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## THE MEMORIAL HALL.

### LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE

In the afternoon the celebrations took the form of the laying of the foundation stone of the Memorial Hall, at St. Germain's Square. True to its usual policy when winter functions of the Taranaki Agricultural Society—from whose president and committee the idea of the memorial hall emanated—are concerned, the weather had changed from fine to very wet. Rain fell heavily before the proceedings, and for the greater part of the ceremony. This naturally dampened the ardour of the populace, and there were not very many of the public present.

The first speaker was the Mayor, who referred to the facts that it was only a few days since the idea to build the hall—the name of which it had been suggested, should King George's Hall—had originated, and that the Borough Council, through whom the £250 Coronation subsidy would be paid, had unanimously agreed to drop the other schemes for Coronation memorials in favour of this. The hall, he continued, would be of great benefit not only to New Plymouth, but to Northern Taranaki as a whole. When, at the Taranaki Agricultural Society's winter show, it had been pointed out that a larger hall was required, no one had any idea that within two weeks the foundation stone of a large and permanent building suitable for a drill hall as well as for use for shows and other gatherings would be laid. Mr. Tisch hoped that the various committees in the territorial forces and in the other societies interested would meet as soon as possible to further the movement. If they took their cue from the enthusiastic and energetic president of the Agricultural Society they would be meeting within a year to declare the hall open. It was not a day too soon for such a hall to be built. He was sure that as soon as the hall was opened there would be innumerable requirements for it right away.

Mr. W. Ambury (president of the Taranaki Agricultural Society), after referring facetiously to the weather conditions, said that he was very glad to be present on such an occasion, for several reasons. One heard the average visitor to New Plymouth, and several of the old settlers, say that New Plymouth was so very, very slow. It had been slow for a number of years. But, though moving slowly, still we were moving, and there had been progress in the district. There would be greater progress in the next five years than in the past five years. This function marked another milestone in the history of New Plymouth in particular and of Taranaki generally. Dealing with the progress made by the province, Mr. Ambury pointed out that five years ago the butter and cheese exported was valued at £692,700; last year it was valued at £1,114,000, an advance of about 60 per cent. In the same period the value of exports of hides, skins, and tallow had increased from £14,216 to £81,282, or an increase of nearly 500 per cent.; frozen meat had increased from £75,000 to £230,954; and wool from £42,774 to £110,926. Including a number of other sundries, our total exports had increased in value from £835,255 five years ago to £1,547,143 last year, or nearly double, showing that while apparently there had been no excitement and rush of speculation the district had progressed steadily. The more intense farming that was coming into vogue here meant increases in produce, population, and revenue. To-day there were signs of progress which should give us hope and courage for the future. Mr. Ambury referred to the progress of the Stratford-Ongarue railway, which was opening up new districts and bringing them into touch with the port; to the opening up of the Mokau-Mohakatano block; the development of the oil-boring and ironsand industries; the Greater New Plymouth scheme; and the success of the Agricultural Society's winter shows. In connection with the last-mentioned, he was very glad to be able to report that the last winter show had yielded a profit of something over £100, in spite of the heavy rain which had been experienced. These were reasons why they should be encouraged to push along the scheme for a new and better hall. He felt that the winter show had come to stay and be an annual fixture of great benefit to both farmer and townsman. They were now a step forward to getting a good building for show purposes. Mr. Ambury appealed to all the people of New Plymouth and North Taranaki to put their hands in their pockets and help in the effort to erect a hall suitable for winter shows as well as for the training of territorial forces and other purposes.

Mr. H. Okey, M.P., also made a neat speech, in which he congratulated the Borough Council on its splendid spirit in allowing the Agricultural Society to take advantage of the Coronation subsidy, and its splendid sympathy toward agricultural matters. Owing to the great pressure on our space to-day we are unable to give a longer report of Mr. Okey's speech.

The Mayor, assisted by Mr. W. F. Short, who prepared the stone, then lowered the foundation stone into place, and declared it "well and truly laid."

Among the contributions laid on the stone were cheques from the following gentlemen:—Mr. W. Ambury, £10; Mr. G. Tisch, £10 10s; Dr. Leatham, £10; Dr. Home, £5; Mr. H. Okey, M.P., £2 2s. Several smaller donations brought the sum up to £42.

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