

89 Brougham Street and its first resident

The house at 89 Brougham Street was built in 1896 and today still looks almost exactly the same from the exterior as it did the day it was built.

Francis Penty

The house was designed by Francis Penty, a well-known early Wellington architect and sanitary engineer. He was born in England in 1841 and came to New Zealand in 1887. His training and experience as an architect in England made him very highly respected in Wellington. By 1896 he had designed 150 private houses, as well as commercial premises.

Penty also took part in public affairs and served as a councillor representing Cook Ward from 1892-1895. He was apparently an energetic councillor and a member of the Electric Lighting, Public Library, Private Streets and Public Works Committees. His forte was, understandably, sanitation and he was credited with doing much to forward the work of improved drainage in the city at the time.

Interestingly, he was of the view that "so far as the City Council is concerned, politics should be left severely alone, and that all should conspire together for the general good of the city as a whole" and that "matters of necessity should claim the attention of the Council first, and luxuries subsequently"!

John Cole Edwards

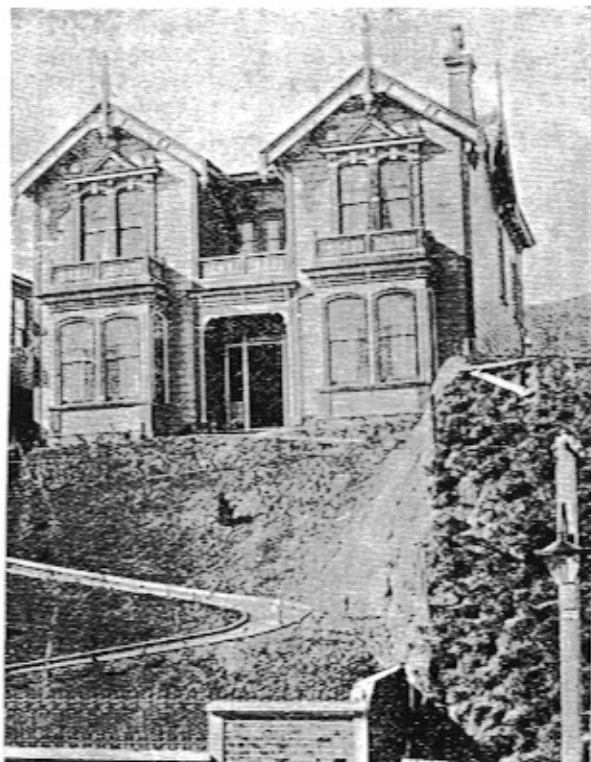
Penty designed 89 Brougham Street for JC Edwards. Edwards was born in England in 1854 but in 1862 his father came to New Zealand as the schoolmaster of the Non-conformist Settlement north of Auckland. He was educated principally at his father's school at Mahurangi, then at Wesley College in Auckland.

He went into the publishing and printing industry and by 1878 had started his own business as a printer in partnership with a bookseller of Lambton Quay, under the name Dutton and Edwards. Not long after, he took on a new partner and under the name of Edwards and Green the firm became well-known throughout New Zealand for printing the *Law Reports*, the *Industrial Gazette*, and other important publications. Green left the business in 1886 and Edwards continued alone until 1894 when he sold the business to one of the firms involved in the production of the *New Zealand Cyclopaedia*. This change was made to allow him to give more time to the *Cyclopaedia* company, of which he was also a director. It is fascinating to find this association with one of the men (because I assume they all were men) instrumental in the publication of the unique reference tool to which the Historical Society is so indebted.¹



From 1885 to 1888, Edwards was also a representative of Cook Ward on the Council. He was a valuable member of the Destructor, Electric Lighting and other committees, but is most remembered for the help he gave in settling the vexed question of the limit of foreshore reclamation. A committee of councillors had been conferring for several months with a committee of the Harbour Board, with the object of agreeing a limit for the Te Aro Reclamation – but with so little success that the report was ordered to be "laid on the table for six months". The problems seemed insurmountable. Edwards didn't see it this way, however. He immediately tabled a motion for a conference of the whole membership of both organisations. As the *Cyclopaedia* says, "this was deemed so reasonable a project that no one was found to oppose". The conference went ahead and, to the surprise of all, the points which had been in dispute for months were amicably settled in two hours.

Edwards married Fanny Bradford of Ballarat in 1879. They had no children and Fanny devoted much of her time to hospital visiting and other charitable and church duties. Apparently, her amiability and exceptional tact made her many friends. Unfortunately she died just six years after they married, while visiting friends in Victoria.



¹ All this information is from the *Cyclopaedia of New Zealand*, Volume 1, 1897.