

1876.

NEW ZEALAND.

PURCHASE OF LAND FROM THE NATIVES.

(REPORTS FROM OFFICERS.)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

Mr. J. W. PREECE, Auckland, to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER..

SIR,—

Auckland, 1st June, 1876.

I have the honor to report, for your information, the progress made in the land purchases within the district under my charge, namely, that to the north of Auckland, since the first of July last.

The lands handed to me to complete the purchase of (namely, Mr. Brissenden's incomplete transaction) were fifty-two blocks, estimated to contain in the aggregate 377,529 acres; of these blocks thirty-six are now surveyed, and contain 261,629 acres, leaving sixteen blocks yet unsurveyed, estimated to contain 115,900 acres. Of these latter there are now seven blocks being surveyed, and will shortly be completed. The survey of the other nine blocks is delayed in consequence of disputes among the owners, most of which, however, I hope to settle as soon as an opportunity offers of meeting the different disputants together. During the first few months, after taking over these matters, I was unable to show any apparent progress in the completion of any of the transactions, owing in a great measure to the fact of there having been only one sitting of the Native Lands Court to the north of Auckland—namely, at Ahipara, in November, and at that sitting the claims were all adjourned without any progress having been made; the time, however, was profitably occupied in getting matters in train for the Courts, and in furthering the negotiations as much as I could.

During the month of January I concluded the purchase of the Waimamaku Block, containing 27,200 acres. Some of the owners of this block had refused to sell at the time the title was investigated, in June previously, but eventually came to terms.

On the occasion of the sitting of the Native Lands Court at Kaihu, in January, I was enabled to complete the purchase of the following blocks, namely, Opouteke, Kairara, Pekapekarau, Waerekahakaha, One, Waipoua, and Maunganui, containing in the aggregate 155,400 acres. No Courts have been held since that date, or I should have been able to have completed the purchase of over 50,000 acres more out of the 77,400 acres, the surveys of which are completed, and only await the holding of Courts to complete the title to them. The delay will, however, enable me to have a larger area ready for investigation of title when the Courts do sit, although it causes my present list of completed transactions to be of a less area than it otherwise would have been.

During the months of March and April I paid several visits to the Whangarei District, and put matters in train there preparatory to getting the blocks in that district brought before the Court. While there I purchased a small block held under Crown grant containing 882 acres, and named Ngatahuna. There are only three blocks in that district, the negotiations for which are all in a forward state, namely, the Kioreroa, Te Tihitihi, and Opuhete Blocks.

During the present month I have completed the purchase of the Papuroua Block, containing 1,220 acres, and so far completed the purchase of the Taungako as to have a deed fully executed by all the surviving owners. Two persons have yet to be appointed by the Court to succeed to the interests of two deceased owners, and a Court is to be held on the 4th July for the purpose. The area of this last-mentioned block is 2,115 acres.

By the foregoing it will be seen that, out of the 377,529 acres comprising transactions incomplete in July last, there have been completed since the 1st of January, 183,820 acres, in addition to which is the Ngatahuna Block, which is not comprised in the former area, being a recently offered block, the area of which is 882 acres, thus making a total of 184,702 acres, at a cost, exclusive of surveys and incidental expenses, of £12,815 6s. 6d., being a fraction over 1s. 4½d. per acre all round; deeds of conveyance for which have been fully signed and completed, and, with two exceptions, registered.

Of the 193,709 acres, the purchase of which is yet incomplete, there will be about 100,000 acres surveyed and ready for the investigation of title within the next two months, immediately after which the titles can be completed unless any unforeseen difficulties arise, which will reduce the list of transactions now on hand to a comparatively small area.