

Place Of Happy Memories To Close

Staff Reporter

A million grubby, sand-covered feet have walked its wooden floors and ice cream has dripped from a million sticky fingers on to its tables . . . the place is the Ngamotu Beach Palladium and on Sunday, after more than 50 years at the service of beach lovers, it is closing down, perhaps for the last time.

McCutcheon and Co. Ltd., wholesale fruit and produce merchants, which holds the present lease of the palladium from the New Plymouth City Council, has de-

cided to relinquish its tenancy from Sunday.

The lessee has found it impossible to operate the palladium at a profit during the winter months, and major development projects at Port Taranaki, which will bring about the death of Ngamotu Beach as a highly patronised seaside resort, are expected to make it a precarious proposition in summer.

What will happen to the palladium is not yet known. The town clerk, Mr. W. J. Connor, said yesterday its fate would be discussed at a meeting of the council's parks and reserves committee on Tuesday night.

The Ngamotu Beach palladium has been many things to many people.

PARTIES

Hundreds of Taranaki people have celebrated their 21st birthday parties within its walls, hundreds of thousands of young people have danced away countless Friday and Saturday nights on its second-storey floor, and unquestionably millions of New Zealand parents have wearily munched buns and sandwiches in its tearooms while their sunburned children have demanded more money for pies, icecreams, soft drinks, lollies and all those sticky things which fill elastic-sided stomachs.

A hundred observation buses have dropped into the palladium for afternoon tea while on the "grand tour" of New Plymouth and a million school children have made it their headquarters while on their annual picnic at Ngamotu Beach.

The palladium has been the hub of Ngamotu Beach the centre of its affairs, the gathering and meeting place for two generations of courting boys and girls.

CARNIVALS

It was never more busy, never more thronged with holiday-makers and tourists, than during the weeks of Christmas and New Year when the annual holiday carnival attracted people from all parts of New Zealand.

Its passing—if final passing it be—will be noted with regret by a host of New Plymouth and Taranaki people who spent most of their summer days as youngsters with in sight of Paritutu and the wharves of Port Taranaki.

It was difficult to obtain yesterday precise informa-

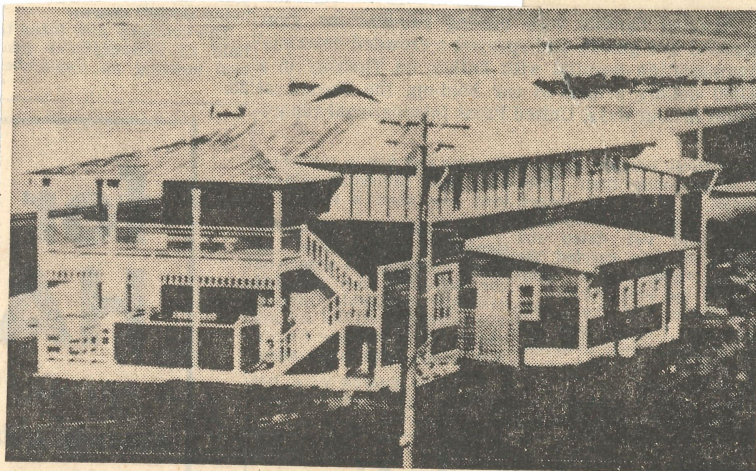
tion on the early days of the palladium but it seems it was built in 1914 by a voluntary committee which had as its aim the improvement and beautification of Ngamotu Beach.

One of the early members of the committee, Mr A. J. Nisbet, Davies Road, New Plymouth, said last night the palladium was always basically the same building though over the years there had been numerous alterations to it.

He said the voluntary committee had administered the palladium, with the aid of a number of tenants, from about 1914 until 1936, when the New Plymouth City Council took over the ownership of the building and the Ngamotu Beach Committee was formed to administer it and Ngamotu Beach in general.

Mr and Mrs Nesbit managed the palladium for the council until about 1945 when the council first began leasing the premises to tenants.

The current tenant, McCutcheon and Co. Ltd. first formed a financial interest in the palladium about two and a half years ago and since last December, Mr and Mrs S. Priest have managed the premises for the company.



The Ngamotu Beach Palladium . . . then and now. Above: The Palladium in 1914, when oil derricks dotted the area and the sea at spring tides often came to within feet of its doors. Below: The Palladium as it stands today. Business economics and the passing of Ngamotu Beach are likely to close its doors for good.

