

BRAKE

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## FIRST DAIRY FACTORY

### LEPPER- TON'S CLAIM

#### FOUNDATION IN TARANAKI

Credit for starting the first dairy factory in Taranaki goes to Mr. A. Brake, now of New Plymouth, who is 87 years of age. This was a proprietary cheese factory established at Lepperton in 1882.

The factory was situated on the side of the road opposite to the present factory and close to the bridge over the Waiongona River.

Interviewed to-day, Mr. Brake verified a statement by Mr. W. Hall, Lepperton, who has been closely connected with the industry for more than 50 years, that to the best of his recollection the first factory was a proprietary cheese at Lepperton owned by a Mr. Brake.

Which district had the first dairy factory in Taranaki was a question recently keenly debated by two New Plymouth businessmen connected with the dairy industry. The question was not settled at the time, though the issue lay between Waitara and Lepperton, but inquiries made gave the honour to Lepperton.

Mr. Brake referred to an article in the Taranaki Herald on April 7, 1882, from the local correspondent which says: "The Manutahi Cheese Factory is now an established fact. Mr. Brake has overcome all the little difficulties incidental to the establishment of a new manufactory and feels every confidence in the ultimate result. This is highly satisfactory, both to himself and the district, in fact the district will gain immensely by Mr. Brake's success.

"For years Taranaki has been inundated by Canterbury cheese; every shop counter has a display—the local article is nowhere. Taranaki is out in the cold. Although one of our local makers took a prize for first class cheese down south, he had the mortification to see his own cheese displayed on the counter as the real genuine imported article."

#### TARANAKI ADVANTAGES.

The correspondent's report continues by saying that Mr. Brake belonged to a family that had established the name of Canterbury as a great cheese making district, by gaining top places in the annual show awards and prizes. "He believes, judging from his experience so far, that both the pasture and the climate is better in Taranaki than in Canterbury; it therefore follows that success is certain, and we may expect before another year passes to see cheese from the Manutahi manufactory take first place on the counters of our stores."

A description of the working of the factory, the equipment and how the cheese is made, follows. "The more I see of the manufacture," the correspondent says, "the more I am convinced that it is a mistake for farmers to go into cheese-making on their own account. Division of labour is more economical in this than in many other manufactories. If any farmer is successful, and likes the business, let him adopt Mr. Brake's plan and agree with his neighbours, purchase their milk, and extend his business."

It was shortly after Mr. Brake's factory opened that Mr. Thomas Bayly opened his factory at Kelly Road. The Waitara-Taranaki company possesses a photo taken of the Bayly factory in 1884. The cheese factory at Lepperton did not last very long, according to Mr. Hall, and it was in 1892 that the present co-operative company, believed to be the first of its kind in New Zealand, was formed and a factory was erected almost on the site of the present building. The Kelly Road factory was purchased from Mr. Bayly by the Crown Dairy Company about 1892 and later was bought by the present Waitara-Taranaki co-operative company.

Although open to correction, Mr. Brake said he thought the first dairy factory in New Zealand was the Edendale factory in Southland. The Ashburton factory opened soon afterwards.