

NEW POST OFFICE READY FOR USE

OFFICIAL OPENING OF £300,000 BUILDING TOMORROW AFTERNOON

In the modern style of clean, simple lines, with all its offices amply supplied with natural lighting, New Plymouth's new £300,000 Chief Post Office is the largest Government building ever erected in Taranaki and the largest State office built in New Plymouth for a quarter of a century.

The new post office will be officially opened by the Postmaster-General, Mr. Moohan, at 2 p.m. tomorrow, after which it will be thrown open to public inspection till 4.45 p.m. Post office business will be transacted in the new building immediately after the official opening.

The new building, completed more than six months ago, is already a familiar landmark in New Plymouth. It has a number of distinctive features, both inside and out. One is the colour of the exterior. Its distinct spire is topped with a blank of pink has an unusual sparkle achieved by the use of a special plaster of white aggregate with mica added.

In this lobby is a grand hall-side for right sitting and deposit of mail. On the frontage proper, the private box lobby adjoins the mailroom but is also reached from the street.

Wide, well-lighted corridors surround the upper stores, and staff cloakrooms are provided on each floor. The flat roof, laid in asphalt, is so constructed that it could become a valuable recreation area for staff.

First floor

The headquarters of the district telegraph engineer and his staff are on the first floor, which also houses the telegraph operating and dispatch rooms, mechanical workshop and rooms for clerical staff.

The building's simple front is relieved by coloured glass panels which illustrate Post and Telegraph Department activities. The central feature is a massive three-lobed steel-rod arch, that in New Plymouth from designs made by Mr. New Day.



THE COMMANDING POSITION of New Plymouth's new £300,000 Chief Post Office in the heart of the business area in Currie Street is shown by this aerial photograph. In right foreground are the spacious loading yards along half the Gill Street frontage, while Currie Street is shown running northwards from centre left. The light well in the centre of the roof provides ample lighting for rooms and corridors throughout the building.

Post office growth

THESE figures show how the work of the post office has progressed in New Zealand in half a century:

	1900	1928
Population	810,828	2,227,000
No. of post offices	1,880	1,588
Total post office staff	2,473	23,854
Articles posted	67,897,000	438,637,734
Revenue	£468,546	£21,740,777
Expenditure	£290,448	£21,422,071
P.O.S.B. credit	£5,320,000	£250,485,064
Toll calls	28,000	41,912,003
Telephones	-	605,234

* No figures are available for the number of telephones in 1900, but in 1928 there were 29,881 in New Zealand.

Plans changed

World War II delayed the building of a new chief post office in New Plymouth for more than 20 years. In 1928 designing had almost reached the stage of calling for tenders, but since then substantial changes have been made.

Controversy lasted for years

The delay and erosion of a new Chief Post Office in New Plymouth was a controversial question for a quarter of a century. The site of a three-story building was acquired by the Government in 1910, when the Hon. Adam Hamilton was Postmaster-General, but no answer had the purchase been made than six months later.

In 1913 Mr. S. F. Adairson, M.P. for New Plymouth, said he was anxious that the post office would not be started that year. Lack of funds, he said, was the obstacle which prevented a start being made, and his estimate was proved to be correct. On June 10, 1914, the Taranaki Herald announced that Mr. Adairson had been informed by the Postmaster-General Mr. George Sir William Broadfoot that authority had been given to proceed with the building, and that tenders would be called that year.

The project was set early in 1916 and construction started on March 4, 1918.



THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Mr. Moohan, who will officially open the new post office tomorrow, is here shown with some of the principals in the construction. From left, Mr. J. B. Darnell, second deputy-Director-General of the Post Office, Wellington; Mr. W. Williamson, principal of the Williamson Construction Co. Ltd., Christchurch, the builders; Mr. Moohan; Mr. E. W. Syme, architect for the building, New Plymouth; and Mr. G. G. Fritchard, clerk of works.



from small beginnings

Post Office Savings Bank deposits mark the progress of Taranaki through 90 years.

It was 1866 when the first Post Office Savings Bank was introduced in New Plymouth — time of pack horses and coaches, when transport difficulties across the wild but fertile Taranaki Plains made even a short journey by today's standards a hazardous undertaking. Nowadays the highways and skyways of Taranaki point to the

progress of this important province just as the first Post Office Savings Bank with its modest first year total deposits of £4895 has grown into today's great organization with many savings subdivisions. Last year the New Plymouth Post Office Savings Bank deposits totalled over £1,500,000 — an indication of how the Post Office services have kept pace with the progress Taranaki has made during these last 90 eventful years.

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Home Lay-by Account

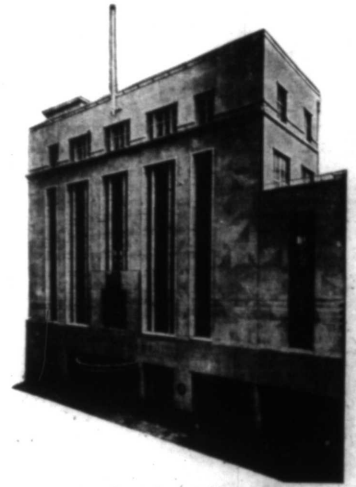
Thrift Club

Investment Account

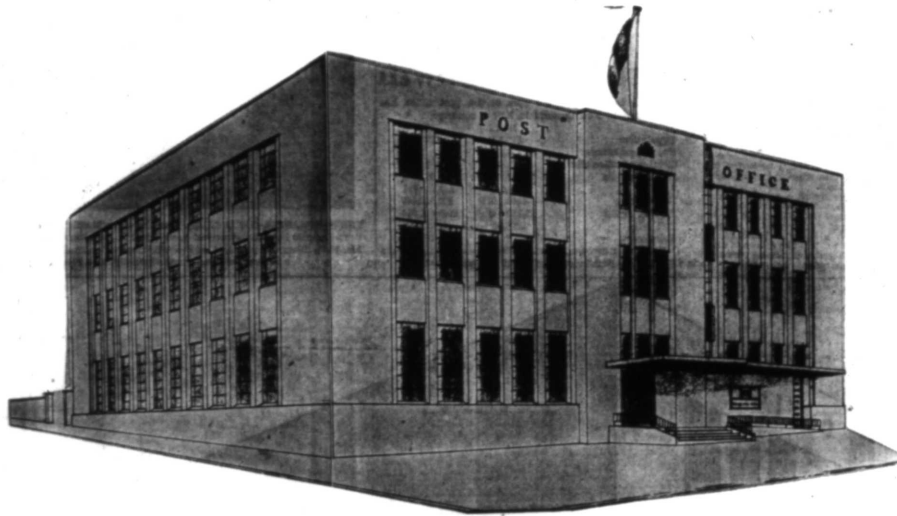


High Street Post Office
CHRISTCHURCH

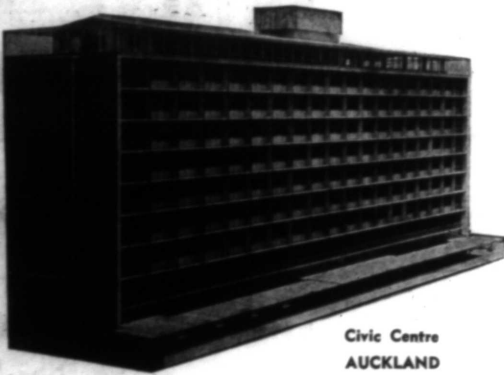
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EARLY DAYS ON THE OVERLAND MAIL ROUTE

(By A. H. Messenger)

THE year 1865 saw the establishment of the first mail service with Pukearuhe. It was operated by 150 men of the 10th Regiment under Colonel Mullett. Mounted troops carried the mail and official dispatches twice a week to this most easterly outpost on the Taranaki frontier.

Pukearuhe became an important post for the overland mail from Auckland. It was being used through somewhat irregularly for several years previously. It was a small settlement, but it lay here after early morning from Pukearuhe, and was called in view of its position after a frequently recurring rain, as the name of the hills from Pukearuhe.

Daring trip

A quite adventurous journey of the period was frequently made by one of "Milkmaid" men, who rode down to Pukearuhe from Mihinakia to pick up any mail that

happened to have been left at the military post.

A daring trip like any other for a young lad, but he knew the coast and tide like a book, and was never in trouble. Through several times were lost here, notably that of Corporal Night who was caught by the tide and dashed against the shore, both he and his horse being drowned.

In 1870 an official post office was opened at Pukearuhe, under the name of Clifton Post Office. This was

apparently closed after the military post had been withdrawn in 1865. With the coming of a regular steamer service between Okeanga and New Plymouth the hazardous overland service by mounted mailmen was discontinued.

From New Plymouth to Wellington the overland route, mostly along the coast, was sufficiently hazardous to test the stamina of any lone rider. From after the war in Taranaki, the tempo of some of the crises revealed decidedly nervous and the mailman frequently went through at the risk of his life.

Telegraph

In 1871, the first telegraph line was opened from New Plymouth to Okeanga. Between Okeanga and Pukearuhe the Marist refused to permit the construction of the line, and a mounted man had to cover the gap by carrying messages through.

It was not until June 20, 1872, that a direct telegraphic service was opened with Wellington and the long

overland mail journeys gradually became relegated to the past. The route of mail carrying on the southern route would be complete without mention of the daring work performed by Captain Mose and his men. There is no doubt that but for this link between New Plymouth and Pukearuhe, the road would have been closed to all traffic save that of military-transported.

The establishment of a mail coach service in later years brought about a great improvement in route communication between the centres of Wellington and New Plymouth. A service that was only eclipsed when the railway line was completed.

WELL-NUMBERED

Altogether the new Currie Street post office has about 200 rooms, most of them on the two top floors. Each floor has a complete directory near the lift well, indicating the direction and numbers of the rooms. At each hour a distinctive number, the directories should prove great time-savers for the public.



The Royal Mail for New Plymouth connects with the schooner Henry at Okeanga.—Drawing by A. H. Messenger.

How schooner Henry brought the mail

(By A. H. Messenger)

AN early record of the carriage of mail by coastal services between Auckland and New Plymouth comes from an account given by Mr. Sam Vickers, and related to the writer a good many years ago, when Vickers went to Wellington to live, shortly before Captain Messenger moved down from Pukearuhe in 1865.

Sam Vickers had a farming interest in the Okeanga district prior to 1860 and having relatives in Auckland made fairly frequent visits, when opportunity offered, to the northern city.

In 1865, he undertook the journey partly to see his people and also with the intention of arranging for the shipment of two cows from Pukearuhe.

Taking advantage of the fact that the schooner Curlew was sailing to Okeanga, he took passage by her, and, as the little vessel was favoured with a fresh easterly wind, had the satisfaction of covering the distance in the minimum time of two days.

His business in Auckland duly attended to, he made arrangements for a return trip in the schooner Curlew, of 10 tons, and on arriving at Okeanga after a rough trip over

between the tide and the sea, as he was looking for the tide, I reckon you're lucky to get that much. As I don't forget, it's to be noted that New Plymouth in the last day of an.

"Do you see those clouds flying over from the westward?" said the captain with a sort of disgust. "I don't suppose you know that that means no creating the bar for a few days of a week perhaps."

"Mail men!" cried the captain in disgust. "Why your mail contract wouldn't keep me in heavy for a week." "Come on, lad," he called to his four-man crew. "Cast off there and we'll drop down to South Head with the last of the day."

Good fishing

"That's the way we started last, then used to proceed with a chuckle, and the captain growled away in his hand. As usual, when we dropped anchor we could see the white flash of big sea on the bar where the water was banking thick up to great cliffs. "Mail contract, see you?" shouted the Captain again, after taking a final look. "Let's go home and get on."

"Well, there we lay at anchor for three days, waiting for a shift in the wind," said Sam, "and we stood in the line making a fine haul of mackerel which, except in Oke-

anga to the schooner's belt, and well and then heaped the mail contract out a bit.

"At the end of our three days at anchor, we were much bothered to find the wind falling light and drifting to the south-west, and then we sighted a schooner coming in across the bar. This proved out to be the Marlow and her captain reported the bar as favorable for an interval. So we waited for some time, but as soon as the tide commenced to ebb, we all set sail and in five minutes were clear of the land."

"We soon discovered that our troubles were by no means over, however, for by next morning the wind was back to the west again, and we started a long haul to seaward for more sea-room."

"The wind grew stronger as we proceeded slowly against it, so that, finally, after three days of needless struggle in an endeavor to make for New Plymouth, we were forced to make for Akaroa Point for shelter. Luckily there was good fishing here as we had fresh supplies for our own needs. We remained at anchor here for two days, when, favoured with an easterly change, we sailed on all the mail to Okeanga and then to Okeanga, with the Auckland mail boat."

"You couldn't get at this time on mail deliveries in three days," said Sam with a grin, "and when we thought of the mailman's instructions for delivery in a day we had of the 'Queen's Mail,' well, we just hoped that our Majesty wouldn't get to be long about it."



The overland mail route between New Plymouth and Auckland in 1865.—An A. H. Messenger illustration.

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Telegraph engineering is important for New Zealand

THE Post and Telegraph line man is, after the postman or the telegraph messenger, the most familiar P. and T. figure to the average citizen, but behind the efforts the public may see being made to install or repair telephone and telegraph lines and cables, there lies one of the most important branches of Public Service activity in the country—the maintenance of the best possible communications every day of the year.

The telegraph section of post office activity came into being years after the post office, which for the first 40 years of New Zealand's life as a partly settled country was the only responsibility of the post office as it exists today. Other countries have separated their telegraph and telephone services from their post offices, but in New Zealand there has been a continuous blending of the most important means of communication—the head and by voice.

The engineering department is responsible for the construction, maintenance, technical operation and supply of all telephones, telegraph and radio plant and equipment, which has added responsibility for the maintenance of all departmental motor vehicles—outside of those used in the mechanical plant and equipment which are so important to any post office. New Zealand is divided into engineering regions, with these regions are district offices under the control of a district engineer.

As a measure of district activity, New Plymouth's office, which has been separated from Whangarei since then it has grown in strength and importance as new techniques have replaced the old, and more and more modern changes have been installed, not to mention the important part that radio now plays in the Post and Telegraph Department's modern branch. The present district handled from New Plymouth extends north to Awakato and south to Patea, while the inland region is at Kaitiaki. Over this region, Mr. T. Williams, a district engineer, is responsible for the maintenance of the functions of the engineering branch. With modern technique, the type of equipment installed is constantly changing and more modern development of electronics into the field of telephone switching, major changes can be expected in the future. The outside activities are conducted by the construction branch in charge of Mr. D. Mitchell, who oversees the work of laying the underground cables, building

side of the engineering branch is a clerical section under the control of Mr. L. Turbush. In the clerical office also the radio licence records for the Taranaki postal district are maintained. At the end of March there were 21,800 of them. About one-quarter of these licences in March while the remainder are spread over the other eleven months of the year. The renewal of these has to be checked and the licence numbers sent out to those licensees who want to renew their licence immediately the old one runs out.

With the rapid increase in the number of telephones installed as the traffic over the toll circuits increase and the latest development in the expansion of the toll system is the installation of a microwave radio system between Manukau and Palmerston North. This link between Taranaki and New Plymouth will be linked into this system with a "super link" from the Taranaki repeater station.

The buildings to house the equipment at the repeater stations are being built now and the erection of the steel towers at each site will be commenced soon by post office staff in the New Plymouth district.

In New Plymouth the special central cable to carry the circuits from the radio station at Windy Point to the toll exchange in Larder Street has been laid. All this equipment is new to the staff here and special technicians are equipped with the radio inspector and his assistants also operate from the district offices and are kept busy tracking down radio interference, checking on the toll installations in ships, aircraft and land firms and others who operate V.H.F. radio telephone apparatus either through their own or the post office base station. They also have the equipment task of interviewing the small percentage of people who do not pay their radio licence and operate sets without one.

From 500,000 to 5 million postings

STATISTICS for the years 1894, 1904 and 1937 (the latest available) show the growth of post office business in New Zealand.

The figures are:

	1894	1904	1937
Articles posted	533,871	1,440,569	5,461,737
P.O.B.R. deposits	143,000	179,327	1,148,330
P.O.B.R. withdrawals	151,891	238,316	1,150,800
Money Orders issued	2,900	8,979	10,730
Value of money orders	23,000	117,445	227,500
Telegrams handled	92,100	264,284	388,137
Outward toll calls		15,987	667,849

The value of the outward toll calls in 1937 was \$25,262. The excess of withdrawals in 1894 has been attributed to the financial panic of 1892-93 and to land speculation in 1904.



THIS SWITCHBOARD is an essential part of New Plymouth's communication with the outer world for it provides the outlet for the teleprinter and the means of connections to the outgoing parts of Taranaki served from New Plymouth as their main office. A telegraph mechanic adjusts the wires during testing of the new board.

CHANGES

In 1935 there were 15,737 telephone connections in Taranaki—just under half the present figure, and of this number 1143, or only 20 per cent. of them were automatic working. This development has meant the establishment of a number of new automatic exchanges and the installation of many miles of underground cables. The switching equipment has all come from the United Kingdom.

SUCCESS OF WELFARE FUND

The welfare fund of the Post and Telegraph Department is one of the best examples of co-operative effort to be found in New Zealand. Its constitution affords every one of the 23,731 men and women who are their being in the post office service.

The Post and Telegraph Association has as its motto, "Solidarity in the silver thread running through the past, the present and the future." It has been able to do this because of the full co-operation with the administration, and never with a murmur of protest.

In accordance with the provision made, the appeal fund, the post office sick benefit fund and the post office welfare fund.

COMFORTS AND HELP

The welfare fund is something new in post office affairs, for it stemmed from the rehabilitation scheme of World War Two and now provides:

- Comforts for sick members.
- Financial assistance in cases of distress or misfortune.
- Holiday homes in some 25 centres, including Whangarei, Gisborne, New Plymouth, where P. and T. staff may have their families for a cheap holiday.

With the fund there operates also a joint auxiliary system which has proved of value to the Department (and also to the district administrators).

The post office has always been noted for its joint efforts, and it is not surprising to find that today 90 per cent. of its 23,000-odd officers and men are active supporters of the welfare fund.

The holiday cottages are perhaps the greatest boon. The aim was first to provide convenience at a reasonable cost for the sick workers, but while this policy remains basically unchanged, the popularity of the cottages—there are 60 situated from Russell to Riverbank—has been such that a great benefit has been established to maintain them from the modest returns their users pay.

Another important welfare fund service is assistance with the education, including Whangarei, Gisborne, New Plymouth, where P. and T. staff may have their families for a cheap holiday.



The telephone is a friend

NOT long ago a New Plymouth woman received news that her son had been seriously injured in Australia. A young policeman, taking the message to the distressed mother, suggested that she might telephone direct to the hospital where the young man lay and within a few minutes she was being confidently reassured by the sister in charge of the ward that there were high hopes of recovery.

Such a service would not be dreamed of when New Plymouth's first telephone was installed and used on December 1, 1885, but today it is almost indispensable for people to telephone any part of the world to convey messages of pleasure or comfort, or to transmit important business. The telephone has become a friend.

The total of 180 original subscribers to New Plymouth's first telephone exchange has grown to more than 20,000 in the New Plymouth telegraph engineer's district today, and something like 750,000 toll calls go out from the New Plymouth post office alone every year.

The first exchange operated only from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and in its first year the total revenue amounted to only £231. Telephone-like radio-aided television, had to establish themselves in New Plymouth as early as 1925. In fact, after 13 years New Plymouth had more 200 subscribers and a revenue of £228.

Today there are 2372 subscribers in New Plymouth and toll revenue alone reaches \$20,000 a year. New Plymouth telephone subscribers have a 24-hour-a-day service since 1911 and an automatic exchange since March 27, 1925. Looking after demands of telephone, requires constant attention from a small army of workers employed by the telegraph branch, with headquarters in the automatic exchange in Larder Street, where Mr. A. Rumbles is in control. The staff have to install and maintain the telephone exchange switching equipment, as well as the manual equipment still needed in the operation of the country's toll system. A special section of the same branch looks after the "carrier" equipment, which by using different frequencies for each channel allows up to 12 separate telephone circuits to be provided over one pair of telephone wires. In the not-distant future, the telephone service to and from Taranaki will be greatly improved with the installation of the new microwave repeater station service linking north and south of the North Island through Taranaki. This modern method will enable thousands of messages to be put through automatically.



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Closing of the old, opening of the new

Over 2000 applaud opening of new chief post office

NEW PLYMOUTH'S £34,000 new chief post office is open for business.

By pulling a cord, the Postmaster-General, Mr. Moohan, yesterday afternoon attended a pleasure commemorating the official opening while a crowd of over 2000 applauded enthusiastically.

Hours before the Minister and the official party attended the wooden table erected at the main entrance to the post office in Curtis Street surrounded by mail and postage stamps and walked in warm, sunny conditions for the opening ceremony.

A section in front of the post office building was roped off and seating for 500 official guests was provided. Flags flew from the new building and neighbouring premises, and the New Plymouth City Band played.

By 3 p.m. the crowd was packed deep behind the wire barriers and workers were leading out the windows of neighbouring buildings to enable Mr. Moohan and official party around the area.

Before the official speeches began

were presented by Miss Angela Smith, a post office employee, to Mrs. Moohan, wife of the Minister, the Mayor, Mrs. A. G. Hunter and Mrs. E. P. Adkinson, wife of the member of Parliament for New Plymouth.

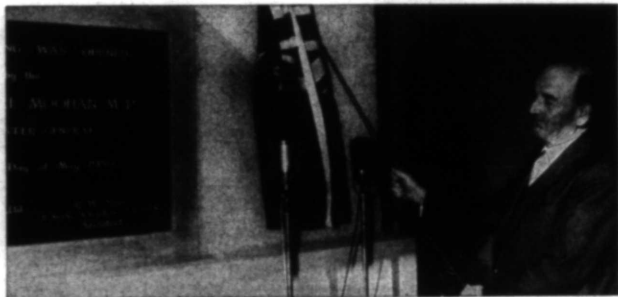
Mr. Moohan was presented with an engraved silver tray, with the design of the post office on one side by the principal of the contracting firm which built the post office, Mr. W. Williamson, before officially opening the building.

After attending the speech, the official party went inside the building and Mr. Moohan sent the first telegram from the new office.

Minutes later members of the public entered the post office and the post office staff started down to a working trade.



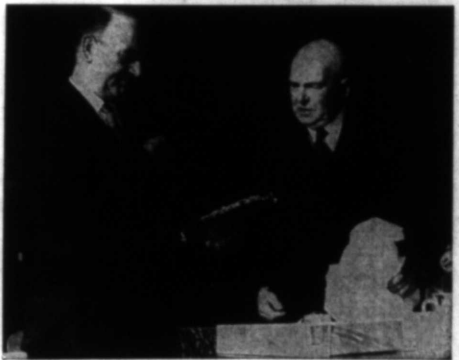
PART OF THE LARGE CROWD which gathered outside New Plymouth's new chief post office yesterday afternoon for the official opening by the Postmaster-General, Mr. Moohan.



MR. MOOHAN puts aside the New Zealand Ensign to unveil the granite stone bearing his name and the names of the architect and contractor, as well as the date the new building was opened.



LAST CUSTOMER in the money order office at the old post office yesterday afternoon was 11-year-old Murray Falconer, of Spotswood, serving him is Mr. Barry Sole, behind the grating.



THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Mr. Moohan, inspects the sterling silver plate which the contractor, Mr. W. Williamson (on right) presented to him to mark the opening of the new post office. On the plate is engraved a model of the new building.

"A new era"

THE opening of the new post office marked a new era, not only in New Plymouth but in the Post Office itself, said Mr. Moohan, during the opening ceremony. He later described the building as the most up-to-date post office in New Zealand.

Mr. Moohan offered his "congratulations to the architect, builder and subcontractors and others who had made the building possible."

"It must be a source of satisfaction to them, to the people of New Plymouth, and to Mr. Adkinson," he said. "It was my member of Parliament who had never heard of New Plymouth's new post office, then that member was 'taken care' because Mr. Adkinson had been industrious in presenting New Plymouth's case."

He concluded that New Plymouth was the most historic part of New Zealand, since 1843, when the first mail routes started in the province. The Post Office had long been associated with New Plymouth.

Necessity

"The needs of the people of New Zealand for new automatic exchanges, new post offices and similar apparatus in millions of pounds," said Mr. Moohan. "In the next four years £4 million will have to be spent on post offices and automatic exchanges."

"My grandfather's day the telephone was a new device, but today it is a necessity. I think New Zealand has the second highest telephone density in the world."

The previous day he had spoken of automatic telephone exchanges. The exchange would provide for 100 people waiting for telegrams and would provide for a further 100 people.

Mr. Moohan said the Post Office staff endeavored to speed office departments in getting to the public. With the introduction of the telegrams and telegrams, the duties of the staff had increased enormously.

The Post Office was getting to that it could provide a work, telegrams and even fresh certificates to the public.

"They take all your money and pay three per cent," he said. "The Post Office has more apparatus—£750,000—than the leading banks in New Zealand put together," he continued.

"Some trouble"

The New Plymouth post office was subjected to ensure that work was carried out for the convenience of the public. Had it not been for the fact the post office would have been built in 1930-31, he said. The war had interrupted and, following the war, had come a demand for private buildings.

"It should have been opened in December last year but we had some trouble in the basement. Automatic telegrams have been ordered to be put on one side it will be fixed up in the next few days," he said.

"I consider it a great privilege to

open this post office. I hope it will serve the public for many years to come," he concluded.

After a walk of 10 years New Plymouth had finally got a new post office, said the Mayor, Mr. A. G. Hunter. There was some confusion in that the city now had a more up-to-date post office than it would have had 10 to 12 years ago.

The opening of the post office had been eagerly awaited by the people of New Plymouth and the large crowd present showed typical public interest in the building.

Mr. E. P. Adkinson, M.P., said the new Post Office was the largest Government building erected in Taranaki.

"The previous Postmaster-General, General, had the foundation stone of this building; he performed the dedicating and Mr. Adkinson, now the Minister is about to perform the continuation service."

The war was the reason for the delay in construction, he said. Once the priority of the New Plymouth post office was determined the new post



MR. MOOHAN sends away the first telegram from the new chief post office, as he hands his message to Mrs. M. M. McNair.

with the erection.

"Plans and specifications were prepared throughout all this and then the crucial point came. There was a delay of a year through finance," said Mr. Adkinson. "Every minister faces that problem."

A delegation waited on the Prime Minister, Mr. Boland, and later a far greater attention of public money was made available for the Post and Telegraph department so

go ahead with their projects.

A certain amount of money became available for the work and tenders were called, said Mr. Adkinson.

Mr. Adkinson thanked the Press who, he said, had persistently given every assistance for the erection of the building over the years.

Prudling the New Plymouth architect, he said that during the erection of the building it

would have been when for the people concerned to have learned to lead knowledge and then there would have been too trouble.

"While this is a great day for New Plymouth it is an even greater day for the Post and Telegraph staff. The manner in which the staff have carried out their duties under changed conditions would not be surpassed anywhere in New Zealand," Mr. Adkinson concluded.



LEFT: Hundreds of people rushed the main lobby of the new post office to send telegrams, buy stamps, and make certain that first-day letters were put in the right place to receive the special opening-day slogan. For more than two hours the full staff had a strenuous time dealing with a record volume of business. RIGHT: Part of the changeover, which few people saw, was the quick removal of all signs which indicated that the Devon Street building existed as a post office. Here P. & T. workmen remove the signs from the posting box lobby in Rube Street; only a few minutes after the staff-room staff had cleared all mails and movable equipment to the new building.

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