# Opunake – Historical notes collection

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## The Maoris and Te Namu

When the Maoris came to New Zealand, many of them settled in the province of Taranaki, then covered with wild native bush extending almost to the shoreline. The earliest known history of Opunake begins in 1820. At that time a fierce plague, Te-Ariki, swept the countryside sadly reducing the number of Maoris. In 1833 the Miko-Tani Pa was besieged by invaders and fell, the remnants of the tribe seeking shelter at Te Namu.

Te Namu Pa stands on the North bank of the Otahi River and is a Maori fortress of considerable strength. Less than a quarter of a mile to the Heimama River is Te Namu-iti, a small pa on a narrow peninsular with precipitous sides. The dark records of the Waikato raids into Taranaki is relieved by many a story of heroic defence and stubborn resistance. Acquisition of the musket gave the Northern invaders an enormous advantage for in that time Maoris had no opportunity of similarly arming themselves. The Southern tribes acquitted themselves most gallantly with the weapons of the Stone Age and the fires of the tribesmen of Taranaki never ceased to burn in the land of their ancestors.

Te Namu was carefully provisioned with food and water against the inevitable siege. In all, the leaders found themselves with a hundred and fifty warriors to hold the pa. The invading parties took up positions on the landward side of the Pa and partially fortified some rising ground name Kaiaia. After continuous musketry fire they launched the assault. The defenders hurled stones down on to the attackers killing and wounding a number. From an elevated platform the one musket in the Pa was used with deadly accuracy. The warriors of Taranaki did what they could with their native weapons and the attack failed.

For a month the Waikato laid siege to the Pa of Te Namu. The whares on the flat land in front of the Pa were all burned. Six unsuccessful assaults in all were made, the final assault being a fierce attack made just before dark. Under cover of musketry fire the attackers crept right up to the base of the defences and attempted to undermine the palisade. Again the defenders hurled boulders down from their high stages and the Pa could not be taken. The Waikatos commenced a retreat which became a rout as the valiant hand of defenders actually sallied forth from the Pa and attacked the enemy. The bodies of the dead were burned with fire. Throughout the siege the tohungas intoned their potent karakias and to the gods the tribesmen ascribed the victory.

Historic Te Namu with its sacred dead, is its own memorial and the history of its few standing against its many is not forgotten. Imagination paints many a picture round the old time fort, attack and repulse before the carved palisade, the tohungas chanting their incantations, the hakas of defiance and of victory, the final harrying of the retreating foe and the black corpse smoke rising by Te Namu.

Late in the year 1860, Bishop Selwyn made a trip from New Plymouth to Wanganui, passing through Opunake. He was held up by Maoris near Mototi, where his horse and his luggage were taken from him. After one or two days wait his horse and his luggage was returned to him and he proceeded on his way. The luggage was given back to him on his return journey.

Te Namu has survived the ravages of the years and stands unfortified today as an emblem of Maori friendship towards the Pakeha.

## Maori Legends

These two legends are concerned with the Maori tribes in and around Opunake

A Remarkable Native

About 1893 a remarkable old native died at Matakaha Pa near Opunake. Old Nikorima was supposed by Europeans and natives to be over one hundred and twenty years old at the time of his death. Some of the natives could remember Nikorima as a grown up warrior when they were children. They grew up to be warriors and in time died of old age but old Nikorima lived on. They believed that he must have seen Captain Cook's vessel passing through the Straits from what he afterwards said of Cook's voyages. One day Nikorima was asked what the Maoris had thought of a vessel when they first saw one. He replied, "When I first saw a vessel I was a boy without hair on my face, but I did not know what it was; we at that time thought it was a very large bird. Years passed. I was a warrior with a full beard on my face and had been in several fights when I next saw another of these large birds. It was a long way from the shore and we wondered at the size of the bird. Again sometime after another of these white birds appeared; it came near to the shore and stopped all day. There was no wind so the boldest of the people went out in canoes to look at the bird but when we got near we saw that it was not a bird but a large canoe and we saw people in that large canoe with fire in their bellies and smoke coming out of their mouths. When we saw the people with fire in their bellies we were afraid to go nearer; we returned to the shore and told what we had seen. Some would not believe us and went out to see these strange people. That canoe went away and was talked of for a long time. We wondered at the size of the canoe but most of all we wondered at the men with fire in their bellies and smoke coming out of their mouths. In those days we knew not how to smoke; we thought when we saw the smoke coming out of their mouths that they had fire in their bellies.

Paika and Motu

Once Maoris used to look upon wars as Europeans regard pleasure. From the earliest childhood they were trained in the use of arms and in the methods of warfare, so that it was thoroughly implanted in them. Like other uncivilised tribes the Maoris thought that to take the life of a hostile brave was a mark of manhood. They had, however, other objects in view other than killing for pleasure. They had to supply slaves and fresh meat. Cannibalism was not looked upon by the Maoris with such horror as it was by the Pakeha, and human flesh was used as desert with berries, kumaras, taros, fern roots etc. Among the tribes was a tacit agreement that war should cease during the planting and harvesting seasons, but could be immediately resumed after these were over. From this it can be gathered that war was a very trivial thing among the Maoris.

Among the most successful raiders were the Waikato tribes. They lived in heavily bushed, mountainous country and were easily able to protect themselves against invasion. These tribes were seldom defeated and were so confident of victory that they carried ropes for their slaves and made themselves kumetas to carry back the flesh of their enemies. To preserve the flesh they steamed it over fires and packed it into bark boxes. This fierce tribe fought all along the West Coast as far as Wellington leaving havoc in their trail.

One of these war parties fought as far as Mawhitiwhiti Pa, near Normanby and took it. The taking of the Pa was a scene of carnage. Men and women were slaughtered and taken as slaves. Among those taken as slaves was a beautiful young girl named Motu. A Waikato warrior, Paike saw the beautiful young girl and fell in love with her. He took her as his slave and married her.

For many years Paikea and Motu lived happily together in the wild bushland country of the Waikatos, but after a while Motu began to long for a sight of her own home and people and at last he consented on condition that she returned when he sent for her. At last she arrived at Mawhitiwhiti Pa, where her people were overjoyed to see her. They had believed her dead, so great was the rejoicing. Motu was so happy among her own people that she did not heed the time as it flew by. After a while Paike sent for her, but she sent the messenger back asking for a little longer.

Paika sent another messenger but Motu sent back another answer asking for a little more time. At last Paika came to get her and was greeted with affection on all sides. He stayed for a few days and again asked Motu to return with him. Again she delayed her return home. Paika lost patience and was seized with jealousy for he believed Motu loved her own people better than him. Then he thought of a cunning plan by which he could revenge himself upon her. Making known his intention of returning home he asked her to say goodbye to him outside the Pa. As soon as he was clear of the village Paika tomahawked his wife and proceeded on his way the demon in him aroused and haunted by the cries of Motu. Motu's two brothers, on following her out of the village came across her dead body and concluded that Paika had murdered her. They loved their beautiful sister and when they saw her murdered their hearts filled with hatred for her murderer and they started out in pursuit of Paika. After several days they came upon his tracks but could not reach him. At last they thought of a plan. Imitating their dead sister's voice they called him to come back and at last succeeded in getting within his reach. But Paika was not to be taken easily. He killed one brother and fought furiously with the other. Paika getting the worst of the combat secreted himself in a hollow tree thus eluding vengeance. He returned home but his life was embittered with the loss of his beautiful Motu. He gave way to despair refusing drink and food and at last died.

**Tapu**

Before the white settlers came to this land the natives were very simple. They were a brave fearless nation and very loyal to their laws, tribes and traditions. Their literature was told orally around the evening fires and in this way were handed down from father to son and so through many generations. Their stories or legends had much of the supernatural in them and all events were accorded to the Taipos (evil spirits) or Atuas (good spirits).

The priests or tohungas were held in very high esteem by the rest of the tribe as they were supposed to be deep in the confidence of the spirits. The word "tapu" was given to certain actions in this way a Maori became mad and then disappeared and died. The priest was told what action this was punishment for and that deed became tapu.

The Maoris are very sharp witted and have a keen sense of the ludicrous, but it is impossible to shake their belief in the non-existent spirits such as fairies. Then fairies were of two kinds: Nga-Patupaiarehe, who love to tease and spend their time in fun and frolic, accredited with assuming all shapes and being in all forms partial to human flesh. Here is the story of how the first of these Taniwhas came into existence.

Pu lived in the Waikato district. He was a giant in size and was of tremendous strength, but he was "hapei" or club-footed. Now Pu had heard of great wrestlers in Taranaki and as he was confident of his own prowess, he decided to visit it. In the Maori tribes it is the duty of the host to find a combatant for the visitor in any way he might desire. As Pu travelled down the coast, he defeated one by one the many wrestlers matched against him, and the story of his tremendous power flew before him. When Pu reached Opunake he was undefeated and great consternation was felt among the Kainga tribe of Oeo, for they had no man to match against him.

Long they sat discussing the problem, until a little dwarf (Npunu) performed the Challenger's dance, shouting out that he would fight Pu. He was ridiculed by the rest of the tribe but he persisted in his intention. When Pu saw the dwarf come forward to fight him, he thought he was a devil or kiko-kiko, for no ordinary man of such small size would dare to fight him. As Pu advanced, the dwarf bent down and picked up a handful of sand, throwing it into Pu's eyes. Pu, blinded, was unable to fight back and the dwarf had no difficulty in cutting off his head and throwing it into the sea. The head floated north to the Waitara River crying, "Pu, Pu, Pu!" as it went so that everyone knew that Pu had been defeated and there was great rejoicing over his downfall. The head floated in on the tide up the Waitara River and now it is a scourge to all who pass the river at the point to which the tide brought it, being the first place ever known as "tapu".

**War Tale**

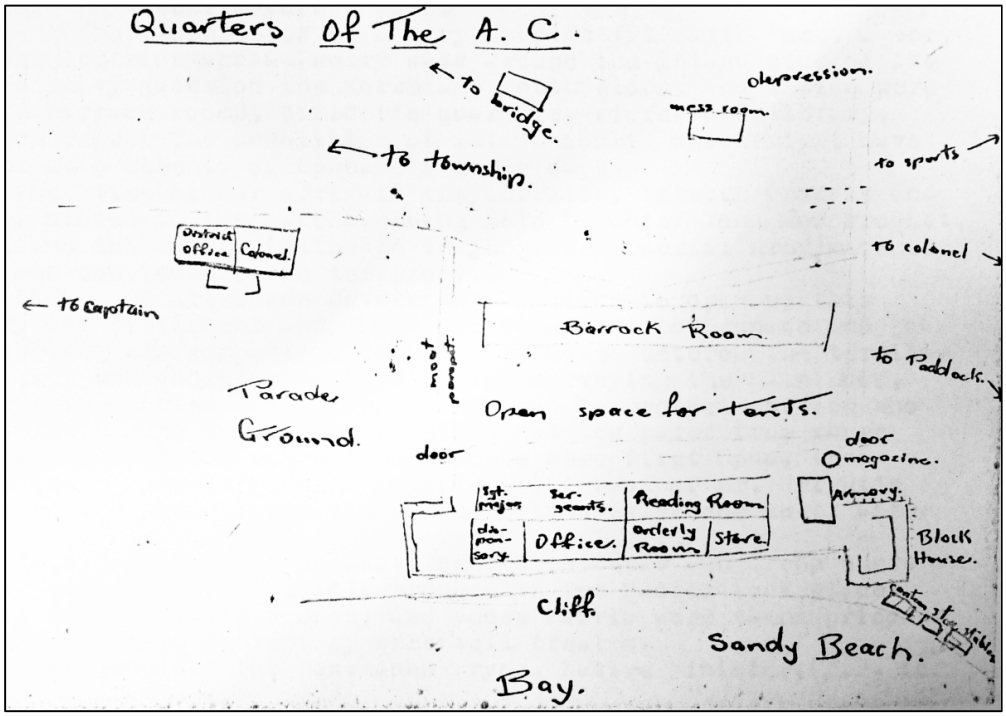
At the mouth of the Kapuni River, on the Waimate Plains are the ruins of two Pas. These were known as Whakarongomai (to listen) and were built on the very edge of the cliff, so that no person could land and attack it from the sea. The one on the southern side was a very strong Pa being protected by a moat several feet deep and many chains wide. It was occupied by the Ngatimatu tribe whose principal domicile was near Waitara. The Waikato tribes made many attempts to capture these Pas for they were the only two who succeeded in repelling their attacks. When the Waikatos got firearms they started another expedition South. The Ngatimarus retired into the Pas with only one pistol (they had killed the owner as he had shot one of their men) but no ammunition. The Waikatos made a semi-circle on the cliffs and when the Ngatimarus came out to taunt them with their former defeats, they were greeted with a volley from the guns on the other side. Many Ngatimarus fell but as they did not know the use of firearms many more were killed. The Ngatimarus becoming a little dismayed retired for a council of war. The Waikatos attempted to take the Pa by assault but they failed again and again. At last the Ngatimarus surrendered and there was much feasting and rejoicing until at last the Waikatos returned home. In later years the Waikatos make another raid forgetting to erect any sort of a shelter for themselves, so confident were they. The Ngatimarus, however, had since learnt the art of firearms and the attacking Waikatos were nearly annihilated. They then collected the guns and ammunition from the slain. Sometime later a Taupo chief, visiting in the Waikato district taunted the Waikato Chiefs, but when they refused to return to Taranaki he decided to do it himself. He came by sea from the Wanganui River with 2,000 followers. The Whakarongomai tribed marched south to meet and made fortifications on the south side of the Waitotara River.

When the Taupo tribe arrived they attacked and a tremendous battle began. The Taupo tribe were utterly defeated and few escaped to tell the tale, while the Ngatimarus feasted on the dead and divided the prisoners for slaves.

**The Armed Constabulary**

At the beginning of the settlement of Opunake the Imperial Army had an encampment on both sides of the Main Road, overlooking Te Namu. It was the company of the Irish regiment which eventually settled in the district. An officer of the regiment is said to have purchased Opunake for the sum of £10 from the Maoris. During this time an unfortunate incident occurred. Miss Dobey, an Englishwoman and sister-in-law of the Commanding Officer was murdered by a Maori while sketching for an English magazine, The Graphic. The murder took place near the Te Namu Road. Her grave may be seen today in the old Military Cemetery past the hospital.

1866 saw the arrival of Von Tempsky's Forest Rangers who began the erection of the renowned Redoubt, on the top of the cliff above the Power Board's Surge Chamber. The Redoubt which was later improved and occupied by the Armed Constabulary, with earthen walls about 12 feet high and 18 feet thick and containing two barrack rooms, a store room, library, officer's quarters, and offices.




The A.Cs. arrived in the year 1875 and relieved the Imperial Forces, a small signal station and a house being built at this time for Captain Morrison.

The Maoris contrived to be troublesome and in … more volunteer recruits were called for, being sent from Wellington in the S.S. Hinemoa. They were landed by surf boat in Opunake Bay, the same being manned by members of the Force under a Maori Coxswain, (George Taylor). Three hundred members comprised the number stationed at Opunake and the same number were camped at Okato. The making of a road was undertaken by the soldiers and was to run from Opunake to Okato. This was done between skirmishes with the Maoris, each force working from their own end. The men always had to have their rifles and ammunition close by and a close guard by a picket guard had to be kept of each side of the road, for Chief Tohu and Prophet Te Whiti, both of Parihaka, vowed that the road would never meet. Boisterous weather was encountered most of the time, but the Forces won through and the road was built. The A.Cs. also built a road from the beach up to their barracks. In 1881 the A.Cs. encircled and captured Parihaka.

Many of this renowned Force settled in the Opunake district and became prominent citizens.

**Early Settlement of West Coast**
By Thomas Pole Hughson Snr

I, with other Armed Constabulary members landed in Opunake Bay of the Government Steamer "Hinemoa" in March 1880, in Surf Boats and marched up a track on the south side of the bay, (the present road was then not in existence) and we were stationed in the Redoubt erected on the top of the cliff directly above the present Surge Chamber of the Electric Power Board.

The Redoubt consisted of a very substantial Earth works, a very deep trench outside and a Sentry walk around the inland side of the wall, two heavy gates on the North and South sides, and inside were two large barrack rooms, officer's quarters, stores and library. I much regret the demolition of this Redoubt which might have been kept as a memento of Opunake's early days.

At the time of our arrival, the territory between Opunake and Okato was closed to the Pakeha, being held by Chief Tohu and Prophet Te Whiti and the Maoris (although in 1866 the Imperial Army marched through and confiscated the territory.)

In 1880, the Atkinson Government decided to open up this territory for settlement and 300 A.Cs. were sent to Opunake and 300 to Okato being six companies. In May 1880 we entered the territory from each end and started forming and surveying the Main Road, sentries being posted each side of the road to protect workmen who also had their guns and ammunition piled not ten paces from where they were working; our camps from Opunake were first Opua, then Kaikahou (near Maxwell's) the Pukehina, (at back of Mr Wright's farm. Of course these farms did not come into existence until after 1882.)

At this Camp we met the Okato contingent near Pungarehu where they were camped, when a little brush with the Maoris took place (contrary to Te Whiti's orders) and these Maoris were taken prisoner and sent to Dunedin where they were well treated.

At this juncture the Hon. John Bryce, Native Minister, (M.P. for Wanganui) intended to march on Parihaka with the six hundred Armed Constabulary but on submitting to Cabinet they turned it down considering that such might cause another war. Hon Bryce then resigned the portfolio and the Hon. Rolleston, M.P. for Christchurch, was appointed Native Minister; and he moved the A.Cs. about to Warea, Cape Egmont to guard and make ready a spot for the light house, then to Rahotu, and at the end of twelve months Hon. Rolleston told the Cabinet that the only solution to the Native difficulty was Hon. Bryce's idea and that he resign and Hon. Bryce be re-appointed, but Hon. Bryce refused unless the volunteers were called out to the number of 2,000 including the A.Cs. as the Maoris now knew his intentions. This then was done and volunteers from North and South arrived at Rahotu, and Pungarehu, eventuating in our march on Parihaka in October 1881. First arresting a Maori murderer (Hereki) who had been protected in this outlawed territory for some years. He was taken to New Plymouth, tried and hung. Then Te Whiti and Tohu were taken prisoner (political) and sent to Nelson where they were provided with a villa and servants to wait on them. They were kept there for three years during which time I was stationed at Parihaka with No.3 Company.

In 1882, the West Coast Reserves Act was passed (the survey having been completed) when a great rush of settlement took place in Opunake and the new district. In Opunake shops, hotels, auctioneering establishments were built. Also farms were taken up all along the Coast. A portion of the farms were sold for cash on the sea side of the road but the farms on the inland side of the road were let by the Maori owners on a thirty year term with £5 allowance for improvement at end of lease. Rentals were about from 1s to 3s per acre.

Then an Amending Act was passed in 1892 providing for other leases on a twenty-one year with a right of renewal and a full compensation for improvements, the native trustee collecting and distributing the rents.

In 1911, a Committee was formed (of which I was Chairman) to approach the Government re amending the West Coast Settlement Reserves Act which resulted in an extension of the 1882 Act Leases for ten years at a new valuation minus the £5 compensation for improvement but full compensation at the end of the ten year's lease or permission to purchase with the Maori owner's consent. Also the 1892 leaseholder to have the same purchasing privilege at new valuation. Sufficient Reserves were kept and provided for Maori use. About the end of 1884 the Parihaka Camp broke up and the A.Cs. were shifted to Opunake, and the one policeman policy adopted; Tom Hickman, our small mounted man, was appointed and stationed at Pungarehu and later at Opunake, doing good service.

At this time Parihaka consisted of all Raupo whares and only one wooden house that had been built for Te Whiti by a former native minister. Several large Maori whares that had been built at Parihaka to accommodate the Maori visitors were pulled down as the Maori visitors that we marched kept coming back and consequently we carted the materials into Camp and built whares for ourselves. While stationed at Parihaka we went into the Bush and sawed timber. We built a large Hall on the top of the hill used for the Library, and a stage, and concerts were held with the aid of a painted drop scene. On the decision to strike camp an Okato friend who had paid regular visits to the Camp took possession of the drop scene and took it to Okato. The Maoris later demolished the hall. The shops and billiard room were shifted away. My father's shop becoming my first home in Okato.

Then regarding our Rahotu Camp we took possession in 1881, we took possession of the two Maori Pas on either side of the Rahotu Road, the one on the North side being the chief one and now situated on the south west corner of the domain and from which Rahotu received its name. No.4 Company camped on the top of the hill and No.3 surrendering. We then went to the bush and cut and squared sufficient timber in 12 foot lengths 10 inches by 10 inches inclosing the top of the hill right round and covering corners to protect from invasion. We had a tennis court, football ground as well as parade ground. The hill on the south side was used to station the picket.

In 1885 the Government decided to disband the A.Cs. and permission was granted for transfer to the Police or Artillery or otherwise receive one year's pay as compensation, the latter being adopted by many who took up land under the West Coast Settlement Reserves Act and became farmers. Among these were the Hickey's, McReynolds, Maxwell, Billing, Layard, Crispe, Wade, Rollo, White, Hughson and others who faithfully carried out the breaking in of the land and handed it down to their posterity.

Amongst those who came to settle under the 1882 Act was Mr J. Stephenson (later of Pihama), who took up land on the Kahui Road. He then took up the building of the present hotel and licensed it to a Mr Brown who also did blacksmithing. Mr Stephenson got the second contract for our A.C. rations at 8d per number per day. The former contractor, Mr Felix Macguire had 1/3d for the same. Mr Stephenson, however, provided us with much better rations, for which we were thankful. During the time Macguire was in charge we had to subsist on barrels of Cabin biscuits full of weavel, for several days.

Another settler of great importance to Rahotu was Mr F. M. Chapman, JP, who recognised the public needs of Rahotu and took steps to secure Recreation grounds and Cemetery Reserves. Securing our old camp and twenty acres near Rautini Stream and seven acres for the Cemetery Reserves. He also recognised the need for a hall and secured the right from the Defence department to remove one of our barrack rooms from the Redoubt in Opunake to Rahotu. The site was purchased from the Hotel-keeper and a Committee elected to help in the removal and erection of the room.

This room did service for many years until the growing population of Rahotu increased the need for a larger hall. The present hall was then built and the barrack room is still doing service as a supper-room.

The farmers in those days had to do all milking by hand and set the milk in shallow pans, skimming and churning it by hand, then packing it themselves into 56lb kegs to be kept until the Australian market was open, no English market then being available. Prices fluctuated from 4½d to 1s and one year a farmer had to send ½lb to pay its way.

About this time the Government came to our rescue by reducing all Maori rents by one-third for five years. This proved a great benefit as cattle as well as butter had dropped in price. Enter the Crown Dairy Co. (N. King, J. C. George & R. Cock) decided to start Dairy Factories as the English market was opening up. We agreed to supply them with milk at 3d per gallon for five years, there being no prospect of separating arrangements at this time. The price at the present time is usually well over 8d. At the end of the five years the Crown Dairy decided to sell out to the farmers, so that all the factories became Co-operative concerns.

We had several flax mills on the Coast and the Fungi industry was carried on by Mr Chew Chong of New Plymouth, who purchased the fungi dry from the farmers at 3d or 4d per lb and sent it to China. Mr Chong is also noted for the fact that he was the first to start the butter factory system.

The Maoris and Pakehas always worked harmoniously together to the advantage of both. Only one incident happened at Rahotu, and this was in March 1918. It happened on a sale day and also a Maori May-Day. The Maoris indulged in Waipero (drink) to excess and towards evening Constable D. O'Neill arrested Billy Te Whiti for being drunk and disorderly. Te Whiti resisted and lay down on the road and being of a corpulent build the Constable was unable to move him. Several pakehas assisted to move him, but the Maoris resisted and one person got his hand badly bitten. I then explained that the Maoris would likely tip the lock-up over if he was locked in it, so the names of the offenders were taken and the matter was remanded to the Supreme Court. This small matter was posted as a riot and one lady in Rahotu received a cable from Sydney asking if she was still alive.

I regret that the young Maoris are losing their language and I would very much like to see some method adopted on the lines of the Welsh people who while talking the English language still retain the use of their own.

I have tried to set out in a concise way the Early History of the district.
I am, Yours truly, Thomas Pole Hughson, Senr, Rahotu.

**Growth of the Town**

After the passing of the "West Coast Settlement Reserves Act, 1882," Opunake township began to grow. Most of the settlers were former members of the Imperial Army and Armed Constabulary. The site of the present borough of Opunake was a swamp lying between the forest and the sea when Military authorities discovered that troops could be disembarked in Opunake Bay. Behind the swamp forests stretched for miles. The only "road" North and South was the beach, although the Maoris had their tracks through swamp and forest from pa to pa. The town of Opunake has grown from the nucleus created from the erection of a military block-house. During the years of Maori unrest its progress was slow, although the Opunake Town Board came into existence in 1882. The Board continued to control the local Government of the town until 1937, when Opunake became a borough.

Like all new settlements the first need of the town was for good roads. The first road contract let by the Board was for the construction of Padlock Street from the present Club Hotel corner to the War Memorial. Gradually the Streets and roads were improved, but twenty years after the town had been established it took seven hours to reach New Plymouth by coach and only one hour less to reach Hawera. More than another twenty years was to pass before the Railway reached Opunake.

The first years of Opunake's history were colourful. The Maori leaders Te Whiti and Tohu were, at the height of their influence and their periodic meetings at Parihaka drew large attendances of Maoris from all parts of Taranaki. The average population at Parihaka was at least 2,000 in 1881. Fortunately the difficulties between Maori and Pakeha were overcome without bloodshed. Ill will and misunderstanding were succeeded by goodwill and today Maori and European share the task of developing the district of which Opunake is the centre.

There being no need for military operations, the Armed Constabulary did pioneer work in road-making and bridge-building. Only within 1959 was the last of the bridges built by the A.C., built over the Okahu River, replaced by a ferro-concrete structure. For forty years the care of roads and bridges in the district of which Opunake is the commercial centre has been the responsibility of the Egmont County Council.

The first industry to be established near Opunake was flax-milling. This industry began in 1868. There were ample supplies of native flax in swamp areas and the market for New Zealand hemp was promising. With the clearing of the forest and the draining of many swamps, the flax industry has made way for one that has proved the mainstay of Opunake, indeed of the whole of Taranaki, the dairy industry. The flax industry flourished until 1903. It was during the establishment of the flax mills that the saw mills were erected. In 1883 a rope and twine factory, owned by Messrs Wagstaff Bros., was in operation in Opunake, and the quality of the products was very highly spoken of. The binding twine was first used in a reaper and binder operated by Mr J. Rotheray in that year.

In 1882 the first Club Hotel was established on the site of the present Club Hotel by Middleton Bros. Further development of the town took place in the building of Courtenay's Auction Mart, McGregor's Blacksmith's, Forrester Hall, Photographic Studios, and B. Galvin's "Egmont Courier" was established in 1883. This newspaper was issued to the people of the town and surrounding district for two years. During the next year the "Opunake Times" began its circulation and was owned by the late Mr M. J. Brennan. This paper continues to be printed under the proprietorship of Mr Rush.

The Bank of New Zealand was established in the town in 1898. It was a wooden building of one small room and opening about twice a week usually on sale-days. On the occasions of opening the Bank clerks came from Hawera to attend to the Farmers from the surrounding districts. In 1951 this building was pulled down and rebuilt as the present Bank.

The township continued to grow with the erection of Prosser's Brewery which was situated opposite the Farmer's Co-op. This brewery had a windmill attached but no signs of it now remain. A tinsmith's, furniture shop, confectioner's, several fruit shops, a boarding-house, chemist's, butcher's, grocer's and draper's were also erected. At this time Opunake possessed an excellent Brass Band which used to play in the fort where the old Redoubt used to be every Sunday afternoon.

In 1901 the Police Station and residence and also the Post Office were added to the Opunake township. John Stewart, a soda-water manufacturer and a patriotic member of the town, brought the first motor-bike to New Zealand from England.

At a Sports Meeting held in the district Stewart caused much excitement among the people by riding this bicycle around the race-track at the “terrific” speed of twelve miles per hour. This settler also presented to the town in the following year Opunake’s First Fire-engine. It required eight men to man it, of which Mr Stewart was the chief. It had two… of hose and a large sum of money was expended on the making of wells in several alleys between the shops.

One of Opunake’s greatest setbacks was experienced when a disastrous fire swept away part of the centre of the town in a few hours, but that, like other misfortunes, was not allowed to interfere with the progress of the town. This fire occurred in 1914 and destroyed the Club Hotel, a fruit shop, the photographic studios, an auction mart, a confectioner’s, a tinsmith’s, a blacksmith’s, butcher’s, draper’s, chemist’s, grocer’s, furniture shop and a boarding house. This fire started in the Club Hotel and the fire-engine was used to quench the flames but the fire had too firm a hold. The firemen, on being told that the bar was in danger and knowing that there was no hope of saving it, dashed into the hotel to have a last drink before the Hotel was totally destroyed. Meanwhile, however, the flames, through the agency of the wind, had set alight the building beside which stood the fire-engine. Unfortunately, while the firemen were making the most of their last few moments in the Hotel, the engine caught fire and was utterly destroyed.

In 1914 the ground was surveyed for a railway between Opunake and Kapuni, but it was not until 1921 that the actual construction was commenced. This was only achieved on continued agitation on the part of the Opunake people. Since then Kapuni has been connected with Hawera and Opunake has a regular service to Hawera. A railway was surveyed and planned between Opunake and New Plymouth, but this Coast Line was never constructed owing to the failure of Opunake as the Port of Taranaki and the growth of New Plymouth.

With all the hard work and fortitude demanded of Opunake’s pioneer settlers they still found time for sports and pastimes. It is on record that a Race Meeting was held at Opunake in the Recreation Grounds in 1884, and it is stated that the track was in better order that at previous meetings. A cricket and tennis club was formed by members of the Armed Constabulary in 1883 and challenges were issued from Constabulary at Pukearuhe and Parihaka and from a club at Hawera. Early in 1909 the asphalt courts were opened, including the present Club buildings.

Rugby Football was established in 1886 when a match was played at Pihama. The first Opunake Senior Team was formed in 1897 and since that year Opunake Rugby Football Club has been one of the most important in the province.

In later years bowling greens and golf links have been established as well as many Tennis Clubs.

Opunake’s beach is well-known throughout Taranaki as a pleasant holiday resort and the Opunake Surf Club has earned a high place in Life-saving organisations for its vigilance and efficiency.

Opunake’s population is increasing as are the amenities it can offer to residents. Improvements of farm lands in the district is being extended year by year with increased production as a result. There is a long way to go before improvements of farmlands has reached its limit. As the centre of a district of such actual and potential value as to production, the future of Opunake is assured.

**Prominent Buildings of Opunake**

The New Theatre was added to the town in 1921. It is situated in the centre of the township on the Main Street. It is built of reinforced concrete and extends 110 feet back from the Street. 82 feet of this is utilized for theatre and 28 feet for shops (two) in front. The width of the threatre is 37 feet and there is a graduated slope to the front. The building is well supplied with light and ventilation. Heaters have recently been installed for use in winter months. The stage is fitted for concerts as well as for pictures and is 24 feet by 18 feet. It has three dressing rooms adjacent for use during the productions of concerts and plays. When the theatre was first built the gallery was not in existence but provision was made for enlarging it. The seating accommodation consists of leather lined tip-up chairs with spring seats and backs. The building plans were Mr Arthur White and he was the sole supervisor of the work. When the pictures were first shown in Opunake, they were screened only two nights a week with one matinee. This number has increased so that now films are screened six nights a week with one matinee.

The first hospital was opened in Opunake in 1920. This was the Sea-view Private Hospital and it was situated on Domett Street adjacent to the residence of the doctor. The hospital was open for medical, surgery and maternity cases. During the same year plans were drawn up for the present “Cottage Hospital.” This building was not completed until many years later, however, owing to the enormous cost. It is built on the cliffs and the fresh air is very beneficial to the patients. It faces Layard Street and is open for maternity cases.

The first Religious Services were held at the Public School until the present Methodist Church was built by Mr N. Fitners in 1883. The present Anglican Church was erected by Messrs Simms & Ross in 1892. At the time Catholic Services were hld in the old Library of the A. C. Redoubt and later a church was built by the order of the Rev Father Mulverhill. (This building is now St. Patrick’s Hall). The Presbyterian Church was erected in the year 1901, services prior to this being conducted by the Rev R. J. Ellworth.

A Message of the Church: It may have been the spirit of adventure and romance that brought the pioneers to these shores, but it was a more enduring spirit that let them win through in spite of all sorts of discouragements and difficulties. There was the romance of finding a new land and exploring it, and above all, the adventure of carving out a home in it with the indomitable spirit and courage that enabled them to meet all contingencies and obstacles and to overcome them. These are the qualities that have made it possible for the present generation to enjoy the goodly heritage that is New Zealand. And it is the spirit of the pioneers, a spirit built upon a lively Faith in God who both helps and gives the power to do and dare, that is issuing a challenge to the people of the present. The first settlers left us a memorial to their faith in the countless churches dotted over the country from the North Cape to the Bluff, churches which at one time were thronged with worshippers who found their church-going and observance of such things as Bible-reading and the sacredness of the Lord’s day a very real sense of God’s presence and help. It was their devotion to their religion and the Public acknowledgement of its obligations that constitute the challenge of the past to the present. What has been said about the Faith and Practice of the pioneer settlers cannot be said of the present settlers in large measure. It is sad but true. Much of the troubles and difficulties which face a man as an individual and as a race can be traced to a grave lack of a sense of importance of spiritual values. The key note of man today is fear. As a result of fear, distrust, hatred, war. These things could not be where God was all in all, where he was inspiration and power to get things done. But these things where people have drifted from the faith of their fathers, have drifted from the Church.

## The Schools

During the year 1918 the wooden Primary School buildings were used as a temporary hospital for victims of the influenza epidemic. On January 30th 1919 this school was completely destroyed by fire and all school records made previously were burnt. It was thought that the fire was the result of non-disinfection of the school after the epidemic. Many parents feared that their children might contract the disease if some preventative measure was not taken. From this fire some few Desks and a little other furniture were saved.

When school reopened after the summer vacation lessons were held in the Town Hall. The infants and Standard I used the main hall while the supper room was occupied by Standards 2 to 7. The hall was a very bad substitute for the school owing to the insanitary condition. During the winter months stormy weather caused the roof, the windows, the walls to leak badly and once the building was partly flooded. The children suffered from the severe cold as there were no fires. After several months of these unhealthy conditions heaters were installed and windows, locks and basins were added. On the examination of the children by Dr Gunn it was discovered that the bad throats, weak chests and malnutrition were due entirely to the atmosphere of the hall-school and the sanitary arrangements were an invitation to Typhoid in the summer months. She also recommended the parents to petition the Education Board to begin on the new building at once or failing that to refuse absolutely to allow their children to face another term under the present conditions.

Next year at the beginning of the term the High School held their first separate class in the Church of England Sunday School room. The nine pupils were taught by the secondary assistant, Miss Sage. Mrs Wright then Miss Hickey was headmistress of both departments. Owing to the lack of pupils, however, the Board decided to close the school on March the 31st.

At the end of the month of December the new school was opened by the Chairman of the Education Board, Mr White. A large gathering of about four hundred people attended the opening of the school and a banquet was held under a huge marquee on the school grounds. A Social and Dance was held in the Town Hall on the same evening.

On May the 31st 1921 Mrs Wright resigned her position. She was very popular among the pupils, town committee and townspeople. Mr Crom arrived soon after to take the place of the relieving headmistress. During this latter part of the same year a library of 169 books arrived to replace those burnt in the fire of 1919.

In September 1924, the Sunday School room was once more available for Secondary classes. A little later Mr Burgess took the place of Mr Crom as headmaster. On April 15th the High School was opened and classes were held in the present woodwork room. The number present the first day was 17 which rose to 23 five days later. During the same year an electric motor and pump were installed in place of the windmill used previously.

Early in the year 1926, the building of a new room was commenced and was completed by the end of the first term holidays. This room was used to accommodate the secondary pupils and is the present woodwork room. Mr Walden was appointed first secondary assistant but was soon replaced by Mr Whitehead. When school reopened on 1927 the increased number of pupils necessitated a second secondary assistant. Mr H. Denham was appointed for that position. The school committee now found it necessary to apply for more secondary accommodation with a manual room attached. This resulted in a secondary room being attached in the Easter holidays.

In 1928, Mr Caigou became the new secondary assistant assisted by Miss Scarrow. In June a grant was received for the building of the High School with a new manual room. The building was commenced two months later and the official opening was made by Mr C. J. Hawker on October 31st. In November a temporary school was erected near the High School to accommodate Standards 5 and 6 to relieve overcrowding in the lower school. In 1929 manual training was commenced by children from the Rahotu, Oaonui, Pihama, Opua, Arawhata, Mangahume, Te Kiri and Opunake schools. In June of the next year a piano was purchased for the Secondary Department.

In March 1931 the preparation of the school grounds was begun. The playing grounds were completed at the end of the next month and two areas of lawn were sown. In 1932, Miss Scarrow was replaced by Miss McCrae as secondary assistant. During the next year the unused areas of the High School grounds were afforested with eight hundred macrocarpa trees. Near the end of the same year Mr Herman took the place of Mr Caigou. In May 1934, Burgess the headmaster left and Mr Armstrong took his place.

From 1936 there is very little information of importance in the school records. Mr Williams took up his position as headmaster in that year and remained until during 1941. In 1936 Miss F. Ryan replaced Miss McCrae and Miss W. Downes became permanent assistant. Also Miss Dalfield took up duties at the High School. In 1938 Mr Penney commenced duties. During the same year the Dental Clinic was established in the grounds of the lower school. The next year the intermediate school was built near the Secondary Department. Mr Crane became additional assistant of the High School in 1939. When school opened the next year Mr Brooker became probationary assistant but left to join the Air Force the next year. In the next year Mr Clarke commenced duty in the same Department and later in the year Mr Crane left. In 1940 Miss Bertram became permanent assistant in place of Mr Crane. Early in 1941, Miss Simpson took up duties as assistant for the duration of the war. In 1941 Mr Percy took Mr Williams place as headmaster. Miss Downes resigned in 1942. A signal pole from the wrecked ship ‘Lord Worsley’ was erected as the school flag pole in the school grounds. In the same year there was a tree planting ceremony when 34 shrubs and trees were given to the school by the pupils. In 1943 Mr Percy left and Mr Dunn took his place as headmaster. At the same time Mr Penney finished his work as senior assistant. Mr Hepburn commenced duties as senior assistant in March 1944. Shortly afterwards Miss Bell took up duties for duration of the war.

**The Harbour**

The difficulties of land transport in Taranaki fostered the use of Opunake as a port. It was planned as the central port of the province the goods landed being conveyed to the districts by coach. Trading vessels lay in the roadstead and the cargoes were handled in surf boats. Until the year 1881, these surf boats were handled by the Armed Constabulary. The goods that were unloaded from the surf boats were stored in the shed built upon the beach for that purpose. They were soon after conveyed to the outlying districts. Shipping was sufficiently important in 1891 to lead to the formation of the Opunake Jetty Company which built a jetty at which coastal vessels might be berthed.

When the Jetty Company was formed the surf boats ceased their work, and the Lighter Company went out of existence. The cost of the Jetty and the road which was made to it was £2,000. It superseded the old lighter service which had served for over 10 years, bringing in merchandise and taking flax from the mills to the boats. The first Jetty was in use for about two years when the outer end was smashed away owing to the teredo having eaten away the iron bark piles. It was rebuilt in totara, the piles being sheathed in copper as an extra precaution. That lasted many years during which many times coastal steamers came along side.

When the ill-fated harbour scheme was started, the jetty was demolished and the timber used for temporary construction works. Here are some familiar names that came to Opunake Bay in the day of the old Lighter Company. Timber was rafted ashore from the schooner "Anna Barnett" and the ketch "Agnes" which traded from the Pelorus Sounds. The old Town Hall was built of timber brought in these boats. The troops that came to Opunake during the trouble at Parihaka all landed at Opunake in the surf boats which also landed Te Whiti and Tohu on their return from Dunedin. Other boats to be lightered were the paddle steamer "Terranova" which presented a picturesque sight, the "Rowena" of the V.S.S. Co. from Onehunga, finally wrecked on the reef at Oakura. Messrs Harvey and Greenwood's "Queen of the Sea" which would sometimes take away four hundred bales of flax after landing 30 tons of cargo in a day and the "Muritai" later wrecked off the Hen and Chicken Islands was another frequent trader. After the Parihaka affair there were as many as five steamers at once moored in the Bay. On one trip the Anchor Company's steamer "Clide" ran on the beach causing some excitement before she was hauled off. Captain Harvey ran in the "Hauraki" which frequently visited Opunake until the bottom fell out of her with a load of coal off Cape Farewell.

Under the harbour scheme of 1920 a breakwater was constructed in the hope of making Opunake an all-weather port. The breakwater proved inadequate and with the improvement of roads and rail transport the need for a port was reduced and it was decided to abandon the harbour project. Only the "Arataupu" came into the harbour. Today rates are still being paid by people of the district to pay off the debt incurred by the failure of the harbour.

**Two … Wrecks**

The Wreck of the "Harriet"

In 1820, one Guard was carrying on whaling in the Marlborough Sounds and he was later master of a trading vessel. In April 1834 he and his wife and two children were passengers from Sydney to Cloudy Bay whaling station in the ship "Harriet", 245 tons, Captain Hall, Master. Guard was part owner of the "Harriet". On 29th April the "Harriet" was wrecked on what has been known ever since as "Harriet Beach". It is just south of the Okahu River and about five miles south of the Cape Egmont. All the ship's company landed safely and camped near the place. At first there was no trouble with the natives but on the third day forty natives came up from Te Namu about eight miles south and started plundering. Two of the "Harriet's" … gone away in their only boat taking arms, ammunition and food with them hoping to reach Moturoa and get assistance. Later two hundred more Maoris came and started plundering. This the ship's company tried to prevent but they did not attack the natives. Knowing that the white men had arms and ammunition the Maoris gave notice that they would fight and kill them all. Some entrenchments were hastily constructed. On the 10th May the Maoris commenced the attack by cutting open the head of one of Guard's men with a tomahawk and they killed another man Thomas White. The wrecked party then opened fire with the result that twenty to thirty natives were shot and twelve made prisoners. The second and fiercest attack was made by the Maoris and they succeeded in killing and wounding some ten twelve of the wrecked party. They also succeeded in stunning Mrs Guard and carrying away her and the two children after killing the wounded.

Captain Guard and twelve men got away and were met by some hundreds of the Ngatiawa tribe who prove friendly and sent them on to Moturoa though treating them as prisoners. In time, Guard and five of his men (with three Maori Chiefs) were allowed to go from Harriet Beach … in an open boat under the promise to give the Maoris … of powder. At Cloudy Bay they secured a better boat from the barque "Mary Ann" and reached Queen Charlotte Sound.

Later they crossed the Straits in an open boat and secured a passage from Port Nicholson to Sydney in the schooner "Joseph Weller" reaching Sydney on the eighth day of August.

An appeal was made to Sir Richard Bourke, Governor of New South Wales, with the result that the "Alligator", Captain Lambert, with a detachment of the 10th Regiment including Lieutenant Gunter left for New Zealand in the colonial schooner "Isabella". The "Isabella" had on board a detachment of the same regiment under the command of Captain Johnson and sailed from Sydney on the 3rd August 1834.

Here it was mentioned that when captured Mrs Guard and her two children are first taken to a Pah name Waitoturia situated not far from the sea on what is now known as the Lower Kina Road between Oaonui and the Oaitui stream. She was kept there for some time and then was taken down to Te Namu.

The "Alligator" and the "Isabella" had with them Captain Guard and Mr … to act as interpreter, and a Mr Miller to act as pilot and the three Maori Chiefs. The vessels met with bad weather and although they reached the Taranaki Coast on 12th September the first contact with the Maoris was some time later when Captain Guard with a party … Moturoa where it had been thought that Mrs Guard would be. It was found that she was some thirty miles down the coast. The Maoris were informed that the King's ship had come to Captain Guard, Mr Miller and Mr …, proceeding by land to Te Namu where Mrs Guard was imprisoned and the vessels lay off Te Namu.

The "Alligator's" guns were fired and this alarmed the natives but as bad weather came on the vessels had to put out to sea. On the 24th September they returned and landed a party of forty men personally commanded by Captain Lambert.

The Maoris refused to give up Mrs Guard and the children unless a ransom was paid, but the landing party took prisoner a chief Te Whiti and held him as hostage until the Guards were released. When being taken on board Te Whiti managed to jump overboard, but was fired on and wounded in the calf of the leg. Ultimately Mrs Guard and her children were released and the Pa shelled and burnt. The "Alligator" narrowly missed being wrecked when leaving Te Namu, through the wind suddenly falling, with the consequence that the vessel nearly drifted on the reef.

The wreck of the "Lord Worsley"

In 1882, twenty eight years after the event just described, another wreck took place eight miles further down the coast from where the "Harriet" had been wrecked. A steamer named "Lord Worsley" was wrecked on the North side of Te Namu bay which is quite close to Opunake Bay. The vessel was driven on the rocks a very short distance from the foot of the cliffs just round the point of the Otahi Stream (commonly called Te Namu).

Among other cargo she carried many kegs of powder and also four chests of gold and both powder and gold played a considerable part in the subsequent events. It is now eighty-three years since this wreck. At that time there was much fighting going on in various parts of the country and whilst very many of the natives were foes many of them were friendly while others remained staunch allies throughout. Among the latter was Wirimu Kingi Matakatea. As a consequence of the disturbances, the Maoris, both friend and foe alike, were anxious to get arms and ammunition.

When the wreck took place the Maoris on the south side of the Otahi Stream immediately began to search for ammunition. Seeing what the Maoris were after, the Captain who had got ashore called out to those on board to throw all powder overboard, doubtless telling them to smash the kegs first. The wreck was only about fifty yards from the cliff.

On discovering how they had been circumvented the Maoris became very incensed and would have slaughtered the whole ship's company had not Wirimu Kingi, the paramount chief of the extensive district, north and south, had not intervened. But to save them he had to fight a battle on a small scale.

Wirimu Kingi and a party of followers occupied a position on the top of a cliff, for the purpose of the fight, on the north side of the Otahi Stream and about opposite where the Opunake Dairy Factory is now. The fight lasted all day and was virtually won by Wirimu Kingi. Each time he fired throughout the whole day, he got his man with the result that the ship's company was saved.

Sometime afterward in recognition of the great work Wirimu Kingi had rendered, they sent over to him from Sydney a very fine boat built of Australian ceder. It was light long and of rather too fine lines for surf work. It required a very strong hand at the steering oar to steer it through the surf, for if it were to fall off to the slightest degree it would be instantly swamped.

Wirimu Kingi was a very fine man in every way. He was dignified and one of the most courteous of men. He was throughout a most loyal and firm friend of the Pakeha.

While the Maoris were hunting among the cargo for arms and ammunition, the broke open one of the four chests of gold. As it was not powder those who broke them open passed them on to other things. However, a few Maoris who had come down from a kainga not far from the "Harriet beach" placed more store on the gold and hit it in a swamp, which was below where the Opunake factory is now, secretly proposing to carry it all the way to their place. Later under cover of darkness they attempted to carry out their intention but found that they could only manage one chest at a time. They went off with one. That chest they carried up the coast, hiding it in a swamp just inland of the sand hills fronting the "Harriet beach" on the right of the lower end of the Manini Road. Whether it was later removed or not is not known but it has never been recovered nor did those Maoris come back for the other three chests. Perhaps they were killed in some quarrel over the chest they had taken away. A big reward was offered for the recovery of the gold. Its value was said to have been £12,000.

Later, Mr Graham, who, the Maoris said, was superintendent of the Auckland Province, with the assistance of a Maori who went by the English name of George Taylor, recovered the three boxes. Taylor found the gold but he was never heard to have obtained the reward. George Taylor was a very fine, tall, well built, handsome man. He has lately died in his ninetieth year.

**The Egmont County Council**

With the introduction of the present County system in 1876, the colony of New Zealand was divided into sixty-three counties, the object being to make provision for the primary needs of a comparatively small population in a large area.

Indeed so large were these areas that the district known as the Egmont County was originally part of the Taranaki County which extended from New Plymouth to the Taungatara stream three miles south of Opunake where it joined the Hawera County. The present Egmont County extends from the Puniho Road to Oeo. It has been divided into three ridings or districts so that the administration of the county will be as even as possible. The first riding is from Puniho Road to the Opourapa Road, the second from the Opourapa Road to the Waiaua River, the third from the Waiau River to Oeo.

With the increased development of the district came the need for improved roading and the realisation that the area controlled by the Parihaka Road Board was too great for effective management. In 1901 the Egmont County Council began to be formed and in 1902 took over the maintenance of the Main South Road from the Board. In 1919 the Parihaka Road Board was merged into the Egmont County Council. This area now comprised an area of 240 square miles and a capital value of £2,000,000.

In 1914 a disastrous fire destroyed the County Office and all records made previous to this date.

In 1925 the County raised a loan for sealing the Main and Eltham Roads. This was under subsidy from the Government and twenty eight and a half miles of road were permanently sealed at a very high cost. The district and side roads were formed and metalled under a rate system paid by those connected with it. The County endeavoured to carry out a progressive roading and bridge building programme to meet the requirements of the district. This has greatly increased the Public Debt. The peak was reached in 1928 when it stood at £135,413. Within the area of 240 square miles comprising the Egmont County Council there are some 63 roads, aggregating some 223 miles, 62 bridges over 25 feet in length and innumerable smaller bridges and culverts.

In 1932, the Loan's Conversion Act reduced all loans to 4½% (interest) and thus the Public Debt was considerably reduced. It now stands at £115,378. Because of this reduction all rating areas were abolished and a settled rate is now paid by the whole County.

A disastrous flood occurred in this County in 1936 and over £20,000 was lost in the destruction of roads and bridges. These have been repaired and the Council, at the outbreak of the war, were occupied in rebuilding all bridges in permanent material.

In 1939 the Government allowed a certain sum to be made available for approved applicants for the Housing Scheme. The interest on money was at the low rate of 3½%, but in the Egmont County little advantage was taken of this condition and only four houses were erected.

The County Council now controls only the district and the side roads as the Government itself took over the maintenance of the Main South Road in 1938. Since 1936 the County has taken an active part in the control of noxious weeds. £12,000 has been spent on this alone and have found great difficulty owing to the increase of ragwort on almost the whole of the farming land. Many people have found it necessary to change from dairy farming to sheep farming in order to control the weed.

In many counties a great problem is usually found owing to the inability of the Maoris to realise the need of County Rates. This does not apply to this County so much as most of the native land is leased to Europeans and therefore there are few natives liable to these Rates. Another problem is caused by the increased hospital rates in New Zealand. Since the introduction of the Social Security system there is a tendency for people to look to the hospitals. This applies especially to the natives who regard a stay in the hospital as a rather enjoyable holiday. The hospital rates are levied on the settlers' land and plus the income tax, he is rather overladen. The hospital levy for the Egmont County in 1924-25 was £1999 and in 1943-44 it is £5,809.

Owing to the great density of traffic to the cheese factories, compared with that of factories supplied with only one collecting lorry much more efficiency is experienced in the upkeep of the roads. In 1963 the County should be clear of all debt and when this is accomplished all roads will be sealed and all frontages cleared.

At the conclusion of the war much heavy machinery will be available for use by the Council and 30,000 acres of unproductive land in the Egmont County will by this means be made beautiful and useful. This is one of the future aims of the County Council and another is the afforestation of much barren and at present useless land.

**The Electric Power Board**

A hundred years ago no one could foresee the improvements that lay just ahead. The forces of nature have been so harnessed and adapted to man's needs that a great industry has arisen and millions of pounds have been invested in electrical undertakings.

It was not until the '90s that the settlers of the Opunake district became fully alive to these wonderful sources of light and energy and the early records show that in 1899 the Opunake Town Board were in communication with engineers regarding the possibilities of electrical supply for the town. Plans for a small scheme at the Waiau River were prepared by Mr J. R. Stewart at this time. In 1903 Mr R. Allo reported further on the possibilities of the scheme and in 1904 tenders were received for the installing of a suitable plant but the matter was held in abeyance. Again in 1907 the matter was raised by Messrs Almes and Allen who offered to put in a plant for the town. After further investigation by the Town Board an acetylene gas plant was installed in preference to the Power Scheme. In 1917 a further move was made by the Town Board, Messrs Templain and Toogood, consulting engineers being appointed to draw up a scheme. A poll of ratepayers was taken, a loan of £7,000 was raised and construction commenced. It was then considered that a much larger area than the town could be served and the Power Board was formed in 1921. Immediately it began work. Tenders were accepted for the construction of a dam and tunnel. This involved an expenditure of £3,000. A loan of £70,000 was carried by poll of ratepayers of the Power Board area (bounded by the Oeo Road in the south, east by Awatuna and north by Motuto Stream and in December of 1925 the area from the Motuti Stream to the Puniho Road was added to the licensed district of supply and a further loan of £22,000 was raised to cover the extra outlay capital required.

The £70,000 was to be expended on the building of a weir across the Waiau and a few yards on the south side of the bridge and by means of a race to conduct water through McPhun's Gap to the reservoir. A tunnel put through the reservoir to the Power House on the beach side of the cliff is 380 feet long, 5 feet high and 3 feet 6 inches wide. The water is retained in the valley by an earth dam right along the side facing the river. The weir at the tapping source has a sluice or flood gate and the regulation box is so constructed as to prevent the sand from drifting down the race to the valley.

The introduction of electricity to the district has been of great value for development. It supplies practically all dairy farms with power and practically all dairy factories. At the beginning it supplied 150 farms and 13 factories. The saving in the manufacture of butter and cheese was _d per lb.

The value of electricity is now fully appreciated and as a result of the continued demand for all purposes the Board will shortly be linking up with the major Government schemes so as to assure an adequate supply for the future.

## The Dairy Industry

Today when dairy farming and more particularly cheese-making is the main industry of this coast, it is interesting to look back at the birth and early struggles of the industry. As the land from Hawera to Opunake was surveyed and thrown open for selection, batches of settlers arrived from other parts and naturally the type of farming they were used to was commenced by them. With the advent of the settlers to the Rahotu and Pihama districts, Canterbury cropping was commenced and good reports were made of the fertility of the soil. Others there were who started grazing and sheep farming and here also the heavy wool clips were remarked upon as was the quality of the stock raised.

The papers of the day saw, however, the value of the land for dairying and thus we find the Egmont Courier in 1883 reporting that Taranaki (Wairarapa) dairy factory was paying 4d per gallon for milk, whilst Wairaki (Oamaru) factory was paying 4½d per gallon. In the issue of 1884 the following paragraph appeared:

"The Waikato Cheese Factory is supplying Auckland merchants and storekeepers with 10-15 crates of cheese every week which finds a ready sale. When will the people of Opunake wake up to the fact that their milk is the richest in the colony for cheese-making."

This must have been the jibe that awoke interest, for we find that early in the following year, 1885, Messrs A. H. Moore and Mr Breach canvassed the district of the Opunake settlers with the object of forming a Co-operative Cheese Company. Shares were readily taken up and within three months a company was floated. The first directors were: Messrs S. Breach (chairman), Anderson, W. Pettigrew, Bayley, J. Ching, J. Stevenson and W. McLeod, whilst A. H. Moore was appointed Secretary. Thus it was at Opunake that the first exporting cheese factory was launched in this province.

The Company purchased a property of six acres fronting Layard Street and a factory was erected thereon. The plant was purchased from Mr Crawford, Dunedin, the principal item being a circular, jacketed 500 gallon vat for the making of the cheese, with internal agitators which were driven by a shaft coming through the centre of the bottom of the vat. Mr Cranswick of Hamilton was appointed manager and the factory opened in September 1885. There were thirty-five suppliers and payment was by the gallon of 16½ gallons, and was made monthly by Postal Notes due three months after the date of issue. Milk was not received on Sunday, the suppliers having to skim it and make it into butter. The method of curing the cheese vat to hold it in a steam-heated curing room for three months before sale and all cheese made was coloured. The Loan and Mercantile Agency Company Limited was appointed selling agents and the cheese was taken to Hawera by waggon and then sailed from there to Wellington for disposal.

The first season's output was 35 tons and at the request of the agents a trial shipment, kept in a specially fitted up room on one of their ships, was sent to England, where it met with a ready sale at 44s per cwt. The operations of the Opunake factory was so successful that a factory was set up at Otakeho and another at Manaia, whilst there was a steady increase in the number of suppliers to that of Opunake.

To cope with the increase it was decided to receive milk morning and evening and to make two batches of cheese each day. This proved the undoing of the venture as owing to the rush process the cheese went bad and so did the Postal Notes which the suppliers had received.

Dissatisfaction was now rife among the suppliers and in March 1886 cheese-making ceased. A new Directorate, consisting of Messrs Anderson (chairman), Bayley, C. McHardy, A. Clough, J. McFie, W. McLeod and J. Ching were appointed and they purchased a separator and churn with which they commenced butter-making.

This was continued until 1888 when the premises were leased to the Crown Dairy Company for a period of five years, at the end of which time they purchased the factory and equipment.

A feature of the operations of the old Opunake Dairy Company was that suppliers did not take whey back to their farms. The whey was run from the factory to a big concrete sump at the back of the factory section and a Co-operative pig-farm was run in conjunction with the factory business. Mr E. Bayley was in charge of this part of the business and attended to the feeding of the pigs, which were killed and dressed at the farm and sold to a butcher at New Plymouth.

Dairy farming is one of the most important Primary Industries of New Zealand and the story of its development and progress during the past sixty years is an epic one. In the year 1880, £14,000 worth of dairy produce was exported, whilst in the year 1939, no less than £22,000,000 worth of butter and cheese was shipped overseas. In this development Taranaki played a prominent part and today we find that the province is the home of the cheese-making industry in New Zealand, 45% of the total amount of cheese exported being shipped from New Plymouth and Patea.

**Opunake Beach**

Among the most popular tourist resorts of New Zealand is that of Opunake. Although the beach itself is little more than a ¼ mile long, visitors flock to it from all parts of the country. It is a horse-shoe-shaped bay surrounded on three sides by almost perpendicular cliffs down which paths wind through the plentiful foliage with which they are covered.

Early in Opunake's history the bay was used as an anchorage for ships carrying various supplies. A large store-shed was erected on the beach to contain the produce unloaded from the ships. Opunake supplied the entire district between Okato and Eltham with what was brought by the ships. A fatal accident occurred to one of the ships bringing supplies. It carried a cargo of bricks and to unload these it came inshore, trusting to the rising tide to float it again when it had unloaded its cargo. It came too far, however, and grounded on the sand, the flood of the tide being insufficient to float it again. Everything that could be spared was thrown overboard, but nothing could be done to save the ship. Only the skeleton of the ship remains and this may sometimes be seen partly buried in the sand and partly supported by the rocks.

In later days the beach has been steadily improved by the Seaside Society. It has a large sheltered area available for campers, and in the height of the Summer season the camping ground is occupied to its fullest extent. A cook-house has been provided for the campers and all may take advantage of it.

There are also many cottages lining the sea-front as well as the Society's buildings. These are a pavilion, a grand-stand, bathing sheds, Surf Club building and band rotunda.

Another feature of the beach is the Opunake Life-Saving Club which has done and is doing outstanding work. The safety of the bathers is well ensured by their vigilant watching. The bathing and surfing facilities are among the best in New Zealand and it is this which particularly attracts its many visitors.

The formation of a Seaside Park as Opunake's Centennial Memorial has been commenced. As far back as 1910 Mr M. J. Brennan and a small band of enthusiasts formed the first Seaside Improvement Society, and down through the intervening years public-spirited men have always been available to carry on the good work.

The splendid sands and surf have consistently maintained their perfection, and the energy of those concerned has been concentrated on improving the surroundings and providing facilities for comfort of all. Since 1910, over £6,000 has been expended on bringing the facilities for comfort and pleasure up to their present high standard, a standard which will compare favourably with any in the country, a fact vouched for by the hundreds of tourists who make extended stays in the comfortable camp area. The improved portion of the beach surroundings comprises 4½ acres of formerly privately owned land and the Society's and is to develop the whole area as a model playground, the beautification of which they are enthusiastically carrying forward with proper planning. A few years hence will see the district endowed with a park which in beauty and convenience will be worthy of the adjoining beach and which together will endow this and future generations, both young and old, with unequalled means to Health and Happiness.

**Prominent Men of Opunake**

Mr George William Rogers, one-time chairman of the Town Board of Opunake, was a member of that body for over ten years and chairman for seven years. He was born in the year 1862, in Canterbury, where he was educated, and brought up to a commercial life. In 1882 he removed to the North Island, and shortly afterwards established himself at Opunake. In all Public Affairs he always exerted himself to promote the welfare of the district. He was honorary secretary to the Opunake Racing Club for thirteen years, chairman of the School Committee and a prominent director of the Opunake Wharf Company. Mr Rogers was mainly instrumental in obtaining from the Town Board a grant for the Wharf Company to make a road to the jetty.

Mr Michael Fleming, Chairman of the Egmont County Council, and one of the members for Rahotu riding, was born in County Tipperary, Ireland, in the year 1854. He was educated at the Galbally National School, and was brought up on his father's farm. In 1874 he came to New Zealand, and landed in Nelson, and was for three years on the West Coast diggings, principally on the Buller River. Mr Fleming then went to Canterbury, where he remained for eighteen months, and afterwards removed to Hawke's Bay, where he remained for two years. In 1881, at the time of the Te Whiti troubles, he acquired part of his Rahotu farm, and the fencing he put up was pulled down by the Maoris. Mr Fleming was a member of the Egmont County Council from the time of its Institution, and was appointed chairman in the year 1904. For over twelve years he was a member of the Parihaka Road Board, and for eight years its chairman. He was also chairman of the Cape Egmont Dairy Company for many years from its inception in 1896, was chairman of the local school committee and of the Domain Board, and a trustee of the Public Hall. In 1884 Mr Fleming married the second daughter of Mr John Kavanagh, of Okato, and had ten children. He was further referred to as an excellent farmer.

Mr James Burgess, one of the members of the Egmont County Council for Rahotu riding, was born in the year 1874 in Hertfordshire, England, and was brought up to farming. After some years farming on his own account he came to New Zealand in 1881, and took up his farm at Warea. Mr Burgess had been a member of the Egmont County Council since its Formation, was chairman of the Warea Co-operative Dairy Factory and of the Cape Egmont Horticultural Society. For some years he was a member of the Parihaka Road Board, and was the county's first representative of the New Plymouth Charitable Aid Board. Mr Burgess was Provincial Delegate and Secretary of the Warea branch of the Farmer's Union, of which he was also president in earlier years, and was director of the Egmont Box Company Limited, and president of the Warea Literary Institute. Above all, however, Mr Burgess was a farmer.

Mr Ebenezer Maxwell, one of the members of the Rahotu riding in the Egmont County Council, was born in Kilmore, Victoria, Australia, in the year 1862, and was son of the Rev Andrew Maxwell, and a nephew of Mr Justice Johnston. He came to New Zealand in 1866, and was educated at the Crofton Grammar School, Wellington. Subsequently, he was for three years in the employment of a Life-Insurance Company, and later on entered the law office of a relative. He joined the Armed Constabulary at the time of the Parihaka disturbance (1881), remained in the force for seven years, and was engaged in the clerical office at Opunake, and in the Defence Department, Wellington, for most of the time. After resigning from the force he started sheep-farming near Opunake. His first farm, sold early in the present century, consisted of 440 acres. The present holding (now his son's) is named Marumarunui, after an old Maori fort of refuge visible from the homestead and situated on Mount Egmont. Mr Maxwell took a keen interest in public matters, and was connected with many local bodies and institutions. Since the formation of the county he was a member of the Egmont County Council, and he was for many years a member of the Parihaka Road Board, part of the time as chairman. He was a member of the New Plymouth Harbour Board, to which he was elected in 1894, and of which he was chairman for seven years. Mr Maxwell was a director of the Opunake Wharf Company Limited since its inception. He was Major of No.1 Battalion, Wellington Mounted Rifles. He was also vice-president and a member of the Farmer's Union in the Taranaki Provincial District, and a director of the Taranaki Farmer's Mutual Insurance Association. Mr Maxwell took a great interest in botany, and at the Melbourne Exhibition he gained first prize for a collection of New Zealand ferns. He was survived by two sons and one daughter, one of the sons having the home farm and carrying on the study of botany for which his father was famous.

Mr Samuel Campbell was elected a member of the Egmont County Council for the Oeo riding in the year 1905. He was born in County Derry, Ireland, in 1861, and learned farming on his father's farm. In 1882 he came to New Zealand, and settled in the Taranaki district. After some years spent in general and farm work he took up a portion of his later holding, which he added to from time to time. Mr Campbell was a director of the Pihama Dairy Company since its formation; was a member of the school committee, and a trustee of the Hall Committee, the Recreation Grounds committee, and a member of the Oeo Bowling Club. He married, had ten children and spent his life as a farmer.

Mr James Conaglen was elected a member of the Egmont County Council for the Oeo riding in the year 1905. He was born in County Donegal, Ireland, in 1856, where he was educated and learned farming on his father's property. In 1876 Mr Conaglen came to New Zealand, and landed in Auckland, where he worked for about four years on the kauri fields. He then went to Wanganui, where he was engaged in bush work for several years. In 1885 he removed to Pihama, where he acquired part of the holding now possessed by his descendants. He took this in conjunction with his brother and another, whose shares he subsequently acquired. The holding consists of two farms, separated by the Skeet Road. The homestead "Wanvoe" consists of 113 acres, the other farm, "Glencoe" contains 298 acres. Mr Conaglen was a member of the Waimate Road Board; was chairman of the Pihama school committee and of the Hall Committee; was a member of the Oeo Bowling Club; and had been a director of the Pihama Dairy Company since its inception in 1897. Mr Conaglen married and had a family of six. He proved another excellent farmer.

Mr Robert Warner was elected a member of the Egmont County Council for Rahotu riding in the year 1905. He was born in Nelson in 1847 and was a son of one of the early Nelson pioneers, who land in Nelson in 1842, and was one of the few who escaped the Wairau massacre. Mr Warner was educated in Nelson, and brought up on his father's farm. He was subsequently for many years sheep farming in the Wanganui district, and managing farms, and was then for three years in the Midhurst district, before removing to Opunake in 1889. Mr Warner's farm consisted of 320 acres of good grazing land, on which he conducted dairy farming.

For some years Mr Warner was a member of the Eltham Road school committee; and was for seven years Chief Ranger in the Ancient Order of Foresters, was a circuit steward for some years in the Wesleyan church; and was choir leader of his local church in the Wanganui district. He married and had seven sons and two daughters.

Mr John Wagstaff Brame, was a native of Birmingham, England, and came to New Zealand with his parents as a boy in 1865. He was a son of Mr John Brame, one of Albertland's pioneers. After being educated in Auckland at private schools, he entered the service of the Telegraph Department in 1872, as messenger in the Coromandel office, and was appointed to a cadetship in 1878. Since then he was stationed at various offices, of which Opunake was far from the least. Mr Brame took much interest in musical matters. He was also an enthusiastic student of New Zealand ferns and had one of the best collections in the colony. After leaving Opunake Mr Brame was for some time at Kumara, whence he was later transferred to Balclutha.

Mr George Charles Keenan, formerly in charge of the Opunake School, was a native of Westmeath, Ireland, and was educated at Cheltenham College and King's College, London. He came to New Zealand in 1880, and from that time was engaged in teaching in various schools. As a cricketer he distinguished himself; he took a great interest in athletics generally, and was a member of the Phoenix Cricket Club in Wellington, and an active member of the various football clubs. The main distinction of his career was that he was for many years the first Lieutenant of the Wellington Guards.

Mr George Philip Armstrong, editor and proprietor of the Opunake Times for many years, was born in Greytown, New Zealand, in the year 1870. He was brought up as a printer and worked successively on the Wairarapa Standard and the Wairarapa Observer. For some time subsequently he gained experience on papers in the Wellington, Hawke's Bay, and Auckland districts, before entering into partnership with Mr M. J. Brennan in the year 1895. Mr Armstrong took an active interest in the various clubs and societies of Opunake.

Mr John McDavitt, solicitor, Opunake, was born in Bendigo, Australia, in the year 1858, and came to New Zealand at an early age. He was educated in a private school at Greymouth, and afterwards entered the office of Mr A. R. Guiness, later Speaker in the House of Representatives. He returned to Australia some time later, but returned again to New Zealand, to enter the office of Mr W. H. Jones, a solicitor, of Greymouth. In 1888 he was admitted a solicitor of the Supreme Court of New Zealand, and in 1891 began practice in Greymouth. Eighteen months he removed to Reefton, where he remained for two years. Mr McDavitt then went to Stratford, where he practised for three years, and thence went to Waihi. In the year 1897 he settled at Opunake. He was the solicitor for the Opunake Town Board, and the Oaonui, Pihama and Opunake Dairy Companies, and was conductor of the Opunake Harmonic Society and Brass Band; was connected with the choir of the Roman Catholic Church, a steward of the Opunake Racing Club, and on the committee of the Caledonian Society.

Mr Andrew Clarke, former Tailor and Habitmaker of Opunake, was born in the year 1868, in Auckland, where he was educated, and at thirteen years of age was apprenticed to the tailoring trade. He subsequently worked as a journeyman in various parts of Auckland, and was for a short time in business on his own account with a partner. About 1891 he removed to the Taranaki District, and in 1894 went to Opunake to manage a business which he shortly afterwards acquired. For over eight years Mr Clarke was secretary and delegate for the Opunake Football Club, was a member of the management committee of the Taranaki Rugby Union, the Opunake Racing Club, the Caledonian Society, and the Coursing Club, and secretary of the Des Forge Challenge Cup Union. While in Auckland and competed with some success in pedestrian events. Mr Clarke was married with two children.

Newman Brothers (Henry James Newman), Former General Storekeepers and Provincial Merchants, Opunake. Agents for the Northern Fire Insurance Company, Straits Fire and Marine Company, Booth and McDonald's Farm Implements, Reid and Gray's Drags and Agricultural Implements, McDougall's Celebrated Sheep Dip, Yates' Seeds, and the Aorere S.S. Company. The business of this Firm was established in the year 1880, by the proprietor in conjunction with his brother, Mr J. H. Newman, and great progress was made. Messrs Newman Brothers were twice burnt out, and then occurred the death of one of the partners, but Mr H. J. Newman carried on with the indomitable spirit of the pioneers. He replaced the old store with a handsome and well-stocked building, which was on the site where Hughson's now stands. Mr H. J. Newman is a son of the late Mr J. L. Newman, a well-known colonist and was born in Nelson. The family afterwards removed to New Plymouth, where Mr Newman was educated. He subsequently entered the office of the Union S.S. Company, and remained there until he decided to establish his business at Opunake. Mr Newman takes a great interest in local matters, and warmly supports whatever promises to aid the progress of Opunake. He is a member of the Ancient Order of Forresters, and has held office as treasurer of the local court for many years.

Prosser Bros (Claude Thomas Prosser and Rowley Tidd Prosser), former Watchmakers and Jewellers, Opunake. Messrs Prosser Bros imported largely, and took repairing of all kinds. They were owners of considerable property in Opunake. Mr Claude Thomas Prosser, the Senior Partner and Manager of the firm, was born in Wellington, in the year 1880. He was brought up as a watchmaker and jeweller under Mr C. Rowlands, and worked at the trade from 1898. In 1903 he took over the business in conjunction with his brother. Mr Prosser was a member of the Opunake Mounted Rifles, and of the Opunake Coursing Club. Mr Rowley Tidd Prosser, Junior Partner in the firm, was born in the year 1881 in Opunake, where he was educated. He subsequently took up farming, and held a dairy farm of 230 acres in the Opunake district.

Mr Samuel Prosser, who was an early settler of Opunake, was born in the year 1844, in London, England, where he was educated. He went to Australia in 1852, and in 1864 came to New Zealand. Mr Prosser went to the Wakamarina diggings in company with two brothers and was very successful. The brothers subsequently went to Wellington, and established a large livery and bait stables. Carriages for these stables were used by the Duke of Edinburgh and suite on the occasion of their visit, and Mr S. Prosser several times drove the royal party. For some time afterwards Mr Prosser kept the old Crown and Anchor Hotel, and, later, was driving a coach on the Hutt and Porirua lines. A coach built to his order in the year 1880 was so large that it was named Big Ben and, after having various owners for twenty-six years, it was broken up at Taihape in 1906. It was an interesting sight to see Mr Prosser, with Big Ben and six spanking greys, going down the Ngahuranga line, or from Wellington to the Hutt races. Mr Prosser was for some time proprietor of the Victoria Hotel. In 1882 he went to Opunake and opened the Empire Hotel, a very large building. It was destroyed by fire in the year 1885, and Mr Prosser then took over the Club Hotel. He subsequently sold out and returned to Wellington but soon went back to Opunake, where he bought land. He sold out his farm in 1889 and opened the Opunake Hotel, in which he remained some time; but retired in 1893, two years before his death. Mr Prosser was a public-spirited man, and was a warm supporter of any movement having for its object the improvement of the town and district. He was for some time a member of the Town Board. He died at the age of fifty-two, leaving a widow, six sons and five daughters.

Mr John Guy, passed away in his eighty-second year on February 25th, 1921 in Opunake. He was a pioneer of this district. Mr Guy was born in Padstow, Cornwall and as a young man was supposed to be a sailor. He did not care for sea-life, however, and came to seek his fortune in New Zealand in 1875. He could tell many a stirring story about life in the early days of the colony. He came to Opunake in 1889, where he followed the occupation of an engineer and carpenter until his later years, when his failing health forced him to relinquish his work. Many monuments of Mr Guy's handicraft still remain in the district. He was the soul of integrity and honour and was a staunch Methodist, being for many years a lay preacher. Mr Guy took a keen interest in local affairs and occupied a position on many local bodies.

Mr M. J. Brennan died on the 12th September, 1920. He was respected, loved and honoured by all. Mr Brennan established the "Opunake Times" in 1896 and ran it until 1913, when Mr A. J. Brennan took it over. In 1919 it was sold to its present proprietor, Mr Rush. Mr Brennan commenced business at Tauranga and drifted into Journalism. Later he established the "Wanganui Chronicle" and he also began the "Waimate Witness" at Manaia. Mr Brennan came to Opunake in 1894 and during his life here he became the Secretary of the Pihama, Cape Egmont, Opua Road, and Opunake Dairy Companies. Mr Brennan was born at Auckland in 1854 and his boyhood was spent at Panmure. His right leg was amputated in 1915, and this helped to hasten his death, for he died at the age of sixty-six. Mr Brennan was of sterling qualities and a good churchman. He was survived by his wife, five sons and four daughters.

**Pioneer Women of Opunake**

Mrs Hickey of "Te Namu", Opunake, came from Fermoy, Ireland. Her skill as a nurse soon became known. On her errands of mercy she suffered many discomforts while travelling through mud, darkness and storms. In Ireland they have a belief that "death-knocks" are heard just before the death of anyone in the house. One night about midnight some-one knocked at Mrs Hickey's door once, saying that he had left his wife at home with their only child, a baby girl, who had become suddenly violently ill. Would Mrs Hickey tell them what to do? She sent him to the township to get certain medicines. Then, as soon as he had gone, she set off across country alone in the dark, to the woman's home. When she opened the door, the woman started to reproach her. "Why didn't you come in when you first came to the door? I heard three knocks on the front door but when I opened it you were not there. Then I heard three knocks on the front door, but you were not there either. When I returned to the room three more knocks sounded over the cot. I took my little girl in my arms and she died immediately. I am sure you could have saved here." Such was her faith in Mrs Hickey's powers. Mrs Hickey never forgot a kindness. There was one other pioneer woman, a kindly soul, who had helped her through a great deal of sickness. This woman became a drink addict and sank lower and lower. At last she died in poverty. When the Minister's wife called to offer help she was astonished to find the body laid out in spotless sheets and everything else in keeping. In answer to the visitor's expressions of surprise Mrs Hickey, who was kneeling at the bedside, said simply, "She was my friend. I see her as she was thirty years ago." That was the charity of one pioneer woman to another. Mrs Hickey's faith in God was boundless, as was he belief in the goodness underlying every nature. In later years her friends came to her with their worries, just as they had done with their sicknesses. To the end her home held the core of pioneer hospitality.

Mrs E. S. Stronge had many experiences with the Maoris, at first alarming, but when misunderstanding had vanished she found the natives kind and charming. Just before the first horse races in Opunake, Mrs Stronge gave a very pretty dressing-gown with quantities of cream lace at the sleeves and neck and a cream felt hat to a Maori woman and to her husband a pair of underpants and a tall beaver hat. They were the greatest swells at the races! One Christmas Day Mrs Stronge brought in an old Maori to share their meal. When asked to have a second helping he cried “No! I bust!” Another Maori who often came and had a good meal always went out and rolled about on the grass. He said “That the good thing when I are too full.” One day a Maori rode up to the door and asked Mrs Stronge to “wash his shirt and make it hard on the chest”. It was in such a state that Mrs Stronge just had to say “I do not know how.” A Maori brought her a very sick baby which she saw was starving. She told him to come every day and get some milk for it. He came once and the next time Mrs Stronge saw him she asked him why he had not done as she bid him. He said “No good. She too much trouble!” Once a Maori woman carried in one of Mrs Stronge’s little girls, saying that she had broken her leg. Imagine how Mrs Stronge felt – forty miles from a hospital. She sent for the doctor, but when he arrived he was too drunk to stand. The pioneer spirit made itself felt once more, Mrs Stronge ordered the doctor away, pulled the leg into place herself and carefully tended it during the following weeks. Her leg-setting was quite a success.

Mrs A. Warner came to Opunake over fifty-five years ago and lived on the Eltham Road, which was just mud with pungas and logs laid across – just a one-man track to walk on. It took three or four horses to pull an empty dray to Mrs Warner’s place, which was three miles up the road. The first week that she did the washing Mr Warner and the boys felled a very big tree, which unfortunately buried both the line and the clean white clothes in the mud. Mrs Warner was known far and wide for her nursing abilities.

Mrs Guy, Senior, was another pioneer woman noted for her kindness in nursing; also answering calls everywhere for help. She was a devoted worker for the Methodist Church, in which she held several offices up to the time when, at the age of eighty-seven, she broke a leg and had it amputated. She kept up her interests to the last, however, passing away at the age of ninety-two.

**Present Day Opunake**

The town of Opunake is situated on the West Coast of the North Island of New Zealand. It is forty miles from New Plymouth by motor and sixty-four by railway. It has a population of 1080. The “Opunake Times” is the bi-weekly newspaper of this town and has been in circulation since 1896. There are two banks, and infant, intermediate, and secondary schools, and also a convent school. Opunake possesses a telephone exchange, post and telegraph bureau, money order office, a hydro-electric plant and a public hospital with a resident doctor. There are monthly sittings of a Stipendiary Magistrate Court with a district police constable. Opunake is the centre of a large dairying district with factories or creameries every few miles. There is good accommodation and excellent travelling facilities on the tar-sealed roads. There is a Horse-shoe-shaped bay surrounded on three sides with almost perpendicular cliffs which is proving increasingly popular. The beach is almost a ¼ mile long and the tide recedes some 200 yards, leaving plenty of room for amusements. The sporting opportunities are good with shooting of game and plenty of trout in the vicinity. Opunake is well-supplied with every conceivable article by the varied assortment of shops along the Main Street. There are three butchers, one baker, four drapers, four grocers, two fruiterers, one furniture shop, two suppliers of electrical equipment, two radio-repair centres, three confectioners, two tea-rooms, one fish shop, one sports depot, one boot shop, two jewellers, two hairdresser and tobacconists, two beauty salons, one bicycle shop, two garages, one dentist, one Library, one chemist and photographic studios, one theatre, two hotels, three halls, four churches and numerous offices.

**The Cenotaph**

This monument in memory of the soldiers killed in the Great War was set up in 1920. It was suggested that trees, to be planted as a living memorial, be donated. Dr Watt gave an oak sapling collected at Gallipoli.

**Opunake** – Herbert D. Mullon, New Plymouth

The township of Opunake (County of Egmont) is built on the south Taranaki coast 40 miles south of New Plymouth. A military post was established in 1865 and the site for a township was surveyed by the Provincial Government in 1867. The present population is about 1200.

"Postage Stamps of New Zealand" Volume 3 records that the Post Office was opened on 27 May 1870 under the name OPUNAKI, the relative authority being "NZ Government Gazette" notice of 1870. This notice, page 372, announced the appointment of John Black as Postmaster but the date of his appointment and opening of the office is not given. The relative post office notice is dated 26 May 1870.

The "Taranaki Provincial Gazette" XVIII Number 12 in reprinting the notice spells the word correctly as OPUNAKE. The "NZ Gazette" 1871 page 198 in recording the names of offices opened since 1 January 1870 gives the spelling as Opunake. This same spelling is repeated in the "Taranaki Gazette" XIX Number 15. The "Postage Stamps of New Zealand" records that the spelling was changed from I to E (Opunaki to Opunake) from 1 April 1881, with the footnote 'nearest known date'.

The writer, who lived in this town as a boy, has in his possession a lettercard dated 5 July 1887 with the office name in the cancellation spelt with an "I" – Opunaki. This is the latest date he has been able to find. The earliest "E" – Opunake – he has found is 22 January 1890. Perhaps someone can fill the gap?

When this matter was referred to the Director-General of the Post Office in November 1957 the reply he received showed little light on the reason for the use of the "I" – Opunaki – for such a long time.

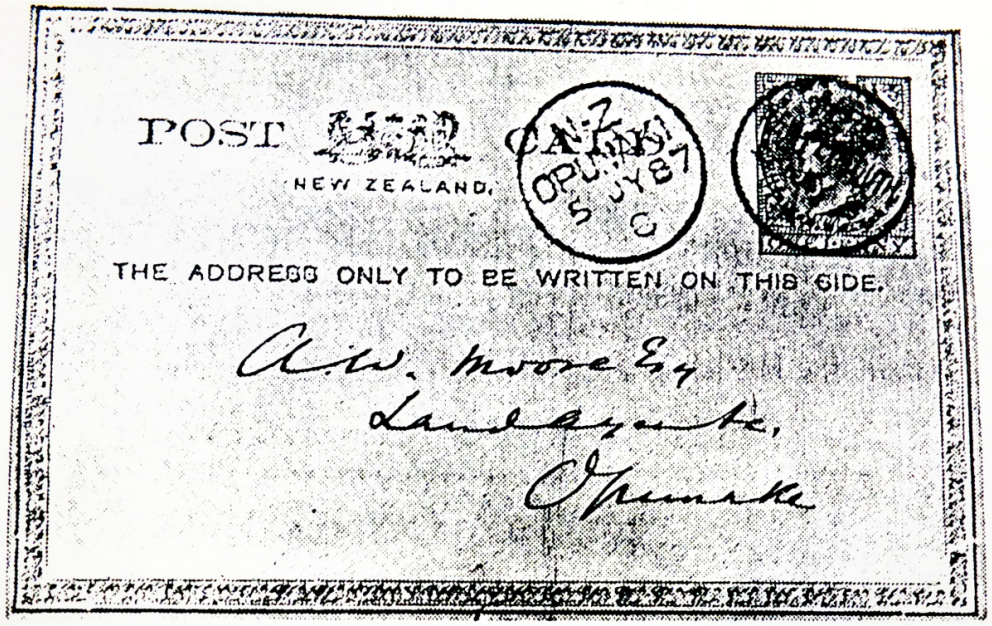
> "It is noted that you have a postcard bearing postmark 'Opunaki 5 July 1887'. The official records do not show definitely when the spelling of the office name was changed from Opunaki to Opunake, but it was prior to 1 April 1881. The Money Order and Savings Bank Branch was opened on 1 January 1881 and the Gazette notice spells the name of the office as Opunake. In all probability the spelling of the name was changed on that date. It was not uncommon, in the latter part of the last century, for the original date stamp to continue in use after the spelling of the office name has been changed. It is also known that the original date stamp continued in use at an office when the designation was changed entirely."

I submit that the name of the office was always OPUNAKE – that it this was the intention of the authorities in 1870. The change took place when the clerk who wrote the instruction to the manufacturer of the date stamp miss-spelt the word using an "I" instead of the "E"; or the manufacturer misread the instruction. What is remarkable is that the 'error' was allowed to continue for such a long while.

It was rather disappointing that when this matter was referred to the Post Office no further action was taken to check the official records – the Gazettes – and that apparently the correspondence was not referred to the outside authorities on such matters – i.e. the various persons connected with the 'Handbooks'. It is further submitted that the date stamp 'error' is unique. The intention was to use an "E" but someone used an "I"!

The 1d red-brown NZ Postcard mentioned in this article has the stamp cancelled NEW PLYMOUTH with the OPUNAKI 5 JY 87 C coin circle date stamp impression just to the left. If anyone knows the whereabouts of the card please report to the Editor immediately please.

***Subsequent Newspaper Article*** *(undated)*




Why was Opunake spelled "Opunaki"? This post card, dated July 5, 1887, shows clearly that the post stamp used ended the township's name with an I and not an E.

Mr H. D. Mullon, New Plymouth, said it was not uncommon for the name of a post office to be changed or an alteration to be made in the spelling. The first post office at Waitara was known as Raleigh and Ngaere was originally spelled "Nga-Ire."

However, he said, Opunake had an origin unique in Taranaki and possibly New Zealand. The post office was opened on May 27, 1870, and the official Gazette notice of the 1871 recording of the opening gave the name as "Opunake." This same spelling, as we know it today, was retained in the Taranaki Gazette.

But the date stamp supplied at the time and in use at least until July 1887, spelled the name Opunaki. Post Office records showed that the name was changed on or about April 1, 1881. The date stamp, however, was not replaced until some years later and the earliest "Opunake" he had discovered was on January 22, 1890.

The post card (above) was written by Henry Robert Richmond who settled on Carrington Road at Hurworth when he arrived in the colony in 1851. Mr Mullon added that the spelling with an "I" might have come about by an error in the General Post Office. The New Zealand Gazette in 1870 notified that John Black had been appointed postmaster at "Opunaki," he said.