



Otago-Southland microfilm & documents from the Provincial period

The Provincial Council was not sitting, but I was shown the chamber in which it is held. The members sit, like Siamese twins, in great armchairs, which are joined together, two- and-two, like some semi-detached villas. I was specially struck by what I cannot but call the hyper-excellence of the room. There has been, in most New Zealand provinces, a determination that the Provincial Assembly shall be a real parliament, with a Speaker and Speaker's chair, reporters' galleries, strangers' galleries, a bar of the house, cross benches, library, smoking-room, and a 'Bellamy' — as the parliament refreshment-rooms are all called, in remembrance of the old days of the House of Commons at home. The architecture, furniture, and general apparel of these Houses — such of them as I saw — struck me as being almost grander than was necessary. The gentlemen as they sit are very much more comfortable than are the members in our own House at home, and are much better lodged than are the legislators in the States of the American Union. The Congress of Massachusetts sits in a building which has indeed an imposing exterior but the chamber itself inspires less awe than does that of Otago.

Anthony Trollope. *With Anthony Trollope in New Zealand*, ed. A.H.Reed. Wellington, 1969, p.36.

IN 1852, as explained in Bulletin 31, the British Government granted New Zealand a constitution, providing for the establishment of six provinces, each with its own directly elected Superintendent and representative provincial council.

The councils were initially given authority to pass such ordinances as were required for law and order, and for the general good government of the province. They were excluded, however, from exercising any jurisdiction over the following: the imposition of customs duties; the alteration of currency or weights and measures; the erection and maintenance of lighthouses and beacons; the imposition of harbour or shipping dues; bankruptcy; the regulation of Crown or Maori lands; the inheritance of property and legislation relating to wills; the abolition of civil or criminal courts; and the infliction of disabilities on Maoris to which Euro-

peans were not subject. Such matters fell within the jurisdiction of the General Assembly for New Zealand. The Governor could, within three months of receiving the same, disallow any ordinance passed by a provincial council and assented to by the province's Superintendent.

In 1853, the powers of the provincial councils were extended to take over the administration of sheriffs, coroners, police, jails, sheep inspection, road works and harbours. Revenue was derived from the surplus of the General Government, which was divided among the provinces, and from acting as agents in the administration of Crown lands. Most officials responsible for the administration of the province were appointed and paid by the provincial governments.

Otago was also given administration of the goldfields with a Goldfields Commission, until disagreements between Dunedin and the Cen-

tral Otago miners led to the Colonial Government resuming direct control in 1867.

The boundaries of the Otago Province — as proclaimed in February 1853, and of which the future Southland Province was part — were formed by the coastline to the west (Tasman Sea), south (Foveaux Strait) and east, while the northern boundary was a somewhat imprecise line drawn along the Waitaki River from the ocean to its source, thence along a ‘right line’ to the source of the Awarua River, and thence down the course of the Awarua River to the sea. The lack of precision in the northern boundary was to cause a bitter ongoing dispute between Otago and Canterbury, not resolved for some years.

Southland secedes

It was in the south, however, that Otago ran into more serious administrative and political problems. Convinced that the infant Otago settlement needed to remain as compact as possible until it gained strength, Superintendent William Cargill did his best to dissuade people from settling in the distant, unserviced southern areas. To inhibit pastoralists from stocking their runs, for instance, no official port of entry was at first gazetted on the southern coast. Another grievance was that revenue received from the sale of southern Crown lands was not being returned to the district in expenditure on public works.

The 1858 New Provinces Act enabled the malcontents to proclaim, on 25 March 1861, the new Province of Southland. Its boundaries were the Mataura and Waiau Rivers, and a line running at angles from Eyre Peak to Lake Manapouri. Documents relating to this area were disentangled from the Otago Provincial Council records held in Dunedin, to be re-housed in Invercargill and extended as part of the Southland Provincial Council’s operations over the next nine years.

Financial instability, caused mainly by extravagant railway plans and other public works, coupled with a failure to find significant deposits of gold within the boundaries of the new province, caused Southland to reunite with Otago on 6 October 1870. Its archives were moved back from Invercargill to Dunedin and placed in the custody of the Clerk of the Otago

Provincial Council, to be drawn upon as Otago resumed responsibility for the southern area.

They were not, however, laboriously reintegrated with the Otago files. In July 1873 a Select Committee was appointed to examine the Southland archives with a view to publishing extracts from them. The committee decided to arrange the archives ‘in a manner relevant to the subject matter and in proper order of succession’. This was duly done and they remain in that order today.

Two years later came the passage of the Abolition of Provinces Act, effective from 31 October 1876. The then Superintendent, James Macandrew, was instructed to deposit all Otago public documents with the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Dunedin. At first he refused, but in April 1877 he was forced to surrender the archives.

Archives go north

At some later date the archives appear to have been divided. Documents and correspondence relating to the Superintendent and the Executive were sent to the Lands Department head office in Wellington. The remainder, including the minutes of the Executive Council, the Treasurer’s files, and papers relating to the Southland and Otago Provincial Councils, remained stored in the Dunedin Chief Post Office, which occupied part of the old provincial building. When that building was demolished in 1919 in preparation for the building of a new Chief Post Office (finally opened in 1937), these papers were sent first to the Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, and subsequently transferred to the Dominion (later National) Archives, Wellington. A *Preliminary Inventory No. 5: Archives of the Provinces of Otago and Southland*, was published in 1955.

Southern researchers inevitably found it so costly and time-consuming to consult these records in Wellington that work on Otago-Southland topics was seriously affected for many years. It was not until the 1990s, when the Hocken Library was still acting on behalf of National Archives as the repository of official material south of the Waitaki, that Wellington relented and began filming the Otago-Southland provincial papers for use in Dunedin.

Otago holdings

These Bulletins are primarily concerned with the holdings of the Hocken Library. Bulletin 31, issued in conjunction with this one, lists the Otago-Southland material issued in printed and bound form — the *Gazettes, Votes and Proceedings*, etc etc. Here, in Bulletin 32, we are dealing with unpublished papers available mainly on microfilm. This material is held, along with a bank of microfilm readers, in the spacious corner alcove to the user's left after entering the library proper — a far cry from the cramped space available in the former premises.

Not all the original provincial material has survived its various shifts and the passage of the years, and some of the surviving material has become too fragile to be copied economically at this stage. Of the 16 original series of Otago papers, the Hocken held at the beginning of this 21st century, the following:

OP 5 (3 reels): These contain instructions to the Superintendent from the General Government for the period August 1853 to December 1861. The series is not indexed, but an excellent descriptive list is available. Note, however, that not all the correspondence identified in these lists can be located.

OP 6 (12 reels): This series contains letters from provincial officials as well as from the general public, and includes statistics, petitions, complaints etc for the period January 1854 to December 1861. Not indexed, but again the Hocken holds a descriptive list.

OP 7 (95 reels): The Superintendent's General Inwards Correspondence for the period January 1862 to June 1877. This is by far the largest series. Of the original holdings, located at National Archives in Wellington, 15 boxes covering the period March 1866 to October 1868 were found to be so badly water damaged that, for conservation reasons, they could not be filmed. The material filmed so far covers a wide range of topics: mining and land leases, railways, immigration, roading, education and schools, Stewart Island settlement, provincial harbourmasters' reports, goldfields wardens' reports, economic conditions and so on. The correspondence is not confined to officialdom and includes letters from private individuals, as

well as a large number of maps and plans. It includes letters addressed not only to the Superintendent, but also to various other officials — as long as the letters either arrived through the Superintendent's Office or were later referred to him. No separate inwards correspondence has survived, so that items sent directly to other officials, or referred to them, have been lost. The correspondence, filed by number, is broadly chronological, though as each subject is brought together, a file may contain correspondence covering several years. While only the inwards material has been preserved, references to Executive Council decisions can often be found on the margins of individual letters.

OP 9: Reels 1 to 9 are General Registers and Indexes to the Superintendent's Inward Correspondence (OP 7).

OP 11: The filming of the Superintendent's Outward Letterbooks, 1853-1877 is under investigation.

Using the material

Newcomers to the microfilm material will need some patience while becoming familiar with the way the OP 9 indexes are organised. In typical 19th century fashion, the Inward Letters to the Superintendent were recorded in a bound, hand-written ledger — in this case, in two different ways.

In one part of the ledger the letters are listed by keyword in an alphabetical sequence of pages, the entries on each page being made chronologically as the letters were received. Generally only one page was allotted to each letter of the alphabet, so that when the first 'B' page filled up, for instance, a second 'B' page was opened further on in the ledger. Sometimes this is indicated by a note like 'After Z' at the foot of the filled page.

Each incoming letter was also given a file number, recorded alongside the alphabetical listings. For instance an item described as 'Ferries to be closely watched by police' is given the file number 44. Another part of the ledger was devoted to a numerical sequence of these files. Under 44, for example, other material relating to ferries can be found and these groupings are very helpful. Once again, when there was too much material for the space allot-

ted to a particular file, the file would be continued on some other page out of sequence.

To look at the actual letters making up File 44, the researcher now turns to the drawers holding the 95 reels in the OP 7 sequence. Each reel is identified, Film 001 being shown to cover Files 1-135, in which File 44 would be located. The whole sequence holds more than 17,000 files, but one can quite quickly scan the labels on the reel-covers to find the correct reel for any particular file.

The Hocken Library staff are always on hand, of course, to initiate unpractised researchers into the system's little mysteries.

Southland holdings

Of the Southland archives, only an estimated two-thirds now survive, all of which the Hocken holds in microfilm. The original inventory, however, was published and can be found in the *Appendix to the Votes and Proceedings of the Southland Provincial Council*. The series contains both Inward and Outward Correspondence for the period January 1861 to October 1870.

The archive is largely divided into two series. Microfilm reels 1 to 18 consist of the minute and letter-books of the Council and the Executive, each book accompanied by a nominal index. The remaining 28 reels, 19 to 46, are filed by subject matter — eg ferries and accommodation houses, jails, goldfields, education, law and police. The law and police file includes additional information, in some cases, not included in the subject file.

The Hocken Library holds an index for reels 19 to 46. This series also contains several maps and plans. Compared with the Otago Provincial papers, the Southland papers are relatively easy to navigate.

Overall, the Otago-Southland Provincial Archives represent a marvellous deposit of primary information, some of it unavailable from any other source. Reference to almost all Provincial Government, and most Central Government, activities are to be found within them.

The descriptive lists and the OP 9 microfilm series are a great help to finding one's way around the archives. Listings of individual files sometimes indicate whether a plan or map is included — though, since these plans and maps

are often unique, consideration might be given to the creation of a separate detailed index to these important items in the unpublished papers.

Other Provincial records

Further Otago Provincial material in the Hocken Library may be found in the collection AG 200, the records of the Otago Harbour Board. This board came into being, still under the control of the Provincial Government, on 30 June 1874. In November the same year, the then Provincial Harbourmaster, Capt. William Thomson, also came under the control of the new Harbour Board, though still employed by the Provincial Government. It is probably due to this move that some of Thomson's official papers survived in Dunedin.

The material consists of two extremely interesting and informative sets of correspondence. The first [AG-200-12/01/01] is the Provincial Harbourmaster's Record Book for the period March 1861 to September 1868, giving the arrivals and departures of vessels, with destinations. The second comprises the Provincial Harbourmaster's Outward Letter Books, three volumes for the period 1863-1878 [AG-200-12/05/01 to 12/05/03]. Other miscellaneous records relate to such subjects as the appointment of pilots, the Port Chalmers railway pier etc.

The Otago Education Board papers [AG-294, series 44] include the Provincial Council's Executive voucher book for 1867-68; tenders and specifications for Dunedin and outlying toll-gates and their accompanying houses; and papers concerning the erection of the Naseby jail.

Other miscellaneous papers in the Hocken Library include the minutes and evidence of the Otago Provincial Council's Retrenchment Commission of 1870 [MS-189]. This material includes the minutes of the proceedings of the Civil Service Commission of 1865-66.

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