



Peaceful Valley



Peaceful Valley reflects both its working class past and the people who currently live there: independent, feisty, neighborly, often bohemian. The tolerant live-and-let-live attitude has been attractive to artists and writers, and others who have sought a more unconventional place to live along the Spokane River, which has shaped the valley and the lives of the people who have long lived in its constant presence.

Peaceful Valley - Days of Yore

Peaceful Valley has a rich history and is a unique part of Spokane. A natural bluff dominates and separates Peaceful Valley from the Browne's Addition neighborhood to the south. The Spokane River to the north and the confluence of the river and Latah/Hangman Creek to the west have shaped the history and formed the neighborhood boundaries. Main Avenue feeds directly uphill into Downtown Spokane to the east boundary at Monroe Street. This area was a traditional gathering place for Native Americans as a trading center for bartered goods and the abundant salmon which were harvested from the Spokane River and Latah Creek.



Early settlers came to Spokane; they too appreciated the view of the falls from Peaceful Valley. The typical home was often dictated by the platted narrow lots, only 25 feet wide, but deep enough, at 100 feet, for a second home, often rented out, behind the street side residence. Housing seasonal laborers, the turn of the century shotgun-style houses were an affordable option for loggers and miners. Once called Poverty Flats and Spring Flats (from the natural springs flowing from the south bluff) the neighborhood still has a distinct mining town air to it. These small narrow houses would only later be fitted with toilets and garages.

Among the builders were many Finns, who brought with them their sauna tradition, some unique architectural features, and a talent for labor organizing. The Finnish Social Hall, long gone, was a focus of music and dancing, political meetings, and other community events. There were also community saunas and livery stables.



In 1901 the Spokane Casket Company began operations on Water Avenue and was the only major manufacturing and employment source within the neighborhood. At the height of its operation it employed fifty people. The property is now park land along the river.

In 1912, land, created by debris infill from the 1889 fire, was purchased by the Park Board to create Glover Field. A photograph from this same year shows Maypole Dances in the field. The field held a stadium until the bleachers were condemned in 1925. Native Americans, representing 28 different tribes erected teepees on fields and roadsides throughout Spokane, including Glover Field with its spectacular view of the Spokane River Falls during the Indian Congress of 1925 and again in 1926. The Spokane Betterment Organization, a group of business boosters, sponsored the events following the passage of the 1924



The Peaceful Valley Neighborhood Council meets the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm. Meetings are held at the Peaceful Valley Community Center at 214 N. Cedar.

peacefulvalley.spokaneneighborhoods.org



Indian Citizenship Act which gave official status to all Native Americans.

In the early 1900s, most of the school children would climb the hill to attend class, even in the snow. But from 1917 to 1930, the Cowley School at the corner of Maple Street and Clarke Avenue served early elementary school age children. The school was closed in 1930 and only recently refurbished as a privately owned triplex residence.

In the past, nearly every lot was built, but the architectural significance of the modest vernacular homes was not well appreciated. Benign and intentional neglect led over the years to the destruction of a large number of homes and other structures. Alarmed at the loss of usable, restorable historic houses, a group of neighbors banded together in the 1990's, and because of their work and that of historian Nancy Compau, a large portion of Peaceful Valley is now on the National Historic District Register. The neighborhood has been infilled with additional new homes, many of them on a much larger scale, occupying multiple lots.



The Great Gorge Plan in 2005 was a significant three-year public effort that helped express the neighborhood and community's desire to protect and enhance the public's experience with the Spokane River. During that time, the Sandifur Pedestrian Bridge was completed, crossing the river at the far west end of Peaceful Valley and connecting with the Centennial Trail on the north bank.

Life in Peaceful Valley - Today

The bluff and the river make Peaceful Valley a secluded hideaway adjacent to the busyness of downtown Spokane, offering walkable proximity to the public library, business, entertainment and restaurants. The neighborhood has only two street entrances: on the east from Monroe Street down Main Avenue, and on the west at the intersection of Riverside Avenue and Clarke Avenue by People's Park. For those walking, there is also one long, steep staircase at the south end of Cedar Street climbing the bluff to Riverside Avenue, and another, shorter stair climb, to the west, from Spruce Street.



The neighborhood has an eclectic group of residents including office workers, caregivers, teachers, lawyers, telecommuters, woodworkers, artists, musicians, etc. Those who live here take pride in the community's supportive attitude toward freedom of expression, which can be seen or heard when strolling through the neighborhood. Friendly neighbors will check on each other during the worst winter snows and are not shy about starting conversations with passersby from front porches.

The atmosphere of Peaceful Valley is unstructured and unpretentious, much like the art found scattered throughout. This neighborhood values creativity rather than luxury. Pristine lawns are often ditched in favor of unique gardens. Residents are self-described as eclectic, artistic, funky, relaxed and resilient.

The views from Peaceful Valley are unlike any other neighborhood. Whereas the West Central and Riverside neighborhoods look down upon the river, Peaceful Valley has a much more intimate perspective of the waterfront. The river draws deer, the occasional moose, red tail hawks, osprey, blue heron, bald eagles, skunks, raccoons, porcupines, beaver, river otters, and of course marmots. From Glover Field the view includes the historic Monroe Street Bridge, the Spokane Falls and the downtown skyline.



Peaceful Valley - Treasures

- Glover Field - Established in 1912, it is named for the “Father of Spokane”, James N. Glover.
- The View of Spokane Falls.
- Peaceful Valley Community Center - Originally a barracks at Fairchild Air Force Base, it was moved to Glover Field and later became Spokane’s first Community Center.
- Peaceful Valley Park - Situated below the Maple Street Bridge, it extends the full width of the neighborhood from Wilson Avenue to the Spokane River.
- Historic Portraits - Local artist John Thamm was commissioned by the neighborhood to capture the face and spirit of many longtime residents who were devoted to this community and left an enduring impression on all who knew them. Thamm’s fading murals can be seen on the Maple Street bridge supports. Preservation of the murals is an ongoing concern of the neighborhood.
- River Access - Whether outside your door or a short stroll away, the river is a constant presence to be enjoyed. Most vacant lots along the river are public land, offering river access.
- Pietsch House - This is one of the oldest single-family residences in Peaceful Valley. Built by German bricklayer Franz Pietsch in 1891, the house features an Italian bricklaying method uncommon in Spokane. Other notable structures include Cowley School, Woodcutters Hall, and many surviving wood frame buildings.
- People’s Park.
- Most Valued Treasure - The sense of belonging to a tight-knit community that cares about its neighbors and neighborhood as a diverse extended family.



Peaceful Valley – Natural and Built Identity



Lying just west of the downtown core, the aptly named Peaceful Valley is geographically secluded from the other Spokane neighborhoods. The Valley is cradled by its southern bluff and the Spokane River, which flows quietly past, a stone’s throw downstream from the torrent of the rushing falls cascading below the Monroe Street Bridge. The river influence is strong in the valley: Ospreys keep a keen eye from their nests perched above while Red Band trout (a protected subspecies of Rainbow trout) swim in the eddies and pools below. Much like the river, at first glance the pace in Peaceful Valley appears slow, quiet and serene, belying the true power and force of the currents within. It doesn’t take much more than a few minutes spent in the neighborhood to gain a sense and appreciation of the strength of community and neighborhood resolve lying just below the surface. While the underbelly of the Maple Street Bridge looms overhead and is a predominant feature of the neighborhood, its grandiose scale only adds to that sense of self-containment.

Peaceful Valley is the smallest of Spokane’s neighborhoods. The small scale of its homes and boundaries are only emphasized by the Maple Street Bridge,

tall apartment buildings lining the south bluff and the massive scale of Kendall Yards looking down from the length of the north bluff. Unique to the built environment of this settlement is color: The artistry of the residents comes out in the more unusual paint schemes of the old houses.

In continuity with much of Spokane's waterfront, hand built basalt and urbanite (broken concrete) walls follow Wilson, Main and Clarke Avenues. It's difficult to find a level street as the whole of the neighborhood gently slopes down to the riverbank. The Peaceful Valley River Walk offers the public relatively free access to the river from end to end. The urban forest of Peaceful Valley is a mass of various deciduous trees and conifers (as eclectic as Peaceful Valley residents themselves) scattered in yards and at irregular intervals along the walkway planting strips. The palate of trees is accented by small gardens in the yards of most residents. Gardens and art displayed on front porches and in yards is a matter of pride in the neighborhood.

Peaceful Valley - Neighborhood Tales

"Came home one day to find an elderly lady with a cane picking up the windfall plums in the yard. Thus I met Granny Quinn. Her picture used to be on one of the John Thamm murals on the bridge. Bought the house six months later. Loved the low key, unpretentious atmosphere...classical pianist next to a Clint Black fan."

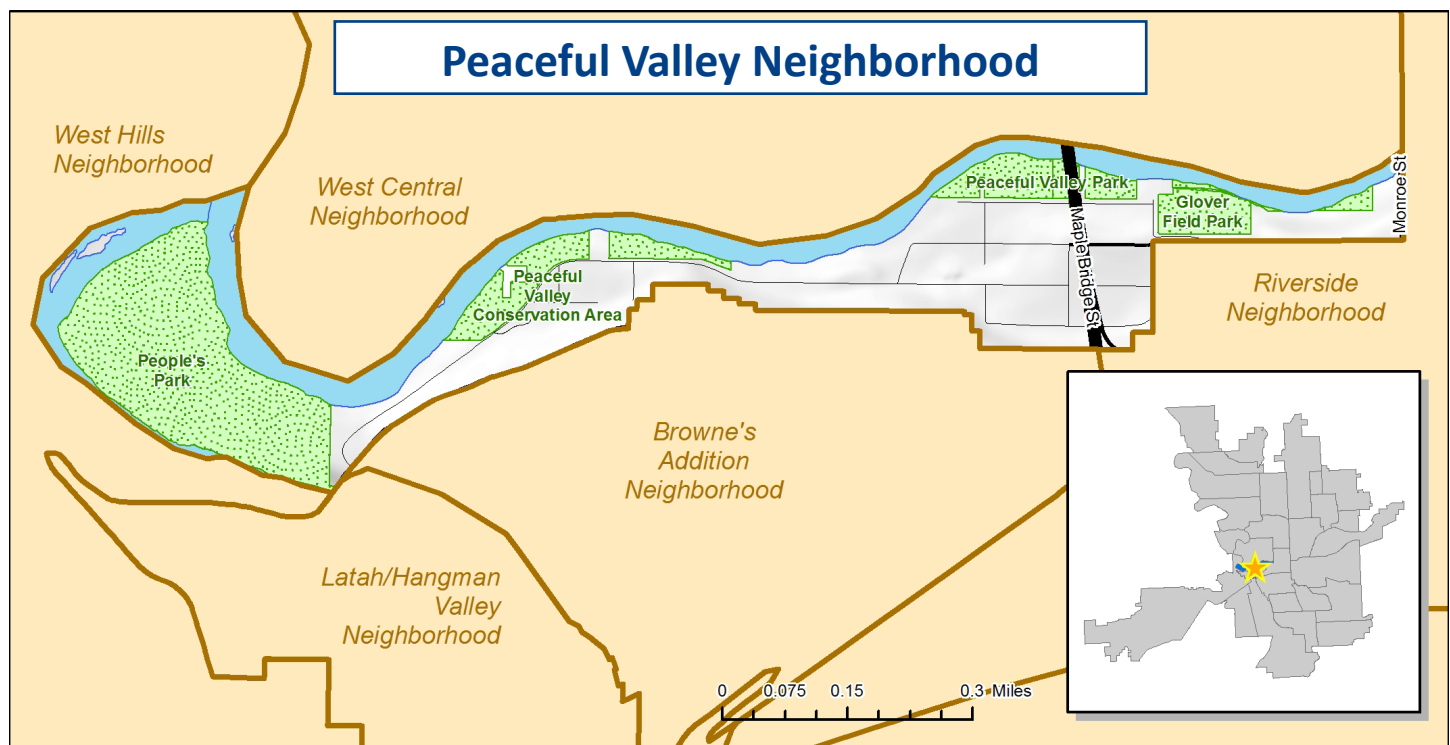
-Barbara Morrissey

"When I first came here I saw a goat up on someone's second story balcony and I thought, how interesting. One house is known as 'the chicken lady's house' because the woman who used to live there kept her chickens inside with her."

-Joanie Eppinga

Peaceful Valley - Annual Events or Activities

Peaceful Valley Park, Glover Field, and the Peaceful Valley Community Center are great places for special activities. Please contact the Park Department to arrange for a use permit for your event.



Compau, Nancy Gale. Spokane's Peaceful Valley Historic District. The Pacific Northwest Forum, Volume X, Number 2, Pages 2-11, Spring 1985. Davis, H. et al. (1989).

SOURCES

First class for 100 years: Spokane public schools.

Note: There are many great historic references on Peaceful Valley.

