



# From Seals to Social Laboratory

## 19th century American material in the Hocken Library

**W**E OFTEN ask what gives New Zealand's pakeha culture a recognisable identity. How much does it owe to the isolated South Seas island paradise environment that so appealed to the first emigrants? How much to interaction with the Polynesians?

Little attention has been paid to one of the most important influences — the degree to which the subsequent assimilation of American life and culture altered the ratio of our British and European heritage. The borrowings from America have been enormous: in technology, entertainment, media culture and social attitudes. Yet, even after two centuries of contact between New Zealand and the United States, and a belated increase of interest in certain aspects of the relationship, M.P. Lissington's short study, *NZ and the US, 1840–1944* (1972), is one of the few books even to attempt a general historical perspective. The index to the latest *Oxford History of NZ* lists neither 'America' nor 'United States'.

Dr Hocken paid little attention to American material, except as it might occasionally impinge on his Pacific interests, and the Hocken Library has no reputation for its American holdings. It is generally assumed there are none.

The assumption is wrong! Though buried, scattered and difficult to find (and there are substantial gaps), there is really an astonishing amount of NZ-US material, certainly enough to sustain a swag of theses and half a dozen good books. Cross-indexing included, the Hocken's card-index has over 300 US entries. In the University's on-line system, which does not distinguish in bulk between Hocken and Central library holdings, I rough-counted over 3000 entries and cross-entries under 'United States' and was still only up to the letter 'F'. The aim of this Bulletin is, therefore, more to point out the broad potential rather than to list specifics.

Much of the raw material lies unquarried within the Hocken's impressive holdings of NZ newspapers, which took an interest in the US from their earliest days. Taken at random, the 2 April 1859 issue of the *Otago Witness* was advertising American axes, American apples, American tubs, American cut nails, American flour, American buckets, American billet saws, American brooms, and an American buggy. Gold discoveries and the Civil War were extensively

reported and a steady stream of incoming American material followed the establishment of the San Francisco steamer link.

### Sealing and whaling

The visit of the American sealer *Mercury* to Doubtful Sound in 1797 is the first known US contact with New Zealand. Having established a substantial fur trade with China across the northern Pacific, the Americans moved south to the sealing grounds around Bass Strait, Fiordland, and the sub-Antarctic islands, and it was the American Owen Folger Smith who in 1804 proved the existence of Foveaux Strait.

This period, falling between the War of Independence and the War of 1812, saw continued animosity between British and American seamen, adding sharpness to rivalries over sealing grounds and to the Australian Simeon Lord's surreptitious dealings with the Americans.

Whaling soon followed, the Americans using the Bay of Islands as their main NZ base and proving themselves so efficient in processing their catches at sea that they gained an increasing monopoly and left few whales for the Australian shore-based stations around southern New Zealand. It is largely thanks to American whaling records in New England museums and libraries — one published example is *The NZ Journal 1842–1844* (1956) of the Salem whaler John B. Williams — that so much early New Zealand history has been retrieved.

These substantial American incursions are well recorded in the standard literature: McNab (*Murihiku, The Old Whaling Days*), Morton (*The Whale's Wake*), Howard (*Rakiura*), Begg (*Dusky Bay, Port Preservation*) etc, and the Hocken also has Langdon, Robert ed. *Where the Whalers Went. An Index to the Pacific Ports & Islands Visited by American Whalers . . . in the 19th century* (Canberra, 1984), as well as the invaluable Roebuck Society publications, and a few contemporary newspapers from Sydney, Hobart and Honolulu. J.O'C. Ross's *William Stewart: Sealing captain, trader and speculator* (1987) is useful, and Rhys Richard's *The Foveaux Whaling Yarns of Yankee Jack* (1995), republishes an American whaler's previously unknown account of Foveaux Strait in 1845–46. Some New England material is held on microfilm, and there are passing references to one or

two early Americans in the Beattie and Thomson papers, but Hocken Archives generally holds little

reported and a steady stream of incoming American

relevant 19th century manuscript material.

### **Americans in the north**

In March 1834 there were as many as 1000 Europeans and Americans at the Bay of Islands (Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*) and in 1836 several American shipmasters asked their government to provide a consular service (McLintock, *Crown Colony Government in New Zealand*). Captain J.R. Clendon, a British merchant, became US consul on 12 October 1838, the American flag was hoisted on 27 May 1839 and Clendon, representing 'neutral' interests, claimed to be influential in the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Also attending the signing (Wilkes, *Narrative of the US Exploring Expedition, 1838–1842*) were several American scientists with that expedition, awaiting the return of their ship from the Antarctic; and Wilkes remarked of Willoughby Shortland that 'a more ridiculously pompous functionary could scarcely be imagined.' The Hocken, incidentally, holds other publications relating to that significant American expedition.

It was the Americans, resenting new customs duties, who encouraged Hone Heke to chop down the flagstaff and hoist an American ensign on his canoe, and who then smuggled arms to the Maori in the 1845–47 war. An American volunteer on the British side was sentenced to 50 lashes for insubordination; and Fort Richmond, near Wellington, was modelled on forts Capt. George Compton had known in America (Barthrop, *To Face the Daring Maoris*, 1979; Cowan, *The NZ Wars*, 1922).

The annexation placed in doubt the rights of American citizens already resident in New Zealand (Tapp, *Early New Zealand*), and William Webster (*Dictionary of NZ Biography*, v.1) urged the US Consul in Sydney to turn Great Barrier Island into a US naval base. Lewis Acker, one of the best-known settlers on Stewart Is and another American to appear in the early volumes of the *DNZB* was progenitor of the massive genealogical work, *Acker Family, 1834–1984*.

### **American settlement models**

It should be remembered that, as a New World colony which had broken away from its European origins and established new institutions, the US not only attracted much international interest, but also the attention of people directly involved in the settlement of NZ.

E.G. Wakefield's 2 vol work *England and America* first appeared in 1833. J.R. Godley, then resident in Ireland, visited the US in 1842, and his *Letters from America* were published, also in 2 vol, in 1844 (Carrington, *John Robert Godley of Canterbury*). Thomas Burns, considering a system of education for Otago that same year, was strongly influenced by the achievements of the American Pilgrim Fathers (McLintock, *The History of Otago*, p.231; the *NZ Journal*). These influences, all from the Atlantic seaboard, came into New Zealand via Britain.

Within a few years, the influences were much more direct. The first overland wagon-train reached Oregon in 1841; 200 families were there by 1843; it was secured to the US in 1846; became a Territory in 1849; and a State in 1859. California, in 1845, held some 11,000 Spanish Indians. The following year, when 1200 foreigners (mostly Americans) had arrived, war broke out with Mexico and when peace was arranged in

February 1848 (the month before the establishment of the Otago Settlement), California and New Mexico passed to the United States. The simultaneous discovery of gold brought such prosperity that the new territory was made a State in 1850.

It had an immediate effect in NZ (Bateson, *Gold Fleet for California: Forty Niners from Australia and NZ*, 1963), and when the Australian rushes began in 1851 and those in Otago 10 years later (Morrell, *The Gold Rushes*, 1940), the counter-flow of American diggers into Australasia was substantial. Von Tempsky, for instance, was in California from 1850 to 1853 (Parham, *Von Tempsky*, 1969). Horatio Hartley (*DNZB*, v.1), after finding the rich Dunstan field in 1862 and sharing 87lb of gold and a reward of £2000 with his Irish mate, Reilly, became the model for George Washington Pratt, the American hero of Vincent Pyke's goldfields novel *Wild Will Enderby* (1889).

Among other Americans, one Davies was prominent in the Waipori discoveries and everyone remembers the Clevelander, Bully Hayes, at the Arrow rushes (Clune, *Captain Bully Hayes*, 1970). On the West Coast, a negro gave his name in 1867 to the Addison's Flat rush, (Salmon, *A History of Gold-Mining in NZ*). Negroes, incidentally, were not uncommon in 19th century New Zealand, and Beattie (*Early Runholding in Otago*, p.58) refers to 'Negroes on the Runs', though two of those he mentions were West Indians.

Even more important was the arrival of US technology. The American axe had established its clear superiority from the whaling days (Richards, *Yankee Jack*); the Colt revolver was the hand-gun of the goldfields. The *Otago Witness's* excellent 9-part series on mining machinery, published in the second half of 1864, shows how much the evolution of that machinery owed to the Californian goldfields.

Cobb & Co's American coach, already proven in Australia, reached Dunedin on 4 October 1861 (Lovell-Smith, *Old Coaching Days in Otago and Southland*), remained largely under the American-bred management of Charles Cole and the Hoyts, and used such Americans as Swanton and the Braytons as whips. Americans were already providing the colonial model. Jimmy Miles, one of the most stylish of the Aussie drivers, was nicknamed the 'White-washed Yankee' for the way he imitated them in dress and panache.

As for the North Island land wars in the 1860s, one of the most famous figures was the British Army deserter and pakeha-maori Kimble Bent—in fact born in Maine, and part rehabilitated from villain to folk-hero in Cowan's *The Adventures of Kimble Bent* (1911).

### **By steam to 'Frisco**

The early interchanges had begun in the days of sail. The fact that the Panama route from Britain was 2000 miles shorter than Suez prompted NZ to take the lead in encouraging steam sailings to America. Efforts began soon after the railway link opened across the Panama isthmus in 1855, and the first Panama service to Wellington began in 1866. When it proved unprofitable, interest shifted to San Francisco, soon linked (from 1869) by rail to the US east coast. The first 'Frisco shipping service in 1870 took 66 days to Britain, no quicker than Suez, but improvements by 1875 reduced it to 44 days, and by 1885, to 38 days.

See the substantial Select Committee reports in *AJHR*; a brief essay, 'The Californian Mail Service' (1962), by Ngaire Broadfoot; a much longer essay by Peter Miller, 'Communication between NZ and Great Britain in 1855–1900' (1971); Will Lawson's excellent *Steam in the Southern Pacific* (1909); and, as an example of detailed modern shipping and postal research, vol.2 of Gerald Elliott's massive *NZ Routes and Rates* (Postal History Soc., 1986)

In the 40 years from the 1870s to World War I, the San Francisco service carried a regular flow of passengers, mail and newspapers between NZ and the US. Russell Carr's *The Travel Diary of a Young NZ Girl*, though not published until 1927, is a rather charming record of her visit to America in 1884–86; in June 1887 the *Otago Witness* carried a series of articles on California by the NZ writer 'Thorpe Talbot' (later Mrs Ward); in 1888 Wm McHutcheson, an Otago postmaster better known for his book *Camp Life in Fiordland*, wrote a lively account of his train journey across America in *The New Zealander Abroad* . . . ; and Josiah Firth, of Auckland, produced *Our Kin Abroad* the same year.

Visits were reciprocated. The goldrushes not only brought American diggers to NZ and Australia, but also the start of a steady stream of American entertainers (Downes, *Shadows on the Stage*) — though, curiously, it was a Mr and Mrs Ray from the 'Royal Theater, New Zealand' who went from Auckland to perform in California's first playhouse in October 1848, and who opened San Francisco's first theatre the following year. The American W.H. Foley brought his circus across from Australia in 1855; Mrs Foley and also the San Francisco Minstrels were entertaining Dunedin audiences by Christmas 1861; Joseph Jefferson, one of the finest actors of his day, was here in 1864; and many others followed. J.C. Williamson, whose Australian-based company dominated the NZ stage for several decades, came from Mercer, Pennsylvania and learned his trade in New York. They brought American popular music with them: and if the diggers' naming of the Kawarau tributary, Roaring Meg, goes back to the British folk-figure who gave her name to the great cannon of Londonderry, it was probably Stephen Foster's song which provided the name for neighbouring Gentle Annie.

The first scientists, as mentioned, were in NZ for the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. In 1874 a party of American astronomers arrived to observe, at Arthur's Point, the Transit of Venus (Miller, *Golden Days of Lake County*, p.265) and were rewarded with 193 photographs and the only satisfactory results recorded in NZ (*Wakatip Mail*, 4 and 11 December, including Professor Peters' scientific lecture). A selection of the shots taken by the firm of Phillippi and Pierson at Queenstown are among the very few 19th century images in Hocken Photographs with an American connection.

Australia had tried for years to entice Mark Twain (Samuel L Clemens), but it was not until 1895, desperately needing money for his new mansion, that he arrived. His works had long preceded him. Shipments of American popular literature were regularly advertised in NZ newspapers, and Twain's humorous works were universally known. His visit to Dr Hocken's home (where he and his family may have stayed as guests) takes up several pages in *Following the Equator*, his

account of the tour. Curiously no copy of the book was catalogued in Hocken's original collection; nor does the library have a copy now, though it does have a modern Penguin version of the text.

### **The flow of ideas**

The regular inflow of American newspapers initiated by the steamship mail services greatly increased the amount of US news in the NZ press and had a genuine impact in a country where there was already considerable admiration for American attitudes and achievements. Nor was that admiration confined to technology. Our National Parks, for instance, owe their existence primarily to the artist-politician William Fox who, in 1874, only two years after the founding of Yellowstone (where he did some painting) was urging Vogel to create a thermal park around Rotorua-Taupo. The Thermal Springs District Act (1881) led directly to the Tongariro National Park six years later (Thom, *Heritage, the Parks of the People*, 1987)

Mark Cohen, deputy editor of the Dunedin *Evening Star* in the 1880s and editor from 1893 (*DNZB*, v.3), was simultaneously a whole-hearted British Imperialist and one of the most enthusiastic observers of American ways. He consulted Sarah Cooper, of the Golden Gate Kindergarten Assn (*ODT*, 5.3.1889, p.3) over the introduction of kindergartens into New Zealand; in his battles for women's rights, studied the use of women police in America; drew heavily on American models with regard to free libraries and a national association for librarians; twice later attended international congresses in the US; met Theodore Roosevelt; and single-handedly encouraged the Liberal Party in its reforms by noting every new technological and social trend he found in America and applying them to NZ.

Another American contribution to Liberal Party philosophy reached NZ via the Knights of Labor, originally founded in 1869 as a combination of trade union and secret lodge. H.W. Farnall initiated the first local assembly in Auckland in 1889 (Roth & Hammond, *Toil and Trouble. The Struggle for a Better Life in NZ*, 1981), and the movement quickly spread to 40 localities, mainly in the North Island, claiming 5000 adherents and the support of 14 MPs. The reforms of the new Liberal Government so thoroughly met the demands of the Knights that, by 1898, the movement had virtually ceased to exist.

But Pat Hickey, the Nelson-born teenager who joined the Socialist Party and the Western Federation of Miners while working in the US (Roth, *Trade Unions in NZ, Past and Present*, 1973), returned home in 1906 as a 24-year-old and drew on his American experience to become the militant leader of mining unions in NZ.

Ambitious New Zealanders were also beginning to look to America, instead of Britain and Europe, as the place with permanent opportunities. George Manley Yerex, though born in Canada and therefore atypical, nevertheless represented new flows of individual migration. An 'ardent disciple of the American way', he came to NZ in the 1880s as franchise-holder for the popular American book *The Family Doctor*, married and settled near Wellington, and imported American office furniture and equipment. His family and descendants (David Yerex, *Yerex of Taca*, 1985) were to lead remarkable careers in both countries.

The Hocken has microfilm coverage of US missionary activity in the Pacific, including the early Mormons; and American religion was beginning to find its way to New Zealand, too, with touring evangelists and gossellers (eg James M. Alexander, *The Islands of the Pacific*, American Tract Society, 1895) long preceding the crusades of Billy Graham. In Christchurch, in 1890, a New Yorker going under the name of Arthur Bently Worthington founded, with his attractive companion, a new religion, the Students of Truth, housed in an impressive Temple of Truth. He left the country, discredited, in 1899 (Monigatti, *NZ Sensations*, 1962).

### On the rails

Though it was not until the 20th century that the technical influx reached flood level, significant use was already being made of American inventions and products.

The first two K-class locomotives arrived from the Rogers works, New Jersey, in 1878 and immediately showed they could not be dismissed, as the Christchurch *Press* tried to dismiss them, as 'Yankee toys.' The NZ railway system was dominated by British locomotives and rolling stock, but W.G. Lloyd, *Register of NZ Railways Steam Locomotives 1863–1971* (1974) and Palmer & Stewart, *Cavalcade of NZ Locomotives* (1965), detail the American involvement. The Baldwin works of Philadelphia, in particular, produced from 1879 locomotives 'capable of really hard work, even if they did lack the precision finish of British-built engines.'

In 1880, the engineer G.S. Duncan used the San Francisco model to create a cable-car system for Dunedin (Campbell and Hargreaves, *Straphangers and Grippiers*, 1994). The following year, visiting California to learn more at first hand, he returned with the patent rights for Australasia of the Hallidie system of wire-rope tramways. He repaid his debt to the US by inventing the 'pull curve', which was adopted in turn by the Americans as the solution to their own long-standing problem of taking cable-cars smoothly around curves.

Alexander Bathgate explained in the pamphlet, *A Plea for the Establishment of Arbor Day* (1891), how his NZ proposal had been inspired by the Nebraska project begun in 1872 and shaped by direct advice from the Forestry Division of the US Dept of Agriculture. The early annual reports of our own NZ Dept of Agriculture (see C.R. Valentine's report, 1894) showed an awareness of what was happening in the US. Dr Babcock's butterfat test, devised in 1890, was in operation here by 1892 (Philpott, *A History of the NZ Dairy Industry*, 1937), and a group of Waikato cheese factories sent Capt. Runciman to gain US knowhow. *Brett's Colonists' Guide* (1883) drew generously on American experience.

### US moves into the Pacific

In its broader expansion into the Pacific, the US began entering fields in which Dr Hocken took a more active interest. His original collection held such items as 'American Missions to the Sandwich Islands' (*Methodist Magazine*, Jan. 1826, N.1); 'Papers Relative to a Treaty of Commerce between the US and Samoa' (*AJHR*, 1879, Var. 2/3); and 'Request of

Natives that Samoa be Annexed to NZ' (1884, 1886, Var. 18/8).

The Hocken Library's modern coverage of Polynesia and the Pacific means there is a great deal of material on areas in which the US expanded so rapidly after 1885. Pearl Harbour became a naval base in 1887, the islands themselves came under Washington in 1898, and became a Territory in 1900 — much to R.J. Seddon's displeasure: he had urged British intervention. After the British, Americans and Germans elbowed for suzerainty over Samoa, a three-power protectorate was set up; then, in 1899, when Britain and Germany were allotted the two largest islands in the group, the US got the rest, including the port of Pago Pago. And the 10-week Spanish-American War of 1898 left the Philippines ceded to the US, which suppressed a Filipino rebellion in 1899–1901 and held power there until World War II.

L.E. Fredman's *The US Enters the Pacific* (Sydney, 1969) is essentially an Australian view, but the NZ interest is well covered in Angus Ross's *NZ Aspirations in the Pacific in the 19th Century* (Oxford, 1964); one can see there the beginnings of NZ-US divergences over Pacific policies. See also G.H. Ryden, *The Foreign Policy of the US in Relation to Samoa* (NY, 1975); S.K. Stevens, *American Expansion in Hawaii, 1842–1898* (1945); M. Tate, *The US and the Hawaiian Kingdom. A political history* (Yale, 1965); and many other indexed publications. The fact that Fitzgerald S. Turton (Dunlop & Dakin, *Southland B.H.S. Old Boys' Register*, 1958, entry 198) died as a 2nd Lt in the US army in the Philippines in 1904, is a reminder of how dispersed and detailed are the NZ-US references to be found in the Hocken.

### Social laboratory

If the US had, during the 19th century, been the New World model to which much of the world aspired, the reforming enthusiasm of Seddon and the Liberals transformed New Zealand into a 'social laboratory' which attracted many distinguished observers, Americans among them. 'For the most part, their praise was extravagant and indiscriminate. The Americans in particular credited the new country with a vision it did not and could not possess' (Desmond Stone, *Verdict on New Zealand*, 1959). But Henry Demarest Lloyd, former financial editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, was no Utopian; and in his two books on NZ, *Newest England* and *A Country without Strikes*, he saw our grandfathers as 'plain men and women determined to wrest a fair living for all.'

The publication of those two books in 1900 provides an appropriate ending to a period in which NZ relations with the US, despite the disparity in scale, were essentially those of two young colonial-based nations. Eight years later, the arrival of the Great White Fleet in Auckland heralded the beginning of a very different century, and the material held in the Hocken relating to the 20th century will be the subject of a later Bulletin.

Compiled and edited for the *Friends of the Hocken Collections* by George Griffiths, with the valuable assistance of David McDonald, and suggestions from several other Hocken staff and Friends.

Designed by Gary Blackman.