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OPOTIKI HISTORY

(Continued from Vol.XV(2),p.139)

1. WAIIOEKA

- Agnes J. McCallion  
Opotiki.

The portion of the Opotiki County known as Waiioeka, or Waioweka, is the land on both sides of State Highway 20 leading to Gisborne, bounded on the one side by the Waiioeka River and on the other by Otara district farms. It bears much evidence of occupation by the Maori people - possibly since the Great Migration - and many interesting and valuable artefacts have been found on the various farms. There are several well marked pa sites - one on William Oakes' land; and the Ohui pa, the earthworks of which are still to be seen on the hill between Ross' and Bennetts' properties. The present day occupants of the Waiioeka Pa are descendants of NGATI IRA, formerly a powerful tribe on the Waipu area of the East Coast. A disastrous battle saw the dispersal of these people, as described by Mr A.C. Lyall, REVIEW XV(2), 128-129.

The main WHAKATOHEA pa was Te Tarata, on the Kiorekina Flat, about four miles from Opotiki, and the battlefield on which the cavalry charge against the Hauhaus, described by Mr J. Lawrence (op. cit. p.133), took place is on Mr Pile's farm, now J. Brown's, a few hundred yards from the pa site.

A blockhouse was built by the troops on land now owned by Mr George Butler and a redoubt thrown up about a mile further on, on the right hand side of the highway, close to the Waiioeka Gorge entrance, on what is now Mr Henry McCallion's farm. The last two miles of the highway, from Mr Brown's place onward, was originally constructed by the troops. There were many skirmishes in the area and on three occasions fighting took place at Butler's creek. Traces of trenches are still to be seen on Mr W. Roger's hill. One trench, known as 'Blockhouse Trench', ran from Otara to the Waiioeka River.

Upon the cessation of hostilities, the Waiioeka land was surveyed and allocated to the soldiers but many found the life too isolated and sold their allotments to incoming settlers. In May 1867, Messrs Begg and Moore, Wilkinson and Livingstone spent a morning shooting on the latter's farm with the result that they used up all their ammunition. They were ambushed in the scrub by the Hauhaus and tried to escape across the hills to Otara, but only two of the party succeeded in doing so, Begg and Moore being killed by the Maoris.

A flour mill, owned by Mr C.F. Bockett, operated on the Mill Stream near the present Dairy Factory land; and a brewery was established on the Otara Road, near its junction with the State Highway.

The Waiioeka Maori School was opened in 1883, Miss Levert being the first teacher. The pa was thriving, clean and well kept, but in later years the influence of the prophet Rua Kenana did the Maoris a great disservice as he persuaded them to sell their horses and drays, and in many cases their land, and hand him the proceeds. See REVIEW XV(1):pp.47,53.

The formation of the Opotiki Dairy Company in 1895 was of great

benefit to the settlers who, until then, had depended largely upon wheat and maize growing, and pig rearing, for their livelihood. At first cheese was manufactured but later the factory turned over to butter; now dried milk and casein are in full production.

Three Warrington sister, later Mesdames Bockett, Clark and Neilson, were wonderful gardeners; their gardens are still beautiful. Mrs Bennett also has a lovely garden.

Mr J.M. Butler was among the founders of the dog trials which are still held in the district, and was first president of the Opotiki Racing Club whose racecourse is now the aerodrome. His daughter carries on her mother's fine garden.

Names of the early settlers of Waioeka: Messrs Hood Glen; Dodds; Isaac Walker; William Oakes; J.P. Murray; Dr Agassiz (brother of the famous explorer, Louis Agassiz); Miss McGregoe, and her niece and nephew, Annie and Henry; A. Young; A. Parkinson; Pile; Thomas Abbot and son, Lindsay; E. Thompson; Matchitt; Armstrong; Clark Neilson; Warrington; Irwin; Harrison; Ebbett and Joblin.

In 1906 a large block of land around Oponae - then called Maraetai - and Wairata was opened for selection by ballot, and men were employed to form a bridle track for riders and for packhorses to take in stores. Some of the men who were successful in the ballot joined the road workers in order to earn money with which to fell the bush, grass and fence their sections.

Packing was an arduous task on the winding track. Everything, including wire, pipes, corrugated iron, furniture and household goods having to be transported on the pack-horses for many years, and the bales of wool brought out. Mr Mulhern opened a store at Matahanea, which, for a long time, was the end of the dray road though it was gradually extended to Crosswell's Creek after 1914. For some years Messrs Kelly and Dicky carted wool with waggon and horses, and took up stores. For a while, too, Mr C. Pipe ran a mail service, using a buggy and pair as far as Matahanea, then pack horses to Opanae.

Some of the new settlers were fresh arrivals from England, and one can imagine the feelings of their relatives who, arriving on a visit, had to face the long ride over a rough, narrow track to the new homes in the bush. The horses developed a special gait, known as the 'Waioeka jog', for it was impossible to canter on most stretches of the track. The scenery was beautiful, but the going was hard on both horses and riders.

#### Two Early Settlers

JOHN McCALLION arrived in Opotiki in 1881 and worked for the Rev. John Gow on 'Carmyllie'. In 1883 he leased the 100 acres on the Waioeka road, near the Pa. Later, he purchased the property now occupied by his son, Henry. Soon after Mr McCallion moved to the farm next to the pa, the Maoris came on to the property and took away from an old burial ground on the land the bones of their illustrious dead.

The Maoris were very restless for a time following the Te Kooti rising, and every night, before going to bed, he would go on to the terrace which overlooks the pa and lie among the tall grass and scrub in order to see what the occupants were doing, without of course being seen by them. When Te Kooti actually visited the pa at a later date, the Maoris were inclined to work themselves into a frenzy. It needed a stout heart to live nearby, for when a haka was performed the ground shook for a half a mile away. Mr McCallion said the noise and excitement of the Maoris was awe-inspiring. When they finally quietened down he would then crawl back to his whare.

On two occasions, when they were still performing hakas well after midnight, he crawled round to Mr Charles Rogers' house. Mr McCallion's first dwelling was a two-roomed cottage, and on going to bed he always barricaded the door and slept with a double-barrelled