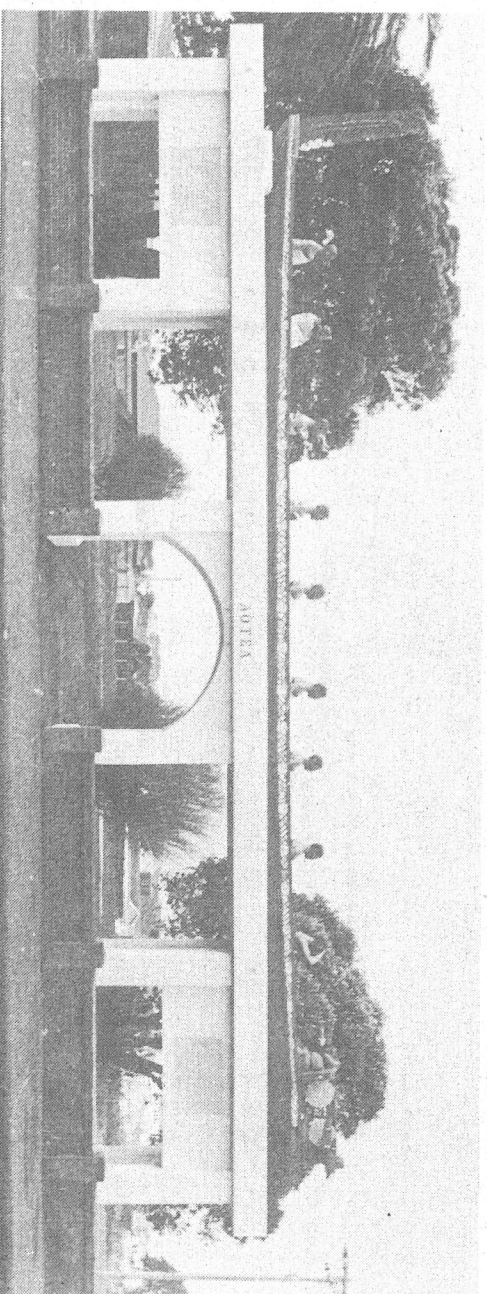


TURI OF ANCIENT TIMES FOUND PATEA THE PLACE OF SWEET-SMELLING SOIL

THE AOTEA MEMORIAL CANOE



Unique among all the memorials erected from one end of New Zealand to the other, a replica of the famous Aotea, or Aotearoa canoe, resting on its six great pillars that parallel the highway at Patea, is an arresting edifice, if not to local residents familiar with it then most certainly to travellers with time to pause awhile and ponder the simple inscription: "This token of remembrance . . . by the descendants living throughout Aotearoa of their ancestors Turi and Rongorongo, their family and fellow voyagers." And so the legend of Turi's coming has to be re-told, as re-told it must be to the end of time, for here is a treasured piece of the very history of the place, called Patea these past six centuries or more.

One of the most skilled of the many brilliant navigators who stud Maori folk-lore, Turi abandoned the sea at the end of his greatest voyage in the 14th century migration from Raiatea, one of the Cook Island group, earlier known as Hawaiiki, and walked in search of a "river that flows towards the setting sun." He came upon Patea, for there the land that Turi smelled — "Te Whenui i hongia e Turi" — was sweet, as he had been told by the explorer, Kupe. "Ka patea tatoru," which appears as an inscription on the mayoral chain presented to the Borough last year by the family of the late Mr F. Ramsbottom, a former mayor, were the words with which Turi informed his followers that they could lay down their burdens, having reached journey's end.

Ten figures are represented in the canoe — Turi, his wife Rongorongo and their infant son nesting in a cloak on his mother's back, Turi's son Turangaimua and brother Rewa and five other men. In all, 11 hapus were represented among the passengers.

On the voyage from Raiatea, Turi's party called at the small island Rangahua, supposed to be in the Kermadec group, and there gathered seeds of the karaka. The Aotea reached New Zealand, land of the long white cloud, about Christmas time and it is generally conceded that it landed near the East Cape "when the lovely pohutukawa was in bloom." It was a wonderful sight for the men who had been tossed about on the high seas for so many weeks.

In their search for fertile land the wanderers in due course arrived at Waitemata, which had been described to Turi by Kupe. According to legend they hauled their canoe across the isthmus from Tamaki to Manakau and sailed down to the Aotea anchorage at Raglan, where they went ashore to continue their search on foot, a scout, Pungarehu, being sent on ahead of the main party.

Turi named several places as they journeyed and, with few exceptions, many have persisted until the present day. Kawhia was the first reached and so named because the party had to journey round the harbour. They travelled on, past Marokopa, Moku, Waitara, Mangati and Matakitaki to Ngamotu, "where the earth did not smell sweet." Then to Tapuwae, Oakura, Kaupokonui (the head of Turi), Marae-Kura, Kapuni (the encampment of Turi), Waingongora (the place where Turi snored), Tangahoe, Ohingahape and Whiti kau.

Turi gave Mount Egmont its original name Taranaki.

A tribe led by Taikahu was said to be in possession at Patea when Turi arrived and legend has it that the two agreed to settle together, their people intermarrying and become one tribe, their pa being sited on the south side of the river and defended by the natural formation and the headland Rangitahi. A large meeting house Matangeri was erected in the pa with a whata or storehouse called Paehua. A nearby spring was named Pararakiteuru and, to make provision for religious ceremonies, an altar was erected and named Rangitaka.

First Kumara Harvest

Chanting some of the old songs, the tribes broke up the soil with wooden spades and planted the few seed kumaras they possessed. The actual planting was done by Turi's wife, Rongorongo, who was skilled in such work and broke the soil very finely. She formed small mounds of the fine soil and planted a seed in each. The mara (cultivation) was named Hekehekepapa and the virgin soil was so fertile an enormous quantity was harvested.

The Karaka seed brought from the Kermadecs was planted on the north bank and evidence of the groves which grew persisted until comparatively recent years, seed from this area, named Papawhero, being carried up and down the coast.

Some of Turi's people later settled to the north of the river near a good spring at Otrairai and between two good fishing grounds, Whiti kau and Kaitangata.

Another name which persists among the people in the district, Tupatea, arose from an incident when a party, led by Turangaimua, departed for the south. The chieftainess Taneroa, daughter of Turi, drew attention to the fact and uttered a bitter curse as they stood in the river. Hence Tupatea — standing in the Patea River.

According to some authorities, Patea should have been spelt Pa-wa-tea, the pa with a clear outlook.

Place of 1,000 leaves

The land behind the present railway station was at one time known as Raunmano, or the place of a thousand leaves. It was said to have been a swamp producing flax, tutu, rauupo and toe toe and was the home of pukeko, parera and Kotuku. An old chant sung by the Maoris of Hukatere told of a landslide in that locality, which carried away many people into the sea "and across to the West Coast."

Pariroa, lying in a sheltered valley beside the railway near Kakaramea, replaced Huketere on the eastern bank of the river when Huketere came under tapu.

Troubled circumstances, believed to be the death of his son in battle with another tribe, added yet another chapter to the legend of Turi. He disappeared, some claim back to Hawaiiki, and his last resting place remains a mystery. But he left behind him descendants who were to become a great race of people and who lived 500 years of undisturbed life, writing little into the history of Patea, until there came the land-hungry pakehas. Tribal angers flamed and, within a few years, the peaceful coast was involved in bloody warfare.

11 November 1918: The Mayor brought up the matter of the influenza epidemic and asked if the Council would take any action in the matter. Resolved: That the Engineer be empowered to buy a limited supply of disinfectant and that the public be notified that they can obtain it from the Council at cost price. The Mayor also mentioned the matter of peace celebrations and suggested the Council should make some vote toward entertaining that children. Resolved: That a vote of £20 be granted toward the entertainment of the children on the declaration of peace.

In the early 1930's discussion arose amongst the Ngati Ruanni tribe about the building of a memorial for the tribes of the Aotea canoe. It was decided to build a memorial canoe at Patea. Henare Hikuroa built the concrete base and canoe structure which now stands

DIVISION OF PEOPLE INTO MAIN TRIBES

The people of the Aotea canoe, after their arrival in this country about the year 1350 A.D., made their first home at Patea. It was at Patea that trouble broke out which divided the people into the main tribes of Ngati Ruanni and Nga Rauuru. It happened this way.

Turi, leader of the Aotea migration, had a number of children, among whom were a son, Turanga-i-mua, and a daughter, Tane-roa, and a daughter, Tane-roa. Tane-roa married Tengapanake, a man of high rank of the Takitimu people.

At the instigation of Tane-roa her husband killed some dogs belonging to Turanga-i-mua. These they cooked and ate. The story says that at that time Tane-roa was expecting a child and craved for the flesh of dogs.

Turanga-i-mua soon found out about this and the thieves were exposed. Thus Tane-roa and her husband could no longer remain in the old home so they crossed the river and settled to the north at a place called Whiti kau. This is three miles up the coast from the mouth of the river.

Founder of Tribe

Whiti kau became in later years a famous place in the story of South Taranaki for it was here that Tane-roa's child Ruanni was born, he who founded the tribe that even today carries his name. Ngati Ruanni's lands of old stretched from the northern bank of the Patea River almost to Oeo and inland to the slopes of Mount Egmont.

At Whiti kau there was a famous place of learning called Kaitapo and it was in Kaitapo that a quarrel broke out which was followed by a further division of the people. Some of Tane-roa's tribe left Taranaki after this quarrel

and went, it is believed, to Wairarapa. South of the river the people of Turanga-i-mua spread over the country-side, building villages and fortifications, mainly in the coastal strip but also inland in some places. The tribe took the name of Nga Rauuru after an ancestor.

Turanga-i-mua was a great warrior and led expeditions to other parts of the country, meeting in battle those members of the earlier migrations who could gather war parties to oppose him. Maori history — that is the stories handed down by the descendants — of the last migration — is full of stories of how the original inhabitants fled before the powerful newcomers.

Counter-attack

However, they must not all have been as unwelcome as the stories say because after one battle in which Turanga-i-mua had gained a notable victory the survivors came back with a counter-attack in which Turanga-i-mua and a number of his leading warriors lost their lives.

The battle took place in the Ruahine Ranges, Turanga-i-mua's body was brought back to Patea by the survivors and there his aged father Turi mourned for his warrior son and could not be comforted.

Turi then disappeared and the story is that his spirit fled from the new home to the old and found peace at last in the islands from which he had set out long years before as the leader of the great adventure.

Turi must have been saddened too by the enmity which had arisen between his children. The quarrel which had broken out between Tane-roa and Turanga-i-mua was not allowed to die down. Over the centuries it simmered, now and again breaking out into open warfare.