

THE FIRST SHIPS

EARLY WELLINGTON VOYAGE OF THE CUBA SURVEYORS ARRIVE LANDING ON PETONE BEACH

(By H. Fildes)

Evening Post.

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(Wellington – Evening Post – April 8, 1920, page 9.)

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The Cuba, a vessel of only 273 tons, and conveying the survey party to the new colony, was commanded by Captain John Newcombe. Excluding the crew, the Cuba carried a total of thirty people, all males—eight in the cabin and twenty-two in the steerage. The principal official aboard was the Company's chief surveyor, Captain William Mein Smith, R.A., who had with him three assistant surveyors, Messrs. Robert Park, Robert A. Stokes, and Wellington Carrington, while the ship's paymaster and storekeeper was the late Mr. H. H. Jackson, of Stonestead, Wairarapa. Another passenger was Mr. (Sir) R. D. Hanson, Commissioner for the Purchase of Land. Departure was made from Gravesend on the 31st July, 1839, a call being made at Plymouth, which was left on the 8th August, and the port of Praya and Santiago, one of the Cape Verde Islands, was made on the 31st. While many of the party were ashore here a violent gale arose, necessitating the vessel putting to sea for the space of four days, during which time she was almost driven on the rocks. Regaining port, the shore party were picked up, sail again made, and two days later a yellow fever, introduced into the ship while at the island, broke out, resulting in the death of the native interpreter, and Assistant-Commissioner to Mr. Hanson, Mr. William Bath, and a young man named Matthews, one of the survey party, the bodies being committed to the deep; while several others of the party suffered from the fever. On the voyage out, it was agreed that an eight-hour day should be worked in New Zealand, and if this was adhered to it would mark the introduction into New Zealand of this important labour measure, credit of which has been given to Samuel Duncan Parnell, who arrived one month later in the Duke of Roxburgh.

The voyage of the Cuba was very protracted; after calling at Kaipara and Port Hardy she made the island of Kapiti on 3rd January 1840. and when five miles off was boarded by the whaler, Captain George ("Jordy") Young, then crossing the strait with his crew. She anchored off Kapiti for the night, being saluted from the shore by a gun fired by a European named Amos Barr. Unfortunately for Mr. Burr the gun exploded, practically blowing off both his forearms. Piloted by "Jordy" Young, the Cuba made sail next morning for Port Nicholson, the injured man being conveyed on her, and the harbour was entered on the 4th January, after a passage of 157 days (5 whole months), anchor being dropped to the north of Somes Island. At this time, almost the whole of the Tory's party had left for other parts of the coast, but a man named Smith, a trader, who had been brought over by Colonel Wakefield from Te Awaiti had been deputed by him to instruct Captain E. M. Smith where to proceed with his survey, and this would appear now to have been Thorndon. It would seem as if Colonel Wakefield in his own mind was uncertain where to have the principal settlement and left it somewhat open to the decision of the Chief Surveyor, who commenced operations in the Valley of the Hutt.

The survey party found erected at several places about the harbour large boards bearing the lettering "New Zealand Land Company"; these had been put up by Trader Smith, who was then living at Ngauranga in a whare provided by Te Wharepouri. Both Smith and Wharepouri had been told Colonel Wakefield to encourage the Natives to build temporary houses at Thorndon, so that they would be ready for the expected settlers. One of the first undertakings of the survey part was the erection of a small jetty on the Petone beach, so that the pioneers could land in some degree of comfort, following which the survey of the heavily-wooded valley was commenced, the officials undergoing extreme rough, wet, and adventurous experiences.

THE FIRST FLEET & FIRST NAMES

EMIGRATION
TO
NEW ZEALAND.

The Directors of the New Zealand Company, do hereby give notice that they are ready to receive Applications for a FREE PASSAGE to the

TOWN OF WELLINGTON,
AT LAMBTON HARBOUR,
PORT NICHOLSON, COOK'S STRAITS,
NEW ZEALAND,

From Agricultural Laborers, Shepherds, Miners, Gardeners, Brickmakers, Mechanics, Handicraftsmen, and Domestic Servants, **BEING MARRIED**, and not exceeding Forty years of age; also from **SINGLE FEMALES**, under the care of near relatives, and **SINGLE MEN**, accompanied by one or more **ADULT SISTERS**, not exceeding, in either case, the age of Thirty years. Strict inquiry will be made as to qualifications and character.

Apply on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, to **Mr. JOSEPH PHIPSON, 11, Union Passage, Birmingham,**
AGENT TO THE COMPANY.

TOWN and COUNTRY SECTIONS of LAND on sale, full particulars of which may be had on application as above.

1 Adam street, Adelphi,
14th August, 1839.

FREE PASSAGE.

EMIGRATION to NEW ZEALAND.
The Directors of the New Zealand Land Company hereby give notice that they are ready to receive applications for a Free Passage to their **FIRST and PRINCIPAL SETTLEMENT**, from Mechanics, Gardeners, and Agricultural Labourers, being married, and not exceeding 30 years of age. Strict inquiry will be made as to qualifications and character. The Company's Emigrant Ships will sail from England early in September next.

Further particulars and printed forms of application may be obtained at the Company's Offices.
By order of the Directors,
JOHN WARD, Secretary.

No. 1 Adam street, Adelphi,
June 15, 1839.

Many English newspapers contained the following advertisement in August 1839:—

“The directors of the New Zealand Land Company hereby give notice that the company’s ships will sail for the First and Principal Settlement as undermentioned:—

The Oriental, 505 tons; the Aurora 550 tons; the Adelaide, 640 tons; from London on Tuesday, the 10th September next. The Duke of Roxburgh, 417 tons; from London on Tuesday, the 10th September, and from Plymouth on Saturday, the 14th September next. The Bengal Merchant, 540 tons; from London on Tuesday, the 10th September and from the Clyde on Tuesday, the 17 September next.

By order of the directors, John Ward, Secretary, New Zealand Land Company’s Office, No. 1, Adam street, Adelphi, 20th August, 1839.”

The Oriental, Captain William Wilson, was the first vessel to get away, sailing from Gravesend on the 15th September 1839, and from Deal six days later, carrying a total of 154 voyagers, prominent amongst whom were the Hon. Henry Petre, son of Lord Petre; Major Hornbrook; Mr. Francis Molesworth, brother of Sir William Molesworth, Bart.; Mr. George Duppa; Mr. W. B. D. Mantell; Mr. Dudley Sinclair, son of Sir George Sinclair, Bart., M.P. Three days later the Aurora, 550 tons, Captain Theophilus Heale, departed with 148 settlers and families. Amongst her cabin passengers were the New Zealand Company’s Magistrate, Major Richard Baker, and Mr (Sir) Edward Stafford. The Adelaide also left Gravesend on the same date with the largest number of emigrants yet embarked, namely, 176. On board were Dr. G. S. Evans, one of the most active members of the New Zealand Company, Captain Edward Daniel Riddiford, Samuel Revans, J. J. Taine, and Henry St. Hill, all of whom were later well-known people in New Zealand.

The Adelaide put into Falmouth for the purpose of picking up Captain and Mrs. Edward Daniell and party and left there on 30th September, 1839.

The Duke of Roxburgh, 417 tons, leaving Gravesend a few days later, left Plymouth on the 5th October with 167 passengers, Messrs. George Hunter, senior and junior, and Robert Hunter being among them; the last named, who joined Mr. Kenneth Bethune, who had already left in the Cuba, founded the old firm of Bethune & Hunter, Wellington (merchants, station & insurance agents). Another founder of an old business firm who came out in this ship was Mt. William Lyon, of Messrs. Lyon & Blair (printers). One of these settlers by the Duke of Roxburgh, Mr. John Pierce, who lost his life in a tragic boating accident off Petone Beach on the following 26th August, has stated the last immigrants left the ship on the 6th March. Colonel Wakefield had accommodated him with a tent for use as a shed, but he would appear to have made it his dwelling during the time he was erecting his

wooden house, referring to it as the first house in the town. Saturday, the 7th March, was a very wet day for the Pierce family, for the head of the household, or rather tent-hold, states it rained so tremendously he was compelled to sit for three hours under his canvas roof holding an umbrella over Mrs. Pierce, but after it had ceased they rolled themselves up in their blankets and slept soundly. At this time a number of horses had been landed from Australia the sight of which had a prodigious effect on the Natives, possibly their first sight of such animals.

The last ship on our list, The Bengal Merchant, 540 tons, Captain John Henry, did not get away from Glasgow before the 31st October.

PIONEER'S LANDING

The first of these five vessels to arrive in Port Nicholson was the Aurora after a passage of 125 days. On the voyage out her little colony of people had little complain of—they were well fed and found a good supply of fresh provisions lasting the whole voyage, while the supplied of wine, spirits, and porter carried were ample. Shortly after leaving England there was one death, that of a child, who was sickly when it came aboard. On evenings when the weather was fine, dancing and other forms of amusement were indulged in, and on crossing the line rare fun was created by Neptune and his barber. While the whole voyage on the whole was most favourable, two or three gales were experienced off the Cape of Good Hope, and a very severe one in the South Indian Ocean, the topmasts of the ship being more than once carried away, while a yardarm was also lost, the vessel itself being repeatedly buried in water, but survived, owing to her buoyancy. On Christmas Day an immense iceberg was seen close to the ship. The emigrants last sight of land had been the white cliffs Dover, and land was not again seen until 3 a.m. on the 17th January 1840, showing up ahead like a dark cloud on the horizon. The harbour of Port Hardy, D'Urville's Island, was entered, where a whaler named MacLaren informed them that Colonel Wakefield, but seven days before, had left instructions for the immigrant ships to proceed to Port Nicholson. A course was at once set, and the Aurora arrived of the heads on the 20th January but owing to a strong northwest wind was obliged to anchor for two days, Colonel Wakefield meanwhile visiting the ship, welcoming the emigrants, and leaving with Captain Heale a pilot in the person of "Jordy" Young. Early the following morning the pilot brought the vessel safely into port, anchor being dropped mid-distance between Petone Beach and Somes Island on the 22nd January, 1840, her arrival being heralded by a discharge of guns from the survey-ship Cuba and responded to by the Aurora.

Details regarding the landing of these first pioneer settlers is very meagre. Mr. John Lodge, a steerage passenger, kept a very complete diary of the voyage out, and the first trials here, which he described as "big as a book," but sent to his relatives in England shortly after. The emigrants landed on the Petone Beach from the ship's boats by stepping ashore on to the small jetty erected by the surveyors. This, however, could only be done when the tide was in; at other times the boat grounded in the shoal water, the men having to wade ashore, while the women were either carried by them, or on the backs of the interested and willing Natives. There was then only one building completed on the beach, the large public storehouse of the New Zealand Company. Captain w. M. Smith was still living in a tent on the foreshore, too busily employed perhaps to have better accommodation. At Thorndon, however, several huts built of native material, plastered on the outside with clay, and lined inside with bark, and having thatched roofs, had been built by speculative Maoris for the expected arrivals. Meanwhile the settlers accommodated themselves in tents or hastily-constructed huts, but the greater number continued to sleep on board the Aurora until the end of the month. By the 9th February most of them had been located by Colonel Wakefield on small patches of land along the beach, and at the back of it, and were to continue there until the surveys were completed. These were in a very backward state, owing to the long voyage of the Cuba, and the difficult nature of the country the surveyors were at work in. One pioneer, at any rate, got to work, and built himself a good wooden house of green timber, measuring 34ft by 17ft, containing three rooms, and commenced to dig up his plat and plant it, while another relates that he slept out in the rain his first two nights ashore.

The commander of the Aurora, Captain Theo. Heale, was very enthusiastic over his charges. Of them he wrote: "This daring band set out strong in heart and hand to found a colony, the situation of their settlement unknown when they left England, without any protection, or the hope of assistance, save their own courage and self-reliance, their only bond of union a voluntary engagement for mutual

support in the common purpose. If it is the colonists who make the colony, it is surely the arrival of these, rather than a few officials at the Bay of Islands at a later date, which makes the birth of the nation.” The allusion, of course, is to the Auckland-Wellington controversy, whether the foundation of the colony is the 22nd or the 29th January, 1840.

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(To be continued.)