

Mt Victoria Historical Society News

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sunday, September 14 at 2.00 pm, Crossways

The Annual General Meeting will be followed by a talk:

Michael Kelly, Heritage Consultant

On the Embassy Theatre renovations and Serious about Heritage

Come and see our newly designed MVHS logo, too!

The meeting will followed by afternoon tea.

Suburbs Review

The final decisions on Wellington City Council's suburbs review have been announced.

The MVHS convenor worked with the Mt Vic Residents Association to craft a submission but, unfortunately, we weren't entirely successful.

The good news first: we succeeded in getting the western boundary along Kent Terrace moved to Cambridge Terrace, so that the statue of Queen Victoria is within the boundaries of Mt Victoria. This seemed absolutely fundamental, particularly given our fight to keep it in its current location.

The bad news: we did not succeed in keeping the former Clyde Quay in Mt Victoria, or in including the Basin Reserve and Government House. We felt as strongly about Clyde Quay as we did about Queen Victoria, because the original Clyde Quay School, first built on the site of the fire station, was one of the earliest public primary schools in Wellington (founded 1889) and is such an integral part of the identity of Mt Victoria. We also felt that a view from anywhere of this area is a view of the heart of Mt Victoria. (This is now part of Oriental Bay, after strong lobbying from property owners.)

We wanted the Basin Reserve included in Mt Victoria because, again, views of it are part of Mt Victoria and its 'open' face is towards our suburb. We believe that Mt Victoria residents have a strong affinity with the Basin Reserve, whereas areas surrounding other sides are largely commercial. With Government House, we believed that as the entrance is in Mt Victoria, the grounds should be included.

One of the issues with such matters as these may be that we do not have the numbers of people to support us in presenting submissions, to show a depth of community or organisational support. Sometimes, this is because we do not have sufficient notice to alert members and ask for help. But, if you're willing to lend support in similar situations in future, we'd love to hear from you.

HISTORICAL NOTE

89 Brougham Street and its first resident

The house at 89 Brougham Street was built in 1896 and today still looks almost exactly the same from the exterior as it did the day it was built.

Francis Penty

The house was designed by Francis Penty, a well-known early Wellington architect and sanitary engineer. He was born in England in 1841 and came to New Zealand in 1887. His training and experience as an architect in England made him very highly respected in Wellington. By 1896 he had designed 150 private houses, as well as commercial premises.

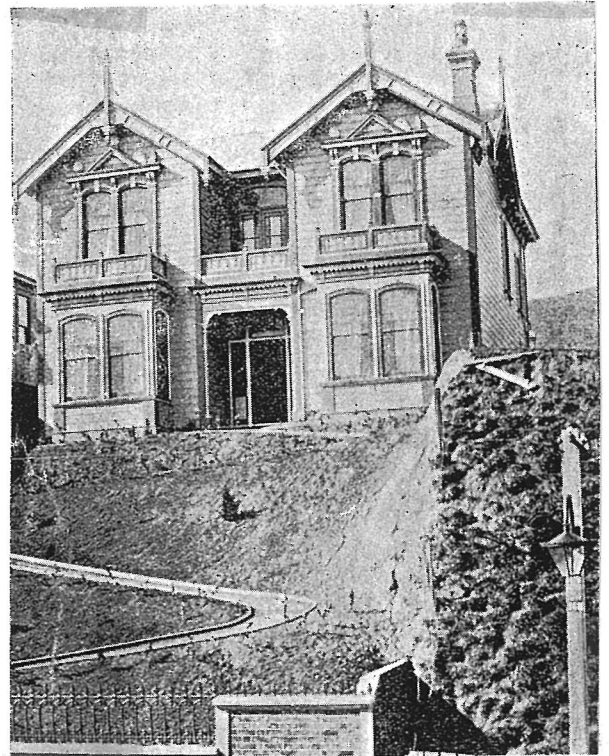
Penty also took part in public affairs and served as a councillor representing Cook Ward from 1892-1895. He was apparently an energetic councillor and a member of the Electric Lighting, Public Library, Private Streets and Public Works Committees. His forte was, understandably, sanitation and he was credited with doing much to forward the work of improved drainage in the city at the time.

Interestingly, he was of the view that “so far as the City Council is concerned, politics should be left severely alone, and that all should conspire together for the general good of the city as a whole” and that “matters of necessity should claim the attention of the Council first, and luxuries subsequently”!

John Cole Edwards

Penty designed 89 Brougham Street for JC Edwards. Edwards was born in England in 1854 but in 1862 his father came to New Zealand as the schoolmaster of the Non-conformist Settlement north of Auckland. He was educated principally at his father's school at Mahurangi, then at Wesley College in Auckland.

He went into the publishing and printing industry and by 1878 had started his own business as a printer in partnership with a bookseller of Lambton Quay, under the name Dutton and Edwards. Not long after, he took on a new partner and under the name of Edwards and Green the firm became well-known throughout New Zealand for printing the *Law Reports*, the *Industrial Gazette*, and other important publications. Green left the business in 1886 and Edwards continued alone until 1894 when he sold the business to one of the firms involved in the production of the New Zealand Cyclopaedia. This change was made to allow him to give more time to the Cyclopaedia company, of which he was also a director. It is fascinating to find this association with one of the men (because I assume they all were men) instrumental in the publication of the unique reference tool to which the Historical Society is so indebted.¹



From 1885 to 1888, Edwards was also a representative of Cook Ward on the Council. He was a valuable member of the Destructor, Electric Lighting and other committees, but is most remembered for the help he gave in settling the vexed question of the limit of foreshore reclamation. A committee of councillors had been conferring for several months with a committee of the Harbour Board, with the object of agreeing a limit for the Te Aro Reclamation – but with so little success that the report was ordered to be “laid on the table for six months”. The problems seemed insurmountable. Edwards didn't see it this way, however. He immediately tabled a motion for a conference of the whole membership of both organisations. As the Cyclopaedia says, “this was deemed so reasonable a project that no one was found to oppose”. The conference went ahead and, to the surprise of all, the points which had been in dispute for months were amicably settled in two hours.

Edwards married Fanny Bradford of Ballarat in 1879. They had no children and Fanny devoted much of her time to hospital visiting and other charitable and church duties. Apparently, her amiability and exceptional tact made her many friends. Unfortunately she died just six years after they married, while visiting friends in Victoria.

¹ All this information is from the Cyclopaedia of New Zealand, Volume 1, 1897.