

## ADMINISTRATION

Okoki Pa is one of several historic reserves administered on behalf of the Department of Lands and Survey by the Taranaki Reserves Board. The Commissioner of Crown Lands, New Plymouth, is chairman of the board, and the address of the secretary is c/- Department of Lands and Survey, P.O. Box 43, New Plymouth.

## TRACKS

A track through the reserve leads from the memorial to the tihi, then back again to the entrance gate. There are magnificent views of the surrounding country from various parts of the track and trenches and store pits of the pa can be seen, although they are becoming less distinct with time.

A small, flat elevated grassed area on the eastern side of the memorial prow is a Maori burial ground.

## VEGETATION

History is not the only attraction of this reserve as there are a wide variety of native trees and shrubs. Some of these and the uses the early Maori put them to, are listed below:

**Akeake:** A hardwood used for tool handles and weapons.

**Hinau:** Has a very attractive flower. Berries were collected and crushed with a stone pounder in a hollow stone, and the material resembled flour and was used as a food.

**Karaka:** These trees are often found in association with early Maori dwelling places. The fruit was much sought after as a food.

**Kiekie:** The flower and fruit are both edible; the long leaves were used for weaving food baskets and the aerial roots used for making eel baskets.

**Koromiko:** The young tips of the white variety of this flowering shrub were eaten as a cure for dysentery.

**Kowhai:** When the Kowhai flowered the Maori planted his kumara. A yellow dye was extracted from the bark and used for colouring flax fibre, which was used in the weaving of garments.

**Mamaku:** The young shoots were cooked for food.

**Ponga:** Used by the Maori to define bush tracks at night; the fronds were placed on the ground with the white side uppermost.

**Puriri:** Used for palisades on top of parapets where hard, lasting timber was required; also used for spears and fish-hooks.

**Rangiora:** The large leaves of this shrub were used as a receptacle for food.

**Rata:** Used for firewood as it gave out great heat.

**Rewarewa:** Tui and bellbirds are attracted to this tree.

**Ti-Kauka:** The base of the young leaves was eaten. In European times the small trunks of the tree were used as chimneys on whares because when green, they resist fire for a long period. Leaves were used as cordage which was noted for its great strength.

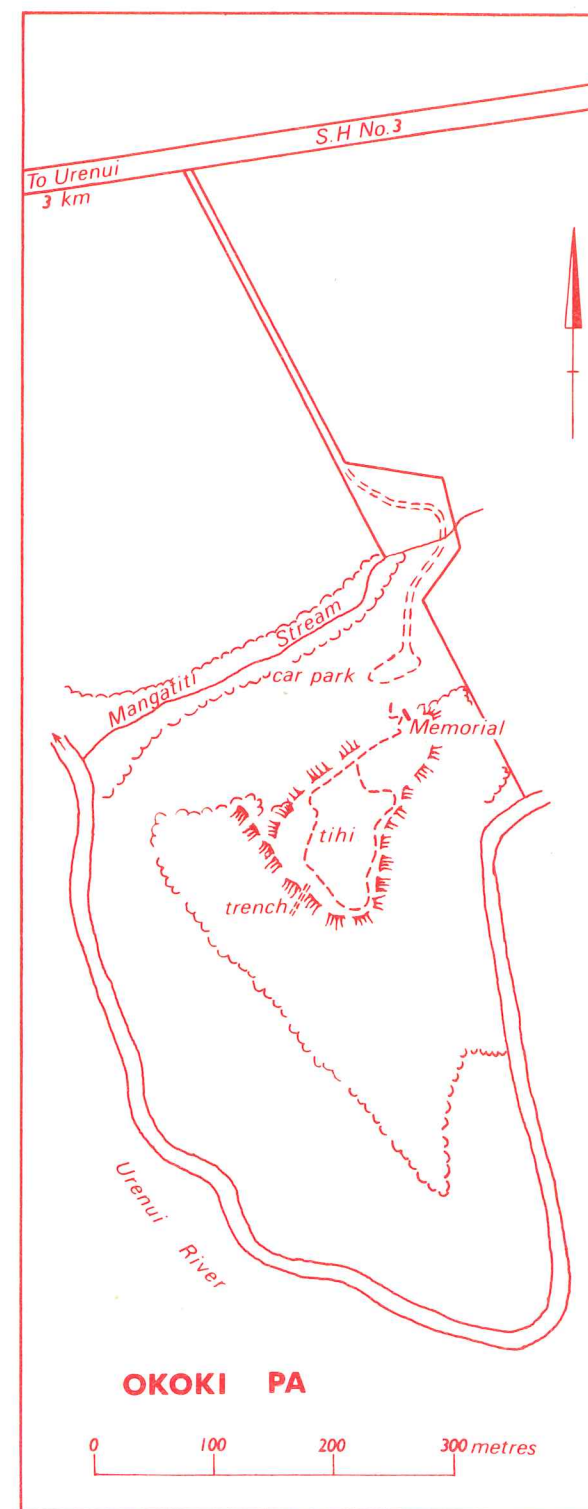
**Titoki:** The scented oil was extracted from the fruit and used by the Maori women to enhance their beauty.



Photograph of Sir Peter Buck  
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Published by the Department of Lands and Survey,  
Wellington, New Zealand.

3,000/P 67/1975



# OKOKI PA

SCENIC AND  
HISTORIC  
RESERVE

# OKOKI PA

In the days before the arrival of the European, the whole area between the Urenui and the Mimi Rivers was known as Whakaurunganui-Taniwha, after the large cluster of fortified pa which surrounded it. One of the most important, and also one of the oldest, was the great pa of Okoki.

Today the pa site is one of Taranaki's historic attractions and contains the last resting place of the famed Maori leader Te Rangi Hiroa (Sir Peter Henry Buck) and his wife, Lady Margaret Buck. It is the memorial to this great man, in the form of a huge, stylised Maori canoe prow jutting from a backdrop of native bush that first catches one's eye. In accordance with Te Rangi Hiroa's express wish the urns containing his ashes, and later those of Lady Buck, were placed in a vault at the base of the prow.

## LOCATION

Okoki Pa is situated off State Highway 3 some 3.5 kilometres northeast of Urenui and 35.5 kilometres from New Plymouth. The turn-off from the State Highway is marked with an Automobile Association Historic Place sign and an unsealed drive leads to a car park just inside the reserve.

## HISTORY

Very ancient by traditional reckoning, Okoki is believed to have been built by the earliest Maori settlers in this area, the Ngati Mutunga, who still occupied the pa in the 1820s. Built on a bend in the Urenui River at its junction with the Mangatiti Stream, the pa's tihi, or top platform,

# SCENIC AND HISTORIC RESERVE

is some 61 metres above the river. It was so strongly constructed and well defended that, in its long history, the pa was reputed never to have been captured. The Ngati Mutunga also built and occupied a number of other pa in the vicinity from Titoki Pa just north of Waititi to a small pa, Te-Rau-o-te-Huia, south of Onaero River.

The battle of Motonui, in 1822, took its name from the area of land between the elevated Okoki Pa and the sea. A large invading force of Waikato Maoris under the leadership of their famous chief Te Whero Whero, who was later to become the first Maori King, was marching south in an effort to rescue from starvation a party of Waikato warriors besieged at Pukerangiora Pa on the Waitara River.

At that time the Ngati Mutunga numbers of Okoki were strengthened by the Ngati Toa under Te Rauparaha who in the course of their migration south to the Kapiti coast, were in temporary residence.

A plan was devised that Te Rauparaha and 80 picked warriors should lure the Waikato into the Mangatiti Valley where the main force of Ngati Mutunga and Ngati Toa would strike. The ruse was successful and nine Waikato chiefs and a large number of Waikato warriors were killed. The Waikato withdrew under cover of darkness and, although badly depleted in number, they carried on to Pukerangiora to lift the siege.

The Waikato, seeking utu for their defeat, exacted a terrible revenge. This confrontation led to the virtual abandonment of the Taranaki coast from Mokau to Patea. Okoki was deserted as members of the Ngati Mutunga migrated to the Chatham Islands.

## TE RANGI HIROA (SIR PETER HENRY BUCK) K.C.M.G., D.S.O., M.A., Litt.D., D.Sc., M.D., Ch.B.

Of Maori and Irish parentage Te Rangi Hiroa was born at Urenui about 1877, and lived there with his parents until he was about 15. Although his first language was English, he also learned Maori and Maori lore from his mother and grandmother who were both members of the Ngati Mutunga. He distinguished himself both as a scholar and athlete and after a period at Te Aute College, he graduated in medicine from Otago University in 1904. He returned to Otago University in 1910 to take an M.D. degree.

In 1905 he joined the Department of Native Affairs as a Maori Health Officer. He was married that year to Margaret Wilson who came from a North Ireland family and who, although not of Maori blood, understood his work and accompanied him on his many travels. He was a member of Parliament from 1908 to 1914 and was for a few weeks a Minister of the Crown.

After serving with distinction as an officer in the Maori Battalion during World War 1 he returned to New Zealand to serve his people as Director of Maori Hygiene.

In 1911 he began to publish short papers on particular aspects of the material culture of the Polynesian Islands and during parliamentary recesses he took appointments as medical officer in the Cook Islands and Niue enabling him to pursue this interest. Some years later he joined a museum expedition to the Cook Islands as an ethnologist. In 1927, on the nomination of the Maori Board of Ethnological Research, he was appointed ethnologist at the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Hawaii. Shortly afterwards he became the Bishop Museum Visiting Professor of Anthropology attached to the Institute of Human Relations at Yale University.

Although in his own words "a home made anthropologist" his books on Polynesian culture remain classics to this day. He became "Successor-Director" to the Bishop Museum in 1933 where he stayed until his death on December 3, 1951. His ashes reached Okoki on 8 August 1953 to finally be with his Maori ancestors who are buried here.

