

The Fitzroy History Society Inc. Newsletter

June 2001

Evening Visit to Saint Patrick's Cathedral

On 9 May, 35 members and friends visited Saint Patrick's cathedral. On a cool clear evening, Max Potter led us firstly around the grounds explaining recent changes, the new statues, the historic site and the external floodlit structure of the cathedral.

Then inside to the semi-darkened Gothic-inspired interior, where we learnt of the earlier structures, the appointment of William Wardell as the architect for the eventual design, the early fund raising assisted by the gold rush, and the phased construction through to 1897. Unfashionable local bluestone was used with its associated reputation of being a "poor man's building" but 140 years later the durability of that bluestone has well justified that choice.

When moving around the cathedral, we noted the hammer beam ceiling of the nave, the stonemasons' craft around the windows, the French Gothic style of the main sanctuary, the seven side chapels, and the rich decorations and imagery exposed again in the recent restoration and cleaning.

Around the walls we saw the memorials to the earlier archbishops now buried here, and the plaques commemorating the groups throughout Victoria who contributed to the building.

Fitzroy's Mary McKillop, potentially Australia's first saint, had been born nearby at 9 Brunswick Street, and she is suitably honoured in one of the side chapels.

Our guide for the evening, Max Potter had been a long term Fitzroy resident and he had an intimate personal knowledge of the building, the restorations over the last decade, and the bishops of the last 40 years.

When crossing Brunswick Street from now on, we can look up to the towering presence of Saint Pat's, and we all now know a lot more about the building and its history.

In closing, Max invited us all to return again and see the cathedral in daylight.

Michael Moore

Johann Yager- Mayor of Fitzroy

Thank you to member Mrs Gwen Heron for sending us material about her great grandfather Johann Yager and his involvement in Federation. Yager came to Victoria from Holzheim Germany and arrived in Fitzroy in 1863 as a journeyman bootmaker.

Commencing with Robert Hurst in 1868, by 1872 Yager's business had expanded sufficiently for him to build a factory in Kerr Street. In 1883 the partnership with Hurst was dissolved and Yager carried on the business alone. By this time the turnover of his business (which employed 150 hands) was estimated to be £35,000 per annum. Yager was married to Sarah Lammy (from County Tyrone Ireland) and they had four children. As a married couple their first residence seemed to be at 169 Lygon Street then 81 Alfred Crescent North Fitzroy. After Johann died in 1911 Sarah was living at 162 Barkley St. North Fitzroy.

Johann Yager's other business interests included buying urban property. (He lost heavily in the 1890s depression following the land boom). He was also a friend and business associate of Macpherson Robertson, the famous Fitzroy confectionary manufacturer.

Yager's public activities included being a Fitzroy Councillor, a Justice of the Peace and a Commissioner of the Metropolitan Board of Works. In 1893 he became Mayor of Fitzroy. As a prominent Fitzroy figure Johann Yager received several invitations from the Victorian Government to participate in the celebration of Federation in May 1901. These included invitations to a *Conversazione* in the Exhibition Building (Tuesday 7th May 1901), to the Opening of the Parliament of the Commonwealth (Thursday May 9th 1901) and to an evening reception for the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall & York at the Exhibition Building on May 9th.

The invitations were works of art in themselves and were produced by such famous Australian illustrators as Julian Ashton and Howard Deli. Mrs. Herron has sent colour photocopies of Johann Yager's Federation material, including the invitations, to the Society. We will bring this material along to our August 15th meeting when members are invited to dig out their own Fitzroy treasures and tell us a little about their historical (or sentimental) importance.

John Senyard

Oral history project

Have you got a story to tell about life in Fitzroy?

Or maybe you know of someone else who has. Larissa Romensky is looking to interview older people who have had a long and interesting association with Fitzroy.

The interviews will be part of the Fitzroy Oral History Project for the City of Yarra and which will be broadcast on radio later this year.

Please call Larissa Romensky on (03) 9525 3363.

Brunswick Street history

From the National Trust's report for the classification of Brunswick Street, December, 2000

Fitzroy is Melbourne's first suburb. The Brunswick Street precinct comprises parts of Crown Allotment 49, 70, 71, 83 and 84 and was the first of Fitzroy's streets to develop commercially. Allotment 49, immediately north of Victoria Parade, was subdivided in October 1839 and sold as the village of Newtown. By 1841, several small houses and villas had been built between Victoria Parade and Palmer Street, although the street was still totally unpaved.

During the 1940s, small shopkeepers located in Brunswick Street to provide local residents with building materials, food and clothing. Brunswick Street, between Victoria Parade and Alexandra Parade was officially proclaimed in May 1851; its name is thought to derive from Captain Brunswick Smythe. It was listed in Tanner's directory of 1859. By December 1854, subdivision was completed or commenced in the whole of the precinct and according to one memoir, 'shops rivalling those in Bourke Street, Melbourne, were to be found in Brunswick Street. *To be continued.*

SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW DUE!!!

Thanks to all those who have renewed. Subscriptions for the Fitzroy History Society are from January to December. Please send your subscription to PO Box 180 Fitzroy 3065. Pay \$5 yearly or \$10 for 2 years.

Executive Committee —2000-2001

Convenor: John Senyard
Treasurer: Harold Mackrell
Secretary: Shared role
Publicity: Margaret Lee
Editor: Jill Robertson (9419 8868)

Meet Ann Polis and Tony Knox

Founders of 'The Melbourne Times'

Journalist Ann, and photographer/writer Tony, will talk about reporting on Fitzroy in the 1970s and how they tackled the planning, council and heritage issues of the day.

When: Thursday 28 June 2001

Where: The Fitzroy Learning Network
198 Napier Street, Fitzroy
(opposite the Town Hall)

Time: 7.30 pm

Members \$2 Non-members \$3