

A U C K L A N N D B O T A N I C A L S O C I E T Y

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Christmas is a time of memories. Consequently we are most happy to be able to publish an article by Dr. L.H. Millener on Historic Trees of Auckland.

Dr. Millener is our representative on the Historic Places Society and since historic trees form an important part of local history a commencement has been made of a study of this fascinating subject. The Tree Society have already collected some data which they handed to Dr. Millener who has since been at pains to add to it.

Dr. Millener feels there must be many "trees with a story" of which he has not yet heard. We hope that our members will do their best to ferret out any information they can. Unfortunately with the growth of the city many splendid old trees are doomed. It is more important then that historic trees should have their stories recorded since in some cases at any rate this might result in saving them from the axe. We feel sure we can count on members to co-operate in this matter.

HISTORIC TREES OF AUCKLAND.

The story of Auckland's trees is an extraordinary one. Our climate as you all know, is a tree climate. In 1840 in fact, when Auckland was founded, the North Island as a whole was mantled almost continuously in luxuriant forest. But over the Auckland Isthmus, where once kauri forests had grown almost to the waters edge, as on the sites of Ponsonby and Parnell, the Maori had fought bitterly for 500 years. When the white man came "the fires were dead, and the hearthstones cold." The landscape was a wilderness of fern and almost impenetrable scrub -- in the words of the Rev. Walter Lawry, a landscape of "appalling baldness."

Nevertheless, there must have been, here and there, especially in valleys and other sheltered places, the remnants of forest. Among our most historic trees, then, will be those few that have survived from pre-European days -- pohutukawas along the shore, and a few elsewhere -- puriris in Grafton Gulley -- these, with karakas, rewarewas and other trees in parts of Parnell, Remuera, Mt. Eden (Almorah Rd. for example) and elsewhere -- puriris, tarares and white pines in Smith's Bush, Takapuna -- kauris at Northcote and Birkenhead -- and a few more are all

that now remain.

In the Domain a few venerable kanukas persist from those that must have looked out over Auckland from their scrub-covered ridge when the very first tents sprang up on the shore.

There are ancient kanukas, too, in Dingle Dell, St. Heliers -- and old, old cabbage trees. Cabbage trees are, indeed, an historic Auckland species. Until early this century a celebrated specimen stood by the swamp that was Newmarket -- on the old Auckland-Onehunga Road in front of the Newmarket School. It was Te Ti-tutahi - the cabbage-tree standing alone. Hochstetter pictured it in 1863, and described it as "a magnificent specimen of its kind..... fully deserving the indulgence bestowed upon it." Alas, Ferdinand von Hochstetter little knew what was to be the fate of this, and many other famous trees, in a more progressive Auckland. I believe that a direct descendant of old Ti-tutahi established from a branch-tip, now grows in an Epsom garden, I know not yet quite where.

Another great loss was that of Te Totara-i-ahua, a totara that had been ceremoniously planted by the Maori, in about Shakespeare's day, on the top of Maunga-kie-kie. It was this tree that led the young Logan Campbell and his four adventurous companions, early in 1840, to christen the hill One Tree Hill. A much older Campbell writes, in "Poenamo", with nostalgic regret, of the loss of the famous Maori name. Before 1850 the tree had been destroyed--by some timber-hungry pakeha it is thought. Over a century later hooligans were to root up its young successor. A pohutukawa now battles with the wind in its place. The pines on Maunga kiekie, by the way, were planted by Sir John himself - but the puriris they were to shelter have succumbed.

Of the wealth of trees planted by the early pioneers many still remain - although the growing pains of giant Auckland are taking toll year by year. The Norfolk Island pines, growing so splendidly here - and the oaks, which also can be giants in a century in this climate, take pride of place.

The first Norfolks came almost with the birth of Auckland - sold in tubs by Norfolk Island convicts to enterprising sailors. You will all know the two fine trees planted nearly a century ago at Mission Bay, one by Bishop Selwyn, first Bishop of New Zealand, the other by Bishop Patteson, first Bishop of Melanesia. At the moment Bishop Patteson's tree is leading by a short head.

Many of the fine Parnell Norfolks were planted, too, by early missionaries. The splendid group (one tree is 135 ft. tall) on the old Garlick estate at Mt. Albert, opposite the Methodist Church, were planted by the late Mrs. Garlick as an eighteen years old bride. Her husband had brought the trees from the Kokianga on horseback. The two Government House Norfolks (like the great flame-tree on the lawn there) we owe to Sir George Grey. The magnificent specimen on the corner of Epsom Avenue and Manukau Road is a reminder of MacDonald's pioneer nursery - and so the story could go on.

The origin of most of our old oaks is just as romantic. The first George Graham who came out as Hobson's secretary in 1840 collected acorns later, in England, from oaks in the Great Forest of Windsor and from the "royal oak" at Boscabel in which Charles II hid after the battle of Worcester. Sir Walter Scott, no less, gave Mr. Graham other acorns.

~~Our oaks then, in Government House Grounds, in the Symonds Street Cemetery and elsewhere, are of truly famous ancestry. The grove (probably partly at least of "royal oaks") that gave its name to our Royal Oak is, unhappily, no more.~~

Other old oaks, like those in the Ranfurly reserve at Epsom came from David Hay's wonderful nursery in Seaview Road, founded a hundred years ago. Hay it was who, with Morrison, brought back budwood from Sir George Grey's mysterious "poorman's orange" on Kawau. One of the original mother trees of our New Zealand grapefruit still bears abundant and sweet fruit, as it has for over seventy years, on the south-east corner of the intersection of Mt. Albert and Hillsborough roads.

Mixed plantings of old trees are still to be seen in parts of St. Heliers (there's an historic macrocarpa at 87, St. Heliers Bay Rd., with a base of 43 ft. round), about Judge's Bay, Parnell Park, Victoria Ave., Mountain Rd., Gillies Ave., and at Onehunga, Hillsborough and elsewhere. The giant pines and macrocarpas of Cornwall Park, and the unfortunate olives, were planted by Sir John Logan Campbell himself about 1863.

Famous, tree-planting visitors do not seem to have been many. Chiefly remembered seems to be Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, second son of Queen Victoria, who in 1869 planted a Norfolk Pine and a Californian "big-tree" side by side in the Domain by the propagating houses (there was a little zoo there once, you know). This same duke is said to have swung (politely, I mean, of course) from the branches of the grand old pear tree that still grows behind Edenhall flats in Eden Crescent.

I would like to conclude by thanking those many good people who have helped me in this research, and to say how grateful we of the Historic Places Society would be for further information or suggestions. It is too late to save some historic trees and places: it is not too early to try to save even more.

We are always glad to receive communications from country members. Mr. Cresswell's article which deals with a most historic place is particularly timely. It is not only of general interest to members, but should be most useful to any whose holidays or wanderings take them to this portion of the East Coast.

INDIGENOUS FLORA OF COOK'S COVE.

Of historical interest, as the first place in New Zealand where the renowned Navigator was able to obtain fresh water, Cook's Cove is a small two pronged inlet situated on the North side of the South headland of Tolaga Bay and a mile East of the present jetty. High sandstone cliffs prevent access to Cook's Cove from the jetty, so a track must be followed over the easy intervening hills.

As one approaches the Cove the track descends from low ridges covered with manuka, tauhinu and gorse, with Gaultheria antipoda occurring in cooler, shady situations. As one descends a low ridge numerous rifle pits add to the historical interest, reminiscent of early whalers trading