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Shopping for Pleasure? Female leisure, fashion and  
independence in Wellington, 1850-1910.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Abstract

The importance of shopping as a leisure pursuit and its impact on the ability of women to enter public spaces in the Victorian city has been recognised in recent years with a number of studies in Europe and America. This thesis will examine how far the women of Wellington, New Zealand enjoyed the opportunity to spend time and money in the developing department stores of the capital city. Furthermore, along the lines of Erika Rappaport it will consider whether shopping was emancipating or detrimental to women's quest for independence.

The growth of large retail stores in Wellington and the various ways in which they attracted the female shopper has not been fully considered by historians at this stage and this thesis explores this growth and contends that it was widely equivalent to that in Europe and America. Looking at primary evidence including diaries, letters, newspapers and literature the study will analyse how the privileged women of Wellington spent their time, and how the public space of the shop allowed them to extend the boundaries of their world. It is hoped that examining this under studied aspect of women's leisure pursuits will add to the literature on social and gender history in New Zealand.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisors Associate Professor Kirsty Carpenter and Dr. John Griffiths for their support on this two-year journey. Their suggestions and feedback have been incredibly useful to me in guiding the structure and content of this thesis. Starting from a position of wishing to study shopping in Britain via a comparison of New Zealand and Britain to finalizing on shopping in Wellington has meant quite some changes in direction and their help has been essential.

I would also like to thank family and friends for support and encouragement to keep going. I am extremely grateful to my father Colin Richardson, who spent many hours proof-reading the final draft and provided grammatical feedback. Completing this thesis during some major changes in my life, including a global pandemic, has been challenging at times so the support of friends and family has been vital.

## Abbreviations

|     |                            |
|-----|----------------------------|
| ATL | Alexander Turnbull Library |
| EP  | The Evening Post           |
| NZM | The New Zealand Mail       |
| NZT | The New Zealand Times      |
| WI  | The Wellington Independent |

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## Introduction

“History is from day to day, and nothing in our national life has been more daily than keeping shop and going shopping”.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the rise of online shopping, the enjoyable and social nature of going shopping can still be observed with a visit to any shopping centre in New Zealand. Is this enjoyment a modern phenomenon or has this always been the case? When choosing a thesis topic, I had become fascinated by Judith Walkowitz and Erika Rappaport’s studies of women in the Victorian city of London and in particular the women’s access to the West End for purpose of shopping.<sup>2</sup> Though there are a number of texts examining shopping in England and the United States there is limited academic research on New Zealand shopping history. Studying women in the Victorian age presents a challenge to any historian, whether studying shopping habits or other interests, due to lack of visibility of the women in subsequent historical texts. New Zealand with its status as the first country to enfranchise women also offers a unique opportunity to look at the social lives of women who enjoyed more political (and potentially economic) rights than other women of the time. Similarly to Rappaport this study takes shopping as a starting point for examining women’s role in the public spaces of the city and is not designed to be a study of shopping history only.

This thesis will concentrate on the capital city of Wellington, as a general study of the whole of New Zealand would have proved to be much larger than would be able to be covered here. Wellington was chosen as the unique combination of politics and retail space could make for some interesting dynamics. There has been increased interest in the history of the department store in Europe and the consumption therein following on from the successful television adaptations of Zola’s *‘Au Bonheur des Dames’* as *‘The Paradise’* set in northern England and the *Mr Selfridge* series. Selfridge said “I helped emancipate women. I came

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<sup>1</sup> Alison Adburgham, *Shops and Shopping 1800-1914: Where, and in What Manner the Well-Dressed Englishwoman Bought her Clothes*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1964, xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Judith R. Walkowitz, “Going Public: Shopping, Street Harassment, and Streetwalking in Late Victorian London”, *Representations*, 62: Spring, 1998, 1-30; *City of Dreadful Delight: narratives of sexual danger in late-Victorian London*, London: Virago, 1992; Erika Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London’s West End*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.



along when they wanted to step out on their own. They came to the store and realised some of their dreams.”<sup>3</sup> Despite extensive material on the rise of the department store, the early days of such stores in Wellington, New Zealand has not been examined. This thesis will be asking how the Wellington stores developed and whether overseas influences were important to this process. Additionally, it will investigate to what extent women had access to their own money and enough independence to choose how to spend their time, in particular in the pursuit of retail purchases. It will examine whether the ability to both visit the shops and to choose what to purchase was a measure of their growing freedom. The thesis focuses on the period between 1860 and 1910 with some analysis of Wellington’s earlier history where necessary to show development of the shops.

The first chapter will explore the shopping centre of Wellington city during the period studied, with particular emphasis on the rise of the department store. The department store has been critical to the literature of consumption and in particular that of the female shopper, and so it is important to examine how these stores influenced the ladies of Wellington. The second chapter takes on the theme of work and leisure of the elite woman of Wellington. With the contention of the importance of shopping as a leisure activity it is useful to examine how women spent their time so as to be able to place shopping in context. Chapter two also investigates women’s economic ability to pursue shopping as an independent activity. The third chapter will cover women’s experience of shopping during the period studied, and will additionally examine whether the pursuit of shopping and fashion was either liberating or not for women.

## Sources

Primary material has been utilised to provide information to support the arguments put forward. One of the difficulties in studying the daily lives of Victorian middle-class women is that they tended to be less newsworthy at the time than men. The digital platform *Papers Past* has been extensively utilised here as it provides a vast library of newspaper and magazine titles online for the student of history to discover. The newspapers provided not

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2210421/Mr-Selfridge-Extraordinary-story-retailing-visionary-revealed.html>

only advertisements, but also a rich source in the Ladies Pages written by female journalists, and Society Pages offering descriptions of society women and the outfits they wore. The ability to view an exhaustive amount of newspapers due to *Papers Past* makes it easy to perform what Roger Blackley terms “unfocused research” but it can be overwhelming to try and distil the mountain of information into easily manageable chunks of data.<sup>4</sup> The approach taken therefore, was to perform general searches on key words such as ‘shopping’ narrowing results by location and date. The results of these searches were built up into a primary source database allowing them to be catalogued into subjects in line with the chapter headings. A qualitative approach to the data was taken due to the anecdotal nature of much of the material collected.

For the experiences of the women themselves diaries and letters generally provided evidence of their activities. A number of women who met the criteria of middle-class, Wellington based women writing from 1860-1910 were selected. This approach resulted in a selection of women with a varied range of age, marital status and position in society. Appendix A includes a table detailing the women that have been considered in this study. To supplement the diaries and letters, this thesis additionally considered New Zealand written fiction, newspaper columns, adverts and illustrations to provide information about the female experience.

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<sup>4</sup> Roger Blackley, “Cruising the Colonial: Newspapers and Shop Windows”, *Journal of New Zealand Studies* 12, (2011): 65-66.

## Literature Review

There are a number of useful accounts on the history of retailing in general, and the department store specifically, both in Europe and the United States. In England a number of studies appeared in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century examining the history of the retail trade along with the rise of the department store in particular.<sup>5</sup> Dorothy Davis in her authoritative study of the history of shopping from the middle ages only touched lightly on the Victorian era, whereas Alison Adburgham's masterly study of the history of shops and shopping in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century encompassed the change in retail history from the small local shops of the Napoleonic era to the huge department stores at the end of century. James Jefferys explored all retail trading from 1850 onwards and his coverage was approached from an economical perspective. He does, however give a useful definition of a department store which I have used later in this thesis. Finally at this time, Pasdermajian produced a history of the department store which examined their origins and evolution from 1860 through to 1940. These studies were all largely consistent in their arguments on the evolution of the department store, citing the influence of the Parisian and American stores, along with the impact of social and economic changes throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> Century which resulted in the middle-classes having money available for luxury spending.

The study of shopping and consumer culture only really started to become significant in the 1990s as historians recognised that consumption was a significant endeavour, whereby different groups of society demonstrated differing social behaviours. From that point shopping and consumption has been an important part of social and cultural history.<sup>6</sup> Historians started to view the department store as a phenomenon which provided the (mostly female) consumer with a place to escape their everyday lives and enter a 'palace or cathedral of consumption'.<sup>7</sup> In addition historians started to examine women's roles in the

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<sup>5</sup> See Adburgham, *Shops and Shopping 1800-1914*; Dorothy Davis, *A History of Shopping*, (Great Britain: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1966), <https://doi-org.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/10.4324/9781315889061>; James B. Jefferys, *Retail Trading In Britain 1850-1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1954); H. Pasdermajian, *The Department Store: Its Origins, Evolution and Economics*, (London: Newman Books, 1954).

<sup>6</sup> Susie L. Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: politics, culture and society in nineteenth century Britain*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2016), 98.

<sup>7</sup> See for the UK: Bill Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History*, (London: Leicester University press, 1995); Judith Flanders, *Consuming Passions: Leisure and Pleasure in Victorian Britain* (London : HarperPress, 2006); Geoffrey Crossick and Serge Jaumain, eds. *Cathedrals of Consumption: The European Department Store, 1850-1939* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 1999); Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian*

making of these palaces and how instrumental the female consumer was in this history. Erika Rappaport and Judith Walkowitz have both considered women's part in the development of the West End of London and concluded that women were active agents in the creation of their own independent shopping palaces.<sup>8</sup> Cox and Hobley's study of the rise of shopping as seen through the changes in retail shop assistants, provides useful detail on how shopping changed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and provides background on what the shopping experience would have been like on the other side of the counter as well.<sup>9</sup> Krista Lysack took a different approach and has demonstrated how the female shopper was represented in Victorian literature using a number of primary sources including novels as well as newspapers and magazines.<sup>10</sup> In the United States, Susan Porter Benson and Elaine Abelson examined women's place in the growth of shopping culture, with Benson investigating how the consumer interacted with the shop worker and Abelson looking at the world of the middle-class shoplifter.<sup>11</sup> More recently a number of studies have looked in detail at the geographical and social spread of the department store and have argued against a one size fits all approach to the history of the store. This has opened up the study of the provincial store and some discussion on the characteristics that defined the department store.<sup>12</sup>

In New Zealand literature examining the rise of the department store and the history of shopping has been limited. Helen Laurenson's book *'Going Up Going Down'* is a competent study of the rise and fall of the department store in New Zealand. She mainly concentrates on the period from 1920 onwards but contains some coverage of the history of the stores in

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*England : Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1990). See for the United States: Elaine S Abelson, *When Ladies Go a-Thieving: Middle-Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Vicki Howard, *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers and Customers in American Department Stores 1890-1940*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988); See for Paris: Michael B Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store 1869-1920*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*; Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*.

<sup>9</sup> Pamela Cox and Annabel Hobley, *Shopgirls: The True Story of Life Behind the Counter*, (London: Hutchinson, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Krista Lysack, *Come Buy, Come Buy : Shopping and the Culture of Consumption in Victorian Women's Writing* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Abelson, *When Ladies Go a-Thieving*; Benson, *Counter Cultures*.

<sup>12</sup> Jeanne Catherine Lawrence, "Geographical Space, Social Space, and the Realm of the Department Store", *Urban History* 19, no 1 (1992): 64-83; Jon Stobart, "Cathedrals of Consumption? Provincial Department Stores in England, c.1880-1930", *Enterprise & Society* 18, no 4 (2017): 1-36; Lancaster, *The Department Store*.

the main centres of New Zealand.<sup>13</sup> She notes that colonial New Zealand offered great opportunities for entrepreneurs who had drapery experience. Stores were pivotal centres of interest around which much of the life of cities and towns in New Zealand revolved. They offered a glimpse of the exotic 'other' – the world of the great metropolis.<sup>14</sup> Evan Roberts explored the influence of American sales techniques on New Zealand stores but concentrates on the period from 1909 and has therefore missed potential impacts earlier in the history of the department store.<sup>15</sup> Despite these limitations, Roberts and Laurenson demonstrate how important the department store was in New Zealand retail history. The majority of the remaining literature tends to cover specific stores or towns. One of these is Fiona McKergow's analysis of shopping in Palmerston North.<sup>16</sup> She notes that shops were a crucial part of British development in New Zealand as they offered a prime opportunity to disseminate the British culture of abundance to the settlers. Shops and shopping gave settlers a sense of connection to the mother country as well as helping with material gratification and the sociability of 'going shopping' in town.<sup>17</sup> To date there has been no general history of Wellington shops similar to McKergow's on Palmerston North. Judith Millen's book on Kirkcaldie & Stains is well-written and comprehensive but obviously only covers the history of that store specifically.

Other locally based histories have limited use in looking at the impact of department store on the cities of New Zealand. Ben Schrader's history of urban centres in New Zealand only lightly touches on shopping, and only as a leisure activity for women, rather than examining the stores themselves. Similarly Hamer and Nicholls have written a comprehensive survey of the history of Wellington; unfortunately however, they have not considered shopping or retail as part of this.<sup>18</sup> Other general histories of Wellington have again mainly ignored

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<sup>13</sup> Helen Laurenson, *Going up, Going Down: The Rise and Fall of the Department Store*, (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Laurenson, *Going up, Going Down*, 1-7.

<sup>15</sup> Evan Roberts, "'Don't Sell Things, Sell Effects': Overseas Influences in New Zealand Department Stores, 1906-1956", *The Business History Review* 77, no 2 (2003): 265-289.

<sup>16</sup> Fiona McKergow, "'Just the Thing': Shopping for Clothes in Palmerston North" in *Looking Flash: Clothing in Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. Bronwyn Labrum, Fiona McKergow and Stephanie Gibson, (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> McKergow, "'Just the Thing': Shopping for Clothes in Palmerston North", 133-135.

<sup>18</sup> D.A. Hamer and Roberta Nicholls, *The Making of Wellington, 1800-1914*, (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1990); Ben Schrader, *The Big Smoke: New Zealand cities, 1840-1920*, (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2016).

shops and shopping.<sup>19</sup> Dale Miller's chapter in the recently published *Routledge Companion to the History of Retailing* claims to cover shopping history in Australia and New Zealand but unfortunately focuses mainly on Australia. Miller notes the "modest volume of academic research" available on Australasian department stores but unfortunately does not extend this volume for other than David Jones in Sydney.<sup>20</sup>

The popular myth of the British late Victorian middle-class woman was that of the angel in the house – but did she actually exist? Historians have investigated whether Victorian womanhood was as rigid as popular opinion believed (and have challenged the assertion).<sup>21</sup> Patricia Branca has argued that middle-class married women were not in fact "useless ornaments" as they had been popularly represented, but in fact their role was "functional...central and crucial".<sup>22</sup> Conversely, Susie Steinbach has commented that the middle class came closest to living life in separate spheres – the men went out to work and the women stayed home and raised the children. Respectability was very important and gender roles were a result of this. Middle class boys went to school and often university whereas girls tended to be educated at home and did not seek to earn their own living.<sup>23</sup> In support of the argument against domestic angels in Britain, Petersen investigated the lives of three generations of a Victorian family. She argued that even though none of the women she studied needed to work to support themselves a number of them did actually pursue employment outside of the home, and spent the resulting payment in shopping for themselves. She gave an example of Lydia North who taught piano lessons and enjoyed buying an apple on the way home with the money she made. Lydia's daughter was given an allowance in part for teaching one of the younger children and spent this on church offerings, ribbons, shoes and gifts.<sup>24</sup> The women in Petersen's study were obviously comfortable with both being out of the house and in indulging in some leisure shopping.

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<sup>19</sup> See for example: Redmer Yska, *Wellington: Biography of a City*; (Wellington: Reed, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> Dale Miller, "Retailing in Australia and New Zealand: Historical perspectives through the distinctive lens of innovation", in *The Routledge Companion to the History of Retailing*, ed. Jon Stobart & Vicki Howard (London: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> See for example: Patricia Branca, *Silent sisterhood: middle-class women in the Victorian home* (London: Routledge, 2013); Jeanne M. Petersen, "No Angels in the House: The Victorian Myth and the Paget Women", *The American Historical Review* 89, no 3 (1984): 677-708.

<sup>22</sup> Branca, *Silent sisterhood*, 144-153.

<sup>23</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 141-143.

<sup>24</sup> Petersen, "No Angels in the House", 694.

More recently there have been studies examining women's ability to move within the public space of the city. These studies have concluded that women did in fact have access to public space and that they took advantage of this in acting as observers as well as participants.<sup>25</sup> In New Zealand Ben Schrader has noted that women's expanding access to the public space was a defining attribute of all modern cities in the late 19th Century. The accounts included in his book suggest that New Zealand cities shared this characteristic, and he suggests that further research is required to ascertain the extent to which middle-class women's access to the city increased.<sup>26</sup> Although this access is out of the scope of this study women in Wellington had a significant ability to access public space, including of course the shopping centres of the city.

Research on the history of women's independence in New Zealand has increased in recent times especially in the wake of the centenary of women's enfranchisement in 1997. Raewyn Dalziel, one of the early historians of women's history discussed the role of the colonial wife or 'helpmeet' in New Zealand society. Dalziel suggests that the unique circumstances of New Zealand life coupled with the traditional views of women's place led to a particular emphasis of women's role in the home. She suggests that these women were actually more content with this role than their English counterparts as they felt that this role was necessary and rewarding. The fact that men outnumbered women helped with this as there were not the numbers of spare women that English society had.<sup>27</sup> According to Dalziel the actual act of migrating gave women the ability to break free from restrictions in a socially acceptable manner.<sup>28</sup> Barbara Brookes examined the history of New Zealand women and noted that with the decline in European family size and their dominance in urban areas women were able to leave the house and have more independence, including attending

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<sup>25</sup> See for example: Deborah L Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jessica Ellen Sewell, *Women and the Everyday City: Public Space in San Francisco, 1890-1915* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Emily Remus, *"A Shopper's Paradise: How the Ladies of Chicago Claimed Power and Pleasure in the New Downtown"* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Schrader, *The Big Smoke*, 229.

<sup>27</sup> Raewyn Dalziel, "The Colonial Helpmeet: Women's Role and the Vote in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand", *New Zealand Journal of History* 11, no 2 (1977) 112-123.

<sup>28</sup> Dalziel, "The Colonial Helpmeet", 115.

tertiary education and entering employment.<sup>29</sup> In *Breadwinning*, Melanie Nolan examined women earning a living, her book though concentrates mainly on the era post this study. Nolan and Jenny Coleman, have both produced useful studies on female enfranchisement and economic independence in New Zealand.<sup>30</sup> More recently Catherine Bishop has provided a comprehensive study of colonial women business owners arguing that they were more common than previously thought.<sup>31</sup>

Key to the literature analysing New Zealand society is Miles Fairburn's theory of social alienation. Fairburn describes the atomisation of the ideal colonial society, 'Arcadia', and the impact this atomisation has on the Arcadian ideal.<sup>32</sup> He posits that people came to New Zealand without family support and moved frequently, so therefore did not have time to establish social ties. However, his study concentrates on those who live in geographical isolation, rather than those living in towns and settlements and specifically on settlers rather than indigenous communities. The evidence that Fairburn presents on loneliness comes mainly from literate and educated back-country women, a sub-section of the community that possibly would be expected to be lonely given their isolation from similar people.<sup>33</sup> There is no evidence of any sort of social isolation present in the lives of the women studied for this thesis. Frances Porter and Charlotte MacDonald have presented the lives of colonial women in their own words. They described their social ties and relationships, and how women interacted within this matrix of social relationships.<sup>34</sup> In Wellington Roberta Nicholls' chapter on Elite Society in *The Making of Wellington* gives an important insight into the social lives of elite women. Nicholls concludes that there was a

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<sup>29</sup> Barbara L. Brookes, *A History of New Zealand Women* (Wellington: Bridget William Books, 2016) chap 4.

<sup>30</sup> Jenny Coleman, *From Suffrage to a Seat in the House: The Path to Parliament for New Zealand Women* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2020); *Polly Plum: A Firm and Earnest Woman's Advocate* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2017); Melanie Nolan, *Bread Winning: New Zealand Women and the State* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> Catherine Bishop, *Women Mean Business: Colonial Businesswomen in New Zealand* (Dunedin, Otago University Press, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and Its Enemies : The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society, 1850-1900* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1989). See also for rebuttals of Fairburn's work: James Bellich, "The Ideal Society and Its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society, 1850-1900 by Miles Fairburn, Review By: James Bellich." *Journal of Social History* 24, no. 3 (1991): 672-75; Caroline Daley, "Taradale Meets the Ideal Society and Its Enemies." *The New Zealand Journal of History* 25, no. 2 (1991): 129-46.

<sup>33</sup> Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and Its Enemies*, 203.

<sup>34</sup> Frances Porter, Charlotte MacDonald and Tui MacDonald, *My hand will write what my heart dictates: the unsettled lives of women in nineteenth-century New Zealand as revealed to sisters, family and friends* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1996).



distinct parallel to society in England but that this disappeared over time and certainly by the end of the Edwardian era. Her study encompasses a number of social activities and interests including fashion but does not scrutinise shopping as one of these activities.<sup>35</sup>

Schrader also examines social activities of New Zealanders and he asserts that the provision of spaces that women in particular could visit was a leading reason for the development of modern society, and that this was taken up by the middle classes. However, he limits his study to institutions such as museums, libraries and art galleries and does not look into the part that shops (as one of the key spaces that catered for women and to a lesser extent men) would have also played in this development.<sup>36</sup>

By examining the development of the department store in Wellington, and how the women in the city accessed the stores this thesis aims to contribute both to the literature available on the history of shopping in New Zealand, and also that on women's social activities during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

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<sup>35</sup> Roberta Nicholls, "Elite Society in Victorian and Edwardian Wellington" in *The Making of Wellington, 1800-1914*, ed. D.A. Hamer and Roberta Nicholls (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1990), 195-225.

<sup>36</sup> Schrader, *The Big Smoke*, 136-142.

## Chapter One: The Department Store in the Empire City

### Part One – The rise of the department store.

Existing studies of the rise of the department store in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century have concentrated on well-known shopping areas such as the West End of London or individually famous shops such as the Bon Marché in Paris.<sup>37</sup> For New Zealand there have been far fewer studies, Helen Laurenson's book looks at department stores across the country but only concentrates on them from their heyday in the 1920s. Other studies have looked at specific stores or towns but so far there has been little written about Wellington shopping history.<sup>38</sup> How did the humble draper's store of the early days of Port Nicholson become those 'cathedrals of consumption' that we see by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and how did the Wellington stores compare with those in Britain or the United States in offering shopping as a leisure activity for women? Many stores opened and closed throughout this period so this thesis concentrates on those which became the most successful and whose names at least live on today – Kirkcaldie & Stains, James Smith & Co and the DIC. Some of the smaller or shorter-lived stores also deserve mention for their contribution to the history of Wellington shopping, especially in the early days of the colony.

Departmentalised organisation of goods was one of the key innovations in the rise of Western consumer culture in the nineteenth century as stores moved from "the jumble of the general store and from the narrowness of the specialty shop".<sup>39</sup> The history of the term department store is in itself a complex subject with many interpretations of how such shops

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<sup>37</sup> See for example: Geoffrey Crossick and Serge Jaumain, eds. *Cathedrals of Consumption: The European Department Store, 1850-1939* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 1999); Vicki Howard, *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Bill Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History* (London: Leicester University press, 1995); Michael B Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store 1869-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers and Customers in American Department Stores 1890-1940* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

<sup>38</sup> See for example: Helen Laurenson, *Going up, Going Down: The Rise and Fall of the Department Store*, (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2005); Julia Millen, *Kirkcaldie & Stains: A Wellington Story* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2000); Fiona McKergow, "'Just the Thing': Shopping for Clothes in Palmerston North" in *Looking Flash: Clothing in Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. Bronwyn Labrum, Fiona McKergow and Stephanie Gibson, (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2007).

<sup>39</sup> Vicki Howard, *From Main Street to Mall*, 13.

began, what their key features were and when the term was adopted.<sup>40</sup> This thesis will utilise James Jefferys' definition which is "a large store selling under one roof, but in physically separate departments, four or more different classes of consumer goods one of which is women's and girls' clothing".<sup>41</sup> This definition neatly encompasses the stores that made such a significant and lasting mark on Wellington's urban landscape. In New Zealand, as in other countries, the term department store was not generally used until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and tended to be used only in reference to the large stores in the United States (and the Bon Marché in Paris). Much like the stores in London, the larger drapers stores in Wellington did not refer to themselves as department stores until well after the turn of the century.<sup>42</sup> Although department stores were a minority in retail sales for New Zealand at this time their impact on consumer society and female independence across the world cannot be understated, and it is for this reason that this chapter will concentrate on those types of stores.<sup>43</sup>

Porter, in his study of the development of a department store in the English city of Southport reminds us that "the development of retail establishments is basically a study of local history" and that the "home" customers were the store's most important market.<sup>44</sup> During the period under scrutiny Wellington went through a transition from a small port settlement to the capital city of New Zealand. European settlement of what was then called Port Nicholson began in 1839, with the name being formally changed to Wellington in November 1840. Earthquakes helped shape the city of Wellington; the one in 1855 levelled many of the wooden buildings but also raised the coastline enabling new coast roads and putting in place the topography of the city that we see today. In 1865 Wellington became the new capital of New Zealand and the seat of government was moved to the city. This was a time of growth for the area and by 1881 the population had reached 20,000. However, the

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<sup>40</sup> For discussion on what criteria make a department store and the controversies of naming a store as such see: James B. Jefferys, *Retail Trading In Britain 1850-1950*, 18-19; Ian Mitchell, "The Victorian Provincial Department Store: A Category Too Many?", *History of Retailing and Consumption* 1, no 2 (2015), 149-163; Jon Stobart, "Cathedrals of Consumption? Provincial Department Stores in England", 810-845.

<sup>41</sup> Jefferys, *Retail Trading In Britain 1850-1950*, 465-6.

<sup>42</sup> Stobart, "Cathedrals of Consumption? Provincial Department Stores in England", 813; The first advertisement where Kirkcaldie & Stains referred to themselves as a department store was in the Dominion, 29<sup>th</sup> January 1908.

<sup>43</sup> Roberts, "'Don't Sell Things, Sell Effects'", 267.

<sup>44</sup> J. H. Porter, "The Development of a Provincial Department Store 1870-1939", *Business History* 13, no 1 (1971), 64-65.

period from 1880 to 1895 was a time of economic depression for the whole country and this had its impact on Wellington as well. This downturn did not however, prevent the stores from flourishing and was in fact a time of innovation for many of them. By the end of the century, economic conditions had improved and Wellington was thriving once more with the population reaching over 49,000 by 1901.<sup>45</sup>

Judith Flanders noted that in the United Kingdom, “the physical development of shops was one of almost constant change from the eighteenth century onwards” and therefore the department store did not appear overnight as is popularly supposed but was a prolonged process.<sup>46</sup> In Wellington this development was paralleled by the growth of the city itself and therefore did not start until European settlers began to populate the town in the 1840s. As the colony started to grow there were initially limited opportunities for shopping in Wellington apart from items of practical use to the early settler. As Davis has stated, in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, shops were still small and run by one shopkeeper selling a variety of items.<sup>47</sup> Shops in early Wellington would have been run along these lines. Early advertisements mentioned drapery items for sale alongside more general goods such as hardware and groceries. In 1840, J. Allen advertised that “he can supply every article of drapery, hosiery, provisions, fresh meat, &c. &c.”<sup>48</sup> As the 1840s progressed references to specialised drapery establishments can be found in the newspapers, with Levin & Co. announcing a new “Drapery and Haberdashery Establishment” on Lambton Quay in 1841 which ran alongside their general store.<sup>49</sup> Ladies of the town would have been able to browse for their ribbons, shawls and sundry other goods away from more mundane items. Throughout the 1840s Wellington shops continued to be small general stores with drapery areas attached, and it was not until the 1850s that the first exclusively drapery shops were opened.

Charlotte Godley, who arrived from England in 1850, was obviously pleasantly surprised by the fact that a number of items important to a lady could be purchased in Wellington.

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<sup>45</sup> For a detailed history of Wellington see Hamer & Nicholls, *The Making of Wellington*.

<sup>46</sup> Flanders, *Consuming Passions*, 105.

<sup>47</sup> Davis, *A History of Shopping*, 255.

<sup>48</sup> New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator, 12<sup>th</sup> September 1840.

<sup>49</sup> New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1841.

There are lots of ladies walking about the town; we are to dine out again to-morrow, and my husband next day is to be Mr. Bulkeley's guest at the mess, so it is all very gay, and there are really shops for everything (jewellery, white kid gloves, etc.)

However, not everything she required could be obtained and she sent a number of requests home to her family for rarer items such as ready-made gowns.

I may ask you to send me out a silk gown of some rather dark, cheap kind; a made up skirt with flounces, if they are still to be had, would be thought beautiful here, and cannot be bought. I can get scrub gowns, but everything wears out so fast here with fading in the hot sun, and mud, and so much our-of-door work.

Charlotte also commented on the prices of items in the shops in Wellington and how they compared with ones at home.

All imported goods from England are about double their original price in the shops here; sometimes more. For instance, a piece of chintz I got, though only a little common blue and white stripe, 1s. a yard, and our frightful Axminster carpet 4s. 6d.; crockery and glass the same, with something additional from breakage.<sup>50</sup>

In these early days of the colony it would seem that Wellington stores were behind those in England both in price and in availability of goods.

At the start of the 1850s the colony was seen as a place of opportunity, and more settlers started to arrive and set-up shop. One of the earliest was Mary Taylor who opened a drapery shop in 1850 in the suburb of Te Aro. Her letters to her friends in England contained many details of her shop which she described as being “among the *first* in town”, though

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<sup>50</sup> Charlotte Godley, *Letters from Early New Zealand*, 1850, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-GodLett-t1-body-d5.html>.

there were already stores calling themselves drapers by this point.<sup>51</sup> From the descriptions in her letters it would appear that her shop was successful enough to employ a saleswoman and possibly a dressmaker.<sup>52</sup> Mary managed the shop for a few years and then left to return to England, selling the shop to the Misses Smith who went on to run it until 1866. Other than Mary's shop a number of small drapery shops came and went throughout the 1850s. It was not until well into the 1860s that stores were established which were to become household names – these included Kirkcaldie and Stains in 1863 and James Smith's Te Aro House in 1866. Nonetheless, in these early days even these shops were fairly small and basic. Lady Barker, a recent immigrant from England journeying to Christchurch, was definitely not impressed by the shops on her stop in Wellington in 1865.

At first, I thought the shops very handsome, but I found, rather to my disgust, that generally the fine, imposing frontage was all a sham; the actual building was only a little hut at the back, looking all the meaner for the contrast to cornices and show windows in front.

Whether she ventured in the shops and found anything worth buying she does not say but later on was impressed by the “capital shops, where everything may be bought” of Christchurch.<sup>53</sup> Despite Lady Barker's views, by the 1860s shops in Wellington were offering a similar shopping experience to that provided by drapers and dry-goods shops in Britain and the United States.<sup>54</sup> Shops such as Picketts on Lambton Quay were popular with the ladies of the town and carried a wide variety of stock. According to their newspaper advertisement in October 1861 Pickett's were carrying the following to attract their female shoppers:

Spring Mantles, New styles

Spring dresses, very choice

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<sup>51</sup> Mary Taylor and Joan Stevens, *Mary Taylor, friend of Charlotte Brontë: letters from New Zealand and elsewhere* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1972), 89.

<sup>52</sup> In her letter dated January 4<sup>th</sup> 1857 Mary mentioned some patterns and noted: “The poor woman for whom I wanted them is now our first rate dressmaker”, Taylor and Stevens, *Mary Taylor, friend of Charlotte Brontë*, 129.

<sup>53</sup> Lady Barker, *Station Life in New Zealand* (Auckland: Golden Press, 1883), 18.

<sup>54</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 109-111.

Ribbons, Velvets, Flowers  
Chenille Hair Nets, Feathers,  
Straw Hats, White and Brown,  
Falls, Black and Fancy  
Lace, Mantles, and Jackets<sup>55</sup>

Dorothy Davis noted that “the history of department stores is a collection of highly personal success stories”<sup>56</sup>, and this was also true in Wellington as the handful of successful stores were centred around the people who started them, such as Kirkcaldie & Stains, James Smith and Bendix Hallenstein. These entrepreneurs were well placed to take advantage of the ‘retail revolution’ of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century that was taking place in Britain. There the growth of middle-class incomes, the availability of industrially produced goods and the developments in the retail trade all contributed to the explosion of the Victorian consumer society.<sup>57</sup> In New Zealand with its high per capita income opportunity was ripe for the taking.

Founded in 1863 by John Kirkcaldie and Robert Stains, who had both travelled from England via Melbourne with prior drapery experience, Kirkcaldie & Stains was one of the premier shops within Wellington. Their first premises opened on Lambton Quay on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 1863 with an “Important Announcement” in *The Wellington Independent* newspaper to let potential customers know.<sup>58</sup> Further advertisements listed the number of departments in the store and the articles that were available to be bought. With a list encompassing silks, many different shawls and mantles, fancy dresses, drapery of all sorts, hosiery and gloves and general mourning it appears that they were providing the ladies of Wellington with a good choice of items to peruse and buy. The immediate success of the store meant that in 1868 Kirkcaldie & Stains purchased a larger site on Lambton Quay which was to be their home until they closed in 2016. This new building was a very ornamental

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<sup>55</sup> The Wellington Independent, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1861.

<sup>56</sup> Davis, *A History of Shopping*, 289.

<sup>57</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 107-121.

<sup>58</sup> WI, 5th December 1863; for more information on Kirkcaldie & Stains see Julia Millen, *Kirkcaldie & Stains: A Wellington Story*; which extensively covers their background prior to opening the shop and about the rise of the store which became the premier retail establishment in the capital.

and elegant building with Corinthian columns, balustrades and other decorative touches reflecting the feeling that they wanted to impart to their lady shoppers. The shop was also divided into departments (although many years from being called a department store) – general drapery, millinery and clothing and was certainly one of the biggest in Wellington if not the colony. Large windows and skylights contributed to the elegance of the shop, whether this store would have impressed Lady Barker is unknown but it did however, draw a lot of admiration from the local press. At a cost of three and half thousand pounds (around \$500,000 today) the previous store had obviously been a success in the preceding five years.<sup>59</sup> By the early 1870s, Kirkcaldie & Stains was viewed as the premier store in Wellington even to the extent of being cited in local poetry and jokes.<sup>60</sup>

James Smith was another retail entrepreneur who established a drapery shop that became an extremely successful department store. Te Aro House was an extremely important feature of Wellington's shopping history and its success was at least partially responsible for making the Te Aro and Cuba Street area one of the premier shopping areas in the city. The original store was that which had been opened by Mary Taylor and later sold to her assistants, the Misses Smith. After purchasing the store in 1866 from the Misses Smith (no relation) James Smith, renamed it Te Aro House and made "extensive alterations".<sup>61</sup> The development of this store throughout the period studied can be seen from the available photographs, starting from the basic 28 feet by 26 feet building he purchased in 1866 (Figure 1). In the early 1870s the premises already looked extremely different with a veranda and larger windows to encourage shoppers to linger. Throughout the decade the shop went from strength to strength (Figure 2).<sup>62</sup> In 1875 the improvements to businesses around the city and population increase in the suburb of Te Aro meant that James Smith needed to significantly expand Te Aro House (Figure 3). This created a large drapery emporium with different departments for clothing, house furnishings, millinery and general drapery. The latter two departments were lit from the roof in a new fashion which had the

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<sup>59</sup> WI, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1868.

<sup>60</sup> For example, a poem in The Wanganui Herald on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1869 comments on ladies' hats being "a credit to Kirkcaldie's store".

<sup>61</sup> WI, 27<sup>th</sup> September 1866, Evening Post 29<sup>th</sup> September 1866.

<sup>62</sup> The Evening Post, 29<sup>th</sup> November 1871.



advantage of displaying the colour of fabrics much better than previously.<sup>63</sup> The millinery room in particular was apparently superior to any other in Wellington at the time and could be accessed through a columned arch which added to the elegance of the room.<sup>64</sup> Pictures of the new Te Aro House were extensively used in advertisements and in the yearly *Wellington Almanac*. Advertising claimed that both locals and visitors believed that there was no better drapery business in the colony. Whether this was true or not, certainly Te Aro House was a shopping establishment known for the “richness and gorgeousness” of their window displays.<sup>65</sup>

In Britain, by the 1870s, changes in consumer spending and the ability of the middle and working classes to utilise discretionary income had resulted in significant changes in the retailing industry. The construction of purpose-built stores rather than adding on to existing buildings as had happened previously was one of these changes. This meant that stores could start to be built with customisations specifically to encourage shoppers to come in and linger and browse through tempting displays. This included advances such as large plate glass windows, special lighting and multiple floors.<sup>66</sup> In Wellington purpose built stores had been seen since the early days of the colony, as there was more scope for new buildings than in the crowded streets of London. Additionally, earthquakes and frequent fires had disastrous effects on the mainly wooden built stores meaning that new buildings were often required. When Wellington became the capital of New Zealand and the seat of government in 1865 there would have been opportunities for businesses to expand to be in keeping with those of a capital city. A large number of stores therefore, were purpose built in the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> The Evening Post, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1875.

<sup>64</sup> The New Zealand Times, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1875.

<sup>65</sup> The Evening Post, 30<sup>th</sup> March 1876.

<sup>66</sup> Flanders, *Consuming Passions*, 112; Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 147.

<sup>67</sup> For example the stores of Kirkcaldie & Stains, J McDowell & Co., Joseph Burne, Moeller, Jacoby & Co., and Warmolls.



Figure 1. Te Aro House, 1866.



Figure 2. Te Aro House, Cuba Street Wellington, in the early 1870s.



Figure 3. Te Aro House, Cuba Street Wellington, in the late 1870s.

The 1870s were a boom time in the New Zealand economy and the retail sector reflected this growth with a number of new and updated establishments becoming available for shoppers. An article in *The Evening Post* promoting the new premises for J. McDowell and Co. commented favourably on the “transformation taking place in Wellington” and that buildings were going up all over previously deserted places. The article also claimed with the usual hyperbole that J. McDowell and Co. had taken over as the premier drapers of the city with “one of the largest shops probably to be found in the colony”.<sup>68</sup> Opening on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1872, it was one of the handsomest shops in Wellington, a real emporium with several departments under one roof. First class furnishings were notable with “flashing mirrors, burnished brass and polished counters”, and very attractively arranged goods to appeal to the female shopper.<sup>69</sup> Although McDowell and Co. was not one of the stores that achieved longevity, it was a popular store that lasted until 1895. By the mid 1870s there were a number of these “costly mercantile establishments” being built or extended in the main shopping areas of Wellington.<sup>70</sup> Wilson and Richardson of Lambton Quay in 1876 took over premises and stock from Joseph Burne who had been running a draper’s shop in the area since 1848. They notably improved their premises with a large veranda, and divided their large warehouse into departments with a handsome showroom for the ladies to see clothes and millinery. Adding in a show-room to these drapery establishments was a modern and important move as it gave the ladies a more attractive environment to view the goods and encouraged them to linger and presumably spend more in the shops. Lighting was also important and Wilson and Richardson made sure to announce in their advertisements that the improvements had resulted in a “radient light” [sic] that would aid their customers in their shopping.<sup>71</sup> Despite the improvements in the stores however, a visitor from Otago commented that some of the shops “put one in mind of the old village single store”, showing that there was still plenty of room for improvement in the Wellington shopping experience.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> The Evening Post, 27<sup>th</sup> December 1872.

<sup>69</sup> WI, 28<sup>th</sup> September 1872.

<sup>70</sup> NZT, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1875.

<sup>71</sup> NZT, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1875, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1875.

<sup>72</sup> WI, 29<sup>th</sup> April 1874.

In the 1870s, due to previously mentioned political and economic growth in Wellington, there were more potential shoppers in the capital than had been seen previously. Two main shopping areas grew up in Wellington, the Te Aro / Cuba Street district and Lambton Quay. Lambton Quay, was the location of the more upmarket shops throughout this period and continues to be to this day. Also known as 'the Beach'<sup>73</sup> Lambton Quay was popular with "ladies bent on shopping excursions" during the day, and was particularly well populated on a Saturday night when "all Wellington seems to devote itself to promenading up and down from Willis Street to Thorndon".<sup>74</sup> The Cuba Street area was put on the map by James Smith and was also home to a number of other retail outlets. Both areas were very popular with the shopping public, an example of this is when in 1877 a new shopping arcade opened in Manners Street it was reported that several thousand people took the opportunity to visit the opening of the arcade.<sup>75</sup>

Lawrence's study of the geographical and social space of the department store asserts that despite an assumption that these stores were solidly targeted to middle-class women in fact there were distinct types of store catering for different social strata.<sup>76</sup> In Wellington, the social divide appeared to be neatly drawn between the Lambton Quay stores and the Cuba Street ones. Kirkcaldie & Stains wished to attract the elite class of Wellington and its surrounds and pitched themselves so as to reflect that. In 1904 for example, they advertised themselves as "The 'Correct' Store" where all the fashionable people did their buying.<sup>77</sup> Their illustrated catalogues and advertisements were aimed at assisting the buying public to make the correct decisions on purchases to reflect and enhance their lives. For example, one advertisement they ran played on women's concern at how they were viewed by others and how the shop could help them address that.<sup>78</sup> Conversely, the Cuba Street area was populated by stores which were more popular with the working class, C. Allan Harris wrote in the *Evening Post* of Saturday night out on the street for the men of "labour" and their

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<sup>73</sup> Due to its original proximity to the sea where the waves would come right up to it, Lambton Quay was known as 'the Beach' for many years.

<sup>74</sup> Whanganui Chronicle, 8<sup>th</sup> September 1885.

<sup>75</sup> NZT, 3rd December 1877.

<sup>76</sup> Jeanne Lawrence, "Geographical Space, Social Space and the Realm of the Department Store", *Urban History* 19), no 1 (1992), 64-83.

<sup>77</sup> EP, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1904.

<sup>78</sup> Kirkcaldie & Stains advert, ATL, Eph-D-COSTUME-1905-02.

families.<sup>79</sup> We will see later in this study though, that the women of Wellington were willing to visit many different shops to obtain what was needed, even if they were mainly loyal to one of the main stores.

Flanders has argued that the development of the British department stores stagnated during the 1880s and 1890s whilst those of the United States had made massive steps forward.<sup>80</sup> In Wellington, the downturn of the economy which lasted from the late 1870s until 1895 prevented any substantial new stores from being opened. However, those that already existed continued to innovate through this period. Historians have identified a number of innovations in selling over the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century which helped the American stores grow from small drapers and dry goods shops to the large emporiums they became. This was the era where these 'palaces of consumption' became a source of leisure for middle-class women around the world. Literature on the American department store has tended to concentrate on the large stores such as Chicago's Marshall Fields.<sup>81</sup> It is useful to look at the development of the small store in the States to see where the parallels may have existed with the development of those in Wellington. In his history of T.C Power & Bro in Montana, Henry Klassen has noted key factors in its rise such as improvements in transportation, marketing and the one-price system that were being used to such acclaim by the large stores. Reading the history of Power & Bro, the similarities to Wellington stores are striking, this was a small family firm started by an entrepreneur which transformed from a general store to a department store throughout the period of 1870s-1910.<sup>82</sup>

In New Zealand, Evan Roberts has claimed that "the first store to deliberately follow American ideas about retailing was the Auckland store Laidlaw Leeds, later renamed Farmers" which was opened in 1909.<sup>83</sup> However, looking at the evidence available on the leading retailers of Wellington it can be seen that many of the American innovations were well adopted here and that there continued to be advancements in the retail space

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<sup>79</sup> EP, 17<sup>th</sup> November 1906.

<sup>80</sup> Flanders, *Consuming Passions*, 116.

<sup>81</sup> See for example: Vicki Howard, *From Main Street to Mall*; William Leach, "Transformations in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925", *The Journal of American History* 71, no 2 (1984).

<sup>82</sup> Henry Klassen, "T. C. Power & Bro.: The Rise of a Small Western Department Store, 1870-1902", *The Business History Review* 66, no 4 (1992), 671-722.

<sup>83</sup> Roberts, "'Don't Sell Things, Sell Effects'", 269.

throughout the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The Drapery and General Importing Company (D.I.C) and The Economic were two stores that opened in Wellington in the 1890s and owed much to the influences of American and Parisian store innovations. Forrest Ross's article on The Economic in 1905 talks at length on the influence that American retail innovations had on the store resulting from Mr George's trip to the United States.<sup>84</sup> A number of these innovations will be examined in more detail later in the chapter.

One of the retail establishments that opened in Wellington with some panache at this time and had a successful run well into the late twentieth century was the D.I.C. store. Bendix Hallenstein started the D.I.C in Dunedin in 1884 before expanding to Christchurch and then Wellington in 1891. The store had all the additions to make shopping an enjoyable experience for ladies, from a refreshment room where you could have "an exquisite cup of café au lait and a queen's cake" to a dress makers' fitting room and a retiring room for ladies which was "sumptuously furnished".<sup>85</sup> They launched with the usual advertising rhetoric displayed by the drapery stores stating that "it is no exaggeration to say they comprise the Largest, Newest and most Fashionable Selections of the Old World that have ever been opened out in Wellington". In the Wellington Gossip pages of the *New Zealand Mail* it was claimed that eight thousand people had been through on opening day and that it was considered quite the thing to do. Based on the descriptions in the newspapers of the new emporium it would certainly have been an experience to visit there. First the shopper would have been greeted by the "be-medalled porter" who would "open the door and usher her into the handsome portals", which had "two magnificent bronze figures on marble pedestals" and "a huge mirror which tempts many people to walk into it". From there she would look around the many departments with their "beautiful and comprehensive stock of every possible article of bodily and household equipment and adornment". After an exhausting time shopping our lady shopper could then retire to the new refreshment rooms which had retiring rooms and lavatories attached, this being a first for Wellington.<sup>86</sup> The success of the Wellington branch of the D.I.C. was reflected in the annual company results where it was noted that the first year's turnover was greater than it

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<sup>84</sup> New Zealand Mail, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1905.

<sup>85</sup> Evening Post, 24th September 1891.

<sup>86</sup> NZM, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1891, Wairarapa Daily Times, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1891.

had been in Christchurch or Dunedin. When opened it was thought that the D.I.C. with its refreshment room and large emporium of 50,000 square feet over three floors was twenty years ahead of what Wellington needed but it's success belied that and by 1898 it was being expanded by a third of its size.<sup>87</sup>

The other notable large draper's emporium established in Wellington in the 1890s was George and Kersley's The Economic, opening in the Lambton Quay area. They established The Economic in November 1894 and expanded the warehouse twice prior to 1897. William George came from London where he had worked for William Whitely Limited, a large department store colloquially known as 'The Universal Provider'.<sup>88</sup> He established The Economic on Lambton Quay after seeing a need for a store on the lines of ones in Melbourne, Paris (Bon Marché) and London (Army and Navy Stores), that supplied fashionable items at the lowest prices for cash only. He was joined by Henry Kersley who had previously been at Kirkcaldie & Stains. They claimed that the fashionable items in their windows could be seen almost simultaneously with ones in London. The Wellington public's partiality for bargains and the ability to pay with cash immediately rather than receiving a draper's bill ensured success for this venture.<sup>89</sup> In 1905 following a major fire they built a new store along American lines (as has been mentioned previously); these innovations included glazed counters to show off the "dainty novelties" within, and low stands throughout holding display goods. Another innovation deemed to be the first of its kind in Australasia was a cash electric railway.<sup>90</sup> The Economic continued to innovate into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and traded until 1921 when they amalgamated with the D.I.C.

Both Kirkcaldie & Stains and James Smith made further shop improvements in the 1890s possibly in reaction to the new innovative stores being opened in the city. Kirkcaldie & Stains expanded their store creating a large, light and airy showroom that was one of the "most commodious showrooms in the Colony". According to one newspaper article their cash system of payments combined with careful attention to customers helped them

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<sup>87</sup> EP, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1896, NZT, 11<sup>th</sup> June 1898.

<sup>88</sup> *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District*, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d42-d1.html#n656>.

<sup>89</sup> NZT, 5<sup>th</sup> December 1894.

<sup>90</sup> NZM, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1905.

become one of the leading businesses in New Zealand.<sup>91</sup> In 1898 James Smith cut ties with Te Aro House which continued to be run by his former partner.<sup>92</sup> His sons James and Alex moved to a new building called “The New House” and letters were sent to their customers to let them know this, and to take the opportunity to communicate about members of the staff and their ongoing connection to Wellington. The New House was immediately popular and there was quite a rush of customers on the first day of opening to take advantage of the bargains to be had. A photo of The New House in 1898 shows windows covered with Sales notices and a couple of well-dressed ladies looking in at the window displays, quite a change from the first small shop in 1866. James Smith & Sons continued to be a popular store well into the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century and along with Kirkcaldie & Stains and the D.I.C. became one of Wellington’s department stores.

By the late 1890s the economy in Wellington improved. In 1897 the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* which listed businesses in the Wellington region covered in detail the ten largest draper’s companies including James Smith, Kirkcaldie & Stains, The D.I.C. and The Economic. It also mentioned the names and addresses of an additional (smaller) fourteen draper’s shops. This means that for a population of around forty thousand (again according to the *Cyclopedia*) there were at least twenty-four establishments where one could purchase drapery goods.<sup>93</sup> By this time a shopper ‘doing the block’ on Lambton Quay would have the choice of four large emporiums, with Kirkcaldie & Stains located between Brandon and Johnston street, the D.I.C on the next block with an entrance on Panama Street, and George & Kersley’s The Economic, and Warnock and Adkin located further down towards the Parliament end of the Quay. Those venturing to the Te Aro end of the town could visit James Smith’s Wholesale and Retail Drapery along with a number of others such as C. Smith, and Veitch and Allen who were both fairly large establishments along with seven other smaller stores. From this point, other than necessary rebuilds due to fire, the stores continued to develop and innovate but remained essentially the same stores until the First World War.

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<sup>91</sup> NZT, 28<sup>th</sup> September 1891.

<sup>92</sup> EP, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1898.

<sup>93</sup> *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District.*



## Part Two – Creating a “ladies paradise” in Wellington.

One of the critical factors for the rise of the department store was “the spread of advertising from quack medicines to other areas”.<sup>94</sup> It is not a coincidence that the rise of the department store is echoed by the rise of advertising, and the progress of both was closely paralleled in New Zealand and Australia as well as throughout the United States, London and Paris.<sup>95</sup> For stores to be successful they needed to let potential clients know what was available to be bought and therefore attract them into the stores. The role of the department store has been described as one of educating and encouraging a consumer society in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Davis argued that these shops catered to those who though now well-to-do were inexperienced in shopping, by ensuring there was choice and an abundant display of goods.<sup>96</sup> Despite their isolation from the rest of the world Wellington store owners utilised many of the same retail innovations in marketing goods. The leading drapers put a lot of effort into marketing their goods to potential buyers, using the newspapers with daily advertisements. Up until this point it had been common for shops to not advertise at all. As an example, neither Mary Taylor nor the Misses Smith who bought the shop from her advertised their drapery business in the local newspapers, relying on word of mouth in the small township that Wellington was at that time. However, as Kathleen Coleridge has shown, Wellington retailers came to realise the importance of the newspaper as a method of attracting custom.<sup>97</sup> By the 1860s advertisements were more numerous but were still generally unsophisticated and tended to consist of a list of the available goods and their prices which they begged their customers to consider. It was also common to list which ships the goods had come over from, possibly so the customers could see that these were fashions direct from London or Paris. The language in the advertisements was very respectful and slightly obsequious for example “JAMES SMITH BEGS to intimate that he has RECEIVED the FIRST SHIPMENT” (capital letters were also used a lot for emphasis) and

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<sup>94</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 118.

<sup>95</sup> Ellen McArthur, “The Role of Department Stores in the Evolution of Marketing: Primary Source Records from Australia”, *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 5, no 4 (2013), 449-470.

<sup>96</sup> Davis, *A History of Shopping*, 290.

<sup>97</sup> Kathleen Coleridge, quoted in Ian F. Grant, *Lasting Impressions: the story of New Zealand's newspapers, 1840-1920* (Wellington: Fraser Books, 2018), 18.

“J.BURNE takes the present opportunity of returning his sincere thanks to his numerous friends and customers for their patronage”<sup>98</sup>

As the century progressed advertising activities became more elaborate, and by the early 1870s a number of the larger shops were well known for the types of advertisements they presented to the public. Advertising across the globe and particularly in the United States had become an elaborate tool used by the cleverest of the stores, and this influence travelled across to New Zealand. In 1871 the *Evening Post* in Wellington commented on “the dignity to which it [advertising] has risen in America” and that “our enterprising tradesmen are working hard for its elevation”. Warmolls, the men’s clothing store, were known for their sensational posters and adverts while McDowell & Co. made “philanthropic announcements” of the “enormous value of the property” being presented to the public for the “smallest possible consideration”.<sup>99</sup> These advertisements would have been an important source of income for the local newspapers and a symbiotic relationship developed. As well as newspaper advertisements the stores branched out to other mediums at this time. James Smith published an Almanac as a gift for shoppers which included maps of the colony and city as well as information on the goods stocked.<sup>100</sup> At the start of this decade advertisements were still fairly simple in approach, mainly listing the goods for sale, and did not include any special enticements to attract the ladies of the city. As the decade progressed however, advertisements became more elaborate and utilised more illustrations to entice their buyers and stand out from the crowd. In 1875 James Smith started including a picture of the Te Aro House store in their advertisements giving them visual focus.<sup>101</sup>

From the late 1870s onwards, in line with what was happening in the United States, advertising became more and more extravagant utilising full pages of newspapers and even at times multi page supplements. The Wellington stores vied with each other to provide sophisticated illustrations and wording for their advertisements. James Smith was a

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<sup>98</sup> WI, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1867.

<sup>99</sup> EP, 11<sup>th</sup> February 1871.

<sup>100</sup> EP, 31<sup>st</sup> January 1877.

<sup>101</sup> NZM, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1875.

consummate promoter and was well known for his advertisements; his advertising campaigns took advantage of events happening in the capital or elsewhere to compare with shopping at their store. An example of one promotion was a comparison of a local two-mile bicycle race with shopping at The New House, where everyone could gain a prize. These series of adverts seemed to encompass everything from sports events to Paganini playing his violin. Anything could be used as a way to entice shoppers to the store, like excursions in from out of town. For example an excursion in 1898 from Palmerston North where shoppers were enticed into The New House with offers of a free “hot luncheon” at Mr Godber’s shop for anyone making a purchase. With this occasion being a half day holiday and the shop closed in the afternoon they also drew attention to the fashions in the windows and their ability to service any orders by post.<sup>102</sup> By the end of the century advertisements were illustrated with pictures of goods and were much more attractive than earlier. Kirkcaldie & Stains in particular made extensive use of the ability to show pictures and to pitch their advertisements to attract elite women.

Along with advertising, mail order and direct mailing were an important part of the business of attracting customers, and stores developed them into an important feature of their business.<sup>103</sup> Mail order was an effective way to reach their rural customers and was successfully used by Kirkcaldie & Stains, James Smith and the D.I.C in Wellington. By the end of the century catalogues became beautifully illustrated and served as a way to promote the season’s fashions.<sup>104</sup> Kirkcaldie & Stains alone sent out thousands of catalogues and received each year fifteen to twenty thousand letters containing orders and cheques.<sup>105</sup> These approaches allowed the stores to employ the personal touch and target shoppers with events that would appeal to them. Abelson has described the part that American department stores played in enticing women to shop and describes the sense of wonder and awe that these shops worked hard to create in their customers.<sup>106</sup> Wellington store-keepers may not have had the ability to create such exotic wonderlands, working as they were on a much smaller scale but they did attempt to entice shoppers with special events

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<sup>102</sup> James Smith Scrapbook, 1898-1949, ATL, 93-215-5/4.

<sup>103</sup> McArthur, “The Role of Department Stores in the Evolution of Marketing”, 455.

<sup>104</sup> Kirkcaldie & Stains Ltd: Fashionable attire for spring and summer, 1904-5, ATL, Eph-B-KIRKCALDIE-1-1904.

<sup>105</sup> *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District*; NZM, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1898.

<sup>106</sup> Abelson, *When Ladies Go a-Thieving*, 43.

and decorations. The stores would have kept lists of their clientele as many bought on credit, and they sent out letters and invites to provide the personalised touch and invite shoppers to events. Special invitation-only evenings whereby shoppers could browse the stock and where the shops were highly decorated to show goods to their best advantage were particularly popular. These special shopping invitations appeared to be numerous and the ladies of Wellington would have found it hard to resist the pretty goods on sale. One evening in particular at Kirkcaldie & Stains apparently attracted thousands of shoppers. The decorations were elaborate involving large quantities of silk festooning the ceiling, a band playing on a podium and many other items to delight the public.<sup>107</sup> “Novelty and up-to-dateness” were also key to attracting the shopper and required rapid turnover of goods and special and exciting ways to display them.<sup>108</sup> The turning of the seasons was a prime opportunity to display the new goods for sale and attract purchasers. Newspaper columns assisted by noting all the new fashions that could be obtained to update one’s wardrobe for the new season. As Davis has noted the department stores played their part in influencing the middle-classes to become fashion conscious, and customers “were awed and flattered and before they knew it they were influenced and persuaded.”<sup>109</sup>

Christmas time gave the enterprising shop-keepers even more opportunity to dress both their windows and shop interiors and to find ways to entice the shoppers in. In London Christmas shopping throughout the month of December and even earlier became essential to the celebrations of the Christmas period from the 1880s onwards.<sup>110</sup> It would seem in Wellington however, that retailers did not recognise this opportunity until the 1890s, as references to special Christmas events and promotions were not seen in the newspapers prior to that point. Christmas Eve had always been a special shopping night with “the streets thronged to a late hour by pedestrians bent on admiring the shops... and on making their purchases for the holidays to come”.<sup>111</sup> From the 1890s onwards however, the draper’s stores made every attempt to entice the shoppers in during this period by advertising goods

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<sup>107</sup> New Zealand Freelance, 26<sup>th</sup> September 1903.

<sup>108</sup> Davis, *A History of Shopping*, 292.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 292.

<sup>110</sup> Christopher Hosgood, ““Doing the Shops’ at Christmas: women, men and the department store in England, c.1880-1914”, in *Cathedrals of Consumption: The European Department Store, 1850-1939*, eds. Geoffrey Crossick and Serge Jaumain (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 102.

<sup>111</sup> EP, 28<sup>th</sup> December 1874.

from the beginning of December and setting up all sorts of entertainments for children. In 1894 the D.I.C. converted their furniture department to a Christmas one and had a large Christmas tree with Father Christmas providing an especial attraction for the children.<sup>112</sup> In 1895 The Economic topped this with a display featuring a mechanical Neptune surrounded by moving fishes and sea monsters and in 1896 with a mechanical display of Jack Frost.<sup>113</sup> The Economic was also the first store to parade their Santa in 1905.<sup>114</sup> Reading through the advertisements during the Christmas period, the activities for enticing customers will be familiar to the modern shopper, including late night opening and clearance sales starting after the holidays. Gifts with purchase are also not a modern innovation as Te Aro House was offering these for cash buyers during the Christmas period from 1891, with variable gifts depending on how much the shopper had purchased.<sup>115</sup>

The post-Christmas clearing sale was also a key time for the drapers. Sales had been popular since the early days of the colony and were always a good way to entice the public into the shop. The D.I.C salvage sale after the fire that burnt down their premises in 1905 is a good example of the public's love for a bargain as it is said that this sale caused an "extraordinary commotion amongst the multitude of bargain-seekers in the city and suburbs", with huge crowds waiting from before the store opened and queuing all day. The photo in the newspaper serves to illustrate the crowds, showing men, women and children all waiting to enter the store (Figure 5).<sup>116</sup>

As well as other methods of attracting customers, the buildings themselves, many of which were either newly built or extensively improved in the 1880s and 1890s were a useful tool with elaborate décor, large showrooms and large plate glass windows.<sup>117</sup> Leach asserts that "department stores were among the first modern institutions to disseminate the new technologies of color, glass, and light."<sup>118</sup> Much like with advertising, entrepreneurial store-owners were quick to realise that these innovations in the design and build of the premises

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<sup>112</sup> NZM, 21<sup>st</sup> December 1894.

<sup>113</sup> NZT, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1895, Evening Post, 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1896.

<sup>114</sup> Santa Parades, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/interactive/santa-parades>.

<sup>115</sup> NZT, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1891.

<sup>116</sup> NZM, 15<sup>th</sup> February 1905.

<sup>117</sup> McArthur, "The Role of Department Stores in the Evolution of Marketing", 406.

<sup>118</sup> William Leach, "Transformations in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925", *The Journal of American History* 71, no 2 (1984), 323.

would be important in attracting the customers. One such innovation used by The Economic was a Dark Room where the daylight could be excluded to show evening dress materials under electric or gas lights. Alterations to their store in 1897 included large plate glass windows similar to the leading establishments in London and the United States, and strategically placed mirrors to make the interior space look much bigger. Pictures of the interiors of the stores in Wellington are not common unfortunately, so we must glean what we can from those that do exist. In the photo of the D.I.C Mantle department in 1884 (this was the Dunedin store but we can assume the Wellington one would have been similar) we can see dummies dressed in costumes, giving ladies an idea of what the outfit would look like on them, as well as items hanging up and available to be browsed through. (Figure.4) This picture is similar to pictures of the Mantle showroom for The Economic in 1905 and that of Kirkcaldie & Stains in 1897, which appeared in print at the time, unfortunately the quality is poor for both of these interior shots.<sup>119</sup> The pictures of Kirkcaldie & Stains show a store still run along traditional lines with long counters before which are placed chairs for the shopper as well as the browsing area such as the Mantle showroom. The continued utilisation of the counter was also common in British department stores until at least the middle of the 20th Century. Browsing opportunities were available with hanging or arranged goods all around the store to be inspected, particularly in the gloves and fancy wear departments. We can also see the carpet warehouse with numerous carpets and linoleums hanging up.<sup>120</sup> The Economic building which was built in 1905 following a fire utilised much in the way of retail innovation inspired by Mr George's trip to the United States. These included an electric lift, dressed first-floor windows, low stands holding goods and glazed counters to display more goods. All of these things were novel for the Wellington market and would have provided a shopping experience aligned to that of the department stores overseas.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District*, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d42-d1.html#n656>, NZM, 7th June 1905.

<sup>120</sup> *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District*, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d42-d1.html#n656>; Stobart, "Cathedrals of Consumption? Provincial Department Stores in England", 812.

<sup>121</sup> NZM, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1905.

In addition to the physical make-up of the store, dressing the windows was an important part of encouraging the customers to come in and spend money.<sup>122</sup> Many of the drapers had specially illuminated windows and made regular changes to the displays even to the extent of dedicating members of staff to be window dressers. The displays were always very popular with shoppers and passers-by and quite often the pavements were blocked by throngs of window shoppers. Warnock, Kelly and Adkin advertised “Sixty feet of plate glass!!” to attract the attention of “thousands of ladies”.<sup>123</sup> Wilson & Richardson of Lambton Quay even showed magic lantern shows of dissolving pictures to entice the Saturday night shopping crowd to special sale events.<sup>124</sup> Window displays were changed to reflect the new season’s stock and to “excite inevitable feelings of longings in the heart of every feminine beholder”, according to one newspaper article in 1876 which remarked on the gorgeous window displays.<sup>125</sup> The ability for shoppers to be able to browse and spend time looking at goods with no pressure to buy became increasingly important. The use of shop windows assisted in showing off shop’s stock to the public even when the store was closed. Skilled promoter James Smith even advised customers that the full range of new blouses could be seen in the shop window for those who liked to see them without entering the store.<sup>126</sup> The Wellington stores understood the need for innovation in window dressing and looked to America for influence, with Kirkcaldie & Stains going as far as to engage an American window dresser.<sup>127</sup> The ability for women to be able to engage in window shopping had an important impact on their presence in public streets and this influence will be examined later in this thesis.

Retail historians have discussed at length the in-store innovations offered to the shopper in the United States and France (and eventually the United Kingdom) which ranged from the practical to the incredible.<sup>128</sup> In Wellington, with its smaller population and therefore smaller stores, the offerings were aligned more to the practical, these included dressmaking

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<sup>122</sup> McArthur, “The Role of Department Stores in the Evolution of Marketing”, 458; Leach, “Transformations in a Culture of Consumption”, 325.

<sup>123</sup> NZT, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1889.

<sup>124</sup> NZM, 21<sup>st</sup> September 1888.

<sup>125</sup> EP, 30<sup>th</sup> March 1876.

<sup>126</sup> EP, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1906.

<sup>127</sup> Wairarapa Daily Times, 26<sup>th</sup> May 1903.

<sup>128</sup> See: Abelson, *When Ladies Go a-Thieving*; Lancaster, *The Department Store*; Leach, “Transformations in a Culture of Consumption”; Michael B. Miller, *The Bon Marché*.

departments, refreshment and rest rooms and special travel arrangements to get to the store. James Smith's Te Aro House promoted the convenience of having a tram stop located outside the store to make it easier for customers, and even included a timetable in their newspaper advertisements.<sup>129</sup> Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century dressmaking departments became important in the shops as they expanded into department stores.<sup>130</sup> Stores would have been eager to include these departments so that they could offer the whole service from purchase of the fabric to making up of the outfit, and not lose the customer to one of the many independent dressmakers. The larger shops had tailoring departments as well as ready to wear clothes. In 1898 James Smith advertised the fact that they had obtained Miss Hutchinson from Kirkcaldie & Stains to take charge of the dressmaking department, and that customers could "rest assured of a perfect fit and first-class work" as well as "moderate charges".<sup>131</sup> A well-respected dressmaker such as Miss Ross at Kirkcaldie & Stains who had "a reputation for fit and style, unsurpassed by any other modiste in the Colony", would help promote such a department especially as her designs were featured in the social columns.<sup>132</sup> An article in 1892 mentioned that Thorndon House (then run by Messrs Warnock, Kelly and Adkins) was well known for its dressmaking and despite having around fifty staff could not cope with the demand for its services, this would suggest that this type of service was particularly important to the ladies who shopped.<sup>133</sup>

For shopping to be a pleasant leisure experience and so that women would spend sufficient time browsing and buying, both refreshments and rest rooms needed to be provided. The provision of gender specific public rest rooms has been studied for Dunedin and Auckland but not so far for Wellington. The Dunedin study concluded that it was the department store that provided women with their own conveniences within the city.<sup>134</sup> It was not however, until the late 1880s that these started to become available in Wellington and

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<sup>129</sup> NZM, 5<sup>th</sup> February 1881.

<sup>130</sup> Jane Malthus, "Dressmakers in Nineteenth Century New Zealand", in *Women in History 2*, eds. Barbara Brooks, Charlotte MacDonald and Margaret Tennant, 281.

<sup>131</sup> NZT, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1898.

<sup>132</sup> NZM, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1892; references to a Mrs Knight who wore the design of Miss Ross are mentioned in the social columns, it is not clear of the outfits worn which was Miss Ross's design though.

<sup>133</sup> NZM, 18<sup>th</sup> November 1892.

<sup>134</sup> Caroline Daley, "Flushed with Pride: Women's Quest for Public Toilets in New Zealand", *Women's Studies Journal* 16, no 1 (2000), 95-113; Annabel Cooper, Robin Law, Jane Malthus, Pamela Wood, "Rooms of Their Own: Public Toilets and Gendered Citizens in a New Zealand City, 1860-1940", *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 7, no 4 (2000), 417-433.



supplied women with a place to shop and socialise. A Refreshment Room was added (with lavatory) to provide comfort to both local and visiting shoppers to the new Te Aro House which opened in 1886 after the previous one was destroyed by fire.<sup>135</sup> This seems to be the first in the city and commentary in the *New Zealand Mail* indicated that prior to this Wellington had significantly lagged behind cities such as Melbourne and Sydney in “supplying their patrons with comfort and conveniences during the sometimes wearisome period of shopping”. The newspaper commentary finishes by congratulating the proprietor of Te Aro House for recognising that Wellington women should “enjoy equal facilities, comforts and convenience while shopping as do their sisters in neighbouring colonies”.<sup>136</sup> Having a refreshment room located close to the dressmaking service as it was at Te Aro House allowed customers the ability to relax whilst using this service and possibly made them more likely to consider the service. The undoubted success of the tea rooms resulted in all of the big stores opening tea shops from the 1890s onwards. The D.I.C. opened its new store in Wellington in 1891 with a tearoom conveniently located near to its dressmaking department, that proved very successful with both ladies and men. By 1898 it was enlarged and redecorated to keep up with demand. It would have been very elegant with Japanese screens round each table and the glass and silverware inscribed with D.I.C. By all accounts, tea at the D.I.C. tea room was the thing to do and the social columns claimed that “anyone who has not had ‘afternoon tea’ at the D.I.C is to use a colonialism ‘slightly out of it’”, and here were to be found the fashionable ladies of Wellington and surrounding areas.<sup>137</sup> Ladies coming in to Wellington for the events such as the Agricultural Show stayed for a few days to do the shops and the D.I.C. refreshment room was an especial resort for them.<sup>138</sup> Kirkcaldie & Stains opened their tearoom in 1898 along with their new premises. In 1899 The Economic went a step further and as well as a tearoom for both sexes provided “a suite of rooms...for ladies only, including luxurious lounge rooms, private tea rooms, lavatories”. In 1903 Kirkcaldie & Stains upped the ante by providing music in their tea rooms with an Italian musical trio which was extremely popular with the shoppers.<sup>139</sup> These “daintily-

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<sup>135</sup> NZM, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1886.

<sup>136</sup> NZM, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1886.

<sup>137</sup> NZM 29<sup>th</sup> April 1903.

<sup>138</sup> EP, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1891.

<sup>139</sup> New Zealand Freelance, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1903.

fitted” rooms would have been a further inducement to women to spend hours around the shops.<sup>140</sup>

Finally, there is the service aspect of the stores to be considered. Roberts has noted that one notable difference from the New Zealand retailing model to the American one was the emphasis on individual service rather than sales techniques.<sup>141</sup> American and Parisian department stores became known for their “modern selling... tied to the innovative policy of free access”.<sup>142</sup> Shoppers being able to browse and not have to buy is one of the key reasons that shopping would become such an important leisure occupation for women. The stores of Wellington, in particular Kirkcaldie & Stains were conscious of their elite clientele and like the British stores tended to stick to the tried and true method of offering women individual service. Lancaster has noted that British stores continued to employ formal methods of service with shop-walkers and counters with chairs for customers.<sup>143</sup> Wellington stores appeared to do the same, as previously mentioned interiors of the shops clearly show lines of counters and chairs. Additionally there are a handful of references to shop-walkers in the popular press so presumably these traditions continued in Wellington until at least the turn of the century. However, by 1910 leading drapers in Wellington were assuring the public that “because you come to look around don’t for a moment fancy that you will be pestered to make purchases.”<sup>144</sup>

Despite retail playing a major part in the lives of Wellington’s population histories of the city have mostly overlooked the development of the shops. It was important in a thesis examining women’s shopping activities, to commence with a review of the shops themselves to understand whether they offered a pleasurable experience. The growth of the department store in Wellington has quite clearly emulated that in the developed world, in particular France, England and the United States. It is also clear that American marketing innovations had a more significant impact on the stores than historians had previously understood. The challenges brought about by distance and colonisation did not considerably

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<sup>140</sup> Wairarapa Daily Times, 10<sup>th</sup> October 1899; NZM, 10<sup>th</sup> January 1901.

<sup>141</sup> Roberts, ““Don't Sell Things, Sell Effects””, 266.

<sup>142</sup> Howard, *From Main Street to Mall*, 14.

<sup>143</sup> Lancaster, *The Department Store*, 28.

<sup>144</sup> EP, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1910.

impact on the ability to take retail innovations and to run with them. Individual entrepreneurs were crucial to this development and successful shops were a true reflection of these personal achievements.



Figure 4. The Mantle Department of the Drapery and General Importing Company at the time of its opening in 1884 in Dunedin.



Figure 5. People waiting outside the D.I.C Sale, NZM, 15<sup>th</sup> February 1905.

## Chapter Two: Ladies' Work and Leisure

The elite of Victorian and Edwardian Wellington was made up of wealthy landowners, professionals, politicians, managers or proprietors of substantial businesses, often merchants, senior government officials, ship's captains, top clergyman and regular army officers.<sup>145</sup>

In Roberta Nicholls' study on elite society in Wellington she notes that there was the same type of class divide in Wellington as in Britain, with the governor and his wife acting as royal representatives in the Empire city.<sup>146</sup> This thesis will be using Nicholl's definition of elite society which is quoted above, and therefore will examine the habits of women whose husbands or fathers fit within that definition.<sup>147</sup> There are layers of class within this wider definition of privilege so for example Agnes Grace, as the wife of a wealthy doctor with political leanings, had a more privileged existence than Laura Fitchett, the wife of a dairy farm owner. It is useful to study the "ordinary middle-class women"<sup>148</sup> of Wellington as well as those at the pinnacle of society to ascertain the differences in their social (and shopping) habits. With the exception of Laura, all of the women in this study have appeared in the social columns of the newspapers that were prevalent from 1890 onwards marking them as socially privileged. However, as Laura died prior to 1890 it is hard to speculate on whether she would have appeared or not. Of necessity women from the working classes have been excluded from this study, one as this would expand the scope too far and two, because the primary evidence is far more readily available for the middle and upper classes.

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<sup>145</sup> Nicholls, "Elite Society in Victorian and Edwardian Wellington", 195.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 195-197.

<sup>147</sup> For a full list of all women who appear in this study see Appendix A.

<sup>148</sup> Branca, *Silent sisterhood*, 6.

## Part One – Women's work

Despite living in the first country in the world to grant women the vote, New Zealand women have been portrayed as being markedly domestic.<sup>149</sup>

Raewyn Dalziel has asserted that New Zealand women were more independent than their English sisters and because of this were content with their role as 'helpmeet' to their husbands. She maintained that the New Zealand woman's desire for enfranchisement was not because of wanting to look for positions outside the home, but to help with "their role as guardians of moral health and welfare."<sup>150</sup> Reading through the diaries and letters of Wellington women during the period studied it is evident that home and family was absolutely the centre of their world. Originally historians of middle-class women in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century had concluded that women were angels of the house who spent most of their time in the home and were concerned only with domestic matters; this view has changed however, as historians have examined the lives of these women more closely.<sup>151</sup> That New Zealand married women were concerned with the domestic is not being debated here however. Melanie Nolan usefully gives us three different definitions of the way that the word 'domesticity' was used in her study on women's work, this thesis however, will use domestic to refer to the work done within the home and family.<sup>152</sup> Evidence has shown that given the lack of domestic servants in the colony, middle-class women's primary occupation was to cook, clean and look after their families.<sup>153</sup>

There is ample evidence in the diaries of both Jane Anderson and Laura Fitchett, of their preoccupation with running their homes. Laura, in particular notes undertaking many domestic chores even though she had some domestic help, mentioning a cook and a Mrs Stockbridge who helped with cleaning and washing. Laura's work around the house was not just limited to the traditionally female domestic role, as she also wrote that she had "been

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<sup>149</sup> Nolan, *Bread Winning*, 15.

<sup>150</sup> Dalziel, "The Colonial Helpmeet", 113.

<sup>151</sup> See for example: Dalziel, "The Colonial Helpmeet"; Branca, *Silent sisterhood*; Petersen; Bishop, *Women Mean Business*.

<sup>152</sup> Nolan categorises domesticity as "first, it is the actual pattern of women's lives and work within the family and outside the paid workforce. Secondly, it is the set of ideological and presuppositions that justify women's domestic sphere and make it seem 'normal' and 'natural'. Thirdly, it is an ideal in which the two separate spheres of domesticity and paid work are never completely separate", Nolan, *Bread Winning*, 12.

<sup>153</sup> For example see: Lady Barker, *Station Life in New Zealand*.

very busy painting the engine and helping father up in the forge to straighten iron for the door in the open shed.”<sup>154</sup> Jane was mostly concerned with raising her children during the period that she wrote her diaries. She also spent a considerable amount of time wrestling with servant issues and needed to replace her domestic help on a regular basis. This lack of domestic help is a common theme throughout many of the diaries written and has been the subject of analysis by historians.<sup>155</sup> Even the unmarried were not immune to the domestic round, as Irene Edwin’s diary shows that the daughters of middle-class women were also expected to undertake domestic chores especially, if like Irene, their mother was absent for a time. Irene, as the eldest daughter oversaw organising meals for the family as well as shopping for groceries. Jessie and Laura Barraud did not need to organise the family’s meals but were kept busy all the same. Both the Edwin sisters and the Barraud sisters lived full lives as young ladies at home, filling their days with activities such as music, tennis, sewing and providing domestic support to their parents.<sup>156</sup>

Even women in the higher classes were not immune from having to look after the house. Jessica Pharazyn complained “our only servant went out for the whole day, we had to cook our own dinner, and wait on ourselves”.<sup>157</sup> These women were not “ornament, status symbol and angel in the house”, they were useful to their husbands and families.<sup>158</sup> Anna Stout writing in 1910 told the *Englishwoman* magazine that only those women who “spend their time in amusement” did not vote, and that there were “few women of that class in New Zealand”.<sup>159</sup> The diaries of the women in this study also give proof to Dalziel’s assertion that New Zealand women accepted their primary domestic role and were content with the level of independence that this gave them. From the evidence of the diaries, it is clear that none of the women studied worked outside the house once they were married. Even Laura Fitchett who was more involved in her husband’s business than say Jane Anderson was, concentrated mostly on domestic support of her husband. It is not ground-breaking to

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<sup>154</sup> Diary of Laura Fitchett, 1882-1886, ATL, MS-Papers-6793.

<sup>155</sup> Bishop, *Women Mean Business* 37-39; Porter, MacDonald and MacDonald, *My hand will write what my heart dictates*; Dalziel, “The Colonial Helpmeet”.

<sup>156</sup> Diary of Laura Fitchett; Jane Anderson diary, Irene Edwin diary, Laura Cottam Barraud diary.

<sup>157</sup> Jessica Pharazyn diary.

<sup>158</sup> Dalziel, “The Colonial Helpmeet”, 115.

<sup>159</sup> The Queen, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1910.

assert here that the vast majority of middle and upper-class women did not work during the period studied but it is useful to look at how the evidence for this assertion stacks up.

Catherine Bishop's recent work on female businesswomen has highlighted the numbers of women who ran businesses in colonial New Zealand, however, she also acknowledges that the middle-class women, like the ones in this thesis, were primarily focused on their full-time employment as wives and mothers.<sup>160</sup> Working middle-class women in Wellington would have been very much a minority throughout this period. Although the coverage of gender, class and employment is variable in the Census data it is possible to determine some useful statistics from what is available. The table below shows the percentages of working women throughout this period for the whole of New Zealand. This illustrates that for all women of working age only a small minority were employed outside the home. This number only grew slowly throughout the period covered, culminating in 18% of all women being in employment by 1906.

| Year | Not Employed | Employed | All Women | Workers as a Percentage of all women |
|------|--------------|----------|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| 1871 | N/A          | N/A      | N/A       | N/A                                  |
| 1874 | 113,421      | 14,949   | 128,370   | 12%                                  |
| 1878 | 161,221      | 22,193   | 183,414   | 12%                                  |
| 1881 | 194,538      | 25,774   | 220,312   | 12%                                  |
| 1886 | 232,343      | 33,872   | 266,215   | 13%                                  |
| 1891 | 248,364      | 45,417   | 293,781   | 15%                                  |
| 1896 | 278,006      | 53,070   | 331,076   | 16%                                  |
| 1901 | 300,985      | 65,671   | 366,656   | 18%                                  |
| 1906 | 342,313      | 75,244   | 417,557   | 18%                                  |

Table 1: Women in Paid Employment in New Zealand from Census Results.

The data available for Wellington suggests the same pattern, unfortunately the 1891 Census was not broken down by region so there is a gap in the results.

<sup>160</sup> Bishop, *Women Mean Business*, 37-39.



| Year | Not Employed | Employed | All Women | Workers as a Percentage of all women |
|------|--------------|----------|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| 1871 | N/A          | N/A      | N/A       | N/A                                  |
| 1874 | 11,940       | 1,604    | 13,544    | 12%                                  |
| 1878 | 20376        | 2,816    | 23,192    | 12%                                  |
| 1881 | 21859        | 3,165    | 28,654    | 11%                                  |
| 1886 | 31,583       | 4,303    | 35,886    | 12%                                  |
| 1891 | N/A          | N/A      | N/A       | N/A                                  |
| 1896 | 47,102       | 9,995    | 57,097    | 18%                                  |
| 1901 | 54,667       | 12,436   | 67,103    | 19%                                  |
| 1906 | 66,774       | 16,443   | 83,217    | 20%                                  |

Table 2: Women in Paid Employment in Wellington from Census Results

According to the Census results tabulated above the percentage of working women in Wellington only increased from 12% to 20%. This grouping covered all women who had recorded that they were in paid employment and does not give us a breakdown by social class, however the largest sub-group was that of domestic servants, suggesting that working-class women dominated these figures.<sup>161</sup> Additionally, the results do not give us a breakdown of the marital status of these women, so we are not able to determine what percentage of female workers were married. Reviewing the diaries and letters of the ladies examined in this thesis, none of the married ones worked outside of the home nor would there have been any expectation on them doing so. Gordon and Nair's study of middle-class women in Glasgow during the same period determined that "the percentages of married women with any source of income recorded in the census are tiny, between 3 and 4% until 1891, when the figure rose to 6.2%"<sup>162</sup>. It is reasonable to assume therefore, that the number of middle-class women working outside the home in Wellington would therefore have been extremely low, meaning that for the vast majority any money would need to be obtained from husband or father.<sup>163</sup>

<sup>161</sup> For example: In 1881 62% of all employed women in Wellington stated their occupation as domestic servants. See Appendix B for the full list of occupations recorded in the 1881 Census.

<sup>162</sup> Eleanor Gordon & Gwyneth Nair, *The Economic Role of Middle-class Women in Victorian Glasgow*, *Women's History Review* 9, no 4 (2000), 794.

<sup>163</sup> Inadequacies of the New Zealand census data has been called out a number of times most currently by Catherine Bishop, *Women Mean Business*.

As Belich has noted there were not many jobs suitable for ladies of the middle and upper classes, for the respectable lady the only real possibility was that of teaching.<sup>164</sup> The 1881 census recorded 318 women in the Professional category including 259 teachers. This is only 8% of all working women in Wellington and therefore an extremely low proportion of all women. It is very unlikely that any middle-class women continued to teach after they were married. Jane Anderson, née Spinks, was one such woman who started a school with her sister Florence from their house in Wellington. Jane only lasted for a couple of years of teaching prior to marrying in 1862, and then became involved in her marriage and children. Florence, however, did not marry and continued to run the school until 1879.<sup>165</sup> Whether Florence made enough money to constitute making a living is unknown and she continued to live with her parents (her father being a successful merchant) during this time.

In the late 19th and early 20th Century there started to be more opportunities in the types of employment that middle-class women could investigate, although the numbers of women in employment remained low as has been seen. A number of newspaper columns were authored by women, and other than perhaps Elizabeth Harris who was married to the proprietor, it can be assumed that some payment was made for this work. Forrestina Ross (known as Forrest) was one of these women. She started her employment as a teacher prior to marriage and then entered journalism alongside her husband. However, women like Forrest Ross were the exception rather than the rule with only 10 women recording their profession as Literary in 1896. Irene Edwin, who like Florence Spinks remained unmarried, wrote columns on colonial Wellington for the *Evening Post* newspaper later in life, but it is not known whether this was a financially worthwhile endeavour. The other woman for whom we have some information on career is Jessica Pharazyn née Rankin who was an English poetess celebrated for her work with the Irish composer Balfe. This poetry was written prior to her marriage in Wellington and is never mentioned in her diaries, Jessica seeming content to put it aside for her new role as wife.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Belich, *Making peoples*, chap 15.

<sup>165</sup> Bishop, *Women Mean Business*, 293.

<sup>166</sup> F L Irvine-Smith, *The Streets of my city*, Wellington New Zealand, 1948, <https://www.wcl.govt.nz/heritage/streetschap2.html>

As the elite women of Wellington were therefore unlikely to pursue any paid employment the question then is how did they afford items from the shops? For shopping to have been a pleasure women would have needed access to sufficient funds to be able to purchase the items that they wanted. Without their own money it is probable that funds would have needed to be supplied by their husbands or fathers. The next section examines this contention and how far the woman studied would have been free to spend on what they liked.

## Part Two – Emptying their masters' wallets?

Hard Times

(A Woman's View)

I hear them talk of the wretched "times,"  
To me, alas! They're drawing near,  
I have to wear my shabby boots,  
And don a bonnet of last year;  
It's really rather hard to see  
Such tantalising chapeaux shown  
And sigh, 'That's just the one for me.'

But if I say, in coaxing tones,  
"Jack, let me have some cash to-day,"  
You'd think I'd asked him for his life!  
He gets in such a fearful way;  
He glares at first in speechless rage,  
Then growls, "The woman's surely mad!  
Money, indeed! First tell me, ma'am,  
Where the article is to be had?"

Millie

Wellington, April 24.<sup>167</sup>

Millie's poem was published in the Ladies Column of the *New Zealand Mail* in 1880 at a time when New Zealand had been plunged into an economic decline. The poem illustrates both the general view of a woman's vanity but also that women were dependent on their husbands and fathers for their money. Apart from single women who were required by circumstances to earn their own living it was expected that the husband (or father)

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<sup>167</sup> NZM, 8th May 1880.

controlled the purse.<sup>168</sup> Even shop owner Mary Taylor, independent as she undoubtedly was, received the money to start her business from her brothers. Mary did, however, manage the business herself. According to her business partner Ellen Taylor, Mary did all the negotiations with the wholesalers for stock for the shop and was as “fierce as a dragon” with them. Both this and the running of the shop itself would have been extremely unusual for women of their class, and Ellen remarked that “our keeping shop astonishes everybody here”.<sup>169</sup> Mary and Ellen Taylor were uncommon in Wellington being unmarried middle-class women, as most women of the elite classes were married once they reached their twenties. As Dalziel reminds us, marriage was the “main occupation” of women, and around 90% of women of suitable age were married in the late 19th century.<sup>170</sup>

Before 1884 husbands and wives in New Zealand (and in the United Kingdom) were legally one person with the wife having no legal rights of her own.<sup>171</sup> Along with this they would have had no economic rights either but be dependent on their husband to support them. By the late 1890s however, women in New Zealand had obtained the vote and there was more pressure for them to have an amount of economic independence. An article in the *White Ribbon* magazine on the economic independence of married women, noted “a women of this colony has a voice in the public affairs of her country, but she has not the right to pay her milliner’s bill”. The writer stated that it was largely the women of the middle-class who suffered this indignity and called for married women to be paid a wage equal to that of a servant rather than being treated as a slave. This call for the economic independence of married women by paying her a part of the husband’s income or earnings sparked much controversy in the popular press.<sup>172</sup> The vision of a wife being paid for her domestic duties was a step too far, even for such well-known feminists as Lady Stout, who declared that “the most effectual means for securing the economic independence of women after marriage is

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<sup>168</sup> Porter, MacDonald and MacDonald, *My hand will write what my heart dictates*, 8; Bettina Bradbury, “From civil death to separate property: Changes in the Legal Rights of Married Women in Nineteenth Century New Zealand”, *NZJH*, 29:1, p.44.

<sup>169</sup> Taylor and Stevens, *Mary Taylor, friend of Charlotte Brontë*, 100.

<sup>170</sup> Raewyn Dalziel, “The Colonial Helpmeet”, 112-123; James Belich, *Making peoples : a history of the New Zealanders : from Polynesian settlement to the end of the nineteenth century* (Auckland: Penguin, 2001) ,chap 15.

<sup>171</sup> Bishop, *Women Mean Business*, 57.

<sup>172</sup> White Ribbon, 1st July 1895, 1st May 1896.

to maintain their economic independence before marriage".<sup>173</sup> Even the granting of the Married Women's Property Act only guaranteed women any income which she owned or bought to the marriage, and did not provide anything for women who did not work or own property.<sup>174</sup> However, despite these legal changes for working women there would have been little impact on the women in this thesis, and indeed on the majority of the middle and upper classes, as it has been established that they did not work outside the home. As Nolan reminds us, economic independence was not an automatic result of winning the right to vote, and it has been a slow process to reach this independence throughout the 20th century.<sup>175</sup> Certainly, the women of the late 19th and early 20th Century may have had access to, but did not have rights over the family money.

Don't talk to me of stylish hats,  
Be glad you are clothed at all, ma'am!"  
And off he goes and bangs the door,  
Shaking the whole house with its slam;  
But when the dreaded "4<sup>th</sup>" draws near-  
With all the bills upon it flung-  
Poor Jack begins to look grim,  
As if his hanging day had come.<sup>176</sup>

Looking back to Millie's poem any money available to the protagonist was provided by her husband - money that presumably was hard to come by. This would have been the case for all of the women in this study, though Jessica Pharazyn is the only one of the women who has mentioned a specific allowance from her husband, noting "he bought my first quarter's allowance, twenty-five pounds".<sup>177</sup> All the women analysed were dependent on their husband or father for money to spend at the shops, although other than Jane Anderson none of them make mention of needing to pay bills or accounts at the shops. Jane noted in

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<sup>173</sup> Christchurch Press, 28th September 1896.

<sup>174</sup> Bradbury, "From civil death to separate property", 55-57.

<sup>175</sup> Nolan, *Bread Winning*, 14.

<sup>176</sup> Poem by Millie, NZM, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1880.

<sup>177</sup> Pharazyn, Jessica, 1818-1891: Journal / transcribed by Mary Moore, MS-Papers-6491.

her diary each month her account payments to Kirkcaldie & Stains. In June 1879 for example she wrote:

I went to my fathers. Flo [her sister] lent me eight pounds. I paid Kirkcaldies bill for May. Cissie [daughter] lent me £12 and Eddie [son] £1.00.<sup>178</sup>

Further entries in her diaries show that borrowing money from her family to pay the Kirkcaldie & Stain's monthly bill was a regular occurrence for Jane, and additionally in her diary she itemises what she has borrowed from whom and when she pays them back. No other bills are mentioned throughout her diaries so we can speculate that perhaps her husband saw to the general household accounts, and that Jane was just responsible for her draper's bill? At no point does she mention a monthly allowance from her husband but presumably she managed to repay her loans to her family. Why did she not ask her husband for the money to pay her drapery bills? Prior to her marriage Jane had been running a school in Te Aro with her sister Florence and therefore would have earned her own pin-money, if not a living wage. Despite this, in 1861 Jane recorded that "Mamma finally bought me a new parasol at Pickett's...it cost seven and sixpence; I had a cheaper one last summer but it was very bad". Even running a school and presumably making an income, Jane had had to put up with a shoddy parasol all of the summer and needed to wait for her mother to buy her a new one. Before her marriage then it seems that Jane was reliant on her parents to be able to make purchases, but once married could shop on credit as long as she found a way to pay the bill each month.

Laura Fitchett recorded the items she shopped for and the amount spent in her diary. In addition, as Laura paid the household bills, and possibly based on the types of payments she made, ones for the dairy farm, it seems that she was perhaps the manager of the family income. In one entry she noted that she:

15 June 1882 Bought Louie a jacket & a pair of gloves for 16/6...

Paid the last instalment of B. Shorts, Society 3 pounds

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<sup>178</sup> Jane Anderson – Diary, MSX-3770.

Paid Turnbull 15 pounds.<sup>179</sup>

Laura itemised her purchases carefully in her diary, recording what she bought, for whom and how much it cost. She did not mention any limit on her spending for items that she bought for herself and others, so her husband Ashton was seemingly one of the more generous ones. In an urban setting like Wellington there would have been more access to domestic items such as food, and less need to produce them at home. Therefore, the domestic work of women like Laura included doing the shopping, quite often daily. Reading the diaries of all of the women in this study, in particular Jane Spinks and Irene Edwin, it is clear how much time was spent on shopping as a part of everyday domestic life. Most days Jane or her sister would make a trip to pay for bread. Irene and her sisters made a number of trips to buy assorted items such as bananas, molasses, and bird seed. This new and expanded role for women gave them “status and economic power” according to Abelson.<sup>180</sup> In a sense this would be true, if wives oversaw the purchasing of an ever-expanding list of items for the home then they would have more access to money than previously.

James Belich has noted that 19th Century marriage was as much an economic as a romantic arrangement, and he presents a number of examples to show that was indeed the case in colonial New Zealand.<sup>181</sup> Whether the marriages of the women in this study were for practical or romantic reasons is unclear, as many of the diaries do not mention any romantic feelings for their husbands. Jane Spinks married David Anderson, both solidly middle-class members of the mercantile class in Wellington. According to her diary, Jane and David met at choir practice, and their relationship developed from there through the usual Victorian courtship process. Possibly then, despite it being a good match for Jane it was more of a romantic one. Jessica Pharazyn writing in the late 1860s is more forthcoming on her feelings for her husband than the other diary writers. Despite mentioning a number of occasions where he was annoyed or even “dreadfully angry” with her, Jessica seemed overall to be happy in her marriage to Charles, calling him her “dear husband” quite often. Like Jane,

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<sup>179</sup> B. Shorts was an agent of the Australian Mutual Provincial Society; Turnbull could have been T. Turnbull Architect or W and G Turnbull Merchants.

<sup>180</sup> Abelson, *When Ladies Go a-Thieving*, 14.

<sup>181</sup> Belich, *Making peoples*, chap 15.



Jessica's marriage was a good one. Arriving in New Zealand as an unmarried lady of forty-nine, marrying a widower with an income of "five thousand a year" would have been thought a particularly good match.<sup>182</sup>

Porter and MacDonald have noted that money was a source of many tensions in marriage and provide letters from Mrs Mary Rolleston to her husband showing how these tensions can manifest. In one example, Mary did not have the ability to purchase what to her was a necessary item of dress for her move to Wellington, without her husband's approval. Even though she had "made £15 by [selling] fruit" the approval was not given.<sup>183</sup> Despite Mary feeling that she would "know best and my plans are the most economical in the long run" she elected not to incur her husband's ire and did not therefore purchase the dress. Even that fifteen pounds made from the fruit legally belonged to her husband, as this was prior to 1884. However, not all husbands were like Mary's and many provided their wives with ample allowances for shopping. Dalziel observed that New Zealand "by the mid 1860s had one of the highest standards of living in the world".<sup>184</sup> She asserted that women were well rewarded materially for their efforts in the home, so they would have had access to their husband's purse and were able to spend money on the luxuries of life that were expected in a civilised community. Accordingly, Jane Spinks records in her diary how she spent time before her marriage purchasing a piano to grace her new home with her husband.<sup>185</sup> With disposable income being firmly linked to the rise of the department store was there then more ability for the women of New Zealand to shop?

Rappaport asserted that "wives shopped, but husbands generally paid for and legally owned the purchased goods."<sup>186</sup> Shopping was often viewed as inherently problematical as women had growing opportunities to empty the family wallet. Good wives were expected to spend within the means of their husband despite the temptations of the shops. In the story "Tempted" published in the *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies Journal* magazine, the

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<sup>182</sup> Diary of Jessica Pharazyn; Biography of Charles Pharazyn, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/1966/pharazyn-charles-johnson>.

<sup>183</sup> Porter, MacDonald and MacDonald, *My hand will write what my heart dictates*, 292.

<sup>184</sup> Dalziel, "The Colonial Helpmeet", 117.

<sup>185</sup> Diary of Jane Spinks, 1861-62, ATL, MSX-7831.

<sup>186</sup> Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 49.

protagonist, Helen must wear a “sombre” black dress to the ball as her husband “did not feel justified in incurring the expense” of her buying a new dress to wear. Helen is tempted by a friend to “borrow...rubies to wear to Mrs Mason’s ball” as she was “too beautiful a woman to be dressed like a dowdy”. As a good wife Helen resists the temptation and is rewarded by her husband giving her the coveted rubies.<sup>187</sup> In many cases women were viewed both by men and their own sex as being frivolous spend-thrifts. There are numerous references in the press of women’s love of shopping and their inability to resist the goods laid out so temptingly by the shopkeepers. These references ranged from condemnatory, such as a passage in the *Wellington Independent* on “the rage for dress which now animates the female sex, and which leads to so much extravagance, debt and discomfort”, to acceptance of them as charmingly instable for being tempted into shopping. The *Wellington Independent* in 1865 commented on the impact of two drapery stores being next to each other as “lovely women, with that charming instability...will never pass the tempting spot without trying either the one or the other of these most alluring traps”.<sup>188</sup>

*New Zealand Mail* Ladies’ Page editor Elizabeth Harris was particularly vehement in her views on extravagance in wives especially in regard to shopping:

I do lift up my feeble voice in protest against those women whose husbands, working their way through the world with incomes none too large, find the draper’s bills a dreaded drain upon the purse.

She then recounted a story of a woman she overheard at the drapers being persuaded to purchase an item because “Lady Robinson bought some of the same piece” to which the woman replied “That decides me. What would suit Lady Robinson would be utterly unsuited to me”. Mrs Harris commented, “mentally I patted that sensible and wise woman on the back and congratulated the man who owned her”.<sup>189</sup> This story is indicative of the contemporary view of a woman’s place and her economic status, particularly with the woman being described as “owned” by the man. Extravagance in a wife appeared to be a

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<sup>187</sup> “Tempted”, author unknown, in *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies Journal*, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1890.

<sup>188</sup> *WI*, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1865.

<sup>189</sup> *NZM*, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1880.

deadly sin and there were numerous advice columns in the media showing women how to avoid it. In 1870 Mary Colcough, writing as Polly Plum, protested about women buying “bargains” and spending money they could not afford, stating that “many women seem hardly to understand the value of money.” Mary’s view was that giving women the opportunity to earn her own living would therefore ensure that she was much better at dealing with money as she would “appreciate all the hardships and disappointments of getting money”.<sup>190</sup>

Hand in hand with the dangers of extravagance was the temptation of easy credit in the shops. Rappaport noted that credit “occupied a prominent role in the Victorian middle- and upper-class family economy” that had not been “sufficiently emphasized” by historians. “Buying on credit”, says Rappaport “was a widespread if much criticized practice throughout the nineteenth century”.<sup>191</sup> The majority of the large drapery establishments in Wellington accepted credit as payment for goods, sending a monthly bill to their clients. Jane Anderson is one example of a woman who bought on credit and her borrowing requirements to pay these bills each month have been mentioned previously. Receipts are available for Te Aro House showing that a Mrs James McKenzie of Karori also shopped on credit with monthly bills being sent to her home (and being paid on time).<sup>192</sup> Would women have felt a sense of guilt in spending money (or using their husband’s credit) on items of fashion for themselves rather than practical items for the home and family? In 1854 the insightful Mary Taylor wrote of her female customers:

It gives them such evident pain to see anything they can’t buy, and it is so impossible for them not to look at the most expensive things, even when they can’t buy any but the cheapest. Then the tricks they play on their husbands’ head or heart or purse, to get the money! ...There are some silk mantles coming about which more lies will be told than would make a lawyer’s fortune; to me, their husbands’ friends and neighbours.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Daily Southern Cross, 10th December 1870.

<sup>191</sup> Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 50.

<sup>192</sup> Receipts relating to Mr and Mrs James McKenzie, ATL, MS-Papers-12090-1.

<sup>193</sup> Quoted in Taylor and Stevens, *Mary Taylor, friend of Charlotte Brontë*, 120-121.

Credit could be problematical for both the customer and the retailer. Husbands were liable for their wives' debts up to 1884, and even after that time with few women earning or having their own money the husband would be expected to pay. Retailers had less certainty of receiving payments than with cash and could charge more to those using credit to cover for other losses. In the late nineteenth century it became more common for drapers to advertise cash sales only as way of skirting all the potential pitfalls of the credit system. Kirkcaldie & Stains switched to cash in 1885 while The Economic opened in 1894 with only cash payments from the start. As previously noted this move to cash was not only a way for retailers to deal with the issues with credit, but also was an important part of the development of the department store, as it meant that varied prices and haggling could be replaced by fixed prices and allowed the retailer to sell more cheaply.

If shopping in general was subject to criticism, then shopping in the sales was even more of a danger to the family purse. A common trope in the British media was that of women being "easily seduced by displays of merchandise, especially if it was on sale" and this also was common in the New Zealand press.<sup>194</sup> There were many newspaper columns advising women how to shop in the sales and to carefully select what may be a bargain and what could be wasted money. Women were portrayed as being either empty-headed victims of the draper's scheming, or vicious bargain-hunters engaged in a war with other women for the same goods. In the New Zealand press we can see a similar portrayal of shoppers through-out the period studied. In one column a description of a sale at Kirkcaldie & Stains is given depicting the "surging throng" of women inside the store and those locked outside waiting to enter who "shook the doors and hammered on them persistently".<sup>195</sup> Extraordinary events such as the "huge salvage sale" at the DIC after a fire destroyed much of their premises attracted a "multitude of bargain-seekers". Photos of the events show a crowd of women and men waiting outside the building for entry as well as a crowded scene inside. (Figure 5.)<sup>196</sup> However, Forrest Ross supplied a third side to the argument by

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<sup>194</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 114.

<sup>195</sup> Wairarapa Daily Times, 2nd August 1904.

<sup>196</sup> NZM, 15th February 1905.

applauding ladies who could spot a genuine bargain and use the sales as an opportunity to save money:

There are people with a decided gift in shopping. They can picture in their mind's eye - a ravishing fichu out of a remanent of net and some scraps of good lace, or a smart blouse out of a few yards of ordinary silk.<sup>197</sup>

Saving money for the family was to be lauded and women who did so by avoiding extravagance in their shopping were much admired. In the poem by Millie, the author shows her true colours as a supportive wife and concludes:

And now I see him, day by day  
Pale and worried, full of care,  
I have resolved to do my best,  
To lessen the burden he's to bear,  
I have done with smartness for now,  
There's something better far to do,  
In studying to economise,  
And help him pull through.

Now, girls, a cheerful happy face,  
Can brighten up one's home;  
Pray do without the finery,  
That tempted us to roam,  
We needn't search up Lambton-Quay  
For looks of admiration,  
A loving smile from "Jack" at home  
Is a truer approbation.

Poneke wives and daughters

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<sup>197</sup> NZM, 7th July 1898.

Will do their best to stem,  
The turn of evil fortunes  
That grimly threatens them;  
Small self denials of vanity,  
Will tell up day by day,  
And, pulling all together,  
Soon the cloud will pass away.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Poem by Millie, NZM, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1880. Note “Poneke” is the Maori word for Wellington.

### Part Three – The social activities of Wellington women

“Alas for our lords pockets ! The ‘season is in’ and the purses must come out”.<sup>199</sup>

Ladies arriving from Britain such as Charlotte Godley or Lady Barker may have been taken aback by the fact that the smaller population of New Zealand meant that as Mary Taylor noted, “classes are forced to mix here, or there would be no society at all”.<sup>200</sup> That being said, social life for the elite women of Wellington widely followed that of the elite in England with events such as balls, dances and At Homes being common for both. Although for many of the women studied domestic work would have taken up considerable time in their day, the evidence of their diaries shows that they also had time available for leisure. Although leisure was not a 19<sup>th</sup> Century invention it started to have more impact as a result of increasing financial security, and as Peter Bailey argues, more “time and services that it [security] could buy”.<sup>201</sup> Historians have argued that the concept of leisure can be hard to define but Bailey’s definition of leisure as “playfulness, fantasy and fun” is a useful one to use here.<sup>202</sup> However, whether all the social events that Wellington women attended would fit into those criteria is doubtful, and certain activities such as ‘calling’ were often criticised for their tedium. Indeed, for wives of politicians and other ambitious men these activities would be more work than pleasure. Despite this, the main question of this chapter is whether there were sufficient social occasions in Wellington to justify women needing to shop for outfits, therefore all the types of events which took women out of the house and meeting other people will be considered.

Charlotte Godley was a member of the British landed gentry<sup>203</sup> who travelled to New Zealand with her husband on his appointment as chief agent for the Canterbury Association. Charlotte and her husband lived in Wellington for a short time in the early days of the

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<sup>199</sup> NZM, 12<sup>th</sup> June 1880.

<sup>200</sup> Quoted in Jeanine Graham, “Settler Society” in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, eds, Geoffrey Rice, W.H Oliver, and B.R Williams, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Oxford University Press, 1992, 134-135.

<sup>201</sup> Peter Bailey, “A Mingled Mass of Perfectly Legitimate Pleasures”: The Victorian Middle Class and the Problem of Leisure, *Victorian Studies*, 21:1, 1977, p. 4.

<sup>202</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 177.

<sup>203</sup> The term British gentry is used here to signify people such as Mrs Godley and also Lady Barker who travelled to New Zealand for a short stay from Britain and were still expected to retain their identity as a member of the British elite society rather than becoming part of the New Zealand society.

colony.<sup>204</sup> She was surprised at the lively social life in Wellington in 1850, as general expectation from visitors in those early years was that formal social wear would not be required. Author Charlotte Evans commented that in the early days of New Zealand there was much less formality of dress with women only being expected to be dressed 'demi-toilet' at social gatherings.<sup>205</sup> Mrs Godley though discovered that there was more to do than she had anticipated:

I am afraid I must now ask for a few gloves ... for I left all mine at home, little expecting to want them,... I am sorry to give the trouble, but I find I wear more gloves than I expected, being so much out.<sup>206</sup>

It seemed that for the middle and upper class women there were many opportunities for wearing the items that they obtained from the shops through-out the late 19th century. Throughout the period studied New Zealand started to move from a more rural to urban-based society, with nearly 40% of the population living in towns by 1881.<sup>207</sup> Olssen has argued that the population growth in these areas "transformed the towns".<sup>208</sup> This transformation would have meant more infrastructure, providing increased opportunities for social interactions, with improvements to transportation being key. This increasing urbanisation has been seen in the growth of the department store in an earlier chapter. Moving to this urban existence meant that the women in this study had access to a rich network of friends and relations thereby avoiding the effects of social isolation that impacted women in rural communities. In fact there was a rich social life in Wellington as evidence from sources such as newspaper social columns and diaries demonstrates. Numerous sales of works, fetes, 'at homes', garden parties and dances are mentioned with regularity through-out the period.

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<sup>204</sup> Beryl Hughes, 'Godley, Charlotte', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, first published in 1990, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1g11/godley-charlotte>.

<sup>205</sup> Charlotte Evans, *Over the Hills and Far Away*, 1874, 149, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-BroOver-t1-g1-t2.html>.

<sup>206</sup> Charlotte Godley Letters; Schrader, *The Big Smoke*, 117.

<sup>207</sup> Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and Its Enemies*, 8.

<sup>208</sup> Erik Olssen, "Towards a New Society", in *The Oxford history of New Zealand*, eds. Geoffrey Rice, W.H. Oliver, and B.R. Williams, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992), 258; also see: Schrader, *The Big Smoke*.



Balls and dances were an extremely popular form of entertainment and appeared to be well-attended and enjoyed by the participants. Jane Malthus has argued that the popularity of balls during the early Colonial period was perhaps due to “isolation and loneliness” in the sparsely populated towns which may have been true for early Wellington.<sup>209</sup> Charlotte Godley mentioned a number of different balls during her short stay in Wellington and noted her surprise at how elegant they were:

We were asked for "Dancing at nine" on a magnificent printed card, and presented ourselves soon after 9.30, when we found everyone arrived and in superb ball-dresses, apparently just unpacked from London, specially Mrs. Eyre. We were, I think, all surprised at the general effect of the ball, it was so very good.<sup>210</sup>

However, there did not appear to be any lessening of the popularity of balls as the population grew and they were very well attended. The Governor and his lady, as the official representatives of Queen Victoria in the Colony, held the premier balls of the season. Ladies in the correct social circle would have eagerly awaited these occasions and the excuse to purchase a new gown. The Birthday Ball at Government House in 1886 had around 700 attendees and was crowded but enjoyable according to accounts. In 1895 Irene Edwin commented that she “enjoyed it very much” of the Birthday Ball she attended with around 500 other attendees.<sup>211</sup> Around 200 dresses worn by the ladies were described in the social columns with the costumes worn by the highest elite (such as the Governor’s family) receiving much more in the way of description than those presumably lower in social importance. Those ladies who wished to imitate the dresses of the ‘Upper Ten’ would have found the descriptions of interest although, unfortunately where the outfits were procured was not mentioned.<sup>212</sup> Balls and dances held in private houses were also extremely popular with Wellington’s society, both the elite and those lower down the social scale. Irene Edwin and Agnes Grace both mention a number of these events throughout their diaries, as does

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<sup>209</sup> Jane Malthus, “European women's dresses in nineteenth-century New Zealand”, (PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 1996), 101.

<sup>210</sup> Charlotte Godley Letters, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-GodLett-t1-body-d4.html>.

<sup>211</sup> Invitation to Her Majesty's Birthday Ball, 1895, ATL, MS-Papers-0267-24.

<sup>212</sup> Malthus, “European women's dresses in nineteenth-century New Zealand”, 92.

Jane Anderson, whose daughter Cissie had a new outfit bought specially when she attended a dance.

Nicholls has argued that Wellington's social life was seasonal, in particular centring around the sitting of Parliament as members from out of town bought their female relatives with them for the session.<sup>213</sup> Festivities were common when Parliament was in Session and ladies of Wellington and those visiting for the Session were expected to look their best. A number of 'session girls' would arrive in Wellington to attend the dances that went along with the season. Both visiting and local ladies attended the opening of Parliament, using this as an occasion to exhibit new outfits. Jessica Pharazyn recorded attending the "opening of the General Assembly" in 1868 and noted that it had "much more state and ceremony than I expected, Lady Bowen looked charming".<sup>214</sup> Arrivals of a new Governor spawned any number of events and it was important to show Wellington society at its best. In 1889, the newspapers encouraged Wellington women to dress in their prettiest outfits to impress the new Governor, Lord Onslow and his wife. A popular outing for the women of the town was attending the sittings of Parliament in the Ladies Gallery. Sitting in the gallery afforded them the ability to meet up with other women in a safe space and they would engage in handiwork learning "'how to govern', as well as the last bit of scandal".<sup>215</sup> A picture in the *London Graphic* shows ladies in the gallery fashionably dressed, some knitting and others watching the proceedings with attention.<sup>216</sup> Mary Rolleston of Christchurch was one of the ladies who travelled up with her husband for the parliamentary session and was often noted as attending the sittings as well as the social events that accompanied them.<sup>217</sup>

For many women social events, especially those that accompanied the Parliamentary sessions, were more work than leisure and these events came with their own challenges. It was important to the Wellington elite to emulate British society, and there were many occasions that women of the upper end of the scale had to attend as part of their social

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<sup>213</sup> Nicholls, "Elite Society in Victorian and Edwardian Wellington", 208.

<sup>214</sup> Diary of Jessica Pharazyn, 1818-1891 : Journal / transcribed by Mary Moore, ATL, MS-Papers-6491.

<sup>215</sup> NZM, 12<sup>th</sup> June 1886; 28<sup>th</sup> June 1895; 4<sup>th</sup> May 1888; 12<sup>th</sup> May 1888, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1895; 4<sup>th</sup> September 1880.

<sup>216</sup> *London Graphic*, 13<sup>th</sup> November 1880.

<sup>217</sup> For example see: NZM, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1898.

standing.<sup>218</sup> They would defy wet and windy weather (both common in the Wellington season) or illness to attend their social events, especially those at which they were obligated to be present. Jessica Pharazyn, as wife to an important land-owner had many social obligations which she has noted in her diary. Unusually for this time she also wrote comprehensively about her emotions and health, and noted a number of occasions that she attended despite both ill-health or bad weather.<sup>219</sup> Alla Atkinson also discussed the weather's impact on events and in a letter to her sister described a reception at Government House which she attended in 1901.

The reception. The weather was worse but Flora and I (our husbands refused to participate) went to Government House to a so-called reception. We tried to get a cab but it was quite impossible and, in spite of having our best clothes on, we decided to face everything. So we bought galoshes and had mackintoshes and umbrellas. Before we reached the gates the rain from the north was worse than any I have ever been out in.<sup>220</sup>

In another letter from 1901 Alla describes the last minute panic to get a white dress for her daughter to attend the children's ball at Government House.

I at once rang up Kirkcaldie's & Warnocks for ready made white muslins or silks & in half an hour they sent me seven dresses none of which would do ! so next morning in pouring rain Mary and I had to go down to hunt in the other shops – we found a pretty white silk in the D.I.C which with a few more tucks & a runner at the waist could be made to fit – S bought a fresh white sash & a lace petticoat & blk stockings & her outfit was completed very clean and pure looking.<sup>221</sup>

Privileged social events also included the ritual of calling on other ladies of the same class. This remained an important part of the social round until late into the 19th Century,

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<sup>218</sup> Nicholls, "Elite Society in Victorian and Edwardian Wellington", 197-199.

<sup>219</sup> Diary of Jessica Pharazyn.

<sup>220</sup> Porter, MacDonald and MacDonald, *My hand will write what my heart dictates*, 182.

<sup>221</sup> Correspondence - Alla Atkinson, ATL, MS-Papers-4863-09, 2 June 1901-5 Oct 1902.

although it did become increasingly incorporated into the 'At Home' ritual.<sup>222</sup> Nicholls has written comprehensively on the 'Calling' and 'At Home' rituals in Wellington, and has noted the difference between the open days whereby the lady would have a specific day to welcome any caller into her home, and the invitation only events which tended to be planned for special occasions. Both Jessica Pharazyn and Agnes Grace who were in the higher echelons of Wellington society mention frequent calls that they either made or received. Many women found the calling ritual a bore and it would have taken up a great deal of their time. Anna Richmond wrote to her sister in 1878, "calling takes up nearly all my time. It is frightful the amount that is expected".<sup>223</sup> The exclusive 'At Home' events were extensively commented on in the social columns of the newspapers from the 1890s onwards, and were an important part of Wellington society life. These events were much more social than the calling ritual and the hostess would have spent considerable time organising the catering and the entertainment. One of these 'At Home' occasions held at Mrs Ross's house was reported to have had up to 300 guests attending, enjoying tea and "soft and pretty music".<sup>224</sup> Like the previously mentioned balls and dances, outfits were important especially once they began to be reported in the social columns, and the ladies of the town would have spent time in selecting what to wear. Garden parties and afternoon teas were also extremely popular during this period. Jane Anderson and Irene Edwin are both mentioned at a garden party held by a Mrs Sprott. Mrs Anderson wore "black silk, lace mantle and small black and cream bonnet" and Miss Edwin a "white gown with pale yellow insertion".<sup>225</sup> In 1897 Jane held an afternoon tea herself for the purpose of guests meeting with her sister-in-law Mrs Ballance. She wore "a neat dark blue cloth gown trimmed with velvet to match; Mrs Ballance wore black silk finished with lace".<sup>226</sup> By the end of the century however, it seemed that any type of outing was fodder for the fashion columns even "walking dresses worn by Wellington ladies ...whilst shopping on Lambton Quay."<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Nicholls, "Elite Society in Victorian and Edwardian Wellington", 203.

<sup>223</sup> Quoted in: Porter, MacDonald and MacDonald, *My hand will write what my heart dictates*, 176.

<sup>224</sup> NZM, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1895.

<sup>225</sup> NZM, 20<sup>th</sup> February 1896.

<sup>226</sup> NZM, 5<sup>th</sup> August 1897.

<sup>227</sup> NZT, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1897.

Nicholls' study notes the different types of entertainment available to Wellington society and she comments that theatre productions and concerts were very popular.<sup>228</sup> Irene Edwin, Agnes Grace and Jane Anderson all mention attending these sorts of events. Irene, after one such outing commented that "they also met some of Walter Bentley's Opera people, at least they smelt as if they were, the air being filled with scent"; presumably smelling of scent was not something a respectable girl would do. Attending lectures was also popular and Laura Fitchett, who seemed to have the most limited social life of all the women studied, mentioned that she "went to hear Dr Sims Lecture, was very much pleased. Met Barbara there".<sup>229</sup> However, public performance was not just for the less respectable as the ladies of Wellington put on many such events themselves. Irene and her sisters performed in concerts both publicly and in private. Irene described at length one concert in which she and sister Lily performed along with all the other performers and the outfits of each so this was obviously a highlight of her social calendar.<sup>230</sup> Along with events outside the house there were many held in private homes. A visiting English journalist commented that "next to the 'social dance' the most popular winter entertainment here is a euchre party".<sup>231</sup> Euchre and similar card games, along with more active occupations such as ping pong and tennis, were much in evidence in the social columns and the diaries. Both Agnes Grace and Jessie Barraud were extremely involved in playing tennis, both mentioning many occasions where they attended or held tennis parties. Towards the end of the 19th Century and into the early 20th, women started to become more active in sporting endeavours, including cycling, hockey and tennis amongst others.<sup>232</sup> The Edwin sisters were keen hockey players, as well as playing ping pong, and were members of the Ladies Auxiliary.<sup>233</sup>

Spending time at home could also be a choice for women's leisure time. Jane Anderson was one woman in this study who seemed to prefer spending her time in the domestic sphere. Jane was married to David Anderson, a shop-keeper. David's father (David Senior) had opened one of the first grocery stores and general merchant businesses in Wellington, and

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<sup>228</sup> Nicholls, "Elite Society in Victorian and Edwardian Wellington", 205.

<sup>229</sup> Diary of Laura Fitchett.

<sup>230</sup> Diary of Irene Edwin, 1893, ATL, MS-Papers-0267-24.

<sup>231</sup> NZT, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1897

<sup>232</sup> Malthus, "European women's dresses in nineteenth-century New Zealand", 270.

<sup>233</sup> Diary of Irene Edwin diary.

was in the front rank of the Wellington business community. Jane's father was also a shop-keeper and involved in local politics, so they were a solid middle-class family. Jane and David appeared to live a fairly quiet social life which was centred around their children. She had the usual servant problems, having at least six different ones in 1877 alone, and spent the majority of her time looking after her children, of which she had four at this time. Jane's main social events outside her house were attending church and paying calls, or going on shopping expeditions with her eldest daughter Florence (known as Cissie). However, David's sister Ellen, who was married to John Ballance (the future Prime Minister), lived a much more active social life which she introduced to Jane and her family. Cissie also appeared to have a much more lively social life than her mother - attending concerts, dances and the opera on a number of occasions. The Anderson family were not perhaps in the first rank of Wellington elite society as Cissie was invited to see a friend dressing for the Johnston's fancy ball but was not invited to it herself. Jane and her children also went to see Ellen Ballance dress in her finery before such events as the Governor's Ball. Cissie seemed to attend more of the at-home parties, which seemed to require her to purchase new dresses each time. In the 1890s once her children were grown, Jane had a more active social life than before and is mentioned a number of times in the Wellington social columns up to 1910.<sup>234</sup>

Another of the ladies in this study also appeared to live a mainly domestic life. Laura Fitchett was married to Ashton Fitchett who was a dairy farmer in Ohiro Road, Brooklyn, from 1882 until her untimely death from septicaemia in 1889. She kept a diary for about four years of this time. Most of the entries, deal with her domestic round on the farm and looking after the children. Her social life mainly consisted of visits to friends and family. She does mention a couple of trips to see lectures at the Athaneum on Lambton Quay, but her life being a helpmeet for Ashton would not have left her much time for formal socialising. Laura would perhaps have been at the lower end of the middle-class and therefore was not expected to pay formal calls or be invited to the same social occasions as the other ladies in this study.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Diary of Jane Anderson, 1881, ATL, MSX-7834; In 1886 it seems that Jane and Ellen were both committee members of a ball in aid of the Hospital Fund.

<sup>235</sup> Diary of Laura Fitchett.

A counterpoint to the domestic lives led by Jane and Laura were the much more social lives led by Jessica Pharazyn and Agnes Grace. Jessica as wife of an important member of Wellington society documented numerous social occasions in the period she kept her diary. As this was in the late 1860s, Wellington was still in its early days of development, but balls, dinner parties and receptions seemed to be a regular occurrence for Jessica. Unusually for women diary writers of this time, Jessica also shared her thoughts and feelings on her life, and seemed in the main to enjoy the social events she attended. She noted in 1868 a list of the events she had been to:

Ball at Mrs Graces – crowded but very agreeable.....Ball at Government Buildings given to Sir George and Lady Bowen. Lady Bowen's Wednesday morning receptions. Dinner party at Dr Featherston's Superintendent of Wellington A party of 16 – a good dinner – handsome plate etc.

Agnes Grace was the daughter of one of Wellington's wealthy landowners and married to Dr Morgan Grace who was a leader in Wellington society. Agnes's diary from the late 1880s and 1890s records many social occasions both outside and inside the home, including paying calls, attending 'At Homes' and many public functions. Having visitors over for dinner seemed a particular favourite domestic event for Agnes and her family, as this is mentioned multiple times throughout her diary. As a leader in Wellington society, Agnes was expected to be seen at Government House functions, as well as others of particular social significance, and even opened the dancing on the arms of the Governor or other important gentlemen. Her diary unfortunately, does not tell us her thoughts on these events and whether she enjoyed them or merely accepted them as part of her role as a wife.<sup>236</sup>

Irene Edwin was also a member of a family who had their place in the social elite. Her father Captain Robert Edwin was well-known for his role as a meteorologist for the Wellington area.<sup>237</sup> Irene Edwin and her family were recorded as present at a number of occasions also attended by other members of the social elite such as Lady Stout and Mrs Grace. In 1894 Irene 'came out' as a debutante, at a ball given by Mrs and Mrs Pharazyn, at which the

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<sup>236</sup> Diary of Agnes Grace, 1890, ATL, MS-Papers-1852-3.

<sup>237</sup> Biography of Robert Atherton Edwin, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2e6/edwin-robert-atherton>.

cream of Wellington society were present. She and the other debutantes “all wearing, of course pretty white frocks”.<sup>238</sup> Irene or her sisters [as they are often only referred to as Miss Edwin I may have mistakenly assumed Irene] attended many events documented in the newspaper, and presumably a number of others where their names had not been stated. Whether she enjoyed all these occasions as much as she enjoyed the Birthday Ball is not recorded, although she did comment that she was “glad to go home and practise at 5” when attending a dull afternoon tea. Other than that the few social events she noted in her diaries she appeared to enjoy. When her younger sister Lily married in 1907 there were a number of columns describing the wedding and pre-nuptial afternoon tea, with descriptions of the family and guests. The wedding dress was described in detail, and was in fact provided by the Misses Douglas from London, not one of the local drapery stores. Whether the outfits of the rest of the wedding party came from England or Wellington was not noted.

Reading the diaries and letters of women such as Jane Anderson, Jessica Pharazyn, Laura Fitchett, Agnes Grace, and Irene Edwin it becomes apparent how much of the social life for these women centred around other women of the same class. Other than organised entertainments such as balls and theatre trips much of the lady’s social life revolved around making and receiving calls and attending afternoon teas with other women of their class. Agnes Grace paid and received numerous calls, which she documented in her diary, and spent time with female friends. Both Jane Anderson and Laura Fitchett, who did not attend much in the way of organised entertainment through the period of their diaries, mention many visits by and to other women especially those of their own family. Irene and her sisters spent a lot of time together and with their cousins the Harding girls. One of these all-female occasions would be of course the shopping trip which will be examined in the next chapter. The importance of the department store in providing a female space has been mentioned previously and this is something that will be revisited later in the study.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> NZM, 27<sup>th</sup> July 1894.

<sup>239</sup> Schrader, *The Big Smoke*, 125-6.



## Chapter Three Shopping and Fashion.

### Part One – Shopping for pleasure?

‘Why are the ladies of Wellington the height of fashion?’ to which the answer was ‘Because they are seen in Kirkcaldie’s’ (Kirk-all-days).<sup>240</sup>

Whatever new pastimes may come temporarily into favour with the vast majority of women, I venture to say that shopping holds first place in our affections. Even if one’s purse is light and one’s real requirements very limited, a walk around the shops is generally attractive.<sup>241</sup>

If the home was the place of work for women, then visiting the shops as noted above would become one of their sources of leisure.<sup>242</sup> Elaine Abelson noted that “as domesticity expanded beyond the confines of the individual household and emphasis was increasingly placed on the new world of material obsessions, shopping became woman's work and woman's recreation.”<sup>243</sup> If leisure was about having a good time then from the 1870s onwards the rise of the department stores offered an environment that middle-class women could use as a place for this leisure.<sup>244</sup> It’s not hard to imagine the excitement of leaving the domestic round to spend time looking in the shop windows that “have been so exquisitely dressed. The beautiful textures, so harmoniously blended in colours and arranged with consummate skill, have been a joy to see”.<sup>245</sup> The advances made by the retail entrepreneurs on Lambton Quay or Cuba Street provided women with a rich experience for leisure shopping, as well as numerous grocers, chemists and others meeting their more prosaic shopping needs.

Using primary materials, this thesis examines the way women spent their days and in particular their references to shopping trips. The media of the day, particularly the ladies’

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<sup>240</sup> EP, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1872.

<sup>241</sup> Lady editor “Aunt Ellen” writing in the Ladies Pages in NZM in 1895; NZM, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1895.

<sup>242</sup> Abelson, *When Ladies Go a-Thieving*, 21.

<sup>243</sup> Abelson, *ibid*, 13.

<sup>244</sup> Peter Bailey, “The politics and poetics of modern British Leisure: A late twentieth-century review”, *Rethinking History* 3, no 2 (1999), 157.

<sup>245</sup> NZM, 27<sup>th</sup> May 1903.

columns in the newspapers has also been analysed to understand how shopping was viewed as a leisure occupation. These sources give us some rich content on fashion and shopping, which includes fashion columns, illustrations such as cartoons, and fiction. The well-worn trope of ladies loving to go shopping was alive and well in late 19th Century Wellington as the quotations from local newspapers at the start of this chapter illustrate. Did the women of Wellington feel that they could admit their enjoyment of shopping in their personal records, or did they feel as Lady Barker wrote in 1860, “you must not despise me if I confess to having enjoyed the shops exceedingly”?<sup>246</sup> Diary entries for Jane Anderson née Spinks, Laura Fitchett, Irene Edwin, Laura and Jessie Barraud, Jessica Phahrazyn and Agnes Grace have been consulted for this chapter. They are listed here in roughly chronological order starting with Jane Spinks in the 1860s and ending with Irene Edwin in the 1890s.<sup>247</sup>

Jane Spinks’ diary in 1861 records a number of trips “down the beach” with her older sister Florence (known as Flo) and lists the shops they visited each time.<sup>248</sup> It seemed a regular, almost daily occurrence for them and they visited a number of shops on Lambton Quay such as Gilbert Pickett & Co and E Wilcox.<sup>249</sup> According to their newspaper advertisement in October 1861 ‘Pickett’s’ were carrying the following to attract their female shoppers:

Spring Mantles, New styles  
Spring dresses, very choice  
Ribbons, Velvets, Flowers  
Chenille Hair Nets, Feathers,  
Straw Hats, White and Brown,  
Falls, Black and Fancy  
Lace, Mantles, and Jackets.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Lady Barker, *Station Life in New Zealand*, 12.

<sup>247</sup> For details of the exact dates covered by the diaries see Appendix A.

<sup>248</sup> Jane used the local term of ‘the beach’ for Lambton Quay in her diary; Diary of Jane Spinks.

<sup>249</sup> Gilbert Pickett & Co was a draper’s shop located on Lambton Quay from 1852 until late 1860s; E Wilcox was run by Miss Elizabeth Wilcox and was advertised as a Ladies and Children’s Outfitting Shop located on Lambton Quay from 1857 until 1872.

<sup>250</sup> WI, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1861.

Jane and her sister Flo seemed to enjoy purchasing items on approval which they then took home to try, stating for example that “Flo and I went down the beach as far as Pickett’s and brought home some hats for me to try they did not do”.<sup>251</sup> On other occasions Jane and Flo bought trimmings and gloves, parasols, and quite often changed the items they had bought for other more suitable ones. Another time Flo purchased “a brown silk net with gilt beads at Mrs Wilcox’s;” she later gave this to Jane and purchased herself a black one.<sup>252</sup> Once she was married, Jane’s diaries record a number of trips to the shops with her daughter Cissie. This seemed to be one of her main activities outside the house. Jane and Cissie predominantly shopped at Kirkcaldie & Stains where Jane had an account, however, other emporiums are also mentioned such as Wilson & Richardson. On one such occasion she commented “Late in the afternoon Cissie and I went out. She selected a sealskin cap at Wilson & Richardson’s”.<sup>253</sup> Jane does not mention many trips to purchase items for herself in these later diaries as her excursions seemed to focus mainly on items for Cissie. It is very likely that Jane and Cissie enjoyed these trips and used them as a good opportunity to have some mother and daughter time without the males of the family. Social occasions for Cissie would ensure a shopping expedition was required. In August 1881 a party at the Nathans’ required a new dress to be purchased, and then on 1<sup>st</sup> September again Jane notes that “Cissie and I went out shopping on account of the party at Mrs Barnett’s”, with a further trip the next day “about things for the party”, followed by a dress fitting for Cissie in the afternoon.<sup>254</sup> Jane’s trips to the shops also included her monthly visit to pay her account at Kirkcaldie & Stains. As previously noted, she detailed these in her diary each month along with the amount she had to borrow in order to pay the bill, and from whom (quite often it was Cissie). Once the children had grown up Jane was mentioned more in the social columns attending events and potentially rekindled her enjoyment of shopping for herself. As there are no diaries existing from that time this cannot be confirmed.

Jessica Pharazyn, as the wife of one of the leaders of Wellington society enjoyed an active social life in the late 1860s. Much like Jane she recorded a number of visits to ‘the Beach’ in

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<sup>251</sup> Diary of Jane Spinks.

<sup>252</sup> Diary of Jane Spinks.

<sup>253</sup> Diary of Jane Anderson, 1877, ATL, MSX-7832

<sup>254</sup> Diary of Jane Anderson, 1877.

her diary. She has provided scanty details on her actual shopping expeditions other than one unfortunate episode where she purchased a present for husband Charles which was not graciously received by him. Jessica also provides details of writing to friends in England to ask for an “evening dress and silk slip” to be sent out ; a purchase she later regrets once it arrives and is deemed unsuitable.<sup>255</sup> Whether, like Charlotte Godley earlier she had found that ready-made dresses were not available (or not perhaps to her liking) in the Wellington shops at this time she does not say. A few days later in the diary she mentions purchasing “a bonnet” and ordering “a black net dress” from the shops in Wellington so obviously there were some items that she liked.<sup>256</sup>

Jessie and Laura Cottam (known as Cottie) Barraud were the daughters of one of Wellington’s prominent store keepers. Charles Barraud owned a Pharmacy and Art studio on Lambton Quay and would have been well known in Wellington society. Cottie kept a diary for a short length of time, but also useful for this thesis were the letters sent to her by Jessie when Cottie was on trips out of Wellington. Jessie appeared to have been a social young lady, in particular enjoying tennis parties, and lived the privileged life of a middle-class girl at home. She was obviously willing to spend time at the shops stating on one occasion that “I cannot get any grey cord for my hood, I think I have tried every shop in the town;”.<sup>257</sup> Again, like others before, Jessie found limitations in what the Wellington stores could provide. Cottie and Jessie were obviously practical girls and mention making their own clothes, as well as references to taking their dresses to dressmakers to have them made. On one occasion, Jessie and her mother “went down town to do some shopping. We got the peacock blue” and then noted that she would “have my dress fastened in front”.<sup>258</sup> Cottie also mentioned a number of times in her diary where she “went down town”, which I assume was to do shopping although no shop is specifically mentioned. For her 20<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1879, Cottie wrote that “I am to have an ulster for a present”. Ulsters, which were caped overcoats, were fashionable outerwear for ladies in the late 1870s, showing that the Barraud family were aware of the latest trends.<sup>259</sup> Cottie bought a pair of gloves for Jessie’s

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<sup>255</sup> Diary of Jessica Pharazyn.

<sup>256</sup> Diary of Jessica Pharazyn.

<sup>257</sup> Barraud family : Letters, 18875-1885, ATL, MS-Papers-11151.

<sup>258</sup> Barraud family : Letters.

<sup>259</sup> Jayne Shrimpton, *Victorian Fashion* (Oxford: Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd, 2016), 21.

birthday (no mention from where although she did reference shopping at Kirkcaldie & Stains a couple of times).<sup>260</sup>

In the 1880s, Laura Fitchett was mostly concerned with her domestic duties – taking care of the children and the house with numerous shopping excursions sprinkled in. Laura was the second wife of Ashton Fitchett, a dairy farmer located in Brooklyn. She did not seem to attend many social events outside of the house and possibly therefore did not need much in the way of ‘going-out’ clothes; the picture of Laura shows a woman who is relatively plainly and practically dressed (Figure 10). The clothes she mentioned sound like they were practical items, on the 4<sup>th</sup> July she noted that she had “been to town and got a homespun dress 2/2 a yard, 10 yards and ten shillings for making it”.<sup>261</sup> However, she also mentions purchasing a “riding habit jacket, and also a piece of velvet for a dress”. The velvet was taken to “Miss Park, at Chris Smith’s, Draper” to be made up into the dress. It seems that Laura was not particularly happy with the results stating that, “My dress came up from C.Smith, Draper of Cuba Street. Had to send it back because the sleeves were too short, and the dress too tight.”<sup>262</sup> As well as using the dressmaker, Laura also did her own sewing, on one occasion she stated that she “altered my black cashmere dress and habit jacket.”<sup>263</sup> Noting the shops referenced in her diary it seems that for clothes Laura shopped mainly in the Te Aro area and not up Lambton Quay. This could be due to her location as it was closer to her home, or that the prices in the Cuba Street shops were cheaper than Lambton Quay. She did refer to some Lambton Quay shops such as Myers Picture Frame Establishment, but no references to higher class drapers such as Kirkcaldie & Stains. Laura’s diary shows regular trips to the shops, both for items for herself and for others, and quite possibly she enjoyed the break from her domestic duties that these trips afforded her.<sup>264</sup>

Later in the 1880s were written the diaries of Agnes Grace, the wife of Dr. Morgan Stanislaus Grace who was a prominent citizen in Wellington and a member of the social

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<sup>260</sup> Laura Cottam Barraud, 1859-1935: Diary / transcribed by Marsha Donaldson, ATL, MSDL-1277.

<sup>261</sup> Diary of Laura Fitchett.

<sup>262</sup> Diary of Laura Fitchett.

<sup>263</sup> Diary of Laura Fitchett.

<sup>264</sup> This diary has been transcribed at a later date by a descendant of the Fitchetts and the original is not available so there may be errors in the transcription and I have made assumptions about some of the references (e.g Myer, Picture Framer not Meyer).

elite. Agnes wrote her diary from 1888-1890 and documents her numerous social activities. She mentioned a number of shopping trips in her diary, though like Jessica Pharazyn she did not state which shops she frequented or what she purchased there. Agnes had nine children to equip so there would have been a number of events that they required to be shopped for, as well as for herself. Being one of the elite class she had an active social life and would have required a number of fashionable outfits. Some of her more elaborate costumes were worn at a number of events, such as “an exceedingly handsome toilet of black and white striped velvet and silk , trimmed with a quantity of rich lace, fastened with diamonds” which she wore to Government House and other elite events though 1890 to 1892. It is hard to determine how far Agnes enjoyed her trips to the shops as the references are very terse.<sup>265</sup>

Finally, Irene Edwin was a young woman who wrote a diary of her daily life in 1893. During the period of the diary Irene and her siblings spent their days looking after the house as their mother was away on a trip. Most of her concerns seemed to centre on what to cook each day and doing the grocery shopping for the meals. However, there were also trips to the drapery stores to purchase clothing items while her mother was around. While her mother was away it is possible that the girls had other more domestic concerns, and also maybe did not have the funds to shop for clothes whilst on their own.

In the morning Mother, Rene, Lily and Duckie went shopping to Kirkcaldie’s to get some braid for Duckie’s frock and to change Lily’s blouse, then to the D. to get some blue ribbon for Rene’s hat. From there Rene and Lily went to Grady’s to get Mother’s glasses & Duckie’s brooch & Mother and Duckie went to Gordon’s for salts.<sup>266</sup>

On another occasion Irene and her sisters spent some time going around various shops looking for just the right teapot. Like Jessie Barraud they seemed comfortable with the idea of browsing around many shops to find the item they were looking for:

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<sup>265</sup> Diary of Agnes Grace; Biography of Morgan Grace, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2g15/grace-morgan-stanislaus>.

<sup>266</sup> Irene refers to ‘the D.’ in her shopping trips, given the date this could be the D.I.C.; diary of Irene Edwin.

Went to the shops looking for a teapot. Started at the Golden Rule, nothing there but the commonest brown ones so they went to Manttans where specimens were better but small, so they adjourned to the D. to look at their stock. There they found the size and shape they wanted but the patterns were so hideous, one was shiniest black with a pattern 3 inch deep of gold lace and below that were ... blue and pink flowers, that was one of the best specimens. They said they would get one with a pattern they liked better so resolved to go down to Andersons and see what he had and just as they were scanning the shop in despair the boy produced one they decided to take. It was a sort of bright brown coffee and was ornamented with 2 circles of gold in tiny raised spots. They paid 2/6 and ordered it to be sent up.<sup>267</sup>

Shopping was a daily concern but was it a fun, leisure activity for Irene and her sisters? Although Irene does not mention whether she enjoyed the process of shopping for outfits she was likely interested in clothes, as she described in detail the outfits worn by the girls performing in a concert:

Rene [Irene often referred to herself in third person] wore a cream embroidered muslin with a gold sash knotted at one side round her waist & a deep chiffon frill at her neck, fastened in front with a gold & pearl safety pin brooch.<sup>268</sup>

It is probable then that she was interested in what she wore and therefore would have spent as much time in selecting an outfit as she did with the teapot. In 1906 when Irene was in her early thirties and unmarried (unusual for a woman of her class at that time) she kept a log book of purchases made overseas including a number of items for furnishing the house, but also items such as silk stockings and petticoats. These are all items she could have purchased in Wellington so why pay the additional postage and wait for them to be sent over? Unfortunately she did not comment on why she was shopping by mail order so we do not know whether it was lack of options in the Wellington shops or that she did not

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<sup>267</sup> Diary of Irene Edwin.

<sup>268</sup> Diary of Irene Edwin.

want to go shopping for whatever reason. She also listed the catalogues that she received which included ones from London and from the United States.<sup>269</sup>

A rich source of information on the Wellington shopping and fashion scene has been the Ladies Columns written for the newspapers. These columns offer an intriguing view on the lives of the middle-class woman of the time, and have not so far been particularly well-studied.<sup>270</sup> This paper is limited to examining just those that concentrate on women's shopping habits, but further study of these to open a window into Wellington women's lives would be fruitful. Elizabeth Harris has been previously mentioned as the lady editor known as 'Elise', she wrote a number of articles dedicated to the fashion and shopping during her tenure at the *New Zealand Mail*. Her columns, although written for public consumption, likely remained true to her personal beliefs. Elizabeth believed it was a woman's duty to look good at all times and provided ample information to the women of Wellington on how to achieve this. She made many trips around the Wellington draper's shops with extensive descriptions of the goods available for purchase. She presumably enjoyed these shopping expeditions, stating that "I am sure you will agree with me that a few hours spent among the shops is not all waste time". In another column she described her "pleasant half-hour strolling from counter to counter" examining the goods at the newly opened Pantheon shopping emporium.<sup>271</sup>

Although it is hard to determine who penned the fashion and social notes columns, Janet McCallum has provided details of two further columnists in Wellington who wrote for the *Evening Post* and *Freelance* newspapers. Louise (Lulu) Brandon, who wrote as Christabel for the *Freelance* was a member of Wellington's elite society, and as such wrote about the occasions that she attended.<sup>272</sup> She made a number of mentions of shopping trips, mentioning her dislike of sales shopping, "most of us loathe shopping when the place is full of bargain hunters"; and conversely how pleased she was to accept an invitation from

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<sup>269</sup> Diary of Irene Edwin; Irene Edwin - Housekeeping book, 1906-1913, ATL, MS-Papers-0267-28.

<sup>270</sup> Chanel Hughes, "Dolce Cabot and the *Canterbury Times* 'Ladies Page': An Examination of early New Zealand Women's Journalism", (Master of Arts Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1998); Janet McCallum, *Women and their words: notable pioneers in New Zealand journalism* (Masterton: Fraser Books, 2009).

<sup>271</sup> NZM, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1886, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1887.

<sup>272</sup> Janet McCallum, p. 84.



Kirkcaldie & Stains to an open evening to view their stock. Lulu was also mentioned fairly frequently in the social columns attending numerous occasions with the other elite such as Mrs Mill's 'At Home', where she wore a fashionable "black voile gown, with Eton jacket and white vest".<sup>273</sup> McCallum has noted that it was popular in the 1900s to write social columns in the forms of letters, and an example of this in Wellington were the columns in the *Evening Post* written by Forrest Ross.<sup>274</sup> She wrote them as if a letter coming from a young girl named Priscilla who was new to Wellington. The chatty letters told the story of Wellington society and there are various mentions of fashion and shopping, such as that "everyone seems to be getting frocks for the Ducal festivities" and taking tea at Kirkcaldie & Stains. Unlike Christabel, the fictional Priscilla evidently enjoyed the sales and noted that "one shop was quite as good as an afternoon tea,...for one met all one's friends there". One story tells of a young lady purchasing a summer hat, "she was in a perfect vortex of hats for an hour in one shop, with two distracted assistants hovering around...Audrey announced she had had a charming morning".<sup>275</sup> Although these accounts are fictional they give a unique window onto Wellington fashion and social life, offering us a way to see what is very hard to see any other way. In addition to these social diaries numerous mentions of ladies, both young and otherwise, meandering down Lambton Quay appear in the newspapers, alongside complaints about perambulators blocking the pavements, or how girls need to take more vigorous exercise than looking in the shop windows.<sup>276</sup> These examples all demonstrate that window shopping, browsing the goods on offer, and choosing the most suitable or attractive item was a regular and enjoyable past-time.

Also useful in providing an insight into shopping habits are the receipts of expenditure from a Mrs James McKenzie of Karori. Annie Elizabeth Wilson became the second wife of James McKenzie, Surveyor in August 1887. A number of receipts of monthly accounts from Te Aro House, Kirkcaldie & Stains and Edward Pearce [a boot and shoe shop] detail some of her shopping expeditions and purchases. In October 1900, for example, she shopped at Te Aro House on four separate occasions, spending on average just under a pound (approximately

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<sup>273</sup> NZM, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1903.

<sup>274</sup> Janet McCallum, *Women and their words*, 68, Forrest Ross biography, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2r28/ross-forrestina-elizabeth>.

<sup>275</sup> EP, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1901, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1901.

<sup>276</sup> For example see: EP, 31<sup>st</sup> August 1870, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1879; NZM, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1896;

\$150 New Zealand Dollars in today's currency) on each trip. In December 1897 she made eight trips to Te Aro House spending in total six pounds, fourteen shillings and seven pence (around \$1,000 NZD). Items she purchased were mainly dress materials such as different fabrics, lace, pins and buttons which she would have made up herself or employed one of the many dressmakers in Wellington to do so. She also purchased a number of accessories such as gloves and hats as well as undergarments. Annie would have had a large number of outfits to purchase as there were eight children in the family, of which five were girls (six of the children were Annie's and the other two were her step-children). A handful of occasions captured in the newspaper social columns refer to Mrs James McKenzie of Karori, although McKenzie (also spelt MacKenzie in some references) was a fairly common name. Annie would have been expected to attend and host a number of events as her husband was promoted to Commissioner for Crown Lands. In 1908 she hosted a bridge party where she "received in a handsome frock of black taffeta trimmed with cream lace" and in 1909 she attended the Rose and Carnation Club's show wearing "a well-fitting self-coloured tussore silk with black facings, and a smart violet toque with a green osprey." Unfortunately, we cannot determine Annie's enjoyment or otherwise of her shopping trips but based on the evidence of the receipts they were obviously a regular occurrence for her.<sup>277</sup>

A further source of information examined on whether privileged ladies enjoyed their shopping excursions is that of pictorial evidence, in particular those published in the media. Unfortunately photographs did not become common in published media until very late in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and those that are available not always of the highest quality. Certainly, emotions are not able to be determined from this sort of media, but perhaps insight can be gleaned from what is available. One example is a view of the crowd outside The Economic on Christmas Eve 1907, showing the sheer numbers of (mainly) women waiting for entrance into the store (Figure 6). Christmas Eve, however, was a special occasion and one which was famous for its shopping crowds. Society photographs, published in the newspapers, show us beautifully and fashionably dressed women, and along with the society pages offer us a

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<sup>277</sup> Receipts relating to Mr and Mrs James McKenzie, ATL, MS-Papers-12090-1; NZT, 18<sup>th</sup> November 1909; Dominion, 19<sup>th</sup> October 1908.

descriptive view into what the privileged ladies of the time wore, but not their shopping habits. More interesting in terms of showing women dressed in the latest fashions are the cartoons drawn for the newspapers and magazines. More so than fashion plates these illustrations showed women actually performing activities such as shopping, and often depicted in a satirical way fashionable women and their pursuit of style. These cartoons not only showed the fashions of the day they also illustrated social snobbery, such as the two young ladies not speaking to another because “she wears a stuff dress” (Figure 7). These cartoons were drawn by Arthur Palethorpe, a New Zealander who was active in this field in the 1870s-1880s drawing for the Wellington based *Punch* magazine. The women in the cartoons were drawn in the latest fashions of the day and at least two of them depict women window-shopping. (Figure 8) The cartoons give us an interesting insight perhaps on the male view of women shopping, but not of that of the women themselves. The *Freelance* newspaper also included cartoons drawn by a local artist, one of which depicts women on Lambton Quay dressed fashionably whilst doing their shopping (Figure 9).

The final source investigated is that of New Zealand female-written fiction for the period studied. As Morag MacKay has asserted these books give us insight into being a woman in colonial New Zealand.<sup>278</sup> However, the books tend to use rural settings rather than urban and those that can still be read are limited in value for this study. Magazines and newspapers also published New Zealand fiction from time to time and the tale of Helen in “Tempted” has already been referenced earlier in this thesis. Another story from the *New Zealand Mail* has a couple from a boat spending a day in Wellington and telling of how they “amused ourselves by gazing in the shop windows”, the female protagonist even manages to persuade the man to buy her “chocolates, cigarettes and fondants” and even a “magnificent stone marten fur”.<sup>279</sup> However, stories based in Wellington are rare and have not provided much in the way of evidence on shopping for pleasure.

Erika Rappaport argued that ladies visiting the West End of London did shop for pleasure. She based this conclusion on extensive primary evidence but not unfortunately the words of

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<sup>278</sup> Mackay, Morag., “‘A Colonial Tale of Fact and Fiction’: Nineteenth-Century New Zealand Novels by Women”, (PhD, University of Auckland, 2003).

<sup>279</sup> “On the Boat” in NZM, 5<sup>th</sup> September 1903.

the women themselves.<sup>280</sup> Middle-class women in the Victorian era generally did not make a point of commenting on their clothing or shopping journeys in their diaries.<sup>281</sup> However, the ladies surveyed definitely did go shopping and for some such as Jane Spinks it seemed to be a common outing to walk to 'the Beach' to have a look around the shops. As previously noted, all the women (other than Laura Fitchett) had their outfits commented upon in the social columns, and being fashionable would have been of importance to them.

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<sup>280</sup> Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*.

<sup>281</sup> Ya-Lei Yen, "Clothing Middle-Class Women: Dress, Gender and Identity in Mid-Victorian England c. 1851-1875" (PhD Thesis, University of London, 2014), 38.



Figure 6. New Zealand Mail, Issue 1817, 2 January 1907, Page 68  
<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZMAIL19070102.2.171.7>



Figure 7. Palethorpe, Arthur, fl 1870s: Clara - Oh, here's Miss Smith coming along; shall we speak to her? Amelia - No, dear! Mama says she can't be a lady, because she wears a stuff dress. The New Zealand Punch, September 13, 1879, ATL, H-692-003.

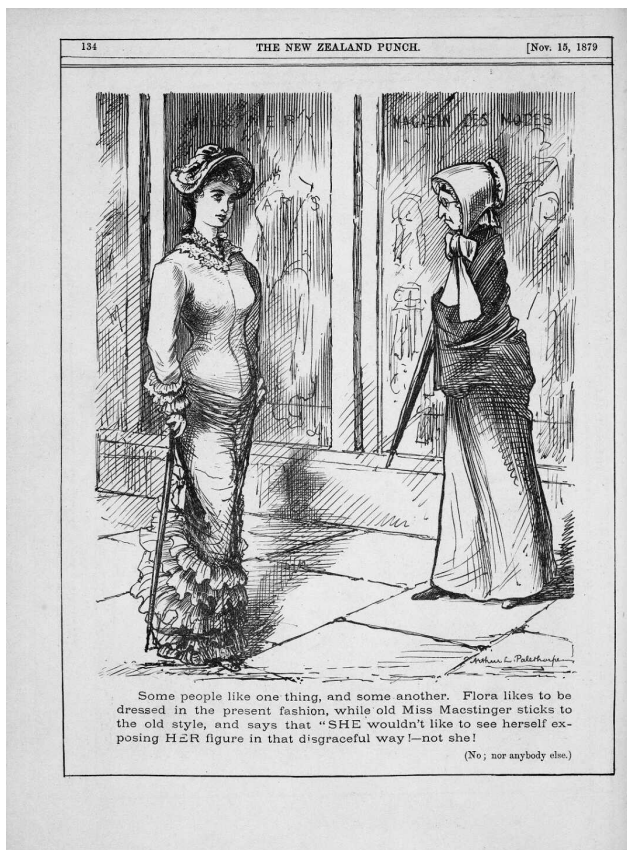


Figure 8. Palethorpe, Arthur, fl 1870s :Some people like one thing and some another. The New Zealand Punch (Wellington), November 15, 1879, ATL, H-692-010.



Figure 9. Free Lance, Volume V, Issue 249, 8 April 1905, Page 16  
<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZFL19050408.2.20.1>

## Part Two – Fashions in Wellington

It is, by the by, rather descriptive of the climate here that the clothes are always quite in the summer style, such as white shawls with large bright flowers on them, straw bonnets with sky blue ribbons, and white cotton gloves; bright colours are quite ‘the go’ here.<sup>282</sup>

Charlotte Godley writing in 1850 was evidently impressed with the bright colours worn by the local women in Wellington. It is clear that there was enough social occasions in Wellington even from the early days of the colony to make a fashionable wardrobe a necessity for those who wished to partake in the events. This chapter will briefly consider fashion in Wellington, and in particular the social symbolism of the dress that elite women of the city wore. In the early days of the settlement, there was not much in the way of commentary on the events or outfits worn, as the social columns did not really get started until much later. It is therefore difficult to establish what outfits were worn to events and whether there was a distinct Wellington style. However, Charlotte Godley’s commentary showed that there was definitely a fashion scene in Wellington even in the early days:

After much rain the Hutt road is the only tolerable place, and indeed it is always the fashionable lounge, especially on a Sunday afternoon, when everyone walks there, from the Governor and his wife down to all the shop people in their best clothes.<sup>283</sup>

It seemed, at least in the early years, that colonial fashion was concentrated on adapting what had been bought from home to be used in the different climate of New Zealand. Fashions at this time lagged behind those of England until the wherewithal to keep up was available.<sup>284</sup> Mrs Godley, in fact complained in her letters home that Wellington was very behind England with fashion and that the Lieutenant-Governor’s wife Mrs Eyre with a year-old trousseau was the most up-to date in the town. She approved of Mrs Eyre’s wardrobe saying “there we found our deputy Queen sitting up in all the honour of reception, bride-

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<sup>282</sup> Letters of Charlotte Godley.

<sup>283</sup> Letters of Charlotte Godley.

<sup>284</sup> Alison Drummond, *At home in New Zealand : an illustrated history of everyday things before 1865* (Auckland: B & J Paul, 1967).

cake, and a gorgeous dress, but *trés bien choisie*;" and "we found everyone arrived and in superb ball-dresses, apparently just unpacked from London, specially Mrs. Eyre."<sup>285</sup>

Jane Malthus has noted in her extensive study of women's dresses worn in New Zealand during the period studied that there was "no indication of adaptation [of women's dresses] to the colonial environment".<sup>286</sup> Although there are a few mentions of fashions that Wellington women made their own to suit local events or the Wellington climate, it would seem that Malthus's argument is largely correct. The Wellington weather had a strong impact on the population as wind and dust in the summer, and wind, rain and mud in the winter needed to be dealt with. However, women appeared in the main to attempt to continue to follow overseas fashion, sometimes to the detriment to their outfits. Alla Atkinson's travails at the reception at Government House in extremely rainy conditions have been previously mentioned, and she also noted how she tried to keep her "new cloth dress" and "big feathered hat from ruin".<sup>287</sup> There was a rumour that ladies had to weight their skirts with shot to prevent any embarrassment in the Wellington winds.<sup>288</sup> Elise writing in the *New Zealand Mail* provided instructions for a "double-barrelled" petticoat, along the lines of the divided skirt popularised by the Dress Reform movement to counteract the wind, and this innovation apparently caused quite a reaction by the ladies of the town.<sup>289</sup> Whether it was widely adopted by the ladies of the city to resist the Wellington wind is not mentioned. Many of the prevailing fashions from London or Paris would not have worked well in the Wellington climate, although there is plenty of evidence that these fashions were adopted. The Misses Boyle, daughters of the Governor, were known for their economies on matters of dress, and practised these economies by wearing cotton blouses and dark skirts all year round. The girls adopting this fashion in imitation must have regretted it as thin cotton blouses in a "biting Southerly wind" would not have been very practical.<sup>290</sup> In 1896 'Ione' noticed in the draper's stores many wonderful hats but could not imagine wearing many in windy, dusty Wellington, stating that "tulle, areophane and long slender stalks of

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<sup>285</sup> *Tres bien choisie* translates to very well chosen; Letters of Charlotte Godley.

<sup>286</sup> Malthus, "European women's dresses in nineteenth-century New Zealand", 25.

<sup>287</sup> Correspondence - Alla Atkinson.

<sup>288</sup> EP, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1870; Colonist, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1878.

<sup>289</sup> NZM, 8<sup>th</sup> September 1883.

<sup>290</sup> Observer, 12<sup>th</sup> September 1896.



nodding flowers do not seem suitable for this place".<sup>291</sup> There are numerous additional references in the popular press of women wearing items unsuitable for the prevailing conditions of Wellington's climate and muddy thoroughfares, so it would seem that there was little diversion from the fashions that were popular overseas.

Historians have noted the impact of fashion columns and in particular fashion illustrations in influencing women's dress in Britain and the United States.<sup>292</sup> What was in fashion at 'Home' had a significant impact on the fashions in New Zealand, with newspapers and magazines carrying fashion notes and later illustrations of fashions from London and Paris. However, despite their interest it was possible, especially in the early days that the Wellington shops did not actually receive the new fashions until at least a season or more had passed. This meant that fashions in the colony could be quite different to that which women read about in the English magazines and in letters sent from home. This could have been due to the length of time that the shipments took to get to Wellington, or even that the drapers were trying to sell off old stock before they ordered new. Even as late as 1881, Elizabeth Harris was concerned that a lady of the highest fashion in New Zealand would be quite out of fashion at 'Home', stating that:

We might almost declare that English and colonial fashions are distinct from each other, for a lady dressed in highest style procurable here, would, upon taking a trip Home, even by the quickest route, find her attire looked upon as decidedly old-fashioned.<sup>293</sup>

In addition, buying clothes from home could be fraught with difficulty, not just the lengthy wait for the item to arrive but the chance that it could be the wrong size or style as well. Jessica Pharazyn recorded in her diary that the dress she had ordered was a "great disappointment, gorgeous and in bad taste...material and colour good - but style odious".<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> NZM, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1896.

<sup>292</sup> Ya-Lei Yen, "Clothing Middle-Class Women";

<sup>293</sup> NZM, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1881.

<sup>294</sup> Diary of Jessica Pharazyn.

There were still plenty of options in the Wellington shops for those looking to buy fashionable items despite the tardiness of British fashions reaching the colony. The fashion columns provided a lot of information for those who wished to know what was in the shops, and Elizabeth Harris, at least, felt that Wellington was a fashionable place to be. She was somewhat annoyed to discover that the English society magazine *The Queen* was still of the opinion that “strong and useful dresses, not too elaborately made” were seen as best suited for New Zealand, and that nothing elegant could be obtained in the shops.<sup>295</sup> Based on the number of drapers’ shops in Wellington alone at this stage she was justified in her opinion. Elizabeth provided a service to ladies by describing the fashions in the shops. She noted that the number of new articles in the leading drapers’ shops was bewildering, and complained that the “constant succession of contrasting fashions” would lead to extravagance as women tried to keep up.<sup>296</sup> From her praise and vivid descriptions it would seem that the shops in Wellington were fully stocked with many desirable articles.<sup>297</sup> Later on in the 1890s, ‘lone’ wrote about the fascinating fashions for the benefit of friends in the country and others “who are not able to share in my joyous perambulations of the various shops, and flit from muslin to chiffon, and from embroidered stockings to the new sequin belts”.<sup>298</sup> As previously noted, despite numerous details of outfits described in the social columns there was no mention of where such outfits were purchased, so it can only be speculated that the Wellington shops did in fact provide the elite with a wide variety of fashionable costumes. The exception to this was a handful of weddings where it was noted that the brides’ outfits were made by either Kirkcaldie & Stains or The D.I.C. One of these weddings was noted as being “fashionable and exceedingly pretty” and the bride’s dress was “much admired”, demonstrating that Wellington by the end of the century could at least provide ladies with the fashionable items they desired.<sup>299</sup>

Roberta Nicholls has commented that clothing worn by the elite had symbolic significance to show their status and separateness from the rest of the community.<sup>300</sup> Wellington had

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<sup>295</sup> NZM, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1886.

<sup>296</sup> NZM, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1886.

<sup>297</sup> For example see: NZM, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1886.

<sup>298</sup> NZM, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1896.

<sup>299</sup> Free Lance, 18<sup>th</sup> October 1902.

<sup>300</sup> Nicholls, “Elite Society in Victorian and Edwardian Wellington”, 204.

the reputation of being concerned with fashion and social standing, even more so once the seat of government was moved to the town. Margaret Herring, a settler who moved to Wellington after a short stay in Nelson wrote in her letters in 1861 that Wellington was “more dressing, more fashion”, than Nelson was and had noticed that English fashions were very popular in the capital.<sup>301</sup> Margaret noted that another elite lady, Mrs Johnston, was “the most stylish woman in Wellington, quite a leader of fashion” after she attended a social event at Judge and Mrs Johnston’s house. Margaret was quite nervous about attending these “stylish affairs” where the ladies all wore “low bodices, grand head dresses”. Margaret apparently did not think that she would require any grand clothes for her future lifestyle married to a vicar and was quite happy with her “peach silk with an ordinary velvet head-dress”. She noted however, that another vicar’s wife, Caroline Thatcher was evidently much more fashion focused, as she “has been accustomed to high life in England and has heaps of dresses’<sup>302</sup> Other than sources such as letters like those of Margaret Herring we have little information on what society ladies wore to their events prior to the 1890s.<sup>303</sup> As we have seen from the diaries of Wellington ladies, even when they did mention their clothes there was very little description of the outfit worn or purchased.

Once the social columns did begin they were numerous and detailed in their descriptions. Those attended by the ‘Upper Ten’ as the social elite was called, tended to have special mention and the social columns were quite exhaustive in their reports of the outfits of the society ladies:

Lady Glasgow was wearing a lovely gown of lightish peacock green satin, brocaded with flowers in a lighter shade, black velvet double cape, the upper one being trimmed and bordered with handsome gold braid and beaver, bonnet comprised of black velvet, jet, blue satin and tips, and she carried a beaver muff.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Margaret Herring letters

<sup>302</sup> Margaret Herring letters

<sup>303</sup> Malthus, “European women's dresses in nineteenth-century New Zealand”, 8.

<sup>304</sup> NZM, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1895.

Using the social columns as a reference the number of events and costumes worn by Lady Glasgow through-out the 1895 season can be analysed.<sup>305</sup> From the 31<sup>st</sup> May to the end of September she attended twenty-six events where her outfits were recorded in enough detail to determine what she wore. She is described as wearing a number of different gowns as well as the afore-mentioned peacock coloured gown, which she also wore once more during the season to an afternoon reception at Government House. No pictures exist of the outfits so assumptions have been made from the descriptions given, and that she would have had more than one black gown as they were very fashionable and appropriate for these events. Given this it would seem that she wore around twelve different gowns during the 1895 season, all of which were richly described.<sup>306</sup> They apparently consisted of expensive and fashionable materials such as velvet and silk, with luxurious trimmings such as fur. In addition, on a number of occasions she wore her “beautiful diamond ornaments”.<sup>307</sup> As Nicholls has stated it would have been important for Lady Glasgow as the premier woman of the colony to show her status with the clothes she chose to wear.<sup>308</sup> Conversely, during the same season Mrs Agnes Grace was also recorded as being present at a number of occasions but only two (possibly three) different outfits are described. Although Mrs Grace was high in Wellington society it is evident that her outfits were not as interesting to the reader as those worn by Lady Glasgow. As the Governor’s family led Wellington society their outfits would have been studied and possibly copied by women further down the social scale. Whether Lady Glasgow’s style of dress was imitated by Wellington society is not known, though a later Governor’s wife, Lady Plunket’s diamond earrings were apparently much imitated.<sup>309</sup>

For the elite women of Wellington it was important to see and be seen in their outfits so as to impress their social peers. Alla Atkinson wrote in 1901 of having a dress made, “I have had my ... new black silk made up with a little train to the skirt & two bodices, a high & a low

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<sup>305</sup> Lady Glasgow was the wife of the Governor of New Zealand from 1892 to 1897 and therefore was at the pinnacle of New Zealand society.

<sup>306</sup> See Appendix C for a full listing of all Lady Glasgow’s outfits, black evening gowns were extremely popular during this time so my assumption is that a society leader would have had more than one in her wardrobe.

<sup>307</sup> NZM, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1895.

<sup>308</sup> Nicholls, “Elite Society in Victorian and Edwardian Wellington”, 204.

<sup>309</sup> The Observer 12<sup>th</sup> September 1896; NZM, 17<sup>th</sup> May 1889; New Zealand Freelance 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1904.

– I don't know if it is a success yet, as no one has seen me in it but the dress-maker"<sup>310</sup>; presumably whether she liked the dress herself was less important than other women liking it. The Edwin family were invited to the Governor's Ball in 1895 and Irene Edwin provides some commentary on the occasion. She wore a "white silk and gauze gown" to the Ball, according to the Social Notes in the newspaper.<sup>311</sup> Her amusing account of the Ball provides some evidence that New Zealand society was still very much led by the dress rules of the British elite, as she remarks on having worn "my white satin & 9 people thought I was coming out. Mr Coates & Capt. Adams (Pylades) solemnly congratulated me & Capt. A. hoped I would go to a great many more balls & enjoy them all very much."<sup>312</sup> Numerous girls of Wellington society, including the Edwin sisters, 'came out' during the period of this study and would have worn traditional white dresses for these occasions.

Nicholls has noted that "well-to-do women in Wellington, however, had rather less success than their English counterparts in demarcating themselves from the public at large by the clothes they wore".<sup>313</sup> In her study of New Zealand female servants, Charlotte Macdonald refers to an incident with Lady Barker where her housemaid had asked for her riding habit pattern. Lady Barker was aghast at the "unashamed boldness with which she assumed she could appear in the same style as those in a different (and higher) station of life".<sup>314</sup> The *New Zealand Mail* in 1896 carried a story of a similar occurrence:

I have been told a very amusing story of an up-to-date New Zealand servant girl. She came to her mistress confidentially one afternoon and remarked, 'How very pretty that dress of yours is, Mrs Blank, it fits so beautifully. I wonder was it made in Wellington?' 'Oh, yes,' replied the mistress much amused,. 'at Miss So-and-so's'. 'Oh indeed,' was the startling reply, 'well, I will have my new dress made there!' And she did.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Alla Atkinson letters.

<sup>311</sup> NZM, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1895.

<sup>312</sup> Irene Edwin, Invite to Birthday Ball.

<sup>313</sup> Nicholls, "Elite Society in Victorian and Edwardian Wellington", 204.

<sup>314</sup> Macdonald "A woman of good character", 121.

<sup>315</sup> NZM, 27<sup>th</sup> February 1896.

Elizabeth Harris, also commented on this phenomenon in her column with a tale of an expensive plush mantle that her friend could not afford but was disgusted to see it later being worn by a member of the 'demi-monde' rather than a member of the middle or upper classes.<sup>316</sup> Certain ladies in the Upper Ten also wished to be demarcated from the middle-class to the extent of wearing old costumes to a ball as "all the grocer's daughters and ironmonger's wives were getting new costumes".<sup>317</sup> It seems that women from all walks of life in Wellington did their best to copy the fashions of the ladies of society.

As early as 1870 a letter to the *Wellington Independent* entitled "Our Girls" had bemoaned the "growing love on the part of the colonists for finery and display", a complaint that was echoed many years later by Lady Plunket. In 1904, she caused some controversy with her views on colonial girls, their independence and their dress. Lady Plunket had only been in the country some six weeks before her views were published in the newspaper so she was still a virtual newcomer:

Asked about dress, Lady Plunket thought there was not much difference between England and New Zealand, except in regard to the morning, when Englishwomen dress with more studious simplicity than occurs to the average colonial.

She also commented in regard to young girls of fourteen or fifteen, "how expensively they do dress!".<sup>318</sup> Her comments caused a flurry of responses to the press, but in none of these were her words on extravagance of dress refuted, but were either supported by those deploring the extravagance of dress or criticised by those who saw nothing wrong with the way New Zealand women dress.<sup>319</sup> Looking back to Charlotte Godley's thoughts on the brightness of the outfits it would seem that elaborate dressing was a common theme throughout the period.

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<sup>316</sup> NZM, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1886.

<sup>317</sup> Observer, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1892.

<sup>318</sup> Otago Daily Times, 25<sup>th</sup> August 1904.

<sup>319</sup> See: The Press, 27<sup>th</sup> August 1904; 30<sup>th</sup> August 1904; 1<sup>st</sup> September 1904; 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1904; 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1904; 5<sup>th</sup> September 1904.

Jane Malthus argues that British middle-class women's dress in the period studied reflected their role in society as guardians of the home and family. In New Zealand this was also true, with the corseted silhouette reflecting their submissive role as the colonial helpmeet.<sup>320</sup> As can be seen from the numerous society columns in the 1890s and beyond, the dress of the privileged class of women was expected to be fashionable and reflect their husband's standing in society. Malthus contends that given the restrictions of dress that some women in New Zealand supported the 'Rational Dress Movement' that had grown popular overseas.<sup>321</sup> In Wellington, Elizabeth Harris was a firm supporter of the Rational Dress movement devoting a number of columns to it during her tenure as Lady Editor of the *New Zealand Mail*. She even went to the extent of exhibiting items such as her divided skirt at the Industrial Exhibition in 1885. In 1894 a dress reform wedding in Christchurch made headlines throughout the country. A flurry of correspondence on the necessities or otherwise of dress reform followed the wedding. "A Modern Girl" wrote that "loose dresses" would be required for women "to uphold our newly-recognised position as the equal of a 'man'". However, "Topsy" felt that the tailor-made garments of current fashion, if made with shorter skirts, would ensure women were "stronger and healthier" than if they wore "a loose, floppy garment".<sup>322</sup> Other than the members of the Rational Dress Association it seemed there was little support for a move to wearing rational dress as "fashion's influence was powerful, as was the entrenched stereotypical etiquette separating the spheres of men and women".<sup>323</sup> Despite a number of newsworthy events such as the bifurcated dress wedding of Kate Walker in Christchurch, there does not seem to be much evidence that the ladies of Wellington adopted the rational style.<sup>324</sup>

Was being interested in the clothes that she wore detrimental to the independence of the middle-class Victorian woman? Fashions through-out the 19th Century and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century were restrictive and even harmful to the health of the wearer.<sup>325</sup> As has been seen there was little difference between the clothes worn overseas and those worn in

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<sup>320</sup> Malthus, "Bifurcated and not ashamed", 34.

<sup>321</sup> Malthus, *ibid*, 32-46.

<sup>322</sup> Christchurch Post, 13th November 1894; NZM, 23rd November 1894, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1894.

<sup>323</sup> Malthus, *ibid*, 45.

<sup>324</sup> NZM 9<sup>th</sup> March 1894, 6<sup>th</sup> February 1896.

<sup>325</sup> See for example: Roberts "The Exquisite Slave".

Wellington. Jane Malthus asserts that despite the wide and varied role of the colonial woman her dress still “affirmed her subservient role”<sup>326</sup>. Despite their growing independence women were still seen as “symbols of the family’s position in society.”<sup>327</sup> It is clear from the numerous social columns in the newspapers from the 1890s onwards, that fashionable dress was critical to the societal position. The Canterbury Women’s Institute attacked the fashion columns in the newspapers, saying that they treated women as “a mere peg for hanging clothes on”, and that such columns were “unworthy of the dignity of intelligent women”. This was responded to by one of the authors of such columns with the acerbic comment that “the members of the Institute are not remarkable for any great personal grace, nor particularly careful attire”.<sup>328</sup> This type of disagreement certainly helped to propagate the myth that a woman could either be interested in fashion or in female independence but not both. A British journalist, Frederick Dolman, shows us another view, as he describes two of the leading political ladies of Wellington. Both Lady Stout and Mrs MacDonald showed that “pleasing features and tasteful dresses are by no means inconsistent with an active interest in public movements”.<sup>329</sup> This leads on to the next section which explores whether shopping itself was helpful or harmful to women’s independence.

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<sup>326</sup> Jane Malthus, “Bifurcated and not ashamed”, 34.

<sup>327</sup> Malthus, *ibid*, 33.

<sup>328</sup> Press, 13<sup>th</sup> November 1894; NZM, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1894.

<sup>329</sup> Auckland Star, 5th July 1898.



### Part Three – The impact of shopping on independence.

Women suffragists and female emancipators generally may, in course of time, make many modifications in the female character; but they will never eradicate her taste for shopping, or cure her of the exquisite pleasure of obtaining a good bargain.<sup>330</sup>

Historians have argued opposing views as to whether the act of shopping was either liberating or ruinous for women in this era, however, this has not been considered for women in New Zealand. Judith Walkowitz suggested that women enjoyed the freedoms afforded to them by having access to London's West End, and that access to public space such as department stores helped encourage feminist demands. Christopher Hosgood has challenged this assertion by asking whether women were active agents in this emancipation. He questioned how doing the shops gave women authority and whether in fact it was just another aspect of men undermining the potential emancipation of women with misdirection into shopping.<sup>331</sup> Was the act of shopping itself an act of true independence for women in this era? In 1875 an article in the *Saturday Review* appeared entitled "The Philosophy of Shopping". In this the author (assumed to be Eliza Linton)<sup>332</sup> waxed lyrical on the delights of shopping and how ladies could "luxuriate in a sense of power" that shopping gave them. Linton's view was that the "dethroned mistress" of the house could be "transported to a position of supreme command, with a world of material luxury at her feet". Shopping for the Victorian middle-class woman in Britain, is therefore depicted as a purely female leisure activity which gave the participant a real feeling of purpose and power.<sup>333</sup> Studies of the independence of New Zealand women of this period have taken a different stance. New Zealand women achieved enfranchisement very much earlier than the British, and because of that shopping did not perhaps have the same emancipatory impact that has been argued for Britain.

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<sup>330</sup> The Star, 17th March 1892.

<sup>331</sup> See: Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*; Hosgood, "'Doing the Shops' at Christmas"; Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*; and Walkowitz, "Going Public".

<sup>332</sup> Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 32.

<sup>333</sup> Bruce Herald, 3rd March 1876.

Ben Schrader has observed that middle-class women were expected to stay at home or at least socialise in private rather than public spaces.<sup>334</sup> This thesis has previously discussed the social occasions that Wellington women attended during the period studied. Many of these occasions took part in private homes or were invite-only events in venues such as Government House, which functioned as quasi-private spaces. Ladies at these events would not be annoyed by members of the working class or men that they did not know. The most common type of excursion out of the house for women, other than shopping, was the 'At Home' or afternoon tea event and these were usually women-only occasions. Ladies tended to be accompanied by their husband or father for other public events such as opera, theatre or lectures. One key exception to staying in private or quasi-private spaces was when women were out shopping, including the act of window-shopping. Schrader acknowledged the sociability of the urban centre in New Zealand in his coverage of leisure pursuits, and for women how this encompassed the pleasures of window shopping and shopping. As with other studies of shopping he noted that the activity was about more than the purchase but was about the social side of being out of the house that drew women to it.<sup>335</sup> It was important for women to have a goal in mind such as shopping when they were venturing outside the home as aimless wandering could be misinterpreted, leaving women open to unwanted male attention. Women could linger, and were indeed encouraged to do so, by the artistically presented shop windows. Jessica Sewell has argued that for women "the most common reason to go out into public was to run errands, especially errands that involved shopping".<sup>336</sup> Sewell was discussing women in San Francisco at the turn of the century, but evidence from their diaries shows that this was the same for the women of Wellington. As previously noted, the ladies observed in this study lived the comfortable lives of the late Victorian middle-class colonial. Other than the social occasions discussed earlier it was exceedingly common through-out the diaries to see references to trips downtown, to the shops, or simply a list of items bought on any given day. However, evidence also shows that the middle-class women of Wellington had a more public life than simply the shopping excursions that Schrader and Sewell discussed.

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<sup>334</sup> Schrader, *The Big Smoke*, 219-220.

<sup>335</sup> Schrader, *The Big Smoke*, 228-229.

<sup>336</sup> Jessica Sewell, *Women and the Everyday City: Public Space in San Francisco, 1890-1915* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2011), chap 2.

Despite the original view of Victorian women being restrained to a purely domestic existence, recent studies have found that generally they were quite comfortable with a more public existence than had been envisaged.<sup>337</sup> Abelson has shown with her study on female shoplifters that women were comfortable moving about the city “acting purposefully and autonomously on their own behalf as well as that of their families.”<sup>338</sup> New Zealand women of this time certainly appeared to have active social-lives outside the house, as they are well-documented taking part in activities such as attendance in the ladies’ gallery at Parliament, shopping on Lambton Quay, even partaking in or watching sporting events. Where they did have the time and opportunity it seems that there were no strictures on these women being out and about in the city, either on their own or with their husbands and families. Even in the 1860s the ladies of Wellington have recorded many trips down “the Beach” where they “saw everybody” as well as doing their shopping.<sup>339</sup> In 1873, Emily, in Dunedin, wrote about “doing the block” and describes the people she saw during the “most fashionable hour” including a group of ladies “very demonstrative, very talkative, and seemingly much delighted to see each other”.<sup>340</sup> Possibly, she would have had a similar experience in Wellington as there are a number of references to women parading up and down the “half-crown” side of Lambton Quay displaying their finery.<sup>341</sup> The photo of Lambton Quay from 1900 (Figure 11) shows many people strolling along including a number of groups of women who appear to be comfortable with being out in public.

Conversely, lone writing a column in the *New Zealand Mail* in 1895 mentioned an incident where men “eyed” a group of (respectable elite) girls who were walking home from singing practice and who “looked as if they thought we had formed ourselves into a ‘doing the block’ society”.<sup>342</sup> lone’s story captures the dichotomy which has long been understood about Victorian society, that of the immorality of public life against the respectability of

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<sup>337</sup> See: Abelson, *When Ladies Go a-Thieving*; Flanders, *Consuming Passions*; Sewell, *Women and the Everyday City*; Remus, “A Shopper’s Paradise.”

<sup>338</sup> Abelson, *When Ladies Go a-Thieving*, 16.

<sup>339</sup> Diary of Jessica Pharazyn.

<sup>340</sup> Otago Daily Times, 6th September 1873.

<sup>341</sup> It seems that the ‘half-crown side’ was used in Victorian times to show the better side of the street, similarly to the better part of a theatre where the audience would have paid a half-crown to enter; mentioned in: WI, 22nd January 1870.

<sup>342</sup> NZM, 12th April 1895.

being in the home.<sup>343</sup> Rappaport and Walkowitz have both discussed the potential dangers for women of being out and about in public. By going out onto the streets and engaging in activities such as shopping, women demonstrated that they did not need to remain within the house to be respectable. However, this public respectability still had parameters within which they needed to stay. Being out at night without a male escort, parading up and down the block for no other reason than to enjoy themselves, these were not seen as behaviours of decent women. These behaviours could then be used to try and stifle their growing independence. There was a danger that they would be seen as prostitutes or simply as less respectable lower-class women. Deborah L Parsons tells us that women's involvement in public life in the late 19th Century was a source of concern to men as women were seen as "being overwhelmingly present".<sup>344</sup> Crowds of females out in public without male chaperonage were counter to the views that many men had on the correct place for women.

The rise of the New Woman later in the century also gave fuel to those who were uncomfortable with women in public. There were unfavourable descriptions in the popular press such as one in 1897 condemning the New Woman in Wellington for her loud voice and immodest behaviour and noting that there were "scores of her to be seen doing the block on the half-crown side any afternoon from four to five."<sup>345</sup> Even into the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century the New Woman continued to be criticised both for her appearance and her manner in public. Wellington girls were subject to a number of complaints in the popular press on their "loud and strident" voices in public spaces such as "the Ladies Gallery of the House of Representatives, to the dress-circle of the Opera House, in the trains and in the trams". The commentator (a male) was also upset by the way that women in Wellington walked, "they flout, they sprawl, they swing, anything but walk in quiet un-obtrusive way".<sup>346</sup> Women were not immune from being criticised by their own sex either; in 1904, Lady Plunket, newly arrived in Wellington from London, commented disparagingly on the number of young girls "parading the streets" with too much freedom. This resulted in a flurry of letters to the

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<sup>343</sup> Mica Nava, "Modernity's Disavowal: Women, The City and the Department Store", in *Modern Times, Reflections on a Century of English Modernity*, ed. Mica Nava, (London: Routledge, 1996), 4.

<sup>344</sup> Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis*.

<sup>345</sup> Christchurch Press, 16th January 1897.

<sup>346</sup> EP, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1904.

newspapers either supporting or opposing Lady Plunket's views, but in all cases, there was an acceptance that girls in New Zealand had more freedom than in England.<sup>347</sup>

Were women comfortable in their role out in public life or did they prefer a more domestic existence? Inherent in this question would have been concerns about their safety in public places, and whether conveniences were available for them for their comfort. Walkowitz has remarked on the importance of women in the West End of London having access to the street without molestation.<sup>348</sup> Did women in Wellington have similar issues in accessing Lambton Quay or Cuba Street? I have found only a handful of references to men either verbally or physically annoying women as they went about their business. One incident in 1878 involved a "fashionably dressed" man who "offered some most gross and outrageous improprieties" to ladies.<sup>349</sup> These incidents took place mainly in the evening, a time when respectable women were expected to be at home, and therefore by being outside without a male escort were women seen as fair game? In 1889 "W" from Wellington wrote to the *New Zealand Mail* to complain about morning shopping trips being ruined by:

groups of idlers who seem to have nothing else to do but stand about smoking and expectorating on the footpaths and, indeed, so careless are they, that unless one is constantly on the alert one's dress may be spoiled by coming into contact with these tiresome people.<sup>350</sup>

In 1899 the Wellington Library council noted that ladies did not want to read their periodicals in the public reference library as they "objected to be stared at by men"<sup>351</sup> Complaints such as these are however infrequent in the newspapers during this period. Although not a statistically significant list there has not been any mention in either the writings of the women, or print media of any molestation of women in conducting their shopping excursions. In fact the women studied seemed to have no limitations on leaving

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<sup>347</sup> EP, 27th August 1904.

<sup>348</sup> Walkowitz, "Going Public", 1-21.

<sup>349</sup> EP, 28th May 1878.

<sup>350</sup> NZM, 21st June 1889.

<sup>351</sup> EP, 10th March 1899.

their houses for excursions. Shopping, either buying or just browsing, gave women the excuse they needed to leave the house and carve out some time for themselves.

Jan Furnée, in studying whether shopping gave independence to Dutch women, noted that there were a number of obstacles that could detract from the liberating pleasures of shopping. As well as the afore-mentioned potential molestations these also included having access to conveniences such as rest rooms and a comfortable shopping environment.<sup>352</sup>

Caroline Daley has also written of the “connection between the provision of public toilets for women and women’s place within wider society”.<sup>353</sup> Unfortunately both Daley’s study and Cooper et al’s, “Rooms of Their Own” focused on New Zealand cities other than Wellington, although they provide information useful to a Wellington study.<sup>354</sup> Provision of public toilets for women in Wellington has not been well recorded, though lavatory and retiring areas for women are mentioned in descriptions of public events. As mentioned previously it was the rise of the department store that helped make these spaces easier for women to access and therefore stay longer in the public arena. This was however not until 1886 in Wellington, at Te Aro House, (although later for the other well-established stores such as Kirkcaldie & Stains). Other than those provided by the shops, accessible lavatories for women were not common during the period studied. Records of a meeting about the Wellington Public Library show that the provision of lavatories for women could be controversial. In 1893 it was proposed to include a “ladies’ lavatory in the north-west corner of the ladies’ reading-room”; in 1899 it was further proposed to erect a new lavatory in a different area and remove the one in the reading room as that was in a “very inconvenient place and gives rise to much complaint on the part of ladies who use the reading room”. However, in 1901 the lavatory was removed altogether and was still closed by 1907 when there was a move to reinstate a lavatory in the library. It was noted in this report that there was still a very real need for ladies’ conveniences in the city, so it seems that Wellington did

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<sup>352</sup> Jan Hein Furnée, “Shopping as Liberation?: Women and Urban Space in Amsterdam, 1863-1913”, *Low Countries Historical Review* 130, no 2 (2015), 92-122.

<sup>353</sup> Caroline Daley, “Flushed with Pride: Women’s Quest for Public Toilets in New Zealand”, *Women’s Studies Journal*, (2000), 96.

<sup>354</sup> Annabel Cooper, Robin Law, Jane Malthus & Pamela Wood, “Rooms of Their Own: Public Toilets and gendered citizens in a New Zealand city, 1860-1940”, *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 7, no 4 (2000), 417-433.

not have ladies' facilities even then.<sup>355</sup> However, unlike the West End of London, Wellington's shopping areas were more easily accessed by the ladies of the city and its suburbs. Many of the ladies in this study lived within walking distance of the shopping area and therefore were able to include a visit to the shops in their daily routines.

The other inconveniences that put obstacles in the path of women enjoying their time shopping included issues such as the Wellington weather and the state of the public thoroughfares.<sup>356</sup> Wellington streets were dusty in the summer and muddy in the winter, both extremes providing obstacles to women being able to traverse the shopping areas in comfort. In 1865, the shopkeepers were unhappy with the dusty streets and the very real possibility of this leading not only to the "destruction of merchandise, but...ladies being prevented by the weather from shopping"<sup>357</sup> Jessica Pharazyn was particularly displeased with the conditions in Wellington, writing in 1868 that she "walked twice to the Beach, blinded with dust, eyes quite inflamed in the evening".<sup>358</sup> As late as 1901 ladies were still complaining about the state of the streets and "the disagreeable arrangements of dress for wading through mud puddles to do our shopping".<sup>359</sup> The Wellington weather has been previously mentioned as a potential influence on the types of clothes ladies wore but also would have been instrumental on how the ladies chose to spend their day. Many of them mention the weather daily in their diaries, and with limited transportation available bad weather would have impeded pleasurable trips to the shops. Sometimes they were able to take the trams which ran between the Basin Reserve and Lambton Quay from 1878. Prior to this, other than walking, they would have needed access to a trap or carriage. In 1881 Jane Anderson and daughter Cissie took advantage of the tram to return from a trip to Newtown and stop at Kirkcaldie & Stains on the way home. Obviously if they were not able to catch the tram then options were limited. In 1879, Laura Barraud records making trips to visit her dressmaker "I went to May's to have my dress tried on & had to walk both ways as I missed the tram & I was very tired when I got in."<sup>360</sup> The introduction of the tram system offered

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<sup>355</sup> NZT, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1899, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1907; EP, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1893.

<sup>356</sup> Jan Hein Furnée, "Shopping as Liberation?", 109.

<sup>357</sup> EP, 4<sup>th</sup> October 1865.

<sup>358</sup> Diary of Jessica Pharazyn.

<sup>359</sup> NZM, 28<sup>th</sup> August 1901.

<sup>360</sup> Diary of Laura Cottam Barraud; "Trams in Wellington", <https://www.wcl.govt.nz/heritage/trams.html>

real convenience to women for shopping and the shop-keepers were eager to utilise this even to the extent of including timetables with their advertisements.<sup>361</sup>

It has been well documented that women's path to the vote in 1893 was a result of what Nolan calls "domestic feminist" activity. Their role as "helpmeet" and guardians of the family's morality was what pathed the way to enfranchisement.<sup>362</sup> New Zealand women's greater independence and freedom than their British counterparts has also been highlighted. More like the women of United States and Australia they seemed comfortable with being in public spaces either alone or more commonly with other women. As the vast majority did not work outside the home their choice of public space was limited to church, shops and public leisure spaces such as theatres and Parliament. By taking women out of the house on a regular basis the shops therefore helped to expand women's public role, and this grew as the shops offered more facilities such as refreshment rooms and lavatories. Shopping gave women a sense of purpose, a place to socialise and the ability to control at least some of the family budget.

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<sup>361</sup> NZM, 5<sup>th</sup> February 1881.

<sup>362</sup> See: Nolan, *Bread Winning*; Dalziel, "The Colonial Helpmeet".





Figure 10. Portrait of Laura Fitchett, ATL, MS-Papers-6793



Figure 11. Crowd walking along Lambton Quay, Wellington. Harkness, W E :Photographs. Ref: 1/2-062517-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. [/records/23076682](#)

## Conclusion

The development of the Wellington department stores largely followed that of Britain and the United States, although even in 1911 journalists were debating whether the department store “came to us from America, or is merely a glorified descendant of the ‘store’ of early colonial days”.<sup>363</sup> Key to this development were the stores opened by individual entrepreneurs such as Kirkcaldie and Stains, James Smith and Bendix Hallenstein. These men learnt from travels overseas and used these innovations to continue to improve the shopping experience. With increasingly closer ties to America, store owners like Mr George of The Economic found that a “trip through the States...taught him many things”.<sup>364</sup> By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century these sophisticated marketing approaches combined with physical improvements meant the large stores of Wellington could truly be called a ‘ladies paradise’.

When the visitor reaches Kirkcaldie and Stains’ new building, the D.I.C., and Hannah’s, [than which] there is no finer in this respect even in its greatest counterpart- London itself. ‘The Quay is grand’ night or day, and thousands of happy, well-dressed men, women and children fill the eye as they thread their way midst an endless race of cabs, cars and trams the livelong day.<sup>365</sup>

The above quote comes from an article on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wellington and gives the reader a sense of the bustling thoroughfare that was Lambton Quay in 1910. As retail entered its “golden age” after the First World War the Wellington department stores were already in a strong position to provide women with the shopping experience they desired.<sup>366</sup>

A significant contrast from the development of overseas department stores is that of the involvement of women as retailers, and not simply as shop-assistants. Laurenson noted that overseas women were not usually the initiators of department stores, but New Zealand’s colonial development provided an environment in which women could play a pioneering

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<sup>363</sup> NZT, 18<sup>th</sup> December 1911.

<sup>364</sup> NZM, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1905.

<sup>365</sup> NZT, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1910.

<sup>366</sup> Laurenson, *Going Up Going Down*, 6-7.

role.<sup>367</sup> Mary Taylor and later the Misses Smith have been mentioned in this thesis as early pioneers in Wellington's retail development. Bishop has demonstrated how widespread it was for women to run draper's shops and provides a number of examples.<sup>368</sup> These include that of Warnock, Kelly and Adkin, an important store in Wellington in the 1880s and 1890s. The owners were all previously employed by Kirkcaldie and Stains, with Kate Kelly being the female partner. The involvement of a female in an important role was publicly downplayed, as most of the references in the newspapers called the partners Messrs Warnock, Kelly and Adkins. Laurenson also noted that this unique involvement of women was little recognised, however, the success of these stores as they evolved from drapers stores to department stores reflected the hard work and vision of the women owners.<sup>369</sup>

Despite the involvement of some women with the retail trade it was not common for middle-class women to be engaged in employment outside the home. This thesis has demonstrated that these women were dependent on their husbands for money to spend shopping. The women in this study appeared to have sufficient access to funds for this purpose with their husbands being "fair-minded men of steady habits" who provided them with these funds.<sup>370</sup> Neither did the women examined seem extravagant in their shopping habits. Of Laura Fitchett's forty-eight documented trips to the shops on only twelve occasions did she purchase an item of clothing for herself, the majority of visits resulted in domestic expenditure or items for the family.<sup>371</sup> Descriptions of drapers' sales in the newspapers also demonstrate the love of the Wellington woman for a bargain and their desire to be well-dressed whilst not spending extravagantly.

This thesis initially asked whether women enjoyed spending time their leisure time shopping. At the outset of my research, I had expected to discover solid evidence from the women of the city on their enjoyment of their shopping excursions. The diaries examined provided plenty of evidence of regular trips to the shops and mention of many items of clothing purchased on these trips. These accounts offer valuable insight onto the women's

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<sup>367</sup> Laurenson, *ibid*, 60-61.

<sup>368</sup> Bishop, *Women Mean Business*, 111-161.

<sup>369</sup> Laurenson, *Going Up Going Down*, 60-61.

<sup>370</sup> Letter from Jessie Mackay, *Lyttelton Times*, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1895.

<sup>371</sup> Diary of Laura Fitchett.

daily routines and the social occasions they attended. Akin to Mary Guppy writing in 1873 they liked to “walk about a little, and visit, and go shopping after the house-work is over;”.<sup>372</sup> Jane Anderson’s excursions into town first with her sister Flo and later with daughter Cissie demonstrate the social bonding opportunities that these gave her. On one occasion Jane and Cissie visited “the Bazaar” and later in the day Flo visited them to see what had been bought. This obviously afforded pleasure for Jane and her family. Other than Jessica Pharazyn however, the women’s emotions were not well documented in the diaries. Various reasons could be posited for this. One possibility is that many of the diaries are very much a factual description of their lives and do not cover the most part the inner lives of the women. Jackson and Alston have noted that girl’s diaries written in New Zealand do not “reflect the expanded roles colonial life offered them” covering instead their domestic activities and stated that these diaries were kept more as a “genre convention” rather than as an opportunity to explore their thoughts and feelings.<sup>373</sup>

A search of newspapers also bore fruit with Ladies Pages and Social Columns providing useful and entertaining commentary. Here was found a treasure trove of insights into ladies and their shopping habits, amongst many other fascinating subjects, such as the state of married life in the colony and the servant problems facing middle-class women. The social columns also provided many nuggets of information and allowed me to picture the subjects in their finery. Like Annett-Wood’s examination of modern women and their representations in the ‘The Mirror’ magazine, further study on the Ladies Pages of the Wellington newspapers could provide useful insight into the lives of women in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>374</sup> One interesting point to emerge from commentary on the ladies of Wellington is the supposed extravagance of their dress especially seen whilst out shopping. That shopping was a social occasion cannot be better demonstrated than by women wearing their best outfits, however unfit for purpose. One male journalist bemoaned seeing two young ladies “enter a well-known drapery establishment, the one in white muslin, and the other in white silk. It was summer-time, and it was warm; what did the mud matter? And the wet

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<sup>372</sup> Letter from Mary Guppy, Mount Ida Chronicle, 28<sup>th</sup> November 1873.

<sup>373</sup> Jackson, Anna and Lucy Alston. “Colonial Girlhood and the New Girl’s Diary”, *Women’s Writing* 21, no. 2 (2014): 259-274.

<sup>374</sup> Jessie Annett-Wood, “The Modern Woman in The Mirror: Modernity and the New Zealand Women’s Magazine 1922-1932”, (Master of Arts in History Thesis, Victoria University, 2015).

umbrellas dabbing against the frocks?”<sup>375</sup> Numerous references in the newspapers to women enjoying strolling down Lambton Quay, window shopping and meeting friends, or mingling with gentlemen from Parliament, reveal that there continued to be bias against women being so free in public spaces. Despite this, the ability for women to be out and about in the public arena closely echoes similar conclusions by Sewell for San Francisco and Rappaport for London. Much like the women of today, the women of Victorian Wellington enjoyed spending time in each other’s company, and a major part of this enjoyment centred on the shops. As one lady commented, “on our way down to the tea rooms we have enjoyed stopping to look at the windows which have been so exquisitely dressed.”<sup>376</sup> A simple statement that evokes an image of well-dressed ladies, meandering down the Quay, chatting and stopping every now and then to gaze into the shop windows.

Rappaport asserted that “in Edwardian London, women’s emancipation and consumer pleasures had merged”, and by challenging women’s place in public and in the family shopping helped alter their role.<sup>377</sup> The link between lady consumer and emancipation was not as significant in New Zealand as the ‘domestic helpmeet’ achieved enfranchisement through her social and community involvement. One of the questions posed at the beginning of this thesis was to posit the notion that women were comfortable with a more public existence than was popularly supposed to have been available to her. It is notable that there was criticism of women being too present in public and particularly where they drew attention to themselves. The so-called ‘New Woman’ was especially criticised for her loudness and lack of feminine qualities. However, I found little evidence of women being impeded from going downtown to shop by either molestation or lack of facilities. The department stores were instrumental in providing women with the wherewithal to stay longer by offering refreshment rooms and lavatories, the lack of the provision of the latter by the city was notable though. It is clear that shopping provided women with enjoyable opportunities to socialise and enjoy their time in public spaces. Lady journalist, Forrest Ross neatly captures this pleasure by describing a group of women, “round a draper’s window,

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<sup>375</sup> EP, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1904.

<sup>376</sup> NZM, 27<sup>th</sup> May 1904.

<sup>377</sup> Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 220-222.

gay with delicate-lined silks and velvets, the women press, pointing and discussing and admiring,”.<sup>378</sup>

Examining women’s every-day lives offers much to a social historian in demonstrating how women spent their time and what was important to them. Shopping was such a major part of the every-day that it is surprising that more attention has not been given to this as a subject for analysis. In investigating middle-class Wellington women and their leisure shopping this thesis will contribute to this aspect of the social history of New Zealand. It is important to understand shopping as a social activity as opposed to simply an act of consumerism in examining women’s history. Shopping for pleasure rather than for need gave women an expanded role outside of the home and access to a public space as “producers, and consumers, workers and shoppers,”.<sup>379</sup> It is no wonder then that young Delia felt “her heart beating in funny little jerks” as she “entered a fashionable store on Lambton Quay” and enjoyed the “new sensation of being her own mistress in the art of shopping!”.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> Forrest Ross, WDT, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1898.

<sup>379</sup> Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 222.

<sup>380</sup> “How Delia first went a-shopping”, NZT, 30<sup>th</sup> November 1909.

## Appendices

### Appendix A – Women referenced in this study

| Name  | Husband  | Husband's Occupation   | Children / Significant Family   | Lived      | Dates of primary material         |
|---|--|--|---|------------|-----------------------------------|
| Sarah Ellen Jane (Jane) Anderson nee Spinks | David Anderson<br><br>Married 1862.                              | Grocer and general merchant  | Sister: Florence (Flo) Spinks<br><br>Children: Florence (Cissie), David, Ernest, Edward, Leonard<br><br>Sister-in-law: Ellen Ballance   | 1835?-1914 | 1861-1862<br>1877<br>1878<br>1888 |
| Jessica Pharazyn                            | Charles Johnston Pharazyn<br><br>Married 1867<br><br>Third wife. | Runholder, merchant and member of New Zealand Legislative Council. |   | 1818-1891  | 1867-1869                         |
| Laura Cottam (Cottie) Barraud               | N/A  |  | Father: Charles Decimus Barraud (Pharmacy Owner)<br><br>Sister: Jessie  | 1859-1935  | 1877-1879                         |
| Jessie Barraud                              | N/A  |  | Father: Charles Decimus Barraud (Pharmacy Owner)<br><br>Sister: Laura   | 1863-1892  | 1875-1885                         |
| Laura Sophia Fitchett                       | Ashton Fitchett<br><br>Married 1882                              | Dairy Farmer   |   | 1859?-1889 | 1882--1886                        |
| Agnes Mary Grey                             | Dr Morgan Stanislaus (Stan) Grace                                | Surgeon and member of New Zealand Legislative Council.             | Children: Eily  | 1842-1914  | 1885-1888<br>1890                 |
| Irene Atherton Edwin                        | N/A  | N/A  | Father: Robert Atherton Edwin (Meterologist and retired Naval Captain)<br><br>Mother: Amelia Charlotte Edwin<br><br>Sisters: Lily, Avis | 1875-1952  | 1893                              |

|                                     |                                     |                                 |  |            |           |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|------------|-----------|
| Ann (Alla) Atkinson                 | Tudor Atkinson                      |                                 |  | 1858-1916  | 1901      |
| Mary Rolleston                      | William Rolleston                   | Run-holder, Politician          |  | 1845-1940  |           |
| Anna Richmond                       | N/A                                 |                                 |  | 1855-1912  |           |
| Margaret Herring                    | John Edward Herring                 | Vicar                           |  | 1838-?     |           |
|                                     |                                     |                                 |  |            |           |
| Elizabeth Harris                    | John Chantrey Harris                | Newspaper owner                 |  | 1839?-1906 | 1880-1890 |
| Forrestina Elizabeth (Forrest) Ross | Malcolm Ross                        | Journalist, mountaineer, writer |  | 1860-1936  |           |
| Annie Mackenzie                     | James MacKenzie<br><br>Married 1887 | Draughtsman, District surveyor  |  | 1863-1935? | 1896-1901 |



## Appendix B Occupation Data

| Occupation          | 1881 | 1896 |
|---------------------|------|------|
| <b>Professional</b> |      |      |
| Teachers            | 259  | 579  |
| Nuns                |      |      |
| Medical             | 12   | 343  |
| Literary            |      | 10   |
| Art                 | 7    | 58   |
| Music               | 31   | 189  |
| Actor               | 8    | 43   |
| Government          | 1    |      |
|                     | 318  | 1222 |
|                     |      |      |
| <b>Domestic</b>     |      |      |
| Board & lodging     | 119  | 317  |
| Servants            | 1889 | 4060 |
|                     | 2008 | 4377 |
|                     |      |      |
| <b>Commercial</b>   |      |      |
| Saleswoman          | 24   |      |
| Shopkeeper          |      |      |
| Other               | 31   |      |
|                     | 55   | 685  |
|                     |      |      |
| <b>Agricultural</b> | 58   |      |
| <b>Industrial</b>   | 57   |      |
| Dressmaker etc      | 473  | 1716 |
| Washer woman        | 75   |      |
| Other               | 7    |      |
| <b>Total</b>        | 3051 | 8000 |

## Appendix C – Lady Glasgow’s Outfits 1895.

| Date      | Event                                   | Outfit   |
|-----------|---|--|
| 11/6/1895 | Concert                                 | A handsome black brocaded gown, trained and a lovely long cloak of oyster coloured satin brocaded with pink sprays, the high collar and down the front was bordered with soft pale fawn feather trimming tipped with pink.   |
| 20/8/1895 | Matinee                                 | A stylish black crepon costume, the short cape of it having a handsome embroidered yoke. Pretty bonnet of two shades of green velvet with an osprey to match.  |
| 9/7/1895  | Amateur theatre                         | A black gown, miroir velvet cloak, and sapphire blue velvet bow in her hair.   |
| 30/7/1895 | Exhibition of Fine Arts                 | A black gown, stylish black velvet three-quarter cape trimmed with fur, and black velvet bonnet trimmed with sky-blue satin and black tips.  |
| 28/5/1895 | Second night of "Ruddigore"             | A handsome black satin gown, trained and trimmed with lace, and a long electric-blue cloak, the yoke braided with silver.  |
| 4/6/1895  | Play "The Guvnor"                       | A handsome black gown trimmed with lace, and a pretty online velvet opera cloak lined with cream silk  |
| 11/6/1895 | Lecture                                 | A black silk gown with ruffles of white lace at the high neck and sleeves, and a long goblin blue cloak, braided with silver   |
| 25/6/1895 | Theatre performance                     | A handsome black gown and long blue cloak  |
| 13/8/1895 | Reception at Government House           | A handsome brown moire gown with satin stripes, trimmed with gobelin blue silk and passementarie   |
| 16/7/1895 | Hunt Club races                         | A stylish gown of dark and light brown striped hairy cloth, moss green velvet circular cape trimmed with fur and beads, small green bonnet trimmed with jet.   |
| 4/6/1895  | Diiner and dance at Governemnt House    | A handsome claret velvet and silk gown   |
| 25/6/1895 | Opening of Parliament                   | A beautiful gown of dark blue satin brocaded with tin-blue flowers, a black mantle and a bonnet to match her dress   |
| 25/6/1895 | Opening of Parliament                   | a lovely gown of lightish peacock green satin, brocaded with flowers in a lighter shade, black velvet double cape, the upper one being trimmed and bordered with handsome gold braid and beaver, bonnet comprised of black velvet, jet, blue satin and tips, and she carried a beaver muff |
| 16/7/1895 | Afternoon reception at Government House | An elegant gown of of a very dark blue silk brocaded in a lighter shade, the bodice was prettily trimmed with pale blue satin and ecru lace.   |
| 28/8/1895 | Concert                                 | A handsome dark red satin gown trimmed with velvet and lace, goblin blue cloak trimmed with silver braid.  |
| 3/9/1895  | Matinee                                 | A stylish tailor-made costume of drab covert coating, faced with black moire, and a small jet bonnet with osprey.  |

|                  |   |   |
|------------------|---|---|
| <b>9/7/1895</b>  | Dance at Government House                 | A very handsome dress of green merveilleux, trimmed with heliotrope chiffon   |
| <b>28/5/1895</b> | Opening of "Ruddigore" at The Opera House | A lovely gown of very pale green satin, brocaded with a large pattern of dark green and pink sprays, and the bodice trimmed with old lace and diamond ornaments. She also wore a pretty grey corded silk cloak, lined with yellow and bound with soft brown fur.  |
| <b>19/6/1895</b> | Birthday Ball                             | A lovely gown of figured brocade, which had a shot appearance, of pale blue and cream. Round the train and hem of the skirt, and on the sleeves and bodice was lovely light brown fur; the corsage was also trimmed with lovely lace, caught with diamond ornaments, and she wore her diamond tiara.  |
| <b>24/9/1895</b> | Ball at Government House                  | A very lovely brocade gown, the colour of which is called elephant's breath....a very pale shade of bluey grey. The gown in question was made with a very full skirt, and only slightly trained, the corsage was draped with beautiful cream lace among the folds of which nestled lovely cream roses on the shoulders, and with diamond ornaments, a very elegant toilette was complete. |
| <b>6/8/1895</b>  | Ball at Government House                  | A beautiful gown of white brocade sprayed with tiny pink roses and made with a long train, the sleeves were composed of alternate stripes of cream lace and white satin, the same lace on the corsage being caught with diamond stars, small white tips fastened with a diamond star were worn in the hair and completed a lovely toilette  |
| <b>20/8/1895</b> | Reception at Government House             | A very lovely gown of oyster colour brocade, handsomely trimmed with lace, and she wore her beautiful diamond ornaments.  |
| <b>3/9/1895</b>  | Dance at Government House                 | A lovely cream dress brocaded with flowers and handsomely trimmed with lace   |
| <b>3/9/1895</b>  | Children ball at GH                       | a lovely white pompadour silk gown, sprayed with pale pink and trimmed with lovely cream lace and satin   |
| <b>2/7/1895</b>  | The Club Ball                             | A lovely gown of white satin bordered round the hem of the skirt and train with pale blue velvet, and down one side was a long wreath of forget-me-nots. These flowers were also to be seen on the bodice. The sleeves were of dark blue velvet veiled with black spangled chiffon; she also wore her diamond ornaments and carried a lovely bouquet.                                     |
| <b>3/9/1895</b>  | Ball at Government House                  | A lovely white satin gown much trimmed with turquoise velvet and wreaths of forget-me-nots, and the corsage was also trimmed with gold embroidered black chiffon and velvet   |

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