

# Nolan's closes

An institution disappeared from New Plymouth today — Nolan's auction mart closed.

An air of sadness hung over buyers and browsers today as the familiar red "SALE" flag fluttered over the company's Devon St premises for the last time.

Shelf and floor space, once packed with a vast range of goods, was mostly barren as staff prepared a small number of items for this afternoon's auction, the last in the company's 69-year history.

After today, the firm will cease to provide residents with a quiet retreat from the bustle of Devon St, or a service which has given countless people an opportunity to furnish a flat or buy their weekly vegetables.

## 'Not very well'

The situation has been largely brought about by the ill health of the managing director, Mr D. (Bill) Nolan, who was reported by his doctor today as being "not very well" in Iona Hospital.

Bunches of flowers on sale at the Devon St doorway sold quickly as usual, but only a small number of people gathered for an auction of vegetables earlier today.

However, the quantity of vegetables for sale was far below normal, and the firm has not been accepting goods for sale, for the last fortnight.

Vendors of goods left unsold after today's auction will be asked to collect them.

## Sad

Staff and customers alike expressed sadness at the closure.

"I don't know what to think," said the company secretary, Mr N. B. Wagstaff, who had been with the company for 41 years. "It is going to leave a bit of a gap as far as the public is concerned. I wonder what people are going to do with all their goods. We used to be full most of the time."

Some people had been regular customers for more than 30 years.

Mr Wagstaff said the staff had been reduced from about 25 some years ago to about 12, due to the closure last year of the fruit and vegetable department, and the hide and skin department a few years previously.

## Staff

Mr Dick Stewart, with 22 years' service with the firm, said many people had been in to ask what they would do for their goods after the closure.

"We have had a loyal patronage. Some people have come in every sale day for many years."

The company had dealt with goods ranging from a needle to an anchor. Farm produce and bacon had been a popular

commodity until regulations prevented their sale at auctions.

During the depression days home-made produce, such as butter, was very popular.

He said the size of the crowd at auctions depended on what goods were being offered.

"I've seen this place really full, and I've seen it nearly empty."

Mr Bill Coleman, who worked as storeman for 13 years, said it was a very sad occasion, but Mr Nolan's health had to come first.

"This place is going to be greatly missed."

One employee, Mrs R. S. Denston, has found it easier to settle in New Plymouth because of her contact with the public at Nolan's. She arrived from England on December 14, last year.

"The people I have met have been really friendly and charming," she said. "It's like a club."

## Customers

A customer, Mrs M. Bennett, New Plymouth, described the firm as wonderful. She had lived in the city since 1910, and her father used to bring fowls to auction at Nolan's.

"I come here regularly. What is going to happen now?"

Her thoughts were echoed by other customers approached by the Herald.

The mart was originally bought from Mr William Courtney by Mr E. Griffiths, a land agent, in 1903. In 1906, Mr John W. Wilson, and the founder of the firm, Mr Leslie A. Nolan, bought the premises. They were both auctioneers, but in 1907 Mr Wilson sold his interest to Mr Nolan.

The firm traded under the name of L. A. Nolan until 1940, when it was incorporated as a limited company and was named L. A. Nolan and Co. Ltd.

## Built

Another building on the corner of Gill and Liardet Sts, called the hides store, was built in 1910 by Bond and Co as an experiment in using hollow concrete blocks. The first hide sale took place in 1910. The last sale was on August 8, 1972.

Another store on the corner of Molesworth and Liardet St, a grain store, was built in 1925.

Mr L. A. Nolan died on June 13, 1945, and his son, Mr Bill Nolan, who was a director, became the governing director.

In 1951 major repairs were made to the front of the mart. The building will be up for sale after today.

even though the public can see what their money is spent on when new exhibits appear."

He was commenting on the report released yesterday by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council which urged increased facilities to improve conservation of museum pieces.

"The preservation of cultural objects is absolutely essential, and I think we need, as the report suggests, a centralised national laboratory and trained technicians working permanently in the museums."

## WELCOMED

The chairman of the Taranaki Museum Board and a member of the Historic

## FOUNTAIN WORKING

The Pukekura Park, New Plymouth, fountain was back in operation today after a major overhaul of the mechanical parts and motor.

The mechanism began to give trouble last month, and the fountain was shut off on February 18 to enable a city engineering firm to carry out repairs, the park curator, Mr George Fuller, said today. Various bearings and shafts needed attention.

This was the first major work done since the fountain was commissioned in 1956. It was built to commemorate the Queen's visit in 1954.

LORD LLOYD, Chairman of the National Bank of New Zealand, has announced that Sir John Marshall has accepted an invitation to join the New Zealand board of the bank. Sir John is a director of a number of other companies, including Philips Electronics Industries, Norwich Union and Hallenstein Bros.

with facilities for training advisory technicians." This would give smaller institutions somewhere to turn to for advice on preserving manuscripts and the treatment of particular materials, she said.

## EARTHWORKS

"There is also a lack of expert knowledge on the preservation of earthwork sites, such as Maori pas, and rock art remains are also in urgent need of restoration."

Mrs Gale said the Taranaki Museum had made use of conservation aids at the Auckland City Art Gallery and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

But Mr Prickett said: "We have terrible problems in the museum with cloaks, watercolours and photographs fading and decaying, and we have approached the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, for advice from their full-time conservation officer on preserving pictures."

## FALLING APART

He cited examples of items of clothing in the Taranaki museum which literally fell apart if they were touched, although they were kept in the basement under fairly good conditions.

"Original photographs were also fading badly, and we are hoping to get a darkroom soon so we can print and display copies, while original photos are stored in good conditions."

The museum has already built a heat-controlled workroom and last year the windows in the main gallery were blocked off to exclude natural light, which faded and decayed exhibits.

The report also commented on the lack of awareness of conservation needs by local authorities.

Mrs Gale said some local bodies thought that they had done enough by protecting building sites and trees in their district schemes. This

City Council and the trust co-operating over the restoration of Richmond Cottage, The Gables and Te Henui Vicarage.

# Attacker may be absconder

AUCKLAND, Today (NZPA). — The victim of a brutal assault in her little Ponsonby stationery shop yesterday, Mrs Vera Lett (74) had two fingers jabbed into her eyes, and another finger was jammed into her throat.

Then she was beaten about the head and cut with a kitchen knife, and left lying in a pool of blood in the lounge of the living quarters behind the shop.

Police consider the method of attack might have some significance in their search for a Polynesian girl, thought to be in her 20s, who was in the shop minutes before Mrs Lett was found.

They suspect she could be mentally deranged, Detective Superintendent J. F. Stevenson, head of the Auckland CIB, said today, perhaps an absconder from a mental institution.

Mrs Lett is in a fair condition at Auckland hospital.

Mr Stevenson said that initially, Mrs Lett was attacked with a ballpoint pen.

The suspect was seen hanging about the shop between 10 a.m. and noon. It was just after noon that Mrs Lett was found.

The suspect is thought to have had an accomplice about the same age, but shorter and wearing large white "curtainring" earrings.

The suspect herself is described as being 5ft 9in, slim, with short, black hair, wearing

there is nothing but the buns he and his cl

a gold ring in one ear and having both ears pierced. When last seen she was wearing white trousers and a wet stained brown top.

Mr Stevenson said today that a woman customer went into the shop to buy a notebook and heard "noises and thumps out the back".

A Polynesian woman appeared behind the counter and seemed flustered. The customer's husband went into the shop. Both noticed blood on the "shop assistant's" wrist.

Another customer walked in and at that stage the Polynesian woman left the shop, carrying a round, brown, cane bag saying "the lady won't be long".

Suspicious, the man and wife went "out the back" and found Mrs Lett unconscious.

## READY TO EVACUATE

WELLINGTON, Today (NZPA). — New Zealand is poised to evacuate its medical team at Qui Nhon at short notice.

A Government spokesman in Wellington today said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was constantly in touch with the team through the New Zealand Embassy in Saigon, which was assessing the situation every two hours.

"The latest information is that there is no immediate threat to Qui Nhon," said the spokesman.



L. A. NOLAN AND CO. LTD auctioneering staff, Messrs Dick Stewart (left) and Bill Coleman (on stand) call for prices on a small amount of vegetables which went under the hammer in New Plymouth today. The company closed after the main auction this afternoon.