

1908 Land Development History of Upper Hutt

From historical newspapers articles

Evening Post newspaper 04 March 1908

Still Spreading - Wellington to Upper Hutt - Populating the Valley - A little while ago the Upper Hutt was really up Country, today it is promising to become a suburb of Wellington. When that railway line is straightened and duplicated at last, business men will not resist the temptation to have not only boxes, but mansions up the line. Even now, with a slow and rather inconvenient service, especially in the mornings, city men who content to have their abode in a place where there is room to dally with the cabbage and prouder plants. The city is threatening to practically absorb the Upper Hutt or, as inhabitants of the pretty settlement might put it, the Upper Hutt is to absorb Wellington it will be a policy of give and take.

An Old Settlement - The Upper Hutt (writes an Old Identity) is one of the oldest settlements in the Provincial District of Wellington. It was surveyed by the late Robert Parkes, one of the surveyors sent out early in 1840 by the New Zealand Company. He made a surveyor's line through the valley, where the present main road runs north. He cut a surveyor's line across the valley what is known as No. 1 line near Silverstream, and another known as No. 2 line at Trentham, the present road to the rifle range. The third line he took across the valley is the present Wallaceville road. Sections were laid off from those lines in hundred acre blocks. Most of the land was taken up by gentlemen in England and Scotland from the New Zealand Company in 1839 and 1840 the remainder was acquired by settlers from the agents of the New Zealand Company in Wellington. The whole of the valley was one of the finest forests of mixed native timber in New Zealand. There were thousands of trees seven feet across the butt and 150 feet in height, principally totara, rimu, and white pine. Later on there was a bush track cut through the valley from Petone to the Upper Hutt, wide, enough for cart traffic. Over the hill from the Taita to Silverstream the track was three feet. The land in the valley is of first class quality as a whole, and is well sheltered from the south east wind. The present railway station is 40 feet above river level, and 211 feet above sea level. The streams are teeming with imported trout.

Pioneer Families - The Brown family was the first to settle in the some sixty years ago. The next family to arrive there, about two years later, was the father and mother of the present Mr John Barton, Trentham, and Mr W Barton of Featherston. Mr John Barton has the distinction of being the first child of European parents born at the Upper Hutt. In the early days a great many men got their living in the district by pit sawing timber for buildings, splitting shingles, and cutting posts and rails. Many years afterwards sawmills were started, and when the bulk of the heavy timber had disappeared under the saw the land was cleared, sowed down in grass, and used for sheep and dairy farming. Things continued in this way up till five years ago. There were several blocks of what were called absentee land, the owners living abroad, and receiving their rents through their Wellington agents. Unfortunately these blocks were the most important land in the district for building purposes, and it was a recognised fact that this unopened land kept the district back very materially. The Brown family had a lease for many years of the block of land where the railway station now stands, but five years ago Mr George Brown acquired the freehold, and within three months cut it up into building allotments, all of which were taken up six weeks later. Building operations were begun at once, and now the greater part of that block is covered with houses. The cutting up of this particular block gave the Upper Hutt its first real start. Three years ago the title to another block of land, disputed for sixty years, was cleared. The agents cut it up and sold it in building allotments, giving the district the second start. There are now many first class buildings upon this block. Since then the Upper Hutt Township Estate and the Palfrey Estate both very valuable properties have been subdivided and put up to auction.

Public Buildings And Others - At the last session of Parliament £1000 was voted for a new school and site there. At the present time there are two schools, four churches, and two first class hotels, also a town hall. The Government is preparing plans for a new post office at the corner of the main road and the railway street. Mr Gibbons a short time ago took up a big

block of land near the railway station and the main road, and removed all his nursery from, the Lower to the Upper Hutt. Mr P Davis has recently erected a very fine brick building for a store. Mr J Hazelwood also recently set up a brick building for business purposes. Mr Lay, storekeeper, is about to construct a new two story brick store. The Wellington Racing Club, in its annual report, gives the value of its land, buildings, and improvements at the Upper Hutt as being £44,000. The Wellington Golf Club has acquired a big block of land between Silverstream and Trentham, and spent several thousands of pounds in buildings and improvements. Mr Chote has a large brick and pipe factory at Silverstream. The Hon. Dr Collins is the proprietor of a considerable area at what is known as Maori Bank. Mr Joseph Joseph owns property near the same place, on which he has erected a beautiful country dwelling. On the adjacent tableland Mr G Shirtcliffe's fine residence commands an extensive view of the whole valley. Mr T M Wilford MP, has just completed a residence at Maori Bank. Mr T Boyd has built a brick shop and billiard room, also a blacksmith's shop. Two other shops will be built as soon as plans and specifications are prepared. Mr Williams has just opened a coal and wood yard, and many minor improvements have been made during the last three years. The Government has its laboratory and all necessary buildings on a large block of land at Wallaceville. The Railway Department has recently taken over about seven acres to enable it to extend the station accommodation. The Wellington Convent, Hill Street, has acquired seven acres of land for a convent and school. Within the last three years, over a hundred new buildings have been erected in the Upper Hutt Valley, apart from the racecourse buildings and the brick factory. When the railway to the Upper Hutt was opened on 1st February 1876, there was no available land near the station for building sites with the exception of a fifty acre block belonging to the Brown family the remainder was all absentee land or otherwise locked up. The Brown homestead was on the site where the Provincial Hotel now stands, and many people asked them to cut up it certain portion of the land for business sites and private dwellings. They did so to encourage progress cut up about fifteen acres, and sold it very cheap. Mr Caverhill has just completed his valuation of the Mungaroa riding, and it will be found that it has gone up at least fifty per cent, since the last taken three years ago. From Silverstream to the Maori Dank has doubled during the same period. Land sold five years ago by George Brown at from £10 to £25 the allotment of one eighth of an acre is now bringing in £80 to £150. From Silverstream to the Maori Bank the Government valuation five years ago was from £7 to £18 an acre the present valuation is from £100 to £200 an acre for broad acres. Land that was cut up and sold in building sites nine months ago averaged £500 an acre.

(Reference Papers past website Evening Post newspaper 04 March 1908 page 3)
