



## New Zealand's Nine Provinces (1853–76)

**O**N 30 June 1852, after half a century of constantly changing constitutional relationships with NSW and Great Britain, the passage by the British Parliament into law of the 'Act to Grant a Representative Constitution to the Colony of New Zealand' at last gave this country a settled, semi-federal system of government.

New Zealand became divided into the six provinces of Auckland, New Plymouth, Wellington, Nelson, Canterbury and Otago, each with its own legislature, built around the six original planned settlements or 'colonies'. Above them was a General Assembly consisting of the Crown-nominated Legislative Council and a directly elected House of Representatives. Sir George Grey proclaimed the coming into force of this Constitution on 17 January 1853; the boundaries of the new provinces were gazetted on 28 February; and regulations governing the elections were gazetted on 5 March.

Each province had a Superintendent and a Provincial Council, both directly elected by men aged 21 or older, with freehold worth £50 a year. Elections were held every four years, each Provincial Council electing its Speaker at the first meeting after an election. Amending legislation in 1856 provided for the appointment of a Deputy Superintendent when necessary.

### **New provinces**

The original Westminster legislation had always provided for the creation of additional provinces, and when the spread of settlement brought disaffection between some of the original centres of provincial government and the outlying settlers, the General Assembly in 1858 was persuaded to pass the New Provinces Act.

Under it, any district of between 500,000 and 3 million acres in extent, with a European population of no fewer than 1000, could petition for separation provided that at least 60% of electors agreed. Hawkes Bay separated from Wellington on 1 November 1858; Marlborough from Nelson on 1 November 1859; and Southland from Otago on 1 April 1861. New Plymouth also changed its name to Taranaki under the same legislation.

The provincial system came to an end under the Abolition of Provinces Act, assented to on 12 October 1875. No further sessions of the Provincial Councils were held, though the Superintendents continued to function until the Act became fully operative on 1 November 1876. The provinces were then replaced by the county system, which remained in being for the next 110 years.

### **Background reading**

Several sources provide useful guides to the provincial period.

W.P. Morrell's *The Provincial System in NZ 1852–76* (London, 1932; rev., 1964) describes how and why the system came into being, the on-going relationships between the provinces and the central government, the debates of Centralism v Provincialism which became prominent in 1867–68, the financial problems which several of the provinces suffered, and the developing battles over immigration and public works.

The crisis came when Vogel's attempt to create a major afforestation plan for New Zealand ran into dog-in-the-manger hostility from provinces unwilling to allow even 3 percent of their waste lands to be transferred to central government administration for the purpose. Once an ardent provincialist, Vogel became converted to the abolition of the provinces and public opinion sided with him.

For a compact view of the structure of provincial government, consult pp. 177–244 of *NZ Parliamentary Record 1840–1949* (Wellington, 1950), edited by Guy H. Scholefield. In addition to a succinct potted general history Scholefield records the developments within each province and provides full lists of Superintendents, Deputies, Speakers, Executive Councillors and Provincial Councillors, all with their individual electorates and dates of service. Also listed are the dates of all the sessions held by the various provincial councils.

In the 1950s, National Archives published a valuable series of Preliminary Inventories of the material held from the various provinces, each with an appendix listing the province's official publications. And in its September 1990 issue, pp. 10–13, *NZ Historic Places* published a brief and somewhat incomplete article on the buildings the various provincial government used. Only those of Canterbury and Southland survive.

Two relevant PhD theses held by the Hocken Library are D.G. Herron's 'The Structure and Course of NZ Politics 1853–1858' (1959), and G.A. Wood's 'The Political Structure of NZ 1858–61' (1965). Also see R.H. Ellis, 'Sir George Grey's petitions to the Colonial Office over the abolition of the provinces', OU thesis, MA (1968). Note also R.P. Hargreaves, *Maps in NZ Provincial Papers* (1964).

### **The Library's holdings**

Besides an extensive range of the official literature issued by the Otago Provincial Council, the Hocken Library also holds, thanks to Dr Hocken's energetic collecting, a range of basic material from the other provincial councils, and this is listed below. The lists are accompanied by a selection of books, some dealing with specific aspects of the provincial machinery, some providing a general historical background in each province. Newspapers of the period and also a few relevant biographies are noted, but considering that more than 1000 prominent men served on the various provincial councils, 1853–76, the pool of biographical sources clearly offers scope for further study.

In conjunction with this bulletin, which deals with the published material relating to all the provinces, Bulletin 32 describes the unpublished material, generally on microfilm, relating particularly to the provinces of Otago and Southland.

## **1 Auckland (1853–1876)**

General: No general Auckland provincial history exists, but the 1902 *Cyclopedia* devotes 9pp to the Provincial Superintendents. Coverage can also be found in such books as J. Barr, *City of Auckland* (1922), with a photo of the old Provincial Buildings; G.W.A. Bush, *Decently and in Order. The Government of the City of Auckland 1840–1971* (1971); and Una Platts *The Lively Capital, Auckland 1840–1865* (1971).

Newspapers: *NZ Herald* (1863–76, microfilm); *NZ Weekly News* (from 1861, incomplete).

*Acts*: Sessions I–XIX (1853–1866).

*Acts & Ordinances*: Sessions XXVIII (Dec. 1872–Feb. 1873), XXIX (Feb.–July 1874).

*Acts & Proceedings*: Sessions I–IX (1853–1858).

*Gazettes*: Vols I–IV (1853–1856), VIII–XII (1860–1864), XV (1866), XVII (1868, incomplete), XVIII–XXIV (1869–1875).

*Journals*: Sessions XIX–XXII (1865–1868); XXIV–XXX (1869–1875).

*Votes & Proceedings*: Sessions X–XV (1859–1863).

## **2 New Plymouth (1853, renamed Taranaki 1858–1876)**

General: Taranaki is fortunate in that an early New Plymouth journalist, Benjamin Wells carefully wrote *The History of Taranaki*, a 311pp 'standard work' in 1878, only two years after the provincial period ended. Judith Basset's *Sir Harry Atkinson, 1831–1892* (1975) is a biography with much political relevance.

Newspapers: *Taranaki Herald* (1852–62, 1868–75, with breaks).

*Gazettes*. Vols XI–XIX (1863–71), Vol. XX (1872, one issue only).

*Ordinances*. Sessions I–XV (1853–67).

## **3 Wellington (1853–1876)**

General: Only 3pp are given to the Provincial Superintendents in the 1897 *Cyclopedia of Wellington*, but A.E. Mulgan's *The City of the Strait* (1939) provides a centennial history of Wellington city and province. Brief references occur in such books as G.M. Betts. *Betts on Wellington; a city and its politics* (1970).

Newspapers: *NZ Spectator* (1853–65).

*Acts*. Sessions I–XII (1853–65).

*Acts & Proceedings*. Sessions I–IV (1853–57), VI–XVI (1858–68).

*Gazettes*. Vols IV (1857), XVII–XIX (1870–72).

*Journal of Proceedings*. Sessions XXI–XXII (1871–72), XXIV–XXVIII (1873–75).

### **3a Hawkes Bay (1858–1876)**

General: A handy introduction is A.H. Reed's *The Story of Hawke's Bay* (1958), in which the provincial period is given 80pp, with events described in a series of four chronicles. Also worth consulting: I.W. Malcolm, *Bibliography of Hawke's Bay* (1969); J.G. Wilson and others, *History of Hawkes Bay* (1939, 1976 reprint); and Matthew Wright, *Hawke's Bay, the History of a Province* (1994).

Newspapers: *Hawkes Bay Herald* (1857–67, 1871–74, with breaks).

*Acts*. Sessions I–X (1858–66).

*Gazettes*. Vols I, II & IV (1860, 1861, 1864; looseleaf and incomplete), Vols VII–XII (1866–71, bound), Vols XIII–XVI (1872–76; looseleaf and incomplete).

*Votes & Proceedings*. Sessions II–XII (1859–67), XVIII (1871), XXI (1874).

## **4 Nelson (1853–1876)**

General: C.B. Brereton's readable *Vanguard of the South, Nelson NZ* (1952) devotes a couple of chapters to the period; and see also the more recent *Nelson, a Regional History* (1997), by Jim McAloon, and *Edward Stafford, NZ's First Statesman* (1994), by Edmund Bohan. There is also coverage in Ruth Allan, *The History of Port Nelson*

(1954), while a brief reference in J. Newport, *Short History of the Nelson Province* (1966) mentions the impending demolition of the old Provincial Council buildings.

Specific: H.F. Allan, *The Nelson Provincial Council* (1974, from a 1939 thesis).

Newspapers: *Nelson Daily Examiner* (1853–72, incomplete).

*Gazettes*. Vols I–XX (1853–71).

*Votes & Proceedings*. Sessions I–III (1853–56; with *Acts* for Session III, 1956; and *Statistics of Nelson*, 1843–55).

*Votes & Proceedings, & Acts*. Sessions IV–XII (1857–67), XIX–XXVI (1869–75).

#### 4a Marlborough (1859–1876)

General: The provincial period is well covered in T.L. Buick's *Old Marlborough* (1900), and gets three chapters in *Marlborough, a Provincial History* (1940), ed. by A.D. McIntosh. For the battle between Blenheim and Picton as provincial capital see H.D. Kelly, *As High As the Hills. The Centennial History of Picton* (1976), which includes illustrations of the old Provincial buildings in Picton. Also Jeanine Graham, *Frederick Weld* (1983), and Rex E. Wright-St Clair, *Thoroughly a Man of the World. A Biography of Sir David Monro* (1971).

Newspapers: none local.

*Gazettes*. Vols I–X (1860–69).

#### 5 Canterbury (1853–1876)

General: In *A History of Canterbury* Vol.1 (1957), Section III, L.C. Webb describes the developments of the Canterbury Association and the introduction of the provincial system. Vol.II (1971) is given over completely to the provincial period, G.C. Hensley dealing with the Superintendency of J.E. Fitzgerald, and W.H. Scotter covering the Moorhouse-Bealey years 1857–68, and also the eight-year Superintendency of William Rolleston until the provinces were abolished. Other writers discuss the literature, music, education, art and architecture of the provincial period, the appendices include details of session and members, and the bibliography lists relevant theses and publications. Among other relevant books: Edmund Bohan, *'Blest Madman'. Fitzgerald of Canterbury* (1998); A. Selwyn Bruce, *The Early Days of Canterbury* (1932); O.A. Gillespie, *South Canterbury. A Record of Settlement* (1958, 1971); W.D. McIntyre ed. *The Journal of Henry Sewell, 1853–57* (2 vols, 1980); W.A. Pierre, *Canterbury Provincial Railways* (1964); A.H. Reed, *The Story of Canterbury* (1949); W.H. Scotter, *A History of Port Lyttelton* (1968); W. Downie Stewart, *William Rolleston* (1940).

Specific: C.R.H. Taylor, *Gothic Beauties and History of the Canterbury Provincial Buildings* (1929).

Newspapers: *Lyttelton Times* (1853–59, broken holdings), *The Press* (1861–76, on microfilm).

*Address of His Honor the Superintendent at the Opening of the First Legislative Council of the Province of Canterbury, NZ, September 27 1853. Gazettes*. Vols XV–XXII (1868–75).

*Journal of Proceedings*. Sessions I–XXI (1853–64), XXIII (1865), XXVI–XXVIII (1866–68), XXX–XLII (1868–75).

*Ordinances*. Sessions I–XLII (1853–75).

*Report on the Formation of the Canterbury Plains, with a Geological Sketch-map and Five Geological Sections*, by Julius Haast, Provincial Geologist, Session XXII (1864).

#### 5a Westland (semi-autonomous 1868; autonomous 1873–1876)

General: Discovery of gold provided the impetus towards Westland's independence from Canterbury, and P.R. May devotes three chapters to the process in his *The West Coast Gold Rushes* (1962, 1967). The story is taken further by both Philip May and Bernard Conradson in *Miners and Militants. Politics in Westland 1865–1918* (1975), edited by May. Also worth reading is E. Iveagh Lord, *Old Westland* (1940), while several of the other historical works on Westland pay some attention to the Provincial period.

Newspapers: see Christchurch *Press* and the *Nelson Examiner*.

*Gazettes of the County of Westland*. Vols. I–VI (1868–73).

*Gazettes of Westland Province*. Vols I–II (1874–75).

*Journal of Proceedings, County Council*. Sessions I–XIII (1868–73).

*Journal of Proceedings, Westland Provincial Council*. Sessions I–II (1874–75).

#### 6 Otago (1853–1876)

General: As the foremost province in the colony, Otago fared well during the provincial period and lost much in political prestige when the provinces were abolished. In his massive *The History of Otago* (1949), A.H. McLintock devotes 277 pp to a detailed coverage of the provincial era — a book in itself. Other standard works, such as Erik Olssen, *A History of Otago* (1984) and A.H. Reed, *The Story of Otago. Age of Adventure* (1947) deal with the period more compactly. A contemporary 19th century view is provided in James Barr, *The Old Identities: Being Sketches and Reminiscences during the First Decade of the Province of Otago, NZ*, by 'An Old Identity' (1879); while the title of James McIndoe's *A Sketch of Otago, from the Initiation of the Settlement to the Abolition of the Province, with a Record of all the Important Events in its History Chronologically Arranged...* (1878) speaks for itself. Biographical references to the Provincial Council range from James Adam's *Twenty-Five Years of Emigrant Life in the South of NZ* (2nd ed., 1876) to T.H. Brooking's *And Captain of Their*

*Souls. An interpretative essay on the life and times of Captain Wm Cargill* (1984), the first Superintendent, and Raewyn Dalziel's *Julius Vogel, Business Politician* (1986).

Specific: *Address Concerning Proposed Provincial Councils Ordinance* (1851, F&J 1/39); *Correspondence between the Honorable the Premier of NZ and His Honor the Superintendent of Otago on the subject of the proposed abolition of the provinces of NZ* (1876).

Newspapers: *Daily Telegraph* (1856–64), *Dunedin Leader* (1863–64), *Dunedin Echo* (1869), *Evening Mail* (1866–67, odd copies), *Evening News* (1862–64, odd copies), *Evening Star* (1872–75), *Illustrated NZ News* (1868–76), *Illustrated New Zealander* (1866–67), *NZ Sun* (1868–69, odd copies), *Otago Daily Times* (1861–76), *Otago Guardian* (1873–76), *Otago Mail* (1864), *Otago Witness* (1853–66), *Sandfly* (1875–76, odd copies), *Saturday Advertiser* (1875), *Saturday Review* (1864–71), *Southern Mercury* (1874–76); and a wide range of Otago township papers, see Bulletin No.3.

Unpublished: Anon. 'OPC Country Members' (1853, F&J 2/44, ms); A.P.F. Browne, 'The Otago Goldfields 1861–1863, Administration and Public Life', OU thesis, MA history (1974); A.H. Cook, "'The Slowly-Dying Cause". A study of Otago provincialism after the abolition of the Provinces, 1875–1884', OU thesis, MA (1969); Linda M. Cowan, 'Immediate reactions in Otago to the movement for the abolition of the Provincial Government, 1874–1876', OU long essay, PGDipArts (1972); W.P. Morrell, 'The Provincial System of Government in NZ with special reference to its working in Otago', Ross Fellowship (1921–22).

*Bills*. Sessions I–IV (1853–55, loose), Session XVI (1862, loose).

*Departmental Reports & other papers*, 1875–76.

*Gazettes*. Vols I–XX (1853–76).

*Order Papers*, Sessions XXIX–XXXIII (1871–74).

*Otago Government Advertising Sheet, Supplement to Gazette*. Vols I–II (1864–70; indexed, with annotations as to where some missing copies may be found).

*Otago Police Gazette*, 1864–77.

*Otago Provincial Council Debates*. Session XXVI (1869; special session, mainly concerned with railways, taken verbatim and published by George Bell,

of the *Evening Star*).

*Otago Provincial Council Election : Polling Paper* (1853; F&J 13/29).

*Supplementary Schedule and Synopsis of Otago Ordinances*. Sessions I–XXXIV (1853–75).

*Votes & Proceedings*. Sessions I–XXXIV (1853–75).

In addition, note the extensive listings of Provincial Council ephemera on pp. 433–36 of W.H. Trimble's *Catalogue of the Hocken Library* (1912).

## 6a Southland (1861–1870)

General: Although the standard Otago histories pay some attention to Southland's breakaway years, the most accessible account is to be found in F.G. Hall-Jones, *Historical Southland* (1945). In addition to discussing policies and participants, Hall-Jones gives (p. 164) further sources not listed here. Mary Stevenson's biography of James ('Speaker') Wilson, who chaired the Provincial Council for eight years, is in *The Advance Guard, Series II* (1974).

Specific: *Historic Places*, No.4, March 1984, p. 30 has a photograph of the Southland Provincial Building which the Historic Places Trust bought and preserved.

Newspapers: *Bulletin* (1864), *Southlander* (1862–76, broken run), *Southland Daily News* (1863–69, 1873, 1875, 1876), *Southland Times* (broken run).

Unpublished: A.R. Dreaver, 'The Southland Province of NZ in the Days of Dr J.A.R. Menzies (Superintendent, 1861–1864)', OU History honours (1929); June D. Marshall, 'Southland's Attitudes to the Abolition of the Province 1874–77', OU BA honours History (1975).

*Gazettes*. Vols I–V (1861–67).

*Ordinances*. Sessions I–V (1861–63), XII–XV (1866–67).

*Votes & Proceedings*, Sessions I–XXIV (1861–69, compiled retrospectively by the clerk to the Otago Provincial Council and issued in 1874); *Ibid*, *Appendices*. Sessions I–XXIV (1861–69, compiled by the clerk to the OPC and issued in 1875).

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