

# HISTORIC STREETS OF OTAKI

by Barbara Swabey

In pre-European days, the Maori, having no horses or vehicles, roamed on tracks far and wide over the land, naturally taking the easy way where possible along beaches or down broad streams or rivers. It is quite possible that these tracks all had names as the Maori was clever at giving descriptive and distinctive names to places and landmarks.

When the Europeans arrived and made roads, however primitive, for their carts and coaches, they named these, sometimes obviously — for example — Coach Road, and sometimes in Maori — for example Te Rauparaha Street.

A coach being driven from Wellington to Foxton went along the beach from Paekakariki, turned inland to cross the Otaki River, travelled the **Coach Road** into Otaki and after a change of horses at Martin's Hostelry (site now opposite Rangiatea) continued on the road, such as it was, leading straight on down to the beach again.<sup>1</sup> Most of the original road is now known as **Rangiuru** after Te Rauparaha's Pa of the same name which was situated at the mouth of the Otaki River. The remains of the southern end of the original road is now called **The Old Coach Road** and joins Rangiuru Road about a quarter of a mile from the beach.

The end of Rangiuru Road joins **Te Rauparaha Street** (at the present day Post Office) named after the clever, cunning and famous Maori warrior. His monument, erected by his son Tamehana Te Rauparaha, stands a few hundred yards from where the two streets meet. Te Rauparaha Street leads into **Convent Road** (where the Roman Catholic Mission was established in 1844) and then past the golf course and so once again we meet the Old Coach Road on its way to the beach.

**Main Street**, a very unimaginative name, joins the Rangiuru Road and Te Rauparaha Street and just going to the end of the shopping area then becomes **Mill Road**, so named for the flour mill built on the bank of the Haruatai stream. This road runs on fairly straight until it reaches the main highway.<sup>2</sup>

So much has been written about Octavius Hadfield that it is only fitting the street opposite Rangiatea, the Church he was instrumental in building, should bear his name, **Hadfield Street**.<sup>3</sup>

The original road to the Otaki Cemetery was along **Lupin Road** which wended its way past a long lupin covered sand dune (now built over) on one side and farm land on the other. During the 1914-18 war a road was put in from Mill Road and called **Anzac Road** in honour of the men who were serving overseas.

**Rangatira Street** takes its name from Hoani Taipua a chief or rangatira of the



*Not a car in sight. Looking east along Main Street circa 1920. The Post Office is on the left on its present site as is the Telegraph Hotel and town picture theatre.*

Ngati Raukawa. Hoani Taipua owned the land and lived in a large wooden house on the site of the Otaki Memorial Hall.<sup>4</sup>

Matene Te Whiwhi remembered as being responsible in bringing Hadfield from the Bay of Islands to administer to the Maori people of this district. He owned the land and lived about the centre of Hadfield Street not far from his beloved Church. **Matene Street** and **Matene Place** perpetuate his name.<sup>5</sup>

**Temuera Street** recalls Paora Temuera M.B.E. and the regard in which he was held through New Zealand for his work for the Maori people.<sup>6</sup>

The present main highway used to turn right at the end of Mill Road, proceeded over the railway line with a sharp turn left. After a short flat stretch there was a steep climb before the road reached the top where it joins the present day ramp. This piece of road now known as **Old County Road** is a short one way stretch down hill from the ramp. The road running along to the Waitohu River with very few houses was known locally as "the terrace."

Manuao, a clearing and Kianga, was a deep narrow re-entrant of the original natural forest margin a mile east of Otaki. The narrow western entrance to the clearing was situated near the sand dunes near the present day Haruatai Park. This clearing extended eastward to the base of the isolated conical greywacke hill on the **Waitohu**

**Valley Road.** The bush abounded in bird life and was a valued snaring place for the Maori. Later the clearing was occupied by a native village also called Manuao complete with a whare — whakairo or carved meeting house, the people being hapu of the Ngati Raukawa. Although bush, birds and people are gone, the name **Te Manuao Road** recalls memories of what has been in the past.<sup>7</sup>

The land between Waitohu Valley Road and Te Manuao Road was farmed by Mr F. W. **Dittmer**, who gave his name to the street joining these two.

Generally known as **Freemans Road** but officially designed **Awahohonu Road**, was a blind road running up the steep hill from Rahui Road near the Otaki Maori Racecourse. In 1966 on asking for a name change, 28 signatories to a petition lodged with the borough council conveyed that Freemans Road was the address which was used on their correspondence for some time past. About that time the road was extended to join up with Te Manuao Road, sections were cut up and new homes built, so on May 19th, 1966 the council approved that the name be changed as the Freeman family had a long association with Otaki and farmed land on both sides of the road; so officially the name was changed from Awahohonu Road to Freemans Road.<sup>8</sup>

**Rahui Road.** This name is a shortened form and also perpetuates the name Tauranga-rahui, a distributary watercourse on the northern side of the Otaki River and east of the railway line.<sup>10</sup>

East of the railway line and off Rahui Road, is a short road now named **Te Roto Road** which perpetuates the old place name. "Te Roto" signifies a "place inland" and has nothing to do with a lake or lagoon which often has "roto" preceding the name.<sup>11</sup>

Up to 1921 the affairs of Otaki and district were administered to by the Roads Board but in 1921 Otaki became a borough and the first mayor was Mr J. P. Brandon. He held office from 1921 to 1929 and upon retiring lived in Otaki until his death in 1936. **Brandon Street** is a blind street off Freemans Road.

Waerenga means a clearing for cultivation so it is safe to assume that the land now bearing the name **Waerenga Road** had been cleared for crop growing. Originally the road had been called "Jubilee" after the Jubilee Hotel, established in 1890.

**Knight's Grove** was named for Fred Knight who came to Otaki after the war and started growing hothouse tomatoes in Mill Road. Interested in the town and district, he became mayor from 1959 to 1963.

**Dunstan Street** was the old stock route but no one knows where the name came from.

**Arthur Street** the shortest in Otaki takes the name from Arthur Mitchell who loved to stand on the corner and talk to allcomers. He farmed land off the main county road at the top of the terrace. This land ran in an easterly direction and adjoined Percy Freeman's property.

**Bell Street** recalls George Bell who came to New Zealand in 1842. He acquired land in Otaki which he farmed and he also started a fellmongery. The house he built is still standing but much altered. He was buried at Rangiatea in 1940.<sup>12</sup>

**Kirk Street** was about a quarter its present length finishing at a large two-storeyed wooden house built by a Professor R. C. Kirk from Wellington. He did not stay in Otaki very long and sold his house to Mr Byron Brown who in turn sold it to Mr Samuel Ngawhare Cook. It then became known as the "Cook House" but the street retained the name Kirk and was lengthened to join up with Bell Street.<sup>13</sup>

Mr Charles Atmore came to Otaki in 1919 after serving overseas in the war. When he was taken into Mr George Harper's office he already had his degree LLB but later obtained his LLM and then Mr Harper made him a partner, the firm being known as Harper and Atmore. Mr Atmore followed Mr Brandon as mayor of Otaki from 1929 to 1933. He was elected mayor again from 1938 to 1953. **Atmore Avenue** commemorates both his name and long term as mayor.

Mr Charles Lemon was born in London in 1834, educated at a Technical School obtaining a rudimentary knowledge of surveying and electricity. He came to New Zealand in 1863, was appointed Postmaster in Oamaru and two years later was made general manager of Posts and Telegraphs. The degree of Doctor of Philosophy was conferred on him by an American University in recognition of his serving in New Zealand for the United States Transit of Venus party in 1874 to 1875. After thirty years service, Dr Lemon retired to a small farm in Otaki. He built the house at 63 Waerenga Road and his land ran back towards the Otaki River. A very colourful person, his name is perpetuated in **Lemon Street**.<sup>14</sup>

The long stretch of **Tasman Road** built about 1920 recalls the name of Abel Tasman. We then come to the Mountain View estate where the names of three former mayors are remembered.

Robert McKeen was born in Scotland in 1884 and came to New Zealand in 1909. He worked as a coal miner until he entered parliament in 1922 where he remained for 32 years. During this time he was chief Whip for the Labour Party then Speaker of the House from 1946 to 1950. He retired to Otaki and became mayor from 1953 to 1959. During his term as mayor, he was responsible for the Tahuna Flats being built. **Robert McKeen Street** helps us to remember his name and what he did for Otaki.<sup>15</sup>

Mr O. H. E. Yates M. A. was Headmaster of the Otaki Primary School taking up his duties in May 1949 a position he held until the end of 1956. He was a keen gardener and grower of some note so on retiring he became secretary to the Otaki Horticultural Society. He held the position of mayor from 1963 to 1968. **Yates Street** is the second in the Mountain View subdivision.

Mr Timothy O'Rourke came to Otaki as a Police Officer about 1890. Later he

served as Clerk of the Court and gave outstanding public service in a variety of ways. He served a term as mayor from 1933 to 1938. His name has been given to **O'Rourke Place**.

**Rupene Street** recalls a story from pioneer days. When Thomas Bevan came to New Zealand, he established a rope walk first at Te Aro and then moved up country to Waikawa; leaving four motherless children in Wellington until he had built a home for them. A Maori guide, Rupene was sent to accompany the children on their long walk. What courage those children had and what kindness and strength was shown by Rupene who tended them with care and carried the youngest child for most of the way while helping the others through swamps, rivers and rough patches they met on the way.<sup>16</sup>

A little to the left of the Rangiuru Stream is **Te Whena Street** so named after a Maori chief Hakaraia Te Whenua who owned the land in that vicinity.

This leads into **Atkinson Avenue**. Tudor Atkinson was a Wellington Lawyer and company promoter who came to Otaki in 1895. He built a home for his family at Rangiuru and lived there for about five years. His hopes of turning Rangiuru into a seaside holiday resort did not eventuate so he took his family back to Wellington.<sup>17</sup>

Hakaraia Kiharoa died in 1852, a principal teacher of the Ngati Raukawa, he was loved and respected by both Maori and European. His name was given to **Kiharoa Street** which runs parallel to Atkinson Avenue.<sup>18</sup>

**Hariata Street** is on land being part of a block owned by the late Hema Te Ao the last paramount chief of the Ngati Raukawa. The late Mr A.D. Webster who subdivided this section of land purchased it from Mrs S. Kaihau, formally Tungia Te Ao. Her daughter was named Hariata which was a christian family name of the Te Ao's for several generations since the coming of the Missionaries. Because of this Mr Webster chose the name for the new street.<sup>19</sup>

After the war, the Rehabilitation Board was involved with the subdivision of land for the market gardens. They purchased Edward's farm opposite Tainui, roaded it and cut it into four large and four small blocks. The growers, mostly from the Hutt Valley, applied for land and a ballot was held. In appreciation of the help and advice given by the R.S.A.'s representative on the Rehabilitation Board, Captain Phil Bennett of Waikanae and at the request of the new residents, the recently made road was named in his honour. So we have **Bennett Road** which now for some reason has an 'S' on the end to become **Bennetts**.<sup>20</sup>

There are about sixteen streets in Otaki bearing the names of native trees. Only one tree was named for a resident. Miss Miles ran a rest home in Manuke Street which she called "The Ngaios". After her death, her nephew put through a street called **Ngaio Street** in her memory.

*Forty-Four*

The more recent streets to be formed in Otaki are at Norfolk Park on the banks of the Waitohu River. All the streets have been named for the pioneers of the district, who with their community spirit and foresight did so much for Otaki. There are Dodds and Hewson Crescents, Colenso Place and Simcox Street. All these people have been well documented in earlier copies of the Otaki Historical Journals.

## SOURCE MATERIAL

- <sup>1</sup> O.H.S. Journal 2 page 49.
- <sup>2</sup> O.H.S. Journal 3 page 66.
- <sup>3</sup> O.H.S. Journal 3 page 3.
- <sup>4</sup> O.H.S. Journal 3 page 33.
- <sup>5</sup> O.H.S. Journal 2 page 38.
- <sup>6</sup> O.H.S. Journal 3 page 55.
- <sup>7</sup> Horowhenua, G.L. Adkin page 232.
- <sup>8</sup> Mrs Edna Doyle.
- <sup>9</sup> Horowhenua, G.L. Adkin page 144.
- <sup>10</sup> O.H.S. Journal 3 page 85.
- <sup>11</sup> Horowhenua, G.L. Adkin page 345.
- <sup>12</sup> O.H.S. Journal 5 page 34.
- <sup>13</sup> Mrs Eliza Muir.
- <sup>14</sup> Mr Paul Orr, P.O. Museum and Archives.
- <sup>15</sup> Mr Fox.
- <sup>16</sup> Thomas Bevan, Reminiscences.
- <sup>17</sup> H.M.W. Atkinson, Artist and Botanist.
- <sup>18</sup> O.H.S. Journal 2 page 33.
- <sup>19</sup> The Otaki Mail.
- <sup>20</sup> O.H.S. Journal 5 page 61.

## AOTAKI STREET

No one knows quite where the name Aotaki came from but the following was read at the Otaki Literary and Debating Club on September 2nd, 1919. Two or three days later the interesting letter from A.J. Knocks was published.

## INTERESTING LEGEND

### How Otaki Derived Its Name.

How did Otaki come to be named? A great many of the old Maori names in this land have been derived from legends which the old Maoris treasured and passed down from generation to generation; and a weird fantastic tradition exists with how Otaki received its name. It is said in the dim remote past a Maori tohunga in Taranaki had a



*A view west along Main Street from the Aotaki intersection in the early years of this century. Note the building now occupied by Edhouse Drapers. On the right is the Central Hotel, long since burnt down. Tasman has not yet been constructed. Photograph courtesy Nicolson Collection.*

young and very beautiful wife who fell in love with another man and fled with him away to the south. The tohunga whose name was Hou set off in pursuit following them all the way to Paekakariki. As he journeyed down the coast he named a great many of the places he passed — names which stand to this day. For instance it is said that at Wanganui Hou was much delayed not knowing which way the fugitives had gone, and he called the place Whanganui — the place of waiting. Then he made a detour on a false 'scent' and named the locality Aramoho — meaning fools' errand.

On reaching the broad waters of the Manawatu Hou's heart failed him for some time, fearing he would be unable to cross; therefore he named the river Manawatu — heart standing still. On approaching Otaki the flat was covered with thick scrub and Hou made his way wearily through the heavy growth, pushing his spear in front of him as he went, and it was thus, so the tradition goes that the name was given — Houtaki, Hou after the tohunga and taki or takitaki meaning feeling one's way with a spear or stick. This tradition is firmly believed by the older Maoris who ridicule the theory advanced by some that the name was originally Aotaki. The "H" was gradually dropped and the name Otaki has remained ever since. It may be mentioned that the tradition goes on to the effect that when reaching the rocks at Paekakariki Hou came

to the base of the great rock Te Paripari. In those days the rocks were not solid but hollow. Hou heard his wife talking with her abductor on the other side of the rock. He then uttered a powerful incantation or karakia by means of which he cleft a passage through the great rock, whereby he passed through to the other side. Then, sending his wife out to sea he turned her into a rock which stands to this day named Wairaka after Hou's wife. The Maoris say the pakehas may laugh at this tradition but they point to the cleft rock of Te Paripari and the rock Wairaka out in the sea as proof of the truth of the story. The pakehas look on this rock as a work of nature, but the Maoris call it still "Te Ana o Hou" the cave of Hou.

### How Otaki Derived Its Name.

(To the Editor)

Sir, In your issue of Wednesday last, under the heading of "How Otaki Derived Its Name" the writer of the article states that a sorcerer by the name of Hou gave the name. In my humble opinion there is no doubt he called it "Aotaki" which means world search. In saying this I would respectfully suggest to your many readers that Hou in his journey along the coast of this island in search of his wife, named all the rivers from Taranaki to Waikanae and travellers in those days invariably went by the seashore and not through thick scrub. It will be found upon inquiry that the rivers only were named.

I have many many times heard the Maori nurses singing a lullaby in which the names Hou and Aotaki are included. I enquired of Muopokos and Rangitanes, who occupied Otaki about two hundred years back, long, long before the Ngati Raukawas came, and the old folk of these tribes were unanimous in saying Hou gave this place the name "Aotaki". It is said in the "Mail" that the "H" was gradually dropped. You, sir, will of course note that this would leave the name Outaki not Otaki.

So far as the name of the river here once being Houtaki, it seems to me out of place. In any case, Mr Editor, do you not think Aotaki sounds prettier than the pronunciation of the other name suggested, and that we should leave well alone? There are many things that could be said in support of my contentions, though I will not at present trespass further on your valuable space.

Just a few words on the difference made by one letter on the spelling of Maori names. The island of "Kapiti" is nearly always spelt this way. This is wrong, and has no meaning thus spelt and pronounced. The proper way to spell the name of the island is "Kaputi" and I think it was as near as the Maori in the early days could pronounce "cup of tea" among the old whalers at "Kaputi" island, — I am, etc.

A.J. Knocks.

Te Pari, Otaki September 4th, 1919.