

Obituary

John Dobree Pascoe

John Pascoe will be sadly missed by all those who worked with him in the preparation of New Zealand's centennial and official war histories and in the preservation of National Historic Places and National Archives. His career in the Department of Internal Affairs between 1937 and 1972 reflects not only his extraordinarily wide interests and abilities, but also the ebb and flow of government patronage of history.

As illustrations editor of centennial publications, John was responsible for the layout of *Making New Zealand*, a splendid pictorial record of New Zealand's first hundred years. In wartime, he was increasingly employed as an official photographer to record scenes and people on the home front. How well a camera in sensitive hands can illuminate written history is shown by his photographs in *Introduction to New Zealand*, produced by the Historical Branch of the Department, primarily as a hand-out for American allies. When the War History Branch was set up, John became its illustrations editor. Then for brief terms he was secretary of the National Historic Places Trust, controller of Wild Life and legal officer, before his appointment as Chief Archivist. Although this was not the job he sought, he gave his best to it, consoled by the thought that after twenty years of working with historians he had some understanding of their needs and foibles.

In his struggle to build up the National Archives and to get more adequate staff, and accommodation and official recognition for them, John was sustained by the self-same qualities that had made him one of New Zealand's greatest mountaineers — energy, enthusiasm, courage, humility and meticulousness. Old friends, colleagues and newcomers alike, who worked in the Archives, appreciated his helpfulness, tolerance and generosity and sampled a little of the good companionship valued by those with whom he swagged, tramped and climbed.

For complete fulfilment, John needed history, music, art, films and literature as much as the mountains, the bush and sunshine. His sense of historical purpose began to develop when he was a young, exploring mountaineer in Canterbury and Westland, as evidenced by his efforts to ferret out and preserve the Douglas papers which he later edited for publication. In middle age he devoted much of his

spare time to writing, editing and research. In the many books he published and especially in his last, most lavishly illustrated, *Exploration New Zealand* (Wellington, 1971), he blended historical narrative with first-hand knowledge of travel and topography and his own photography.

As his biographical study *Mr. Explorer Douglas* demonstrates, his reflections upon the explorers themselves were full of sympathy and insight because of his own personal experience of the perils of traversing mountainous and bush country in its primeval state.

A popular, earthy historian, he has given many more New Zealanders a feeling for their own history and landscape than have the academics.

MARY BOYD

MAKERS OF FORTUNE

A Colonial Business Community and its Fall

by R. C. J. Stone

Business history in New Zealand has been largely confined to the chronicles of individual firms, written with more or less piety. Dr. Stone focuses on a town and a period: Auckland in the second half of the nineteenth century, culminating in the boom and collapse of the 1880s. He skilfully retraces the steps by which members of Auckland's commercial elite were drawn into the speculative rashness which ruined and discredited nearly all of them.

Beyond the moralistic interpretations common immediately after the crash Dr. Stone discerns the economic forces at work, and the entrepreneurs' part in the development of Auckland, which they furthered if sometimes unwisely and to their own cost.

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