

# **The naming of Wanganui**

## **A paper prepared for the Wanganui District Council**

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### **Introduction**

This paper was commissioned by the Wanganui District Council in April 2009. The purpose of the commission was to provide a paper based on independent historical research on the naming of Wanganui, the settlement.

The author's qualifications are set out in an attached document. The research has been conducted taking the properly disinterested approach of a professional historian.

### **Scope of the research**

The initial scope of the research was to focus on the reasons behind the spelling of Wanganui and on reactions to the spelling in the nineteenth century and very early twentieth century.

However, in the course of the research, information has emerged concerning these issues in the mid-twentieth century. Because this information is crucial to making more information available, the timeframe covered by the paper has been extended by several decades.

Much of the research for the paper was concentrated on examining relevant primary material at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Archives New Zealand, the Wanganui District Library and the Whanganui Regional Museum. A number of secondary sources have also been thoroughly examined.

The paper also draws attention to a number of errors in various secondary sources. This has been done in the interest of accuracy and in an effort to stem the further perpetuation of the errors involved.

### **Wanganui and the background to its founding**

Wanganui is one of New Zealand's oldest towns and the only planned nineteenth-century settlement where early European settlers decided to reject an English name in favour of the written version of a Maori name.

The settlement was founded by the New Zealand Company in 1840-41 and was initially referred to as the settlement at Wanganui. Prior to the settlement's founding, European

contact with the area had been sporadic and transitory. The first recorded contact was in 1831, and the name Wanganui began appearing in written form in the late 1830s.<sup>1</sup>

The written version of the name may have appeared earlier, but no evidence has been found to support it appearing before the late 1830s.<sup>2</sup>

The name had originally applied only to the lower reaches of the river that ran through the area.<sup>3</sup> Over time it had also become the collective name for the Maori people of the river.<sup>4</sup> Later, when Europeans in New Zealand began hearing about the area and visiting it, the name had been applied as a general term for the vicinity near the mouth of the river. Neither before nor after European contact commenced, was the name carried by any Maori pa or kainga in the lower river valley, or in the hills bordering the valley.<sup>5</sup>

### **The ‘Wanganui’ spelling in the 1830s and early 1840s**

The first written reference to ‘Wanganui’ that has been found is in a book published in 1837 for the New Zealand Association, the forerunner of the New Zealand Company. The book was called *The British colonization of New Zealand* and the author was Edward Gibbon Wakefield.<sup>6</sup> References to the book appear in William Wakefield’s diary in 1839 and in T.W. Downes’s book, *Old Whanganui*, in 1915.<sup>7</sup>

At the time the 1837 book was printed, the river was known in England as the Knowsley.<sup>8</sup> The book refers to the ‘Knowsley’ but also states that ‘The native name of the river is Wanganui, and the banks are inhabited by a warlike tribe of that name.’ The information had been provided by ‘An intelligent native, now in England,’ who also

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<sup>1</sup> See following sources re early European contact in the early and mid-1830s: L.J.B. Chapple and H.C. Veitch, *Wanganui*, Hawera Star Publishing, Hawera, 1939, pp.13-20; T.W. Downes, *Old Whanganui*, W.A. Parkinson, Hawera, 1915, (Capper Press reprint, Christchurch, 1976), pp.167-170; M.J.G. Smart and A.P. Bates, *The Wanganui story*, Wanganui Newspapers, Wanganui, 1972, pp.45-47; R. Taylor, Journals, qMS-1991, Alexander Turnbull Library, transcript, entry for 21 Aug. 1850; Wakefield, Edward Jerningham. Diary, 1840. Micro-MS-2208. Alexander Turnbull Library, entry between 21 and 25 April 1840; D. Young, *Woven by water*, Huia Publishers, Wellington, 1998, pp.15-17.

<sup>2</sup> The name does not appear, for instance, in Richard (Dicky) Barrett’s journal for the 1820s and 1830s and no manuscript material has been found at the Alexander Turnbull Library relating to the whalers and traders who operated out of Kapiti Island in the early 1830s. (The earliest visits to Wanganui by Europeans were made via Kapiti.)

<sup>3</sup> A.D. Mead, *Wanganui River*, A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1957, p.4.

<sup>4</sup> David Young, ‘Whanganui tribes’, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand.

<sup>5</sup> Smart and Bates, pp.28, 30-40, plate 2; Map of area drawn by E. Jerningham Wakefield that appears between his diary entries for 29 and 31 March 1840 (Wakefield, E. J. Diary, 1840. Micro-MS-2208. ATL.)

<sup>6</sup> E.G. Wakefield, *The British colonization of New Zealand*, London, 1837. Wakefield’s name does not appear on the title page, but he is listed as the author in the National Library catalogue. See also P. Burns, *Fatal success*, Auckland, 1989, pp.47, 89, 105, 121 and P. Temple, *A sort of conscience, the Wakefields*, Wellington, 2002, pp.195, 197, 418.

<sup>7</sup> Wakefield, William Hayward. Diary. qMS-2102. ATL. Transcript, p.111; Downes, pp.171-172.

<sup>8</sup> A map made in 1814 on the mission ship *Active* shows the river flowing into a Knowsley Bay. The name may have first appeared on Admiralty charts and been bestowed in honour of the Earl of Derby whose ancestral home was Knowsley Hall near Liverpool. See: Chapple and Veitch, p.26; Downes, pp.171-174; A.W. Reed, *Place names of New Zealand*, A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1975, p.473; Smart and Bates, pp.45, 48.

stated that ‘the language spoken by them was so different from his own, as to be scarcely intelligible.’<sup>9</sup>

The ‘intelligent native’ was living with Gibbon Wakefield and had been brought to London from Le Havre where he had been stranded. He was from the Kapiti area and in 1839 went as the Maori interpreter on the *Tory* with William and Jerningham Wakefield.<sup>10</sup>

Some difficulty was encountered in tracking down the 1837 book, largely because references to it in William Wakefield’s diary and in Downes’s *Old Whanganui* say the book was called ‘The present state of New Zealand’.<sup>11</sup>

The name Wanganui has also been sighted in the diaries and journals of several early visitors to the area. It appears, for example, in William Wakefield’s diary entries in October and November 1839 and in his nephew Jerningham Wakefield’s account of the same months in his book, *Adventure in New Zealand*.<sup>12</sup>

It is appropriate at this point to draw attention to a rare error in L.J.B. Chapple and H.C. Veitch’s centennial history, *Wanganui*. On page 223 the authors state that Jerningham Wakefield always spelt the name as ‘Whanganui’. This statement is incorrect: at no stage in Wakefield’s early diary, in *Adventure in New Zealand* or in a series of articles he submitted to the *New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator* did he use the term ‘Whanganui’.<sup>13</sup> All his references to the area, settlement and river are clearly spelt as ‘Wanganui’. The problem with errors such as this is that they tend to be perpetuated. This error was repeated, for instance, in A.W. Reed’s *Place names of New Zealand* in 1975.<sup>14</sup>

Chapple and Veitch seem to have based their comments on the spelling of the name in the 1908 edition of *Adventure in New Zealand*, which was edited by Sir Robert Stout. In this edition all Wakefield’s references to ‘Wanganui’ were changed to ‘Whanganui’, and Stout claimed this was because ‘The publishers have obtained the services of Mr Hadfield, an experienced Maori scholar, who has carefully gone over his Maori words, and put the spelling in correct form.’<sup>15</sup> Stout provided no additional information on ‘Mr Hadfield’, but it is highly likely that he was referring to Henry Samuel Hadfield, the eldest son of Octavius Hadfield, who was the interpreter from 1883 to the Legislative Council of New Zealand.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> E.G. Wakefield, pp.110-111. Wakefield spelt the name Knowsley as ‘Knowlesly’.

<sup>10</sup> See under ‘Ngaiti’ in P. Burns, and under ‘Nahiti (Nayti)’ in P. Temple.

<sup>11</sup> W. Wakefield diary, p.111; Downes, p.171.

<sup>12</sup> W.H. Wakefield. Diary. qMS-2102. ATL. Transcript, pp.72, 86, 107, 109, 110, 114; E.J. Wakefield, *Adventure in New Zealand, from 1839 to 1844*, John Murray, London, 1845, Vol. 1, pp.98, 114, 115, 116, 142, 144, 145.

<sup>13</sup> *New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator*, 9 May 1840, p.3, 16 May 1840, p.3, 30 May 1840, p.4, 20 June 1840, p.2. See note 1 for details re Diary, and note 9 re *Adventure in New Zealand*.

<sup>14</sup> Reed, p.461.

<sup>15</sup> *Adventure in New Zealand, from 1839 to 1844*, edited by Sir Robert Stout, Whitcombe and Tombs, 1908, p.xxvi.

<sup>16</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand, Vol. 1, Wellington Provincial District*, 1897, p.98.

Jerningham Wakefield's spelling of the name is also misquoted in A.D. Mead's *Wanganui River*. Here on page 10, in an otherwise accurate quote from *Adventure in New Zealand*, page 458, Mead uses the 'Whanganui' spelling in two instances where Wakefield had written 'Wanganui'. Mead was probably also using the 1908 edition.

Bad weather had prevented the Wakefields from landing at Wanganui in November 1839, but William subsequently visited the area, and Jerningham lived there for several years in the early 1840s. Both continued to use the 'Wanganui' spelling.

The Wanganui spelling was also used by the missionary, the Rev. Henry Williams. The name appears in a reference to the river in his journal entry for 14 December 1839. Williams stayed at Putiki from that date until 19 December.<sup>17</sup>

Another missionary, the Rev. James Buller, stayed a night at Putiki on 12 January 1840. Buller had travelled down the river and wrote the name in his journal as 'Wanga-nui'.<sup>18</sup> Thirty-eight years later he recalled the visit in his book, *Forty years in New Zealand*, and wrote the name without a hyphen.<sup>19</sup>

Towards the end of January 1840, yet another missionary, the Rev. Octavius Hadfield, visited Wanganui. Hadfield returned there on 23 May 1840 with Henry Williams to seek signatures for the Treaty of Waitangi. Hadfield, like Williams, used the 'Wanganui' spelling.<sup>20</sup>

So too did the first resident missionaries, the Rev. John Mason and lay catechist, Richard Matthews, from 20 June 1840, and the long-serving missionary, the Rev. Richard Taylor, from May 1843.<sup>21</sup>

The 'Wanganui' spelling also appeared on at least two early maps. The first was a 'Plan of the Country Districts laid out on the Wanganui 1841',<sup>22</sup> and the other was an 1843 chart of New Zealand, produced by James Wyld in London, that included the name 'Wanganui Riv.'<sup>23</sup>

### **Why the name was spelt 'Wanganui'**

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<sup>17</sup> L.M. Rogers (ed.), *The early journals of Henry Williams, 1826-40*, Pegasus Press, Christchurch, 1961, pp. 465-466.

<sup>18</sup> Buller, James, Journal, 1838-1844, Micro-MS-0364, ATL.

<sup>19</sup> J. Buller, *Forty years in New Zealand*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1878, p.75.

<sup>20</sup> Hadfield, Octavius (Rev.). Papers. qMS-0897. Transcript and p-copies of actual letters. pp.2-4.

<sup>21</sup> Rev. John Mason: letters and journal 1839-1842, transcribed and edited by Joyce Mackenzie, 1994; Richard Matthews: letters and journal 1838-1846, transcribed and edited by Joyce Mackenzie, 1994; Taylor, Richard (Rev.). Journals. qMS-1986. Transcript, pp.274, 281 (first mention). See also, R. Taylor, *The past and present of New Zealand*, 1868, and *Te Ika a Maui*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1870.

<sup>22</sup> ATL cartographic reference MapColl-832.41 gbbd/1841/Acc.15388.

<sup>23</sup> ATL cartographic reference MapColl 380a 1843 24800.

Mention has been made of an 1837 reference to the local Maori dialect. A distinctive feature of the dialect was – and is – the pronunciation of the *wh* sound. Among local iwi, the sound is barely aspirated, more like *wa* (as in want) than the strongly aspirated *wha* (pronounced as *f* in other tribal dialects).<sup>24</sup>

The ‘Wanganui’ spelling was a direct consequence of the way the initial sound in the name was pronounced by local iwi. When the name was first written it was, in short, spelt as early European visitors and settlers heard it pronounced.

The spelling was also influenced by the fact that by the time it was adopted the orthographic foundations of written Maori had been laid, and these were providing the first informed guide on how Maori words should be spelt. The foundations had been laid through the work of Thomas Kendall, the missionary, and by Professor Samuel Lee, the oriental linguist at Cambridge University. In 1815 Kendall had published *A korao no New Zealand or The New Zealander’s first book* and in 1820 had worked with Lee in England to compile *A grammar and vocabulary of the language of New Zealand*.<sup>25</sup>

The publication of these books saw the beginning of missionary attempts to standardise the spelling of the Maori language. The process continued with the publication of five Maori-to-English dictionaries by members of the William Williams family between 1844 and 1917. Publications by other missionaries, such as the Rev. Robert Maunsell and the Rev. Henry Fletcher, were also influential. Also involved in the process were a number of Pakeha who worked in the nineteenth century as interpreters or as officers holding positions of responsibility in the civil courts, the Native Land Court or various government departments. Among the people who worked at some stage in this category in or near Wanganui were John White, Garland Woon and Richard Woon. Another was C.O.B. Davis, although he never lived in Wanganui.<sup>26</sup>

Details in the following two sections provide information on the five dictionaries mentioned above and on the connections with Wanganui relating to the families of Henry and William Williams.

### **Background information on the five Maori dictionaries published between 1844 and 1917**

These dictionaries were the five editions of *A dictionary of the New Zealand language*. The first edition was published in 1844 and was compiled by the Rev. William Williams, a younger brother of the Rev. Henry Williams. The second edition was also the work of William Williams. It was published in 1852, some seven years before Williams was

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<sup>24</sup> Mead, p.4; *Wanganui River Annual* 1989, p.6; *Whanganui River Annual* 1990, p.6; ‘The story of your museum’, article prepared by Whanganui Regional Museum. Details also checked and confirmed with Morvin Simon (17 May 2005) and Chris Shenton (Aug. 2005) when I was preparing the Wanganui regional entry for Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand.

<sup>25</sup> J Binney, entry on Thomas Kendall, *Dictionary of New Zealand biography*, Vol. 1, 1990, pp.224-225; A. Sharp, entry on Thomas Kendall, *An encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, Vol. 2, 1966, pp.215-216.

<sup>26</sup> See in *DNZB* Vol. 1 re Maunsell, White and Davis and Vol. 3 re Fletcher.

consecrated as the first Anglican bishop of Waiapu. Williams had taken a BA in classics at the University of Oxford.<sup>27</sup>

The third and fourth editions of the Dictionary were compiled by Williams's son, the Rev. William Leonard Williams, and were published in 1871 and 1892. Always known as Leonard, this member of the family became the third bishop of Waiapu in 1895. He had graduated BA from Oxford in 1852.<sup>28</sup>

Leonard's son and William's grandson, the Rev. Herbert William Williams, published a greatly enlarged fifth edition of the Dictionary called *A dictionary of the Maori language* in 1917. The edition was a 'meticulously edited enhancement' of the earlier editions. Herbert had graduated MA in 1887 from the University of Cambridge. He was consecrated the sixth bishop of Waiapu in 1930.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Williams family's connections with Wanganui**

In December 1839 Henry Williams preached the first sermon by a European at Putiki. His grandson, the Rev. A.O. Williams was Anglican missionary at Putiki from 1885 to 1921, and his great grandson, the Rev. W.G. Williams, served there and in other Wanganui parishes from 1913 to 1933.<sup>30</sup> Many descendants of Henry Williams, including W.G. Williams, attended Wanganui Collegiate School, as did – and have – numerous descendants of William Williams.<sup>31</sup> W.G. Williams's daughter, Sybil, attended Wanganui Girls' College and was head prefect there in 1931 and 1932.

### **The 'Whanganui' spelling in the 1830s and early 1840s**

None of the early diaries and journals that has been sighted includes any references to the 'Whanganui' version of the name. The term might have been used in the records kept by other early visitors, but the consistent use of the 'Wanganui' spelling by missionaries and the New Zealand Company suggests this was unlikely.

The 'Whanganui' spelling did feature, however, on two early maps, both produced in London by James Wyld. One was an 1841 chart of Cook's Strait [sic] that had the words 'Whanganui Knowsley R Bar',<sup>32</sup> and the other was an 1843 map, labelled 'The islands of New Zealand' that had the names 'Whanganui or Knowsley R.'<sup>33</sup>

### **A change of name**

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<sup>27</sup> F. Porter, entry on William Williams, *DNZB*, Vol. 1, 1990, pp.497-498.

<sup>28</sup> F. Porter, entry on William Leonard Williams, *DNZB*, Vol. 2, 1993, pp.580-582.

<sup>29</sup> B. Biggs, entry on Herbert William Williams, *DNZB*, Vol. 3, 1996, pp.570-571.

<sup>30</sup> W.G. Williams was a son of A.O. Williams.

<sup>31</sup> Information gleaned from the Williams family tree provided by family descendants and from the latest edition of the *Wanganui Collegiate School Register*. Also from the research carried out for my entry on the Wanganui region entry in *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*.

<sup>32</sup> ATL cartographic reference MapColl 833aj 1841 21657.

<sup>33</sup> ATL cartographic reference MapColl-830a 1843 650.

In 1841 the estimated population of the Wanganui settlement stood at around 60.<sup>34</sup> In the following year -1842 - the settlement underwent a change of name. In May that year, the directors of the New Zealand Company instructed the company's principal agent, William Wakefield, to give the settlement the name of 'Petre'. The company's intention was to commemorate the 'great services' rendered by Lord Petre, a fellow director of the company.<sup>35</sup> News of the decision reached Wellington in early November<sup>36</sup> and on 24 November the name of the town 'hitherto known by the name "Wanganui"' was officially changed to 'Petre'.<sup>37</sup>

### **How the town's name was perceived in the mid- and late 1840s**

The name Petre was never popular and in May 1844 a petition signed by 37 prominent settlers was submitted to the Superintendent of the Southern District, Mathew Richmond. The petition expressed 'the anxious desire of the inhabitants to have re-instated the former, and now well known name Wanganui.'<sup>38</sup> One of the first signatories to the petition was the Rev. Richard Taylor. The petition was duly forwarded to Governor Robert FitzRoy, and in June the colonial secretary, Andrew Sinclair, strongly recommended that the petitioners' request be granted.<sup>39</sup> FitzRoy agreed,<sup>40</sup> but the demands of dealing with issues such as the New Zealand Company land claims and the outbreak of fighting in the far north meant nothing was done to give effect to the petition before news of FitzRoy's recall reached New Zealand in October 1845.

A facsimile of the petition is held at the Whanganui Regional Museum. The facsimile includes 35 signatures from the original document but does not include two signatures that are also on the original document. The two signatures are those of John Cameron and Henry Churton. The punctuation shown on the facsimile also varies slightly from that on the original document.

The facsimile seems to have been the source for Chapple and Veitch and Smart and Bates saying that the petition was signed by 35 settlers.<sup>41</sup>

Mention should also be made here of several errors and misleading statements in T.W. Downes's book, *Old Whanganui*. On page 248 there are three errors in one sentence. The sentence reads, 'In the Whanganui Museum there is a document dated May 3rd, 1844, which was forwarded to the Superintendent of the Wellington Province, praying that the name of the town be altered from that of "Petre" to its original appellation of Whanganui.' The name of the museum should be 'Wanganui Museum', Wellington Province should be 'Southern District' and the name requested by the petitioners should

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<sup>34</sup> The figure was estimated by William Wakefield. See Chapple and Veitch, p.267.

<sup>35</sup> Fifth report of the directors of the NZ Company, 31 May 1842, pp.21-22.

<sup>36</sup> *New Zealand Colonist and Port Nicholson Advertiser*, 4 Nov. 1842, p.3.

<sup>37</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 1842-44, p.341.

<sup>38</sup> Petition of Wanganui settlers to the Superintendent of the Southern District. IA 1. 1844/1407, Archives New Zealand.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, 'A S' (Andrew Sinclair) minute, 27 June 1844.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 'R F' (Robert FitzRoy) minute, 18 July 1844.

<sup>41</sup> Chapple and Veitch, p.224; Smart and Bates, p.55.

be 'Wanganui'. Also misleading is Downes's caption under a copy of the facsimile on pages 224 and 225 as it has the word 'Whanganui' when the facsimile clearly has 'Wanganui'.

While Petre would remain the official name until 1854, the 'Wanganui' name continued to be widely used. The name was used, for instance, in March 1845 throughout Commissioner William Spain's report on the New Zealand Company's claim to the district of Wanganui, whereas 'Petre' appeared only in the title, alongside 'Wanganui', and in the addresses of letters sent between Spain and William and Jerningham Wakefield.<sup>42</sup>

Only from around the mid-1840s did the 'Whanganui' spelling slowly begin to emerge in the written record in New Zealand. The first references to the name that have been sighted were in an article headed 'New Zealand Church Almanac' in the *Daily Southern Cross*, 22 February 1845. The article includes sections from the Almanac that also mention 'Whangarei' and 'Whangaroa' but which have no 'h' in 'Wakatane'. The insertion of the 'h' in 'Whanganui', 'Whangarei' and 'Whangaroa' is somewhat surprising as the 1844 edition of *A dictionary of the New Zealand language* by William Williams had listed the word 'wanga' but had had no listing for 'whanga'.

In Wanganui itself, local Maori may not have been aware of the alternative spelling of the name until at least the late 1840s. This seems likely because until then local Maori had been mainly reliant on Anglican missionaries in Wanganui for learning about the written form of their language, and the missionaries there always used the 'Wanganui' spelling.<sup>43</sup>

The first example, for instance, that this research has found of a letter written by a Maori in Maori that included the 'Whanganui' term was a letter from Hori Kingi Te Anaua dated 14 November 1850.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, several examples have been found of letters written in Maori that used the 'Wanganui' spelling. The first of these letters was one written by seven Maori on 26 November 1844. The letter appeared in a newspaper and was accompanied by an English translation, verified as 'true' by the Rev. Samuel Ironside. Included in the letter was the following sentence: 'Great is our wish that the Europeans should settle permanently at our place at Wanganui.'<sup>45</sup>

Some indication of the relative use of the two spellings can be seen in Papers Past, the online database of searchable New Zealand newspapers. The database covers the years between 1839 and 1920. The first example of the 'Whanganui' spelling appeared, as already mentioned, in February 1845, and by then there were 1,389 examples of the

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<sup>42</sup> British Parliamentary Papers, Colonies New Zealand, Vol. 5, Irish University Press, pp.80-101.

<sup>43</sup> Anglican missionaries had a virtual monopoly on schooling Maori in the writing of their language until the arrival of the Methodists in 1848, the Catholics in 1851 and the Presbyterians in 1853. See Chapple and Veitch, pp.84-91.

<sup>44</sup> Laura Harper Papers, 1953-19-18, Whanganui Regional Museum.

<sup>45</sup> *New Zealand Spectator and Cook's Strait Guardian*, 14 Dec. 1844, p.3.

‘Wanganui’ spelling. By the end of 1849 there were three ‘Whanganui’ references and 2,533 ‘Wanganui’ references.

Searches for ‘Whanganui’ and ‘Wanganui’ on the Niupepa Maori newspaper database have found no listings for either name before 1855. This database is based on ‘Niupepa 1842-1933’: a microfiche collection produced by the Alexander Turnbull Library. The lack of ‘Whanganui’ references before 1855 is particularly surprising as by the end of 1854 there were 185 references to the name in Papers Past.

The ‘Wanganui’ spelling appeared in 1849 in three chapters of a book based on a journal kept from July 1846 to June 1849. The book was called *Sketches in New Zealand* and was written by W. Tyrone Power.<sup>46</sup>

Time has only permitted a brief examination of the correspondence in Sir Donald McLean’s papers for the 1840s, but there certainly seem to be many more instances of the ‘Wanganui’ spelling than of the ‘Whanganui’ spelling.<sup>47</sup> The ‘Wanganui’ spelling also appeared in both the Maori and English versions of the 1848 deed of purchase drawn up by McLean.

Further errors appear in *Old Whanganui* in Downes’s references to the deed on pages 320-326. Here Downes again substitutes ‘Whanganui’ for ‘Wanganui’, and his caption under a facsimile of the deed between pages 320 and 321 also has the wrong date. The caption reads, ‘Sale of Whanganui to New Zealand Company, 1840.’

### **Developments from 1850 to 1900**

During this period there was an increase in the use of the ‘Whanganui’ spelling. A factor influencing the increase was the discarding of the ‘wanga’ listing in favour of ‘whanga’ in the second edition of *A dictionary of the New Zealand language* in 1852. ‘Wanga’ would not appear in any of the subsequent three editions.

In 1852 the name ‘Whanganui’ was used in a Catholic mission register. The register was headed, ‘Register of the Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages and Burials of the Catholic Station of Petre (Whanganui) Begun on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of February 1852.’<sup>48</sup>

One of the more interesting examples of the ‘Whanganui’ spelling from this period involved the founding in 1854 of one of the country’s oldest schools, Wanganui Collegiate School. The endowment that enabled the founding of the school was a grant dated 13 October 1852 for some 250 acres from Governor Sir George Grey to the bishop of New Zealand, G.A. Selwyn. The trust deed included a plan showing the location of the land under the heading ‘District of Whanganui’, and the same words appeared in the deed. For this reason the school’s governing authority became known as the Whanganui

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<sup>46</sup> W.T. Power, *Sketches in New Zealand*, Chps VI, XVI and XIX.

<sup>47</sup> McLean’s papers are now online in the Manuscripts and Pictorial collections of the Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>48</sup> The Catholic register is held at St Mary’s Catholic Church, Campbell Street, Wanganui.

College Board of Trustees. The school was originally known as the Native Industrial School. It has been called Wanganui Collegiate School since around 1867, although the term Wanganui Endowed School was sometimes used in the late 1870s and early 1880s.<sup>49</sup>

The school has for well over 100 years provided an example of how the two spellings can be accommodated in a sensible and comfortable manner. It is an example worth noting.

Not until 1920 would another institution, other than those relating to Maori, include the 'h' in its name.

The year in which Wanganui Collegiate was founded was also the year that saw the official sanctioning of 'Wanganui' as the town's name. The sanctioning came by way of a Wellington Provincial Council Act in January 1854. The Act changed the town's name from Petre to Wanganui. It was passed on 19 January and assented to on behalf of the Governor of New Zealand by I.E. Featherston, Superintendent of the Province, on 24 January.<sup>50</sup> The Constitution Act 1852 had given superintendents the discretion to assent to bills on behalf of the governor. Certain powers had also been transferred to them in late 1853 that had previously been vested in the governor and lieutenant governors.<sup>51</sup>

In 1872, some 18 years after the Act was passed, Wanganui was proclaimed a borough.<sup>52</sup> No record has been found of any specific repeal of the 1854 Act after the abolition of the provinces in 1876. That Wanganui remained the official name is made clear, though, in two proclamations in 1924. The first was to proclaim the union of the Borough of Wanganui and the town districts of Gonville and Castlecliff,<sup>53</sup> and the second was the proclamation declaring the Borough of Wanganui a city.<sup>54</sup>

In 1854 the 'Whanganui' spelling appeared in the name of the electorate – Whanganui and Rangitikei – but from 1855 the name was listed as 'Wanganui'.<sup>55</sup>

Both names appear on a map produced in 1864 by James Mackay, civil commissioner. The map indicates the location of 'friendly and unfriendly tribes' and has the town as 'Wanganui' and the river as 'Whanganui'.<sup>56</sup>

Both names also appear in the first two volumes of the *Transactions and proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* in 1868 and 1869. The 'Whanganui' spelling is used in two

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<sup>49</sup> Copy of original deed provided by Richard Bourne, chairman WCS Museum Trust. See also *Wanganui Collegian*, centenary number, April 1954, No. 184, p.10; B. and D. Hamilton, *Never a footstep back: a history of the Wanganui Collegiate School 1854-2003*, Whanganui College Board of Trustees, 2003.

<sup>50</sup> *Acts and proceedings of the Provincial Council of Wellington*, 1853-4, session 1, No. 11.

<sup>51</sup> See section XXVII, Constitution Act 1852 in A.H. McLintock, *Crown colony government in New Zealand*, Wellington, 1958, Appendix D. Also *ibid.* p.374 and W.P. Morrell, *The provincial system in New Zealand 1852-76*, Whitcombe and Tombs, second (revised) edition, 1964, pp.62-63.

<sup>52</sup> *NZ Gazette*, 5 Feb. 1872, p.88.

<sup>53</sup> *NZ Gazette*, 27 March 1924, p.734.

<sup>54</sup> *NZ Gazette*, 12 June 1924, pp.1399-1400.

<sup>55</sup> *NZ Gazette*, 28 Aug. 1854, pp.105-106; 9 Aug. 1855, pp.86-90; 22 July 1856, pp.97-103.

<sup>56</sup> Information provided by June Orr, Lower Hutt.

papers by the provincial geologist, J.C. Crawford, in references to the river and its inhabitants and to the town, and the 'Wanganui' spelling is used in the Institute's list of members for people from Wanganui. The 'Wanganui' spelling is also used in 1869 in a paper written by John Buchanan, who was draughtsman at the Geological Survey. The title of Buchanan's paper was 'On the Wanganui beds'.<sup>57</sup>

In 1872 the Otago provincial geologist, F.W. Hutton, defined a group of sediments as the 'Whanganui group'. Since then, though, all geologists have used the term 'Wanganui strata' and also 'Wanganui stages' and 'Wanganui series' and have referred to the great west coast sedimentary sink as the 'Wanganui Basin'.<sup>58</sup>

The 'Whanganui' version of the name was invariably used from the late 1860s in connection with the Native Land Court. It is also on at least one headstone in the old town cemetery at Heads Road. The inscription on the headstone records the death 'at Whanganui' in 1894 of a 'Late Lieut of HM 18<sup>th</sup> Royal Irish Regt'.

The number of nineteenth-century references to 'Wanganui' in Papers Past amounts to 390,215, and the number of references to 'Whanganui' to 4554. The 'Whanganui' references are, in the main, related to Maori, the river and the wider region rather than to the town. The paper with by far the largest number of 'Whanganui' references – 3,164 – was the Auckland *Daily Southern Cross*. Next in line with 689 was the *Taranaki Herald*. Among these 689 references, 673 appeared between 1852 and 1867 when Garland Woon was co-owner and editor of the paper. Woon was known to favour the 'Whanganui' spelling and after he left the *Taranaki Herald* in December 1867 the 'Whanganui' spelling did not appear for almost nine years. It had not been mentioned from December 1867 until 29 November 1876 and from then until 1899 was mentioned only 15 times.

The gap between the 390,215 nineteenth-century 'Wanganui' references and the 4554 'Whanganui' references would also be considerably wider if New Zealand's oldest extant newspaper, the *Wanganui Chronicle*, were included among the searchable papers on Papers Past. The later-established *Wanganui Herald*, for instance, has only 146 nineteenth-century references to 'Whanganui' compared with 181,950 references to 'Wanganui'.<sup>59</sup>

However, on the Niupepa Maori newspaper database the number of 'Whanganui' references increased considerably from 1855 in comparison to the 'Wanganui' references. Contributing to the increase between 1898 and 1900 was the inclusion on the database of the bilingual newspaper, *The Jubilee: Te Tiupiri*. The paper was published in

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<sup>57</sup> *Transactions and proceedings of the New Zealand Institute*, Vol. 1, 1868, pp.305-328, 488-489; Vol. 2, 1869, pp.163-165, 343-360, 435.

<sup>58</sup> Information provided by scientist Dr Maggy Wassilieff who was until recently botanist and science writer at Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand.

<sup>59</sup> The *Wanganui Herald* was founded as the *Evening Herald* in June 1867 but is only available online from 1876.

Wanganui and was set up by a Maori committee.<sup>60</sup> The editors of the paper were Wi Hipango and H.T. Whatahoro.<sup>61</sup>

### **The twentieth century**

The century had scarcely begun when a suggestion was made at local government level to change the town's name to 'Whanganui'. This was the first time the issue had been raised at this level. The suggestion was made at a Borough Council meeting on 12 August 1902. At the meeting the town's mayor, Alexander Hatrick, suggested that the corporation 'should mark the coronation of His Majesty King Edward VII' by making the town's name "'Whanganui"' in accordance with the original native name and meaning.'<sup>62</sup> Hatrick seems to have been acting on his own volition and not on behalf of any community group or organisation.

The suggestion aroused little interest in the columns of the *Wanganui Chronicle* and occasioned only two letters to the *Wanganui Herald*, both opposing the notion.<sup>63</sup> One of the people who wrote to the paper also raised the matter at a special meeting of the Chamber of Commerce. After members there discussed the issue, the majority decided that 'a change in the spelling of the name of Wanganui would be inadvisable and detrimental to the interests of the town and district.'<sup>64</sup>

On 23 September when Hatrick formally moved the motion to change the spelling, he found 'an unsympathetic Council',<sup>65</sup> with eight councillors voting against the motion and only two supporting it.<sup>66</sup>

An error appeared in the *Wanganui Herald* soon after Hatrick first suggested the change of name. This error is being pointed out because it is one that could be used in the current debate to suggest there was confusion in 1902 among Pakeha over the two spellings. The article concerned was about the 1854 Act and begins by stating 'That there was a doubt 50 years ago about the correct way of spelling the name of our town is evident by the wording of the Act authorising the changing of the name.' The *Herald* goes on to quote from the Act, saying, 'That the said town on the river Whanganui ... shall from and after the passing of this Act be called or styled by the name of "Wanganui".'

The *Herald* is completely wrong: the Act clearly has the name of the river as 'Wanganui'.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> See I. Church entry on Hori Pukehika, *DNZB*, Vol. 3, pp.410-411.

<sup>61</sup> National Library of New Zealand (PublicationsNew Zealand); University of Canterbury Catalogue.

<sup>62</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 14 Aug. 1902, p.2; Wanganui Borough Council minutes 12 Aug. 1902.

<sup>63</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 27 Aug. 1902, p.3, 29 Aug. 1902, p.2.

<sup>64</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 30 Aug. 1902, p.4; *Wanganui Herald*, 1 Sept. 1902, p.2.

<sup>65</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 24 Sept. 1902; Wanganui Borough Council minutes 23 Sept. 1902.

<sup>66</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 25 Sept. 1902, p.2. The *Wanganui Herald*, *ibid.*, lists seven councillors as opposing the motion but fails to mention the name (Williams) of another councillor who opposed the motion.

<sup>67</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 2 Sept. 1902, p.2. See note 40 re reference for the 1854 Act.

Ten years after the Borough Council rejected Hatrick's suggestion, the Rev. Herbert Williams made a plea for the scientific study of Maori names in a paper delivered to the Wanganui Philosophical Society on 12 August 1912. In the course of the paper Williams remarked that 'in this particular part of the North Island you have the example of the Natives in dropping an "h": it is no more correct to write and say "*Wanganui*" for "*Whanganui*" than it would be to write and say "Ampstead Eath" and plead the example there of the natives.'<sup>68</sup>

By the time Williams delivered his paper in 1912 the standardisation of the Maori language was well under way. The process would continue through Williams's enormous input into the compilation of the fourth edition of *A dictionary of the New Zealand language*, which appeared under the revised name of *A dictionary of the Maori language* in 1917.

The standardisation of the language had brought certain advantages but had also come at a cost as the distinctive features of several local dialects had been lost. This had occurred fairly early in the case of some southern dialects, although the impact there of Maori visitors from the north had also contributed to the process.<sup>69</sup>

In 1920 another institution was founded in Wanganui that included the term 'Whanganui' in its name. The institution was a masonic lodge called Lodge Whanganui. The reason why the lodge adopted the name 'Whanganui' is interesting as in the lodge's 50<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> jubilee booklets it is said that the masons who founded the lodge had decided to call it after the name of the borough. The decision is interesting because neither then nor ever had the borough had the 'h' in its name. Interesting too, is the fact that one of the lodge's charter members was L.J.B. Chapple, a strong proponent of the 'Whanganui' spelling. Whether Chapple influenced the decision is not clear but his subsequent involvement in another group that adopted the 'h' spelling tends to suggest he had some influence.

Lodge Whanganui functioned as an entity until 2003 and then merged with another lodge – Rutland – to form the United Lodge of Wanganui.<sup>70</sup>

Mention was made earlier of the work of the Rev. Henry Fletcher. One of Fletcher's most useful works was the compilation around 1925 of an index of the Maori names that appear in a number of books and journals. The index was never published but a proofread and edited version is now available on the University of Waikato's website. The bulk of the references to 'Whanganui' and 'Wanganui' are from the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* (1892-1910) and the *Transactions and proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* (1868-1910) and there are around six times as many references to 'Whanganui' as there are to 'Wanganui'. The nature of the 'Whanganui' references is outlined at the start of the

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<sup>68</sup> The paper was published in the *Transactions and proceedings of the New Zealand Institute*, Vol. XLV, 1913 (for 1912), pp.354-364. Quoted passage is on p.358.

<sup>69</sup> See, for instance, H. Beattie, *Our southernmost Maoris*, Dunedin, 1954, Chp. XI.

<sup>70</sup> Considerable help was given here by Laurence Milton and Bill Williams at the Grand Secretary's Office Freemasons New Zealand.

list and this reads, 'Most references are to the river, district and tribes of the North Island'.

The references to 'Whanganui' between 1900 and 1920 in Papers Past are, in the main, also in this category, although 'Maori matters' would be a more appropriate descriptor than 'tribes of the North Island'. During these years there were 227,575 references to 'Wanganui' and 294 to 'Whanganui'. The *Wanganui Herald* is only searchable until 1909 and from 1900 to 1909 the paper had only 130 references to 'Whanganui'. From 1910 to 1920 there were also only 9 'Whanganui' references in Papers Past compared with 33,723 'Wanganui' references.

A different picture on the use of the two spellings is revealed on the Niupepa Maori newspaper database. Here, among the listed papers, there is a strong preference for the 'Whanganui' spelling. Between 1855 and 1933 there were 3995 references to 'Whanganui' on the database compared with 609 to 'Wanganui'.

In 1938 the issue of changing the town's name to 'Whanganui' was raised again at local government level. The proposal seems to have come from a recently formed committee called the 'Whanganui Historical Committee'. The committee had been set up to 'collate and prepare records to be edited and published for the Centenary, and to be responsible for historical details in connection with local pageantry.'<sup>71</sup> The names of the committee members appear on page 1 of Chapple and Veitch's centennial history, *Wanganui*. Among the members were at least three firm supporters of the 'Whanganui' spelling, and these were the chairman, L.J.B. Chapple, and general members, T.W. Downes and Flora Spurdle.<sup>72</sup>

At the committee's first meeting on 11 April 'the correct spelling of Whanganui' was discussed and it was suggested that a petition be placed in the library for those interested to sign. No action was taken on the petition, but after reports of the meeting appeared in the papers, there were several letters to the editor. One person wrote twice in support and three people wrote opposing any change in the name. One letter opposing any change was signed 'FOONGA-NOA-E',<sup>73</sup> and another was signed 'FONGANUI'.<sup>74</sup> As in 1902, the Chamber of Commerce discussed the matter. Only one member is reported to have been in favour of changing the name.<sup>75</sup> One of the people who spoke against any change was Alexander Hatrick's brother-in-law, A.S. Burgess.<sup>76</sup>

The matter was also discussed by the Whangarei Borough Council, and a letter was sent from that council to the Wanganui City Council saying 'it is felt that the addition of the

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<sup>71</sup> Wanganui City Council minutes, 3 May 1938.

<sup>72</sup> Flora Spurdle wrote two books: *New stories of old Whanganui* (1958) and *More stories of old Whanganui* (1963). See *DNZB* Vol. 5 entry on Spurdle

<sup>73</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 26 April 1938, p.6.

<sup>74</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 23 April 1938, p.16.

<sup>75</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 3 May 1938, p.6.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, and *Wanganui Chronicle*, 3 May 1938, p.3.

letter 'h' to Wanganui will increase the confusion already existing, particularly as time and custom have made the present spelling generally accepted.'<sup>77</sup>

At the time the letter was sent, municipal elections were about to be held and the Wanganui City Council decided to refer the letter and one from the Whanganui Historical Committee to the incoming council to consider. There seems to be no record of the issue coming before the new council, although at some stage it must have rejected the proposal. This is confirmed in a sentence on page 238 in Chapple and Veitch that reads, 'In 1938 the proposal to change the name of the city to Whanganui was again unsuccessfully advanced.'

In 1945 another group, the local branch of the New Zealand Founders Society, adopted the name 'Whanganui'. In 2000, however, the branch decided to remove the 'h' from its name and become the Wanganui Branch.

By 1950 the 'Wanganui' spelling had been used for some 113 years and Wanganui had been the official name of the town for nigh on 100 years.<sup>78</sup> Commenting on the name in 1954, the linguist Bruce Biggs wrote, 'Apparently Wanganui is one of our few conventional spellings that gives evidence of the fact that there is a very substantial difference between the initial sound of the word and the initial sound of such words from other dialects as Whangarei.'<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Wanganui City Council minutes, 3 May 1938.

<sup>78</sup> The spelling had been used for 113 years since 1837 and Wanganui had been the official name for 96 years since 1854.

<sup>79</sup> Reed's Place Name Index, ATL, letter from Bruce Biggs to A.W. Reed, dated 30 July 1954. Biggs later became a professor at Auckland University.