

WAITARA DEVELOPMENT

HISTORY OF THE POST OFFICE

CONSTRUCTION OF NEW BUILDING

MINISTER OF LOBOUR'S ADDRESS.

The history of Waitara and the development of the activities of the Post and Telegraph Department in the district, with a description of the new post office recently constructed, were dealt with by the Hon. S. G. Smith, Minister of Labour, in opening the new building on Saturday afternoon.

"Waitara is rich in Maori lore and tradition," Mr. Smith said, "but I shall confine myself to its European history. The earliest mention of Waitara and its European story is connected with the barque William Stoveld, commanded by Captain Davidson, which anchored off the river mouth in 1823, and traded with the natives for flax and pork.

"The town as it now stands was laid out and surveyed by Mr. F. A. Carrington in 1866 and 1867 and in 1867 the first sale of town and suburban sections was held. In a sketch made by Mr. Burgoyne, surveyor, in 1868, the township of Waitara comprised Mr. Tom Leadon's Waitara Hotel, Mr. B. C. Lawrence's bakery and confectionery, Mr. Wm. Halse's private residence, Mr. Oliver Spurdle's wheelwright shop, the ferry, with Mr. Christeen Nelson as ferryman and pilot, Webster Bros.' store and jetty and the old block house and flag staff towards the beach. There were also a number of suburban residences, including those of Messrs. Sam Joll, John Carrick, Mathew Jonas, John and Thos. Elliot, H. H. Wood, Tait Bro., Isaac, Dan and Arthur Bayly and John Cameron. A littler later Mr. John Gilmour's store was established.

"A flourishing shipping trade was in operation from the river port about 1872, and it continued for many years, mainly through the efforts of the brothers F. L. and W. D. Webster, whose craft traded between Taranaki and Australian ports.

THE OVERLAND MAIL.

"Waitara's postal history dates back to 1841, when the overland mail track between New Plymouth and Auckland crossed the Waitara River inside the mouth about abreast of the old cattle wharf on the north bank, approximately half a mile seaward of the bridge, at what used to be the ford and ferry. During the military occupation of Waitara in 1860-61 when the headquarters of the Imperial forces in New Zealand were situated on the camp reserve, the overland mail routes were in the hands of the enemy, and mails were conveyed by sea between New Plymouth and the camp by the small paddle steamer Tasmanian Maid, which made the river her haven in rough weather. Later a mail service to the township was performed by Mr. Paterson in his two-horse covered express, and this method of conveyance continued until the railway was opened in 1875.

"The first post office in Waitara was opened on March 1, 1871, in the charge of Mr. J. Cameron, who was paid salary at the rate of £5 per annum. The office was later transferred to the railway station, the stationmaster acting as postmaster, the first occupant of the dual position being Mr. F. Bluck, who took charge on December 1, 1876. The office remained under the control of the stationmaster until April 1, 1885, when Mr. G. W. Burford, a permanent officer of the post office, took charge, although it is to be noted that prior to this date a staff of post and telegraph officers had been employed under the control of the stationmaster.

"The successors to Mr. Cameron, the first incumbent of the office, in the position of postmaster, together with the dates of their appointment, are.—F. Bluck 1.12.76, M. I. Cleary 25.1.78, J. W. Kinnibrugh 13.2.78, T. Marsden 30.11.83, G. W. Barford 1.4.85, H. Gourlay 1.7.91, E. Clarke 1.4.97, R. D. Dansey 1.2.00, H. E. Gilbert 1.11.03, J. T. W. Collier 12.12.13, T. Cole 14.3.18, T. J. Boland 1.4.19, F. W. Barnard (present postmaster) 24.9.20.

"The money-order office and savings-bank branch and a telegraph office were opened at Waitara in 1878, and a telephone exchange with 11 subscribers on August 28, 1899. The number of subscribers now connected is 292.

INCREASE IN BUSINESS.

"In the last ten years there has been an appreciable general increase in the post office business at Waitara, as the following comparative figures show, the first figures being for 1920 and the second for 1930 in each case:—Letters, postcards, and other articles posted 156,260, 447,300; letters, postcards, and other articles delivered 226,290, 451,440; 1386 money-orders issued of a value of £8412, 1561 of a value of £8,204; 689 money-orders paid of a value of £5433, 761 of a value of £4402; 2357 savings-bank deposits made amounting to £68,169, 2883, amounting to £39,287; 1342 savings-bank withdrawals made amounting to £44,071, 1143, amounting to £31,310; 32,750 telegrams and telephone toll messages forwarded of a value of £1072, 48,111 of a value of £1828; telegrams and telephone toll messages received 28177, 47,184

"The old site of the office was first occupied by the department on October 19, 1879, the business being transferred from the railway station, so that a portion of the post office building which has just been vacated has been used as a post office for over half a century. Additions were made as the business of the office grew, the last considerable alteration being effected in 1898.

"The building which I am about to declare open for business is a two storied structure built in brick and concrete, and is of fire-resisting construction. The exterior is treated with plaster enrichment, and the roof is finished with Marseilles tiles. The surround to the main entrance facing McLean Street has Roman Doric pilasters and entablature surmounted with a flagpole. Two residential and three official entrances have been provided on the ground floor. The building is of modern design, and embodies the most up-to-date practice in design of public buildings.

"It is satisfactory to know that materials from other than British

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ANTI-ACIDO

sources form such a small fraction of the building as to be practically negligible. All timber, cement and brick were obtained in New Zealand, and as far as possible fittings have been obtained from New Zealand manufacturers using British material.

"The ground floor provides accommodation for the post office and comprises: Mail room, 20ft by 24ft 6in; public space, 23ft by 12ft; telephone exchange, 17ft by 12ft; postmaster's room, 12ft 6in by 10ft 3in; private box lobby, 12ft by 8ft; vestibule, 11ft 6in by 8ft; two stores and a strongroom. A separate entrance hall for the residential portion is also provided on this floor. The usual conveniences, including a bicycle shed, are provided in an outbuilding.

"Residential accommodation is provided for the postmaster on the first floor and is as follows:—Living room, kitchen, three bedrooms, sun room, with bathroom, passage, pantry and linen press. The contractors for the erection of the building were Boon Bros., New Plymouth and the contract price was £5985.

"I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. W. H. Skinner, the well-known authority on the history of the district, both European and Maori, for much of the early history mentioned," added Mr. Smith. The early Maori history furnished by Mr. Skinner is interesting indeed, and I regret that in the time at my disposal I could not touch upon it. The information, however, is being carefully preserved by the Post and Telegraph Department.

PRaise FOR POST OFFICE

UNEMPLOYMENT ADMINISTRATION

MINISTER OF LABOUR'S THANKS.

Appreciation of the efforts of the staff of the Post and Telegraph Department in the administration of the Unemployment Act was expressed by the Minister of Labour, the Hon. S. G. Smith, at the opening of the new post office at Waitara on Saturday. "I desire to take this opportunity of publicly expressing my personal appreciation of the excellent manner in which the staff of the Postal Department carried out the work," Mr. Smith said.

A great deal of work had been added to the regular work of the post office, Mr. Smith continued. He wanted to give unstinted praise to the department for the manner in which it had handled the registration and the collection of levy payments. It was questionable whether any one other than those who had to assist with the work had any idea of the tremendous task entailed by the administration of the Act.

There was absolutely nothing to guide the department. The law provided for the registration of every male over 20 years of age. This meant the registration of over 400,000 men and the handling of the forms filled in by them. In addition, there was the issue of the levy books and the collection of the levy from 385,000 men. Altogether the task had been carried out with as little friction as possible.

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