

1885.
NEW ZEALAND.

THE NORTH ISLAND TRUNK RAILWAY

(REPORT ON THE CEREMONY OF TURNING THE FIRST SOD OF), AT PUNIU, 15TH APRIL, 1885.

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

MR. G. T. WILKINSON, Government Native Agent, Alexandra, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Native Office, Alexandra, 13th May, 1885.

In accordance with request contained in your letter (No. 381, of 28th ultimo), I have the honour to forward herewith a special report on the ceremony of turning the first sod of the North Island Trunk Railway at Puniu on the 15th ultimo.

I have, &c.,

The Under-Secretary, Native Department,
Wellington.

G. T. WILKINSON,
Government Native Agent.

CEREMONY of turning the first sod of the North Island Trunk Railway by the Hon. Robert Stout, Premier of New Zealand, assisted by the Ngatimaniapoto chiefs, Wahanui and Rewi, at the confiscation-line at the southern bank of the Puniu River, on the 15th April, 1885.

SOME days before the ceremony took place the representatives of the different tribes commenced to assemble at Wahanui's house at Alexandra for the purpose of meeting the Hon. the Premier, who they had been informed would take part in the ceremony. On the evening of his arrival at Alexandra (14th April) some fifty or more—all representative men—were there to meet him, but the lateness of the hour at which he arrived precluded them from seeing him that night. The next morning, however, the Premier, accompanied by Mr. Blair, Assistant Engineer-in-Chief, and myself, proceeded to Wahanui's house and there met the people who were assembled. Old Rewi, who had driven over from Kihikihi, and several other chiefs were formally introduced to Mr. Stout, as was Mr. John Ormsby, half-caste, chairman of the Kawhia Native Committee.

After the friendly greetings were over, Mr. Ormsby, who had been chosen spokesman, rose and said that, on behalf of the Natives of the district, he welcomed Mr. Stout to Alexandra. The Natives were all aware of the great work on which he had come, and they looked upon it as an important event, just as the Premier did. They considered the action to be taken to-day would be looked upon as an earnest of what was to be the policy of the future. The Native people were aware that Mr. Stout had come to turn the first sod of the main trunk railway. They had a request to make—namely, that the owners of the land should be allowed to take part in the ceremony, and, if Mr. Stout would agree to that, the way they had appointed to assist Mr. Stout was, Wahanui and they would ask Mr. Stout if he would allow Wahanui to dig the sod and put it in the barrow, Mr. Stout to perform the ceremony of wheeling it away, thereby both taking part.

In reply, Mr. Stout said he was exceedingly glad to meet the Natives there assembled. He had heard of Rewi. He was very highly spoken of by the Europeans, both on account of his rank and bravery. He had seen Wahanui at Wellington. He thought the Natives could not have a better representative in Wellington than Wahanui, who had been strenuous in his endeavours to get the best done for the Maoris and to promote their good in every way. He agreed to their proposal as to the turning of the sod. He wished the Natives to know that the ceremony had nothing to do with the title to the land, nor did it affect the chieftainship. Whether a man was there or not it would not make any one's title better or worse, or a chief's chieftainship greater or less. The fact of taking part in the ceremony would not give those who did so any advantage or any greater claim to the land than they had before. It was customary for Europeans who had no claim to a building to be chosen to lay the foundation-stone. The same custom prevailed in regard to the turning of the first sod for a railway: representative men were chosen. He wished to impress upon them the importance of attending to their health. If they wished to preserve their race they must preserve their health. In order to do this it was necessary that they should see that their dwellings were situated in healthy positions, and that they were well ventilated. It was important that they should pay attention to their food, and stop taking alcohol. A little book was being printed in Maori, in which they would learn how to prevent disease, deal with sickness, &c. This book would be circulated among the Maoris. He hoped they would all see to the education of their children. Being Minister for Education, he should be very glad to hear that they had taken measures to have schools erected in their districts, and to provide their young people with knowledge, so that they might read and write English, and know what was being done in different parts of the world.

After Mr. Stout had sat down Hote Tamehana, of the Ngatihaua Tribe, one of the sons of the late Wiremu Tamehana te Waharoa, stood up and suggested that, as Tawhiao had not given his consent, and was not present, they should adjourn the ceremony until some future time. He was quietly replied to and figuratively sat upon by the chief, Taonui, who, although one of the Ngatimaniapoto's greatest chiefs, is of a more retiring disposition than Wahanui and some others, who, as a rule, do most of the talking and negotiating when required; but, this being a case where the dignity and independence of the tribe was assailed, Hote was no sooner seated than quiet and unobtrusive Taonui was on his feet and in a few words gave Hote to understand that his interference was not wanted, and that he had better confine any remarks he had to make to land at Maungakawa (which Hote's people own, and where they reside), and not trouble himself by interfering with Ngatimaniapoto's lands or people—a Maori way of telling him “to mind his own business.” After Taonui's speech nobody cared to support Hote's proposition, and the matter dropped; but it must have been apparent to any of the King party who might be present that, from what Taonui had said, Ngatimaniapoto did not intend to put up with any obstruction or nonsense on that day from those who objected to their action.

After this, several Natives came forward to shake hands with Mr. Stout, and, as it was then past ten o'clock, a general move was made, on horseback and in vehicles, for the Puniu River, some eight miles away, where the ceremony of turning the first sod was to take place.

Mr. Stout was driven there by myself, and accompanied by Captain Capel, of the Armed Constabulary Force, on horseback, and two mounted orderlies. We stopped at Te Awamutu, *en route*, where we were met by the Volunteer cavalry, who took up a position on each side of the road to enable the Premier to be driven through their lines, they saluting at the time. Mr. Stout stayed a short time only at Te Awamutu, to receive a deputation, and visit the graves of the soldiers who fell at the siege of Orakau in March and April, 1864; after which, he proceeded to the Puniu River, where the ceremony was to take place. He was accompanied by the Volunteer cavalry as a guard of honour, and by a large concourse of Europeans on horseback and in conveyances of all kinds. Many visitors had arrived by excursion train from Auckland and also from different parts of the Waikato for the purpose of witnessing the proceedings.

The following gives a correct account of what took place, and of the speeches that were made:—

TURNING THE FIRST SOD.

[Extract from the Auckland *New Zealand Herald* of the 16th April.]

The excursion train for Waikato, with accommodation for eight hundred, left Auckland yesterday morning at 7 o'clock about half filled, and took a large number of passengers at the several stations on the line of railway for Puniu and for the Cambridge races, those for the latter branching off at Hamilton. After some little delay at Frankton Junction, owing to having to water three engines, the start was made about twenty-five minutes to 1 o'clock; but the time was pulled up between Hamilton and Te Awamutu by the extra speed put on. At Hamilton, amongst the large number of passengers taken up were Mr. J. B. Whyte, M.H.R.; Mr. W. A. Graham, Mayor of Hamilton; Captain Steel, Mr. Hay; Mr. D. M. Beere, District Engineer; Mr. A. H. Northcroft, Mr. Hume, Mr. Knox, Mr. Mountier, and many ladies. Arrived at Te Awamutu the passengers were pleased to find that local enterprise had not been behindhand in providing accommodation for proceeding further. A long row of public omnibusses, wagonettes, and traps of all descriptions were drawn up, so that accommodation for nearly all was available. Amongst those who went up from Auckland were Mr. W. R. Waddel, Mayor; Hon. T. Henderson, M.L.C.; Hon. P. Dignan, M.L.C.; Mr. Moss, M.H.R., and Mrs. Moss; Mr. T. Thompson, M.H.R.; Mr. R. Cameron, manager, Auckland Savings Bank; Mr. C. Atkins and Mrs. Atkins, Mrs. Porter; Mr. W. H. Hales, District Engineer; Mr. F. L. Prime, Mr. W. Crowther, Mr. Motion, Mr. J. Stewart, Mr. Constable, Mr. Von der Heyde, and others, including a large number of ladies. When the visitors reached the Te Awamutu Township, the Volunteer cavalry, which had met the Hon. the Premier halfway on the Alexandra Road on his return from the place where he had spent the night and escorted him into Te Awamutu, were drawn up, and their band played some lively tunes, whilst settlers, in all kinds of vehicles and on horseback, were gathering in large numbers from Kihikihi, Rangiaohia, Alexandra, and neighbouring settlements, Cambridge, even, being well represented. A cavalcade was then formed and started for the scene of ceremony, some two miles away, over a villanous cross-road to the south bank of the Puniu River, where the sod was to be turned, on land belonging to Rewi's ancestors. A substantial foot-bridge had been placed over the Puniu, and on ascending the opposite bank the site was at once observed by the marquee and flags and banners, inscribed with Maori welcomes. A large semicircle was formed and kept by the Te Awamutu cavalymen under Major Jackson and Captain Rutherford. About fifteen hundred persons, Natives and Europeans, were upon the ground, including a very large number of ladies. Amongst those present with Mr. Stout at this time were Wahanui, Taonui, Rewi, Hopa Te Rangianini, and other chiefs; Colonel Fraser, M.H.R.; Mr. White, M.H.R.; Mr. Lake, M.H.R.; Mr. Thompson, M.H.R.; Mr. Patrick Dignan, M.L.C.; Mr. Blair, Assistant Engineer-in-Chief; Mr. I. Coates, contractor for the first section of the new railway; Mr. Hursthouse, and Mr. Beere; while standing around were most of the principal settlers of the surrounding districts. Amongst those present were Mr. Storey, Mr. Westney, Mr. Newland, Mr. Goodfellow, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Henderson, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Walton, Mr. Roache, Mr. Ellis, Mr. A. G. Horton, Mr. Rutherford, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Sloane, Mr. W. S. Wilson, Mr. Farrell (Chairman, Kihikihi Town Board), Major Wilson, and others. The barrow used was the same which Sir George Grey used at Claudelands in turning the first sod of the Waikato-Thames Valley Railway. Mr. G. T. Wilkinson acted as interpreter throughout the ceremony.

Mr. W. H. Hales, District Engineer, said: Wahanui, as engineer having local charge of public works, I am deputed to ask you, on behalf of the Native people, to commence the great work to-day, and the construction of this railway, by turning the first sod.

Wahanui took off his coat, dug out three sods, and placed them in the barrow, the Maoris counting each sod in audible tone. This was completed amidst loud cheers.

Rewi Maniapoto then said: I now call on Mr. Stout to wheel the sod.

Mr. Stout took off his coat and wheeled the sods along some planks laid for the purpose, and tipped the barrow at the end, throwing the sods on the ground amidst loud cheers, the Te Awamutu band striking up the National Anthem, the spectators meanwhile remaining uncovered.

Mr. W. R. Waddell, Mayor of Auckland, then called for three cheers for Her Majesty the Queen, which were heartily given by Maoris and Europeans alike.

Mr. Wilkinson explained to the Natives that the Premier would address the Europeans first, and then the Maoris.

Mr. Stout said: Ladies and gentlemen,—I can assure you that I feel that I occupy to-day an exceedingly honourable position, because I have been deputed to take part in what is one of the greatest works that this colony can undertake. I do not need, in addressing a European audience, to point out the good that railways do. I would rather say that this railway is peculiar in many respects. It is, first, to unite together two parts of this colony that have been long separated, from many reasons and from various causes; and I hope that by it we shall still further become a united nation of New Zealand, and that, as colonists, while we always think of our homes and think of our districts, we shall not forget to think of the colony as our nation, to look forward to the development of its national life. But I stand here, further, on ground that a few years ago was not deemed to be open to Europeans. We stand here almost in view of what I might term the classic ground of the Maori war. Not far from here is, as you all know, what may well be termed the Maori Thermopylæ, and which future historians will point to as a battle that was, considering its circumstances, perhaps the grandest fought between any two races. The bravery, as often happens in many battles, was not all on one side. We stand on that ground; and, when we think of what took place in this month some twenty years ago, when the battle of Orakau was fought; when we think of the brave words uttered from the Maori pa on that occasion—brave words, that there was to be no end practically to the fighting; and when we think now of what we have accomplished, and when we have here that brave chieftain, that brave warrior, who then led his tribe at Orakau, and we have the representative of the Government to take part in a work of this kind, I think we will all see that we have made some great advance in our colonial history, and that it has been truly a sign of progress to-day. I think we should remember, in doing a work of this class, to contrast it with the old days, the days of the past, the evil days, in which we thought the colony was to be conquered by war, to be conquered by bloodshed. But we know that peace has her conquests far more renowned than those of war, and that it is by works of this character—works which are not to set race against race nor people against people, but to unite them together as one people—it is by works of this class that nature is conquered and made subservient to man. I say, therefore, let this be classic ground in our history—not classic ground by keeping in memory the evil things of the past, the war of the past, but let this day be remembered as a day to be remembered in our history—as a day, a grand day, for this part of the colony; for here, I hope, is given to us a pledge that will continue of peaceable relations between Europeans and Maoris; and that also to-day we see how helpful these relations are in our march of progress. I do not know that I can express myself well enough how deeply I feel the fact that Rewi is here. I feel it for a reason that may not be known to you. When I was first appointed Premier of this colony, the first telegram I got—before I received one even from my own constituents or friends—the first telegram of congratulation I received, was one from Rewi. I had never seen him, but something I had done or said in 1878 had remained in his memory; and that showed me that the race had been often maligned by people in saying the Maori race had no gratitude. I believe that, if we had been perhaps more kind in the past, more philo-Maori, than we have been; if we, in the past, had treated our brown friends in this colony as brothers, and loved them, we should never have had the wars which disgrace our history. I hope that, in the future, we shall think of them as men who have not had our civilization, our training, our ideas, and if they do wrong, or what we consider wrong, that we shall treat them as we treat our own children. If we have to chastise them in order to uphold the law, we should do it with love and with the object of benefiting them in the future. To-day we have taken part, as I have said, in a great work, in a work that is to be beneficial not only to one section of the colony, not only to one district of the colony, not only to one race of the colony, but to benefit all. I hope, as people who have taken part in this ceremony, whatever part each may have taken, however humble, we shall so act up to the honour that has been cast upon us in the future, and we shall keep this in our memory as having been privileged to take part in one step of the history of the colony, and so act as good colonists in the future that those who come after us will have no occasion to regret our actions in any way. Ladies and gentlemen, it is by what we may term a small ceremony, it is by what we may say is almost a thing not to be noticed at the time, that history, after all, is made. History is made by the growth of the social life of the people. This is a step in the growth of our social life. I ask those who have to deal with the Maoris in these out-districts to think that on them rests a great responsibility, a heavy responsibility, a heavier responsibility than rests on the Government, than rests on those who live far from the Maoris. It is your duty to educate them, to train them; and to-day we have done a thing, I hope, that will remain in the remembrance of the whole colonial people. We are standing here on soil on which there has been a Proclamation that no liquor shall be sold, and we are to-day going to provide you with lunch, but you are to have no alcoholic liquors; and I hope those who do not agree with me in my temperance views will think of this: that, although many Europeans can take liquor without injuring themselves to any appreciable extent, if what is called fire-water gets amongst any aboriginal race like the Maoris it is condemning them to destruction. I ask those who feel that there is some solemnity in human life, considering the bravery of the race, and the loving-kindness which the Maori people have shown in the past to many settlers, and the many good deeds they have done, to agree with me when I say the Maoris ought to be preserved; and I say if the

race is not preserved we shall be handed down in history as a people who came to this country and met a race capable of much improvement and did nothing to improve the race. I hope that will never be written of Europeans in this colony. I ask the out-settlers to be careful in dealing with the Maoris: to teach them how to preserve their physical and moral health, and if we could only teach them these two things the race would live, and hereafter we should see the descendants of the noble chiefs of the present and past generation taking a part in the government of this colony. Surely, if we regard all as brethren, without distinction of colour, race, or creed, it shall never be said of us that we, who think we have reached the highest pinnacle of civilization, will doom any part of humanity—any race, however weak—to destruction. Rather let it be said that we have done all that we could to raise, to elevate, and perpetuate them. I cannot say anything more in a general way. I wish now to say one or two words to the Maoris.

The foregoing remarks had been addressed specially to the Europeans, and had not been interpreted to the Natives. Mr. Stout now turned to the Natives and said: Ladies, and chiefs, and men of the Maori race,—I want to say a few words as to the benefit that the railway will do to you. I do not need to address the Europeans about the good that a railway does. But a railway is a new thing to the Maoris. They know more about a canoe than a railway. A railway is to a European what a canoe is to a Maori: he uses it for travelling about. But the difference between a railway and a canoe is, the railway can go a great deal faster, and can go where the canoe cannot get. But there are two or three things that a railway does. Here, on this section, we intend to ask the Maoris to make it, and they will get the same money for doing it that Europeans get. We do not want to make any distinction between them; and Mr. Richardson, the Minister for Public Works, has told me about the work of the Maoris. He had forty Maoris working for him at the beginning of 1863 in Victoria. They did their work well, and they got wages equal to Europeans; and I have no doubt the Maoris will have pride enough to see that the Europeans do not beat them in making this railway. When this section is made it will be known as the Maori section, and I hope it will be better than that which the Europeans make. But, besides the money you will get for your work, the railway will do more things for you than that. It will make your land more valuable, and the land that you do not need, if you wish to lease it you will get more money for it. Besides that, as you get learned in farming, you will rear cattle and grow perhaps fruit and grain; and then you will get more money for all these things when you have got the railway. Maoris cannot get on without money any more than Europeans. Now, when the Maoris get the railway made, their land will be improved, they will get more money, and I hope they will spend the money in making themselves more comfortable. Except you take care of your health and take care of your money, both your land and your money will be a curse to you. I hope you will think of these things. Now let me specially thank you for coming here to-day. My thanks, and the thanks of the Government, are due to the chiefs who have so loyally supported us. I do not like to mention their names in case there might be some jealousy, and I might omit some. Let me tell you this: that you should not be jealous of this sod-turning, because it does not affect your lands or the titles to the land. It is a mere ceremony. Some one said that this one ought to do it; and some one that that one ought to do it; as to the names, there was much difference of opinion amongst you. But things like this do not make a chief, and do not make a landowner. You should think of a story I will tell you of what happened in my country—Scotland. There was a great chief there named McNab, and he was head of a great number of people. And some people saw him sitting at the foot of the table instead of at the head, although he was a great chief. And they said to him, "Come to the head of the table—you are a great chief;" and he said, "Wherever the McNab sits, that is the head of the table." So the chiefs will remember—those who have not taken part in the ceremony—that, if they are great chiefs, the ceremony will not hurt them. Now, let me say one or two words to all, Europeans and Maoris. I have to thank all the ladies and gentlemen who have attended at this ceremony for their presence here to-day. We have had a good omen—the weather is beautiful. We stand in the midst of lovely scenery. We have mountains in view; we have streams, bushes, and everything that is lovely; but all these things are not lovely unless they are graced by the ladies, and by the Europeans, and the Maoris. After all, what makes the scenery lovely is to see people in it, and people enjoying themselves; and I hope you will all do so to-day. I thank you all very much for listening to me so very attentively. Perhaps some of the chiefs, Wahanui or Rewi, will say a few words.

Three hearty cheers were then given for the Premier, and the band contributed musical honours.

Wahanui: I shall not make a very long speech, after what Mr. Stout has said. The part of his speech I took particular notice of is that referring to the restrictions on spirituous liquors in this district. I consider we could not have a better boundary with which to keep back the liquor than this stream of fresh water running down below us [pointing to the Punui]. I have seen, in one map that has been published, a certain boundary defining this licensing district; but that I did not agree to. I myself consider the proper boundary by which to keep back the liquor is a river of fresh water like the Punui. There is one other suggestion I would like to make, and that is that we should give this railway a name; and the name I give it is "Turongo" [Rewi, who was standing beside Wahanui, also called out "Turongo"]; and I wish that name to apply only to the chain wide of land that belongs to the railway. It does not affect the land on either side of the chain wide, because each person knows the name of his own piece. The person of rank has his own portion, and so has the person of low degree, and it is not a proper thing for a person who is of rank to contest a person of low degree with regard to the title to his land. That is all I have to say.

Mr. Waddel called for three cheers for Wahanui and Rewi, and the call was cordially responded to.

Hopa te Rangianini, who was dressed in a gorgeous mat, stood forward and said: These are my words to Mr. Stout: All that you are to take is the line for the railway, from one end to the other. You must not by-and-by branch off in the direction of Taupo, because I shall cause you

trouble, if you do that. Or if you branch off in any other direction I shall cause you trouble. All the affection that the Maoris wish to show to you in this matter is this line of railway only. After this is done, and I see how we get on together, then I may alter my mind. If I see that the result of this is good, and your affection to me is great, then I shall have no objection. That is all I have to say.

Taonui said: I wish to say a word or two with regard to the management or carrying-out of this railway. If, sir, you were Mr. Ballance, who is the Minister for the Natives, I should have something to say with regard to the work or carrying-out of this railway; but, as Mr. Ballance is not here, I shall reserve what I have to say until I see him. I have something to say about it to him—about the matter—with regard to what is below the surface, and with regard to what is on the other side. I shall have something to say with regard to the position of the stations. As Mr. Ballance is not here I shall not do so to-day, but when he comes here I shall go into these matters with him.

Mr. Stout: That ends the ceremony. Now, in compliance with the request made by Wahanui and Rewi that this section should be called Turongo, it will be called Turongo.

Rewi then introduced his little daughter and only child to Mr. Stout. A photograph was taken of the group, and the assemblage dispersed.

It may be stated that "Turongo" is the Maori way of saying the English words "too long," and is applied in consequence of the length of the proposed line. Turongo is also the name of an ancestor of Ngatimaniapoto. Wahanui's reason, it was explained, for giving this name was that, the two races being now joined, they might now be regarded as descendants of Turongo.

The excursionists from Auckland left Te Awamutu on their return journey at half-past 6 p.m., and arrived in town at half-past 12 a.m.

During Mr. Stout's address to the Europeans I stood beside Rewi and Wahanui and made a running translation to them of what was being said. They seemed very pleased with Mr. Stout's remarks regarding the Maori people, and when he referred to the battle-ground at Orakau (only four miles away), and compared Rewi's attitude towards Europeans then, and now, the old man was visibly affected. And, indeed, the contrast was very marked. Then he was a fighting general, in sole charge of some two hundred and fifty brave but badly-armed Natives, who, without water and with very little food, were enclosed in a pa surrounded by some six hundred British soldiers, armed with the most approved weapons of the day, and yet, when called upon to surrender after three days' hard fighting, during which time they successfully resisted all attempts to take their pa by assault, Rewi jumped on the parapet and defied his enemies, shouting out that they would fight on "for ever, for ever, and for ever." To-day he stood before them as a friend of the European Government and the European people, and, dressed in simple European costume of black-velvet coat, tweed trousers, and tall black hat, and with his little daughter by his side, he looked, instead of the fierce warrior of twenty-one years ago, a fine specimen of a man who, in his old age, had exchanged ferocity for tenderness, and a previous hatred to Europeans into friendship and brotherly companionship towards them.

Wahanui, huge of stature and genial of countenance, acted his part with dignity and composure, especially when it is considered that he was an entire stranger to European ceremonies of this sort; and I believe that both he and Rewi fully realized the meaning of the Premier's words when he said that on that day was given "a pledge that will continue of peaceable relations between Europeans and Maoris."

Since the ceremony took place a number of Natives have gone to work on the section set apart for their labour, and I am sure I am justified in saying that they, as well as Europeans, desire that the work may be carried on to completion with as little delay as possible.

It is worthy of remark that nearly the whole of the earth comprising the three sods that were dug by Wahanui and wheeled away by Mr. Stout was collected and taken away by some of the visitors from Auckland and Waikato, presumably as a memento of the occasion.

I have, &c.,

G. T. WILKINSON,

Government Native Agent, Waikato, Thames, and Auckland.

