



BUSINESS SERIES 4

Shipping

The gold rush to Otago in 1861 saw a dramatic increase in population, resulting in the need for improved shipping services to and from the province. Within a short time Port Chalmers became the third largest port in Australasia, after Sydney and Melbourne.

As a lead-in to the main growth period in shipping, the Hocken Collections holds two theses. The first is Margaret Taylor's *Otago's seaborne trade from the pioneering days to 1879*, a thesis for her M.A. degree in history (1943) and for a similar degree there is W.D Bidmead's *Coastal Shipping in Otago 1830–1878* (1950). A third thesis, presented in partial fulfilment for a B.A. in History by M.A. Chapman in 1975, covers *The golden years of shipping industry: A study of shipbuilding and repairing work in Port Chalmers 1862–1864*.

SHIPPING COMPANIES

The most significant and important holding of a shipping business in the Hocken Collections is the archive of the **Union Steam Ship Company of N.Z. Limited (AG-292)**, a company established in Dunedin in 1875. Within a few years it had become the largest shipping company in the Southern Hemisphere, and the most significant business enterprise established in New Zealand in the 19th century. The 41 lineal metres of the Union Company archive held by the Hocken contains not only the early history of the company, but provides a remarkable insight of how big business operated in those early times. As the Union Company grew, it absorbed most of its competitors, to the extent that the company had a total monopoly of the shipping services along the New Zealand coast as well as the Tasman Sea. After the first 25 years of expansion and acquisitions, the company changed its tack and thereafter entered into secret agreements with other shipping companies in order to control them, all the while giving the impression to the New Zealand and Australian Governments, and the travelling public, that an element of

competition did prevail!

In the early 1890s the Melbourne-based shipping company Huddart Parker commenced competing head-on with the Union Company on the passenger and cargo services from Sydney to Auckland through to Dunedin, from Sydney to Hobart, and from Melbourne to Launceston. After a period of intense competition in which fares dropped to very low levels, the two companies agreed in 1895 to a pooling agreement on all three routes. Then in 1910, when the agreement was due for renewal, the Union Company sought a 25% shareholding in Huddart Parker. The Huddart Parker directors acceded to the demand, the shares being registered in the name of a Huddart Parker director; the Union Company retained the shareholding until the Melbourne company was sold in 1961. Over



James Mills, Founder and Managing Director of the Union Company (author's collection).

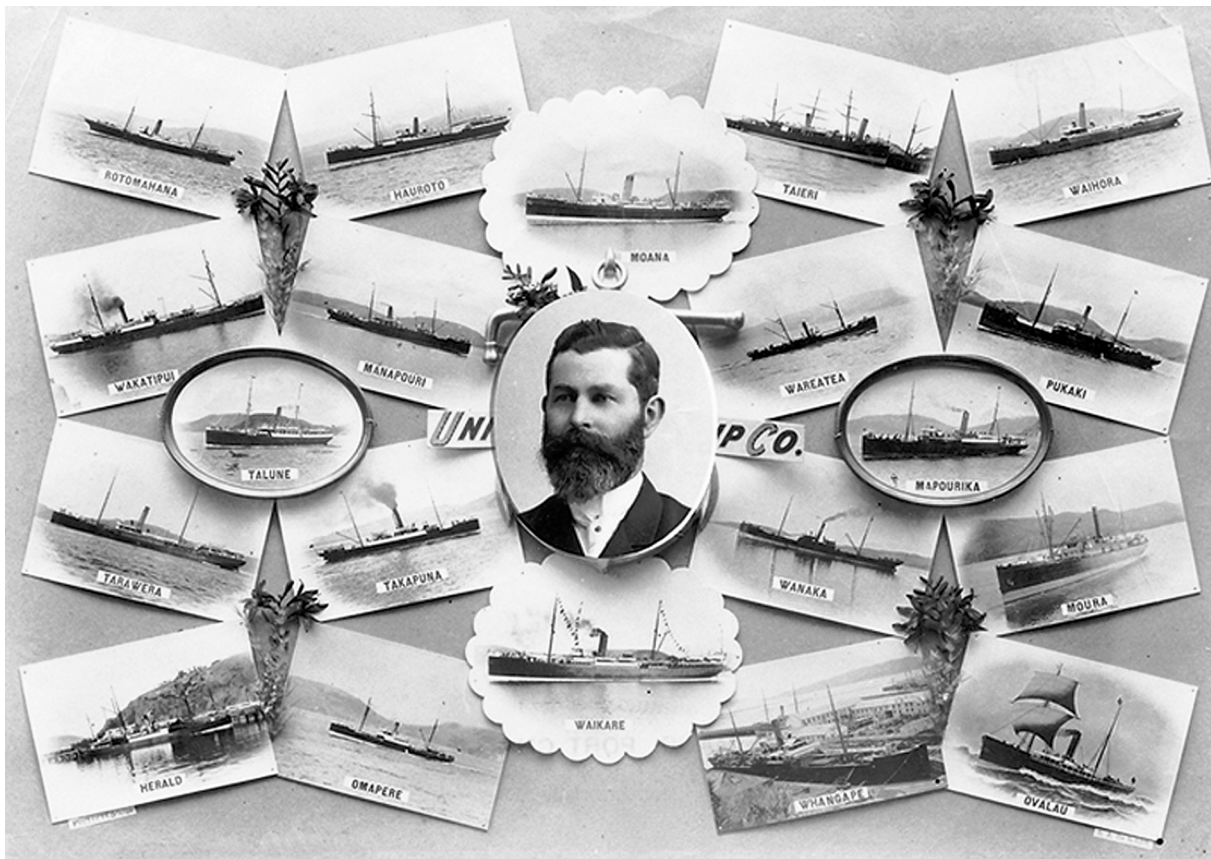
succeeding years the Union Company secretly purchased interests in other competing shipping companies in New Zealand and Australia. The first of these was the Launceston-based company Wm Holyman & Sons, where the Union Company took a 50% shareholding. In New Zealand the investments included the purchase in 1905 of a 50% interest in the Canterbury Steam Shipping Company which traded from South Island ports to Wellington and Wanganui. In 1907 a 25% interest was taken in both the Invercargill Shipping Company of Dunedin and the Wairau Steam Ship Company of Wellington. The following year a 50% shareholding was purchased in the Anchor Shipping & Foundry Company of Nelson, and shortly after, the Union Company acquired 50% of Ferdinand Holm's Maoriland Steamship Company of Wellington, a company which was primarily interested in the carriage of timber on the New Zealand coast and across the Tasman. Another timber carrier competing on the Tasman was the line of ships owned by R.S. Lamb (of Sydney) and the Union Company purchased a share in this concern in 1909. The Napier-based coastal shipping company, Richardson and Co, was targeted in 1912 with the Union Company acquiring a 25% share. The only significant New Zealand-registered shipping company in which the Union Company did not take a shareholding was the Northern Steam Ship Company of Auckland, but in the Northern Company service from Onehunga to New Plymouth, which was competing with the Union Company, both companies agreed to pool their interests and share the profits. In order to conceal the Union Company shareholdings in these smaller, mainly family owned companies, the shares were held in trust by nominee holders.

These confidential arrangements ensured the Union Company monopoly remained intact, and the smaller companies continued as in the past, giving the impression to all that they were competing with *The Southern Octopus: the rise of the Union Steam Ship Company 1876–1917* as author Gavin McLean described the ramifications of the Union Company, initially in his Ph.D. thesis in 1983, and later when the material was expanded and published as a book in 1990. Three histories published by the Union Company (*Union Steam Ship Company of N.Z. Ltd 1875–1925, History of the Union Steam Ship Company of N.Z. Ltd. 1875–1940* and *A Short History of the Union Steam Ship Company of N.Z. Ltd.*, by S.D. Waters 1951) contain no references to any of the confidential arrangements made with opposition companies and it was only when *The Southern Octopus* was

published in 1990, and Ian Farquhar's *Union Fleet* in 2001, that the full extent of Union Company control over the shipping in Australia and New Zealand became known. Both authors extensively used the Union Company archives in the Hocken. Although the Union Company board minute books in these archives only go up to 1913, the Union Company continued its policy of taking secret interests in other shipping companies operating in their sphere of operations, and these included investments in the Gisborne Sheepfarmers Frozen Meat & Mercantile Company, Holm Shipping Company of Wellington, the Watchlin Shipping line of Captain A.F. Watchlin and the Melbourne-based H.C. Sleigh Limited.

The Union Company also made sure that it had effective control of adequate fuel supplies for its large fleet of steamers, and by storing coal in the main ports in coal hulks (generally old sailing ships no longer suitable for deep-sea work) the company was able to offer coal bunker supplies to other shipping lines calling at New Zealand ports. It acquired the Koranui coal mine and the fleet of the Black Diamond Line of Wellington in 1885, and then sold the Koranui mine to the Westport Coal Company of Dunedin two years later, but took over the Westport company's ships and thus gained the distribution of that company's coal in their own steamers. One year later the Union Company purchased the Wallsend, Coalpitheath, Tyneside and Brunner coal mines on the West Coast, and set up a new holding company called the Grey Valley Coal Company which was jointly owned by the Union Company and the Westport Coal Company, both companies domiciled in Dunedin. When coal replaced oil, the Union Company established its own tank farm at Miramar in Wellington and imported the oil for its ships in two tankers owned by the company, thus by-passing the overseas oil companies based in New Zealand.

The Union Company had its Head Office in Dunedin from 1875 to 1921, then in Wellington from 1922 until it moved to Auckland in 1983. The company ceased operations in 1998. At that time the company decided to place its archives from 1875 to 1913 with the Hocken and the remaining archives and staff records were given to the Wellington Museum of City and Sea. Most of those written records have now been transferred from the Museum to the Wellington City Council Archives. Although the Hocken has only the company Articles of Association 1875, 1891 and 1913, Board Minute books, Annual Reports and financial records from 1875 to 1913, it has



Captain Angus Cameron, Marine Superintendent of the Union Company surrounded by a De Maus montage of the Union Company ships in which he was involved (author's collection).

a huge resource of other material, particularly in correspondence files. The founder and Managing Director of the Union Company was James Mills and there are hundreds of letters involving him, many coming from the principal branch managers of the day — Charles Holdsworth in Hobart, David Mills, (James' brother) in Melbourne, F.W. Jackson in Sydney, and H.J. Gibbs in London, as well as the engineer supervising new ship construction in Glasgow, John Darling, and Marine Superintendent Captain Angus Cameron, often also in Glasgow, and from the Denny Bros shipyard at Dumbarton.

There are also Pocket Guides to the company services and timetables from 1875 to 1964, personnel files 1879–1915, staff salaries 1892–1917, shareholders registers 1875–1907 and company circulars 1878 to 1913. In the early days of the company, the directors met weekly and, to ensure they were fully informed on every aspect of the business in Australia and New Zealand, all the Branch Managers wrote every few days to Head Office. The business discussed in these letters provides a remarkable insight into how the Union Company management maintained control of its empire, and at the same time kept a watchful eye on budding competitors and Governments. Hundreds of letters relate to the period 1883 to

1891, while the correspondence involving James Mills covers 1874–75, then the period 1881–1930.

The Hocken Collections are also fortunate to have the archives of Captain Angus Cameron, (**Cameron Family Papers MS-1046**) who was born in Scotland in 1829, and eventually settled in Port Chalmers in the mid-1860s. He subsequently commanded several sailing ships, including the barque *Otago* which was built for him in 1869. She achieved fame in her later years as the first command of Polish shipmaster and author Joseph Conrad. In conjunction with Wm Denny & Bros, Angus Cameron was Master and a part owner of the steamer *Wakatipu*, which inaugurated the first Trans Tasman service of the Union Steam Ship Company in 1876. Two years later the Union Company purchased the *Wakatipu* and appointed Cameron the company's Chief Marine Superintendent. He remained in this role until 1906 and then came on the board of the company from 1906 until his death in April 1909.

The Angus Cameron portion of the Cameron Papers in the Hocken comprises extensive correspondence files, mainly from the late 1890s and the early 1900s, when Angus Cameron was living in Glasgow supervising the construction of new ships for the company. There are also diaries

and notebooks, many plans and specifications of the ships being built, books dealing with the navigation, construction and management of vessels, instructions for masters and officers, sailing directions for major trade routes of the world as well as Admiralty charts. Many of the letters and brochures deal with the provision of newly developed equipment for use on the new vessels. There are several brochures on the Union Company cruises which were run each year to the West Coast Sounds until the loss of the *Waikare* in Dusky Sound in 1910.

Supplementary to the Union Company and the Cameron Papers are files lodged by **James H. Cochrane (AG-922)**, a former staff member in the Dunedin office. The papers include some Dunedin office salaries books 1901–55, a list of Dunedin staff 1945–96 and a set of Union Company magazines — *Roll-on Roll-off News* 1968–76, *Under Way* 1967–84 and *Linkspan* 1984–88.

The only other Hocken links to a major shipping company are contained in the correspondence files in the J.M. Ritchie papers, held within the large archive of the **National Mortgage and Agency Company of New Zealand Limited (UN-028 and AG-133)**, both Dunedin and London. The company held the agency for the Shaw Savill & Albion Company, the principal and oldest shipping line in the New Zealand trade. Shaw & Savill of London had commenced business with New Zealand in 1858 and the Glasgow-based Albion Line had merged with the London company at the end of 1882, some eight months after the epic voyage of the Albion Line ship *Dunedin* had carried the first cargo of frozen meat from New Zealand to London. The New Zealand Shipping Company had been formed in Christchurch in 1873 to compete with the Shaw Savill but within a year both lines had agreed to work together by charging the same freights and rationalising their sailings to and from New Zealand. The New Zealand Shipping Company over-reached itself with the building of five new steamers for the New Zealand trade and financial control of the company was lost to London in 1888.

John Macfarlane Ritchie, Managing Director of the NMA Company, whose head office was in Dunedin, was also the senior representative in New Zealand for the Shaw Savill & Albion Company. His letters to the partners in the Head Office of the shipping company in London provide a very interesting background to the influences British shipping companies had in the New Zealand trade. Ritchie often suggests a tempered

colonial approach to problems rather than conceding to the more aggressive demands of the British ship-owner.

SHIPPING AGENTS

Over the years most of the shipping agents in Dunedin have been branch offices of international or New Zealand shipping companies, but the Hocken Collections does hold some archives of the two largest Dunedin-based shipping agencies. The oldest, **Keith Ramsay (AG-224)**, set up business in 1865, three years after his arrival at Port Chalmers from Scotland in the ship *Jura*. Initially he mainly handled small sailing ships trading to many ports and roadsteads along the South Island coastline. In many cases the master of the ship was also the owner and Ramsay himself started buying shares in some of the little vessels between 1874 and 1892 holding shares in 19 sailing ships, ranging in tonnage from 29 tons to 342 tons, and one steamer. He was soon handling about 150 vessels a year and in 1876 the vessels arrived from such ports as Kaikoura, Catlins River, Kakanui, Oamaru, Havelock, Toetoes Bay, Hokitika, Bay of Islands, All Day Bay, Moeraki, Pelorus Sound, Olova Bay, Greymouth, Waikawa, Kaipara, Napier, Shag Point, Stewart Island, Bluff, Riverton, Port Molyneux as well as Newcastle, New South Wales. The main inward cargoes were timber, stone, coal, grain, potatoes and pollard while outward from Port Chalmers there were always transshipment cargoes from overseas ships. As his business grew, Keith Ramsay also became part owner of a number of timber mills.

One of the more important records in the Keith Ramsay archive are the arrivals and departures books of every ship handled from 1870 until 1978. Keith Ramsay died in 1906 and the business continued under his son, Keith Stuart Ramsay. It became a limited liability company in May 1931 and remained in business until 1978. When small steamers started to replace sailing ships, Ramsay became a shareholder in several limited liability companies operating services between Dunedin and Invercargill and the archive includes the minute books of the Southern Steam Shipping Company 1907–24. The minute books of the **Invercargill Shipping Company (MS-1880)** 1906–21 are in a separate archive. Other records include the letter books of K.S. Ramsay 1903–20, accounting files from 1918–77, balance sheets 1931–75, wage records 1930–77, a newspaper scrap book 1905–30, and correspondence relating to ship's agencies, industry associations and waterfront matters.

In addition there are files on Ramsay family history. Keith Ramsay was active in civic and community organisations, being one of the founding members of the Otago Harbour Board 1874–75 and again a board member 1877–83. He became a City Councillor 1871–75 and was elected Mayor of Dunedin in 1874, and even today he remains the youngest mayor in the history of Dunedin City. Apart from directorships in some timber companies he was also a Director of several public companies including the National Insurance Company, Perpetual Trustees Estate & Agency Co, Westport Coal Co, a Trustee of the Dunedin Savings Bank, and President of the Otago Chamber of Commerce 1892–93. His two-storey home at 34 Royal Terrace was built in 1876 and, after restoration in the 1990s, it remains one of Dunedin's historic homes.

In later years Keith Ramsay Limited was agent for Holm Shipping of Wellington, Northern Steam Ship Company of Auckland, Dunedin-Wanganui Shipping Company, Dunedin and after World War II, it handled the agency work for large overseas shipping companies such as the Dutch Royal Inter-ocean Lines, Netherlands Steamship Company, Royal Rotterdam Lloyd, the Danish Lauritzen Lines, and Japan Line of Tokyo. The archive also holds some records of the N.Z. Lumber Company Otago Ltd, Mote Patent Extension Ladder Co and Walmsley & Knox Plumbing Co.

The other Dunedin-based shipping agency was **H.L. Tapley & Company (00-100)** which was established by Harold Livingstone Tapley around 1900. Tapley had come from Adelaide in 1893 and established his own business at the age of 25. Initially a commission agent, he became involved in shipping in 1901 when he managed small steamers running to Invercargill. In 1904 he gained the agency for the Canterbury Steam Shipping Company which ran small coasters from South Island ports to Wellington and Wanganui, and thereafter he continued to build a successful shipping agency, handling ships of the Scales Line of Wellington, Canadian Government Merchant Marine, Bank Line and Blue Star Line. H.L. Tapley also undertook stevedoring work (the loading and discharging of ships) and for many years handled stevedoring for the Port Line of London. The Dunedin agent for Port Line was the wool buying firm of J.W. Swift & Company, and in 1949 Swift and Tapley merged to form **Tapley Swift Shipping Agencies Limited**, a company still in business as a shipping agent in Dunedin.

Like Keith Ramsay, H.L. Tapley became a City Councillor and became Mayor of Dunedin 1923–27. He was also the Member of Parliament for Dunedin North 1925–28. The archival material held by the Hocken includes shipping movement books from 1920–99, statistical returns for agencies and tonnages handled 1956–91, various Charter Parties and shipping documents covering the wide range of agency work handled. There is also a file on the history of J.W. Swift & Company and a copy of the 40-page unpublished history "*TAPLEYS*" — *Ninety Years in Shipping 1900–1990*".

H.L. Tapley and Company also acted as agents for the two Byrd Antarctic Exhibitions which made Dunedin/Port Chalmers their base in 1929–30 and 1934–35 and the archive contains three boxes of correspondence and accounts for both expeditions, including original letters from Admiral Byrd. There are files of messages exchanged between Dunedin and Little America in Antarctica. In addition the company acted for the Lincoln Ellsworth Antarctic Expedition of 1934 and there is also a file on this expedition. Admiral Byrd named the Harold Tapley Plateau and the James Duncan Mountains in Antarctica in recognition of his association with H.L. Tapley and his manager, Jim Duncan. The file (**MS-1138**) includes further material on the 1934–35 Byrd expedition and covers crew lists for the *Bear of Oakland* and *Jacob Ruppert*, newspaper cuttings, details of stores donated and correspondence from suppliers of equipment.

PORT AUTHORITY

One of the most important archives held by the Hocken Collections is that of the **Otago Harbour Board (ARC-0014)** which was established in 1874. It controlled the shipping, trade and environment of the Otago Harbour until 1989, when the Board was abolished by the Port Companies Act which placed the commercial affairs of the port under Port Otago Limited, a public company operating with an independent board of directors, paying taxes and without all the restrictions (and protection) imposed by the Harbours Act and the National Ports Authority. In addition to the Harbour Board archive, described in more detail below, the Hocken also received records of the Otago Pilot Board for the period 1865–1874 and these contain a list of shipping movements through the port in this period as well as notes by the Pilots on the various ships which called; the Otago Dock Trust 1865–1910 relating

to the first dry dock in the port, and the Otago Towing Company 1879–1883 which operated the towing facilities within the harbour. There is also a journal of events 1870–1872 at the Harbour Office under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Council and this is held under **MS-0036**.

The main records of the Harbour Board include the Board minute books 1875–1981, Annual Reports 1875–1980, Statements of Assets 1908–1969 and the minutes of the various Standing Committees of the Board — generally Finance, Engineer, Works, Reserves, and the Harbour Master. Most of these cover the period from 1874 until around 1980, as the Hocken has not yet taken in the last nine years of records up to when the Board had its last meeting on 25 October 1989. The archive encompasses a vast resource of material including correspondence registers 1905–1979, the Secretary's letter books 1874–1941, general correspondence 1892–1931, Engineer's letter books 1874–1947, scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings 1875–1958, vessel arrivals and departures 1874–1986, import manifests 1939–1941, export manifests 1915–1942, statistical reports of the tonnages of cargoes and ships handled. There is an extensive collection of maps and plans, as well as limited photographic coverage of people, ships and events mainly in the period 1900–30. In order to deepen the harbour the board reclaimed about 270 hectares of land in the Upper Harbour around the Dunedin waterfront, and also entirely reclaimed an area known as Lake Logan and presented it to the City of Dunedin for one peppercorn. As a result there are extensive files on the land holdings, and on the leasing arrangements subsequently put in place to achieve a commercial return on the reclaimed land.

Records are held of the Harbours Association of New Zealand, of which the Otago Harbour Board was a member, as well as the annual conferences that body held. Extensive holdings of annual reports from many of the other ports in New Zealand include Auckland 1898–1935, Bluff 1899–1935, Gisborne 1899–1935, Greymouth 1899–1935, Hokitika 1899–1915, Timaru 1900–1934, Waitara 1897, 1907, 1919–1922, Wanganui 1910–1935, Wellington 1905, 1920, Westport 1898–1919 and Whangarei 1913–1932. There are also records from local organisations such as the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce, and files on a wide range of subjects including Aramoana land and the proposed smelter, boat harbour, boat sheds, container port development, drainage, dredges and dredging, dry docks, elections, floating plant, floods, industrial disputes, Leith canal, loans,

mole, port history, railways, receiving and delivery of cargo, shipping casualties, Tairaroa Head signal station, tenders and visitors to the port.

The records are complex through the board being divisionalised into various departments — mainly Secretary, Engineer, and Harbour Master. Researchers should not give up until all five Eastlight Binders providing a brief inventory of the collection have been perused. The collection is also fully item entered on the Hakena catalogue.

Apart from brochures issued by the Board at varying times throughout its history there are two main histories — *The Port of Otago* by Dr. A.H. McLintock, published by Whitcombe & Tombs in 1951, and *Otago Harbour — Currents of Controversy* by Gavin McLean, published by the Otago Harbour Board in 1985. Under item **95-130** the Hocken also holds the collection of colour transparencies used in the latter book.

INDUSTRIAL RECORDS

The **Port Chalmers Waterfront Workers Industrial Union of Workers** has lodged records with the Hocken relating to the Union covering the period 1896–1966 (**AG-082**). These include minutes of general meetings 1898–1962, Executive committee meetings 1939–61, members files 1933–61, work record diaries 1918, 1941–46, 1948–60, accident reports 1948–58, Benefit Society file 1932–63, Working Mens' Club 1948–51, New Zealand Waterfront Workers Federation Conference reports 1917, 1919–20, 1924, 1926, 1929–33, 1935–37, 1939, 1941, 1943–45, 1947–50, 1952–54, 1956, 1958 and 1960, and details of Awards and Agreements 1909–1960 (not necessarily complete). Other files cover workers and industrial issues, harbour regulations, safe working conditions, along with brochure and material from kindred organisations.

Extensive employer records are also available under (**AG-737**) which includes copies of all the Dunedin and Port Chalmers Port Conciliation meetings 1951–89, as well as the minutes of the Dunedin Branch of the New Zealand Port Employers Association 1964–89.

This bulletin has been prepared by Ian Farquhar with assistance from Hocken Collections staff, and designed by Gary Blackman for the Friends of the Hocken Collections Inc., P O Box 6336, Dunedin.