

An Early History

The story of Barry Bros. really must start with the arrival of Daniel Barry and his wife Catherine (nee Murray O'Brien) in Napier in the early 1860's with his family of two boys, Patrick and David.

Not a great deal, unfortunately, is known about Daniel Barry. He was born in County Cork in 1832 and as a young man fell in love with and married Catherine Murray O'Brien.



*Catherine Murray O'Brien Barry.
Born 1834, Died 8th June, 1912.*

Her family, as legend has it, did not approve of the match, and the couple left Ireland for Liverpool, where an uncle of Daniel's, who had a small carrying business, gave him a job. Whilst in Liverpool, two children were born to Catherine and Daniel, Patrick in 1859, and David in 1861.

When David was two years old, in 1863, the family decided to try their luck in the colonies, and so they set off, first to Perth, and then, not long afterwards, to Napier. It was a very unprepossessing place in those days, consisting of Port Ahuriri, (or "The Spit"), Scinde Island, and a small amount of land on its southern side. Drinking water was difficult to obtain: the first well was dug in the Botanical Gardens by the military, but was closed by a fever epidemic. The other two wells were dug in the town, one near the Vulcan Foundry, and the other in Hastings Street, near the Swan Brewery. Prior to this the drinking water had been obtained from the Tutankuri River.

It is in connection with water that we first see the name of Daniel Barry mentioned:-

H.B. HERALD TRIBUNE, Nov. 22, 1866.

"D. Barry wishes to intimate to the inhabitants of Napier that he will serve them with water at a lower price than anybody in town."

It was obviously quite a competitive game, because, in the same issue... "T. Cleary, Hastings Street, is prepared to supply water in the town at 2/6, and a load on the hills at the most moderate charges..."

There was another mention at a later date, though not in connection with water:-

H.B. HERALD TRIBUNE, Nov. 14th 1878.

"Dennis Shanahan was charged with hitting Fergus Cleary over the head with a hammer. D. Barry, carter, gave evidence as a witness."



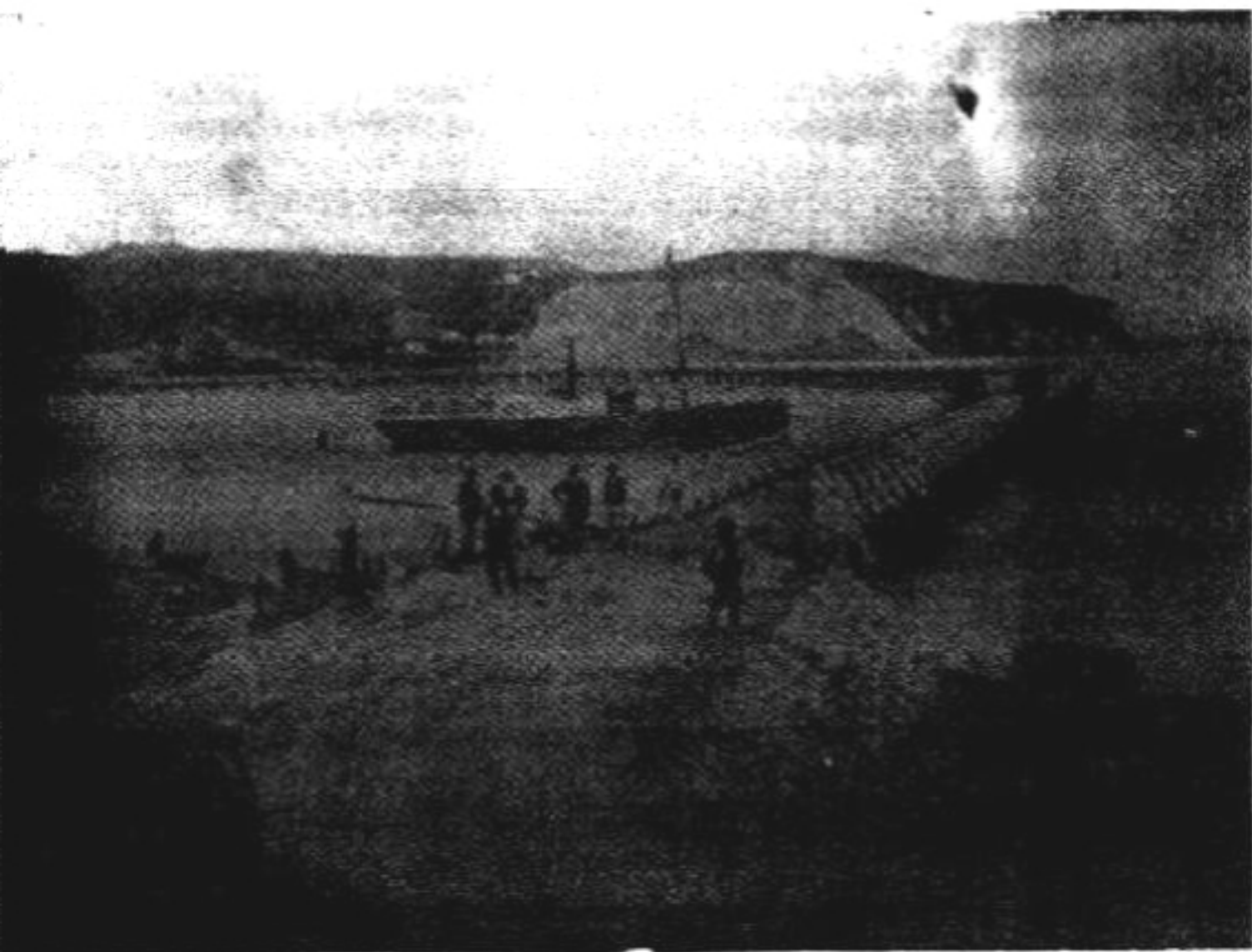
Napier about 1867. Looking South from the Hill

On 18th February 1866, Thomas was born, and at the time Daniel and Catherine were living in a house at the bottom of Shakespeare Road. Thomas was baptized the next day; the God Parents were Thomas and Ann Murray, and the officiating priest Father Pertuis S.M. Thomas Murray was the Harbour Master and Pilot, and was some relation to Catherine, perhaps an uncle.

Seven more children were born in fairly rapid succession. Mary Ann, born 3rd. Sept. 1869, John Thomas, 1st. Jan. 1870, Ann, 18th. Dec. 1879, Joseph Louis Gonzaga, 17th. Dec. 1872, Phill, Kate and Daniel.

In 1878 there is a further notice in the H.B. Herald Tribune: Nov. 14th "Business of water carrier sold by Daniel Barry".

Shortly after this, Patrick, the eldest in the family, started carrying on his own account, with an express - a four wheeled, flat-bottomed truck. By 1880, he was joined by his brother Thomas, but it was not until 1887, the 20th of September, that the partnership was established, with "four horses, three expresses and harness complete."



The first Westmore bridge; the small ship is a paddle steamer.

They were, to begin with, a carrier and parcel delivery business, which was situated in Hastings Street, where Patrick had purchased quite a large area of land, extending through to where Swan Street now is. Stables for the horses were erected there, and the house that he built, and where his family grew up, still stands today.

With the purchase of J. & W. Prebble's business, around 1900, the prosperous enterprise expanded even more. Prebble's carrying business was situated on the corner of what is now Barry Street and Nelson Quay, and it was from these premises that the firm now operated. They also entered the wood and coal business, and coal was brought from the Taupiri and Westport coal mines, and also from Newcastle in Australia by ship.

Soon a major part of the company's operation became the cartage of export and import cargo through the port of Napier. The present harbour was not yet constructed, and coastal boats anchored in the Iron Pot, and larger vessels out in the roadstead, from whence their cargoes were brought in by lighters. Between 800 & 900 tons of produce such as oats, chaff and malt arrived fortnightly.



In the 1880s Patrick married Miss Mary Faughan, who had arrived in N.Z. in quite a dramatic way. On Oct. 22nd 1878 the ship on which her mother, father, and other family members were travelling from London to Napier, "The City of Auckland", was totally wrecked on Otahi Beach. It must have been a traumatic experience. It was 9 p.m., a westerly gale was blowing, and the visibility was nil. This caused the captain to mistake Kapiti Island for Stephen Island, and to alter the ship's course so as to run through Cook Strait. She was under topsail, and instead of running through Cook Strait, she ran on to Otahi Beach. On board were 256 immigrants, including the Faughans. A certain amount of panic ensued, but was promptly quelled by the master, who, revolver in hand, threatened

Patrick and Mary had 7 children, 3 sons, Patrick (Jock) David & Daniel and four daughters, Julia, Mary, (Ninnie), Gertrude, and Catherine, (Kitty).

About the same time Tom also married, a Miss Edith Maude Creagh, whose father, Benjamin Bousefield Creagh was the Harbour Master in Napier.

Tom and Edith had five children, Arthur, born about 1890, Thomas, 1894, David, Isabel, and Edith Maude. To begin with, they lived at the Port, then later shifted to a house in Seapoint Road.

An interesting cutting from a Napier around 1900:

"A three year old son of Mr. Thomas Barry had his thigh broken at The Spit yesterday afternoon. He was on the wharf with his father and was standing behind a case just discharged from a lighter, when a carter, wishing to see the address on the case, and not seeing the boy standing behind, leaped the case, which weighed about 4cwt. over on top of him, with the above result. Mr. Jarvis being handy, the boy was taken home and the limb set immediately."

Daniel Barry died on 13th Dec. 1893, aged 61. At this time he was living with Patrick and his family in Hastings Street. Jock said that he could remember him well and that as a very small boy he used to go up to his bedroom and Daniel would give him blackballs.



Daniel Barry's grave in the Botanical Gardens, Napier.

Both Patrick and Thomas were proud of their teams of horses which at their height would have numbered about 60. The majority of them were Clydesdales, big animals weighing up to a ton. Some of the horses were bought in Dunedin and shipped to Napier but the most famous of them all, Sam was bred by Rathbones of Waipawa. Many stories were told about him. He could haul 30 tons of coal at a time and could back himself into a truck of meat or coal and shut it to its destination on his own. He had his photograph taken by Nelson Stedman, the son of a local bank manager, while he was hauling a railway truck of coal from under a ship's derrick at West Quay. The driver at the time was James Gray.

Nelson Stedman entitled the photo "Hard Labour" and entered it in an exhibition in Paris, winning first prize. This was in the early 1900's.

Land was purchased at Mecanee so that the horses could be grazed and rested there. No driver was allowed to finish work until he had fed and groomed his horse.



The firm became well known for the splendid teams of horses which used to draw floats at the Mardi Gras at New Year and Christmastime. As an example here is an extract from the Daily Telegraph about 1927 on 22:-

"With the advent of motor-tractors horse drawn vehicles have to a large extent disappeared and consequently it is only on a rare occasion that high class teams of horses can be seen at work in the town.

Boxing Day was such an occasion when a fine team of horses, the property of Barry Bros. was to be seen at the Mardi Gras procession. The horses attracted considerable attention, their fine physique and stamina being the subject of much favourable comment. The judge of that particular section was very pleased with the animals and expressed the opinion that the team would be hard to beat anywhere in the Dominion."

To begin with the brothers were "Shy of motors". Patrick had heard of a firm in Sydney discarding them in favour of horses but by the time the 20's arrived the change was inevitable. The horses were gradually replaced by a fleet of Packard, G.M.C. Whyte and Thornycroft solid tyred trucks and tractors.

Operations were expanded to Hastings, servicing the freezing works, carrying carcasses of export meat and other by-products to the shipside. The transport of bales of wool from the Ahuriri wool stores to the wharf was another important job. By this time overseas vessels were berthing at the Glasgow wharf. The breakwater had been started in 1887, but it was not until 1893 that the first vessel, a steamer of 910 tons berthed alongside the breakwater wharf and in October 1896 the Glasgow wharf was officially opened for traffic. It was not until another 30 years had passed that any more construction on the port, as we know it today was undertaken. Consequently a great many vessels, those that could anyway, still berthed at the Iron Pot.



Richardson & Co S.S. "Ripple" photographed from Barry Bros. Looking to Gull wharf. This ship was later lost with all hands between Wellington and Napier (about 1928).



Barry Bros. trucks at the Iron Pot.

Many other family members joined the firm at various times. Patrick's three sons, David, Jock and Daniel and Tom's three sons, Arthur, Tom and Dave, although of the latter three only Dave stayed on permanently. Tom joined the Union Steam Ship Co. after he left school and in 1917 joined the 1st N.Z. E.F. as a gunner. In 1918, on the 8th of April he was severely wounded at Mailly Maillet on the Somme and after returning to N.Z. was in a convalescent situation for a number of years. As his health improved he did work for Barry Bros. for a time but left in 1927 when he started his own firm of Barry's Bottling Co. It was not until he sold that business in 1958 that he returned to Barry Bros. in an active way.

Jock had trained with Faulkners who were coachbuilders and after joining Barry Bros. in 1914 was able to put the knowledge he had gained to enormous use. David, Patrick's son worked in the "Town Office" which was opened in about 1920 and situated in a building on the corner of Market and Tennyson Streets. It was later demolished in the earthquake. Julie also worked there. Daniel had also enlisted in the armed forces. He was wounded and was never very well thereafter. He worked for the firm as a driver but died when quite young, about 40. (I omitted earlier to mention Patrick's youngest son, Frank. He was a Stock Agent and was killed in a car crash in the 30's.)

When David and Jock married (David married Maggie O'Donnahue & Jock, May O'Connor) Patrick bought land from Walters, the butcher, in Latham St. where they both built houses.

In 1931 both Tom and Patrick's wives died. On the morning of Feb. 3rd. Edith had attended 10 O'clock Communion at the cathedral & was inside ^{when the} earthquake hit. The brick walls caved in and the roof fell on the rubble. Her son, Tom, thinking she might be there, worked his way through the fallen beams and masonry until he found her pinned under a large beam. Tom rushed for his friend, Mr. George Waterworth and they along with about 20 helpers tried to lever up the beams which she was under but it was quite hopeless. The fire which engulfed the cathedral was fast approaching. The only thing for Mr. Waterworth to do was to inject her with an overdose of morphine.



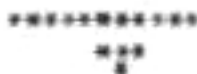
Mary, Patrick's wife had been bed-ridden for a number of years and at the time of the earthquake was unable to leave the house. Gerald Gardiner remembers helping to carry her on her bed to a lean-to shed on a vacant section across the road. After this she was taken to her daughter Kitty's home in Danevirke where she later died.

On November 19th 1935 Patrick Barry died. He was 76. Tom died thirteen years later in 1948. With their death came the end of the original partnership. Both had become very highly respected members of the community and Napier was the centre of their lives, indeed they hardly ever moved out of it. Tom once went to see the Melbourne (up with J.P. Kenny, the then chairman of the Harbour Board, but that was it. He was a good and enthusiastic judge of horses and an authority on the different types of coal. He was essentially an honest, practical business man.

Patrick took a keen interest in public affairs and was fond of sport of all kinds. For many years he was a steward of the Napier Park Racing Club and president of the Napier Bowling Club. He had a quiet and unassuming personality and a great family man.

The family aspect of the firm has persisted until the present day, children and grandchildren taking an active part in the business.

In 1945 Tom's son Dave was appointed General Manager (Tom retained the title of Governing Director till his death) and ran the business until his death in 1959 when his son Peter became manager. Peter resigned in 1975 when the present manager Jim (Cutterell) was appointed, but the Directors and shareholders still remain family members, even to the fourth generation.



THE IRON POT, AHURIRI, in its heyday (above) with lines of steam trawlers berthed along Nelson Quay. Barry Bros customhouse and shipping agency is on the quayside along with the two-storey brick Ahuriri Post Office which tumbled in the 1931 earthquake. Barry Bros now occupy that site as well.