



MT VICTORIA

Historical Society News

For more information contact:
Joanna Newman on 385 2254 (hm)
Alan Olliver on 385 1022 (hm)

No. 57, August 2011



Tararua Tramping Club team working on the new Tauherenikau Hut. Taken by Greg Royle, 29 June 1958
Alexander Turnbull Library, EP-Recreation-Mountaineering-01

Sunday, September 25 at 2.00 pm

Annual General Meeting of the Society

followed by

The Tararua Tramping Club: history and anecdotes

Tararua Tramping Club Rooms, Moncreiff Street

September is Wellington's Heritage Month, promoted by the Wellington Regional Heritage Promotion Council. This year the theme is Heritage and Sport & Recreation. As befits the theme, we are celebrating a proud Wellington recreation club which has chosen to base itself in Mt Victoria: The Tararua Tramping Club. Long-standing member, Ian Baine, has agreed to share with us some of the history and anecdotes of the club, which dates from the 1920's. (For more information about events over Heritage Month, go to: www.wellingtonheritagepromotions.org.nz)

We generally like to follow the AGM with refreshments, but because of the venue this time we are not able to stay after 3.30 pm. We invite members and visitors to join us at a local watering place after the meeting!

Basin Reserve Roading Plans

In July, committee members attended two workshops for 'stakeholders' held by NZTA and its partners. In addition to learning a great deal more about the detail of the proposals, a few things became even clearer. It is obvious that NZTA decided options early on based on the assumption that roading was the only solution and then on cost. Other examples include the pretence that traffic going to one suburb is 'local', but to another is 'state highway'; drawings do not reflect the reality of what would eventuate if plans go ahead; many factors have not been taken into account, such as the imminent opening of a new airport on the Kapiti Coast; it is not true that John Morrison has a "legally-binding" commitment from NZTA to build a grandstand in the Basin Reserve to hide a flyover. Furthermore, NZTA did no assessment of southern Mt Victoria's heritage until the last few months and, consequently, has not informed the public of its value and planned destruction. It was also a surprise to learn that Ellice and Pirie St access to Kent Tce are to be closed, so all vehicles from southern Mt Vic has to exit at Elizabeth St, hugely increasing traffic along narrow Brougham, Porritt and Austin Streets. Our key concerns relating to heritage in the immediate area are:

- The Basin Reserve is Wellington's most iconic public recreation space and significant heritage precinct; the whole area is registered by the NZ Historic Places Trust. Its amenity and landscape values will be lost.
- Loss of the significant heritage boulevard views leading to and from the Basin Reserve, along Kent and Cambridge Terraces.
- Historic buildings in lower Ellice St will be severely impacted, losing heritage and amenity value, with the historic streetscape of Ellice St significantly compromised. 31-37 Ellice St were all built to the same design in 1890 and 39 Ellice St dates from 1876.
- Construction of another tunnel would result in the loss of the original housing on the southern boundary of Mt Victoria and on original town acres (673 and 676) dating from the 1840 Mein-Smith plan of Wellington City.
- It would result in the total destruction of Paterson St. Paterson St was built by Harry Crump in 1900 and its development included acquiring part of the original College Reserve Town Belt land. Crump built all but four of the houses at the end of Brougham St and along Paterson St between 1901 and 1909. These are significant two-storey, Victorian villas.
- Wellington would lose 7 Paterson St, built in 1869 for William Waring Taylor, after whom Waring Taylor St is named. Designed by Nicholas Marchant, it was also the home of the Catholic Archbishop of Wellington, Thomas O'Shea, and the Catholic Presbytery. It is one of the oldest homes in Mount Victoria and Wellington.
- Ettrick Cottage, 19 Paterson St, built between 1871 and 1874 and a Category II historic place, would be lost.
- Up to 20 houses and apartments, including the whole of Paterson St, parts of Brougham St, Austin St and Austin Tce, could be lost or severely affected.

For more information, visit our website: www.mvhs.wellington.net.nz

Lipman Levy – The Mansion and the Penny



The names Lipman Street and Levy Street are among the few remaining local reminders of one of Wellington's earliest entrepreneurs and philanthropists – Mr Lipman Levy. But the money he made – that is, had manufactured – keeps his memory alive and these days changes hands internationally.

Lipman Levy owned two town acre sites between Kent Terrace and Brougham Streets, including what is now the site of the Embassy Theatre. In the 1860s and 1870s much of his estate comprised an attractive ornamental garden, complete with a pair of real-live storks. Mount Victorians of the era are said to remember the-man-with-the-garden, which suggests that Lipman and his wife Sarah may have allowed locals into their prized garden.

Lipman's business career was very successful. He was on the boards of several large companies such as the Wellington Gas Company and Wellington Trust Loan and Investment Company, and had diverse interests ranging from gold mining at Makara (the Erin Go Bragh mine), shareholding in the Patent Slip, membership of the Philosophical Society and many other civic and Hebrew congregational interests.

His house in Kent Terrace was built in 1876 by Mr Jas Lockie and designed by Mr W C Chatfield. The Evening Post praised the new house in its Friday, 2 June 1876 gossip column (but wrongly said it was in Adelaide Road)... "It is fitted with a number of unusual appliances, including a high pressure steam boiler in the kitchen, by which hot water is supplied through pipes to all parts of the house, high and low...also notable are the handsome gaseliers (i.e. gas lights)... the architect ...has succeeded in producing a building not only of remarkable excellence, but also wonderfully cheap, considering the style in which it is carried out". "Wonderfully cheap"? Certainly seems like it. Lipman's house cost £1650 (around \$3,300). According to the British *National Archives Currency Converter*, that's now equivalent to about £76,000 or \$152,000. So, Lipman got a state-of-the- art (1876) house built in Mount Victoria for \$152,000 of today's dollars – excluding GST.

Most people can earn money but few can literally make it, legally. That's usually considered to be forgery or counterfeiting. But when copper coins were in short supply the New Zealand Government tolerated businesses issuing their own coins. These coins were penny and half-penny tokens (worth about 0.8 and 0.4 cents apiece) and 46 businesses nationwide did this for about 20 years, starting in the late 1850's. These token coins were outlawed in 1897.

Since the manufacture of a copper penny coin cost less than half its face, Lipman could make at least 100% profit paying out the token in change and also get the margin on the goods sold. So, Lipman issued token coins, probably by the tonne, yet only a few years later these were worthless and scrapped by the tonne for their copper content. But not all vanished.



In 2007, a rare type of Lipman Levy penny sold for \$A3,200 (that's \$NZ4,500) in Sydney (Noble's Sale 85, Lot 526). Lipman could not have foreseen that one of his penny tokens (worth less than the equivalent of a cent) could become nominally worth more than his Kent Terrace mansion house cost.

Lipman died at his home in Kent Terrace on 27 January, 1880 aged 57, and his wife, Sarah, died a few months later. The estate – including the house and 30 sections - was initially offered for private sale for £9000 but there were no takers. New Zealand was in the middle of a business recession and the 15 December, 1881 *Evening Post* report noted "The sale is the first large sale of a building and sections since the depression set in three years ago". It went on to state the hope that the sale result would boost real estate and business confidence. The estate was subdivided and the two streets at right angles were apparently named Lipman and Levy by the auctioneer, T Kennedy Macdonald & Co, and as part of the extensive marketing of the land sale.