

in the *New Zealand Journal of History*<sup>3</sup> has shown what land transfer records can produce. Broadly, however, such studies are still for the future. In my eastern bays history the Deeds records provide a firm underpinning. Without this search the owners, the basis for any inference as to what they may or may not have done as well as the relationships between individuals and their time sequence would be unknown.

There are of course difficulties apart from time, and the recent change of organisation in the Deeds Offices themselves restrict the readiness with which such records are available for extended search. Few if any leases are registered, although they may be mentioned in mortgages. In Turnbull in our approach to solicitors to encourage the retention of selected conveyancing records, the desirability of preserving leases is stressed whenever possible. In Wellington, the confusing legacy of the New Zealand Company meant that the first Crown Grants were not issued until 1853. Apart from the still largely unexplored Company archives and the proceedings of Land Claims Commission hearings, the little information that has survived is in private papers.

### *Court Cases*

These are chiefly found as newspaper reports or in Law Reports. In the past Court cases have not been used as much as might have been expected in local history. In part this stems from the tradition that the pioneers lived together in happy amicability and never quarrelled except in the pages of fiction. Instant litigation, however, was a feature of the 19th century. Professor Oliver, in his *Challenge and response*<sup>4</sup> when discussing the incidence of litigation on the East Coast as well as Court charges on cases of lawlessness and drunkenness has an interesting comment on this matter. He suggests that the community "... in its settling-down period ... was not without its tensions and animosities, and that these found a socially controlled resolution in the courts ... It may be safely concluded that tensions existed, and also that the courts provided regular means for their resolution ... civil suits and Native Land Court arguments provided occasions for the expression and resolution of rivalries."

At a more modest level I have used such material as extensively as I could; frequently such reports are the only indicators we have for community or local action of any kind. Unfortunately, until 1896, when the *Gazette Law Reports* begin one has to rely on the newspapers and here one only finds things by systematic searching. The *Gazette Law Reports* give the judgments in the Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court and the Court of Arbitration. Appeal cases quite often involve property or contracts and would therefore be within the ambit of an appropriate regional history. And many people turned to the law without hesitation.