

BEACONSFIELD

(Mrs W. Crawford)

Many people passing through Patea have noted the two-storey house on the hill on the seaward side overlooking the town towards the Post Office and known as "Beaconsfield." Whether so named because of its situation or after the Earl of Beaconsfield, Benjamin Disraeli, is not known. A search of the records showed that as from 20th May 1870 a Grant of Sections 44, 45, 46 and 47, Suburbs of Carlyle, totalling an area of 24 acres 2 roods 32 perches was made by the Governor and Commander in Chief of the Colony of New Zealand, Sir James Ferguson to Charles Allen Wray, Gentleman of Patea, then resident magistrate at Patea, who erected the house on its present site. The land was bounded by Victoria Street in the north to Surrey Street in the south, with frontages to Meredith, Richmond, Lincoln, Oxford, Rutland and Middlesex Streets. The land from Lincoln Street to Surrey Street subsequently became a public domain, leaving an area of some 14 acres 3 roods from Lincoln Street to Victoria Street.

The house itself was built of kauri with a driveway from the end of Lincoln Street through two wrought iron gates attached to very large white posts, and running uphill through an archway of pine trees to a circular lawn surrounded by asphalt. A wide wooden

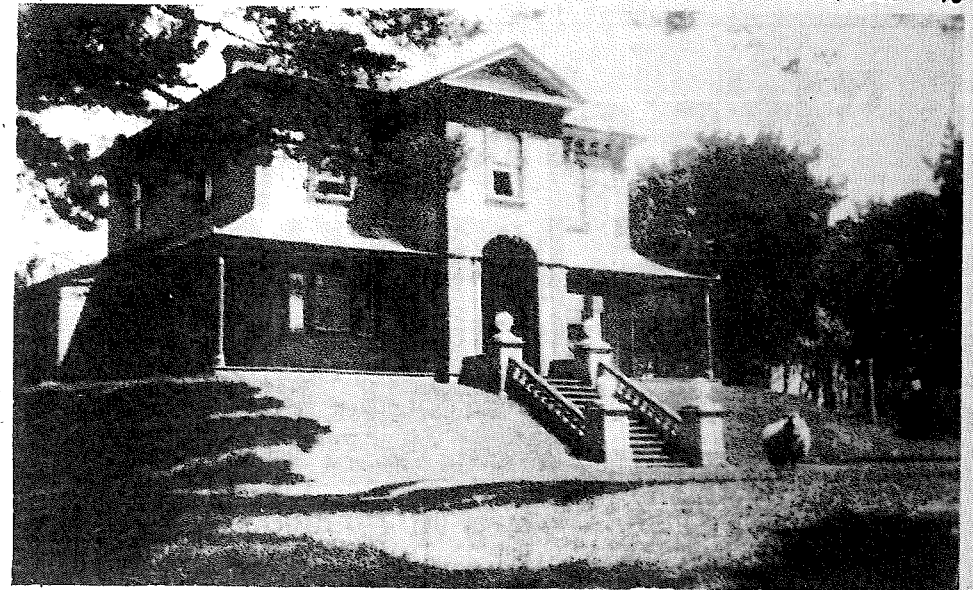
stairway then led up to the front porch which had doors on either side leading to the verandah that ran round three sides of the house. The other entrance to the property was from the end of Richmond Street, through a small iron gate along an asphalt path with a beautiful flower garden and shrubbery on the left and an extensive orchard and vegetable garden over a hedge on the right, then under an archway to the foot of wide steps up the hill to the circular lawn at the top. The steps had a very heavy leaden chain attached to posts on the right-hand side, while two terraces were on either side, those on the left leading to two croquet lawns, while those on the right overlooked the orchard and vegetable garden.

On entering the hallway one found the large drawing room on the left, a large bedroom on the right, then came the staircase with its slender brass rods holding the carpet, leading upstairs with the bathroom off the landing and six bedrooms further up the stairs. From the diningroom was a small study and at the end of the hall was a large cupboard under the stairs, then the back door with large sink bench and a capacious dairy leading off, and on the other side was the big kitchen with its coal range and another room at its end. Outside was the woodshed, wash-house

and toilet and round the corner from the back door was a metal sump and a hand pump that one operated with a backwards and forwards pull and used for pumping water to the bathroom.

A large iron fence sheltered the back yard from the westerly winds and through a solid gate were wooden steps down to a long building that originally housed a carriage, with a pigeon loft above the doorway. At the side was another building, a stable with feed boxes and harness holders separated by a wooden wall from a storeroom. Then came the fowl-house and yard, a wooden gate and two-bail milking shed. On every side were pine trees, with a deep gully lined with pines on the seaward side of the house.

The orchard comprised many varieties of plums, apples, pears, figs, grapes, mandarins, oranges and two magnificent prunus trees that were a picture when in bloom and were in great demand for their leaves for decorative purposes, apart from their sweet fruit. A large walnut tree kept the family in walnuts, both pickled and dried. The vegetable garden gave an abundance of vegetables the year round, while the flower garden was a joy to behold. Because of its wonderful shelter everything flourished, both flowers and shrubs. A path at the foot of



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the steps led through the shrubbery, under two oak trees to the two croquet lawns. An eleagnus hedge ran the length of the lawns on the north with shrubs fronting Middlesex and Lincoln Streets and pines at the driveway end. An asphalt path led along to the front gate, passing a Norfolk pine and cabbage tree, azaleas, camellias and other shrubs with a tennis court on the left flanked by a karaka tree that at one time was the haunt of a morepork, while for many years shining cuckoos were seen in the trees by the croquet lawn and once a bittern appeared in the vegetable garden. Californian quail were common.

On 12th January 1901 the property passed by way of

conveyance to May E. Palmer who in turn conveyed it to Annie Death on 18th February 1911. She was the wife of Joe Death, and on 9th August 1917 she sold the property to Mr. E.F.H. Hemingway, proprietor of the "Patea & Waverley Press," who in turn sold it to Daniel Quickenden, proprietor of the Central Hotel, Patea, on 17th March 1941. From then on the property has undergone many changes. The former vegetable garden and orchard are now occupied by the Patea Women's Bowling Club and fine homes have been erected on the croquet lawns and tennis court. Three homes have also been built on the Victoria Street frontage, most of the old

trees have disappeared together with the verandah. "Beaconsfield" like so many is feeling and showing the effects of the passing years but still retains a certain dignity and for those who were privileged to enjoy its many beauties it will always be remembered with love and affection.