

THE LATE HUNTER SHAW MONUMENTS TO GENEROSITY

Every town has its special benefactor who has left behind him everlasting evidence of unselfishness, generosity and helpfulness. Patea can claim several such men, and among these the name of Hunter Shaw will stand for many, many years to come. During the past two years several corners of Patea have been brightened and improved through the clauses of his will which left a generous estate to be administered on the 'citizens' behalf. Known intimately to only a very few, and known by sight to very few more, his life should be of interest to everyone.

Romance often shrouds the life history of these old settlers of New Zealand, and certainly the late Hunter Shaw's is no exception. Born in the North of Ireland, in 1839, he lived for over ninety years, and often in later life, he would remark that he thought the "Old man with the Scythe" had forgotten to mow him down.

It was about 1860, or shortly before, that he arrived in New Zealand. He had the wanderlust still, however, and explored the few parts of New Zealand then opened up.

In 1860 he attended the sale of the Whenuakura Block, the first land sale to

be held in the Patea district, and purchased, without seeing it, a large area of bush land which he named later "Crescent Falls", deriving the designation from the peculiar course the stream took through the property. He camped in the wilds, and his dream of one day conquering the bush held him to a hard task. He served in a cavalry regiment in the troublous times of that period, rising to officered rank.

Returning to mufti he entered the social life of Patea. As time went on, however, he withdrew to his books, and dropped out of the knowledge of hosts and hostesses. One by one, his fellow soldiers and settlers died, until he was the last left. His brothers and sister, too, all died before him. Only one brother married, but he died without children, so that when Hunter Shaw passed away, the branch of the family in New Zealand died with him. He was buried next to his brother, John in Auckland.

Today there stand to his memory several buildings in Patea which compare with the best in the Dominion. One is the Memorial Building at the north end of the town, and which houses the Library and the Plunket rooms and nurses' residence. Designed by Mr



Gummer, of Gummer and Ford, of Auckland, and built by Mr A.G. Bignell of Wanganui, the building is the finest in the town, and represents a forward step in the progress of Patea.

It was officially opened last December by the Minister of Health, Hon. A. J. Stallworthy. The Hunter Shaw estate was solely responsible for the building and all its furnishings, the total amount expended being approximately £5000.

"He is dead, yet speaks to us".

These appropriate words are engraved on the tablet erected to the memory of Patea's benefactor at the far end of the lobby of the library. Not far removed