

John Howard KEEP (1858-1915)

Evening Post 18 Mar 1881 In Bankruptcy

In the matter of "The Debtors and Creditors Act, 1876" and the Acts amending the same, And In the matter of Edward William Mills, of the City of Wellington, Merchant, a Debtor.

I hereby certify that at the first meeting of the creditors of the said Edward William Mills, held at the Supreme Court House, in Wellington on Thursday, the 17th day of March, 1881, John Wilson Henderson, of the City of Wellington, Accountant, Joe Dransfield, of the City of Wellington, Merchant, and John Howard Keep, of the City of Wellington, Merchant, were duly elected Creditors' Trustees of the property of the said Edward William Mills; and that the said John Wilson Henderson, Joe Dransfield, and John Howard Keep have duly signified their acceptance of such office. Dated this 18th day of March, 1881. Alex. S. Allan, Registrar of the Supreme Court of New Zealand at Wellington.

Evening Post 23 Jun 1881 Wellington Chamber of Commerce

The following members attended the quarterly meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, held yesterday afternoon:- Messrs J. E.. Nathan (chairman), T. K. Macdonald, J. R. George, A. Young, A. S. Allan, F. N. Campbell, J. B. Harcourt, H. Rose, J. H. Wallace, D. T. Stuart, W. T. L. Travers, and S. Carroll.... The following new members were then balloted for and duly elected:- Messrs Hugh Gully, D. J. Nathan, George S. Graham, James G. Allan, C. W. Cave, and J. Howard Keep.

Evening Post Thursday 26 Jan 1882 Fire in Hunter Street [Wellington]

About 10 minutes to 7 o'clock last evening a fire broke out in a pile of buildings in Hunter street, known as Mr E. W. Mills store and offices. Within a very short space of time a large number of firemen and others had assembled on the scene to assist in extinguishing the fire, a few first arrivals having already succeeded in effecting an entrance to the building, which at this time was deserted and locked up. Some smoke issuing from the eaves of the building attracted the attention of several persons in the vicinity, and among the first on the spot was Mr Mills himself, who chanced to be passing down Lambton Quay in a tram car and observed the smoke. Luckily, the fire was nipped in the bud, thanks to the gallant persevering exertions of those engaged in putting it out. It is supposed that the fire originated in a corner of the office of the store, in the vicinity of the gas meter. It is, however, difficult to discover the real cause at present. Mr Jennings, the storeman, is said to have locked up the premises exactly an hour prior to the outbreak, and everything was apparently all right as usual when he left. It is further stated that no fire had been lighted, in the building for some 'time past', nor had the gas been used. During the day the gasman attended and examined the meter contained in a cupboard built against the front wall of the building. It seems the fire broke out in the skirting, and the flames were probably drawn up to the ceiling above, thus communicating with the upper story. The damage occasioned by the fire was comparatively insignificant. Numerous bales of wool were rolled into the street, together with other kinds of goods, and were slightly injured by water. It is exceedingly fortunate that the fire was extinguished at an incipient stage, otherwise one of the most valuable blocks in the city, comprising numerous stores and offices, containing goods and property to the extent of many thousands of pounds, would have been in a fair way to be completely destroyed. To the firemen and their assistants is due the credit of saving the Insurance Companies from such a calamity, and these companies would be performing a graceful, and at the same time deserving act, were they to subscribe a handsome donation to the Fire Brigades for their services as we suggested should be done. It may be added that the building is insured in the Colonial Office for £2,000 in the North British and Royal Offices for £1,000 each, in the New Zealand for £500 and National for £250. The stock was insured in the Colonial for £1,500, Transatlantic, United, Imperial and Hanseatic Offices £1,000 each, and in the Northern and Victorian for £500 each. At the time of the fire, however, the stock was very small consisting principally of hardware. The wools, &c., stored on the premises belong to Messrs Johnston & Co., who were insured in respect of this property in the National Office on a floating policy.

It now transpires that when the Gas Company's officer examined the meter at 4 o'clock, Mr Keep, we are informed, remarked that he thought there was an escape of gas. The officer thereupon asked for some matches, a box of which was supplied to him. Several of these were struck, and after examination reported that there was no escape. It is not improbable that an unextinguished match set fire to the wood, which smouldered until it finally broke out. The hose kept on the premises proved of incalculable advantage in subduing the fire. Their being no suspicious circumstances surrounding the affair, the police authorities do not consider it necessary to hold an inquest.

New Zealand Mail 28 Jan 1882 page 15 Fire in Hunter Street

Within a few minutes of seven o'clock on Jan 25th, Big Ben rang out an alarm, and the "dreadful bell" was speedily echoed by the alarm from each fire station throughout the metropolis. Almost as soon as the first peal was tolled excited persons hastened towards Hunter-street from adjoining thoroughfares, a tiny cloud of white smoke being observed ominously ascending from that locality. Within a very few seconds a large crowd had assembled around the pile of buildings which were some time since, erected and tenanted by Mr E. W. Mills, from the upper portions of which, by this time flames were seen issuing. The Brandon-street contingent of the Municipal Fire Brigade were upon the spot in a remarkably short space of time, the representatives being Branchman Woolcock and Fireman Dodsworth. Before their arrival, however, a Mr McGregor had effected an entrance to the first storey of the building by means of a ladder, and assisted in subduing the flames. The discovery of the fire appears to have been made simultaneously by at least half-a-dozen persons, each of whom vied in his endeavours to prevent the fire from obtaining a hold. Mr M. O'Brien, the messenger of the Mutual Provident Association observed what he describes as "whiffs of smoke", curling from under the eaves of the building, and he apprised Mr Thomas Glew, lessee of the Central Hotel; and, at this juncture, singular to say, Mr E. W. Mills, the former proprietor of the place, and Mr Hayes, brass founder, of Lambton quay, who were journeying home in a tramcar, observing indications of a conflagration, jumped from the car and hastened to the spot. Mr Hayes, directed by Mr E. W. Mills and assisted by Mr Glew, kicked in the little wicket gate in the gateway of the building and piloted by Mr Mills, who, of course, knew the "run of the place", got, within one or two minutes, the fire hose stationed on the premises to play, and, undoubtedly to this fact is attributable the salvation of not only the building in which the fire originated, but also the entire block bounded on the north by Messrs Joseph Nathan and Co's store, the contents of which, irrespective altogether of the building, may be estimated at £40,000; the Post Office Hotel, the Pier Hotel, the Bank of Australasia, and the magnificent brick pile situated at the corner of Custom House-quay and Hunter-street, in the occupation of the Mutual Provident Association, Messrs Bannatyne's free and bonded store, and others, all full of valuable properties. Providentially the damage occasioned is very small, and that this is so is, in no small degree attributable to the exertions of those first on the scene. The fire is supposed to have originated in the corner of the office of the store and close to the gas meter. This is the opinion of Mr J. H. Keepe, who says that his storeman, Mr T. Jennings, locked up the premises at about 10 minutes to 6, leaving everything then apparently all right, that no fire had been lighted in the building for some time past, nor the gas turned on. The gasman, he says, was there during the day to examine the meter, which is kept in a cupboard built against the front wall of the building. The fire broke out in the skirting boards, and there seems to have been drawn upwards through a pilaster, which acted admirably as a funnel or flue, and communicated with the wall of the storey above. The firemen worked with a will, and the Salvage Corps, under Captain Palmer, was promptly on the scene, and in a very few moments, assisted by the police under Sergeants Anderson and Price, 170 bales of wool and skins were rolled into the street. The energy displayed by both corps is commendable. The damage occasioned, whether as regarded the building or the stock is slight, and may be estimated at under £150. The wool taken from the building has been slightly damaged by water and will require to be repacked. The building is insured in the Colonial Insurance Company for £2,000, the New Zealand for £500, the North British for £1,000, the National for £500, and the Royal for £1,000. The stock some little time since in the building was insured in the Colonial for £2,000, in the Transatlantic for £1,000, the Victorian for £500 and in the United for £1,000, and some of these policies are still current, but the stock in the place at the time of the fire was very small, consisting mainly of hardware. The wool and skins stored there belong to Messrs Johnston and Co., and was insured on a floating policy in the National Company for £4,500. It is said that the National Company had only just accepted an insurance of £3,000 on this portion of the contents of the building, and had not had time to reinsure, as usual, a portion of the risk. It will be thus understood that very many interests were involved in the chances of the conflagration spreading.

Evening Post Monday 6 Feb 1882 The Recent Fire in Hunter Street - Enquiry into the Origin

An inquest was held today before Dr Johnston, district coroner, and a jury, into the origin of the fire which occurred on the 25th January, on what are known as Mr E. W. Mills' premises, but which were at the time in the occupation of the Messrs Keep. The following jurymen were sworn: Messrs Charles Hill (foreman), G. Aldous, J. Hillier, M. J. Mulligan, C. Gamble, W. Smith, J. Reid, J. Sloan, W. Lankshear, J. McDowell, W. Wiggins, W. Handley, S. Stone, C. Harding, J. Killow, F. G. Spicer and W. J. Gandy.

Dr Johnston said all that could be done would be to ascertain how gasmen did their work in dealing with gasfittings. The fire was one which might have resulted in incalculable damage to the city, and it is right that a searching investigation should be made into the origin of the occurrence. The jury having viewed the premises, the following evidence was taken:-

John Howard Keep, the occupier of the premises in question, said - About 4 o'clock on the afternoon of the 25th ult. the gasman came in and went to examine the meter. When the gasman was leaving witness remarked that he had noticed lately an escape of gas, and asked him to ascertain where it came from. The gasman asked for matches, and witness gave him a box, and the man went back to the meter. What he did there witness did not know, as a curtain hid him from view. The man, after making an examination for some minutes, said he could discover no breakage, and then he left the premises. Witness left his office about a quarter past 5 o'clock, leaving his storeman there. Witness knew nothing more till he heard the firebells ring later on, when he learned that there had been a fire on his premises.

To Chief Detective Brown - I think most certainly the fire originated in the meter cupboard. The building is insured for £2,500, distributed among five different offices. The whole stock was covered by £6,500. My own stock would be worth £150. The policies were really assigned policies of stock formerly in the building, but the stock was removed by sales made by the trustees in the estate of E. W. Mills. The policies were transferred to me to cover any stock I might have in the building during the currency. The buildings are now the property of Messrs Keep Bros., of Birmingham, whose representative and attorney I am.

Frank Jennings corroborated the evidence of last witness as to the gasman, and added that he looked into the office at ten minutes to 6 o'clock, and saw no sign of fire then. The gas had not been lighted on the premises for several days. William Kershaw, gasfitter, employed by the Wellington Gas Company, deposed that on the afternoon of the 25th January he went to Mr Keep's office to water the meter. Mr Keep said he thought there was a leak and asked witness to see to it. Witness got matches, and tested the joints of the pipe within the meter box, and could find no leakage. He blew out the matches used, and placed them on the front of the meter. Did not hear of the fire till next morning.

To Chief Detective Brown - I have been six years connected with the Gas Company. It is possible for an escape of gas at a joint behind the pipe to ignite without being discernible in the day time. It is much more difficult to make the joint seam at the back of a pipe than at the front. I did not run my finger round the joint to see if there was any lighted gas at the back. A small jet of lighted gas at the joint would in time melt the solder, and thus increase the escape and flame. The gas was turned on when I inspected the meter. I cannot say whether I turned it off after my examination. After hearing some further evidence of little import the jury returned a verdict to the effect that the fire originated in the meter box, either from the meter or pipes, but that there was no evidence to show how it was ignited.

New Zealand Mail 11 Feb 1882

It will be recollected that, some few days subsequent to the recent fire in Hunter-street, the Secretary to the Underwriters' Association forwarded a cheque, through his Worship the Mayor, for £25 on behalf of the Association. The writer of the letter, in enclosing the donation, stated that the £25 was to be appropriated especially to the members of the Fire Brigade for their entire disposal, and that the gift was a voluntary one on the part of the Association, and in no way attached any liability to the Association to contribute towards the permanent establishment of the Brigade. The formal resolution of the Association reads as follows:- "Resolved, that the sum of £25 be given by the Association to the Fire Brigade, to go to the funds of the Brigade, and not to those of the Corporation, for services at the late fire in Hunter-street."

An inquest was held before Dr Johnston, City Coroner, at the Central Hotel Feb 6th, with regard to origin of the fire which occurred in Hunter-street on January 25th. Mr Charles Hill was elected foreman of the jury. The evidence which was brought forward was almost entirely directed towards ascertaining whether the gas-meter, or some of the pipes leading to or from it, leaked or not. Mr J. H. Keep, the occupier of the premises, which form a portion of the estate of Mr E. W. Mills, by whom they were used as stores and offices, stated that at about 4 p.m. on January 25th the gasman came for the purpose of examining the meter, and when he was about to go away witness remarked to him that he had for some little time past noticed an escape of gas. The gasman asked for a box of matches, and having obtained them, went back to the meter, and, on returning, said that he could discover no leakage. Witness left the premises about 5.15 p.m., and knew nothing more as to what had happened until after the fire bells had given an alarm. He had left his storeman in charge. He thought that the fire had most likely originated at the gas-meter. The building was insured in five different offices for a total of £2,500, while the stock in it was covered by policies amounting to £6,500, his own stock being worth about £150. The policies were assigned to him with the estate of Mr E. W. Mills, and the stock which they covered had been sold and removed, but they would have covered any stock he might have put in the building during their currency. The buildings were the property of Messrs Keep Bros., of Birmingham, whom the witness represented in the colony. William Kershaw, a gasfitter in the employ of the Wellington Gas Company, said that he had examined the meter in the premises on the recommendation of Mr Keep. He burnt a number of matches and applied them to the joints, but could detect no escape. He placed all the burnt matches on the top of the meter. He ran his finger round to the back of the pipe to see whether there was a flame there. A jet at the joint would in time melt the metal, and thus cause a big flame. The gas was turned on when he inspected the meter, but he could not say whether he had turned it off or not. The jury returned a verdict to the effect that the fire had originated in the meter-box, either from the meter or the pipes, but that there was no evidence to show how the gas had become ignited.

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Between 1877 and 1886 J. Mackintosh Bell in "Parapara Subdivision" states that the next attempt to smelt Parapara iron-ore was made by Howard Keep and John Chambers, of Auckland, who took up a 640 acre lease, and held it for ten years when it became the property of the Bank of New Zealand. The Bank, in order to hold the ground, constructed a road and stacked a little ore.

New South Wales Unassisted Immigrant Passenger Lists

J. H. Keep departed New Zealand on the ship 'Mararoa' and arrived at Sydney 19 Feb 1889

J. H. Keep departed London on the ship 'Carthage' and arrived at Sydney 26 Apr 1890

J. H. Keep departed Auckland on the ship 'Te Anau' and arrived at Sydney 20 May 1891

J. H. Keep departed Auckland on the ship 'Warrimoo' and arrived at Sydney 17 Apr 1893

Archives NZ Auckland Ref: BBAV 11500 8b p7 Te Aroha Wardens Mining Register 1887-1909

Special Claim "Tui Creek" 50 acres Application No. 28 (1887) folio 6a; License granted for 21 years from 21 Feb 1888; Licensee: John Howard Keep; Registered 16 Aug 1888 Certificate No. 7775; Conditions: the rent shall be at the following rate viz two shillings and sixpence per acre for the first year, five shillings per acre for the second and third years, ten shillings per acre for the next four years and twenty shillings per acre for the next fourteen years. The rent shall be paid half yearly in advance.

Rent due from: (Receipt number in brackets)

21 Feb 1888 to 20 Feb 1889	£6 5s	half paid 15 Jun 1888 (48) and half paid 8 Feb 1889 (76)
21 Feb 1889 to 20 Aug 1889	£6 5s	paid 25 May 1889 (41)
21 Aug 1889 to 20 Feb 1890	£6 5s	paid 19 Jun 1890 (80)
21 Feb 1890 to 20 Aug 1890	£6 5s	paid 19 Jun 1890 (80)
21 Aug 1890 to 20 Feb 1891	£6 5s	

Forfeited 9 Jun 1891

1901 Census Front Street, Treeton, Yorkshire

John H. KEEP	Head	42yrs	Secretary of Colliers Co. [married]	b Birmingham, Warwickshire
Douglas S. KEEP	Son	7yrs		b Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
Norman M. KEEP	Son	2yrs		b Birmingham, Warwickshire
Ada Mary CHAPMAN	Servt	37yrs	Hospital nurse [single]	b Borobridge, Aldbrough
Emily HUMPHRIES	Servt	32yrs	Housemaid [single]	b St Martins, Salop
Mary E. LOCKWOOD	Servt	30yrs	Cook [single]	b Dronfield, Devon