



# MT VICTORIA

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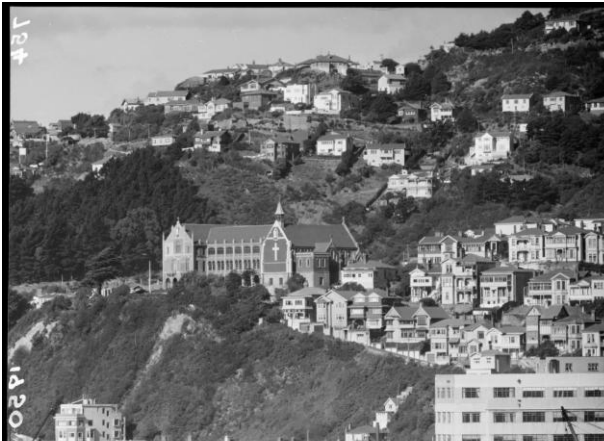
## Historical Society News

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**No. 59, February 2012**

## Fire, Murder and other Echoes of the Past

*Join Natasha Naus for a guided tour of Northern Mt Victoria*



Sunday, March 25<sup>th</sup>

at 2.30 pm

Meet at Crossways

6 Roxburgh Street

### Programme for the year

The year kicks off (literally?) with a walk to learn about the historical highlights of the northern end of Mt Victoria.

Other details have yet to be finalised, but we are planning a film for June and something special for Wellington Heritage Month in September. Look for more information in the next newsletter.

### Website

Our website has been receiving great feedback and is the source of a number of queries – most of which we can answer.

One of those who have contacted us is Wellington independent film-maker, Ro Tierney. She alerted us to a short film she has made about the Fever Hospital on the Town Belt. She has posted it online and we recommend viewing – it is very evocative of the grand old building's days as an institution. Check it out at: <http://vimeo.com/34645206>

### Historic Places Trust

In July this year, the New Zealand Historic Places Trust as we know it is due to disappear. Legislation to change the Act under which it currently operates will, amongst other things, abolish the branches and public membership of the Trust. Steps are now under way to establish replacements for these branches, to ensure ongoing local advocacy for historic places, and to set up an overarching society called Historic Places Aotearoa. Members will join the 'parent' organisation, but become part of the Wellington 'branch' (itself an incorporated society). The Wellington region has embraced this plan and also hopes to re-invigorate the 'branch'.

As advocates for a small, but significant, part of Wellington's local heritage and historic places, we feel there is potentially great value in this new organisation. There is always strength in numbers when it comes to preserving heritage and threats to it only seem to increase over time.

If you'd like to know more about Historic Places Aotearoa, go to [www.historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz](http://www.historicplacesaotearoa.org.nz)

Photograph above:

St Gerard's monastery, 1950, by an Evening Post photographer. Alexander Turnbull Library 114/150/07-F

## *The Dairy Farm on Mt Victoria*

Once upon a time, a long time ago, cows grazed peacefully on the slopes of Mt Victoria, chewing their cud and producing ‘town supply’ milk for the citizens of Wellington. It was the Tutchens, after whom Tutchen Street is named, who made all this possible.

Peter and Sarah Tutchen arrived in Wellington on the “Arab” in October 1841 with their seven children. Peter and his eldest son, Simon Peter, were shepherds by occupation. In 1849, they had a farm in Happy Valley although they probably did not own the land. Happy Valley would have been isolated and remote from the newly-settled town of Wellington in 1855, when a neighbour, whose house was destroyed by the earthquake, was forced to move into a calf house belonging to the Tutchens. (It’s not clear which of the Tutchens this was.)

By 1854, however, at least Peter and Sarah seem to have moved to Mt Victoria to farm dairy cows. They called their property - address Brougham Street - “Hawthorn Hill”. It was not long before all their sons remaining in Wellington - Simon, Charles and Josiah - had joined them. Charles bought land in Pirie Street and Josiah was also nearby. Peter Tutchen died in 1861 at only 63, leaving his wife and two sons running the farm. Between them they owned seven town acres in the 1860’s and leased two acres on Mt Victoria’s Town Belt. Wellington rate books give an idea of how sparsely populated Mt Victoria was at the time, with the Tutchens recorded as one of only 10 households in Brougham Street in 1863.



The Tutchen’s significant dairy operation required employees to assist with the work, as evidenced by Mrs Tutchen junior’s occasional advertising in the newspaper for “a strong active Lad; one that can milk preferred” in the early 1870’s.

At the same time, a bucolic picture of Mt Victoria is painted by newspaper reports, with the Wesleyan Sabbath School children enjoying their annual treat, a picnic in Mrs Tutchen’s paddock at the foot of the hill. On entering the paddock, each child was presented with a bun, then they all joined in amusements with their teachers. There was a plentiful supply of fruit on hand to refresh them after that, followed by a substantial tea at four o’clock. The amusements continued until seven o’clock, then a hymn was sung, hearty cheers were given for the hospitality and all departed. Another year, swings were erected in the field for the 350 children and a tent for the teachers. That year the visitors finally began to wend their way home, down the hill, at 8.30 pm. Even the Rechabites held their Anniversary Day picnic in Tutchen’s paddock in 1872.

Unfortunately, this rural character extended to the access to the Tutchen’s home. Although they paid rates for the maintenance of Wellington roads, including Brougham Street, this street was almost impassable in 1870. In early spring that year, Mr Tutchen joined a deputation to Council, complaining that wood and coal could not be delivered to their residences, a neighbour was forced to keep his children away from school and it was almost impossible to reach the Reverend Paterson’s house.

*Portion of Thomas Ward’s map of 1891, showing the boundaries of the Tutchen dairy farm at its height.*

By 1877, when Sarah would have been 75 years old, it was time to downsize. Two of the Tutchen town acres had been sold to neighbours in 1870 (320 and 321). Now Mrs Tutchen was selling three acres on 21-year leases (with right of renewal for a further 21): TA 323 in Brougham St; 330 in Austin St; and 331 on the corner of Austin and Pirie Streets, subdivided into quarter-acre allotments. She also sold part of TA 324, which had frontages on Pirie St and Tutchen Street, together with a substantial four-roomed cottage newly papered and finished throughout. A feature of “this valuable section” was that it was situated “in the immediate neighbourhood of his Worship the Mayor”, who was William Hutchison at the time (1876-77). That year also, her daughter-in-law, Mrs Simon Tutchen, widowed since 1872, held a public auction at her stock yards in Pirie Street to sell “10 splendid milch cows, some in full milk, others to calve shortly, 1 superior bull” and dairy equipment.

When Sarah Tutchen died at her home in Pirie Street in 1882, the press described her as “one of the oldest settlers in Wellington, and a much esteemed member of the Wesleyan Church for upwards of 50 years.” Four months later, “the great unreserved sale of the Tutchen Estate” was announced - town acres 322, 323 and 324 with frontages to Pirie and Brougham Street and “subdivided into suitable-sized building allotments, each one of which will command an extensive and beautiful view of the whole city and harbour”. With this, the last remnants of the Tutchen dairy farm disappeared from Mt Victoria.