

GEORGE FINN SCRAPBOOKS - notes by his son Arthur Roy Mitscherlich Finn

On October 10 1863, Walter Foster Finn and his wife Suzannah, of Kent England with their first four children ranging 6 years down to 6 months, sailed from London for Canterbury New Zealand on the 1650 ton ship "Tiptree". The ship arrived in Lyttleton on January 2, 1864. Their fifth child – George Finn, was born in Christchurch on 12 July 1965. The family (eventually 13 children) moved to Waimate where Walter Finn was later to become the Town Clerk.

At the age of 12 (1877) George Finn started as a cadet in the NZ Railways at Oamaru. He was moved via Dunedin and Gore to the Traffic Branch at Invercargill in 1882. He progressed to the rank of Relieving Station Master in the Southland area. In this capacity he visited every major station in Southland. In those early days the railways established a Terminal at Kingston, Lake Whakatipu and a depot at Queenstown. Freight and passengers were moved between these points by lake ferry. His duties involved visits to Queenstown fairly frequently.

There he met his wife Marie Mitscherlich. Her father, Frederich was Prussian – a medical student who, having socialist views, had left Germany for England at the time of Bismark. He subsequently followed the gold rushes in California, South Australia (where he married), Victoria and finally in 1883/85 to Queenstown, in each place setting up a furniture making business.

George was transferred to Wanganui in March 1886 and he and Marie were married there in 1886. His income was 3 pounds a week.

Wanganui in the 1880/90's was a very busy and important transport link on the West Coast North Island for Taranaki, King Country, Rangitiki and North Manawatu areas. As a port at the junction of rail, river and sea transport it could not have been otherwise. George Finn quickly became aware of this as his job brought him in close touch with the farming industry which finally claimed his ardent support. He was always a man to appreciate the vital importance of primary and supporting industries to the development and the wellbeing of NZ and he remained so until his death.

Next move was resigning from the Railway Department in October 1890 and joining the well known NZ Loan & Mercantile Company, Wanganui branch.

In 1893 or 94 he resigned to take up a position with the National Dairy Association. He later became Secretary in Wellington. Also in 1893 he became the pioneer of herd testing in NZ finally prevailing on the Government to adopt it. He also promoted and fought the Government to accept the "Home Separation" (?) of cream which is the basis of our Dairy industry today. Additionally he advocated for years the ultimate acceptance of the pedigree bull as against the scout bull, his main opposition being the farmers themselves. The vast progress in our dairy production can be claimed to be largely due to the acceptance and adoption of these 3 measures.

As an aside he started a little one man business in Wellington selling hand separators and associated equipment to farmers mainly in the Wairarapa. His method of seeking orders was to ride his bicycle from Wellington over the Rimutaka Hill to Featherston where he housed the bicycle at the local stables and hired a horse. He then called on local farmers in the lower Wairarapa, soliciting orders, returning to Featherston where he changed back to the bike and thence back to Wellington. It is not know how successful he was in this enterprise.

He then established, in association with Mr JB McEwan, the A & P Food Co Ltd – manufacturers and distributors of stock and poultry foods. In 1914 the firm bought a Ford Model-T two-seater wth brass windscreen rods, kerosene side and tail lamps and brass aceteline type head lamps converted to electric from a generator in the fly wheel. In this he travelled as far North as Auckland, the South Island West Coast to Hokitika and the East Coast to Dunedin but with particular attention to the South Canterbury grain growing area which he came to know extremely well.

In early 1921 he was appointed Manager of a new business in Auckland – the NZ Cattlecake & Oil Company Ltd. – a venture financed by Vestey Bros of England. Finance by Vestey was under the wing of W & R Fletchers Ltd who controlled the Westfield Freezing Co. Ltd. His job was to supervise the building of a factory to crush linseed in the South Island, extract the oil and manufacture the cattlecake, a stock food, from the remaining crushed seed. His advice was naturally to establish the factory in South Canterbury which he knew so well at the seed growing source. But the English management in Auckland insisted that the works must be at Westfield and so it was. A foolish mistake and an increase in transport costs. The linseed growing opration was not very popular because the only buyer

up to this time was an Australian firm who only bought NZ seed when their local production was poor and consequently the Canterbury growers were not too enchanted. As George Finn knew the growers almost all by name he was listened to and production was increased. Also the type of linseed being grown was not the most suitable for giving a high yield of oil like some types grown in Europe and N. America. So test samples were obtained of several types and supplied gratis to Canterbury farmers who were willing to experiment. After a couple of seasons the crops improved immensely with a large increase in the number of bushels produced per acre plus a much larger yield of oil and cattlecake.

A very fine advertising scheme was worked out with the able assistance of Carlton Studios. George Finn floated an idea to use the name of "Moose" as the trade name and the trade mark to embody a bull moose. The famous margue of a bull moose running with a large full moon and Mt Egmont as a background, the word "Moose" and a Tiki below was evolved. Carlton did a wonderful job of artistry particularly with the "Bull Moose" books which were most sought after.

George Finn was a true blue New Zealander and he served his country to the limit of his ability by involving himself in a number of voluntary ways.

He became a member of the Chamber of Commerce and was soon appointed to the executive committee, serving for many years. He was a member of The Manufacturers Association and was appointed to the Executive. He was a loyal promoter of local industries. The greater their success the better for NZ and more jobs for its people. He became known and sometimes laughed at for this slogan and great advocacy of "Buy NZ Made Goods". He was elected President and retained that position for years. Nominated by Auckland he served on the NZ Manufacturers Federation and was soon appointed President of that organization as well. With a Mr. J. Findley the two established the Hall of Industries in the Queen's Arcade, Auckland.

The Unemployment Board was formed in 1930 or 1931 in the height of The Great Depression. George Finn was appointed Chairman, a truly heartbreaking tough job which took a lot of time travelling, in one case as far away as Invercargill. As Chairman he attracted abuse and condemnation from the agitators who did not hesitate to make capital out of the tragic situation of the unemployed. His son Arthur actually heard a well know agitator on the steps of the old Shortland Street

Post Office (Auckland) haranguing a mob, accusing my father of stealing money entrusted to the Board by Government for use at their discretion in extreme cases of hardship. Because it had not been doled out, this despicable type convinced enough of his audience that they should march to my father's Quay Street office and demand that the money should be paid out. The dreadful hardship of some cases was difficult to believe but the agitation and some of his audience didn't worry too much about that.

In 1932, the year of his wife Marie's death, Vestey's NZ Manager decided that George Finn was devoting too much time to national matters and summarily dismissed him – a terrible blow to a man in his late 60's.

While investigating George Finn's papers his descendants have found a lengthy correspondence between the Minister of Education and George Finn in which he vehemently argued the case that the Maori language should be a compulsory subject in all NZ schools. Unfortunately it took many generations before his opinion was finally acted upon.

The family discovered that he was also something of an inventor as a file was also discovered in relation to an "egg clip" he had devised. This was a method of packaging eggs in bulk to avoid damage during transit and George travelled to London for meetings with a manufacturer who was interested in the project, however, the idea was eventually rejected by the English Company and never reached the market place.

In 1931 the book "Datus" was published. This was a chronology of events in New Zealand back as far as approximately 925 AD. The bulk of its contents came from information that George had gathered for many years and from many sources. The date of the last entry was November 26th 1910. The book was a financial loss, nonetheless, for some time it was used as a reference in many schools.

"Datus" Junior or rather "Datus II" was under way during World War II. For some reason known only to George, he kept the rough long-hand manuscript in a leather brief case which he took everywhere. One day he was fossicking about in a second hand book shop in Auckland City and put the case on the floor. On the way home in the tram he realized that he had left the case in the shop. He got out and caught a tram back to the city. No-one had handed in the case to the

proprietor. After a number of advertisements the case was not returned even though the ads expressed "Keep the case but return the contents". So years of work had gone down the drain. George was by now too old to even attempt to re-record this mass of material which frankly he could not possibly have done even if he had been years younger. He died in January 1953 aged 87.

He had a very large number of loosely covered scrap books and newspaper extracts which he bequeathed to the Auckland War Memorial Museum for their archives. These now form The George Finn Scrapbooks.

George Finn was my paternal grandfather.

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