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ARCHIVES OF THE PROVINCIAL PERIOD IN TARANAKI

1. Introduction

Did you ever want to know how George St George improperly buried his horse in 1856?¹ Maybe not, but there is a record of this historic occasion in the Taranaki provincial archives. And chances are you may want to know more about this quite special period in New Zealand's and Taranaki's history whereby, from 1853 to 1876, New Zealand had a system of quasi-federalism in which government was largely in the hands of the provinces.

I don't think I need to remind this audience how crucial these years were for the European settlement of Taranaki versus the Maori. Whatever your interest, all good researchers should make use of the relevant unpublished sources where they exist. Once a researcher has made his or her first incursions into unpublished sources or archives, they do become less frightening and, when guided to use them properly, a wealth of information is found in relation to published textual sources.

By archives is meant those non-current records which are preserved indefinitely for their administrative, legal and historical value. Official records tend to be more likely to survive and easier to locate than private records because official records almost invariably have successor bodies and formal arrangements made for their preservation. National Archives, where I work, is a statutory body catering for the official archives of government and necessarily limits what records we hold for the Taranaki provincial period. But not forgetting the resources available at, for example, the Taranaki Museum, the New Plymouth City Library, and the Turnbull Library, I propose to take you on a "tiki" tour (if you like) through the main groups of archives we have for this period from 1852 to 1876 at a number of different levels, but particularly the Provincial (or local) Government and the General (or central) Government.

2. Background

To give you a bit of background information, the problem between 1846 and 1852 (with the establishment of provincial administration) was that effective centralized government was impossible in conditions whereby there was no regular communication between settlements. The solution, under Governor Grey's guidelines, was to set up a separate government and miniature parliament in each of the larger towns until New Zealand did become more unified, the land populated, trade established and so on. Grey did not include New Plymouth in his original proposals for provinces, possibly on account of the poor harbour it then had and its small area.

It was only added after the Secretary of State in England, Sir John Pakington, said he thought New Plymouth had as good a case for a Provincial Council as the other settlements and gave it one. Its boundaries were formed by the coastline from the mouth of the Patea River in the south to the mouth of the Mokau River in the north, thence up the Mokau River to its source and from there south to the Wanganui River, along which the boundary ran for about 30 miles and thence to the mouth of the Patea River.²

Interestingly, attempts were made between 1856 and 1858 to extend New Plymouth province's boundaries, transferring to it the Harbour of Kawhia from Auckland and a portion of the outlying district of Wellington.³ That piece of provincialist imperialism only resulted in the changing of the province's name, under the Province of Taranaki Act, to that which we know it now, Taranaki.⁴

3. Constitution Act 1852

Anyway, the Constitution Act of 1852 established a General Assembly with two chambers - that is an elected House of Representatives and a nominated Legislative Council. It also established six provinces comprising Wellington, Auckland, Nelson, Otago, Canterbury and New Plymouth.

The constitution of the province was similar to the others with an elected Provincial Council to pass local laws and ordinances and a chief executive officer called a Superintendent elected by the people at large also. After the provinces were abolished in 1876, the Taranaki provincial archives were placed in the hands of a Mr Lawson (formerly the Superintendent's Clerk). They remained in his custody until 1883 when he was instructed

by the Colonial Secretary to transfer them to the New Plymouth Lands Office. They remained there until a portion of them was transferred to National Archives in 1928, followed by the remain in 1952.⁵

4. Provincial Councils

Provincial Councils were to legislate for peace, order and good government provided that their legislation did not conflict with the subjects excepted under the 1852 Constitution Act. But their legislation was always subject to the Governor's power of veto. Their areas of responsibility were:

- planning and construction of public works
- soliciting immigrants and settling them on the land
- maintaining a police force
- schools
- prisons and hospitals and health
- administering public lands
- financing of local bodies
- disease prevention amongst livestock
- noxious weed suppression
- maintenance of ferries and harbours
- and the supervision of purchase and survey of Maori land.

Thus the Provincial Councils became the forum for a whole host of decisions on matters of vital local importance, particularly as provincial affairs intruded directly on settlers' daily lives in this period. The Council consisted originally of nine members but, at the time of abolition, it had increased to sixteen.

Hence the holdings of minutes and papers for the Provincial Council are very important, even more so because Taranaki was too poor to publish its Proceedings unlike the other five provinces. The Proceedings we hold from 1859 to 1867 are photocopies of a longhand journal held by the New Plymouth Public Library; from 1868 to 1873 we hold drafts of proceedings,⁶ and from 1872 to 1875 a fair copy.⁷ However, a fire which burnt down the Provincial Council Chambers in 1859 destroyed all the previous archives of the Council (and the Provincial Treasury) leaving a major deficiency in the records. Likewise, all the messages to the Council before 1861 and the great majority of select committee reports are missing. Nor are there any copies of ordinances between 1859 and 1863 in our holdings. The printed sets of ordinances for Taranaki in existence are very few and their completeness also varies.

5. Executive Council

An Executive Council of two was set up from amongst the members of the Provincial Council in March 1866 with Thomas Kelly (also Provincial Secretary and Treasurer) and William Mumford Burton. The Provincial Attorney also held a seat "ex officio" but without the right to vote.⁸ The Superintendent should supposedly have acted by and with the advice and consent of this Executive. It may have been seldom called as with other provinces like Hawke's Bay but, as the minutes for the period 1866-76 do not survive, it is difficult to tell the extent of its functions and relationship with the Superintendent.

6. Speaker

Some Speaker's correspondence, both inwards and outwards, survives, the latter covering from 1861 to 1875. The Speaker was elected by the Provincial Council and also had a direct line of communication with the Superintendent, although a lot of the letters deal with housekeeping matters for the Council.⁹

7. Superintendents

Undeniably personalities played a large part in provincial politics whereby some of the best known and most popular men were elected to the Superintendencies. The first Superintendent of New Plymouth province (and later Taranaki province) was Charles Brown, elected in July 1853. He was succeeded by George Cutfield in 1857 but he served another term from 1861 to 1865 when H.R. Richmond was elected. F.W. Carrington, elected in 1869, was Superintendent until the abolition of the province. These men's papers therefore represent a significant part of the Taranaki provincial papers concerned with provincial

administration. There are good sequences of inwards letters to the Superintendents for the provincial period which are divided into subgroups - letters from the General (i.e., central) Government, letters from local officials and London Agents, and letters from private individuals.¹⁰ Herein one finds gems of letters like those from George St George and they are an extremely rich and probably under-utilized source of information on society in Taranaki then.

Topics dealt with are numerous:

- the growth of new settlements at Patea, Hawera, Opunake and Waitara
- immigration to the province after the war
- attempts to exploit commercially various resources such as flax and ironsand
- the construction of harbour works
- the development of communications
- education and public health administration
- the establishment of local bodies.

Notable, too, are those which deal with the military side of things and the wars with the Maoris and, in particular, the relationship between the Provincial Government, the people of the province and the forces stationed there. Moreover, because, apart from the Provincial Treasurer's papers, almost nothing survives in a comparable form from such provincial officials as:

- the Surveyor of Roads and Bridges
- the Provincial Attorney
- the Auditor
- the Harbour-Master
- the Storekeeper
- the Gaoler
- the Sergeant of Police
- the Cattle Inspector
- the Inspector of Weights and Measures
or the Poundkeeper

their correspondence with the Superintendent and vice versa becomes extremely valuable also for any historical reconstruction.

8. Provincial Treasurer

The papers of the Provincial Treasurer include correspondence and office papers like cash books, accounts, receipts, estimates and warrants. Although not a complete sequence for the period, also included are letters to Chilman in his capacity as Provincial Secretary and Immigration Officer.¹¹ One needs to be aware of the frequent combination of roles by provincial officers when researching, say, one facet such as immigration. Most of this correspondence deals with financial matters but there are also some miscellaneous papers and letters such as reports on the state of Maoris in 1856, a few inquests and lists of publicans' licenses. Accounts of provincial revenue and expenditure, which were published regularly in the *Taranaki Provincial Gazette*, would be supplementary to archival sources for both the Treasurer and Auditor. For the latter, there are, for 1865 and for 1872-73, but six letters surviving.

9. Provincial Immigration

There was a Provincial immigration officer from 1854 to 1872 and an Immigration Officer for the New Plymouth district from 1872 to 1879. There are really only fragmentary records, and little correspondence other than that to Chilman in his capacity as Provincial Treasurer mentioned before. The Immigration records from Taranaki were transferred together with the Provincial Government records but were incorporated into the Immigration Department series of archives. It consists of three items relating to the nomination of immigrants from England.¹² At the risk of being rude about my home province, the chances

of a lot of people coming to Taranaki in its most troubled times are not great and possibly explains the seeming lack of documentation extant!

10. Taranaki Relief Fund

Perhaps people were not coming to Taranaki but they were certainly leaving temporarily at least. After the outbreak of war in 1860, settlers in outlying districts abandoned their farms and took refuge in New Plymouth or were evacuated for a time to Nelson or (less commonly) Auckland. Because so many refugees went to Nelson, the large quantity of administrative papers concerning them are in the Nelson provincial archives held by us.¹³ In addition, National Archives has a microfilm copy of papers relative to refugees including lists but the originals are held by the Auckland Public Library. In the years following the evacuation, homes were burnt, stock driven off or killed, the land deteriorated and settlers faced ruin. Hence, the Taranaki Relief Fund Commission was established in 1861 (about which more will be said later) to hear the claims for war damages and losses. In the Taranaki Provincial Archives there are two special sets of papers relating to the activities of the Taranaki Relief Fund which, in turn, consist of two different Relief Fund Boards. The first set of papers relate *not* to the activities of Provincial officials but to General Government officials in Taranaki. Two Sub-Commissioners were appointed by the Commission for Taranaki Relief, a General Government official. These papers include reports and letters from the latter, and letters from the Superintendent giving particulars of relief needed, all addressed to the Sub-Commissioners appointed in Taranaki. There are also accounts and lists of those in receipt of funds.¹⁴

But, in July 1863, the administration of this Relief Fund was wound up by the Government and the Province made responsible for its functions. Hence the establishment of a Board of Public Relief to deal with all applications for relief of destitute persons. The papers in the Taranaki Provincial Archives include minutes of the Board, appeals from the destitute, lists of applicants for relief, and orders issued by the Board for food, clothing and housing.¹⁵

Besides their interest from a social historian's point of view and their genealogical value, they are also of interest from an archival point of view. Because of the Constitution Act of 1852, there were some fields in which provincial government could not legislate and which were left to central government. Only the General Government was able to:

- levy Customs duties
- decide how much money was to go to the provinces
- legislate on the Supreme Court
- legislate on marriage, inheritance, currency, postal services, weights and measures
- and especially race relations.

These were all areas where different practices within the same colony would produce chaos.

11. General Government in the Province

Hence, together with special General Government officials such as the Sub-Commissioners of the Taranaki Relief Fund, were a whole host of General Government officials operating in the provincial period at the provincial level maintaining Central Government's laws. Except for the Commissioner of Crown Lands they were paid by the Government of New Zealand.

This is where the detective work begins as it represents another vital network in the provincial period of Taranaki. Taranaki had, in 1866, for example:¹⁶

- Registration and Returning Officers
- Revising Officers
- a Sub-Treasurer
- a Court Registrar, Sheriff and Crier

- an Inspector of Bankruptcy
- a Resident Magistrate
- a Coroner
- a Postmaster
- various Customs officials
- a Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages
- a Registrar of Deeds
- a Receiver of Land Revenue
- a Commissioner of Crown Lands
- and a Civil Commissioner

Again, as often with Provincial officials, more than one post was held by one General Government official. This affects not only where a researcher would find material on them and their functions but also their survival rate. If three offices were combined in one person, then not three groups of papers have been lost but the papers of one person. However, one would expect to locate these archives in the District office holdings for the various archival groups such as Lands and Survey, Customs, Justice, Treasurer or Maori Affairs.

12. Commissioners of Crown Lands

For instance, Commissioners of Crown Lands were appointed for each province. They were responsible initially to the Colonial Secretary and, after 1858, to the Secretary for Crown Lands. While the Commissioner was a General Government official he was usually nominated by the Provincial Government and paid from their funds. The Commissioner was "ex officio" chairman of various land boards through which the Taranaki province implemented their own regulations.

The Commissioner of Crown Lands issued all Crown Grants and kept registers of land sold or leased. In the case of Taranaki, he was also involved in the investigation of the New Zealand Company Land Claims Commission and the dispensing of land to military settlers. His papers include correspondence which is somewhat incomplete, accounting papers, allotment books, Crown Grant books, as well as the papers relating to the Land Claims Commission and military settlers,¹⁷ and one Provincial Government Account Book for 1875 to 1876.¹⁸ The latter remains with the Lands and Survey - New Plymouth archives, probably being deposited with the Commissioner who took charge of all land and survey administration when the province was abolished.

The duties for administering the Waste Lands Act of 1858 which set out the general conditions for provinces dealing with Crown Lands, and control of both land and revenue, remained vested in a General Government official. However, the Land Board Minute Books for Taranaki date only from 1875, when the province was nearing its end.

13. Receiver of Land Revenue

The Receiver of Land Revenue in the province collected all rents, fees and assessments on any land subject to transaction. The District Office material contains only Returns and Accounts for 1866 and Returns for 1867.

14. Customs

However, when one looks at the Customs - New Plymouth material, it becomes apparent that between 1874 and 1878, the Customs Office also acted as an office for the Receiver of Land Revenue. Regarding Customs records which survive for the provincial period, there are outward letterbooks for 1856 to 1863 and 1871 to 1877, and a number of foreign shipping report books for roughly 1851 to 1874.

15. Justice

The plot thickens in the case of the District Justice material. The one item we have, an outward letterbook covering the period 1853 to 1872, was used by the Resident Magistrate, and the Returning Officer, and the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and the Coroner, and the Sub-Treasurer. But they were all one man - Josiah Flight - up until March-April 1868 when H.R. Richmond took over and the book seems to have been used exclusively by the Resident Magistrate until 1872.¹⁹

16. *General Government Resources*

Separate records, as such, for the Sub-Treasurer or, in particular, the Civil Commissioner, whose papers are a very important series for the Hawke's Bay Provincial period, do not survive.

17. *Civil Commissioners*

Civil Commissioners were first appointed in 1862 by proclamation of the Governor under powers allowed him by the Native Districts Act. His job was to assist the Maori to regulate their own local life via "runanga" which existed only in areas of native title which agreed to this system and whose regulations over-rode those of the Provincial Council. To supplement this amazing gap, one has to turn to central government records of the provincial period and use their annual single number registration system with accompanying registers which would record the arrival of a letter in the department from a General Government official. The entries in the register usually have the name of the person writing, the date of the letter, the date of receipt, and subject, and usually the registers are indexed either by the name of the writer, or by the subject of the letter, or by both. With help from an archivist, one should be able to sight the original correspondence. Thus, if records do not survive for General Government officials, one could maintain the principle that they will always have had to have been in contact with the General Government at some stage. In turn, the General Government would have had to reply or generate an answer again which can often be traced through outward letterbooks of the department concerned.

But, in some cases, even General Government records could be fragmentary. Certainly the amount of Native Office material surviving now has been seriously prejudiced by a fire in the early twentieth century which destroyed almost all of the pre-twentieth century registered inwards correspondence. Hence, many of the letters of Robert Parris, Civil Commissioner from 1865 to 1876,²⁰ exist only as entries recorded in the Registers of correspondence although the outward letterbooks do survive.

18. *Sub-Treasurers*

And so the story goes. In contrast, a considerable amount of correspondence survives in central government Treasury records for the Sub-Treasurer in the provincial period in Taranaki. Furthermore, prior to 1866, there is another line of communication: between the Sub-Treasurers and the Colonial Secretary via special outwards letterbooks the latter had for replying to the former.²¹ The Sub-Treasurer's job primarily was to pay the salaries of government officers employed in the areas and any costs incurred by them in the course of their duties.

19. *Provincial Officials and the General Government*

At this stage one might note that the Superintendent for Taranaki province, as other Superintendents, had a direct line of communication with the Colonial Secretary also. And as it would be unusual for provincial officers to correspond directly with the General Government, their line of communication is going to be through the Superintendent.

Therefore a lot of material relating to the provincial period in Taranaki may be located in the correspondence systems of the Colonial Secretary's Office (the forerunner of the Department of Internal Affairs). And as with the Sub-Treasurers there are special outwards letterbooks for the Superintendents, divided after 1863 into North Island and South Island to the time of abolition of provincial governments.²²

Moreover, the papers of the Taranaki Relief Fund Sub-Commissioners mentioned earlier in this talk should be read in conjunction with a special set of papers or archives of the Chief Commissioner held in the Internal Affairs Department.²³ These contain a large amount of material on the claims and awards made, various petitions and memorials from Taranaki settlers, and-registered files extracted from the main sequence of the Colonial Secretary's Office registered files. It illustrates very well the need for a researcher on the Taranaki provincial period to be aware of all the possibilities; to be able to work out systematically, mentally and on paper which organizations or persons (creating agencies) are likely to have made records of relevance to the research; and then to determine if they have survived and where.

20. Military Resources

Finally, no description of the resources available at National Archives for the provincial period would be complete without mentioning those for the military. Although I feel this is a huge topic in itself, I'll attempt to elaborate as with provincial and general and central government archives how one could approach the records surviving.

In Taranaki there were operating a confusingly large number of Imperial troops and Colonial troops, the latter which also included militia and volunteer units. To whom they were responsible were quite different. The Imperial forces and their Commanders-in-Chief had their own central military organization and when they did correspond with the central government it tended to be through the Governor who had his own special correspondence system for naval and military officers. Often the Governor would refer such letters in a duplicate to the Defence Office although the normal channel of communication for Imperial officers would not be as such. There are good descriptive lists for these letters although not a complete sequence of Governor's outward letterbooks to complement them.

In the case of the Colonial Forces, the need to identify the officers who would be corresponding and creating records, through the Registers of Commissions in order to use the main correspondence systems of the Defence Department is important.²⁴ In that way one can find out a great deal about the military operations in Taranaki.

It becomes a more economical process in working from the index to the register of incoming letters to the letters themselves and to isolate the corresponding reply. Also, from 1859 to 1865, alongside the Defence Office existed a separate record-keeping for the Deputy Adjutant General who was mainly involved with the housekeeping and administrative side, including staff. Officers of the Colonial Forces in Taranaki would write to both, but the latter is very useful in locating personal information on men who may have served but whose lines of communication would be through their officers.

Another perhaps quicker source of information is contained in the Maori War Medal series of registers and files, in which are recorded literally thousands of men, both Imperial and Colonial, who applied for and received a medal for service in the various wars in New Zealand. Although not arranged by province, they are indexed by the name of the applicant or recipient. Also included in the Defence Department records is material on the Taranaki Military Settlers, a Colonial Force raised outside the province, mainly in Otago and Australia who, as a condition of their service, were to receive a grant of land similar to the Waikato Military Settlers.²⁵

For the Waikato Military Settlers, there are a relatively good set of records for the Headquarters and the Paymaster and Nominal and Descriptive Rolls, Land Registers and fragments of correspondence to the 2nd and 4th Militia Regiments. In contrast, the Nominal and Descriptive Roll Book for the Taranaki Military Settlers survives²⁶ While that is not the only related archive, in order to gain an impression of how the force operated, one would need to follow the guidelines spoken about previously for using archives to their fullest potential.

Military settlers were to make a considerable and cumulative impression on the landscape of Taranaki. In both Head Office and District material for the Lands and Survey are papers relating to military settlers, both Colonial and Imperial, who were given, when discharged, grants of land by the provincial government of Taranaki, including the Taranaki military settlers. From statistics for the period, it is quite clear that the land disposed of to naval and military men was quite out of proportion to the size of the province and that most of that was confiscated land - almost a million acres altogether.

21. End of the Provinces

Without getting into a detailed discussion over the reasons for the abolition of the provinces to end this talk, suffice to say that while provincial governments lasted for twenty years, once central government was finally established with the will and the means to control the colony, the former became obsolete.

The two main issues in the 1850s and 1860s were the relations with the Maoris and the respective powers and rights of provincial and general governments. A lasting source of discontent with Taranaki province were the terms of financial and land arrangements because, being war-torn, they had little land to buy or sell and hence were always short

of funds for colonisation and development. Therefore, the province also resented central government's control over Maori affairs because of the latter's fears that if settlers controlled their own policies, there would be war against the Maoris!

The course of the seventies, however, saw Vogel come into power and more was to be gained from central government by Taranaki as it gradually assumed the responsibility for colonization and development and so on. It became clear that, by now, provincial governments no longer carried out their original functions and their existence was a source of bitter national conflicts. In 1875, Parliament agreed to a total abolition of the provinces in the following year and the Provincial Councils did not meet again.

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