

# POST OFFICE KEEPS PATEA IN TOUCH

The Patea Mail, Wednesday, September 9, 1981 — 91

**SPECIAL**

**POST MARK**



The special Centennial date stamp will only be used on Tuesday, October 13th, and its use will be restricted to the Patea Post Office. Only letters will be cancelled with the special cancellation, and these must be posted at the Post Office, Patea, on Tuesday, October 13th, no later than 5pm. Letters can be posted in the normal box at the Post Office or in the special box provided.

Out of town people wishing to have mail cancelled with the commemorative post mark may send a stamped addressed envelope to the Postmaster, Patea, clearly indicating that the special cancellation is required.

Many philatelists are now specialising in collecting commemorative post marks and it is expected that there will be a world-wide demand for the Patea Centennial Cancellation.

900 line installation.

"There is perhaps, no more effective service for tying together the separate parts that go to make up the nation than the telephone," he said, "and giving Patea this new automatic exchange took a great deal of time, effort and money. It is a tribute to the belief the Post Office has in Patea's future."

And now, 17 years later, that belief still holds.

## POSTMASTERS AND DATES OF OFFICE

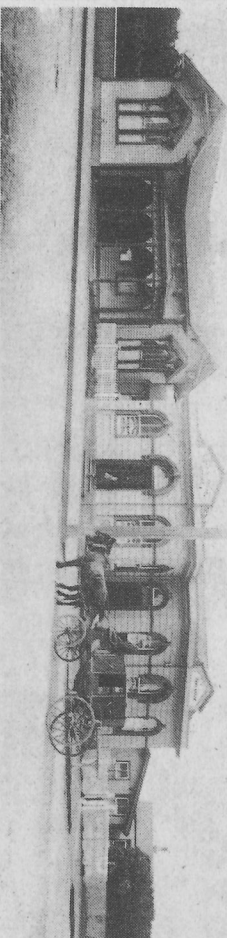
Capt. Hirst (military office) 1866; J. Hutton (first permanent postmaster) 1870; F. Long 1895; A. Benner 1902; W. F. Kennedy 1912; A. J. Mueller 1915; G. Ormsby 1917; H. A. Green 1925; G. R. Taylor 1932; P. Maurs 1937; S. Hills 1942; W. Aston 1945; E. B. Anderson 1948; E. C. Dobson 1957; F. L. Bonifacio 1958; J. Broadbent 1960; C. G. Lakeman 1961; E. H. McElhinney 1963; R. F. Parkinson 1966; F. P. Doyle 1969; W. T. S. Hercock 1974; A. B. Waters 1975; L. H. Terrill 1977; G. D. Stove 1979.

The £7,343 (\$14,686) contract for Patea's present two storey brick Post Office was let to Mr. A. G. Bignell of Wanganni in 1922 but plastering of the 2,700 sq ft building was delayed by wet weather and it wasn't opened until October, 1923.

A small switchboard opened in 1901 with 22 subscribers in the district phone book but by 1930 there were 236 subscribers served by two switchboards.

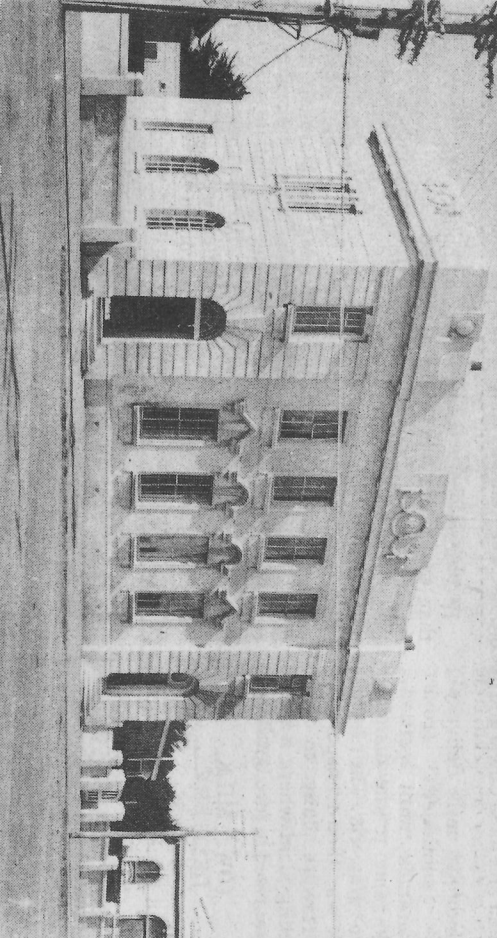
In 1950 some 50 rural subscribers were transferred to the new automatic exchange at Alton and by 1963 744 people were putting their calls through the five switchboards at Patea Post Office.

The following year work started on a £10,308 (\$20,616) automatic exchange at Patea with direct subscriber dialling to Hawera and Okatawa subscribers and on February 18 Rangitikei electorate MP, Mr. R. E. Jack, opened the



The second Post Office, early this century with the earlier building on the right. The Courthouse is on the left.

Photo — Alexander Turnbull Library



The present post office with the second building moved down Stafford St.

Patea guards the southern gateway to Taranaki and Post Office services since 1867 have kept that gate open to the world.

The first Post Office was opened in Patea in May that year and Mr James Hirst, a former captain in the Colonial Field Forces, became the town's first Postmaster. For a start Post Office business was conducted from Mr Hirst's house, near the river where the Imperial troops were encamped during the Maori wars.

In 1870 a new site, on the main highway through Patea, was obtained and Mr Hirst's house erected on the land as the Patea Post Office. About 1880 the house reverted to Postmaster's residence once again and was moved to the back of the present Post Office site to make way for a new Post Office. The new, permanent post office opened in 1880 to receive the irregular mails that came from Wanganni under armed guard by squads of militiamen or bounced over the bar into the Patea River mouth in the Government steamer Sturti or the coastal scows Gundigi or Woodpecker.

An irregular service to the northern outposts was provided by three Patea Maoris, Creed, Hoani Pihama and Mahina until 1868 when other Maori tribespeople north of Patea joined Te Kooti's rebel forces. A fortnightly horse-back mail service was established over the 100 miles between New Plymouth and Patea in that year but this was increased to a weekly service in 1871 and from 1872 a twice weekly coach service carried the mail

north.

In 1879 Mr A. Young established a daily coach service from Wanganni to the Post Office at Patea.

Mr J.A. Hutton, a permanent Post Office officer, took control of Patea postal services in 1870 and on March 17 that year he sent the town's first telegraph message, by Morse key, to Wellington.

The telegraph office was in a small lean-to not far from Taplin and Muir's store with a hole in the door and a small ledge outside

serving as a public office.

"The place was used by the tailor who was making uniforms for the members of the native contingent of some one hundred and fifty men then stationed in Patea," Mr Hutton wrote.

"A very practical illustration of the telegraph was, on this occasion, furnished to the Maoris' minds," he wrote, "Hone Pihama a friendly native chap from Opunake was in Wellington at the time and his brother, whose name I cannot recall, was in Patea.

A memo was sent to me to direct the latter to proceed to Wanganni on the Monday morning leading a spare horse to meet his brother who was leaving Wellington on the Monday en route to Wanganni in the ship Stormbird."

This was done and Mr Hutton said "I can recall the smile of satisfaction on Hone's face when he arrived back in Patea."

Mr Hirst became the registrar of births, deaths and marriages at Patea for some years until his death.



## Post Office



Since 1867 the POST OFFICE has been extending a helping hand to the people of Patea.

From the days of horseback, stagecoach and boat on into the satellite communications era the POST OFFICE has kept you in touch.

Buying plant and machinery, selling beef and mutton, the Post Office gets your message there and makes it all happen.

Our involvement in Patea goes back 13 years before the Borough's birthday.

Post Office staff congratulate the people of Patea on their centenary and we look forward to helping you in the next 100 years.

And to help celebrate the event we are issuing the special Patea Centennial datestamp.

