

PERSONAL MEMORIES OF
HAWKES BAY

With the
Compliments of
J H Davis

PERSONAL MEMORIES

of
HAWKE'S BAY

In the Years 1857 to 1865.

by
Mr. J. H. DAVIS, of HASTINGS.

I am the second son of the late Mr. William Davis, and was born in Hawke's Bay, between Pakowhai and Farndon, in the year 1854. I was christened by the Rev. Colenso at Waitangi. The Rev. Colenso was Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

I can recall that in the 1850's, the first hotel to be built in Napier was owned by a man named Munn; the second was built at the Spit and was owned by a man named Jeffers. Then there was an hotel built at the foot of the Shakespeare Road owned by John and H. Marshall. The Masonic Hotel was built a little later, about 1860. At the back of Munn's Hotel at the Spit, there was a big well - about one hundred feet deep - but there would be only about four or five feet of water in it. One night a man walked out of the back door of the hotel in the dark, and went down the well, feet first. The well was worked by a windlass, and soon after when someone went to get water and lowered a bucket, a voice was heard below, and this was how he was discovered. He put his feet in the bucket and held on to the rope and was hauled up. He was more or less mental afterwards, as a result of the shock, and never quite recovered.

The first storekeepers I can remember at the Spit were - James Watt, Kinross, Stewart, also a man named Maltby, Rutledge & Kennedy (Captain Kennedy), and Richardson - who afterwards started the shipping firm of Richardson & Co. Ltd. There was also Vautier, a wood and coal merchant, and up in the main part of the town were Newton & Irvin (Neal & Close started with these people), Brown & Draper, and Carver, a Chemist. The first Blacksmith was a man named Fletcher, and the second was a man named Garry.

Henry Williams commenced business in a very small shop - about 10' x 20' - trading under the name of Williams & Foan. (Foan, by the way, was the first man to be murdered in Hawkes Bay, by a man named Farrell, a Cooper). The first artesian well in Napier was sunk by Garry at his Foundry. Garry's business was situated in what was then known as White Road (now Hastings Street) and it was over a mile long.

The whole of Napier South was right out to Awatoto, was all water with raupo and bull rushes growing. It was possible to go up a creek in a canoe all the way to Farndon from The Spit. This creek was known as Awatoto, which means "river of blood". There was an hotel kept at Awatoto by a man named McMurray, and the road there was the main road to Meanee and up country; there was also a toll gate.

The first milkman in Napier was man named Ross, and the second was Torr who lived at Awatoto. The first butchers in Napier were Rich & Parker, and the first Saddler's shop was owned by a man named Hill; the second saddler was Holder. The first Livery Stable was owned by Captain Hunter, and Charlie Palmer had another stable. The chemists were Barraud & Bridge. The first man to drive a hansom cab was a Mr. Nesfield. Just ordinary cabs were used for the run between Napier and The Spit. The first coaches that were run to inland Patea from Napier were run by George Rymer, and later he had opposition by a man named McDonald. The first carrier to go into inland Patea was John Bicknell of Puketapu; he was a settler there, and he had opposition later in Jones & Williams. Previous to the carts, the carrying was all done by pack-horses by a man named Batley. He was a contract carrier with pack-horses, and sometimes owing to the floods he was held up for a fortnight on a three-days' job.

In the late 50's there were two newspapers - the "Times" and the "Hawkes Bay Herald". Harding was proprietor and Editor of the "Times", and the "Hawkes Bay Herald" was owned by Wood. Later Dinwiddie & Walker bought out Wood; they were formerly working in Wood's office. These newspapers comprised four sheets of paper which were about foolscap size.

The first Post Master at The Spit was Peter Burke, and the first Pilot John McKinnon, afterwards run-holder at Ara Pawanui. The first school-master was Mr. Marshall, and the fee for pupils was £50 per annum, for boarding. The day school teacher was a Mr. Thompson and the fee of 1/6 per week. The Coach builder was a man named Faulkner. There was also a Ginger Beer and Lemonade Factory owned by Bowman., The first brewer was Hartley, and the first Carpenter - Williams, Robert Holt. There was an hotel at Western Spit kept by a man named Bukiss. When one wanted to go up the coast, horses were swum across the Inner Harbour, the alternative being by road round by Puketapu over the hills. The first Baker in Napier was a Mr. Blake, and the second a man named Rowbottom. The leading men in Napier in the 50's and 60's were - Alfred Domett, H.S.Tiffin, Captain Carter, Captain Curling, Catchpool, Sir Donald McLean, J.D.Ormond and Joseph Rhodes.

Whenever the Maoris came into Napier in the 50's and early 60's they would buy a hot loaf of bread, open the loaf while hot and put a lot of butter in the middle. This they would eat while the hot dripping butter ran between their fingers. They would rarely wear anything but an old blue shirt; some would have a shawl to their knees, but a Maori wearing boots was a very uncommon sight.

The first Gaoler in Napier was a man named Groom, and he used to tell the prisoners that if they were not back before 9 o'clock, he would lock them out. They were, of course, only in for debt, not ordinary criminals, and he used to let them go out whenever they liked. The first Sergeant of Police was Sergeant Skully. There were once two deserters who got away from the barracks on the Hill,

and Skully went to arrest them near Wanganui. On his way back with them as prisoners, coming through the 40-mile Bush one said to him - "I guarantee you can't shoot that pigeon on the tree, Skully." Of course he did, and directly his gun was empty they grabbed him and tied him up. However, they managed to get away and eventually he recaptured them before they got to Woodville. The coaches that used to run between Napier and Woodville in the early 60's were owned by Cobb & Co.

G.T. Fannin was the first Immigration Officer in Napier, and the first doctor was Dr. Hitchings. Dr. English was there for a short time, but he moved on to Waipawa. The first solicitors in Napier were Wilson, Carlile and Taylor.

Curling was the Magistrate, and on one occasion there was a free fight in Napier in an hotel, and Captain Curling was fighting with the rest of them. The next day in court he find the offenders 10/- each, and made them all pay for the crockery and furniture that was broken.

The main chiefs in Hawkes Bay were Karaitiana, Menina, Henare Tomoana and Puhara. There was once a tribal fight at Mangatetere between Te Monoui and Te Hapuka. Te Hapuka wanted to extend his boundary, but Te Mononui objected and so they fought. Puhara was the only one who was killed. While they were fighting, Alfred Danvers carrying his swag, walked through between the two parties and he was unmolested; it was strictly a Maori affair.

The Ngaruroro River originally flowed from Roy's Hill right round by Longlands, past Havelock and back again right down just below the Pakowhai bridge where it is at the present time. The rivers in those days were ever so much lower than they are now. The artificial banks now at Meanee, 12 to 14 feet high, were originally the height of the banks of the river. The first flood that the white settlers experienced took place about 1864, and flooded the whole of the Meanee flats and Papakura district. The first bridge to be built in Hawkes Bay was at Meanee, and the second was down near Clive.

The rivers were quite eight feet lower then than they are now, and the tide used to flow right past Powdrell's Bend; at flood tide the water would reach nearly to Redcliffe. The Inner Harbour went out more than half way to Petane into the sea (where what is now known as the "Nine O'clock Bend is - so-called because the Wairoa coach reached there about 9 o'clock).

The settlers on the Meanee flat in the early days, were H.N. Tiffin, Burton, Sutton, Hammond, O'Dowd, Alley, Howard, Edward Davis (known as Sam Davis), Knox, Miller Sladen, Hallett, Hector and James Peacock and John Marshall; there was also the Catholic Mission Station. Oliver, Tuke and Thomas Powdrell came afterwards.

A small Brewery (manufacturing what was known as "Pumice Stone Beer") was started in a pumice stone building, and run by a man named McGlashen. In about the year 1864, a free fight took place after a Race meeting between the natives and the whites, owing to a Maori striking a very old man, Rigby. The whites got the best of it, and the Maoris threatened to return with a stronger force, but that was the end of it.

The first settler at Redcliff was a man named Hawkins (Tom or James, I forget which); the next was Jim Shirley, then Dolbell Bros. and then Tom Shirley. Old Mr. Chambers (father of the present family) first lived at Redcliffe when he came out.

At Puketapu, the Military settlers - so-called because although not settlers they would get a grant after serving a certain time (about 3 or 5 years) - were under canvas for two years. They were commanded there by Captain Fraser and Lieutenant Wilson (who, by the way was later murdered at the Poverty Bay Massacre). The Colonial Defence force were under canvas for two years at Rissington at a place known as Camp Flat. There was an "a" troop and a "b" troop; "a" troop was commanded by Captain Lassair and Johnny StGeorge and "b" troop was commanded by Captain Anderson and Lieutenant Gascoyne. They were all under the command of Major Whitmore.

The first settler to take up land at Puketapu were Alexander and Collin (these people later sold out to John Heslop), Massey Hutchinson and a very eccentric old woman named Burke, who was married to a man named Wyatt but she made him take her name. Following up the river was Brigham, and the next Howes and the next was Bicknell. Then there was a man named "Nine O'clock Smith". He was given this title because he was a book-keeper for Newton & Irvin, and if he arrived at the office door even two minutes before the hour, he would wait outside until 9. The next settler was a man named Nona Smith of Hakowai, and the next was my step-father, O.L.W. Bousefield at Woodthorpe. He was the Government Surveyor; Fitzgerald and Weber were the other surveyors, and Weber was the Head.

The settlers at Wharerangi were Alexander, part owner of Puketapu, Newton and Ellison (grandfather of the present Ellison of the Middle Road), also Captain Hinton whose place overlooked the Inner Harbour. "Glengarry" Station was occupied by a man named Munro. Then there was Captain Anderson of "Sunny Braes". At Pohue were Smith and Marshall, Rakamoana Station. (the proper Marshall's Crossing is between Rakamoana and Patoka). At Marshall's Crossing there was a fight between the Waikato Maoris and the local natives, and they fought over a woman. When a young Chief wanted a wife and the others told him where there was a fine looking girl to be found, the Chief would send down a party to take her prisoner, and if they could not get her by fair means, they would fight for her. On this occasion, this was what the fight was about and the Waikatos were victorious and took the girl they wanted. They also took all the males who were not killed in the fight, and threw them over into a ravine, which was afterwards called "Maori Gully". The only local Maori who got away was a native called Rangihiroa, who afterwards commanded the rebels at Petane Valley, about 1866. He was killed there. At the Omaranui fight, only one man escaped and he got as far as Tarawera and informed all the women that their husbands were either killed or taken prisoners at Omaranui.

Because he was the only man among about a hundred women and children, they christened the place "The Nunnery". I was on horseback on top of a hill at Redcliff at the time of the Omaranui battle, and saw it all. It only lasted about an hour and a quarter. Colonel Whitmore was Commander of the troops, and the Maoris had an idea that all they had to do was to fire away until all were killed. Their idea was that as long as they ~~did a chant~~ they were safe. The Friendly Natives called them "Hau Haus", which means "a lot of wind"; they were given this name because they ~~used to stamp their feet and put their hands above their heads~~ and emit a swishing noise similar to the wind blowing.

Following up the river to Peka Peka (now known as Rissington) was a man named Leadham, and just where the Rissington boarding house is, was a Mr. Gray. The next, further up still, was Wergon at Waipuna. Matthew Hill had a place called "Aardlasser" on the Tutaeakuri (this property later became part of Rissington). Further beyond Waipuna, a man named Emery had what was known as the "Puketitiri Flats". Then there were Peacock & Freedy - they had Hukanui. When Major Whitmore landed in New Zealand, he bought out the whole of the above named Rissington settlers - comprising an area of 110,000 acres - and called it the "Rissington Estate" Whitmore later sold out to Robert Rhodes in the South Island, and he afterwards cut it up and sold it again. Whitmore was a splendid settler for Hawkes Bay. He imported Shorthorn cattle from England, Lincoln sheep, and later Hereford cattle the very best he could procure. His area was so big, that if he heard of a settler having, say, 15,000 or 20,000 acres, he would say - "Oh he is only a little cabbage gardener." Another settler in the Rissington district was Brooking, and another Major Green, who lived between Peka Peka and Woodthorpe. He was the sheriff of Napier and was later sheriff of Auckland. It was quite a common thing for him to ride from Peka Peka to Napier, conduct his business there, and then ride back in one day - altogether about 44 miles.

There were barracks built on top of the Hill at Patoka; There were about one hundred stationed there for approximately two years, and they were called the "Colonial Defence Force". They were there until the barracks were burned down, and then were removed to Waipapa. That would be about the year 1865 or 1866.

The timber for fencing material - Totara posts - for the whole of the lower district in the northern part of Hawkes Bay, came from Pohue bush. It was all split and rafted down the river, and landed just where the buyer wanted it. The balance was landed at Meanee. ~~The men who worked the bush were~~ Peter McHardy, Sam Proctor, Rigby, Antony (an Italian) and Arnold, better known as Charlie Corky. The river was the Mangone, and it flowed into the Tutaekuri at Woodthorpe. About 7,000 to 10,000 posts would be put into this river, and they were pushed down by eight or ten men with boat hooks. Sometimes they would go a mile a day, or if they were fortunate, perhaps two miles. If a flood came, half of them would be washed out to sea or scattered all over the country. From seven to twelve men worked on a raft, and about three rafts a year would come down. Of course, the posts after being split would have to be dried before putting in the river, as they would not float if they were green. The men at the bush would shift camp about every five miles.

The settlers at the Petane Valley were - Villers, McCarthy an old Sergeant, McKain, Torr and Captain Carr.

Hastings started about the year 1872. A man named Goodwin had the railway hotel (where the Grand is now). The "Apostles" were Thomas Tanner of Riverslea; J.N. Williams of Frimley; J.D. Ormond, Karamu; Colonel Gorden, Fernhill; James Watt of Longlands; also Captain Russell, Flaxmere; Captain Hamilton Russell; Donald McLean; Henry Russell of Mount Herbert, Purvis Russell and the Rev Sam Williams, although these three last named did not live here.

All the Omaha property was taken up by Dick Maney (G.P. Donnelly was his manager). All of this country and the Papakura district was cut up into the blocks in the early 70's. The chiefs at Omaha - there were two pas here - were Krauria (the father of Mrs. Donnelly) the Chief of one pa, and Renata Kawepo of the other pa.

Land at that time was bought from the Maoris for anything from 1/- to 2/6d. an acre. For one estate of about 5,000 acres, the Maoris were given a draught horse, a cart, blasting powder and a few old guns. When the Government took it over, it could be bought for 10/- an acre.

Sir Donald McLean was at Maraekekeho Station. When he owned it, it was about 70,000 acres. The next place above his was held by Hector William Pope Smith, who was nicknamed "Pumpkin Smith" because he fed his men on boiled pumpkin. Further up the Kereru district, there were two or three settlers, Gully & Morecroft, J.N. Williams and Herrick, also John and Joseph Powdrell.

The first people to have Matapiro Station were Cartwright & Agnew Brown. They were really all Maori leases in those days. Most of the runs had more wild pigs on them than sheep. Most of the meat eaten in those days was wild pig, and it was much better than mutton. It was a common thing for the kitchen ceilings to be hung with bacon from wild pigs. They used to give 6d. a tail for slaughtering the pigs. They were very destructive and ate the young lambs, and rooted up the grass. Two men took a contract at Okawa and Tunanui to kill pigs at 6d. a tail, and they killed 2,000 in four months. People would give more money for wild pork than they would for dairy-fed pork. The names of these two contractors were Little and Hollis.

At Okawa there was Thomas Lowry (father of the present Lowry), Captain Williams, and Captain Hamilton Russell at Tunanui, Begg at Mangawhare, and J.N. Williams leased Whana Whana from the Maoris. It belonged to a Maori named Henare; he was the original occupier and it was known as "Henare's run."

Hawkes Bay was not originally grass country. There was nothing but fern and tutu. After they had succeeded in getting rid of the tutu, they were worried with the manuka. In breaking in country from fern to grass, you had to stock heavily with sheep, but the trouble was that the fern grew in the Spring and Autumn - mostly in the Spring - and you couldn't check any large portions at a time because there was not sufficient stock. To enable the sheep to

keep the fern down, it had to be young and tender, and it took four years for the roots to die before you could really say it was safe. The country had to be consolidated before it would hold grass. Unless this was done, the grass would all die in the summer, because the grass would be growing on a depth of two feet of rotten spongy vegetation of old fern. This explains why we have the floods nowadays that were never experienced then. The whole of the country used to have this spongy growth feet thick, and it used to absorb the water. When we had six months' dry weather, it all got dried off and, of course, had to be saturated with water before the creeks were filled. I have known a fortnight's heavy rain and the river would only just be discoloured; the water would be absorbed by this spongy vegetable growth.

There was a big pa at Waipuri and there was a settler who used to cart firewood to Napier; he used to drive two horses and two drays at a time, one horse and dray tied behind the other. There was also a French family living there by the name of Fugiere. The first race meeting took place at Waipurik (which is now known as West Clive) about '57, and owing to a Maori's horse being beaten (Te Hapuka owned it) the Maoris seized all the white settlers' horses they could get hold of and rode them away, but they were all found later by their owners. There were no fixed stakes at these ^{race} meetings but the amount paid in entrance fees and voluntary contributions were divided between first and second, pro rata.

The first Sawmill of White Pine was at the Big Bush, and a man named Cashmore started it. Afterwards Waipurik was re-named Clive, about the year '58. The settlers there were Haig, Dyatt, Davis, Boswell, Danvers, Orr, Pilcher, Rhodes at the Grange and Major Gordon at the Kidnappers. Whitmore had a meeting in '58 to try and get them to shift Napier to the undulating country between Clifton and the Grange.

Sturm was a nurseryman at Mangatetere, and Mr. Knight, Snr., (father of the Dannevirke family) was a market-gardener there.

There was also a big pa at Waiohiki, and another near the golf-links just before you get to the butter factory, called Pawakairoa. This pa had some wonderful old Maori carvings and some carvings of

full sized men stood round it. These were later taken away and destroyed. Further up at Moteo, the Chief was named Pora Kai Whatu, and he was tattooed all over.

We had a tremendous earthquake in 1863, quite as big as the 1931 upheaval, only we hadn't anything to destroy then. It brought big rocks off the hills, there were slips on the coast, and the banks of the rivers were broken up. It also brought down all the brick chimneys, but most of the old houses were built of wattle and daub, and they were so built that you had to go outside on to a verandah to enter any room. Wattle and daub was ordinary bush timber plastered on to narrow laths - reinforced - something like rough-cast. At the time of the earthquake, Mr. William Nelson had been in the country about six months. Anyhow, he had a brick chimney and down it came.

At Havelock there was John Chambers at Te mata Reynolds (the first hotelkeeper) and about a dozen residents. There used to be two hotels, one owned by a man named McHardy, but this didn't pay so it was closed up. William Couper had Kaharanaki Station, and adjoining Kaharanaki further on was Captain Curling of StLawrence. Old Buchanan owned Elsethorpe. There was also a flour mill at Havelock, and McKenzie was the first miller. He also had a mill at Omahu and both were driven by a water-wheel. The first Agricultural show held in Hawkes Bay was in Havelock, in '63. There would not be more than one hundred entries in the whole of the exhibits, and they were principally horses, cattle and fowls.

In those days everybody was happy and contented, although they had no conveniences and few pleasures. Women did their washing very often in the creek or river. If the settlers wanted to go about the country, they were very thankful to go by bullock dray - there were no other vehicles. After '65, a few buggies and some spring carts came. One man named Shirley had a working bullock in his dray.

Up the Middle Road a man named Foster had a run. Then there was Matthew Hill at Te Mahanga, and Fred Chapman at Horonui.

The present Campbell's father bought Chapman out. "Greenhill" belonged to Maraekakaho originally. Archie Mclean bought it from Sir Donald McLean. At Waimarama the settlers were Meinertzhagen & Moore, Bee, Hargraves (adjoining Meinertzhagen & Moore's) and Agnew Brown at Te Apiti Station. At Te Aute there was the Rev. Sam Williams, the original settler.

A St. Helena negro, named William Thompson, claimed that he was the first "white man" to cure bacon in Hawkes Bay. His wife was a Maori woman, and he caused some amusement by frequently saying "My children are fair for half-castes, don't you think?" although glance at them showed they were as black as he was himself.