

present capacities. Before it can supersede them, we shall need a mature social history and, in particular, an historical political sociology.

COLIN DAVIS

*Massey University*

*The Perano Whalers of Cook Strait, 1911-1964.* By Don Grady. Reed, Wellington, 1982. 238 pp. Out of print.

*Colonial Surgeon.* By Gail Lambert. Dunmore, Palmerston North, 1981. 213 pp. N.Z. price: \$19.95.

*Tauranga 1882-1982: The Centennial of Gazetting Tauranga as a Borough.* Edited by A. C. Bellamy. Tauranga City Council, Tauranga, 1982. 296 pp. N.Z. price \$12.50.

*Totara Estate: Centenary of the Frozen Meat Industry.* By Martine E. Cuff. New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Wellington, 1982. 80 pp. N.Z. price: \$10.00.

*Maoris and Settlers in South Otago: A History of Port Molyneux and its Surrounds.* By Fred Waite. Otago Heritage Books, Dunedin, 1980. 81 pp. N.Z. price: \$6.95.

*Gold, Quartz and Cyanide: The Story of Barewood Reef.* By John Ingram. Otago Heritage Books, Dunedin, 1980. 48 pp. N.Z. price: \$6.50.

*A Cornish Miner at Hamiltons.* By Audrey Paterson. Otago Heritage Books, Dunedin, 1980. 32 pp. N.Z. price: \$5.50.

*Taiari Mouth and its Surrounding Districts.* By Win Parkes and Kath Hislop. Otago Heritage Books, Dunedin, 1980. 72 pp. N.Z. price: \$11.50.

LOCAL HISTORY is alive and well in New Zealand, and the market seems to be expanding. From the perspective of a professional the main irritant can be simply stated: with the exception of the books by Lambert and Cuff it is often impossible to know how the author knows, for no sources are cited. Yet with the exception of the Centennial history of Tauranga, a collage rather than a history, these works are all written with skill and sensitivity. Although they do not necessarily try to address the themes of New Zealand's history, they provide interesting insights. In each case they probe a local perspective, and this is their strength. It might be argued indeed that, for most of the nineteenth century, local perspectives are more revealing than views from the capital and, even in this century (as Don Grady's fascinating book makes clear), important. Some might argue that the true reality of New Zealand's history can only be captured through intensive study of localities. Others have retorted that as a people we have moved so often and so far that the very idea of a local community is misleading. Yet as these books make clear there were local communities, whether villages, towns, districts, or sheep stations; there were institutional continuities; and there were individuals and families who stayed put. A satisfying history of these small islands (so to speak) must, eventually, contain and resolve the variety of local experiences and family experiences.

In another sense these books cover much of New Zealand's nineteenth century history, although Grady's loving account of *The Perano Whalers*, an industry which is usually discussed in the context of the years before 1840, begins effectively in 1911.

Yet much of New Zealand's social climate, Grady reminds us (although it is not his purpose), has been created by the survival of 'frontier' communities and industries. The Peranos, most of whom could not swim, were scarcely typical immigrants, old Joseph being Italian and Roman Catholic. Yet the extractive industry of the frontier imposed its own rhythms and disciplines. And so did the locality in which they lived. There is much here on families, generations, improvisation and ingenuity, working habits, and customs. Yet the larger themes of the nation's history intrude, but dominate only towards the end as government decisions force the station to close. Although before 1940 the whaling boats became faster and the harpoons more efficient, it was only after World War II that specialization, industrial methods, and the bureaucracy across the Strait became central. Yet despite these changes the station and its men remained hard-working, practical-joking, and not averse to running risks. And the station, like those in the 1830s, was bi-racial.

Gail Lambert's biography of *Peter Wilson* reveals another sort of colonist. Wilson was Scottish, professional, and given to idealism. He first settled in Wanganui and then, driven to distraction by the 'troubles' with the local Maoris, moved to New Plymouth in the late 1850s. One suspects that men like Wilson played an important role in New Zealand's various Wakefield settlements. We know a lot about Godley and Sewell, Cargill and Burns, and even the younger Thomas Arnold. Here, however, we have a man who actually read Wakefield's *Letter From Sydney* and viewed it as a recipe for producing another Andalusia (or, in other terms, the sort of economy we now associate with South America, characterized by vast estates and an impoverished peasantry). The discovery is the more interesting because there is, in professional circles, a minor industry devoted to explaining why Australia and New Zealand developed in ways so different from Uruguay and Argentina. Wilson's attitudes towards the Maoris are also interesting, and Lambert allows them adequate space, while following Sir Keith Sinclair's general interpretation of the origins of the wars. Wilson had modest ambitions for himself but wanted to establish quickly the institutions of a civilized society, and Lambert has written a useful and revealing biography.

So-called 'Native troubles' help to explain why, when much of the North Island was still a frontier the South Island was so far ahead. In the very year which saw Tauranga gazetted as a borough, the first consignment of mutton was shipped from the Totara Estate to Dunedin for freezing and despatch to London. Cuff's small book, which is deeply indebted to the thesis and articles written by Mervyn Palmer, ably tells the history of this project. The role of William Soltau Davidson, general manager for the New Zealand Australia Land Company, is acknowledged, as is the fact that the successful journey of the SS *Dunedin* was only one, and by no means the first, of many experiments in shipping meat across the Equator and around the world. The Argentinians, in fact, led the way. But Davidson, like Wilson a Scot, shared the prevailing Scottish preference for the family farm and did not attempt to obstruct its emergence. Cuff concludes with a brief chapter dealing with life on the estate, and more particularly the 'characters'. The chapter sits uneasily. And the women, in all these works, occupy the background, which is not surprising given how recently even the professional historians have discovered their existence.

Otago Heritage Books has an impressive list of titles, of which those being reviewed are a sample. G. J. Griffiths, who has written a biography of an Otago pioneer runholder (whose run became a goldfield), and edited a three-volume series of biographical essays (*Advance Guard*), has provided the driving force behind this unique venture. Although these works are presented in pamphlet form, they contain

a surprising amount of information, photos, maps, a bibliographical note, and an index. Each book takes a different locality for its focus and so reveals the surprising isolation of communities which were quite close to Dunedin. Roads, rivers, and floods loom large. Taieri Mouth, not more than 25 kilometres from Dunedin, remained a world apart until the car became ubiquitous in the 1950s. Yet each community had some equivalent to Dr Wilson, keen to establish school, church, and library. Each had to locate some economic base for the community's survival, a task more easily accomplished in agricultural areas than in the gold-mining country; and a task more easily accomplished when, as in South Otago (and most of the South Island), there were few Maoris.

The books published by Otago Heritage Books are rich in local evidence and social insight. In some respects they are source materials, more for the historian of society than of politics. Indeed, politics and the law remain decently off-stage, an even more indistinct background than women and families. Yet together these works help restore a necessary perspective, reminding us of the extraordinary variety within New Zealand, and even of questions and areas that might usefully be explored. For instance, in two of these books the Cornish loom large. It is unclear, both at Hamilton's gold field in Otago and New Plymouth, what significance this had. And together these works also remind a careful reader that, at least in the nineteenth century, the two islands had different histories. Although none of the works focuses upon the Maori, quite clearly missionaries, militia, and war are major themes in the history of the North Island, although not at the same time everywhere. And in the South Island, where sheep and gold are major themes, there is in part another history. Yet there were areas of overlapping experience. Local histories, in their nature, convey much yet miss the larger themes and trends. A dialogue is needed, for the two modes really complement each other, although how both could be encompassed in one book remains a mystery.

ERIK OLSEN

*University of Otago*

*Otago Harbour, Currents of Controversy.* By Gavin McLean. Otago Harbour Board, Dunedin, 1985. pp. N.Z. price N.A.

IT IS NEVER EASY to write a history on a subject already found in an earlier work; in this case A. H. McLintock's monumental *Port of Otago*, one of the Otago Centennial Series of 1951. But McLean's new book overcomes the difficulty. It is as scholarly as its forerunner, yet covers a further 35 years and employs a different approach. Whereas McLintock's emphasis was primarily political (the policies and personalities of the Otago Harbour Board), McLean also places stress on the economic forces at work, while bringing to life the ships that have been the *raison d'être* of the port. The later book, moreover, is abundantly illustrated with comprehensive and detailed captions, and has a lightness of touch which will widen its appeal to a general readership without compromising academic standards.

*Otago Harbour* brings home the extent to which decisions affecting New Zealand ports have been governed by political rather than economic considerations. The