The Catlins

‘THE CATLINS’ is the name given to the area of south-east Otago, hemmed in between forested hills and a dramatically beautiful coastline, which for the purposes of this bulletin extends from Romahapa and the Nuggets southward to Chaslands Mistake, and includes all the river valleys facing the south-east coast. Its reputation now is one of native bush, charming waterfalls and scenic landscape, but it also has a considerable history — evidence of a strong Maori presence in earlier centuries, and of timber-felling, farming and fishing in European times. The following lists provide a guide to Hocken Library holdings relating to the area.

BOOKS, THESIS, PAMPHLETS

Hardly any literature on the Catlins existed outside newspapers before 1900, and even up to World War II very little had been published in book form — and most of that through the enthusiasm of two noted Owaka teachers — J.T. Bryant, headmaster from 1884 to 1909, and George Chapman-Cohen, senior secondary assistant from 1926 to 1942. But the amount of publishing in the last half-century has made up a great deal of ground, not only in district history, but also in the numerous land-use and natural history surveys carried out by Lands and Survey, the Forest Service, the Dept of Conservation and the Otago Regional Council.

In addition to the specific titles listed here, virtually all of which are held in the Hocken, it should be remembered that many passing references to the Catlins appear also in general books relating to Otago and the southern region.

Maori settlement


Hall-Jones, F.G. *King of the Bluff: the Life and Times of Tuhawaiki (Bloody Jack)*, 1943.


European settlement and general coverage


Anon. *Owaka Presbyterian Church Jubilee 1885–1935*.


Baker, Everard. *Boy the Dog, Sam the Pig and Peter the Possum. The Story of My Life*. [1986?].


Bannerman, Jane & Dalrymple, A.M. *Jubilee Memorial of the South Otago Parish, comprising Puerua, Port Molyneux and Romahapa*, c. 1905.


Bishop, K.J. *The Catlins Branch Railway — its role in the development and settlement of the Catlins district*, OU thesis, 1975 [held in Central University Library].


Cross, W.H. *An Historical Look through the Minute Books: a condensed historical documentation of the former authorities making up the Clutha District Council*, [1995].


Fairweather, J.R. *Farming in Hurunui and Clutha Counties: current attitudes and practices compared to survey results in 1986, 1993.* Lincoln University.


Henderson, J. *Return to Open Country,* 1967. ‘Big Kate’.

Hocken, T.M. & Fenwick, G.A. *A Holiday Trip to the Catlins District (via Willsher Bay),* 1892.


Reed, A.H. *Farthest South,* 1953.

Reed, A.H. *The Four Corners of N.Z.,* 1954 etc.


Rutherford, V.M. *Otago Education Board Schools,* 1985.


**Scenic and land resources**


Anon. *Catlins Walks and Tracks Information,* 1990. DOC


McCaskill, L.W. *Scenic Reserves of Otago,* 1975.

Lands & Survey.


Morse, P.M. *Wildlife Values of Forested Areas of Hokonui and Catlins,* 1980.

Shipping and sea-coast
Caffyn, Paul. Obscured by Waves, 1979, canoeing.
Ingram, C.W.N. New Zealand Shipwrecks, 1936 and subsequent editions.
Taylor, M. Otago’s Seaborne Trade from the Pioneering Days to 1870, O.U. thesis.
Watt, M.N. Index to N.Z. Section of the Register of all British Ships, 1840–1950.
Verse
Wells, William. Poems, c.1930. Maclellan

PERIODICALS
Newspapers and periodicals provide much interesting Catlins material. A local paper, the Owaka News, functioned from 1932 to 1936, but the Hocken’s holdings are very incomplete. It does, however, hold an almost complete run of the Catlins Post, produced by the Catlins Area School since December 1984. The nearest sizeable centre to the Catlins is Balclutha, where the Clutha Leader has carried good coverage since 1874, and the Hocken holds a complete run since 1967; but earlier issues have not yet been microfilmed, and the holdings of those are scrappy. Holdings of the other early Balclutha papers — Clutha County Gazette (1881–87), Clutha Times (1878–79) and Free Press (1891–1926) — are much the same.

The Hocken holds a good run of the Otago Daily Times, and a computerised index of headings for the period 1946 to 1980, though the ODT card-index from which it was taken did not cover the country edition in detail. The Otago Witness also carried important coverage up to the 1930s, and indexes of varying quality are available for both the picture sections and earlier articles. Other Dunedin papers may be worth consulting for specific events or periods.

There is some Catlins coverage in the Southland Times, while the recent purchase of early Mataura Ensign microfilm means that a Gore perspective on the Catlins is available at the Hocken for the periods 1878–1919 and 1967 to the present. There may also be coverage of special events in such magazines as the Weekly News and Free Lance.

Specialist periodicals should not be overlooked — especially those dealing with timber, agriculture, railways, tourism, motoring, boating, conservation, Kaitahu land interests, fishing, ornithology etc, A useful article on early Catlins postal services, for instance, appeared in the February 1982 issue of The Mail Coach, the journal of the N.Z. Postal History Society.

ARCHIVES
Though the Catlins holdings are not extensive, they do contain interesting material.

Bannerman, Jane, Reminiscences of her life, MS 536B.
Beattie, Herries. Papers, some Catlins material. MS 582.
Bryant, J.T. Memoirs, Reminiscences of, 93-074.
Cattlin, E. Deed of Purchase, Cattlin’s Claim, 1840, Misc. MS 832. The original is not available for inspection, but a photocopy may be requested for examination.

Craig, John. Scrapbook, 1890s, 95-148. Material on Catlins railway and general items.
HM Reporter based in Balclutha.
Hector, Sir James. Papers, Otago Geological Survey material relevant to the area, 1864, MS 443.
Hinahina Sawmilling Co. — see Keith Ramsay Ltd, AG 224.
Houipapa — work diary found in wall, 1900–06, 91-107.
Owaka Anglican Church, Foundation Document, 1892, MS 935; also see St Mark’s Anglican Parish, Balclutha.
Romahapa Hall Society, 90-142.
Schools: There is some material — including examination results of pupils and inspectors’ reports from 1879 to the 1950s — about all Catlins schools in the Otago Education Board Archives, AG 294. There are additional records (R.1080) for Chaslands, Houipapa, Kahuika, Maclennan, Owaka Valley, Purekireki, Stuarts, Tautuku and Tawanui schools. Also Owaka School, historical notes only, 93-074; Romahapa School, historical scrapbook, 94-028, and school committee records, 1864–1936, 94-029.
South Clutha Presbyterian Parish, papers concerning Romahapa church, 81-067.
Wells, William (Kangaroo Bill), Account book ca. 1914–16, Catlins coaching days, bulbs, farming, poems, 92-021.

Maps of the Catlins are mostly standard, though one or two of the Tautuku Bush maps are attractive.
Clutha District, Block I to VII, 1847; Warepa District, Block II, 1862; South Otago, composite map, 1863; Kuriwao, Warepa, Catlins & Rimu Survey Districts, N.Z. Survey, 1883; Kuriwao, Warepa, Rimu & Catlins, part of, N.Z. Survey, 1884; Clutha County, provisional map, Lands & Survey, 1939.
Catlins River Settlement Plan, Otago Survey Litho Press, 1870; Catlins District, part Blocks I & II, Otago Survey Litho Press, 1888; Catlins District, Sections 1 to 22, Block VIII, also Block IV, Woodland District, N.Z. Survey, 1890; Catlins District, part Blocks I, III & IV, Otago Survey Litho Press; Block II, 1900; Block IV, Lands & Survey, 1912.
Glenomaru District, Blocks III & VII; Block V; Block VIII, General Survey Office, 1889; Block IX, Otago Survey Litho Press, 1890; Block X, General Survey Office, 1891. Glenomaru Survey District, Lands & Survey, 1892; Block V, 1908; 1922.
Rimu Survey District, Block XIII, N.Z. Survey, 1893; Block XV, Otago Survey Litho Press, 1896; Sections 1 to 14, Block XIV, Otago Survey Litho Press, 1896.
Tautuku Bush, topographical sketch, N.Z. Survey, 1887; Tautuku District, sketch plan, N.Z. Survey, 1896; map, Lands & Survey, 1906; Block II, Otago Survey Litho Press, 1892; Block III, 1892; Block IV, 1892; Block VIII, 1895; Tautuku Native Reserve, Block XI, Otago Survey Litho Press, 1896; Tautuku Survey District, map, Lands & Survey, 1933.
Woodland District, topographical sketch, Lands & Survey, 1892; Homestead Settlement, Otago Survey Litho Press, 1888; Block VI, 1893; Block VII, 1892; Block X, 1893; Block XI, 1894; Woodland Survey District, Lands & Survey, 1923; 1955.
Owaka Valley, plan of farms, 1893.
Papatowai, town & suburbs, Lands & Survey, 1894; Quakerfield township, 1891, 1893; Catlin town (at head of Catlins Lake), Lands & Survey, 1888.

Photographs
A good range of material is available in Hocken Photographs. Check the index and filing cabinets for Catlins, Catlins River; and also such headings as Agriculture, Clearing of Land, Dwellings, Football, Hinahina, Motor Vehicles, Owaka, Pounawea, Railways, Romahapa, Sawmilling, Surveyors, Tahakopa, Tautuku, Tawanui, Tree-felling and Weddings.

Pictures Collection
Despite the modern scenic reputation of the Catlins, it was remote and virtually inaccessible when romantic landscape painting was at its peak in the 19th century, and even in the 20th century has not attracted large numbers of leading artists. The Hocken holds relatively few works:

Anscombe, Elizabeth (1872–1934), Catlins Lake, 1893, 430 x 600mm, oil.
Artist unknown, An Early Homestead in the Catlins District, 230 x 300mm, oil.
Burns, Angela (1956– ), Catlins Window, 1990, 550 x 450mm, acrylic on paper.
McLintock, Alexander Hare (1902–68), Catlins River, n.d., 113 x 161mm, etching.
Peterson, Florence Edna May (1907–89), Bushfires in the Tahakopa Valley, Catlins, 1967, 280 x 400mm, water-colour.

Music
And if you want to catch the mood as you research all the written records, ask to listen to the only recording the Hocken holds with a distinctly Catlins flavour: Catlin River Boys. The, HMV, 1 disc (ca. 40min), 331/3 rpm, Lindsay & Terry Donovan & Murray Kirk, rec. L802.

Compiled for the Friends of the Hocken Collections by Ron Tyrrell, with the assistance of David McDonald, Beverley Booth and other staff members. Edited by George Griffiths. Designed by Gary Blackman.