

John Chambers & Son Ltd

Industries in New Zealand p335-336 (published late 1890s)

John Chambers & Son Engineers and Importers, Fort Street, Auckland

... established in 1892, when Mr J. M. Chambers came out from England to join his father. He had been for some time connected with Tangyes Ltd., in the Old Country, and came as their representative to New Zealand, so that the present firm are the representatives of the Company in this colony. ... The firm deal in every kind of machinery, engineers' and mining requests, and carry the heaviest stock of mining and general machinery in the colony. The premises in Fort Street have a frontage of 30ft., and a depth of 50ft. They were for some time used as a stock-room and offices, but, as the business increased so rapidly that the output doubled each successive year, they were obliged to procure larger premises for the storage of their current stock, and in 1894 a large warehouse was taken in Gore Street. The new premises consist of two buildings, with a frontage of 40ft., and a depth of 70ft. There is also a large cellarage accomodation, the dimensions of which are 100ft by 100ft. Here are stored heavy machinery, shafting, lubricants, oils etc. Messrs Chambers & Son contract for the complete equipment of a mine down to every detail, including pumping and winding machinery, stamp batteries, and electric transmission of power. They also make a speciality of dairy machinery. The first large contract taken by the firm was the supplying and erecting of the pumping plant for the Devonport Borough Council, which throws water from Lake Takapuna to Mount Victoria, a distance of four miles, and a height of 230ft. They also supplied an auxiliary pumping engine of the Duplex type to the Auckland Water Works, which is capable of throwing two million gallons a day to a height of 450ft. They erected the pumping and winding plant of the Kathleen Gold Mining Company, and a stamp battery to the Success Gold Mining Company for Captain Hodge, the contracts amounting to nearly 14,000 pounds. The firm was the first to introduce in the North Island the air compressor engine for driving pumps and rock drills and have supplied seven air compressing plants on the Coromandel Peninsula during the last two years. They have also supplied ten winding machines during the same period, the largest of which is at present working at the Thames Hauraki Company's mine. It has a winding speed of 1300ft per minute, which is the highest speed that has yet been obtained in the colony. Messrs John Chambers & Son were the first firm to supply electric transmission of power in the North Island, and put up a plant at the Talisman mine. ... They also completed the electric installation on the Northern Steamship Company's 'Terranoa', 'Waimarie', 'Taniwha' and other boats.... The firm have recently introduced in New Zealand the Latch & Bachelor Flattened Strand wire-ropes, and Locked Coil wire-ropes, which have met with exceptional success... The ropes are exceedingly flexible, are free from all tendency to spin or kink, and readily splice into themselves, or into other ropes. The new traffic bridge at Karangahake was built of this rope, which has given every satisfaction. Mr John Chambers, senior, was born in Hertfordshire, and educated in England. After leaving school he was apprenticed to an engineering firm in Greenwich, and on leaving them, bought an ironmongery and coppersmiths business in Newark, Nottingham, which he carried on for about three years, and then sold out and came to New Zealand, arriving in the colony in 1863. He travelled about for a while, and did not settle down to regular business until 1865, when he purchased an interest in the firm of E. Porter & Co., and was senior partner until he separated and joined T. and S. Morrin, when they formed that business into a limited liability company. He started business for himself in Queen Street in 1886. Mr J. M. Chambers was born in Newark-on-Trent, and came to New Zealand as a child with his father. He went back to England in 1886, and entered the employ of Tangye's, acquiring a practical knowledge of engineering by working in their different shops. He was also for a time with Askham Bros. & Wilson, and with W. A. Sparrow, of London.

Archives NZ Wellington Reference ABIB W4228 Box 27

Stratford Civil Record Book: Date: 7 Dec 1894; Plaintiff: John Chambers & Son; Defendent: Gilbert John Willy; Amount: £19 10s 7d

Auckland Weekly News 20 Jan 1899 The Auckland Exhibition [photo included]

We give today another instalment of our photographs of some of the most attractive exhibits in the Auckland Industrial and Mining Exhibition.

John Chambers and Son

This firm is already well known for its enterprise, and it has added considerably to its reputation by the exhibition display of moving machinery, which is justly considered one of the finest displays of the kind ever seen at a colonial exhibition. The entire space, some 2000 square feet, is given over to machinery made in England, and as the whole exhibit is taken from Messrs Chambers and Son's stock, it must be gratifying to New Zealanders to note in these days of international competition in the engineering world, that machinery of British manufacture is still first favourite in this colony. The exhibit comprises a number of the well known Tangye's engines. Prominent among these are a compound horizontal Cornish pumping engine and a coupled-gearing winding engine. These engines are a duplicate of a plant supplied to the Kathleen Gold Mines (Limited), Coromandel. They are erected on solid concrete foundations, in the same manner as they would be if for permanent work, and are both driven by a 18-Hirnant air-compressor, worked by a Tangye gas engine. Another interesting exhibit is a Tangye oil engine, worked by kerosene, the oil being supplied from a tank by gravitation. This engine is famed for its simplicity, and is exceedingly popular among farmers. It can be worked economically, as as it runs for many hours without attention it never necessitates the employment of skilled labour. During the Exhibition season it has been used to drive a dynamo giving 80 lights of 16-candle power, in various parts of the Exhibition. The display of pumps is also of special importance. One of these is shown pumping 2700 gallons of water per hour from a reservoir, under the floor of the Exhibition, and supplying water for air-compressor and gas engine. Several of Tangye's pumps are shown, one special sinking pump being shown suspended from a framework, exactly as it is placed in the mine, while a special steam pump, short-feeder type, is shown for the first time in New Zealand. Three dynamos are shown, two being employed to supply about 150 lights to exhibitors, besides transmitting power to various parts of the building. The exhibit is altogether an attractive and instructive one.

Opunake Times Tuesday 22 Oct 1901 Bankruptcy: Estate of Albert Elgar

The following is the statement of the assets and liabilities in the bankrupt estate of Albert Elgar, of Opunake, a tinsmith:- Assets: Stock-in-trade 149 £ 12s 7d., book debts £135 6s 4d estimated to produce £121 0s 4d, cash in hand £4 16s 6d, furniture £30, tools £33 15s 6d, cow £5 10s, heifer £2, saddle and bridle £2 5s, workshop and tank £40. Total £388 19s 11d. Unsecured creditors as per list: £202 7s 6d. Balance £186 12s 5d. List of unsecured creditors:- Porter and Co., Auckland £90; Chambers and Son, Auckland £19 4s 9d; Drummond & Son, Wanganui £15 0s 11d; Hardley & Son, Hawera £15 10s; J. Judson, Opunake £8 19s 5d; Estate of Pettigrew, Opunake £7 4s 8d; Bang Chong, Opunake 5 pounds 3s 7d; C. Ekdahl, Hawera £1 6s 6d; H. Weston, New Plymouth 12s 6d; A. Standish, New Plymouth £3 3s; W. Parkinson, Hawera 15s; J. McDavitt, Opunake £2 10s; R. Watson, Eltham Road £6 8s 7d; Taranaki County Council 6s 3d; Harbor Board 6s 11d; John Duthie & Co., Wellington £5; W. Peacock, Opunake £5 5s; W. J. Christie, Opunake £1 16s 7d; A. O'Brien, Opunake 15s 6d; M. Howarth, Opunake 10s; G. Newsham, Opunake £6; W. Dudley, Pihama £2; Townsend, Awatuna 10s; T. Wallis, Opunake £1 18s 6d; Bayliss, Pihama £2. Total £202 7s 6d.

New Zealand Post Office Directory 1902

Chambers & Son Ltd. John - engineers and importers Fort St Auckland; Cumberland St Dunedin; Wellington

The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand Volume 2 Auckland p369 (1902)

Chambers, John and Son, Limited, Engineers and Importers, Fort and Gore Streets, Auckland. Telephones 675 and 698. PO Box 323. Bankers, National Bank of New Zealand. Branches at Dunedin and New Plymouth. Messrs John Chambers and Son, Limited, keep at their warehouses an exceptionally large and complete stock of machinery, specialities, engineers' requisites, and of mining, dredging and general machinery. Large engineering works have been undertaken and carried out by the firm. The fine battery and plant of the Barrier Reefs, Limited, was supplied by the firm in 1900. It erected in 1897 the plant of the Kathleen Gold Mine, at a cost of 8,000 pounds, and the Success and Four-in-Hand Gold Mining Companies have been similarly equipped at a cost of 13,000 pounds. Large dairying machinery has been erected by the firm in various parts of the provincial district of Auckland; indeed, the firm makes a specialty of this branch of its business. The firm's well-merited success has been achieved solely by perseverance and integrity. The firm has been in existence since 1892, and is recognised as one of the leading and most progressive firms in New Zealand, with a name respected from Auckland to the Bluff. The expansion of the business was so great that, in 1899, it was formed into a limited company, under the title of John Chambers and Son, Limited with Mr John Chambers as chairman, Messrs J. M. Chambers and Seymour Thorne George, directors, and Mr W. Stanley Cooper, secretary. The company has the sole agencies in New Zealand for Tangye's Ltd (which employs 1600 hands), Asham Brothers and Wilson, Sheffield, for Bell's Asbestos Company, Limited, London, and Babcock and Wilcox's Water Tube Boilers, etc. The specialties of the firm are requisites and machinery for mines, waterworks, dairies and creameries. It not only keeps considerable stocks, but regularly receives the Sydney and Melbourne stock sheets of Tangye's Ltd., and can secure any machine required at the shortest notice. The firm completed and erected the pumping plant for the Devonport Borough Council's waterworks, and it constantly has contracts in hand for the erection of dairies, engines, chaff-cutting plant, etc. It is in a position to enter into contracts for the supply of machinery of every description, and will undertake to erect and complete it in any part of the colony, and hand it over in good going order. The firm has a competent staff of men to undertake engine-fitting and all kinds of machine work. Its offices and warehouse are at the corner of Fort Street and Gore Street; the buildings are of brick and four stories in height, and the total floorage space is 32,400 square feet. The business of the firm extends over the whole colony, and besides employing travellers, the partners themselves occasionally make business trips through the country towns and districts.

Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives 1905 H15A p66 Return showing the names of owners of Boilers
J. Chambers & Son own a 2nd class 16 hp driving machinery with 13" cylinders in the engines situated in New Plymouth.

Archives NZ Reference AD 3/32 1908/177 Inwards correspondence register of the Army Department
Officer Commanding Permanent Force writes on 16 Mar 1908 re claim of John Chambers & Son. Referred to Officer Commanding Defence Auckland 20 Mar 1908 - ascertain whether the attached account is correct and if so forward a certified voucher for authority to pay. (account 1/7/4).

Archives NZ Reference AD 3/35 1910/199 Inwards correspondence register of the Army Department
C.G.S. Wellington writes on 15 Apr 1910 re Oil launch asking Palmer Engineering Coy re account J. Chambers & Son. Forwarding correspondence re claim from J. Chambers & Son asking for £1 10s for 6 type No.2 Helleesen drycells at 5s each for oil launch ak. On 18 Apr 1910: Officer Commanding Defence Auckland suggest that the account should be forwarded to Palmer Engineering Coy as the launch was in their charge. On 21 Apr 1910: Suggest the account together with copy of Officer Commanding Defence Auckland explanation be sent to Palmer Engineering Coy for settlement. On 30 Sep 1910: Forwarding news from Officer Commaning District Auckland asking what has been done in the matter - replying what was done in the matter. [Former papers: D. 10/212]

Alexander Turnbull Library Biographical Index - NZ Biography 1962 Volume 2 p84 - Humble start led John Chambers to foremost place
The New Zealand-wide firm of John Chambers and Son Ltd., has demonstrated its confidence in Hawke's Bay by investing thousands of pounds in land, buildings and stock in Hastings. The company's newly-erected premises in Heretaunga street will be opened on Monday. From small and humble beginnings almost 70 years ago, John Chambers and Son Ltd., now holds a foremost position in the selling and servicing of some of the finest engineering equipment, heavy machinery and agricultural plant for New Zealand's primary automotive and industrial needs. The founder, Mr J. M. Chambers, first had his thoughts turned towards New Zealand when, as a lad of 16, he was apprenticed as a coppersmith to a firm involved in servicing vessels engaged in the Crimean War. While thus employed he met many travellers and in particular, sailors who told glorious tales of the land "down under". These tales of early New Zealand led Mr Chambers to resign his position and emigrate to this country. He arrived in Auckland in 1864 after an eventful voyage lasting almost six months.

Gold Mining

Unfortunately, in 1866 a trade depression set in; business in general became paralysed and the firm of ironmongers he was employed by in Auckland was forced to close down. In these circumstances, Mr Chambers turned his efforts to gold mining and with a party of friends, took to digging in the Thames area. Their efforts, however, met with little success. At the same time it brought home to Mr Chambers the need to introduce mechanisation of some kind to implement mining since he was convinced vast quantities of the elusive metal could be obtained with suitable mining equipment. He therefore spent the ensuing years designing mining and general contracting equipment. In 1876 he visited Great Britain, the United States and Canada, to arrange for the manufacture of some of his equipment, and at the same time he took the opportunity of securing for himself the New Zealand Agency for many engineering and industrial lines. Incidentally, some of the agencies then secured are still held by the Company.

Mineral Resources

On his return to New Zealand Mr Chambers resumed his interest in mining as well as in other businesses and concerns being established in the country. He was one of the first at the goldfield at Ohinemuri and was one of the original share-holders in the Martha mine, which later became known as the Waihi Gold Mining Co. He did much for the development of this, especially in the Karangahake area, where he erected the first smelting furnace. Later he pegged out the Ohinemuri river for tailings. This river was subsequently worked by the Waihi-Paeroa Gold Extraction Co. Ltd. Mr Chambers, whose knowledge of the mineral resources of the country was extensive, was instrumental in the development of the coalfields at Kamo and did much to assist with the assembly of one of the largest cement works in New Zealand. In 1893, his son, John Chambers Jun., having returned to New Zealand after being six years in Australia and Great Britain undergoing training as an engineer, joined his father and they established the firm of John Chambers & Son Ltd.

Company's Fortunes

For the first three years of operation the company confined its activities to selling mining and contracting equipment in the Auckland area, but in 1896, when New Zealand enjoyed a mining boom, the firm really prospered. This boom brought many orders to John Chambers & Son Ltd. For two years the company was exceptionally active in contracting for the supply and erection of pumping and winching machinery, stamp batteries, and even electric lighting for existing mines and mills. The firm contracted to deliver and erect machinery of all kinds and even the construction of buildings. The latter were built of wood or iron framework, the timber in most cases being cut from the virgin forest growing near the battery sites. The company became firmly established in New Zealand as mining and contracting engineers for it made a success of every job undertaken. When the boom collapsed, the firm resolved upon stocking, contracting and engineering requirements and machinery of all kinds, including equipment for the rapidly developing primary industry. In 1903 Mr J. M. Chambers died and the business was carried on by his son until his death in 1918.

Abreast of Times

In the 70 years of its history, the business has changed in its character with the development of the country, and perhaps in no way has it shown its vitality and versatility more than in meeting such changes. Today the company operates 19 sales branches with more than 600 employees. While the founder and sales assistants first covered the country by horseback, followed by the use of bicycles, the company now has a fleet of more than 60 modern vehicles to enable its engineers and sales representatives to call at regular intervals on all engineering, industrial and automotive concerns throughout the length and breadth of the country. Today the firm of John Chambers & Son Ltd. is headed by Mr G. N. Roberts as chairman and Mr Douglas L. Smith, M.I.Mar E., M.I. PlantE., as general manager. Mr J. R. Graham, A.M.I. Mech E., A.M.N.Z.E.E., A.M.I.MarE., heads the newly-formed engineering sales division.

Alexander Turnbull Library Reference TL 3/1/2 7 Jun 1962

Letter from the Turnbull Library to The Managing Director, John Chambers & Son Ltd., Cr. Jervois Quay and Cable Street, Wellington

Dear Sir, In the hope that some of your older personnel may have knowledge of the descendants of Mr J. M. Chambers, I write for your help in a quest. Mr J. M. Chambers' father (John Chambers) was interested in the New Zealand Iron & Steel Co., formed in 1883, and I find that in 1917 he (Mr J. M. Chambers) held some of his father's records of this company, which went into liquidation in 1886. It is these records that I am seeking, and any suggestion you can give me would be greatly appreciated. We know that Mr J. M. Chambers died in 1918, and that his two sons went to Australia, but their subsequent movements we have not traced. Yours faithfully, Chief Librarian.

Alexander Turnbull Library Reference TL 3/1/2 19 Jun 1962 Reply from John Chambers & Son Ltd.

Attention: Mr C. R. H. Taylor - Dear Sir, We would refer you to your letter TL 3/1/2 of the 7th Jun of this month in which you asked for any information we can give you in regard to the descendants of the late Mr J. M. Chambers. We would suggest that you communicate with his daughter, Mrs Kathleen Caffin, whose address is:- Balrath, Co. Meath, Ireland. As an alternative Colonel Mackey of Russel McVeagh & Co., Solicitors, Auckland may be able to assist you as this concern have acted on behalf of the Chambers' family for many years. We trust this information will be of assistance to you. For John Chambers & Son Ltd R. A. Elliott, Manager.

Beginnings: A History of the North Shore of Auckland by Paul Titchener

Volume 3 p11 Notes only: A Tangye 6hp boiler & engine was installed at Duder Bros Brickworks by John Chambers & Son.

Volume 4 p31 Notes only: A contract was let to John Chambers & Son to supply pumps, boilers and other machinery in the Lake Pupuke Pumphouse. Includes a photo of a Tangye Pump and the pumphouse dated 7 Mar 1906.