

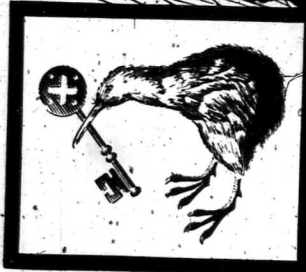


at
NEW PLYMOUTH

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The newly-built New Plymouth offices of the N.Z.I. in Currie St. - opposite the Post Office.

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Official opening tomorrow



THE NEW ZEALAND INSURANCE CO.'s new \$100,000 New Plymouth branch office building which is to be officially opened tomorrow by the company's chairman of directors, Mr. A. G. Wilson (Auckland). The main entrance is in Currie St. opposite the Chief Post Office.

107 YEARS IN NEW PLYMOUTH

The first office of the New Zealand Insurance Company in New Plymouth was opened in 1861 and operated as an agency from the Taranaki Herald office.

Before the end of 1862 the New Zealand Insurance Co. had branches throughout the Auckland province and in all of the principal towns of the colony.

The company's activities in New Plymouth began when it opened an agency handled by Weston and Weston solicitors. The company still has both insurance and trustee connections with the Weston family.

The agency was run by local residents but the company's office in Auckland kept a watchful eye on its interests.

In 1864 the agency moved from the Herald office to the Investment and Loan Society buildings. Mr. C. Rennell undertook all the company's clerical work for the agency.

In 1867 Mr. J. C. Nicholson, a solicitor, acted for the sale of land in the company for a new branch office in lower Brougham St. Mr. Nicholson's firm have been tenants since the erection of the company's first building.

In 1871 a New Plymouth branch was established, the only insurance company at that time in full operation in this territory.

In November 1897 Messrs B. Coleman and Son's tender of £650 was accepted and the new building started. It was completed in 1908.

Mr. H. M. Didsbury was transferred from Wellington in 1907 to New Plymouth to become the first New Plymouth branch manager. Part of the building was let to Weston and Weston, who continued their agency.

The branch operated from there until 1922, when the company moved to its new building in Devon St. It occupied this building until the move this month to the new office in Currie St.

A district representative office was opened in Hawera in 1905 and in Stratford in 1906.

On an 'island'

An attractive, two-storey structure, the New Zealand Insurance Co.'s new building is situated on an "island" bounded by four carriageways—Currie St., St. Aubyn St., Huatoki Lahe and James Lane.

Construction began last year after demolition of the former warehouse of Burgess Fraser Ltd. The Urban Council involves a new concept of being closed off from the rest of the office.

Opening from the reception area are the manager's office, a large interview room and the office of the chief clerk.

Panelled off from the Opera House, since 1922, the new building combines many of the latest developments of office block construction. The Currie St. side has an unusual feature in that the footpath ver-

and is detached from the building. This allows maximum natural light to filter into the ground floor with cars in park. This space, far not enclosed, has already been subject to vandalism.

The first floor of the building is a 2200 square foot space to be let as office space.

The building is of concrete and steel construction.

Windows have white wooden frames and below each is a 30ft stand holding the company's emblem. On the top of the roof are two flagpoles, one flying the company's flag.

Artefacts uncovered

Two Maori artefacts were uncovered during excavations for the construction of the New Zealand Insurance Company building in Currie St.

Found 17ft below the surface, one of these was a stone, pounder made of volcanic rock from Mt. Egmont.

Pounders were used to crush fern root to a pulp before cooking. Features of pounders is that they each have a head carved on the top in memory of an ancestor of the maker.

The other relic found was a wooden adze handle, a handle generally made of mahika, which was attached to a stone adze and used for chopping.

Both of these finds are to be mounted in the foyer of the new building. They are thought to be at least 125 years old as they went out of use about 1841.

Stronghold

The site of the new building was part of the old Maori pa, a Maori stronghold used before the first European settlers arrived in 1840 from Plymouth, England.

Two tidal creeks joined the rear of the site and were used as an anchorage for small boats and also as a launching basin. By Mr. Crocker, a boat builder, he set up his business on the bank of the larger, the Huatoki Stream.

The first building on the site was the public hospital, which was built in 1841-2. It was later extended and finally moved to a new site in 1886.

The first settlers arrived in March, 1841, on the William Bryan after a 75-month journey. The shore was then only about 200 yards from the site of the New Zealand Insurance building—it is now a quarter of a mile.

The hospital was built on the site with the idea of being the centre of the town, with other offices and buildings radiating from it. This worked well, but slowly the town moved westwards toward the present port, which proved to be better than the offshore anchorage.

After all available land had been used in that area the town spread eastwards.

In 1842 there were no buildings adjacent to the public hospital. A local architect drew up plans for subdividing the area. An early purchaser was Mr. Collier, whose business still functions.

Bishop Selwyn, Bishop of New Zealand, visited New Plymouth in October, 1842, and held his first service only a few yards from the site of the new insurance building.

Several buildings have occupied the site over the years, the last one being that of Burgess Fraser Ltd. It was pulled down to make way for the present structure.



MR DON MALCOLM, newly appointed manager of the New Plymouth branch of the New Zealand Insurance Co., at the desk of his new office.



THE RECEPTIONIST in the New Zealand Insurance Co. Office, Miss Gaele Kendall, works in her new, spacious surroundings.

You See, the PREMIUM BUILDERS have done it again

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MAORI RELICS found on the site of the new New Zealand Insurance Company site during excavations. LEFT: Stone pounder. RIGHT: An adze handle.

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