

# BRAVE DAYS

PIONEER WOMEN  
OF  
NEW ZEALAND



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## TO OUR READERS :

Though the exploits of men and women cannot always be separated, as far as possible this is a record of the endurings, experiences and triumphs of women. It does not profess to be a complete record. That would be an impossible task within its limited pages. In its facts it has tried to be as historically correct as is possible with the lapse of years. Such as it is, we submit it as a combined effort to do something of justice to our subject.

We sincerely thank all contributors whose work we know has entailed some effort and self-sacrifice. Authorised collectors, who have been assisted by many others whose names we regret it has not been possible to mention, were appointed.

Their names are as follows:—

Auckland	....	....	Mrs. Helen Wilson	....	Pio Pio.
Wellington - Wairarapa	....	....	Mrs. T. R. Barrer, M.A.	....	Masterton.
Wellington-Wanganui - Poverty Bay	....	....	Mrs. Flora Spurdle	....	Wanganui.
Hawke's Bay	....	....	Mrs. T. H. Lowry	....	Okawa.
Taranaki	....	....	Mrs. C. Benton	....	Auroa.
Nelson-Westland	....	....	Mrs. A. Forsyth	....	Ruby B., Nelson.
			(Assisted by Miss Bond)		
Marlborough	....	....	Miss B. Chaytor	....	Picton.
Canterbury	....	....	Mrs. J. D. Hall	....	Christchurch.
Otago	....	....	Mrs. J. F. Drake	....	Berwick.
Southland	....	....	Mrs. W. H. Ward	....	Lumsden.

In some cases we have had other sources of information, and have amplified material. It has not been possible to acknowledge separately each small source of supply, personal or recorded. An apology is tendered to any who

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Members present at inaugural meeting:—

Mrs. W. J. Polson ....	---	---	Wanganui.
Mrs. C. C. Jackson ....	---	---	Wairarapa.
Mrs. J. Pow ....	---	---	Wellington.
Mrs. R. Lilburn ....	---	---	Wanganui.
Mrs. W. Carson ....	---	---	Palmerston North.
Mrs. P. Talbot ....	---	---	Timaru.
Mrs. S. Myers ....	---	---	Wellington.
Mrs. Preston ....	---	---	Waikouaiti.
Mrs. W. B. Matheson ....	---	---	Wairarapa.
Mrs. Joll ....	---	---	Hawke's Bay.
Miss Fulton ....	---	---	Marlborough.
Misses McKenzie ....	---	---	Southland.
Miss W. B. North ....	---	---	Nelson.
Mrs. Isaacs ....	---	---	Wellington.
Mrs. Purchase ....	---	---	Wellington.

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Mrs. Joll (acting) 1929.	Mrs. J. Pow and Mrs. McCorkindale 1927-28.	Mrs. D. Simpson 1929-34.
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Mrs. C. K. Wilson 1935-37.		
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Mrs. Susan Scott ....	---	---	Wanganui.
Mrs. T. Snowden ....	---	---	Te Kuiti.

## CHAPTER XI.

### HAWKE'S BAY.

BY MRS. T. H. LOWRY, *Okawa.*

What can any chronicler hope to achieve in a short and sketchy record of so tremendous a subject?

Pioneer women of Hawke's Bay!

Given time and space, what a history might be accomplished. Lacking, as we do, both space and time, and with only the most casual notes for reference, the task must be treated in a superficial manner which skims the surface of detail, the stories taken as the sort of reminiscences exchanged over a log fire in a country house in winter time.

To begin with, let us look at Hawke's Bay with the eyes of our grandmothers—lacking roads, bridges, telegraph wires, railway lines, and the daily post. Let us remember the settler at Wairoa—whose grandson plays a very useful game of tennis on the Hastings Courts to-day—who only seventy years ago walked twice a year by the coast to Wellington for his Home mail. And into that environment, adding the frequent fear of native risings, let us set those early pioneer women who came, so many of them, from cultured homes in serene old England.

It was Mrs. J. D. Ormond (1st), Napier's Grand Old Lady, who rode to her wedding all the way from Napier to Te Aute. She was not a horsewoman, but she rode all those miles with her brother, Mr. Richardson, taking it without complaint as a custom of the new country. And at the little

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Te Aute Church, nearly eighty years ago, Mr. and Mrs. Ormond were married by the Rev. Samuel Williams—the celebrated “Archdeacon Sam” of later years—while young J. H. Coleman, afterwards himself one of Napier’s most loved and honoured citizens, listened at the church door!

And then on they rode, the newly-married pair, to Wallingford, where Tom Redward, afterwards overseer at Wallingford and lessee himself of the Lake Station, did the cooking. Shortly after the marriage, the Napier-Waipawa coach began to run—and had to be taken across the mouth of the Ngaruroro on a punt.

A sister of Mr. Ormond’s had come out earlier, in the forties, to marry Governor Eyre, on whose staff Mr. Ormond himself first came out. She was accompanied on the long voyage by the old family nurse, and taken to Bishop Selwyn’s house in Auckland, from where the marriage took place.

Mrs. Ormond became a famous Napier hostess, and welcomed young people to her house. She was a fine pianist, and had a splendid instrument which was always kept in perfect order. On Friday nights her house was open to all her young friends, when she played to them, and showed them how to dance.

The purchase of Te Mata Station from the Government in 1854 brings the Chambers family into the picture. From Napier they went by canoe along the coast, and up the Tukituki River, near to where the present bridge crosses it on the Waimarama road. Mrs. Chambers was a young mother with two small sons and a daughter who had been born in Australia. It was intended to build the homestead on the spot where they landed, and all the timber had been taken up. Later, however, the site of the present homestead was decided on, and the timber was floated down the river to there.

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One daughter, the late Mrs. John Giblin, was the third white child to be born in Hawke's Bay; and it was only discovered when she was married that her parents had carelessly neglected to register her.

The Mata homestead was the only house on the way from Napier to the Coast—where the Gordons, Dr. Meinethagen, and the Moores were making history. It was one of the hospitable homes for which early Hawke's Bay was famed, and "open house" was always kept. People arrived at any time of the day or night and were always welcomed. There is a story that one party of visitors stayed so long that a cottage was built in which they lived for several years!

On the other side of Hastings, towards the Ranges, is Okawa, the home of the Lowry family—a lovely spot, steeped in pioneer history. In 1867 Mr. and Mrs. Lowry had to leave their home, with their two young children, on account of native risings. They buried their valuables in the garden, packed themselves and their belongings into a bullock dray, and journeyed to Napier, leaving Okawa in the care of an old gardener. The children are now Mr. T. H. Lowry and Mrs. Bernard Chambers. The British troops, stationed in the Barracks where the Hospital now stands, made the town of Napier safe for women and children. When the times were quiet, Mr. and Mrs. Lowry took frequent journeys to other parts of the country—they were intrepid pioneers. It is said they often rode through from Okawa to the West Coast, taking their children in front of them on the saddles. On that journey they will have stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Willie Birch at Erewhon, where the beautiful trees still bear witness to Mrs. Birch's love of her garden.

In 1856, before she was married, and still a very young girl, Mrs. Lowry set out from Wanganui to attend her sister's wedding in North Auckland. For three weeks the

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schooner was bar-bound in the river, and in the end it was three months before she reached Auckland. As the wedding was long past, the traveller stayed for a year in order to make the journey worth while.

Mrs. Wilson, a sister of Mrs. Lowry's, was a martyr to a Hauhau rising in the Gisborne District. Her husband and the rest of the family were killed, but she and the youngest child—a baby in arms—were saved by her eldest son, who got them away and hid them in the bush. There they lived on berries till their rescue; but the exposure and hardship were too much for a delicate woman, and Mrs. Wilson died shortly afterwards. Her son, "Jimmy" Wilson, who is still living, made his name as one of the great New Zealand rifle shots.

Away out on the coast from Waipawa there is still a McHardy at Blackhead Station—and not so long ago a granddaughter of the pioneer family pointed out to her children the cup-shaped rock on the beach near Aramoana—Mr. Percy McHardy's Station—where "your great-grandmother took the children off the bullock dray that brought them to Blackhead and gave them all a bath!"

There were interesting happenings all along that coast, and beautiful homes have grown up on the sites where the first-comers built their *whares*.

On a hill above the point where the Waipawa road meets the beach, stands the old Pourere homestead, renowned for its garden—a Nairn still in possession. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Nairn (1st) built the first church in the district, on a little hill in their lovely garden; and once a month the Rev. Simcox, coming round the rocks by the beach from Porangahau, held a service. Mrs. Nairn had a beautiful and well-trained voice. She was brought as a bride from England, and found, as others had found before her, that conditions in the new country were "different," to say the least.



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On her arrival at Napier she was welcomed by all the young settlers, who met to bid her farewell the morning she and her husband were leaving by the 7 o'clock train for Waipawa. Regretful farewells drew out to such lengths that Mr. Nairn was afraid they would miss the train.

"Oh, never mind—we'll catch the next!" said the young wife airily. But the next train did not go for two days.

One of the earliest settlers at Port Ahuriri, Napier, was Mr. James Watt, a Scotsman who brought a bride back from England after buying the Longlands Station. He had given her glowing accounts of the place, where he hoped to make their home. But the first day's dinner was served by the Maori cook with his shirt sleeves rolled up; there was no woman attached to the household and none to be got; so the English girl decided that life at Longlands would be too lonely. Mr. and Mrs. Watt lived at Auckland for three years, but later returned to Napier with their family. In Napier they built their wonderful home "Waititirau," and set about planting one of the most beautiful gardens in Hawke's Bay, a garden wherein there was a tree from every country in the world. Soon after coming back to Napier Mr. Watt died, and his widow eventually became Mrs. J. H. Coleman. These two people came to be known throughout New Zealand for their kindness and hospitality, and the city of Napier owes a great deal to them both.

Mrs. John Joll, members of whose family still live on the Havelock North side of Hastings, had a unique knowledge of the Maori language and the Maori people, and was known and loved by the natives as a friend. She once routed, singlehanded, a band of the Hauhaus who, after a demonstration at Paki Paki, came towards the house where she and her husband lived with their young family at Pukehou, with the evident intention of robbing and murdering. The menfolk were away on another part of the farm,

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and when Mrs. Joll saw the war-party approaching she padlocked the gate to give herself time, and then hid with her children from sight. A big half-caste slashed away the padlock with his tomahawk, shouting threats and backed by his followers, but terrified as she was, the threat of danger to her children roused the courageous woman to action. Striding forth from her hiding place she launched forth a string of invective which surprised herself as well as the Hauhaus, who were so astonished to hear a white woman giving vent to wrath in their own tongue, and using arguments best calculated to deter their evil designs, that after some discussion they departed. A magnificent achievement for a woman, and probably without precedent in New Zealand history.

Stories told by the Hutchinson family of Rissington, of the country round there settled mainly in the beginning by brother-officers of Sir George Whitmore, the first-comer, are delightful reminders of that erratic soldier-pioneer. Unfortunately they have no place here, as they deal with the adventures and exploits of men, and this is a record of women. But those who remember the charming little lady who lived for so many years on the Napier Parade will be amused to hear that Sir George is said to have told his bride in England that he had a villa in the country in Hawke's Bay—and her surprise at being obliged to reach that "villa," bumping up the bed of the river on a bullock dray, may be imagined. Sir George is supposed to have owned at one time 120,000 acres of land in that district.

There is a story of a family who lived near Waipawa in the early war days. The husband was an invalid, and when the Maoris came along the wife lowered him down the well, put the lid on, and hid herself and the children in the bush till the war-party had passed. Some of the children are still living.

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There are memories which have been handed down through four generations, of two beautiful brides who were brought to Hastings—Mrs. J. N. Williams, who was a Miss Beetham from the Wairarapa, and Mrs. Thomas Tanner, an Englishwoman. Mrs. Williams was the first mistress of Frimley; Mrs. Tanner lived in another charming house, set in a lovely garden, at Riverslea, near Clive.

Mrs. Tanner's sister was Mrs. St. Hill, wife of the first clergyman in Napier. A remarkable story is told of her. Before the great earthquake of '64 took place, Mrs. St. Hill, because of a dream, had warned her husband that people must not go to church on a certain Sunday. So insistent was she that he decided to hold the service elsewhere. During the service the earthquake began, and the church was wrecked. The earth shook at that time, as it did in 1931, for three weeks.

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Williams, whose names are woven into the fabric of Te Aute history, lived at first in a *raupo* whare on the swamp where smiling pasture land is now, and where splendid stock is sheltered by the beautiful English trees they planted. Te Aute College is a monument to their name. The late Mr. Willie Williams, their eldest son, was born in the *raupo whare*.

The three wonderful sisters of Bishop Williams, who lived in Napier, gave their whole lives to the founding and development of the Hukarere School for Maori girls. There they lived and worked, steadfast and serene, ruling their little band with infinite wisdom and dignity, bringing to hundreds of young native girls the knowledge and understanding of Christianity simply through the example of their own lives. It was tragic, but perhaps fitting, that Miss Kate, should have lost her life in the Napier Cathedral during the morning Communion Service into which the earthquake of 1931 crashed. Pinned down by an immovable beam, with

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the flames drawing nearer, when the doctors tried to help her she waved them away and—"Leave me—attend to the the others," were her last words.

THE WILLIAMS FAMILY (additional by Mrs. Sherrat)—To the people of Poverty Bay the word pioneer is almost synonymous with the name of "Williams."

The respective wives of three generations of Williams all came from England. Mrs. William Williams came with her husband in 1826. They lived at the Bay of Islands till 1840, when they were sent to Turanga—Poverty Bay—to open a mission station at Whakato. It prospered and they moved to Waerengahika, where they carried it on on a larger scale, but in 1865 they were, like others, obliged to fly from the hostile Hauhaus. The station was established some time afterwards in Napier, and Mr. William Williams was made first Bishop of Waiapu. In 1853, their son, Leonard, Archdeacon Williams, came with his bride to help with the mission work at Turanga. These brave women could have had little idea of what was in store for them—the isolation, the primitive conditions, the discomforts, the terrible experiences and hardships that they and their families were called upon to endure. Mrs. Leonard Williams taught her sisters-in-law, and made all their clothes as well as her own and her children's. She saw to the cooking, washing, cleaning, supervised the grinding of the wheat, bread making and baking in a huge brick oven. She also supervised the Maori girls' classes, cutting out, fitting and sewing by hand all their clothes. She was doctor and nurse, not only to their own settlement, but also to the large *pa* across the river. She helped with the memorable outbreak of measles in 1854, when 4,000 Maoris died of measles and

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resulting complications. She took sole responsibility when her men folk were away, which was pretty often. Her day began at four o'clock in the summer. She never sat down, except to meals, until the evening, after the evening meal had been disposed of. Her husband was later the second Bishop Williams of Waiapu. She was the mother of Herbert Williams, third Bishop Williams of Waiapu. Some of her letters record the anguish of mind she suffered when she had to fly the district in 1855. Her home was completely destroyed. She returned to Turanga in 1877 and lived at "Te Rau." In 1894 she died in Napier.

By N.B.—From Pongaroa, a winding road across seventeen miles of hilly country leads to Herbertville. The name was derived from the Herbert family, after whom a street in Masterton is also named.

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert came to New Zealand in the *London* in 1841. They made their home in Wellington, where Mr. Herbert had a road forming contract. After the earthquake, which raised the land several feet, his job was shortened, and he and his wife went to Hawke's Bay, sailing by boat to Cape Turnagain.

Little Mrs. Herbert was carried off the boat through the surf. In this new home she was almost buried alive. The mail came only once a year, and she never left her home except at the call of a woman, when she would walk even a distance of fifteen miles. She was the mother of twelve children, ten of whom lived. She made all the clothes for the family, including even her husband's suits.

In all the long years this quiet woman, who was much loved by the Maoris, had only one amusement, when once a year at the shearers' dance she listened to the music of

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the accordeon. A photo of her shows steadfast grey eyes and a sad mouth, which seems to speak of a life of repression.