

Pioneering History

NEGOTIATING PAKEHA COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN THE LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES*



IN APRIL 1884 Thomas Hocken stood before a group of nearly 40 men who had gathered to establish the Early History Society of Otago. Hocken was known by his contemporaries as a ‘gentleman who had always taken a great interest’ in New Zealand’s history.¹ On this occasion he gave a speech designed to rouse interest in the foundation of Pakeha New Zealand: ‘Whatever his nationality, the pioneer delights to record, and his successors to hand down, the minutest incidents of early history’. He hoped that the story of Pakeha origins, symbolized by the arrival of the immigrant ships *Tory*, *Cuba*, *Wild Watch*, *John Wickliffe*, *Randolph* and *Cressy*, would become ‘as complete and full of interest’ as the accounts of Maori or white American origins (with their well-known immigrant vessels the *Arawa* and *Tainui* or the *Mayflower*). He urged his audience to emulate the Historic Society of New York in ‘raising from oblivion a thousand interesting details connected with the settlement . . . which but for such timely efforts must have been irrevocably lost.’²

Another founding member, the Rev. Dr D.M. Stuart, also spoke with a sense of urgency: ‘For years he had advocated the formation of such a society’. His friend — old settler Mr Cutten — had recently died, taking much information on early Otago with him. However, J. Hyde Harris outdid both Hocken and Stuart with a remarkably long-standing intention to gather Otago’s foundational history. Even before they had arrived in Otago, Hyde Harris stated, people had considered establishing a local historical society, ‘with the object of collecting and preserving all the historical incidents connected with the settlement of Otago as far back as the year 1843.’³

This expression of late nineteenth-century Pakeha historical consciousness was articulated more widely in contemporary New Zealand. Pioneers, early settlers or ‘Old Identities’ (as they were variously known) were the focus of writing, public commemorations and (unsurprisingly) early settler societies’ activities. Jock Phillips notes the ‘glowing tributes to our noble pioneers’ that filled New Zealand books, speeches and public memorials from around the 1890s.⁴ These were all manifestations of a widespread Pakeha effort in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to remember the foundation of European New Zealand.

Pakeha New Zealanders seemingly felt far enough away from the beginnings of organized European settlement to need to deliberately commemorate it; and yet the genesis of ‘New Zealand’ was also close enough to be remembered by

the actual participants — albeit participants who were ageing and dying. Rev. Dr Stuart's concern that his old settler friend had died before his memories could be recorded was echoed throughout historical writings and activities of this era. Early settlers were regarded as irreplaceable sources of history; it was important to preserve their memories before their generation disappeared. Public commemorations and other historical activity aimed to promote remembrance of 'pioneers', or the more generic 'early days' as a basis for a collective past.

The notion of 'remembrance' encompasses a variety of writing and activity that lay outside historiography and in the realms of the ephemeral: newspaper writing, pamphlets, memoirs, activities of early settler societies, community commemorations such as regional or national jubilees — the 'undergrowth' of formal history. This cultural production is perhaps best described by the term 'social memory' or 'collective memory'. As Chris Healy writes with regard to Australian historical consciousness, 'social memory' is a useful concept as it includes ways by which the past is made meaningful apart from formal historical writing.⁵

Moreover, social or collective memory acknowledges the connection between memory and identity. Just as private memories are important to an individual's sense of identity, historians of social memory explore how the enunciation and negotiation of memory in the public arena provide collective meanings and identities for societies.⁶ As Healy observes, social memory has an 'infinity of traces'; all historians can do is try to map some of these.⁷ This article explores how pioneers remembered their own pasts and the ways this intersected with larger public memorializing of pioneers and the 'early days'. Running throughout this historical activity was the fundamental belief that Pakeha would create their traditions out of the process of colonization; from 'a thousand interesting details' connected with settlement.

Around the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — a time, perhaps, of heightened historical awareness because of various jubilees and the turn of century — there was something of an outpouring of pioneer reminiscences. Older individuals ('pioneers') were encouraged by early settler societies, newspapers and their children to write down their memories for publication. Indeed, by the early twentieth century, pioneer reminiscences were a contemporary genre. An *Evening Post* review of recollections by Ellen Hewett, published in 1911, referred to 'those little books of old-time reminiscences that picture a New Zealand — a land of primeval forest, vocal with lovely birds, and of trouble with tattooed Maoris — which recent comers can never conceive, and which, to the younger descendants of pioneers, is now a tradition'.⁸

A common feature of pioneer memoirs was a sense of urgency to record memories of the 'early days' of colonization before early settlers died and their reflections were lost forever. This indicates a time of transition, where there was insistence on recording memories in writing because they would die in oral tradition along with the settlers. In 1883, for example, H.C. Jacobson published accounts of the early days of Banks Peninsula, collected from 'original settlers'.⁹ Jacobson's concern that unique information would be lost was vindicated in the preface to the second edition of his book, published ten years later. 'There is a sort of mournful congratulation in looking over the preface of 1883 —

congratulation in having secured the information before those who gave it passed away'. Listing a number who had died, he emphasized the impossibility of procuring these 'records' had he waited a year or two longer.¹⁰

Early settler organizations shared that concern. These groups were often joint efforts between pioneers wanting to reminisce about the past and the generation below them who, with filial piety, believed it important to remember the pioneers and conserve their recollections.¹¹ The Clutha Pioneer Association, the Otago Early Settlers' Associations and the Early Settlers and Historical Association of Wellington all specifically aimed to record reminiscences during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹² The editor of the Wellington Society's journal regularly pleaded for early settlers to volunteer their memories. 'Readers of the Journal will assist the Editor by informing him as to the most likely persons able to supply historical information about the early settlements in the Wellington district. Those able to do so are, we regret to say, growing fewer and fewer as the years go by, and no time is to be lost in putting on record, for the use of the future historian, facts as to the work of the pioneers of the settlement.'¹³

The phrase 'future historian' was peppered throughout pioneer memoirs. Pioneers — and those collating their reminiscences — did not claim to be writing 'history'; rather they claimed to be working for the benefit of the 'future historian'. This stemmed from the idea that pioneers were eye-witnesses, able to provide accurate historical evidence from their memories.

James Hay was one such memoirist working with the 'future historian' in mind. He published reminiscences of 'Earliest Canterbury' as part of a collective movement by 'older Colonists' in Canterbury to provide 'authentic data for the historian' of 'some future time'. Hay wrote that as he had been blessed with a 'very retentive memory', he could accurately provide with dates and figures 'a great many interesting and important incidents connected with those early days'.¹⁴ E.M. Jacobson claimed that eye-witness accounts had enduring veracity over 'new theories' put forward about New Zealand history. 'Many of those who wish to show how false the old accounts are forget that they are undertaking, after a lapse of fifty years' time, to know more about the various incidents than those who were actually participants'.¹⁵ Even Alfred Saunders introduced his *History of New Zealand* by emphasizing that he was 'the *first* settler who landed from the *first* immigrant ship that entered Nelson Harbour'.¹⁶ Along with utilizing documentary sources, Saunders' point that he had been there and witnessed history seemed to be an important basis for claiming authority as an historian.

Although pioneer memoirists (or compilers of reminiscences) stated that they were setting down the facts for 'future historians', the tone and content of many reminiscences indicate that they were not just to be 'raw material'. Narratives were being shaped and selected. When we read memoirs and other written records, we do not read the memory itself but its transformation through writing. Memoirs are not innocent acts of memory, but attempts to persuade.¹⁷

Some memoirists were open about the selectiveness of the material they included. James Hay divided the whalers around Akaroa into two groups: the 'degenerate', about whom 'nothing need be recorded', and the others, who were 'fine, chivalrous' and industrious.¹⁸ Thomas Hancock instructed his memory

(‘Look back, O! memory . . .’) to recall Auckland’s ‘adventurous pioneers, whose only resources were their own brave hearts, active brains, and strong vigorous limbs’.¹⁹ James Woon, recording his memories of Wanganui’s early settlers, stated that he would only record their good aspects: ‘I have ever kept steadily in mind the grand old Roman maxim . . . “Of the dead (speak) nothing but what is good”’.²⁰

Even if memoirists were not openly selective about the memories they recorded or collated, pioneer memoirs had a generic quality; they described remarkably similar experiences and were written with similar tone. Reminiscences were full of images of ‘hardy pioneers’ ‘toiling’ to found communities; they emphasized certain qualities such as bravery, co-operation and industriousness. Even when writing his reminiscences solely for his daughters, John Logan Campbell carefully selected what to reveal about his past. According to R.C.J. Stone, Campbell erected an ‘opaque screen’ around his real motives and reiterated the Victorian virtues of ‘self-help, hard work, straight dealing’.²¹

Memoirs — like all media — have a ‘schema’; there is a tendency to represent or remember one event or person in terms of another. Peter Burke notes that memoirs depicting life in the trenches, for example, used recurrent images derived from books about World War I.²² He argues that this suggests a process by which the remembered past turns into myth — not in the sense of inaccurate history, but a story with symbolic meaning, made up of stereotyped incidents and characters. This observation about memory and ‘myth’ — myth not meaning untruth, but the process of imbuing ordinary lives with larger, symbolic meaning — is illuminating when applied to pioneer reminiscences. When presenting the details of their lives, Pakeha memoirists followed certain conventions that had evolved in the ‘genre’ of pioneer reminiscences. They ordered their memories into explanatory frameworks — the founding of ‘civilization’ and community — that attributed larger meaning to their lives. Their ‘founding father’ narratives often turned ‘unintended consequences into conscious aims’.²³

The tone of pioneer memoirs (and indeed the works themselves) partly stemmed from settlers and their descendants wanting to claim a place in community history. This phenomenon was epitomized in the Otago Early Settlers’ Association, founded in 1898. The Association’s motto expressed the central purpose of their organization: ‘Reanimate Otago’s Pioneers to fame undying through the dying years.’²⁴ The Association worked to preserve memories, artefacts and documents connected with the ‘early days’; this was all part of promoting Otago’s early settlers within the collective memory of Otago people. ‘Early settlers’ were strictly defined by the Association as those who had arrived in Otago before 1861 (and the influx of gold seekers).²⁵ Sean Brosnahan argues that the Association was a ‘striking’ success ‘in convincing the wider Otago society that the “Early Settlers” were indeed somehow deserving of special status’ in Otago’s historical narrative.²⁶ Brosnahan points out that although the years 1848–1861 were characterized by ‘modest achievements’, it became widely accepted that Otago’s later prosperity stemmed from the work of the early settlers.

It would be overly simplistic to assume that the prominence of Otago's early settlers in collective memory was solely the outcome of self-promotion by the pioneers and their descendants. Alastair Thomson observes of 'memory biographies' by Australian Anzac veterans that the meanings constructed around events in people's lives, especially public events, are related to larger public meanings.²⁷ There is interplay between identity, memory and public versions of the past. In all New Zealand communities it is apparent that there was intersection between pioneers claiming a place in the Pakeha past and others — especially community and cultural leaders — wanting to commemorate a collective past with early settlers as central reference points.

Newspapers — powerful shapers of public opinion — were one medium that acted as historical consciences for Pakeha communities. In the 1880s, 1890s and early twentieth century, it was common for newspapers to publish accounts of 'Old Identities' and incidents from the past. Erik Olssen notes that the *Otago Daily Times* encouraged local history while George Fenwick was managing director around the late nineteenth century.²⁸ The *New Zealand Herald* also regularly published pieces in its Saturday supplements under columns such as 'Old Identities' (worthy early settlers); 'Old Auckland' (history of old buildings and noteworthy Auckland citizens); 'Old Stories Re-told' (revisiting past events and incidents). Editorials reminded readers of forthcoming historical occasions and wrote in reverential tones about worthy pioneers. On the fiftieth jubilee of the arrival of the first British emigrant ships to Auckland, the *Auckland Weekly News* solemnly reminded Aucklanders: 'It is well that these historical landmarks should be remembered and observed, for a nation which has no history is in a bad way'.²⁹

The prevalence of newspaper pieces reminding contemporary society of the hardships suffered by pioneers prompted an Auckland journalist ('Cosmos') in 1899 to comment. Going through issues of the *Auckland Weekly News* dating back to the early 1880s, he observed 'a preponderance of items referring mostly in eulogistic terms to old identities, early settlers etc.'. Their 'general tenor . . . seems to imply that we of to-day are under a sort of indebtedness to these early comers'. Reversing the idea that gratitude was owed to pioneers for suffering hardships, Cosmos wrote, perhaps ironically, that the pioneers had, like the early gum-diggers, 'picked the eyes out of the country, and the only interesting phases out of colonial life'.³⁰ It was unusual for such an opinion to be aired so explicitly.

No matter how early settlers wrote their memoirs, it appears that readers approached such publications with expectations of what they would demonstrate about the Pakeha past. There was keenness to attribute certain values and characteristics to early settlers. In its review of Ellen Hewett's memoirs, the *Manawatu Evening Standard* touched on the ubiquity of the pioneer memoir genre. 'In these days "the early days" are just a little overdone, and the rather intolerant youth of the twentieth century grows impatient at the mention of the deeds of the pioneer'.³¹ Yet the reviewer reinforced the idea of heroic pioneers laying the foundations of community, claiming that Hewett's book made 'readers realize the debt New Zealand owes to the heroes of half a century back . . . from

splendid specimens of the breed called British the best parts of the Dominion have sprung'.³² This was in spite of Hewett's modest tone and absence of any such claims or rhetoric. The reference to the impatience of contemporary youth suggests that there was perhaps tension between audiences tiring of reminiscences (and wanting to move on) and yet feeling a duty to pay homage to pioneers for New Zealand's progress.

The notion of progress was a recurrent point of thematic intersection between pioneer memories and wider Pakeha historical consciousness. Pioneers themselves constantly alerted contemporary Pakeha to the rapid change and progress that had occurred in their lifetime. George R. Hart wrote with wonderment: 'But when one looks around and sees the changes which have been effected here in so comparatively short a time, and the progress made by Christchurch since the days of which I have been gossiping, it is positively astonishing. It is scarcely credible even to one like myself, who has grown up with the place.'³³ 'Old identities' like Hart felt that they had seen settlements transformed from 'hardy bands of pioneers' to civilized cities in a 'comparatively short space of time — a mere span in the history of a country'.³⁴ Acting as witnesses to the 'astonishing' progress of their community, pioneer memoirists tied their personal memories into a larger narrative framework. As emigrants, they also brought such expectations with them. James Belich refers to progress as being one of the principal themes in the 'crusader literature' promoting New Zealand as a destination for British emigration in the nineteenth century.³⁵

These memories of progress were not simply generic statements repeated by unimaginative pioneer memoirists. Their astonishment was genuinely felt. In the 1890s early Auckland settlers John Webster and John Logan Campbell wrote to each other frequently, often contrasting — with a sense of amazement — their pioneer past with the modern present.³⁶ As Tom Griffiths writes of Australian colonists of the 1880s and 1890s, their lives had coincided with 'an era of amazing material progress. They held in their heads memories of such change as they thought would never again be seen.' They revelled in the contrast between a 'recent but primitive past and a progressive present'.³⁷

Moreover, pioneer memories were reinforced by and reflected a historical metanarrative of progress circulating in contemporary Pakeha culture. The late nineteenth century saw a spate of jubilees in New Zealand: towns, provinces, institutions (such as the Methodist church) and the nation. On these occasions of public commemoration the dominant historical motif was rapid progress in the development of communities and 'civilization'.³⁸ The 'extraordinary contrast' between the 'early days' and the present was reiterated in official speeches, newspaper reports, historical tableaux and public displays. The pioneers were given an important role in this metanarrative: they were witnesses to progress, instigators of it and reference points for it.

John Bodnar observes that commemorations held in nineteenth-century New England were organized by cultural leaders, most of whom came from a broad group of middle-class professionals or entrepreneurs. These men of 'social influence' self-consciously encouraged loyalty to larger political structures and institutions and were anxious to associate themselves with the heroic makers of

a new nation.³⁹ In New Zealand, the organizers of jubilees and other public commemorations came from a similar group. They were men involved in industry and local politics. During Otago's jubilee, the *Otago Daily Times* reflected the general sentiment of the commemorations by positioning the early settlers as central to the celebration of progress. 'The dominant feeling was that honour should be shown to whom honour is due, and in a spirit of jubilant gratitude the community turned to "old identities", and in every conceivable form expressed heartfelt appreciation'.⁴⁰ While the early settlers were accorded a significant symbolic role, it was Dunedin's business leaders who orchestrated the commemorations and dominated the two main bodies responsible for organizing the events.⁴¹ Otago's early settlers were not generally part of Dunedin's business elite, and were more likely to be based in rural areas.⁴²

A letter to the editor of the *Otago Daily Times* from an early settler after the jubilee celebrations further suggests that those promoting veneration of early settlers in public commemorations were often not 'old identities' themselves. 'Colonial' believed that there was a discrepancy between the rhetoric honouring the settlers and the way they were actually treated. He believed they had been lured into Dunedin by shopkeepers and hotels seeking profits. Although he was an early settler himself, 'Colonial' did not wish to be glorified. 'At the same time, after all that has been written and said — and said truly — regarding the character of these people who had to pioneer one of the finest countries in the known world, I would say they have had just about enough this time to satisfy them, and that never again will they perform the same to satisfy these people in Dunedin, who have nothing but selfish interest at heart'.⁴³

Commemoration of pioneers with their generic characteristics such as industriousness and co-operation was a colony-wide phenomenon, occurring in many parts of New Zealand. However, it did not necessarily follow that 'pioneer history' was a base for a sense of national cohesion. The gap between settlers as founders of community or province, and settlers as founders of a nation was apparent on occasions of public celebration, when newspaper editorials and official rhetoric insisted that the early settlers had founded a 'nation'. During the province's jubilee, the *Otago Daily Times* asserted that although Otago's provincial history and traditions and provincial achievements were the focus of the commemorations, there was 'no inclination to renew the reign of provincial exclusiveness or to blow Otago's trumpet in challenge to the world at large'.⁴⁴ Such pronouncements had the air of protesting too much.

Perhaps the most striking example of the strength of local over national sense of history occurred during New Zealand's fiftieth jubilee in 1890. Although provinces and local communities acknowledged particular dates — usually the arrival of a group of settlers — there was no set day on which to celebrate New Zealand's anniversary. In late 1889 the Governor, Lord Onslow, advised the acting Premier, Edwin Mitchelson, that he had been invited to attend celebrations for New Zealand's fiftieth jubilee in Wellington on 22 January and also in Auckland on 29 January. He wanted Mitchelson to ensure that the ministers settled 'the vexed question of the date of the foundation of the Colony', as he did not want to feed 'what I hold to be the undesirable spirit of provincialism'.⁴⁵

There had been ongoing debate over the foundation date of the British colony in Auckland and Wellington newspapers during the previous few months. Onslow noted that 'the press of the rival towns have stated their cases with much ability and have probably brought forward every argument which they can find in support of their respective theories'.⁴⁶ The arguments were couched in terms of the nature of each settlement, stemming back to old rivalry between New Zealand Company settlements and the British Crown. While Wellington argued that the genesis of the colony was when the New Zealand Company ship *Aurora* sailed into Port Nicholson on 22 January, Aucklanders pointed to 29 January when Hobson (as representative of the British Crown) arrived in the Bay of Islands. From Wellington's point of view, the early settlers were central: 'If it is the Colonists who make the Colony, it is surely the arrival of these, rather than that of a few officials at the Bay of Islands' that marked the genesis of the colony.⁴⁷ This argument was underlined with tributes of bravery to settlers on the *Aurora*, a 'daring band' who left England 'strong in hand and heart, to found a colony'.⁴⁸

Aucklanders argued that the arrival of the British Crown was the only date with official significance, although a local newspaper countered Wellington's argument with a reminder that eminent colonists (John Webster, William Brown and John Logan Campbell) were settled around Auckland before the New Zealand Company ship had even left England.⁴⁹ In any case, government officials decided in favour of 29 January. Attorney-General Sir Frederick Whitaker and Governor Onslow agreed that 'the anniversary of the *colony* could only be a day on which some act has been done under the authority of the *Crown*'.⁵⁰

Only Auckland marked this official 'national jubilee' on 29 January 1890 with large-scale celebrations; the Christchurch *Press* estimated that there would be 100,000 people in Auckland during the jubilee holiday.⁵¹ Wellington observed the jubilee on its usual anniversary, 22 January, with what the *Evening Post* proclaimed was the 'most successful popular demonstration ever held in this city and probably the whole colony.' The early settlers held pride of place. 'This is one of the cases in which the memory of the much-quoted "oldest inhabitants" can be referred to as authoritative'.⁵² Christchurch and Dunedin did little to acknowledge the national jubilee on 29 January. The Christchurch *Press* noted that Canterbury seemed 'to treat the whole matter with supreme contempt'; insurance offices and banks were closed but 'Jubilee Day interests us not . . . so far as the general public are concerned'.⁵³

This reaction contrasts with the effort made by Christchurch people a month earlier when commemorating the thirty-ninth anniversary of the foundation of the province by the 'Canterbury pilgrims'.⁵⁴ Moreover, by publishing the 'reminiscences of a well-known Canterbury colonist',⁵⁵ the Christchurch *Press* managed to focus on the local past, even while ostensibly acknowledging the national jubilee. Canterbury marked its own fiftieth jubilee in 1900 with significant commemorations, including a jubilee exhibition and plans to erect a statue of Queen Victoria as a jubilee memorial.⁵⁶

Conscious of their distinctive origins, Aucklanders worked from the early 1890s to commemorate the beginnings of organized Pakeha settlement. In

October 1892, 1200 Aucklanders gathered to celebrate the fiftieth jubilee of the arrival of the *Duchess of Argyle* and *Jane Gifford*, the 'first emigrant ships that ever left Great Britain for Auckland'.⁵⁷ The *Auckland Weekly News* editorialized on how New Zealand's history was characterized by 'planting' civilization (embodied by groups of settlers) in the wilderness. The Otago, Canterbury and Wellington settlements had their 'worthy' pioneers, while government in the north was founded 'upon the somewhat miscellaneous elements that had previously existed'. The arrival of organized immigration was thus considered to be a highlight in Auckland's founding narrative: 'And so it came to pass that the arrival of the "Duchess of Argyle" and the "Jane Gifford" is looked back to in Auckland with much the same feeling as is felt in Otago, Canterbury and Wellington'.⁵⁸ Within a few years, 10 October had become an annual reunion day for Auckland's old colonists and their descendants.⁵⁹

The rhetoric that emphasized pioneers as 'nation-builders', or founders of provinces, represents a process whereby the personal and local memories of early settlers were being incorporated into larger historical narratives of 'civilization', nation and empire. The actual content of pioneer memoirs often related to specific sites and usually bore little relation to abstract historical narratives. Moreover, as pioneers were often either still alive or at least within living memory of the community, remembering them could lead to personal, local historical focus. Pioneers were both archetypes and individuals. The preface to James Woon's memoirs, for example, indicated concerns faced by someone writing memoirs in a community where early settlers were living, not-long dead, or vivid in the memories of others. Not only would he speak purely good of those he wrote, but Woon was also worried about the possibility that he might omit a worthy settler: 'I wish it to be clearly understood — and I cannot emphasize the remark too forcibly — that any such omission was quite unintentional: it was a lapse of memory at the time, and nothing more'.⁶⁰

Thomas Hocken and the Early History Society of Otago clearly had high expectations of gathering important foundational history from Otago's 'Old Identities'. However, they were startled by the reluctance of early settlers to contribute, and by the nature of their reminiscences. Hocken recorded with disappointment in the Society's minute book: '[I]t was found impossible to galvanise the Old Identities into any mood to give information or personal reminiscences in writing. Many lived at a considerable distance from town and it was difficult to visit them. If visited, the interview consisted of little more than twaddling personal details.'⁶¹ It seems that the Society's expectations as to the kind of historical material that would be extracted from pioneers came up against the reality of pioneer life — that it was not necessarily interesting or inspirational, but perhaps mundane and personal. Perhaps also, older settlers were reluctant to be interviewed by members of the Society, or were self-effacing and disinclined to view themselves as special.⁶²

The divergence between the personal, local nature of history focused on remembering early settlers, and a more abstract, 'national' historical vision was apparent during a debate in 1906 on where to house Hocken's collection of historical manuscripts and documents.⁶³ The Otago Early Settlers' Association

offered to hold the collection in their soon-to-be built museum. However, Dunedin's scholarly community expressed strong disapproval that significant historical documents of national importance might be stored in a space primarily aimed at reminiscing and serving local needs. Dr William Benham, curator of the Otago Museum and eminent academic, characterized the Association's museum as embodying history based on local remembrance, a form of history that was unsustainable. 'In the future, when the actual early settlers had passed away — when perhaps the descendants of these early settlers were no longer up in the details of the early history of Otago — it would be natural for visitors who were anxious to know anything about early history to go to the Museum in search of it'.⁶⁴ The Settlers' Association president, Donald Reid, countered this with a description of the perpetual 'early settler': 'Dr Benham was mistaken in thinking that the early settlers would pass away in time. As a matter of fact, they would never die; they kept on increasing.'⁶⁵

The prevalence of pioneers in Pakeha collective memories was not a unique phenomenon. It echoed currents of contemporary historical consciousness in other white settler societies. John Bodnar observes that the pioneer was popular in mid-western American commemorations of the late nineteenth century.⁶⁶ Cultural historians Graeme Davison, Tom Griffiths and Chris Healy describe similar themes and discursive strategies in the history-making of white Australians.⁶⁷ The ubiquity of the pioneer figure in the history-making of colonial (settler) societies indicates that it is a historical narrative characteristic of colonization. It is one of the responses to what Jock Phillips has termed the 'serious problem' caused by emigration, where 'cultural traditions and historical associations of the settlers are attached to a home across the seas'.⁶⁸ As Chris Healy writes with regard to Australia, the European settlers perceived themselves as arriving in a land without history, although they were (and still are) also obsessed with their historicity. Europeans arriving in New Zealand believed that their landfall marked the beginning of historical time, measurable in the progress of 'civilization' and contrasting with a 'timeless' Maori past. Emigration had severed historical continuity, a fact perhaps felt particularly keenly by the first couple of generations of immigrants.

This sense of historical disruption is suggested in an *Otago Daily Times* editorial referring to the 1898 Otago jubilee: the 'note of pathos' that often accompanied anniversaries was especially marked in a young colony. 'Most of the elderly and middle aged people now in Otago were born far away: the homes of their childhood are a world-wide distance from their destined graves. They have two pasts, as it were, separately localised.' They think of 'Home', while there are 'other mingling memories of a colonial day that is dead'.⁶⁹ As was customary on such occasions, the editorial urged the early settlers not to dwell on their losses but celebrate 50 years of rapid progress. However, reference to the dislocation caused by emigration suggests how memorializing functioned for Pakeha in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. History was part of establishing connections with a new land for those who had come from another and experienced disruption in historical continuity.

The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century pioneer reminiscences and related historical activity created narratives that gave immediate form to the recent past. Both Bodnar and Healy note in relation to America and Australia respectively, that 'pioneer history' represented a process of forming specific and local attachments in a new land. Healy argues that it was the metaphor of family and local history, rather than general or state-centred history that provided the model of historical imagination through which people made sense of their own time in places that were still new to them.⁷⁰ Although Pakeha pioneers were connected with a 'national' past in the rhetoric of public commemoration, this was self-consciously reiterated in the face of strong identification with local and provincial pasts. The New Zealand Natives' Association of the late nineteenth century, for example, consciously tried to create a larger sense of national unity. At the foundation meeting of the Invercargill branch, in February 1898, founders J.A. Hanan and Robert McNab urged the 500 people present to aim for the 'obliteration of local and provincial jealousies'.⁷¹ Hanan paid tribute to the pioneers, claiming they had laid the foundations of a great nation. Although not a historical association, the Natives' Association recognized that a sense of a national past was an important aspect of national unity. Clearly the Natives' Association had a different purpose from the Invercargill Pioneer Settlers' Association already in existence, which presumably looked to a regional past founded by a particular body of settlers.

As Chris Healy argues, Australian (and by extension, New Zealand) social memory is a 'product of colonialism' because histories of colonizing are ubiquitous. They are histories of discovering, exploring, pioneering, founding institutions and struggling in a new land. Healy suggests that Australia's most powerful public historical narratives date from the colonial period, before 'nation' in 1901. Moreover, he notes, histories of nation-building and national character are some of the 'ubiquitous' histories generated by colonial relations.⁷² Thus understanding remembrance of pioneers as a narrative produced by colonization is more illuminating than regarding it solely as a stage in the evolution of national identity. As Peter Gibbons points out, describing writing — or, more broadly, cultural production — in terms of evolution towards a 'national' literature (or national culture), is to ignore the 'ideological scaffolding'. Writing in colonial societies is intimately linked with the process of colonization, 'the extension of European power into non-European territories'. In this case, historical writing and commemoration of pioneers was directly involved in 'the description and justification of the European presence as normative' and legitimate, while implicitly marginalizing Maori.⁷³

Focusing on the concept of colonization is also important in order to try and understand contemporary Pakeha ideas and sense of historicity. 'Colonization' and 'civilization' were closely linked concepts in the nineteenth century.⁷⁴ The colonists emphasized colonization as a creative process: building and reproducing society, community and 'civilization' in a 'barren' sphere. They believed, as E.G. Wakefield wrote, that colonization was 'heroic work' and consisted of making all sorts of things not yet in existence. In colonizing, individuals and communities were always 'planning, executing and watching

the progress, or contemplating the results of their own labours'.⁷⁵ The process of founding communities had been a reality for many Pakeha of the time; it was something they or people they knew had been involved in and remembered. It is possible to see in the remembrance of pioneers and the 'early days', negotiation between those who remembered the foundation of communities (as participants) and those who regarded the founding of communities as part of a larger abstract historical narrative.

For many contemporary Pakeha looking to the past, the minutiae of colonization and settlement would form the basis of Pakeha traditions and history. Although Robert McNab's own historical work was strictly based on documentary sources (so he claimed), he believed the memories of pioneers would provide a distinctive source of history and identity for Pakeha. McNab wrote in the preface to Herries Beattie's 1911 *Pioneer Recollections* that he had guided and advised Beattie in his effort to publish pioneer reminiscences. 'Were all parts of the country possessed of devoted workers like the author of this book the hope of the late Right Hon R.J. Seddon would be easily realised and a vast storehouse of information put at the disposal of the future painter, poet and historian'.⁷⁶ The notion of the pioneer was not fixed in time, but continued to be central to local history and reminiscences through the twentieth century.⁷⁷ Beattie's collections of pioneer memories were, for example, still being published in the late 1940s. Also, the urge to pay homage to founders seems to occur in cycles.

In writing down memories, pioneer memoirists bequeathed narratives to Pakeha collective memory, as well as responding to the desire of communities to remember a past that could form a basis for collective history. Above all, pioneer memories and public remembrance of pioneers (jubilees and settler associations) celebrated the creation and replication of community and society. This foreclosed other memories, such as disruption, loss and displacement of Maori. Fashioning a past is a crucial part of the process of colonization. Colonization requires the construction of a new 'civilization' in all senses of the word, including a cultural infrastructure. The deliberate attempt by migrants and subsequent generations to record and create historical narratives — in this case, foundational narratives — was part of the colonization process.⁷⁸ Paul Carter argues that colonial societies have an essential need to provide beginnings, to explain why and how they had come about and also to legitimate their presence. He asks: '[w]ho are more liable to charges of unlawful usurpation and constitutional illegitimacy than the founders of colonies?'⁷⁹ Curtis Hinsley also asks, '[a]nd who, therefore, more desirous of creating the founding and legitimating myths that secure title to the land?'⁸⁰ 'Pioneer' histories are the genealogies of communities striving for a sense of legitimacy in a recently settled land.

FIONA HAMILTON

Auckland

NOTES

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1 Rev. Dr Donald M. Stuart introduced Thomas Hocken in this manner to the group of men gathered in the Dunedin Education Office as foundation members of the Early History Society of Otago. *Otago Witness*, 26 April 1884, p.18.

2 *ibid.*

3 *ibid.*

4 Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male — A History*, 2nd ed., Auckland, 1996, p.39.

5 Chris Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory*, Melbourne, 1997, pp.4–5.

6 Paula Hamilton, 'The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History', in Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, eds, *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia*, Melbourne, 1994, p.17.

7 Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism*, p.5.

8 *Evening Post*, 10 June 1911. Quoted in Ellen Hewett, *Looking Back, or Personal Reminiscences: By the Widow of a New Zealand Pioneer Settler*, 4th ed., 1973, p.99 (first edition, 1911).

9 H.C. Jacobson and J.W. Stack, *Tales of Banks Peninsula*, Akaroa, 1914 (preface to the first edition, 1883): 'Banks Peninsula is one of the few places in this Island that has a history, and many of the original settlers are passing away, so that it was desirable to procure their records without loss of time'.

10 *ibid.*, preface to the second edition.

11 Sean Brosnahan describes the founding of the Otago Early Settlers' Association in 1898 as a 'partnership between the pioneers and their descendants' (Sean G. Brosnahan, *To Fame Undying: The Otago Settlers' Association and its Museum 1898–1998*, Dunedin, 1998, p.14). Key to this were the early leaders in the Association — 'migrant youths' who arrived in New Zealand as children or young adults. The Early Settlers and Historical Association of Wellington, founded in 1912, wanted to record 'the story of the rough hewing of new settlements in a strange land' and to show 'the dwindling few, of those old pioneers, that they are not forgotten' (*The Journal of the Early Settlers and Historical Association of Wellington* [JESHAW], 1, 1, December 1912, p.5). Graeme Davison observes that the historical societies founded in Australia in the early twentieth century were vehicles for the younger generation to remember and honour the pioneers (Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, St Leonards, 2000, p.202).

12 The Otago Early Settlers' Association aimed to 'collect and place on record anecdotes and reminiscences of early years' (Sean Brosnahan, *To Fame Undying*, p.9). The Wellington Association similarly acted to 'collect and place on record such anecdotes and reminiscences of those early days as can be got from original settlers and their descendants' (JESHAW, 1, 1, December 1912, p.3).

13 JESHAW, 1, 2 May 1912. In this issue, the editor asked for specific information: 'Early racing days on Te Aro Flat, will some old colonists please supply reminiscences of it?' (p.57).

14 James Hay, *Reminiscences of Earliest Canterbury (Principally Banks Peninsula) and its Settlers*, Christchurch, 1915, pp.3–4.

15 E.M. Jacobson, 'Preface' in H.C. Jacobson and J.W. Stack, *Tales of Banks Peninsula*, 3rd ed., Akaroa, 1914. E.M. Jacobson took over his father's project of collecting and publishing pioneer reminiscences after the latter's death.

16 Alfred Saunders, *History of New Zealand: From the Arrival of Tasman in Golden Bay in 1642, to the Second Arrival of Sir George Grey in 1861*, Christchurch, 1896, p.iii (emphasis in the original).

17 Peter Burke, 'History as Social Memory', in Thomas Butler, ed., *Memory, History, Culture and the Mind*, Oxford, 1989, p.101. Burke quotes sinologist Stephen Owen.

18 Hay, *Reminiscences of Earliest Canterbury*, p.50.

19 Thomas Hancock, *A Short Sketch of Some Incidents in the Colonial Life of Mr Thomas Hancock* (edited by William Coleman), Auckland, 1885, pp.67–68.

20 James Garland Woon, *Wanganui Old Settlers*, 1902, preface.

21 R.C.J. Stone, *The Father and his Gift: John Logan Campbell's Later Years*, Auckland, 1987, pp.135–6. Stone traces the evolution of Campbell's memoirs. He describes how Campbell revised the first 267 pages of the 'Reminiscences' (initially written for his family) in order to submit them for publication as 'sketches of the early days of New Zealand'. These were published as *Poenamo*, a work Campbell claimed to have been 'cajoled into publishing'. The manuscript for *Poenamo* was not written in 'great haste', as Campbell asserted in the preface, but had been laboriously worked on for years.

22 Peter Burke, 'History as Social Memory', pp.102–3. Burke refers to Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*.

23 *ibid.*, p.110. Burke notes that the 'founding father' myth is manifested in many forms. Generally, the differences between past and present are elided and it is as if the main purpose of the past heroes had been to bring about the present.

24 Brosnahan, *To Fame Undying*, p.12.

25 *ibid.*, p.7. Brosnahan describes how the 'early settlers' divided the Otago population into two groups: the 'Old Identities' — those who arrived between 1848 and 1861, and the 'New Iniquities' — 'those who flooded into the province after that date' (p.6).

26 *ibid.*, p.14.

27 Alastair Thomson, 'Embattled Manhood: Gender, Memory and the Anzac Legend', in Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, eds, *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Melbourne, 1994, p.158.

28 Erik Olssen, *A History of Otago*, Dunedin, 1984, p.173.

29 *Auckland Weekly News* (AWN), 15 October 1892, p.28.

30 *New Zealand Herald* (NZH), 3 June 1899, p.1.

31 *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 1 June 1911. Quoted in Hewett, *Looking Back*, pp.97–98.

32 *ibid.*

33 George R. Hart, *Stray Leaves from the Early History of Canterbury*, Christchurch, 1887, p.5.

34 *ibid.*, p.51. Early settler Thomas Hancock instructed his memory to recall the striking progress of Auckland (Thomas Hancock, *A Short Sketch of Some Incidents in the Colonial Life of Mr Thomas Hancock*, ed. by William Coleman, Auckland, 1885, pp.67–68).

35 James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders From Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century*, Auckland, 1996, pp.297–8.

36 Stone, *The Father and his Gift*, p.232.

37 Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, Cambridge, 1996, p.199.

38 Indeed, regional and national jubilees largely functioned as a measuring stick/celebration of progress. The exhibitions that were usually held in conjunction with them underlined this. As graphic demonstrations of New Zealand's material progression, exhibitions were considered by community leaders to be 'appropriate' ways of marking historical landmarks.

39 John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, Princeton, 1992, pp.24–25.

40 *Otago Daily Times* (ODT), 24 March 1898, p.2.

41 Belinda Leckie, 'The Otago Settlement Jubilee, 1898', BA (Hons) long essay, University of Otago, 1990, p.11.

42 This was reflected in the membership of the Otago Early Settlers' Association. According to analysis by Wendy-Anne Curtis, the Association's members were generally not among Dunedin's powerful or dominant in business. ('"A Germ of Perpetuality": The Otago Early Settlers' Association 1898–1930', BA (Hons) thesis, University of Otago, 1987, p.13. Also, an early settler reunion organized in conjunction with the Otago jubilee attracted 'Early Settler' families who came to Dunedin from 'country districts right around the province': Brosnahan, *To Fame Undying*, p.16.

43 ODT, 8 April 1898, p.3.

44 ODT, 23 March 1898, p.2.

45 Lord Onslow to E. Mitchelson, 30 December 1889, Correspondence Relating to Anniversary Day New Zealand 1889–1890, NZ MS 11, p.33, Auckland City Libraries, Special Collections.

46 *ibid.*

47 Theophilus Heale, 'The Birthday of the Colony', pamphlet, November 1889. Heale, the captain of the *Aurora*, had written this in 1883 during an earlier debate over when New Zealand's anniversary day should be marked. Wellington historian, J. Howard Wallace, republished it in November 1889 in pamphlet form.

48 *ibid.*

49 Main Scrapbook, Vol. 6, p.117, Auckland Institute and Museum Library. R.C.J. Stone describes how during the 1890s and early 1900s, John Logan Campbell became known as the 'Father of Auckland'. Indeed, no other New Zealand settlement had a 'founding father' as acclaimed as Campbell. Stone argues that this can be explained by reference to Auckland's unplanned beginnings: 'Lacking true founding fathers, citizens there adopted one': Stone, *The Father and his Gift*, pp.232–3.

50 F. Whitaker to Lord Onslow, 9 January 1890, Correspondence Relating to Anniversary Day of New Zealand 1889–1890, NZ MS 11, p.83 (emphasis in the original).

51 *Press*, 29 January 1890, p.3.

52 *Evening Post*, 23 January 1890, p.2.

53 *Press*, 29 January 1890, p.5.

54 *Press*, 24 December 1889, p.5; 31 December 1889, p.6.

55 *Press*, 22 January 1890, p.4; 29 January 1890, p.5.

56 W.H. Scotter, *A History of Canterbury: Volume III 1876–1950*, Christchurch, 1965, pp.244–5. The statue of Victoria was not unveiled until 1903, by which time it was a memorial to her. The jubilee exhibition was held in the recently erected Canterbury Hall, which seated 3000 people. There were other rooms and annexes up to 360 feet long, providing a mile of avenues for the displays. This was more space than for the 1882 international exhibition in Hagley Park. The Christchurch branch of the New Zealand Natives' Association organized a jubilee souvenir publication: *Canterbury Old and New 1850–1900*, Christchurch, 1900. This book contained three sections; the first, on Canterbury's history, was written by 'men who themselves experienced the storm and stress of a pioneer's life' (preface). The other sections were devoted to Maori and the flora, fauna and geology of Canterbury.

57 AWN, 1 October 1892, p.14.

58 AWN, 15 October 1892, p.17.

59 NZH, 9 October 1906, p.6.

60 James Garland Woon, *Wanganui Old Settlers*, 1902, preface and p.80.

61 Early History Society of Otago Minute Book, MS 97, p.19, Hocken Library, Dunedin.

62 It was usual for pioneer memoirists to begin their accounts with a self-effacing preface, stating that they were only writing at the request of family and friends. Thomas Hocken supplied 'old identity' John Webster with such a preface: 'Something like this — that these reminiscences appear at the earnest desire of your children & of your intimate friends, that you are quite conscious how incomplete they are from your failing memory and advanced years, & how much you regret they were not undertaken 25 years ago and so on & so on.' (T. Hocken to J. Webster, 10 June 1908, Thomas Morland Hocken, Letters 1889–1908, NZMS 4/16, pp.14–15, Auckland City Libraries, Special Collections).

63 From the late 1870s until his death in 1910, Thomas Hocken spent much time collecting documents and manuscripts related to New Zealand history. For further information see: E.H. McCormick, *The Fascinating Folly: Dr Hocken and His Fellow Collectors*, Dunedin, 1961; A.G. Hocken, *Dr T.M. Hocken, 1836–1910: a Gentleman of his Time*, Dunedin 1989; Fiona Hamilton, 'Founding Histories: Some Pakeha Constructions of a New Zealand Past in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1999 (especially chapter two); Olga Fitchett, 'Dr Hocken and his Work', MA thesis, University of Otago, 1928.

64 ODT, 31 July 1906, p.2. Dr William Benham was a zoologist of world stature when he emigrated to Dunedin from England in 1898, to take up the position of professor of biology at the University of Otago. Over the next few decades he held offices in the Otago Institute, was the curator of the Otago University Museum and later sat on the Hocken Library Committee. See John Morton, 'William Blaxland Benham' in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography: Vol. Three, 1901–1920*, Wellington, 1996, pp.47–48.

65 ODT, 31 July 1906, p.2.

66 Bodnar, *Remaking America*, p.121.

67 Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, St Leonards, 2000; Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, Cambridge, 1996; Chris Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory*, Melbourne, 1997.

68 Jock Phillips, 'Musings in Maoriland — or Was There a *Bulletin* School in New Zealand?', *Historical Studies*, 20, 81 (1983), p.527.

69 ODT, 23 March 1898, p.4.

70 Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism*, p.104.

71 Keith Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand's Search for a National Identity*, Wellington, 1986, p.38

72 Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism*, pp.5–6.

73 Peter Gibbons, 'Non-Fiction', in Terry Sturm ed., *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, 2nd ed., Auckland, 1998, p.55; 'A Note on Writing, Identity, and Colonisation in Aotearoa', *Sites*, 13 (Spring 1986), pp.32–33.

74 Erik Olssen explores the relationship between colonization and the nineteenth-century concept of 'civilization'. He argues that the systematic colonization of New Zealand proposed by E.G. Wakefield was seen as particularly successful in transplanting 'civilization'. Even if the ideals were not fulfilled, their ongoing appeal in terms of how Pakeha defined themselves should not be underestimated — particularly in the nineteenth century. See Olssen, 'Mr Wakefield and New Zealand as an Experiment in Post-Enlightenment Experimental Practice', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 31, 2 (1997), p.204.

75 Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *A View of the Art of Colonization With Present Reference to the British Empire; In Letters Between a Statesman and a Colonist* (1849), in M.F. Lloyd Prichard, ed., *The Collected Works of Edward Gibbon Wakefield*, Auckland, 1969, p.825.

76 Robert McNab, preface to James Herries Beattie, *Pioneer Recollections: Dealing Chiefly with the Early Days of the Mataura Valley*, II, Gore, 1911.

77 Chris Hilliard finds that the recurrent characteristics of local history of the 1920–1940 period were clustered around the ideal of 'pioneering' ('Island Stories: The Writing of New Zealand History 1920–1940', MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1997, p.18). The collection of reminiscences before early settlers died was also a concern for local historians of this period and memories were 'a key unit of evidence': pp.21–22. James Cowan used reminiscences as 'the major primary source' for his histories: p.37. He believed that those who had lived through New Zealand's 'pioneering period' were dying unrecorded: p.38.

78 For a wider examination of Pakeha history-making during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century period, see Hamilton, 'Founding Histories'.

79 Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, London, 1987, p.xvi.

80 Curtis M. Hinsley, 'Digging for Identity: Reflections on the Cultural Background of Collecting', *American Indian Quarterly*, 20, 2 (1996), p.181.