



Norsewood Pioneer Museum.

Norsewood

NORSEWOOD PIONEER MUSEUM.

The Norsewood Pioneer Museum was opened on December 11th 1965 by Mrs Jane Brenkley. Official guests for the occasion were the Prime Minister and member of Parliament for the district, the Right Honourable K. J. Holyoake and Mrs Holyoake and His Excellency the Danish Ambassador, Dr Axel Serup and Mrs Serup.

The opening took place just 18 months after the local Branch of the Women's Division of Federated Farmers had called a public meeting in July 1964 to ascertain interest in their idea of establishing a Cottage Museum in Norsewood. An interim committee, formed that night, procured from the Commissioner of Crown Lands a house built in 1888 by the former Lutheran Minister, Pastor Ries. On December 22nd "Hanson's Building Removals" shifted it from its site among rhododendrons and sumachs, on the east side of the old main road just south of Norsewood, onto a County section next to the Post Office in North Norsewood. The decision to resite the house was made in the interests of improved surveillance and hours of entry for the public, who are welcome from 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

Donations, a grant of \$400 from the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and generous assistance from district tradesmen, residents and the Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum have transformed the building into a worthy memorial to the pioneer settlers and their rigorous way of life.

To ensure continuity members formed themselves into an Incorporated Society on December 13th 1965 and the following comprised the original committee of the Norsewood Pioneer Museum Society (Inc.)

Chairman:

Mr J. A. N. HALFORD.

Secretary-Treasurer:

Mrs K. B. CLAYTON.

Committee:

Mrs A. R. DAVIDSON, Mrs O. R. NIKOLAISON, Mr D. CHARLTON-JONES, Mr J. S. GALLON, Mr R. J. GALLOWAY, Mr T. G. HOLMES, Mr R. SCHAARE.

NORSEWOOD—HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The New Zealand Government's policy of co-ordinating public works and immigration was stated many times, but perhaps never more forcefully than by Dr. I. E. Featherston, Wellington Provincial Superintendent, in his opening speech to the Council in 1871. "Public Works and Immigration" said Dr. Featherston "must go hand in hand. Nay I will go further and say that the Government is not justified in undertaking the works I have indicated unless the province is prepared to do its duty in regard to immigration. There is no use in preparing a country for settlement unless you are also prepared to bring to it population; and remember this, that capital invariably accompanies and follows immigration." The Government had begun work in 1869 on the policy which Featherston was promoting and in that year Julius Vogel had spoken of his "comprehensive plan which will extend the benefits of regular and systematic immigration to the colony throughout its length and breadth." Emigration from Great Britain had greatly decreased after 1850 and it seemed possible that New Zealand could absorb more labour than England would readily supply.

In the North Island of New Zealand there were dense and giant forests to be felled to prepare for the expansion of settlement. The agents of the change could only be men and women accustomed to hardships and frugal living. The settlers should be farmers and not wholly ignorant of lumbering.

These two causes — the decline in British emigration and the demand for hardy settlers for the forested land — were sufficient to turn the attention of the New Zealand Government toward Scandinavia. The scarcity of fertile land had forced the Scandinavians to be frugal; the climate made them hardy.

These first immigrants settled in the Manawatu province with much success and then it remained for the larger project to be carried out in Southern Hawke's Bay. In this area (the Seventy Mile Bush as it was then called) there were to be three small settlements of Scandinavians. Two settlements, it was hoped, would be comprised of Norwegians and one of Swedish. Each settlement was to be of about 5,000 acres — ten of which would be planned as a village and subdivided into quarter acre

sections. Some of these sections would be reserved for churches, schools and other public purposes and the remainder would be sold at about ten dollars. The rest of the settlement would be laid out in 20 acre sections and one section was to be allotted to each family at the cost of forty dollars, to be paid in instalments over a period of three years. The first payment would be made when the first month's wages were received. Each alternate section would be withheld from sale for three years. In the fourth year, if the owner of the adjoining 20 acres had completed the payments on his original land he could begin to purchase the second section on the same conditions. If no payments were forthcoming for three consecutive months, or if the owner left the settlement his section would be regarded as abandoned.

The villages were to be given any names which the Agent-General considered would be popular with the settlers.

The Government would provide transport from port of arrival to the settlement at two dollars per adult, also temporary accommodation and free rations to be issued for a week or fortnight whilst sections were being balloted and shelters erected upon them.

When these tasks were completed they, the settlers, would be given work by the Government for three or four days a week at a wage of fifty cents per day for good workers and less for poor workers. The remaining days would be left free to enable them to develop their sections.

If practicable the immigrants for each settlement should travel together on one ship and an inducement was offered to a schoolmaster to come with each party. Featherston was advised by the Minister to inform the immigrants to short draw their rations on the voyage so as to ease their financial difficulties during the early months of settlement.

It was suggested by the Government that the immigrants pay one-third of their passage money, ten dollars, either in cash before sailing or by promissory note redeemable by instalments spread over one or two years. (Later when the Government regarded the establishment of pioneer settlements in the Seventy Mile Bush by the eminently suitable Scandinavians as a matter of importance, it was decided to leave passage money to the

discretion of the Agent). It was desirable that the settlers arrive after August to enable them to fell their bush in time for the summer burn-off.

With all these many conditions of immigration to be explained the Government arranged with Mr B. E. Friberg, a Norwegian settler of Hawke's Bay of several years' standing who had travelled through the Seventy Mile Bush, to go to Scandinavia to assist in the selection of suitable immigrants. He was quite conversant with Colonial life and would therefore, render great assistance in promoting Scandinavian migration to New Zealand and would accompany the settlers on their voyage out to their new land. Meanwhile the sections in the Seventy Mile Bush were being surveyed by Mr D. Ross who was assisted by Messrs J. Mitchell, W. Hallett and B. Lambert. By the end of August 1872 the sites for both Norsewood and Dannevirke were decided by Mr A. Halcombe, Chief Immigration Officer. Mr Ross was in charge of laying out the roads and trees of two feet in diameter and over were felled to the width of a chain and all undergrowth cleared within eight feet of the road area to permit the entry of the new arrivals from Scandinavia to their sections in Norsewood and Dannevirke.

On the morning of Sunday, 15th September, 1872, the barque "Ballarat" arrived in the roadstead at the port of Napier after a voyage of 93 days and amongst the many passengers were Danes for the new settlement.

Some seven hours after the arrival of the "Ballarat" the Norwegian owned sailing ship "Hovding" under the command of Captain Berg cast anchor at Napier after a voyage of 108 days. On board were Mr Friberg and the Norwegian and Swedish immigrants, who like the passengers on board the "Ballarat" were full of praise for both ships' captains and medical officers for maintaining the general health of all passengers. A further two days was spent on board before the immigrants were sent to the Immigration Barracks near where the Napier Hospital now stands. Next day the men and older boys for the new settlement rolled up a few of their scant belongings and commenced the final journey toward Norsewood and Dannevirke on foot. They were accompanied by two five-horse teams belonging to Mr S. McGreevy, a carrier from Waipawa, who was engaged to cart their two

weeks supply of food and tools. By the first evening of their trek along the limestoned roads, Te Aute was reached and as many as possible were housed in the very small hotel whilst the remainder sheltered in anything available. Mr Friberg and Mr Halcombe accompanied the caravan and the former acted as interpreter. Waipukurau was reached in the late hours of Saturday night and good accommodation was had at the Tavistock Hotel (since moved) and on Monday morning early these foot sore men headed toward the Ruahine Ranges and the unknown. Late the following evening of Tuesday Mr H. Fergusson's Railway Hotel was reached at the edge of the bush. The excavation for this small hotel and some of its trees are still to be seen. A further three miles was walked the next morning through the newly cleared dirt road to the natural bush clearing of Te Whiti where a crude shelter of punga sides and totara-bark roof had been built, in the first instance for the surveyors. This was to be their home until the arrival of their wives and families who had remained in Napier. Two tents had been erected in readiness for supplies and in one of these Mr Drower operated a grocery business and the other was used as a butcher's shop by Mr Angus McKay (later the first Mayor of Dannevirke) and Mr Harry Monteith. (Sections were balloted and each settler escorted to his densely forested section and shown the survey pegs). Each man was given the implements necessary to clear his area sufficiently for the erection of a form of shelter. While the Norwegians and Swedes were conversant with the tools used for bush felling the Danes found them strange in an even stranger land but were ready to apply themselves. The men who were to settle in Dannevirke helped the Norsewood settlers in their mammoth task and during those first few days injuries were many from felling trees and sharp implements.

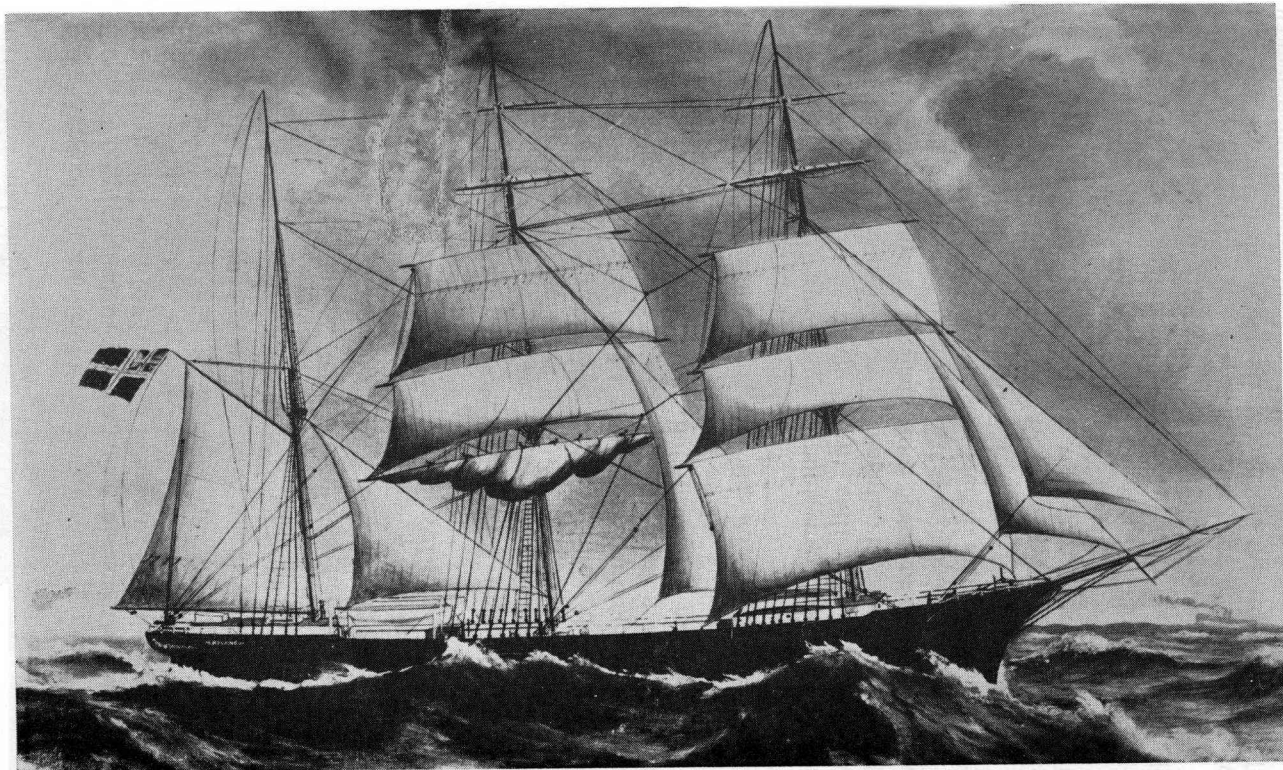
Twelve days after the arrival of the men the remaining party of wives and children from Napier arrived on horse drawn drays at the Te Whiti clearing to be housed there until their future homes were built. There was insufficient accommodation for everyone and many had to sleep outside on beds of fern and three boughs. Their first meal was cooked in the open air over log fires and frypans and pannikins. The most petrifying experience of all was the number of Maoris from the nearby Maori Hill Pah who peered at them through the dark trees.

Here then is the list of Norsewood's first male settlers.

Ole Torkilsen, Johan Nielsen, — Mandahl, Hans Olsen, Lars Larsen, Ole Johansen, Chris Christoffersen, Martin Hansen, Johan Winger, Christopher Finsen, Johanne Englebretsen (ship's carpenter), Christian Svensen, Fred Wahl, Hans Jakobsen, Jan Johansen, Nicolai Hansen, Martin Andersen, Johan Berntsen, Englebret Englebretsen, Anders Larsen, Peter Larsen, Ole Christoffersen, Harold Seerup, Anders Lundgren, Berthold Gundersen, Martin Pedersen, Karl Johansen, Jans Nielsen, Johan List, Edward Petersen, P. Tjelsen, Frederick Mortensen, Johan Halversen, Hans Stokke, Peter Gundersen, Mathias Hansen, Erick Persen, S. Sorensen, Johan Petersen, Pole Jakobsen, Hans Bolstad, Theodor Andresen, B. Ericksen (cabinet maker), Ole Gundersen, Torkel Olsen, E. A. Laurvig, Ole Olsen (berger), Ole Ericksen, Anders Thoresen, Emanuel Fredericksen, August Anderson, Edward Christoffersen, Thomas Jensen, O. O. Nordbye, Neils Anderson, Anton Nielsen, Emil Olsen (tailor), Erick Fager, Ole Lund, Amund Amundsen, Edward Hansen, Emil Olsen (mechanic), Edward Thoresen, Karl Olsen, Englebret Svensen, Anders Johansen, Jan Jonasen, Peder Pedersen.

Never in the history of New Zealand was there more bitter disillusion or disappointment than that experienced by these people from Scandinavia. They had of necessity to face what lay ahead as they were anchored to the settlement by lack of money, a strange language and many children. The men had worked hard to build shelters for their families although quite often two families shared the same humble abode. Some were built like that of the surveyors at Te Whiti and others were of white pine slabs which were simple to cut. The home-made furniture was in keeping with its setting and cooking continued beneath the sky until clay could be found and corrugated iron bought for chimneys. Menfolk soon began work hewing the roads with pick and shovel, forming the Te Whiti end first for easier access to the stores, whilst the women and children remained in their pathetic forest homes trying to grow, among the tree stumps, the vegetable seed which had been supplied.

These gallant people had only their own resources and the comfort of each others presence to support them initially: there was no church, doctor, school or policeman. Indeed a



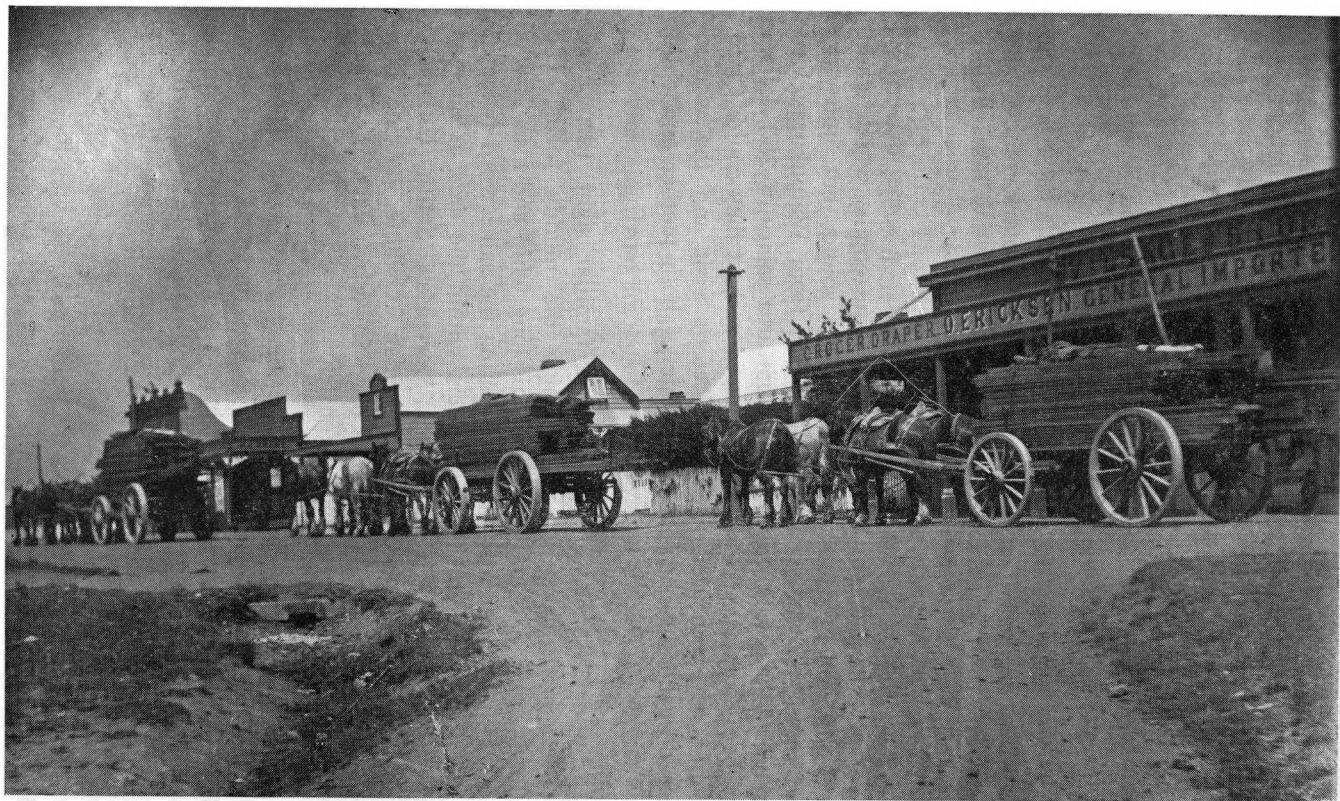
The "Hovding".

whole year elapsed before three families could invest their money in the first and only cow.

A school for the children was discussed many times but appeared hopeless because of language barriers. Mr W. Colenso finally arranged with Mr F. W. Thompson of Napier to undertake school teaching duties at Norsewood in August or September 1873. Mr Thompson had been educated at a private school in Malta and was prepared to learn yet another foreign language in order to promote the teaching of English to the Scandinavian children and many adults. He also acted as a Minister of the church at the many funerals and his helpful advice was greatly appreciated. Attendance at school was very spasmodic due to much ill health, long distance and bad weather to say little of the lack of money necessary for schooling at this period.

Men were finding work very difficult to find and many moved miles from their sections to earn the necessary money to keep up payments on their land. Many could no longer get credit for stores but they were always comforted by the knowledge that the railway, which would pass through their village, would give ample work during its construction and eventually be of benefit to the entire area. But this never happened as the railway was re-routed six miles east of the settlement and never did the Norsewood settlers forgive "the Powers that be."

However many men found employment on the railways construction and their newly learnt skill with timber proved invaluable in the construction of magnificent trestle bridges. But work was not always to be had. More Scandinavians had arrived in the area and labour over-supplied the demand, besides which the progress of the railway was slow due to many stoppages when Public Works funds ran out. The so called farms which had by now been increased from 20 to 40 acres were left more or less in the hands of wives and children who grew everything possible for both home consumption and sale. Laden with baskets full of produce and with small children dragging on their skirts they would walk to the nearest rail-head to sell their goods and, if they were fortunate in this mission, buy supplies which could not be home-grown. Flour was sold in 100 lb. bags only and this was just one item which would be carried on the return walk. The women's hands were almost as calloused as the men's but they did



TIMBER WAGGONS — NORTH NORSEWOOD 1888.

beautiful hand work and never were their knitting needles idle, whether it be at home or walking along the dusty or muddy roads. Some had brought spinning wheels and small hand looms with their few precious belongings from "home" but these had to lie idle for a long time through lack of material.

One or two logging camps had begun about 1876 and the logs were hauled by bullock wagon via Takapau and Waipukurau to the railway or mill in Waipawa.

The coming of the railway to Ormondville in 1880 and the plentiful supply of trees such as matai, rimu, totara, yellow pine and white pine prompted the establishment of saw mills locally and Milling Rights were issued.

The throb of the saw mill engines — some driven by water wheels and one by a mighty marine engine which could be heard for miles was companionable sound, but injury to the employees was very high. Dr Todd from Waipukurau was appointed to pay 26 visits per annum at a salary of 250 dollars and between visits the settlers managed as best they could. Child birth rarely coincided with the doctor's visit and the women helped each other but the death rate of both mother and child was high.

Bullock teams were becoming a familiar sight, their huge wooden home-made wheels churning the muddy roads. The bullock driver was an expert with his long whip and also, it was said, with his profanity, never repeating the same word twice in a ten minute stretch. The sawmillers within the area as near as can be ascertained were Messrs. Mortensen, Smith, Gamman, Nissen, Gundry, Nordloff, Wilburman, Gribble, Jensen, Lee, Nordbye, McLeod, Anderson, Cohr, Sovesby, Parsons, Roper, Brown Brothers, Orbell and Webster.

The saw mills gave rise to many enterprises. The first blacksmith's shop was opened by Johan Johansen, followed by Mr J. Pettersen. A recently arrived German operated a small brewery even though the Immigration Officer had issued an order on August 26th 1872 that no beer or spirituous liquor be introduced to the settlement.

The entire area began to feel that progress was inevitable. Mr Sass the first Lutheran Minister to visit the settlement in

1878 had sown the seed for a church built in 1882 and Pastor Ries carried on the good work followed by Pastor Legarth. The Wesleyan Church was the first church to be built and was served by Pastor Neilsen. Canon Webb of Ormondville paid regular visits to administer to the Anglicans but the first known visit by a clergyman had been much earlier on January 1st 1873 when the Rev. Samuel Williams baptised six infants.

After 16 years of sheer will to survive the settlement was pervaded by a marvellous feeling of progress, a feeling quickly shattered when in March 1888 the smell of smoke turned anxious eyes to the distant hills. A strong wind was blowing and soon it gained velocity and the cry of "Bush Fire" came from every direction. The men were away from their homes, working miles distant and their wives had to make the decision whether the wind would abate or whether to abandon their homes. Many articles were buried in gardens, placed on the roads or in metal pits, even in wells, and as much as possible carried with them out of the path of the fire. The sky turned from gold to deep amber and onward raced the devouring monster of forest and homes. The children at school were well cared for by Miss Bedingfield who made them join hands so that no one was lost since eyes were streaming from smoke. The fire was of immense proportions stretching from near the Ruahine Ranges and threatening Ormondville. There had been numerous other forest fires but this was by far the worst due to the lines of cleared forest which created funnels for the gale to race through and fan the fire into an inferno. Refuge for the panic stricken settlers was sought in Ormondville and Kopua where anxiety was mounting as the fire and sparks flew toward them looking certain to consume the railway and trestle bridges — the Ormondville trestle seemed doomed. When the fire was within licking distance of the bridges the heavens loosed all their fury in an awe inspiring display of lighting and torrential rain and vied for supremacy with the fire which now had no gale force winds to back it. The rain saved further destruction by pouring as it had never done before. Many settlers remained overnight wherever they were whilst some returned to survey the destruction of the labour of years. Many, many houses were ashes, also one church, the school, Mortensen's accommodation house, various stores and barns. Precious few buildings remained, but to

seemingly spite one clergyman who regularly preached of the wickedness of alcohol the hotel was not harmed.

Pathetic groups of settlers met to discuss their further chances of survival. The fire damage they concluded was in the main replaceable. After all being deprived of the railway had been their bitterest blow and they had risen above that.

Some good always emerges from the bad. The fire had certainly burnt their homes and most of their worldly goods but it had also cleared their sections of the remaining trees and stumps, the ashes of which fertilised the soil enabling them to achieve what they set out to do in 1872 — become farmers. The land from this time on, developed to such a degree as to necessitate building a dairy factory. No settler made his fortune from his 40 acre section but each had fought tenaciously for it since before its birth.

Two outstanding settlers were Mr and Mrs Ole Ericksen (who owned a general merchants store). Mr Ericksen had represented Norsewood on all important organizations for the benefit of his fellow settlers. For his unflinching and untiring efforts he earned and was called "Father of Norsewood."

Encouragement to each other and the will to survive seemed to be the motto of the settlement. All had served their district to the utmost — too, they had served New Zealand with distinction.

Never did the Scandinavians forget their early years in this now highly productive New Zealand. In their aged years when asked to comment on first impressions of Norsewood they would gaze into the distance and slowly shake their heads as if to say "There are no words suitable."



DEVELOPMENT OF THE DAIRY INDUSTRY.

Prior to the opening of the first factory, thought to be in the latter end of 1891, butter was churned on the farms and sold to the storekeepers for about three or four cents per pound, the settler apparently being supposed to take it out in goods not cash. The dissatisfaction arising out of this method prompted Pastor Ries to call a meeting at which it was decided to erect a factory.



SOUTH NORSEWOOD A PROCESSION PASSING THE LUTHERAN CHURCH.

Pastor Ries and Samuel Brabazon were appointed trustees with Leonard Andersen and a young man named Petersen in charge of the factory. Dissension among the managers nearly forced the factory to close until John Harms purchased it outright, at a price which enabled the trustees to repay in full cash contributors plus 5% interest in addition. Dissatisfaction over prices paid for their milk turned the farmers thoughts once again toward a co-operative factory and in 1896 the Norsewood Co-operative Dairy Company Ltd. (the first in Southern Hawke's Bay) came into being under the chairmanship of Mr John O'Hara.

As the number of herds increased and with them their distance from the factory it became necessary to build creameries in outlying areas. Makotuku in 1898 was the first erected followed by others in Whetukura, Garfield, Matamau and Ngamoko. The purpose of a creamery was to separate milk of outlying farmers. The cream only being carted to the mother factory. Early in the century the decision to manufacture cheese as well as butter resulted in the closure of the creameries at Whetukura, Garfield and Matamau and the conversion of those at Makotuku and Ngamoko to cheese factories.

The gradual growth of the use of farm separators and improved transport saw the emphasis on butter production once more, and the 1920's brought the closure of the outlying factories and cheese manufacture altogether.

The old cheese room came back into use in 1949 when equipment was installed for the making of buttermilk powder. This move was the result of requests from some farmers who wished to sell whole milk rather than keep pigs!

The 1950's showed a sharp decline in the production of butter due to suppliers grazing sheep in preference to cows. Other companies in Southern Hawke's Bay found themselves in the same position and in 1960 five companies, Tamaki, Norsewood, Woodville, United and Tataramoa amalgamated to form the Ruahine Co-operative Dairy Co. Ltd. Suppliers have benefitted from the change and the collection of whole milk once a day has made life easier.

The factory buildings in Norsewood now ring to the sound of hammer and blow-torch as the products of its new owner, Royden Industries, a light engineering firm, are produced.

IDEA ORIGINATED BY NORSEWOOD RESIDENT.

The annual issue of health stamps is now a well-established custom, and the proceeds in aid of health camps amount to a very substantial sum.

It is a matter of interest and pride that the idea for a New Zealand issue emanated from a well-known woman resident of Norsewood.



Mrs. K. Nielsen.

In 1926 Mrs Kirstine Nielsen suggested that the system obtaining in Denmark and adopted in other countries, of issuing Christmas seals should be followed in New Zealand, the proceeds from the sales to be devoted to the upkeep of sanitoriums or some deserving health project. The suggestion, which was submitted to the Postmaster-General through the late Sir George Hunter, M.P., was favourably received by the Post and Telegraph Department, but it was decided that the issue of a stamp proper having a postage as well as a charity value would be preferable to the issue of a seal. Such stamps had been approved for international use at the Postal Convention of Stockholm in 1924. Approval for the first issue in New Zealand was made on October 2nd, 1929.

SIGNIFICANT TREES.

Three oak trees in Norsewood have links with special occasions in the history of the settlement.

The first, and best known, set in its stone surround at the north end of Coronation Street, north Norsewood, was planted to mark the Silver Jubilee on September 20th., 1897. At the Golden Jubilee in 1922 a marble slab was unveiled at its base by Sir George Hunter and bears the following inscription: "This oak was planted September 20th., 1897, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the settlement of the Norsewood district by Scandinavians from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, September 20th 1872, and this block was erected to commemorate the 50th. anniversary, September 20th., 1922. Ole Ericksen, chairman; Elise Johansen, secretary; Arthur Olsen, treasurer."

To mark the Golden Jubilee an oak was planted in the enclosure that contains the Soldiers Memorial. The oldest of the original settlers alive at that time, Mr Ole Johansen, aged 90, planted the tree, assisted by Mr Knut Andersen, aged 92, who came out four years after the first settlers.

The third oak stands alone at the south end of Coronation Street beside the memorial to Trooper H. J. Beck — killed in action in the Boer War.



Published by the Norsewood Pioneer Museum Society Inc. The Society acknowledge the assistance given by Elizabeth Corbishley and the use of material from the Norsewood School 75th Jubilee publication.