



Dunedin's 19th Century Mayors

FIFTY-SIX men and one woman have served as Mayors of Dunedin in the 140 years since 1865, and this Bulletin, based on material in the Hocken Collections, offers thumbnail sketches of the first 25 of them up to the end of the 19th century. The Hocken holdings relating to the Dunedin City Council are somewhat uneven, and researchers should remember that, in addition to the official mayoral records held in the DCC's own Archives, a quick list of Mayors and their dates is included on the Council's website [www.cityof-dunedin.com]. Nevertheless the range of Hocken material—the standard histories, 19th century newspaper files, street & business directories, births, deaths & marriage records, archival references—is far from negligible. In the following list, an asterisk (*) identifies those Mayors whose names are included in a typed alphabetical list held in the Hocken Photographs department of portraits or other relevant photographs. Abbreviated references are made to four useful basic printed sources:

Anon. *The Cyclopaedia of NZ. Industrial, descriptive, historical, biographical etc...Vol.4, Otago & Southland Provincial Districts*, Christchurch, 1905.

[Fenwick, Geo. ed.] *City of Dunedin. NZ Jubilee of the Civic Government, 1865-1915*.

McDonald, K.C. *City of Dunedin. A Century of Civic Enterprise, Dunedin, 1965* (also containing the results of mayoral elections up to 1962).

Thomson, Jane ed. *Southern People. A Dictionary of Otago Southland Biography*, Dunedin, 1998.

During the first half-century the mayoral term was for only one year, a strangely short period to modern thinking, and it remained so right up to World War 1. But electors could always re-elect good mayors: Mason, Birch and Fish served consecutive years, and others were re-elected after an interval.

MAYORS

*Mason, William (1865–66)

b. Ipswich, 24.2.1810; arr. Sydney 1838, to Auckland in 1840, clerk of works and MHR. To Dunedin in 1862 supervising erection of Bank of NZ, thereafter a leading architect in the city, partnership of Mason & Wales. Champion marksman. Later farmed at Otepopo, retired to Paradise; died in Dunedin 22.6.1897. Refer *Cyclopaedia*, 1905, pp.102 (pix), 285; Fenwick, pix p.18; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.78, 89 etc (+ pix after p.112); *Southern People*, p.333; business directories; also Stacpoole, John, *William Mason. The First NZ Architect*, 1971; Furkert, F.W. *Early NZ Engineers*, 1953. Archives holds personal & Mason & Wales architectural items.

Harris, John Hyde (1867)

b. Deddington, Oxfordshire, 24.11.1826; trained for legal profession; to NZ in 1850, practised in Dunedin for nine years, appointed judge and magistrate until 1864. Elected to Otago Provincial CI 1853, elected Superintendent 1963–65, having to resign because of failed goldrush investments. Sat on Legislative Council 1858–64, and again from 1867, Solicitor-General 1867–68; Otago University Senate from 1867; d. 24.7.1886. *Cyclopaedia*, 1905, pp.36 (pix), 77, 102; Fenwick, pix p.22; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.25, 28 etc; *Southern People*, p.213; see letters, family archives.

Birch, Thomas (1868–69)

b. Fortrose, Scotland, 1825. Arrived in *Slains Castle*, 1852; built first house in Invercargill; revisited Britain in 1858, promoting emigration; licensee of Waverley Hotel, Moray Place; councillor from 1865; hosted the Duke of Edinburgh during his mayoralty. In 1869 elected MHR; president of Otago Caledonian Society; to Britain in 1873 as immigration agent; d. March 1880. *Cyclopaedia*, 1905, pp.86, 102, 108; Fenwick, pix p.22; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.70, 89 etc; see Jane Thomson papers.

Fish, Henry Smith (1870–71–72, 1879, 1893–94)

b. London, 1838. Accompanied his parents to South Australia & Victoria, became apprenticed to his father as painter & paperhanger. To Dunedin in 1863; councillor from 1867 for 30 years; often provocative and combative, and accused by H.J.Walter of taking bribes, but led important city developments; Provincial Councillor, MHR, Harbour Bd, Freemason, sportsman; d.23.9.1897. *Cyclopaedia*, 1905, pp.88 (pix), 102, 108; Fenwick, pix p.22; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.96, 98 etc (+pix after p.112); *Southern People*, p.162; see Archives & Jane Thomson papers.

Mercer, Alexander (1873)

b. Fifehire, 1829. Apprenticeship as a cabinetmaker, and arrived in *Philip Laing*, 1848. With George Ross opened a store in Princes St, later farmed at Warepa, returned to Dunedin 1859 and reestablished a business that continued until 1880. Seven years on the Council; made JP in 1872 and frequently sat at the Police Court. For a time at Portobello, but d. at Dunedin, 6.6.1902. *Cyclopaedia*, 1905, pp. 102, 110; Fenwick, pix p.22; *Civic Enterprise*, p.99;

Ramsay, Keith (1874)

b. Perthshire, 1844; entered business in Dundee, then sailed in the *Jura* to Port Chalmers in 1862. Soon became a shipowner on his own account; elected to the Council at the age of 30; member and chairman of the Otago

Harbour Board, chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, and prominent in a wide range of Dunedin businesses; d. Dunedin, 3.5.1906. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 103, 110, 275 (pix); Fenwick, pix p.22; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.99, 132 etc; *Southern People*, p.408; see personal & business archives, Jane Thomson papers.

Walter, Henry John (1875, 1878, 1879)

b. Jamaica; arrived in Victoria in 1853, moved to Dunedin in 1864, and became proprietor of the Occidental Hotel for 29 years. Elected to Council in 1869; famously resisted the building of a Town Hall in the Octagon in the 1870s, but was ironically in office when the present Municipal Chambers were built a decade later. Developed a bitter feud with Fish, and after Fish beat him 963:586 in 1879, challenged Fish's right to hold the contract for painting the municipal building, had Fish disqualified and was appointed mayor himself. Faced bankruptcy proceedings in the 1890s before moving to Wellington, licensee of Western Hotel there. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 103, 109; Fenwick, pix p.30; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.133, 138 etc (+pix after p.112);

***Reeves, Charles Stephen (1876)**

b. Enniscorthy, Wexford, Ireland, 1835; emigrated to Victoria in 1855, moved to Dunedin in 1863, set up as an accountant and commission agent (later Reeves & Co.) and became a councillor the same year. Uniquely tied with W.Woodland in the first 1876 mayoral election, and won the play-off. Prominent in Harbour Board, Hospital Trustees, Freemasons etc; captain of North Dunedin Rifles, then major in command of 1st Otago Volunteers, retiring in 1890 as lieutenant-colonel; d. Dunedin, 29.11.1912; *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 103 (pix), 110, 275; Fenwick, pix p.30; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.106, 138 etc;

Leary, Richard Henry (1877, 1886)

b. Southall, London, 3.11.1840; emigrated to Victoria, working in the timber trade, and a few years later to Dunedin, becoming partner in an auctioneering & accountancy firm, and later founding his own accountancy business. As mayor his interest in accountancy led him to investigate the book-keeping of the gas department; the manager was sacked, but later reinstated; Leary resigned in protest and easily won re-election. In 1894 he went to London on behalf of the council to sort out the city's loans, but caught pneumonia and d. there on 14.5.1895; *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 103, 110; Fenwick, pix p.30; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.145, 150 etc;

***Ross, Archibald Hilson (1880)**

b. Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1821; town councillor in Sunderland; emigrated to Dunedin in 1859 as draughtsman in the Survey Office; later set up as an optician. Mayor of Roslyn Borough, chairman of Otago Harbour Bd, MHR for one term, active astronomer and member of the Otago Institute. Gave his name to Ross Creek. Retired to Pahiatua, and d. 8.12.1900. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 89, 103, 111; Fenwick, pix p.30; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.159, 278;

Gore, James (1881)

b. Liverpool, c1834; emigrated with his family to Victoria in 1852; worked with his father on road-building and

bridge construction; to Dunedin in 1861 and became a building contractor; d. at Dunedin, 23.7.1917. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 89 (pix), 98, 103, 124, 196; Fenwick, pix p.30; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.153, 159 etc; *Southern People*, p.190;

Thomson, John Bryce (1882)

b. Stirlingshire, 1840; Glasgow apprenticeship in carpentry; emigrated to Dunedin in 1864; with James McGill founded the successful construction firm of McGill & Thomson; first elected to the City Council in 1876. Also chairman of the Otago Harbour Bd, member of the Hospital Bd, Benevolent Society trustee. When partnership dissolved in 1893, conducted the business with his elder son; d. at Dunedin, 16 August, 1911. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 103 (pix), 111, 295; Fenwick, pix p.34; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.160, 217 etc;

Street, William Parker (1883)

b.1846, from Victoria to Otago in the early 1860s; appointed clerk of the Resident Magistrate's Court; later went into business on his own account, served as city auditor, and was elected to the Council in 1880. Won the mayoralty by a substantial majority in 1883; but in 1888 moved to Victoria, engaged in business there until disabled by paralysis in 1896, and d. at Albany, Western Australia, 11.4.1899. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 103, 112; Fenwick, pix p.34; *Civic Enterprise*, p.160;

Scoullar, Arthur (1884)

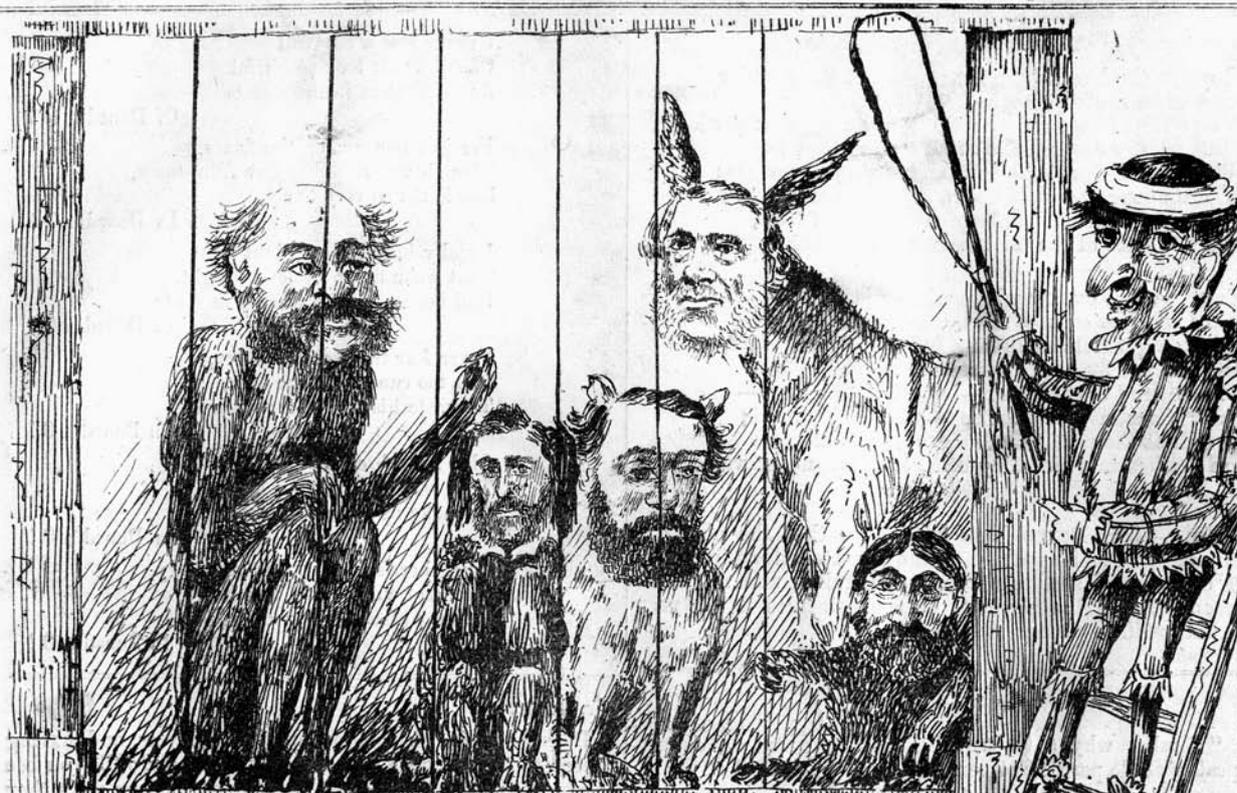
b. in Ayrshire, c.1830s; sent to work at the age of 7, making Kilmarnock bonnets for the next eight years; completed a cabinetmaking apprenticeship; then in 1854 emigrated to Melbourne. Unsuccessful on the Victorian goldfields, he crossed to Otago, did well on the Central Otago diggings; established himself in business in Dunedin in 1863, developed later into Scoullar & Chisholm, furniture warehousemen; opened branch in Wellington, and d. there, 1899. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 104, 112, 313; Fenwick, pix p.34; *Civic Enterprise*, p.160; see substantial Scoullar & Chisholm archives.

Barnes, John (1885)

b. Stockport, 24.12.1817; emigrated to Port Chalmers in May 1858; began business as carter and contractor, ferrying goods to the goldfields, and contracting for public works. Elected to Town Board in 1863 & the new Town Council 1866, also being appointed inspector of works in 1877, and ultimately mayor in 1885, despite his 'crudity of language, hot temper and lack of social graces'. His propensity, as an elected officeholder, to become actively involved in contracts led to a notable tragedy in 1886. Two women were killed by rocks from a mishandled Dowling St blasting operation being supervised by Barnes's son, who had replaced the established foreman. Barnes himself d. at Dunedin on 18.11.1889, having never recovered from a fall from a horse at Milton 18 months earlier. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 99, 104, 108; Fenwick, pix p.34; *Civic Enterprise*, pp. 76, 102 etc (+ pix after p.112); see Jane Thomson papers.

***Dawson, William (1887)**

b. January, 1852, in Aberdeen, son of a brewer; moved



THE HAPPY FAMILY AT THE MUNICIPAL ACCLIMATIZATION BEAR GARDEN.

How Dunedin Punch, in its issue for 22 July 1865, saw the entrants for the first Dunedin mayoral race. Its odds for the 'Mayor's Cup' read: Architect (own brother to Hodman, by Exhibition) 3 to 2 (tk.); Double-do (by Six-and-eightpence, out of Client) 4 to 1 (off.); Jemmy (by Old Saddler, out of Office) 5 to 1 (tk.); Small Boy (by Commissioner out of Sheriff) 20 to 1 (off.); and Scrivener (by Grog-blossom out of Anderson's Bay mare) 40 to 1 (off.)

to Durham when he learned brewing under his father; in 1892 went to Burton-on-Trent to study the latest systems; and worked for some time in Edinburgh before emigrating to Dunedin in 1873, arriving broke. Worked for the Well Park Brewery, then left with two fellow employees to found Speight & Co, which became hugely successful. An anti-Prohibition politician and active on several local bodies, Dawson became immensely rich, remembered for the opulence of his mansion (the ornamental gates later became the entrance to the Botanic Gardens) and for the style of his many mistresses. Presided, virtually on his deathbed, over the union between Speights & NZ Breweries; d. at Dunedin. 27.7.1923. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 89–90 (pix), 104, 112, 120; Fenwick, p.34; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.188, 219 etc; *Southern People*, pp.122–3 (pix); Gordon, Donald. *Speight's. The Story of Dunedin's Historic Brewery*, 1993

Gourley, Hugh (1888, 1896)

b. Ballinahinch, County Down, Ireland in 1825; emigrated to Victoria in 1852, spent 10 years on the diggings and as a saddler; moved to the Otago diggings in the early 1860s, then settled in Dunedin as a saddler. Branched out into the livery trade, ran a line of coaches to Port Chalmers, organised one of the first cab companies in Dunedin and in 1874 took on funeral undertaking. St Kilda borough councillor from 1881, and borough mayor for 13 successive years; elected to the DCC in 1885. Chairman

of Harbour Bd, also on Domain Bd and charitable institutions. Appointed to the Legislative Council in 1899. Died at Dunedin, 16.12.1906. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 75, 104, 113, 118–9 (pix), 124; Fenwick, pix p.36; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.188, 246 etc;

***Roberts, John (1889)**

b. Selkirk, 1845, educated at Cheltenham and at the Edinburgh Academy; in 1862 began work in his father's woollen mill. In 1864 to Melbourne, engaged in station management, and in 1868 to Dunedin. Resident partner in the firm of Murray, Roberts & Co., founding director of Mosgiel Woollens, and involved in innumerable Otago enterprises; chairman of OU finance committee. Member of Provincial Govt and Taieri County Cl. Largely responsible for the tremendous success of the 1889–90 Exhibition, for which, without ever having sat on an urban council, he was elected mayor unopposed. His term was notable for the codification of the by-laws and for his courage in calming a hostile crowd during the seamen's strike. Made CMG in 1891, eventually knighted in 1920; and d. at Dunedin at the age of 89 in 1934. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 104 (pix); Fenwick, pix p.36; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.189, 190 etc; *Southern People*, p.425; see substantial private and business archives, & Jane Thomson papers.

Carroll, John (1890)

b. Tipperary County, Ireland, 11.6.1836; trained as a

stonemason. Emigrated to the Victorian goldfields, crossed to Gabriels Gully, spent time in Dunedin and on the goldfields, and in 1863 built and ran the Douglas Hotel. First elected to the City Council in 1869, and rewarded for his long service by being elected as Dunedin's first Catholic mayor in 1890 with the largest majority of any 19th century election. Prominent on many public bodies, and notably won for the city a significant benefit in dealings with the City & Suburban Tramway Co. K.C.McDonald quotes Civis's delightful description: 'What with his imposing presence, a stately walk, and that inherent taste for dignity which marks every Irishman in office, from the policeman upwards, somehow Mr Carroll looked a Mayor. And as he seldom lapsed into a public speech, a capital Mayor he made.' He d. at Dunedin, 10.11.1903. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 104 (pix), 109; Fenwick, pix p.36; *Civic Enterprise*, pp. 190, 251; *Southern People*, p.87 (pix); see Jane Thomson papers.

Chapman, Charles Robert (1891)

b. Edinburgh, 1847; his parents sailing soon after in the Blundell to Port Chalmers. His father became Registrar of the Supreme Ct, Deeds, Births Deaths & Marriages, etc. He himself was one of the first to attend OBHS, was articulated to the law, and established his own practice in 1873. Defeated for the mayoralty in 1888, but won three years later, his election somewhat controversially following his father's financing of a memorial in the Octagon to the Rev. Thomas Burns, on which the name of the donor was even more prominent than the name of Burns himself. It was C.R.Chapman's initiative in writing personally to Andrew Carnegie in 1901 that led to the establishment of Dunedin's first free public library. Died at Auckland, August 1928. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp.105 (pix), 113, 238; Fenwick, pix p.36; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.190, 191 etc; see Robert Chapman papers.

Haynes, Charles (1892)

b. Tasmania, 1838, moved to Victoria in 1845 for his schooling, and crossed to Dunedin in 1858. Ran a carrier business to the goldfields, set up a store in Palmerston for 13 years, during five of which he was the borough mayor. Moved to Dunedin in 1886, serving on the council, the committees of public and church organisations etc; d. at Dunedin, 7.10.1901. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp.105 (pix), 113; Fenwick, pix p.36; *Civic Enterprise*, p.191.

Wales, Nathaniel Young Armstrong (1895)

b. Northumberland, 1832; emigrated to Victoria and crossed to Dunedin in 1863, becoming clerk of works to William Mason that year, and a partner in 1871. Not trained as an architect, he was an extremely able builder who developed architectural skills. He also rose from the ranks in the Volunteers to become honorary colonel, and led an active public life: MHR in 1874, Harbour Bd chairman, City Councillor, and held a high-ranking office in the Grand Priory of St John; d. at Dunedin, 3.11.1903. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp. 87, 105, 113, 286 (pix); Fenwick, pix p.40; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.170, 192 etc; *Southern People*, pp.530–1 (pix); see archives, postgraduate research paper.

***Cargill, Edward Bowes (1897)**

b. Edinburgh, 9 October, 1823; educated there and at Norwich. Spent six years at sea; was a merchant in Ceylon, 1844–55; two years in Melbourne; settled in Dunedin in 1857. Joined his brother and John Jones in Jones, Cargill & Co., general merchants; bought the *Geelong*, the first steamer on the Otago coast, and was prominent across a whole range of Dunedin businesses. MHR for Bruce, consul for Italy, Vice-chancellor of OU, elder at Knox, etc. In 1897, as the seventh son of Dunedin's founder, and without having sat as a Councillor, he was elected to hold the mayoralty for the year of the city's fiftieth anniversary. He d. at his residence, 'The Cliffs', on 28.1.1903. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp.105 (pix), 109; Fenwick, pix p.40; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.70, 200 etc; *Southern People*, p.84; much generally in Archives on the Cargill family.

Swan, William (1898)

b. Prestonpans, 1838; started out as a miner, had three years in the grocery trade, then worked for his father in contracting. Came to Dunedin 1861; had little luck on the goldfields, worked as a farm labourer, and as a successful carrier to the goldfields. In 1858 to NSW, but returned to Dunedin, setting up as a firewood merchant, purchasing bush land which he felled for the market and, when coal was discovered on his property, becoming a coal merchant for the next 28 years, even importing coal from Newcastle. On the Mosgiel Borough CI for a short time, then from 1888 on the Dunedin council. Trustee for the Benevolent Institution, and for long prominent in the Caledonian Society, becoming its president; d. at Dunedin, 28.1.1901. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp.106 (pix), 113; Fenwick, pix p.40

Chisholm, Robert (1899)

b. Portmank, Kinross-shire, June 1843; arrived at Port Chalmers in 1858, herded cows for two years, then was apprenticed as a carpenter, later joining up with Arthur Scoullar (who would become Dunedin's mayor in 1884) in the joinery warehouse of Scoullar & Chisholm. Mayor of Roslyn for three years; chairman of the Benevolent Institution, the Charitable Aids Board, Hospital Board, Otago Rugby Union, and Retailers' Association. Under the changes of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1900, Chisholm (unopposed in the 1899 election) remained mayor for 17 months. In 1909 he made the interesting proposal that an advisory committee of ex-mayors should be established. Died at Dunedin, 19 June, 1914. *Cyclopedia*, 1905, pp.106, 113, 314 (pix); Fenwick, pix p.40; *Civic Enterprise*, pp.245, 246; see Scoullar & Chisholm archives, retirement certificate.

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