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A GAMING MACHINE CHARITABLE TRUST

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 Paekakariki
Times
Past -

The Hall for All

David McGill

St Peter's Church needed a Sunday School room, so the section beside the churchyard on the corner of Beach Road and Ames Street was purchased by the church committee just as the First



World War commenced. Patriotic appeals took precedence and it was two years before the debt owing on the section was paid off.

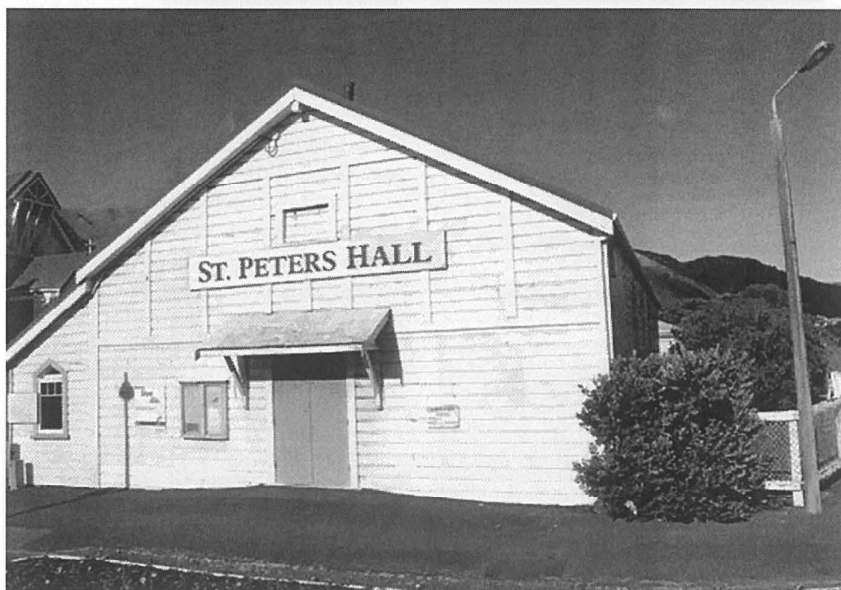
The Sunday School children contributed part of their collections to paying the debt. The committee also received support from the Ladies' Guild and a Girls' Guild. These groups met each week at the home of the Sunday School teacher, Mrs Brien, and made gifts and other articles for sale at the bazaar.

The original plan was for classrooms and an assembly room. The loss of the hotel's social hall in a fire and a tsunami demolishing the surf lifesaving club prompted the demand for a larger building that could be let as a hall.

The fund-raising bazaar held in January 1916 to pay-off the Sunday School section had to be held in a storeroom loaned by the Beach Road General Storekeepers because there was no other suitable site in the district.

This bolstered the demand for a larger building, and to the consternation of the original Sunday School workers, a majority voted for a hall too large for Sunday School.

Local builder Frank Bond got the job, assisted by volunteers. Jack Smith advanced £400 so work could commence. The hall opened with a Social and Dance on Easter Monday, 1 April 1918. Soldier boys from Paekakariki were farewelled at this gathering before they went to war, among them Jack's second son Wit Smith.



St Peter's Hall

The Reverend Ashley-Jones, by now vicar at Wadestown, was special guest, thus sharing the opening of both church and hall.

It took four years to repay Jack Smith. The hall paid for itself as host to socials, dances, balls and a supper room in the basement. Lighting came from Wizard acetylene gas, and water for tea was boiled in four-gallon benzine tins suspended over the open fire in the large chimney at the southern end of the kitchen. The chimney was demolished about 1945. Tea was taken below in a supper room created by covering the piles with scrim and settling for an earthen floor and hurricane lanterns on the walls. It must have been a dramatic dining experience, approached through a trapdoor at the back of the stage.

Over eight decades scarcely a Paekakariki club or organization has not benefited from this hall, even if people had to bring their own seats to watch movies. During World War Two the Plimmerton projectionist provided double features by swapping films with the Pukerua Bay cinema. Ames Street resident John Porter remembers there were three screenings a week. The arrival of the Second Marine Division on the other side of the park had one unfortunate side effect for local kids; the Marines demanded double ice cream in their milkshakes and this drove up the price of a sixpenny shake.

The projectors eventually were

Teenagers say no

A recent survey shows that fewer New Zealand teenagers are opting to smoke.

While 28.6 per cent of 14-16 year-olds said they smoked in 1999, only 17.6 per cent claimed to be smokers in 2004. Teenagers who had never smoked increased from 31.6 per cent in 1999 to 47 per cent in 2004.

The survey showed 21.2 per cent of girls and 13.8 per cent of boys smoked on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. It was conducted by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) New Zealand.

donated to the Foxton Film Museum, recovered about eight years ago for a Laurel and Hardy nostalgia show, where everybody stood for 'God Save the Queen' and jaffas were rolled down the aisles.

Ocean Road resident Gilbert Haisman organized the occasion and now is in charge of refurbishing the somewhat rundown structure for the community trust. There is a plan to bring the movies back. Regulations may determine that outcome but one thing is for sure, the hall is going to keep on being used for all manner of local activities, as it has always been, for 21st parties, informal funerals, neo-classical dances, most recently to shelter flood victims. It is a hall for all occasions.