



Pukahu School photograph taken in 1914. Mr Florence, head teacher, Miss Chambers, assistant. If anyone can put names to the children we would like to hear from you.

Pukahu — some early history

School Closed 15-12-1936 The School opened 1887

About two miles to the south of Havelock North lies the district of Pukahu.

Near the crossroads where Te Aute, St George's, and Mt Erin roads meet was, for many years, the nucleus of a village, smaller than Havelock, but nevertheless with a Post Office, a hotel, a school, and a hall, all amenities for the convenience of a small population of farmers and their workers living in the area.

An early map, drawn before sections for sale in Havelock were offered by the Provincial Government,

shows a large portion of Pukahu and Mt Erin in the possession of Daniel Munn, the owner of one of Napier's earliest hotels, The Royal. The land, or parts of it, then passed in turn to Robert Foster, J. W. Harding of Mount Vernon, E. J. Watt and J. H. Coleman, some of whose descendants still live in Havelock North.

In 1867, agricultural sections were offered for sale by the Commissioner of Crown Lands and the land was gradually subdivided, Watt and Coleman being the owners of a considerable acreage. A census taken in 1874 shows that 106 people lived at Pukahu, but by 1878 the number had fallen

to 70; fluctuations in the size of the population occurred, as with Havelock, but in 1887 the district was considered large enough to support a school, Miss Cooper of the Havelock School being appointed to take charge.

The Pukahu School had a continuous existence until 1936 when it closed — a sure sign of the decline in the local population. Among the teachers of earlier times were Messrs McCutcheon, Plank, and Florence, whose son was later to be come a curate of St Luke's parish, Misses Chambers and Secker.

As Te Aute Road was in the 1860s and 1870s the main highway south, it is not surprising that a hotel should have been one of the earliest of Pukahu buildings, although it might be thought that two hotels within two miles of each other in a sparsely populated district would not find enough customers. The importance of the hotel as a social centre in those times ensured the survival of both the Exchange Hotel, Havelock, and Thistle Inn as the Pukahu hotel was called. The first licensee of The Thistle Inn was John McKenzie, who also conducted a store in the same building. An enterprising gentleman, McKenzie bought land at Pukahu and

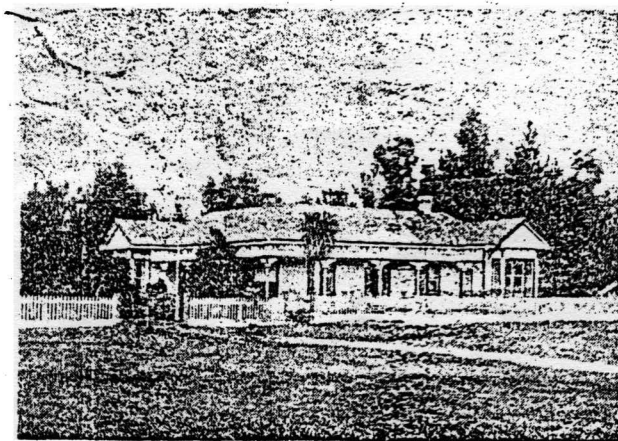
apparently planned the foundation of a township, for in 1874 he offered sections for sale in "The Township of Inverness," the name chosen, no doubt, to remind him of his native land. However, his initiative met with no reward; Inverness never appeared and Pukahu the district has remained.

On the south corner of Te Aute and Mt Erin roads is an old cottage, still occupied, which was formerly the Pukahu Post Office, probably built last century. A little further south along Te Aute Road were a hall and Thistle Inn, both now demolished but still in being in the first decades of this century.

One of the largest houses in the district was "Wellfield," once, with a 300 acre farm, the property of Lockie and McPhee, the house being occupied by Sween McPhee and his family. McPhee bought a small house already there and employed H. H. Campbell to enlarge it considerably. The accompanying photograph shows one of those pleasant, spacious houses typical of their times. It is at present in the ownership of the Symes family and occupied by Mr Tim Symes, his wife and children.

The McPhee family lived at "Wellfield" from 1908 to 1918, Flora (now Mrs Liley) and Effie McPhee attending the Pukahu School. Miss Effie McPhee can recall running across the fields during the lunch

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Wellfield, one of the original Pukahu homesteads which is now owned by the Symes family.

14th March 1980

...from previous page

hour to swim or float (water wings were the rage) in the Old Ngaruroro without the benefit of any supervision by a teacher. Journeys to Hastings were made via Longlands, firstly by horse and trap, but later in a 1912 Studebaker.

The only explanation for the existence of another village in such close proximity to Havelock North appears to lie in the presence of a number of small farmers side by side with one or two large landowners employing a number of men, whose wives and families needed certain amenities close to hand rather than having to travel to Havelock.

The writer is indebted to Mrs Liley and Miss D. E. McPhee for information and to the latter for photographs of "Wellfield" and the Pukahu School Group.

S.W.G.



Pukahu's original Post Office. Until recently it has been used as a house
been demolished.

During the 1930's The Govt. made all
Dental Treatment to Primary School
Children Free..

The first District Dental Clinic was built
at Hastings Central School.

Effie McPhee was appointed the
Head Dental Nurse.