

Early Days in Norsewood
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 S. Fruberson

Today October the 3rd is the anniversary of my landing in Wellington New Zealand in the year 1873 at 5 P.M. a bitterly cold afternoon, anyway, I felt it as having come from the warm climate of New South Wales after a ^{13 months} driving trip from the north of Queensland with twenty thousand sheep for Landra Station on the Darling River five miles below the town of Burke. There were then no railways in New Zealand, it was dense bush land from Takapau right round to Masterton, all the clear land was in the hands of big sheep farmers who employed men to burn off fern and manuka shake grassed fence and improve the runs for the carrying of sheep and cattle. The bush land was reserved for later corners and in this way Norsewood became opened up and settled on. The railway track was surveyed in where it is now but narrower to Norsewood and afterwards altered the sections were surveyed into forty and fifty acres some a little more and some less. In 1872 or earlier there arrived in Napier many emigrants from Norway Sweden and Denmark and these families were allotted the surveyed sections about Norsewood by an official named Friberg a gentleman who could speak three or more languages and he had sufficient authority to hand over each surveyed section to each individual settler. I will give an instance of what Mr Friberg could do in this matter, amongst the emigrants were blacksmiths carpenters bricklayers tailors and even a maternity nurse - Mrs Johansen, whose services were required on numerous occasions in the early days. Well a Mr Mortensen a carpenter on finding that his allotted section was situated in an out of the way locality decided to forfeit it and tramp right back to Napier and work at his trade, happened to meet Mr Friberg who

asked him more he was of 60, he told him he would not take up the section
 and gave his reasons. I shall give you on another one said Trivory which
 he did and this one proving satisfactory, the settler fed his bush improved
 lived passed out and to use a scriptural phrase his son reigned in his stead.
 The early settlers had a strenuous time their greatest difficulty being unable
 to speak the language of the country or do the work as it is carried on
 such as shearing fencing bullock driving and so on but they soon
 learned especially those who went to work on sheep stations, then provisions
 were dear having to be hauled from Napier in bullock drays at a plow
 gate. There were no grass paddocks in those days but there were bells
 in all directions and whenever you heard a bell there was a cow bearing it
 and these cows were remarkably well on the under scrub but there was often
 a difficulty in tracing them, thanks to the bells there were none lost.
 There was much work for the settlers in the way of road making, there
 were branch roads leading from the township in all directions and the
 Road Board which was soon formed saw that formation and metalling
 was properly carried out either by contract or day work at 8/6 per day and
 this was the ruling wage on road and railway there were no unemployed.
 When a settler would fail and turn off a portion of his section it was
 quite common for him to chip in or give a piece for rye corn and potatoes -
 and there was a splendid growth on the newly burnt ground inside of
 a temporary fence, the rye corn would be ground in a small mill kept
 in each house for the purpose also for coffee beans, the early settlers
 had a great liking for rye bread and preferred coffee to tea. The men
 when working away from home on roads or railway left the homestead
 in charge of their wives and these wives did an immense amount of work
 in the way of under scrubbing burning off and a deal of outside
 work of that description, after a time the slab houses gave place to

comfortable houses and instead of going to the creek for water to boil the kettle and wash clothes tanks were erected and much preferred to well or creek. There were no motor cars in those days but there was a primitive four wheeled wagon the wheels of which were merely sawed off the log and the axel shoved through, the wheels when iron bound would last a very long time, one of these vehicles was used by a settler on the German line for many years. And talking of the German line reminds me of an industrious old settler - Jacob Neisen who deserves a chapter to himself. Jacob was emphatic in trying to convince me that forty acres of land was enough for any man in this world on which to live and bring up a family, he had a large one well fed healthy and strong. Here I am said Jacob having everything I want, I grow my own rye potatoes vegetables and fruit eggs and bacon. Jacob had always a fat pig to kill or sell a young steer and numerous cows for which he grew enough and did not buy, he had the largest shed in the district of his own work slabs and a shingle roof. There were no Jersey cattle in those days, Jacob kept a smother bull for the use of his herd to which his neighbours cows also had access on the payment of a small fee. Whenever I brought a cow up to Jacobs place I always had to go in and partake of some rye bread and coffee. Jacob was hospitable. As work went on in the country in the way of bush felling burning off and getting into grass the township progressed slowly, a few business places came into being - blacksmith shop hotel store, the latter in charge of Mr Alfred Perry, proprietor Mr Drouer Waupikuan merchant. As grass paddocks increased cows did likewise and butter became plentiful and cheap, so cheap that when taken to a store the price offered would be 5 or 6 a pound and then goods would have to be taken instead of cash. The early settlers would not go in debt what they could not pay for they went without and the low price of butter led to the erection of a butter factory but this brings us down to our own time when no bush is left and only a few old settlers. S.B.