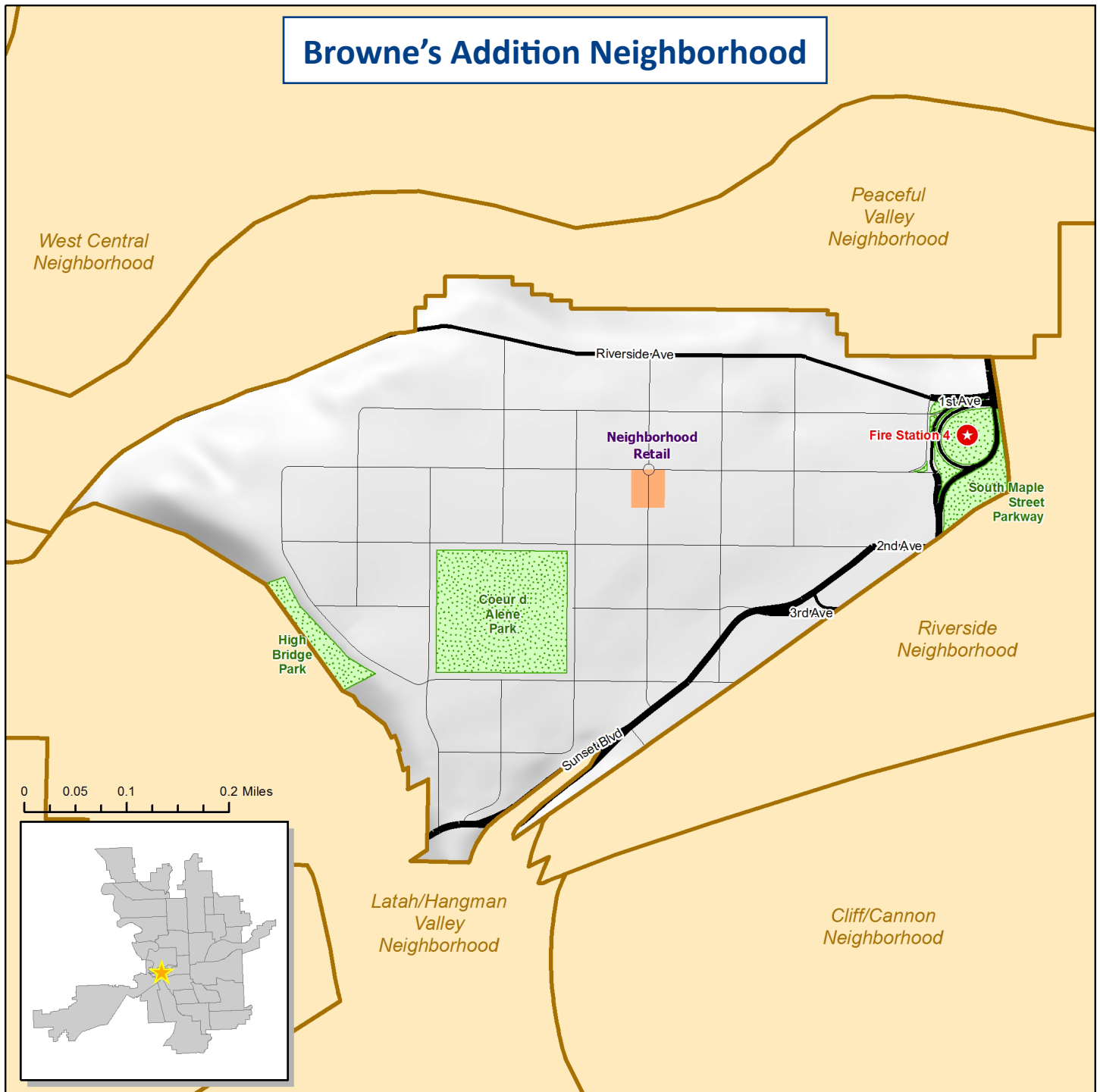
Visitors to Browne's Addition can sometimes take historical tours and hear stories about the lives and mishaps of the residents from times gone past. Listeners can hear about a dead body discovered in the basement of one mansion turned restaurant. Is her ghost still haunting the visitors to the mansion? Then there's the story about a poor widow who found a secret treasure of gemstones, left by a former wealthy resident. Why didn't they remember to take the family jewels? Another tale involves a famous poet who used to bother his neighbors with his mysterious drumming, chanting and dancing. What tragedy befell him? What's the story about the former Montana madam who lived among the wealthy leaders of Spokane? Why was a silver napkin ring found under the floorboards in the attic of one of the mansions? Where can you find the former homes of J. J. Browne and James Glover? Are these urban fact or urban myth?



Browne's Addition - Annual Events or Activities

Annual Summer Art's Festival in Coeur D'Alene Park - Browne's Addition
 Summer Concerts in Coeur D'Alene Park - On-going events and exhibitions at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture - Historical walking tours and storytelling of the early wealthy families in the neighborhood - ElkFest in June - Summer outdoor movies and musical entertainment at Pacific and Cannon Street businesses.

Browne's Addition Neighborhood



SOURCES

Books:

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 History of the City of Spokane and Spokane County Washington by N.W. Durham, Vol 1, 1912
 Sounding Spokane: Perspectives on the Built Environment of a Regional City by David Wang, 2003
 Spokane: Our Early History by Tony and Suzanne Bamonte, 2011

Websites:

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<http://www.tripadvisor.com>, 2015

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 Cats Eye Photography

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