



MT VICTORIA

Historical Society News

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Mt Victoria Past and Present



Elizabeth St from Cambridge Tee – THENand NOW

Sunday, June 15, at 2.30 pm
At Crossways in Elizabeth St

A whole new, exciting slide show by Alan Olliver comparing today's views with the past - with historical information to accompany the old photos and, no doubt, great anecdotes about how he managed the equivalent view today.

Next Events

- September 14 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.
- November 16 Activity to be confirmed.

Co-opted Committee members

The committee has been delighted to co-opt two new members for the remainder of the year, Natasha Naus and Trevor Bleakley. Already we couldn't do without them! Natasha prepared a submission to Council on the Transport Strategy on our behalf and Trevor is proving to be a fantastic minute secretary.

Report on Paterson Street Walk

In March, Alan Olliver and Joanna Newman ran a successful guided walk up Ellice Street and down Paterson Street, ending with tea on the front lawn of historic Waring Taylor's house. The Historical Society is very grateful to Natasha Naus and her flatmates for hosting us at their home for afternoon tea, and to *The Immigrant's Son* in Elizabeth Street for donating coffee.

If you were not able to make the walk, or know of others who would like to learn more about Paterson Street some time, you can now find a guide and historical notes on our website at www.mvhs.wellington.net.nz. (If you would like a copy of the guide but do not have access to the web, please contact Joanna Newman.)

A Famous Victorian

Some time ago, a Mt Vic resident told me she had just learned that she was living in the house once occupied by Charles Baeyertz. The author had made contact as part of her research for a biography she was writing. That biography has come out recently and I would highly recommend it as a well-written, readable account of this fascinating man, his work and his times. If you don't fancy reading the book, however, (Facing the Music: Charles Baeyertz and the Triad, by Joanna Woods), our Historical Note this month will tell you something of the man and his connection with Mt Victoria. [JN]

Literary Mt Victoria: Charles Baeyertz

The Newsletter's last **Literary Mt Victoria** feature was Pat Lawlor. Another literary giant, whose paths crossed with Lawlor's, was Charles Baeyertz. Although he lived in Mt Victoria for only about four years, he would surely have been a notable presence around our streets.

'Giant' is not stretching it as a descriptive term for Baeyertz. He was a very tall and handsome man, with a dashing moustache and neatly-clipped, pointed beard. His personality was larger than life. More than that, however, he dominated New Zealand's critical, journalistic and cultural life from the 1890's until the 1920's, with his publication *The Triad*. As a serious reader of the magazine a young Robyn Hyde noted: "In the 1922 days stuff you remembered was going into Triad pages, some haunting poems, prose that had an edge like a scimitar. She added: "A man called Baeyertz was running the show. He was rather excitingly rude to almost everyone."

Charles Nalder Baeyertz was born in Melbourne in 1866 and when he was still young his widowed mother became a travelling evangelist. At the age of 20 he married Isabella Johnston, older than he was and the daughter of a Baptist clergyman. After suffering losses in land speculation, Baeyertz brought his family to Dunedin in 1892. He taught modern and classical languages (he is said to have known 17 languages) elocution, music and singing, and became music and drama critic for the *Otago Daily Times*, also contributing articles to the *Otago Witness*.

In April 1893 Baeyertz published the first monthly number of the *Triad*, a journal dedicated to the study of music, art and science; literature was added later. Its coverage of science was always minimal, however, and in later years it dealt more generally with current affairs and politics. He struggled to establish the journal commercially in the early days, but by 1898 it had expanded to 12 regional issues throughout New Zealand. Baeyertz constantly travelled the length and breadth of New Zealand, attending concerts and competitions, seeking advertising and promoting the magazine. By 1919 the *Triad* was supposedly found "in every club, hotel and reading-room throughout Australasia". During the 32 years for which he was its editor and part-owner the *Triad* furnished the livelihood of Baeyertz and his family.

With a crusading zeal, Baeyertz sought to disseminate "a small modicum of musical, artistic, and scientific information throughout New Zealand" through the *Triad*. Baeyertz himself wrote much of the material for the magazine. His view of the arts in New Zealand was mixed. He spoke of New Zealand as "Philistia": active in the arts but lacking in artistic sensitivity and an appreciation of excellence. He was essentially conservative and new movements in painting, such as impressionism and cubism, and modern poetry, received little attention in the *Triad*. Despite the journal's wide sales, it was directed explicitly at an educated and cultured élite - the "intelligent and thinking minority" as Baeyertz called it.

As a critic, Baeyertz aimed to stimulate the arts and to counter mediocrity. As a judge of elocution and singing at amateur competitions in New Zealand and Australia, and in his reviews in the *Triad*, he gained a reputation for fearlessness and controversy. He considered it his responsibility to judge all performances against exacting standards of excellence: "The beautiful is true for the professional and amateur alike", he said. While his judgement was seldom at issue, his frequently caustic and sometimes abusive remarks caused offence, especially to amateur performers accustomed to a more charitable reception. Baeyertz denounced his opponents with gusto, engaging in lengthy battles with other journalists. Several times he was involved in libel actions, for his (or his contributing writers') frank comments.

Baeyertz and his family moved to 13 Austin Street in March 1909. In 1911, however, judging the Competitions in Invercargill, he had met up with an attractive young teacher (whom he had known as a competitor since childhood) and they fell in love. Unfortunately, the affair was revealed at the time of his daughter's marriage in December 1912 and Charles left 13 Austin Street immediately after the wedding. In 1914 he moved to Sydney with his lover, Mildred, and they had a son in 1915.

In 1912 publication of the *Triad* was moved from Dunedin to Wellington, and in 1914 to Sydney. A separate Australian edition appeared in 1915 but the *Triad* did not flourish commercially in Australia, and Baeyertz ended his connection with it in 1925.

On his death in 1943, Pat Lawlor described Baeyertz as "big both spiritually and mentally" and wrote of how he "played a tremendous part in the nourishment of culture in New Zealand." He was possibly overstating it to say that "he was in his day as great in stature in our art and journalistic world as was Richard John Seddon in politics" but his observation that Baeyertz's success owed much to "his own ability, his assurance, his suavety and a modicum of bluff" was an accurate assessment of the man.

By Joanna Newman

