

Duncan SINCLAIR (1846-1920)

New Zealand Mail 6 May 1903 p32a

Palmerston North. Mr and Mrs Duncan Sinclair leave Palmerston tomorrow on a visit to the Old World. They propose going to Canada and then across to England and the Continent, after which Mr Sinclair will in all probability pay a visit to Africa. During the course of their tour Mr and Mrs Sinclair will be accompanied by their son Norman.

New Zealand Mail 12 Aug 1903 p55a

Palmerston North. Mr D Sinclair, late engineer to the Pohangina County Council, writing to a friend in Dannevirke from Cowley, ?inchos Creek, Alberta, Canada, says:- "We are having a real nice trip; so far good mild weather all the way, which has been very enjoyable."

New Zealand Mail 16 Mar 1904 p25b

Palmerston North. Mr and Mrs D. Sinclair, who left Palmerston North ten months ago on a visit to America and England, returned to this town on Wednesday evening. Their two sons, Duncan and Harold, are still in South Africa. Mr Harold Sinclair was married recently, and has settled in Pretoria.

Evening Post 13 Dec 1909

Mr Duncan Sinclair, son of Mr D. Sinclair, of Terrace End, is expected to return to the Dominion after an absence of ten years by the Tongariro, due in Wellington to-morrow. Mr Sinclair went through the South African campaign. His father and mother are in Wellington to meet him and his wife.

Bay of Plenty Times 30 Dec 1920 An Interesting Career – The late Mr Duncan Sinclair

With the death of Mr Duncan Sinclair at his residence on the Camp last week there passed away one of the few remaining links with the early history of Wellington and the Dominion. His parents arrived in Wellington in 1838, and shortly afterwards took up land at Wainui o Mata, the present locality of Wellington's main water supply. It was here that the deceased gentleman was born, and spent his early life in farming and sawmilling. He owned and sold to the Wellington City Council the site of the present reservoirs, to which he also gave access through a mile and a half of his land. The sawmill which the late Mr Sinclair ran at Wainui o Mata was one of the first in the North Island and was at that time the largest. Possessed of a foresight which was strongly characteristic of his many undertakings he early recognised the value of steel rails in the working of his mill. These he imported from England and simultaneously obtained from Hobart a steam engine which he named the "Pio Pio." The task of getting the engine from Wellington to the mill was a most formidable one – to all but its enterprising owner. By almost everyone it was declared impossible, the latter portion of the sixteen mile journey being over a very steep hill. The task was, however, safely accomplished with the aid of twelve bullocks and six horses. In 1871 Mr Sinclair was married at Wellington by the Rev. Jas. Patterson to Miss Mowlem sister of the late Captain John Mowlem (one of the pioneer skippers of the Shaw Savill and Albion Company's clippers) of Palmerston North. Captain Mowlem married Mr Sinclair's twin sister. The deceased gentleman's first move from Wainui was to Lowry Bay – just across the hill and on the shores of Wellington harbour. This estate – consisting of some 584 acres – he purchased from the Government which had previously acquired it as a residence for Sir

George Grey. After a short time there he moved north and went in for contracting on a large scale making Palmerston North his headquarters. Amongst the works which were constructed under his supervision were the Marton waterworks and the Apiti bridge, besides several other important undertakings. Subsequently, Mr Sinclair was appointed engineer to the Pohangina County Council, and while in this position he undertook a world tour, and was enabled to apply the knowledge gained by his extensive travel to the Council's benefit during the twelve years he was associated with that body. He was succeeded as engineer by his son, Mr Hugh Sinclair. The deceased gentleman took a keen and intelligent interest in all matters of public moment, and for some time he occupied a seat on the Palmerston North Borough Council. A keen student of nature, he was an authority on New Zealand flora, and had, besides, a remarkable knowledge of many other branches of natural history. It is interesting to note that one native plant, discovered by Mr Sinclair, bears his name. In this connection he was a valued member of the defunct Manawatu Beautifying Society, his remarkable knowledge being always available in the interests of the town. He rendered yeoman service in building up the local museum, many gifts he made having been found by him in exploring little known places when engaged in valuing timber lands (a good deal of which he did for the Government) or in his many journeys over the high lands of the Pohangina County. On many occasions Mr Sinclair had found around Apiti fossilised remains of sea life. A staunch Wesleyan, he was a prominent member and lay reader of the Broad Street Methodist Church for 25 years, and regularly preached in the churches of Bunnythorpe, Ashhurst and other district townships. For many years too, he was a member of the Terrace End School Committee. In all respects he was one of nature's gentlemen, and his quiet and unassuming character earned for him the affection and goodwill of all whom he met. As already stated Mr Sinclair came here to reside some two years ago. He is survived by his widow, four sons and three daughters: Messrs Hugh and Norman (Palmerston North) Duncan (Tauranga) and Harold (Auckland) and Mesdames Louisson (Tauranga), D'Anvers (Papamoa) and W. Grace (Wellington).