



# MT VICTORIA

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## Historical Society News

For more information contact:

Joanna Newman on 385 2254 (hm)

Alan Olliver on 385 1022 (hm)

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## Early Images of Mt Victoria

*From the collections of Alexander Turnbull Library*



### **The Annual General Meeting of the Society**

Followed by Marion Minson from the Alexander Turnbull Library will present a slide show and talk on early artworks and prints depicting Mt Victoria from the ATL collection.

**Sunday September 14, at 2.30 pm**

At Crossways in Elizabeth St

#### **Notice of Annual General Meeting**

Nominations are invited for the positions of Convenor, Secretary and Treasurer of the Society, and for committee members. If you'd like to join the committee, please don't hesitate to put your name forward (nominations will also be accepted from the floor). If you'd like to know more about what's involved, please call Joanna Newman on 385 2254.

The AGM is a time when all members have an opportunity to give us feedback, so we look forward to seeing you there and hearing your thoughts about the activities of the Society.

#### **Membership renewals**

Membership renewal forms are enclosed with this newsletter. (If you have joined since April 30, 2008 you do not need to renew your membership for 2008/9). Thank you for your support and interest over the past year. We hope you'll have no hesitation in renewing for the next year!

#### **Submission on proposed Character areas**

The committee recently prepared a detailed submission on Wellington City Council's proposal to create Character Areas and to manage infill housing in the city. In essence, we supported the designation of Mt Victoria as a Character Area, but took the opportunity to draw attention to many issues which concern us about heritage issues and management of development in the suburb. If you would like to see a copy of the submission, please contact Joanna Newman.

If you'd like to receive copies of any submissions we make in future, we would be happy to put you on an emailing list to receive them at the time. We are not resourced to do mailouts, however, so please – only if you can provide an email address!

#### **Last event of the year**

November 16      Costa Christie – a Mt Victoria Greek oral history, in film

## Kate Edger: remarkable resident of Porritt Avenue

**MRS. EVANS, M.A., will be prepared after 17<sup>th</sup> February to resume work with her pupils. Candidates prepared for the New Zealand University, Civil Service and Teachers' Certificates Examination. Terms on application. Present address, Upper Taranaki-street; after beginning of March, Ellice-avenue, two minutes from Basin Reserve.**

So Kate Evans advertised her school in the Evening Post on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1895. One thing which is instantly noticeable is the letters M.A. after Mrs Evans' name in the advertisement. Pupils at this school would be learning from an exceptional woman. Kate Edger, as she was before she married Reverend W.A. Evans, was the first woman in New Zealand to gain a university degree and the first in the British Empire to earn a Bachelor of Arts. In 1877, she graduated with a B.A. in Latin and Mathematics. When she applied for permission to sit for a mathematical scholarship for the University of New Zealand, she mentioned her age and qualifications but not her gender and was accepted.



Kate Edger, 1857-1935  
 Photograph: Nelson College for Girls

After graduating, she became first assistant at Christchurch Girls' High School and began study at Canterbury College for her M.A. Then, at the age of 26, she was appointed first principal of Nelson College for Girls.

On her 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday, Kate married a Welsh Congregational minister, William Evans. The couple clearly had a love of mathematics in common because the Freelance in 1904 described William as the "mathematical Mr W A Evans". Kate intended to continue working after her marriage but in fact resigned two months later, probably because she was pregnant.

The move to Wellington for the Evans's came in 1893, when William took on the work of establishing the Forward Movement in Wellington. This was a non-sectarian Christian movement which aimed to make religion attractive to the masses and combined adult education with charitable work. It was not paid work, however, and Kate became the breadwinner.

As we can see from the advertisement above, they lived in Taranaki Street when they first arrived in the city, but in 1894 they bought the property which is now 49 Porritt Avenue – in Kate's name. It is impossible to know now whether Kate bought the property because she did, indeed, provide the finance or whether this was a precaution because her husband had no income. They can't have been too stretched financially, however - in 1896 William bought two sections of the newly-subdivided Victoria Block just along the road in Ellice Avenue. The Evans's called their new home Dehra Dhoon.

As well as teaching, Kate helped her husband in his work for the Forward Movement, including giving public addresses. The regular lectures and talks by the Forward Movement included topics such as "The Growth of Socialism" one Saturday night, and "The Christian as Citizen". Reverend Evans also taught adult evening classes and worked with the New Zealand Workers' Union to improve conditions for the unemployed in the late 1890's as part of the mission of the Movement.

In 1900, William was elected to Wellington City Council for Cook Ward and was a councillor until 1905.

Councillor Evans, fourth from left in 1900 – outside the Adelaide Rd tram barns on municipalisation of tramways.  
 Wellington City Archives 00138:0:8703



In 1904, however, in addition to Kate's classes William was taking students at the Ellice Avenue home, too. The advertisement in January of that year reads:

*Classes will be held next year by the Rev. W.A. Evans in Mental Science, to prepare Students for the University Examinations. Mrs. Evans's Morning Class for Girls will re-open on THURSDAY, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb. Evening Classes as usual for Civil Service and University Examinations.*

In 1904 William was also appointed in charge of the Newtown Congregational Church, so financially things were probably looking up. Kate continued teaching, though, and when they sold the house and moved to Hiropi Street in 1906 her classes transferred there.

By Joanna Newman