

# GROWING WITH NEW PLYMOUTH

## WHITES LIMITED

### EXTENSIVE DEVELOPMENT.

### PROVINCIAL TOWN MODEL.

Founded in the year 1888, and having been soundly developed to keep pace with the progress of a growing province, the business of Whites Ltd. in Devon Street, New Plymouth, is now one of the largest and best planned drapery establishments in any provincial town in the North Island. It has steadily expanded its scope and made provision, with the passing of the years, for meeting the requirements of the most closely settled province in the country, until to-day it represents so far as such businesses in secondary towns are concerned, the highest efficiency both in the adequacy of its display and retail business accommodation, and in business organisation.

During the present year the premises have been re-built, in accordance with a plan conceived ten years ago, with a result that to-day the firm possesses one of the finest premises for such a business in the North Island, and which, in some respects, is superior to anything else provided in any town between Auckland and Wellington.

The history of a business that has been run continuously for a period of 46 years, without any practical change in the ownership, is worth recording briefly, as it must be a pride, to some extent of the community, as well as to its owners.

#### Steady Development.

The business was founded on March 1, 1888, by the late Mr. S. B. White, who had previously been in the provision business on the east coast of England. Mr. White came to Taranaki with the intention of taking up farming, but he soon drifted back into commerce, and he purchased a general store business which had been run by Mr. John Handy chiefly as a grocery and ironmongery business and general store of the type common to the needs of the district in the early eighties. About a year later the drapery business appeared to afford the opportunity for an opening in that direction and within the first two years direct orders were placed with the firm of Arthur and Co., of Glasgow, who were then represented in New Zealand by Mr. John Fothergill, who was probably one of the best known commercial men in the country at that time. He is still living in retirement in Dunedin and retains a keen interest in many business with which he had dealings in past days. Subsequently Messrs. M. C. Thomson and Co., of Glasgow, opened up shipping business

with New Zealand and appointed Mr. Fothergill as their local representative. Mr. White decided upon putting his importations through the new firm, and a very happy business relationship was maintained for many years.

It soon became apparent that the firm would have to have its own direct London representatives, and Messrs. Bickley and Bell, of Moorfields (London), who handled the buying for a considerable group of Australian and New Zealand businesses, were appointed the firm's London buyers. All this development was used in the direction of emphasising the general drapery side of the business, and by about 1898, ten years after the establishment of the business, the grocery business had been taken over by Mr. C. Carter, who for some time had been a partner with Mr. White, the latter devoting himself entirely to the drapery business.

#### First Devon Street Shop.

The appearance of the firm in Devon Street was first at the corner of Currie Street, now occupied by Bamfirths. It was not long, however, before the opportunity offered of buying in on the present site, and from then on the history of the business has been one of steady development. A portion of the site now occupied was originally Gledhill's auction mart, which in the early days was a favourite rendezvous for the farming community when they came to town, and it was also the scene of many political gatherings of those days. The building had formerly been occupied by Mr. F. A. Ford, draper, over 50 years ago, and he was succeeded by Jonathan Elyth, whose business was acquired by Mr. White. Other portions of the property which have been added from time to time, were that occupied by Mr. John Gilmour as a stationery business, and later the large hardware business carried on by Okey, Son and Arnold.

In 1920 a private company was formed, of which Mr. P. J. H. White, who succeeded his father in the business, became governing director, and Mr. J. W. Taunt, secretary. A large deal was negotiated by the new company by the purchase of the business of Ambury Bros. in 1923. This had been carried on on the site formerly occupied by Messrs Okey, Son and Arnold, and had been acquired by the Ambury Bros. some years earlier. In 1933 the freehold of Ambury's site was acquired, which gave the firm of Whites Ltd. the freehold of the entire block which they now occupy, and plans were at once prepared for building the extensive establishment which now occupies the site of three former businesses.

As well as its London representation the firm is well represented in other parts of the world, though more than 95 per cent. of the goods handled are of British manufacture. In New York Mr. E. H. Robinson, who buys for some big groups of Australian and New Zealand businesses, controls the purchases in America for this firm. It is of interest to note in passing that Mr. Robinson is a native of Stratford (Taranaki), where his father carried on a successful business over 40 years ago. The Canadian representatives of

the firm are Messrs. A. A. Boite and Co., of Toronto, while for Japan and China the representatives are the Oriental Purchasing Company.

#### A Comprehensive Plan.

The planning of the new premises was an undertaking of no mean magnitude, and the achievement in connection with the reconstruction must be a source of great satisfaction to the proprietors. The new building, which was planned by Messrs. Griffiths and Stephenson, and built by Boon Bros., both of New Plymouth, is in every way modern, though it makes no pretence to elaborate embellishments. It is, in fact, of a plain Spanish type of architecture, but it has been done with every care as to detail, and is an earthquake-resisting two-story block in reinforced concrete, with quite a city appearance in its Devon Street frontage as well as in the exterior finish of the reason of the building which abuts on to Currie Lane.

The shop frontage and display windows are on the arcade plan, and although planned last year conform exactly with designs for such frontages as are shown in the latest trade periodicals for the current year. The artistically designed show windows provide adequate

space for the display of goods, and the decoration and lighting effects add much to the attractiveness of the frontage. Inside, the whole of the eastern side of the building is devoted to the dress department, and here the firm has one em-

#### Spacious Showroom.

ployee engaged continuously in cutting out garments for customers which also may be fitted on the premises. The rear cross section of the shop is devoted to the Manchester department, and in a corner there is a despatch or delivery department, where goods are arranged and dispatched to the various districts to which they have to be delivered. There is also a furnishing section, and the western section of the front portion of the shop is given up to the men's wear department.

the exact type of that which was installed in Harrods (London) by this firm recently.

As in the dress department of this section of the business, so in the millinery and underwear departments, the equipment is designed for efficiency and economy, and represents the latest devices known in this class of business.

A general rest room for women has been incorporated in the showroom which is equipped with the latest conveniences including hot and cold water services, and the firm also provides for its staff (both men and women) private locker-rooms and a kitchenette.

The office accommodation has been planned on the latest ideas, and includes separate offices for the principals of the firm, while the general office is exceedingly well equipped and conveniently arranged for the clerical staff. There has been installed for the purposes of the whole business the latest type of cash carrier by which the cash from every department is sent to the main office by air pressure, and in the office there is in use one of the latest cash registers which analyses the business of the several departments as it proceeds. A system of inter-departmental telephones also adds to the efficiency of the business organisation.

#### General Inquiries.

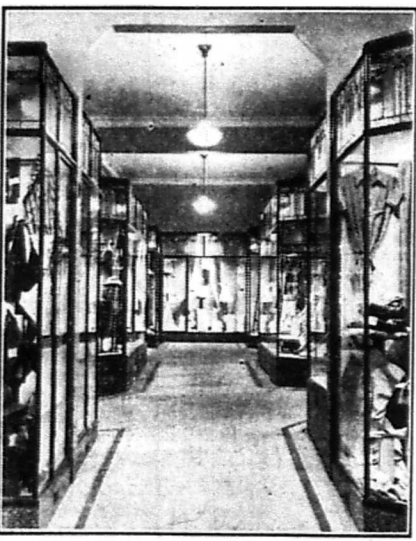
An enquiry bureau is in course of being established in which all inquiries may be answered respecting travel, rail and bus service time-tables, places of interest to be seen in and around New Plymouth, and in short where any information may be obtained concerning the facilities which the town and district of New Plymouth offers either to residents or visitors. The Railway Department and the Borough Council, as well as many sports clubs and such organisations are taking advantage of the opportunity which such a piece of organisation presents of making known what they have to offer in the way of attractions to the public at large.

#### "The Below Ground Kingdom."

Like Vulcan in the opera, Whites Limited, also possess an underground, or below ground, kingdom. The basement extends over the full area covered by the shop. Here is the bulk store and receiving depot for the firm's imported goods where the stocks are marked off before being placed in the shop fixtures. In this section is the furnace, contained in a concrete room, completely fireproof, from which circulates the central heating system used in the winter.

The basement will also be put to other uses for special seasonal displays, when more original attractions will be provided in the way of novelty exhibits than could be made in the shop itself.

Altogether this business with its new and up-to-date premises and equipment, is entitled to rank with the best in the provincial centres of the island, and the enterprise of the firm is such that pride in the place must extend to the community as well as among those most intimately connected with it.



The Arcade Display Windows.

fit of the advice of a representative of the British General Electric Company, who advised both the St. Paul's Pro-Cathedral (Wellington) and St. Mary's Church (New Plymouth) on their lighting schemes, and the system adopted is

WHITES LIMITED ESTD. 1888

DIRECT IMPORTERS OF  
GENERAL DRAPERY FURNISHINGS MEN'S CLOTHING.