



MT VICTORIA

Historical Society News

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Mt Victoria Stories

**You are invited to the opening of our special exhibition
based on oral histories and photographs of long-standing Mt Victoria residents**



In special memory of John Horgan,
one of our members and the first to be interviewed,
who died on May 12.



**Tuesday, June 12
5.30 pm to 7.00 pm
Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington Arts Centre
61 Abel Smith Street**

The exhibition runs from June 13 to July

On Saturday June 30 at 2.00 pm there will be a floor talk by the curator, and an opportunity to listen to the voices of the people interviewed for the oral history project, telling their own stories. Bring along your own old photos of Mt Victoria to share. Even better if you could leave a copy of them with us. If you are able to do this, please write your name and contact details on the back, so we can contact you in future.

*With special thanks to our sponsors:
The Community Trust of Wellington
Mt Victoria Residents' Association
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Crossways

As many of you will know by now, Crossways' future is at risk because the Presbyterian Church, which owns it, has decided to sell.

The Historical Society is behind moves to save it for two reasons:

- **Historical value**

Crossways has huge heritage value; not just for Mt Victoria but also for Wellington. Those who have been members for a while will remember that we did an 'Historical Note' on it some time ago.

In brief, Thomas Whyte Young bought the land on which Crossways sits in 1873. He was a wine and spirit merchant. The house itself was probably built in 1887 and it was a 12-room residence. After his death, his estate was subdivided into 18 residential sections and auctioned off. At the time, it was described as "the last of the original Town Acres". In 1929, Crossways was bought by the New Zealand Women's Christian Temperance Union, which reached its peak in the late 1920's.

In 1952 the land was sold to William Aitken & Co Ltd. This company was established about 1937 in Wellington as an importer of olive oil. From the start, its biggest customer base was the Island Bay Italian community.

The property was next sold to the Presbyterian Church in 1978. This was when it became known as Crossways. Crossways grew out of a decision by the church in 1975 to shift from a traditional setting, with all the trappings, to a community house where they could be in partnership with the secular world.

- **Community centre**

There is a sense that the Council does not feel that an inner-city suburb such as Mt Victoria needs a community centre.

On the contrary, Crossways has played a huge part in making this suburb the unique place it is to live. It has a heart, people who care for each other and a sense of community – in spite of being on the edge of a twenty-four hour capital city and having a large number of transitory residents. That is something precious and worth preserving.

You get a good feel for how important Crossways has been to Mt Victoria from the exhibition at Toi Pōneke; even more if you come to the floor talk at the Gallery on Saturday June 30 and listen to some of the extracts from the oral history interviews we have conducted. Meantime, here are some of their comments – all made before any of us knew Crossways was at risk:

"All the little groups that operate out of there – playgroup and children's crèche, toy library and so on - we couldn't have done it without having a community centre."

"[Crossways], again, played a very big role. Margie-Jean and the other communities felt that the only way you could build community was to do something in the community."

"We had community cafs – community cafés – which were Friday night; and different families served meals – usually two families together - of all various different ethnic backgrounds."

There is to be a public meeting about the future of Crossways on Wednesday May 30th at 7.00 pm - at Crossways, of course. Please come along to show your support and bring your good ideas for its retention.

Next Events for the Historical Society

Dates to put in your calendar now are:

September 16 – AGM and speaker (still to be confirmed)

November 25 – celebration of the 100th anniversary of the opening of the tram tunnel