

Ahuriri: "the dwelling place of the eel" and "a hopeless spot for a town": Napier in the 1850s

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ABSTRACT: This paper looks at the early Pākehā settlers of Napier in the 1850s, and attempts to unravel what houses they had, where they were, and what styles they were built in. In the course of this investigation, an inevitable intersection with the pre-existing Māori iwi was unearthed and is also examined. It searches for the earliest existing housing remains in Hawkes Bay. So far, very little has been discovered remaining from the 1850s.

When the surveyor and writer Alfred Domett first laid eyes on the proposed site for the town of Napier, he thought that it was a most "hopeless spot for a town."¹ Instructed in 1854 to produce a Town Plan, by 1855 the town's future was well planned out, with streets splendidly named either in honour of the finest of British poets and authors (Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, Chaucer, Emerson, Tennyson, Dickens, Browning, Dalton etc); or of the most brave fighters in the recent wars in India (Napier, Hastings, Clive etc) and their famous battle sites (Hyderabad, Scinde, Meanee, etc). By the end of the 1850s Napier was home to over 1500 people – yet barely a decade before the population was sparse, devoid of Pākehā and even relatively few Māori. So: what had happened in the interim - and where exactly did Napier start?

¹ Campbell *Story of Napier* pp 6-7.

Beginnings

In all probability the first Pākehā houses in Hawkes Bay would have been whaler's shanties, along the beach at Ahuriri. Despite the presence of an iron tri-pot (from the Kidnappers whaling station) in the "Iron Pot" (Napier's Inner Harbour) today, the inner harbour at Ahuriri was not a deep, safe anchorage, and there were treacherous reefs just offshore of the steeply shelving shingle banks. Regardless, Stevenson notes that: "We know however, 17 whalers, with crews totaling more than 100 men, were operating in the area by 1847."²

Dine notes that early whaling ships included the *Mermaid of London*, in Oct 1796, and *English Glory* before her,³ while Stevenson notes that most early whalers would have been operating from Tasmania, but also set up shore stations "established along the [NZ]

² Stevenson *Port and People* p 1.

³ Dine *Petane* p 31.

coast from south of Kidnappers to Mahia Peninsula."⁴ Some came ashore, and a very few settled:

By 1840 whaler, William Morris, had established a shore station at Whakaari, Tangoio ... William Edwards, an ex-whaler, lived at Tangoio for nearly 10 years in the 1840s with a Maori wife and five children ... Petane Maori supplied food to the sealers and whalers who set up their stations along the coast of Hawke Bay, and traded dressed flax for goods.⁵

Even less is known about how the whalers lived when they went ashore. Temporary shacks, probably made of driftwood, pumice rocks, upturned boats, or canvas, regardless, none of these whalers' shacks remain in Hawkes Bay today. Fyffe House, a rare surviving whaler's cottage in Kaikoura, dating from 1842, has foundations made from whale vertebrae, while material from old boats made up part of the structure.⁶ While this may not

⁴ Stevenson *Port and People* p 1.

⁵ Dine *Petane* p 31.

⁶ New Zealand Historic Places Trust "Fyffe House" n.p.

have been common, building materials on the shingle spits were certainly at a premium. Not only was there no good rock for building, no clean sand for plaster, no timber for building - for literally miles and miles around - due to the influx of the ocean, there was also no typical swamp material such as raupō, and nor was there any fresh water for drinking. At first glance therefore, Domett was right - Ahuriri was a dismal place for a town.

Geographic

Napier's geography was, if not unique, at least rather unusual. The vast inland plains and gently rolling hills of Hawkes Bay, a largely tinder dry climate, had mostly already lost their original tōtara forest cover and so the flat, rich, silty river plains of Heretaunga were often already simply grassed: the climate was ideal for orcharding and literally perfect for sheep farming.

Set just a few miles off the shores of a series of gently rolling hillsides was the island Mataruahou, the bare "Bluff head" that Cook⁷

⁷ Cook *Captain Cook in New Zealand* p 41. First voyage made in HM Bark Endeavour 1768-1771, Bluff head sighted on Saturday 14th October 1769. No stop was made, and so the lagoon behind was presumed but not confirmed.

and D'Urville⁸ sailed past without stopping.⁹ Geologically undistinguished, and never completely an island, the mile long lump of clay and limestone was linked back to the mainland by two giant shingle banks, caused by the combined force of at least four major rivers that discharged their load of ground river stones and water out at the edge of the bay: the Tukituki, Ngaruroro, Tūtaekurī, and Esk. The product of millions of years of geological shaping, these two lengthy shingle spits contained between them the brackish warm waters of the vast inland sea, a lagoon known to the Māori as Ahuriri.¹⁰

Small islands dotted the lagoon, many of them settled by Māori as temporary fishing villages. Most Māori lived near the river mouths, for

⁸ Jules Sebastian Cesar Dumont D'Urville noted the island of Mataruahou also, but spotting numerous columns of smoke from cooking fires, did not stop there, and sailed on by. "European discovery of New Zealand: French Explorers" n.p.

⁹ Stevenson *Port and People* p 1.

¹⁰ The name Ahuriri is said to belong to a chief who dug out the opening, but in its simplest form means a giant hinaki, or fishing net, which seems the most appropriate. Other names for this area include Te Whanganui-a-Orotū, Te Whanga, Ahuriri Lagoon and the Napier Inner Harbour. The reclaimed land in the lagoon is now commonly known as Lagoon Farm.

fresh water supply, and so the large island and smaller outcrops above the lagoon surface were largely unsettled.

The principle Maori villages in the vicinity... were Te Awapuni, Waipureku, Tanenuiarangi, Pakowai, Whakatu, Awatoto and a few years later Pokonao... Waipureku, south across the Ngaruroro, on the present site of East Clive.¹¹

Of the small islands closest to the mouth of the estuary, two have been noted as being Māori pā - one still occupied in the 1840s (Te Pakake), one not. Gough Island and Māori Island, the two closest small islands to Mataruahou, had been the scene of a great tribal slaughter early in the nineteenth century, and so many hundred were killed there that the islands remained largely bare ever since due to tapu.¹²

Reclamation work on the north-west side of the island has obliterated all traces of a pa that was well known at the beginning of the last century Pakake. There used to be two low islands, little more than sandbanks, just inside the eastern spit. One of these was known to early Europeans as Gough's Island.¹³

¹¹ Bagnall & Petersen *William Colenso* p 186.

¹² Parsons, Pers. Comm. 22 October 2012.

¹³ Buchanan & Simmons *The Maori History & Place Names of Hawkes Bay* p 45.

A small pa still existed on one island into the 1850s, but both of these islets were only barely above high tide mark, and eventually they were both abandoned, and the surrounding land reclaimed from the sea. Today no sign exists at all that the islands ever existed.

The main outcrop from the ocean, the island of Mataruahou, was largely unoccupied by Māori, as it had no fresh running water, and had long ago lost its bush covering. Instead, they preferred to occupy sites on the other side of the lagoon, and waka, not walking, was the preferred means of transport:

Communication between these villages could only be by canoe bounded as they were by a swampy trackless expanse of sedge and flood channel, while no more unsuitable spot for a house could be found than the surf-fronted tongue of flood plain laid down as a peninsula between the rivers ... the chiefs would not agree to any more convenient site, which, if selected elsewhere than on this *tapu* area, would have tied the missionary to the resident sub-tribe occupying the nearest *pa*.¹⁴

Amidst all this squabble of prospective sites, there was one site that no one wanted, and that was the flood-prone confluence of two of the major rivers, the Tūtaekurī and the Ngaruroro. Described by the local Māori chief

Tareha as "the dwelling place of the eel," this mutually unwanted, highly unsuitable place was where the local iwi Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Porou chose to settle their long-awaited white missionaries.

The first real permanent Pākehā residents to the Bay, William Colenso, his wife Elizabeth, and their small son, arrived on 30th December 1844, with a small staff following including a carpenter named Keir. To welcome the missionaries and to house them, a raupō whare had been built by local tribes. It was a simple unsophisticated dwelling: "The native-built raupō whare, without floor, door or windows, with a square hole cut in the roof as a chimney, which the Colensos occupied on landing did not serve as the permanent mission house."¹⁵

Colenso and Keir set to designing a more suitable set of structures. Colenso describes that:

By the end of 1846 a more pretentious structure, withal raupo covered, took its place. Although the site was on a slight rise it was early clear from the vegetation that the area was subject to flooding. The floor of the new house was therefore raised several feet above ground by foundations consisting of the entire trunks of white pine

laboriously felled in the Big Bush and floated down the Ngaruroro into the Waitangi. Kauri plates bout on the Nimrod lay across these, while the high stud was again of kauri.¹⁶

Colenso's description is extremely helpful for understanding the style and construction of the first architecture of the region. Like the local Māori, raupō reed coverings were used extensively as a thatched roof and wall covering. The lengths that Colenso went to find suitable wood are extreme - he had evidently brought his own supplies of stable kauri timber with him on the coastal schooner Nimrod, and nearly lost the lot upon landing - the Nimrod could not safely beach in the stormy conditions near Colenso's river mouth site, and so the timber, and the occupants were offloaded into the nearby surf. The missionary's first actions therefore would have been to roam the beaches, dragging heavy water-logged kauri timber back to his mission station, and storing them there until he could build. Horses did not arrive until some years later. The reference to kahikatea logs felled in the Big Bush (what is now Dannevirke, over 100km to the south), and the completion date two years later, indicates the difficulties of building on the coast in Hawkes

¹⁴ Bagnall & Petersen *William Colenso* p 187.

¹⁵ Bagnall & Petersen *William Colenso* p 190.

¹⁶ Bagnall & Petersen *William Colenso* p 190.

Bay.

This building was 50 feet by 36 feet, with the old style verandah running the length of the house in front. A semi-detached kitchen 27 feet by 16 feet was joined to the house by an enclosed passage. The storeroom, 28 feet by 12 feet, would have been barely adequate for the tons of supplies ... Despite the thatched exterior of the mission house there is no doubt that Colenso, Keir and the natives of Te Awapuni made a solid frame for this building, to be many times shaken by flood waters.

It is probable that the totara-framed raupo house of three rooms afterwards used for Maori male employees was the original building erected for their reception in 1844. A large weatherboard store, a schoolhouse for women and children of Mrs. Colenso's classes, 40 feet by 20 feet, "neatly enclosed within a paled totara fence," a roomy store-house "for potatoes, pumpkins, etc., raised on four strong posts, native fashion," formed with other minor buildings, such as "a privy properly finished," an impressive inventory of construction during the eight years of the station's existence.¹⁷

Late 1840s

So at the end of the 1840s, Napier was still a very basic, backward town, as young sheep farmer Henry Tiffin noted when he was caught in a gale out at sea:

The wind now became a gale and we flew up the coast without a hope of landing. Fortunately, a chance came at Port Ahuriri - for there was no thought of Napier in

¹⁷ Bagnall & Petersen *William Colenso* p 191.



Figure 1: [Rhodes, Joseph], 1826-1905, A. Alexander's store, Ahuriri [1850s?] [detail], Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref: A-159-031

1849 - and glad we were to take advantage of it and land. Soon we found that the only house was on the western spit - a store and trading station it was - where quantities of pigs from all parts were slaughtered, pickled, or made into bacon by Messrs Alexander and Ankertel.¹⁸

The sole European-derived building stock of

¹⁸ Cresswell *Early New Zealand Families* pp 69-70.

Hawkes Bay at that time appears to be a handful of whalers' shacks, assorted stores selling bacon and grog, and Colenso's mission station at Waitangi.

European settlement was actively sought by some local Māori, anxious for Ahuriri not to be left behind and become a backwater. Local Māori chiefs were not impressed by the

constant influx of grog selling traders, and are recorded as saying to Colenso - and in writing to the Government - that they would like some more Europeans - but "good ones," not the drunken whalers and sailors that they had seen so far. Colenso continually counseled the local iwi not to sell their land to settlers (it was illegal, but many were doing this elsewhere), and to wait for official government approval.

The first settler to arrive, alone, was a young well-educated Scotsman named Alexander Alexander. Colenso, who kept excellent diaries (but sadly no sketch pad), recorded everything that happened in the district, and:

On 22nd May he recorded the arrival of the man who was, in the troubled years ahead, to be his best friend, Alexander Alexander, at first a trader in Onepoto Gully, on the south-west corner of Mataruahou, then a farmer at Wharerangi, directly across the Harbour. "A white man has come to the harbour at Ahuriri to reside, and while he himself appears to be a respectable man, his men, as usual, want women!"¹⁹

Setting up shop, literally, Alexander quickly established a permanent residence at the base of what is now known as Main St.

Onepoto, literally the short beach ... was the regular landing place. It was here that Colenso landed the five

¹⁹ Bagnall & Petersen *William Colenso* p 236.

head of cattle he had brought with him from the Bay of Islands in the brig Nimrod in 1844 and it was here that Alexander Alexander set up the original Napier business house, a trading store, in 1846.²⁰

Of Alexander's first residence, the house/shop at Main St, there is little trace: one known drawing (Fig 1), no painting, no remnants, no record, no site. In all probability, the store may have been just canvas to start with, but it would have been quickly rebuilt in timber, or possibly pumice stone, to provide safe haven for the precious goods within, trading "pigs, wheat, potatoes and flax from Maori throughout the district."²¹

While the number, names, and residences of Alexander's "men" are unrecorded, the 26 year old Alexander quickly set up a relationship with, and had a child with, a local Māori woman, Harata Keokeo Hoia. Herself only about 18, Harata was an apparently beautiful orphan, and was evidently heavily smitten with Alexander, stowing away on his schooner.²² They were married some 15 years after the birth of their first child. Alexander became a sheep farmer also, with he (and his

²⁰ Buchanan & Simmons *The Maori History & Place Names of Hawkes Bay* p 45.

²¹ Dine *Petane* p 33.

²² Reed *The Story of Hawkes Bay* p 31.

wife's) farm comprising thousands of acres of land at Poraiti, Wharerangi and Puketapu. Alexander's grave, as the effective father of Napier, lies on a hillside at Puketapu, way across to the west side of the lagoon, surrounded by his beloved country and within close sight of his (still standing, date uncertain) country home.

Tantalizing sketches exist in the Hawkes Bay Museum of a heavily roofed bungalow noted as "Castle Alexander," one sketch looking up hill at the house, the other looking downhill and out to the water. The name indicates that perhaps the house was rather grand and perhaps the hill depicted was The Hill as we know it now, but indications from local historian Patrick Parson indicates a very different location.²³

It appears that the so-called Castle Alexander may have been the eventual residence at Puketapu, rather than the home/store at Onepoto Gully.

While Alexander has been recorded as the first shopkeeper and store owner in Ahuriri, he was closely followed by Anketel, an

²³ Parsons, Pers. Comm. 22 October 2012.

Irishman, who narrowly escaped a nasty death at the hands of kidnappers in the Chatham Islands, his first intended settlement target. Both of these store owners would have catered mainly for the passing whaling trade at first, and were regularly supplied by local Māori, who soon established a good trade in carcasses of wild boar (released by Captain Cook and evidently by this time prospering throughout New Zealand). "The Maoris sold wheat and maize, and could supply an almost unlimited number of pigs, which the traders bought for a penny a pound, and shipped to Wellington salted in barrels."²⁴

Anketel's store was on the site now occupied by the Union Hotel in the modern bustling seaside town of Ahuriri, out on the East Spit. Anketel was a successful trader, for a number of years shipping products to and from Wellington aboard a small coastal schooner, the Hoturangi, as noted here in *The Spectator*:

SHIPPING INTELLIGENCE.

ARRIVALS. October 25 [1948] ... Same day Schooner Gipsy, 25 tons, Thompson, from Ahuriri. Same day Schooner Hoturangi, 15 tons, Anketel, from East Coast.

²⁴ Reed *The Story of Hawkes Bay* p 51.

IMPORTS ... In the Hoturangi, 1 ton pork, 1 bdl. lard, 400 bushels maize, 1 tierce pork. Johnson & Moore, Agents.²⁵

Voyages were frequent - Anketel evidently employed several others to help run the store, the ship, and of course, to run the pig-salting factory, although "in August 1849 the Hoturangi was wrecked at Waikokopu ... no survivors were found."²⁶ It appears likely that both Alexander and Anketel combined forces with regard to the pork-works. Anketel himself, it seems, became known more as an alcoholic, rather than one of Napier's founding fathers. Once again, regrettably, no pictures of Anketel's store appear to have survived, but their influence stayed on for many years more. The spit where they worked from was the site of an abattoir for several decades more, pumping waste products out into the channel and earning the site the permanent nickname of Perfume Point.

1850 – settlers arrive

In December 1850 the region's first true settlers arrived: two families, already intermarried. The McKain and Villers families

²⁵ "Shipping Intelligence" p 2.

²⁶ Reed *The Story of Hawkes Bay* p 51.

settled

on the shingle strip of Westshore. They built their huts from hand-squared blocks of pumice, effluent of eruptions from the central volcanic plateau. Building materials were at a premium; no raupo, toetoe or manuka grew in the salt beds.²⁷

William Villers and James Buchanan McKain established a trading post and the first European settlement in Hawkes Bay, on the shore of the Western Spit, Ahuriri in 1850.²⁸

This trading post was set up on the opposite side of the lagoon inlet from that of Alexander and Anketel: only a short boat ride across the water, but a long way by land - a bridge was not to arrive for many years. Passing trade could anchor nearby, either midstream in the inlet, or just offshore. "McKain ran the hotel on the Western Spit while Villers put up a building in Onepoto Gully and later established a hotel in Carlyle St."²⁹

In contrast to the other scrappy dwellings on the Spit, the houses that these families constructed were probably a lot better built, as

William Villers was a carpenter, and James McKain had

²⁷ Hill *Between the Rivers* p 41.

²⁸ Dine *Petane* p 45.

²⁹ Dine *Petane* p 48.

had extensive experience in building houses ... Their accommodation progressed from a simple shelter to a four-room cottage made from large pieces of pumice, plentiful on the beach at that time, which they fashioned into building blocks.³⁰

Of the first shelter, a descendant Robina Villers "recalled the McKains' first wooden hut shaped like a tent with a gable at each end and a partition to form two rooms."³¹ This appears to describe the typical two-roomed layout of most of the early settlers cottages.

The later, more commodious dwelling stands out in the first known drawing of the tiny settlement, by Joseph Rhodes, the only real building on the Western Spit.

The accommodation house was constructed of the readily sourced pumice blocks, but later timber would be available ... felled trees from Maori at Mohaka.³²

The arrival of shopkeepers and run holders was often the same thing. Land sales direct to Pākehā were still forbidden under the Treaty, so any arrangement with local Māori had to be by leasehold only. And as Māori were keen to earn currency (so that they could

legitimately partake in trade at the local stores, rather than simply barter), there was no shortage of convenient leasehold deals going on with sheep farmers, judging by the quick growth of the town over the next few years.

Indeed, Hawkes Bay's history is one that has grown on the sheep's back and in the 1840s /1850s flocks of Merino sheep were driven north through the Wairarapa to arrive in Hawkes Bay and fill the fields. An early settler, 16-year-old Frederick Tiffen describes driving a flock of merino sheep in 1845 "through Wellington's main street (Lambton Quay) and round the coast to my brother's place in the Wairarapa. The flock numbered between seven and eight hundred."³³

The incoming Pākehā therefore had a surfeit of sites available to them on settling in Ahuriri. The initial traders, as noted, settled on the shingle spits north of the Island, either at the East Spit (now Ahuriri), or the West Spit (now Westshore).

Others settled on the western edge of Mataruahou where there was more protected

anchorage, and less subject to the prevailing NorWester.

The first harbour was at Onepoto (Corunna Bay). It was small and sheltered but it did not silt up as quickly as the Iron Pot, which was nearer the harbour entrance. The sea flowed right up to the foot of the hills all around Pandora Point and so access by land to the Iron Pot was difficult.³⁴

A west-facing main street running gradually up from a sheltered bay with good anchorage, looking out over a well-stocked inland sea, Corunna Bay must have seemed like a perfect place to pitch a tent and start a town. Known then as Onepoto Gully, the Main Street ramped up heavily at the top - extremely steep - and so this was not a good site for expansion. Side roads led off Main Street - later named Burke St and Little Burke St after military settlers. These streets lead off up into the northern edge of the gully, and contain remnants of very heavily modified early houses, but it is not known how early they date from - most probably from a decade later.

Some of the early settler people felt inclined to stay not at Onepoto Gully, but instead to the immediate south of Mataruahou, on a

³⁰ Dine *Petane* p 45.

³¹ Dine *Petane* p 86.

³² Dine *Petane* p 47.

³³ Cresswell *Early New Zealand Families* p 67.

³⁴ Dine *Petane* p 33.

comparatively rare piece of dry, flat land, at the junction of the great southern spit and the island. These people chose wisely - this area is the site of Napier's present CBD. Additional settlements were also to be found either further north at Petane (now better known as Bay View), or very much further south where the first settlers planned for the region's major city to be at Waipureku (now the sleepy hamlet of East Clive, on a short silty stretch of river).

In December 1850

Donald McLean, "Te Makarini," Land Purchase Commissioner ... under instructions from Governor Grey had canoed through the Manawatu Gorge to make preliminary negotiations for the purchase of Hawkes Bay lands.³⁵

The fledgling town was about to grow. On the 20th December "as many as four or five hundred Maoris assembled to meet him; they appeared to be in general agreement as to the sale of land, and boundaries were defined."³⁶

1851 – Ahuriri Purchase

In early 1851, Douglas McLean came back to town to buy vast areas of land on behalf of the

³⁵ Bagnall & Petersen *William Colenso* p 303.

³⁶ Reed *The Story of Hawkes Bay* p 51.

Government – that we now know as the Ahuriri purchase. "And what a considerable party it was! Preceded by hundreds of Maoris, it wended its leisurely way up the east coast - every night buying a few sections."³⁷ The first few purchases in the Ahuriri area were small: McLean was merely warming up for the major prizes.

"On 18 January 1851 Donald McLean reported examining Onepoto Gully"³⁸ and 12 April 1851 McLean "[p]urchased house and outbuildings for £26 as an office for the survey party."³⁹ This was for one of the few existing buildings on the Spit, the McKain / Villers pumice block house where "Donald McLean led a team of surveyors, who shared a pumice house, called "Survey Hall", on the Western Spit."⁴⁰ Reed reports that the survey party was comprised of Park, Thomas and Pelichet.⁴¹ The house "was taken over by surveyor Robert Park The house became Survey Hall."⁴²

Colenso had been almost the sole protector of

³⁷ Cresswell *Early New Zealand Families* p 5.

³⁸ Dine *Petane* p 48.

³⁹ Dine *Petane* p 48.

⁴⁰ Campbell *Story of Napier* pp 4-5.

⁴¹ Reed *The Story of Hawkes Bay* p 52.

⁴² Dine *Petane* p 49.

the Māori in the region for six years, urging iwi not to sell their land to settlers or to sign unauthorized deeds of purchase, much to the exasperation of Pākehā who could not buy, and to the many Māori who wanted to sell. Now at last there was a chance to buy and sell - direct to the Government – authorized by law. Even Colenso was interested in buying land. Long unhappy with the ridiculous flood-prone nature of the site, even some of the local Māori had agreed that this was not a good site for the mission station. Chief Tareha condoled with Koroneho:

No one ever lived here on this spot before you; it has only been the dwelling place of the eel.⁴³

Despite his careful concern for the best outcome for Māori, and evidently somewhat patronizing approach, Colenso had held a position of considerable mana until that point. Having preached incessantly to the Māori that sex outside marriage was a sin, it seems that Colenso fell prey to temptation himself and entered into a very personal relationship with his young Māori housemaid Ripeka. In 1851, Ripeka gave birth to a pale-skinned child, who she named William. Church authorities were soon notified and Colenso became

⁴³ Bagnall & Petersen *William Colenso* p 261.

deeply unpopular amongst both Māori and Pākehā for having abused his missionary position in this adulterous manner.

Curiously, there is also reference to a "government building" constructed by "natives" which was evidently on the north side of Mataruahou, at the base of what we now know as Burns Road in Ongaonga Bay. This "Kawana Whare," as it was described, was presumably commissioned by McLean as a site in which the later official land purchase signings would take place. McLean recorded that on 11th November 1851, he

Paid Thomas £2-10- for windows ... for the house built by the natives for the Govt. on the Island, and entirely for Meetings, and public purposes. It is a very neat commodious house.⁴⁴

Unfortunately, that is all the description that has survived. No physical remains survive.

Ongaonga Bay was a tiny bay on the hills side of the saltwater lagoon which extended from near the "Iron Pot" eastward along the foot of the hill. The little bay was just east of the junction of Chaucer Road and Battery Road. When Napier was laid off in 1853-54, a Government Reserve of 14 acres was made here. It can be seen on the original plan of Napier in the lands and Survey Office. The reserve was to graze surveyors'

⁴⁴ McLean "Diary" 11 November 1851.

horses and run goats or a cow for milk. There was no water but McLean thought a well would remedy this defect. The lagoon has long since disappeared and the Crown sold the Reserve long ago to the Harbour Board. A small gully in the hillside at the rear of Ongaonga Bay was known for many years as Domett's gully.⁴⁵

There is today, in Burns Road, still one single building of great age but it has been heavily modernized. Despite this it is unlikely to be the government building described, although it may have sat nearby. Carefully machined weatherboard profiles indicate that this is not a building likely to have been built by natives at this early time, but indicate it is from following years. It may have been part of a government building compound in the area, as the (later) town plan shows a Government Reserve at the site (record searching is difficult in Napier owing to the 1931 earthquake, when the Council buildings were destroyed by earthquake and then by fire. All early records were destroyed along with the buildings). It is possible that the house belonged to Alfred Domett, who lived in Burns Road in the years to come.

McLean used simple tactics: bartering Māori down in their expectations. With the chiefs keen to sell the land at Ahuriri for £4,000,

⁴⁵ Wilson *The Founding of Hawkes Bay* p 25.

McLean said he could go no further than £1,500, and that all he could do was pay 1,000 thousand sovereigns now, and the rest would follow. Much grumbling and discussion followed, but eventually this price was agreed on. Initial discussions did not include the island Mataruahou (which was initially explicitly excluded), nor did it include the vast inland lagoon itself - this was less explicit. The Ahuriri Treaty Report goes into this in much depth, with discussion over the intended sale/ownership of the waters of the lagoon being a key point, still unresolved.⁴⁶

McLean in 1851 purchased

the Hapuku Block, the Ahuriri Block and the Mohaka Block. The Ahuriri Block (265,000 acres) included Mataruahou, the future site of Napier. But Tareha, one of the vendors, later felt that his interests had been under-valued. To pacify him, the Crown paid him a further £50, as well as two town sections, for the 640 acre Mataruahou (Scinde Island) area, in 1855.⁴⁷

The agreement signed by the tribes stated, in both Māori and English as written in Turton's *Plans of Land Purchases*, that:

we agree to entirely give up all the stony spit from

⁴⁶ Waitangi Tribunal *Te Whanganui-a-Orotu Report 1995*

⁴⁷ Campbell *Story of Napier* pp 4-5.

Ruahoru to Ahuriri, we also agree entirely to give up Mataruahou, Pukemokimoki being the only portion of Mataruahou reserved for ourselves, together with the small piece of land where the children and the family of Tareha are buried during such time as it remains unoccupied by the Europeans.⁴⁸

Pukemokimoki, now an almost forgotten area at the southern end of the island, is:

the hill where grew the sweet-scented mokimoki. Pukemokimoki was on the site of the old recreation ground about where the tram sheds are. It was removed to make way for the railway in the early 1870s.⁴⁹

Negotiations had taken some time, but from speeches at the time it seems certain that a majority of the chiefs were quite willing to sell. Chief Te Hāpuku, of Ngāti Kahungunu, had stated in December 1850 that

The land is for the Europeans ... is the land such a light trifle that it does not pain my right side to part with it. We shall do with the land as we the proprietors of it think proper, only give us time about it.⁵⁰

The purchase was signed at the Government

⁴⁸ "Deeds- No. 2: Ahuriri Block, Province of Hawke's Bay" Turton *Maori Deeds of Land Purchase* v II, p 491.

⁴⁹ Buchanan and Simmons *The Maori History & Place Names of Hawkes Bay* p 45.

⁵⁰ McLean "Diary [Te Hapuku's Speech]" December 14 1850 p 5.

House near the corner of Burns Road and Battery Road (although at that stage neither of the roads had those names, and were more muddy pathways than roads). It was witnessed by Alexander and some whalers, amongst others, as well as the Māori chiefs of the local iwi. Apparently, all gathered were happy, except for Tangoio's people. McLean's diary merely noted: "Ahuriri Purchase 17th November. An eventful day for the Ahuriri district which is now the property of our Sovereign Queen ..." ⁵¹ Reed makes the observation that while:

Mataruahou (Scinde Island, the site of Napier), comprising 640 acres, was acquired on November 11. 1855, for £50... the total 1851-1864 purchases amounted to something approaching 2,000,000 acres, for over £180,000 – an average price of about two shillings per acre.⁵²

1852

In 1852, Colenso's deaconship and license to preach were revoked, by the Anglican officials, in a predictable but savagely cruel blow to Colenso. Although the population of Pākehā in the region was only about 100 in 1852,⁵³ the population of Māori was far

⁵¹ Wilson *The Founding of Hawkes Bay* p 25.

⁵² Reed *The Story of Hawkes Bay* p 53.

⁵³ Bagnall and Petersen *William Colenso* p 354.

greater, and with a single stroke of the pen demoting him to civilian, he had lost his mana, as well as his wife, his child, his lover, and now also, his right to live in the house he had built. Nonetheless, Colenso hung on, hoping to be redeemed (this redemption was a long time coming, happening only in 1894). No longer allowed to preach in his own church, he went to others, such as the native-built church at Petane (Bayview). He wrote in 1852:

Mid-winter service at Petane. The lofty white reeded roof of the chapel with its massive dark pillars and beams, and cross-pieces of red pine, every portion of which was clearly shown by the steady flame of the three fires that blazed in the nave.⁵⁴

To have three fires blazing inside the church appears to be quite a departure from traditional church architecture, but as a Māori design this provides an interesting but tiny glimpse into a different stream of possible ecclesiastical architectural forms. If this was fashioned after the traditional Māori whare, then there would have been no chimneys, just the underside of the thatched roof.

Meanwhile, McLean's push to buy land continued, and with the sale of land now

⁵⁴ Dine *Petane* p 39.

legalized, settlers could purchase land from the Crown's representative and the town began to grow rapidly. The purchase of Mataruahou was a separate deal, and so at first this was simply farmed. A few houses dotted the hill, while most development was taking place either at Onepoto Gully, Ahuriri spit, or increasingly at the future site of Napier town itself.

1853

Although no dates exist, other early dwellings that followed these two early stores are still extant in the Ahuriri beach front area. Chief amongst these is the cottage built by Fitzgerald, nestled at the bottom of Seapoint Road and now heavily modified. Little of the original historic fabric remains, but in the stretch of land between Alexander's store and Fitzgerald house, a string of seaside cottages would eventually extend along the Spit. TH Fitzgerald came to Hawkes Bay about 1853

he bought land in Waghorne Street where he built a house and a store and in Customhouse Street where he built a flour mill - no ordinary mill, this, but, of all new-tangled 19th century ideas, a Steam Mill.⁵⁵

Probably the oldest dwelling in this area and

externally untouched, is the small shepherd's cottage at the base of Shakespeare Road, near Fitzgerald's house. Simply built, with a transverse gable roof and small lean-to at the rear, the cottage is clad in weatherboards externally, with corrugated iron to the roof, but has been completely modernized inside. Timber was now evidently in good supply: "Many of the early houses in Napier were built of timber brought from the Powdrell mill at Wairoa."⁵⁶ The external form of this small, undistinguished dwelling is typical of a number of small cottages still standing in Napier today, some of which have been moved from their original building sites, and most of which have been heavily altered and modernized leaving little trace of historic fabric behind.

On 8 January, 1853, Colenso's house burnt down: most likely arson, by persons unknown. Colenso was not at home at the time - he was on the Hill in Napier, and was called to watch as smoke was sighted at the former Mission station:

the tinder-dry outer walls of raupo were encased in flame fanned by a strong westerly. There was little he could do ... [he] watched from above Te Ongaonga the

billowing smoke blacken the sea and hide Te Matau a Maui.⁵⁷

A plan exists of Colenso's house, showing that the main building at least was quite an extensive residence, and, despite it being the sole building of note for many years, it appears that it was never sketched by its many visitors - or at least no drawing remnants have survived.

Already ordered to vacate the premises the previous year, but refusing to leave the site, this was perhaps the only way that he would move on. Colenso still refused to leave, citing his printing press and heavy paper stock as reasons to stay, as well as the fact that he had built and funded most of the buildings himself. However, he did not own the land and the Waitangi Mission station was at an end. Eventually he was forced out by local Māori, who wanted the sodden 10-acre site back and the remains of the house, chapel and assorted outbuildings were eventually removed over time. The site is now simply remembered by a solitary white concrete plinth in a soggy green field, as unloved now as it was then. In 2012, when I visited the site, it was underwater once again: once more just

⁵⁵ Mooney *The Work is Great* p 19.

⁵⁶ Wilson *The Founding of Hawkes Bay* p 52.

⁵⁷ Bagnall & Petersen *William Colenso* p 341.

the dwelling place of the eel.

1854 - Domett

By 1854 Ahuriri Lagoon had become a busy port and there was a demand for an orderly settlement of the Ahuriri district. With this in mind, the Government created the position of Commissioner of Crown Lands and Resident Magistrate in the Ahuriri district.⁵⁸

The well-educated English lawyer / poet / journalist / newspaper editor / surveyor Alfred Domett, recently acting as Colonial Secretary for New Munster, was appointed to "lay off the town" and thus produce a plan for expansion. Domett later became New Zealand's fourth Premier.

Domett's report initially described Napier as: "a precipitous island of barren, uninhabited ridges, covered with fern and rough grass, dissected by gorges and ravines, with a narrow strip of shingle skirting the cliffs, and joined to the mainland south by a five mile shingle bank ... A hopeless spot for a town site."⁵⁹

Despite these misgivings, Domett seized the chance to give order to the chaos and also to rid the area of the names it had gradually

been accumulating. Instead of the names of soon to be immortalized locals, Domett noted:

It is better to have pleasing associations with the names of our roads and ravines, however unworthy they may seem of such distinguished ones, than to be constantly reminded of the existence of obscure individuals (ruffians possibly, and runaway convicts), whose names get attached to the places they happen to be the first to pitch upon, and almost render the places themselves distasteful, however flavoured by nature.⁶⁰

The Domett Plan became the guiding force for the region, giving it, literally, a road map for expansion.⁶¹

Napier was to be the name of the town, after the great British war hero General Sir Charles Napier (immortalised to this day in Trafalgar Square in London by a bronze from 1855), giving the town a name for the first time truly separate from that of the port (which still retained the name of Ahuriri). Mataruahou itself was renamed Scinde Island, after the recent great battle for the Empire in India. The nearby township of Clive was named for Lord Clive of India, and Havelock North was given the title for General Sir Henry Havelock (also

in Trafalgar Square by 1861). Hastings did not exist at that point.

Domett chose as street names the greatest poets of the British Empire that still mark the streets today. Roads were laid out across Scinde Island in some conveniently located gullies, with Shakespeare Road being the principal thoroughfare and Milton Road, Burns Road and Chaucer Road following close behind. Domett introduced features such as squares and government reserves, and allotted places for schools and churches. How many of the roads were already existing at the time of Domett's planning is unsure - presumably only a few. Emerson St, planned as the main street, was to culminate at Clive Square, named after Lord Clive of India. In reality, Emerson St at that stage was just a path along the edge of the inland swamp, and so Domett had recognized that reclamation was going to need to be carried out. There is a Colenso Avenue and a McLean Park (an Alexander Avenue was produced sometime later). Needless to say, there is no Anketel St, despite his early settler status. There is not a Domett St, but there is however an Alfred St at Westshore. In charge not just of the Town Plan, but also in charge of land sales to settlers, Domett truly shaped the direction of

⁵⁸ Dine *Petane* p 80.

⁵⁹ Campbell *Story of Napier* pp 6-7.

⁶⁰ Campbell *Story of Napier* p 6.

⁶¹ Domett "Plan of the Town of Napier Hawkes Bay"; Campbell *Story of Napier* end pages.

the town.

In the aftermath of the 1851 Ahuriri purchase and the laying out of the town of Napier in 1854 and 1855, local Māori and settlers became what historian James Belich categorised as:

"twin communities co-operating in an often tense but more or less equal "symbiosis" ... economically interdependent, politically allied but autonomous, a more or less equal partnership ... derived partly from mutual misunderstanding ... based more on pragmatism than principle or policy."⁶²

In a letter from Domett to McLean, written 15 July 1854, when the town plan must have been complete, and buying/selling was underway, he notes that:

I wish much that you were here. I don't know a word of Maori & am not likely to acquire it ... Colenso wrote me an alarmist note about natives intending to come with "murderous intentions" as he phrased it and advising strict searches etc . etc. I suspected this to be humbug, & found Alexander entirely agreed with me ... The listening to these beggars is the great thing, and I think we gave them enough of that. I gave them afterwards a dinner at Munns, with lots of beef and plum pudding and not a little bottled beer and wine (between ourselves) ... I gave "the Queen" after dinner - Hapuku, of his own accord, proposed my health - Then each chief

made a short speech - the general purport being the propriety of adopting and maintaining the Queen's Law. Colenso translated throughout and really was of great use: though I find he is an overbearing and rather cantankerous fellow among the natives. To me he is over polite and painfully obliging ... Tom Fitzgerald who is a desperate sneak, and "too much wide awake" as the Maoris say of him has been buying bits of land in Pauls' run & he and Tyse have built a whare thereupon.⁶³

Alexander secured the vast acreage of land that he had been farming for the past few years at Puketapu, and other farmers massed around him. Captain John Chilton Lambton Carter sailed to New Zealand in 1852 and "On 10 December 1854 he took up the lease of 4,654ha of the Ahuriri Block" later reduced to 344ha just to the south of Alexander's land at Wharerangi.⁶⁴ As an indication of just how big the sheep industry had grown in a few short years, Reed notes that, "by 1854 nearly twenty thousand sheep were feeding on the Ahuriri and Hapuku blocks."⁶⁵

1855 - Auctions

In April 1855, when there were already many homes and business premises in Napier, the first sale of public sections took place. Development was blocked wherever

possible by Dr Featherstone, jealously guarding the progress of Wellington, but still Domett politely and humbly deferred to his opinions.⁶⁶

A total of 40 sections were offered at Western Spit at an auction in April 1855. McKain bought 2 sections, Colenso 4, Fitzgerald 1, Bowler 3, Mantell 4, Munn 1, Sealy 1, Russell 2, Johnson 9, and Williams bought 8.⁶⁷ Early settlers were hedging their bets. Due to the multiple settlement zones around the island, sites were selling at the Spit, on the Scinde Island, in the town centre, and several of the bidders owned sites in each location. Despite Colenso purchasing four sites at Westshore, there is no evidence he ever lived there - he bought land on the Island and lived there instead, in Milton Road. Neighbourhoods were changing. "The McKains, Villers and Mrs Barben left the Spit in early 1855."⁶⁸

More buildings were constructed in the town in Napier, cementing the future growth pattern. Interest was strong, with many of the buyers from Wellington. The ascendancy of Ahuriri Spit was now turning.

⁶² Belich quoted, Waitangi Tribunal "Te Whanganui-a-Orotu Report" 5.1.1

⁶³ Domett to McLean, 15 July 1854.

⁶⁴ Dine *Petane* p 69.

⁶⁵ Reed *The Story of Hawkes Bay* p 62.

⁶⁶ Hill *Between the Rivers* p 46.

⁶⁷ Dine *Petane* p 81.

⁶⁸ Dine *Petane* p 49.

At a meeting in May 1855, settlers and residents decided to build a school ... the school was opened in December 1855 ... two adjoining sections on the corner of Tennyson Street and Hastings Street at a cost of £10 and a building was erected for £200.⁶⁹

1856 - Churches

For a decade or more, the Ahuriri purchase made little difference to the customary use and occupation of Te Whanganui-a-Orotu by local hapu, who continued to care for and control it, and related hapu, who visited it seasonally. In 1859 Te Koau (Gough Island), for example, was still "much frequented as a camping ground by fishing expeditions" ... even though it had been laid out in sections in Alfred Domett's 1854 town plan. ... Local Maori were happy to permit Pakeha to use the harbour for trade and shipping.⁷⁰

Mataruahou, with its steep hillsides and gullies and cut off from the hinterland by the lagoon and swampy mudflats, was not an attractive or healthy site for the town. The first sales of town sections were held in 1855 and 1856, and some suburban sections were also sold in 1856. Napier was declared a customs port of entry for the supervision of shipping in 1855. But as long as it remained essentially a beach community, servicing the provisions trade and coastal shipping, local Māori were

⁶⁹ Dine *Petane* p 93.

⁷⁰ Waitangi Tribunal "Te Whanganui-a-Orotu Report" 5.1.2

happy to share "their lake."⁷¹

In 1856 the Churches started to recognize the growing importance of the small settlement, with Anglicans, Methodists, Catholics, and Wesleyans and Presbyterians all starting to plan to build churches in the rapidly growing town of Napier. Fundraising was the first hurdle, and wealthy benefactors were sought – a difficult process in a frontier town.

1857 – Divine Worship

The township continued to grow rapidly during 1857 and Colenso came out of his period of solitude and offered his services to help. In a letter to the *Hawkes Bay Herald* in November 1857, Colenso proposed that, instead of a mooted Wesleyan chapel, perhaps a more multi-denominational building be created, which could allow not only for the worship of different divinities but also for education of a more general kind:

To the Editor of the Hawke's Bay Herald. Sir, In your Supplement of the 24th ult. (only this evening to hand), I note what you say concerning "an effort which is being made to establish a Wesleyan Chapel in Napier," ... I would, therefore, propose to my fellow settlers residing at Napier ... the speedy erection of a suitable Building

⁷¹ Waitangi Tribunal "Te Whanganui-a-Orotu Report" 5.1.2

for Divine Worship, upon the following simple and Catholic plan.

1st., That it be wholly un-sectarian, and therefore free for any Christian Minister:

2nd., That it be equally free to be used as a Lecture-Room for Useful Knowledge on Week-days, or Week-day Evenings

3rd., That Admission be free ...

I am, Sir, Very faithfully yours, William Colenso. Waitangi, Napier, Nov. 2, 1857.⁷²

He further offered to buy the land, and put money towards the building, as well as offering his services to lecture and to preach divinity. Colenso's knowledge of plant and animal life in New Zealand was extensive, and probably second to none in the region. He had collected and classified several thousand specimens over the years, most of which had been sent to museums back in England, and the remainder of which were destroyed in the fire when Waitangi mission was torched. Despite this being most generous, the other citizens of Napier did not take up the offer and no such multi-faith building was created.

1858 – Army Barracks

Settlers became alarmed in August 1857 when local paramount chiefs Te Hāpuku and Te Moananui fought at Whakatu, leaving several

⁷² Colenso "Open Column" p 2.

Māori dead or wounded on each side.⁷³ The Pākehā settlers petitioned for government protection. It arrived soon after:

ARRIVAL OF THE EASTFIELD. With Detachment of '65th regt.

Although, by the overland mail, which arrived on Friday, we learned that troops were under orders for this District, we were scarcely prepared for their arrival almost immediately afterwards. So that, when, on Sunday morning, a barque was seen to enter the Bay, and ... the good people of Napier were quite taken by surprise. ... The barque proved to be the Eastfield, having on board a detachment of 91 rank and file of the 65th regiment, under the command of Lieut. Col. Wyatt. ... In each case the steamer entered the natural basin known as the "Iron Pot" with the greatest ease, and landed her passengers' and cargo on the beach by means of long planks. ... The detachment encamped for the night on the Eastern Spit — the weather being delightful — and are now preparing for a more lengthened bivouac in Onepoto valley.⁷⁴

The 65th regiment, a troop of mainly Irish soldiers also known as the Bengal Tigers, had recently fought in the Indian subcontinent and also in several regions in New Zealand. The 65th camped initially in Onepoto Gully, in an array of white canvas tents.

⁷³ Buchanan & Simmons *The Maori History & Place Names of Hawkes Bay* p 45.

⁷⁴ "Arrival of the Eastfield" *Hawkes Bay Herald* (9 February 1858) p 1.

for the first twelve months they lived in a tent town in the Gully. Ledges were cut into the side of the hill and tents erected upon them in rows, the bank at the back, with excavations for cupboards, serving as one wall of the house.⁷⁵

Plans were soon made, and carried out, to move to permanent quarters, as the regiment set about to build military fortified barracks at the top of the hill. By August the Camp Commissioner was advertising in the local newspaper for haulage of tons of bricks, timber and water, from the beach at Onepoto up to the new barracks at the top of the Hill.

COMMISSARIAT CONTRACT. Commissariat, New Zealand, Camp, Onepoto, August 4, 1858. SEALED TENDERS in duplicate will be received at this Office, until Monday the 16th instant, at 12 o'clock, noon, for the undermentioned Service, viz.— LAND TRANSPORT from the Beach, Onepoto, to the Barracks, from the 1st September 1858, to the 31st March 1859. Wood at per 1000 superficial Feet
Firewood at per Ton
Water at per Tun of 252 Gallons
Goods or Stores at per Ton of 40 Cubic Feet weight or measurement
Bricks at per 1000.
Any further information that may be required may be obtained on application to the Undersigned. J. F. Seymour, CC.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Mooney *The Work is Great* p 13.

⁷⁶ "Sales by Auction" p 2.

A few images remain of the completed barracks: a series of large, timber walled buildings, probably with earth rammed between inner and outer layers in order to protect against bullets, in the manner of the blockhouses built in the Wellington region. They were low to the ground, with shallow hipped roofs. Of the 65th themselves, after a decade with no sign of any rebellion by local Māori, the force was disbanded. They left their mark in the name of Battery Road, at the base of the hill, and 65th Street, at the top of the hill, and most of the men were discharged and became residents of Napier. The Napier Hospital took over the site at the top of the hill, and grew prodigiously over a century, covering the west end of the Scinde Island so thoroughly that it became known as Hospital Hill. No sign of the barracks remains.

Dissatisfaction, for quite some time, at the way that the Ahuriri settlers were being treated by the Wellington Provincial Council (a situation of heavy taxation, with little to show in return), controversially led to the Separation from Wellington, and "on 1st November 1858 Hawkes Bay was proclaimed a Province, with Napier as its capital."⁷⁷ This

⁷⁷ Reed *The Story of Hawkes Bay* p 103.

helped the town to prosper even more quickly.

Other institutions arrived, including Napier's first bank, with the Union Bank of Australia:

[o]pening an agency at Napier in October 1858 ... [it] began in a temporary office in Emerson Street, followed, almost three years later, by a 'handsome building' on the saddle of Shakespeare Road, then the major route between Napier and Port Ahuriri.⁷⁸

The Shakespeare Road site would have been a bustling one - not just midway between town and harbour, but also conveniently located for the richer folk living on the hill. In later years a tram service was also put through Shakespeare Road, with a stop at the top of the hill before descending down the other side. It remained in use later as a residence for bank managers. The bank building acquired a reputation as a haunted house, and people refused to live in it. Later converted to a shop, and now converted back into a residential dwelling, one solitary circular headed bank window remains on the south wall, possibly the oldest confirmed original window in the city.

Newspapers at this time were advertising

⁷⁸ Campbell *Story of Napier* p 9.

houses, sections, and building materials for sale. An advertisement in the *Hawkes Bay Herald* describes a suburban house and section for sale, with land of "about eight acres, partially cleared, and as fenced" with "ONE HUNDRED FRUIT TREES" shows that the:

Neat Little Cottage erected thereon, 18 by 12, is strongly built of Kauri, and from it is a pleasing view of "Clive," the "Kidnappers," and the whole of the country for many miles. THIS NICE LITTLE PROPERTY abuts immediately upon the MAIN LINE OF ROAD through the Island, now being made;⁷⁹

... appears to describe the creation of Napier Terrace which runs along the ridge of the Hill. Another advertisement advertises Town Sections 432 and 434 in Shakespeare Road, "TO BE LET ON LEASE" as well as a "number of very ELIGIBLE BUILDING ALLOTMENTS" all from TH Fitzgerald. The town was booming, as the climb in population shows:

From the probable maximum of a hundred white residents at the end of 1852, the same area by the end of 1858 provided a living for fifteen hundred. Most of the bush-free interior and coastal hills were taken up as sheepruns.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ "Sales by Auction" p 2.

⁸⁰ Bagnall and Petersen *William Colenso* p 354.

1859 – The Church

While the secular side of the town was growing fast, the spiritual side was lagging behind. With the missionary no longer on the scene, the major churches started to jostle for position in saving souls. The Catholic Church made the first move:

The story of Church building in Napier began with the erection of St Mary's Chapel. It was a poor man's church for there were no wealthy people among its parishioners.... The saddle of Shakespeare Road was a strategic site as it seemed likely that it would develop into the town centre. The Union Bank opened a branch there and there were two stores, O'Hara's and Mullaney's. Mass was celebrated for the first time in St Mary's on the first Sunday of March, 1859. The Chapel was described as "a roomy, tastefully finished building which can accommodate 250."⁸¹

Church-building in Napier began with the Roman Catholic St Mary's church, in Shakespeare Road, "which soldiers of the 65th Regiment helped to erect in March 1859. Anglicans and Presbyterians had projects underway at the same time."⁸²

Reed notes that in January 1858 the Presbyterians held a meeting to discuss a gathering place for their flock.

⁸¹ Mooney *The Work is Great* p 43.

⁸² Campbell *The Story of Napier* p 15.

The first meeting to establish a Presbyterian cause was held in the Royal Hotel, Napier, on Saturday, June 9th 1858. ... The chair was occupied by A. Alexander.... one of its earliest and most respected settlers."⁸³ Despite an entire volume on the history of the Presbyterian church, Dickson offers little information about the building of their Napier church. Reed merely notes that "The building of a church with a lofty spire was begun in 1860 and was opened in June 1861."⁸⁴

Similarly, "as early as 1858, the building of an Anglican church was under consideration. In April 1859 plans were invited for a wooden building, with steeple and bell tower, to seat almost 250."⁸⁵

Captain Carter supported the building of the Anglican church in Napier. On 22 January 1856 Bishop Selwyn addressed a handful of settlers in a Napier classroom and offered £100 to start a fund to buy land, and Carter became a member of the 18-strong committee. The first Napier Anglican Church opened in 1862.⁸⁶

It seems that while all three major churches were planning to build, the Catholic church's enlisting of the 65th regiment to help, ensured that the Catholics won this particular battle.

⁸³ Dickson *History of the New Zealand Presbyterian Church* p 130.

⁸⁴ Reed *The Story of Hawkes Bay* p 111.

⁸⁵ Reed *The Story of Hawkes Bay* p 111.

⁸⁶ Dine *Petane* p 70.

Not, however, the war. While the Anglican and Presbyterian churches were erected in the town of Napier, the site selected by the Catholic Church - on the Hill, at the junction of Coote Road / France Road and Shakespeare Road – was perhaps the wrong choice. It was not the eventual site for the town, and instead, became the site for a girls' convent school. A larger church building followed in the same space, which was later dismantled and taken down by bullock team to the eventual resting place at Port Ahuriri, and finally a Catholic cathedral of impressive size was built in the centre of Napier in 1894.

Conclusion

At the start of the decade Napier did not officially exist, and was merely a stopping place for a handful of traders, a disgruntled and soon-to-be disgraced missionary, and several sheep farmers keen to call it their home. By the end of the decade, Napier had been given a name and a purpose, along with over 1500 settlers, who had established a fast-growing town, built of timber, on the edge of a vast inland sea. As a site for a town it had gone from being a dismal site to one that offered numerous benefits: good anchorage, fertile soils, a huge lagoon full of readily catchable fish and the most protected waters

for sailing on - Napier's Ahuriri lagoon became the home of a unique flat-bottomed sailing boat in later years, and the town became known as a tourist mecca, perfect for summer holiday stays along the picturesque Marine Parade atop the shingle strip. Nothing could go wrong, and nothing did, until February 1931.

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