



HAWKE'S BAY'S FIRST 100 YEARS

★ ABOVE: Napier in the early seventies, showing the extensive lagoons and swamp-land near the city.

EARLY in 1850, the *New Zealand Spectator* alluded to Hawke's Bay as "the Alsatia of the colony, whither all the disorderly and desperate characters resort to be out of reach of the law." In spite of the presence of many fine Maoris and a few such whites as the missionary-settler William Colenso, the description was far from being inaccurate. Only five years before, for example, when the American brig *Falco* had been driven ashore at Table Cape, she had been attacked by a mixed gang of Maoris and Pakehas, who had looted the cargo, cut down the rigging, and even stripped the copper sheathing from the vessel's hull.

Since that time, Hawke's Bay has been pacified. If a high proportion of its people are well-to-do, it is not necessarily because they have extracted treasure from others by such direct means. Indeed, the centenary celebrations which began on November 1 mark the time when their governing province to the south was forced—temporarily—to desist from robbing them. Even in those days, as two newly-published books* make clear, Wellington showed a capacity for squeezing moneys from outlying parts which made the *Falco* pillagers look like clumsy amateurs.

By 1857 a great deal of Hawke's Bay land, much of it good sheep country even in its natural state, had been bought from the Maoris by the Crown and parcelled out to settlers. Land sales in that one year had realised £20,000 for the treasury of Wellington Province, which then included Hawke's Bay.

* *THE STORY OF HAWKE'S BAY*, by A.H. Reed; A.H. & A.W. Reed, price 25/-.
PICTURE OF A PROVINCE, by the Historical Affairs Committee, Hawke's Bay and East Coast Museum; Hawke's Bay Provincial Centennial Council.

Rather less than £1000 of this had been spent in the area. The discrepancy was so great—and Wellington's programme of public works so blatantly extravagant—that even some Wellington people were moved to suggest that Hawke's Bay must be getting less than its share. A public meeting at Ahuriri (now Napier) attended by 1185 people, the occupants of a million acres of land, indignantly moved for separation.

The act was quickly done. In October, 1858, a petition bearing the signatures of 200 out of the Hawke's Bay's 299 registered electors, was dispatched to Auckland where the Central Government then sat. On November 1 the Governor proclaimed as a separate province "All that district being heretofore parcel of the Province of Wellington which lies or is within the limits following, that is to say—a line commencing at a stream called Waimata, near Cape Turnagain, running along the northern boundary of Puke-toi to Puke-toi Range, thence in a straight line to where Te-rua-mea falls into Manawatu River, near Awa Purua, thence along the Manawatu River, to the gorge in the Ruahine Mountains, thence along the summit of the said mountains to latitude 39 deg. 30 min. South, thence in a right line to a point in latitude 39 deg. South, longitude 176 deg. 30 min. East, thence in an easterly direction along the 39th parallel of south latitude to the sea coast, and thence southwards along the coast line, including the islands adjacent thereto, to the Waimata Stream." At the same time the town of Napier was constituted the Province's capital. News of the changes reached Napier by sea 12 days after the proclamation.

The capital, incidentally, had been named by Alfred Domett, Commissioner

of Crown Lands, some four years earlier. It was, of course, named for Sir Charles Napier, the military hero of the Indian campaigns of the forties, whose conquest of Scinde and subsequent dispatch "Peccavi" ("I have sinned"), also makes him one of the most famous punsters in the language. The city commemorated the conquest, if not the pun, in the peninsula called Scinde.

Separation did not mean that Hawke's Bay had heard the last of Wellington. For the next few years the Provincial Council was preoccupied with what was known as the Wellington Debt, a sum of £125,000, raised by Wellington before separation, and a portion of which was alleged to be the responsibility of Hawke's Bay. In 1862 the new province reluctantly undertook to repay Wellington £2500 a year.

Mr Reed's account of Hawke's Bay does not cover the centenary period, but extends from the first known settlement by Maoris in the 12th century to soon after the abolition of the provinces in 1876. According to him, the Maoris' arrival arose out of the effects of bad weather at Tahiti. A young chief named Whatonga, having challenged another chief to a canoe race in the open sea, was overtaken by fog and rough weather and did not return. His grandfather, Toi, set out in search of him, and eventually landed at Whakatane. Whatonga, who had been cast ashore in the Society Islands, returned to Tahiti, learned of Toi's search, and in his turn scoured the ocean in quest of Toi before making a landfall on the West Coast between Mokau and Waitara. There he was told of his grandfather's arrival at Whakatane, and in due course joined him there. Whatonga later moved south to Mahia Peninsula,

and his sons, Tara and Tautoki, moved farther south still, to Ahuriri, and eventually to Wairarapa and Wellington.

By the time of white discovery and later settlement, the Hawke's Bay Maoris had adopted the name of Ngati-Kahungunu, after a 14th century descendant of Toi, though their common ancestry did not prevent the various sub-tribes from waging war on each other. Later, however, though their grounds for concern about losses of land were not less great than those of other tribes, they were to hold aloof from the Maori Wars. Except, that is, to repulse a number of Hau-Hau invasions and to play a prominent part in the defeat of Te Kooti. The exceptionally good inter-racial relations which persist to this day may well be due to the far-sighted restraint exercised by the Hawke's Bay chiefs at that time.

The Centennial Council's booklet comprises contributions by a large number of writers covering almost every facet of the Province's history, interspersed with snippets such as the 1860 announcement of the availability of a Ladies' Bathing Machine, and the list of entries in the first A. and P. Show in 1863: 22 horses, 28 cattle, 18 sheep, six pigs, three dogs and one poultry. We learn, too, that the labour market in 1857 was a tight one, with the consequence that single men for station work were able to command as much as £60 a year and their rations. It is such living items as these, liberally used in both books, which make them more than merely works of reference. With their plentiful and imaginative illustrations, they should appeal to all whose homes or hearts are in Hawke's Bay.