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WOODVILLE : GENESIS OF A BUSH FRONTIER  
COMMUNITY, 1874-1887.

The process of settlement and organisation  
on a New Zealand frontier.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the Degree of Master of  
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by

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PREFACE

The object of this work is summarised in its title: genesis of a bush frontier community. Each component of the title does not merely represent a word, but a concept. "Genesis" denotes notions of birth and growth, and in this context it is applied to the processes and interaction involved in the transition from frontier in 1874 to establishment in 1887. Although "Bush" contains the obvious geographical connotations associated with the Seventy-Mile Bush, during the course of the study it also assumes an ideological meaning, depicting the type of settler, his tasks, goals and aspirations. The concept "frontier", which is dealt in detail elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> implies a meaning of place, process and time. "Community" in this context points to the process of community formation, containing the essential prerequisites of belonging to a distinctive community, with regularised patterns of interaction, a recognised system of authority, and a shared set of mutual expectations.<sup>2</sup>

This is a social history in the broadest sense: the sociological implications of community growth are set within a political, economic, administrative, legal and cultural context, providing the study with a suitable framework in order to reassemble the community's history. In brief, this essay attempts to analyse the dynamics and mechanics of the complex patterns, processes and interaction involved in the settlement of a bush frontier community, tracing its development from infancy through to late adolescence and early maturity.

Such a study presents hypothetical, methodological-conceptual and contextual demands. The hypothetical requirements entail a

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1. See 1-4 below.

2. W.R. Burch Jr, "The Nature of Community" in John Forster, (ed.), Social Process in New Zealand (Auckland, 1969), 85.

more precise definition of the concept "frontier" from the American to the New Zealand situation. A research exercise of this nature provides an opportunity to test several working hypothesis suggested in Oliver's lecture Towards a New History?<sup>3</sup> (1969) and Coleman's article "The New Zealand Frontier and the Turner Thesis" (1955),<sup>4</sup> centred on the nature, character, process and timing of the New Zealand frontier, making comparisons with overseas frontiers. The methodological-conceptual demands involve the application of sociological conceptual analysis and geographical methodology to a historical problem, providing a wider basis to study the dynamic evolution of a bush frontier community within an individual, local, regional and national framework as well as reducing the risks of overgeneralisation, particularly concerning definition of the concepts "settler" and "frontier".<sup>5</sup>

Contextual demands are also evident on various levels. Apart from making useful comparisons with extra-New Zealand history, this essay provides a solid local base upon which to formulate generalisations concerning New Zealand history as a whole, especially in the field of state-frontier interaction. Associated with this is the study's relevance to the evolution of bush frontier communities. Before Arnold's pioneering work, secondary source material on bush settlement was confined to a few articles by Franklin, Heerdegen and Petersen.<sup>6</sup> Arnold has now made substantial provision for a suitable

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3. W.H. Oliver, Towards a New History? (Hocken Lecture, 1969) (Dunedin, 1971).
  4. Peter J. Coleman, "The New Zealand Frontier and the Turner Thesis", in Pacific Historical Review, Vol.24 (1958), 221-37.
  5. See 1-4 and 65 below.
  6. See Rollo D. Arnold, "The Opening of the Great Bush, 1869-1881: A Social History of Bush Settlements of Taranaki, Hawke's Bay and Wellington" (Ph.D. thesis, Victoria University, 1971); S.H. Franklin, "The Village in the Bush", in Forster, Social Process, 102-43; Richard G. Heerdegen, "Land for the Landless", in New Zealand Geographer, Vol.23 (April, 1967), 34-49; G.C. Petersen, "Pioneering the North Island Bush", in R.H. Watters (ed.), Land and Society in New Zealand (Wellington, 1965), 66-79.

base from which to study bush settlement. But at the local level secondary source material is limited to anniversary booklets: no comprehensive secondary source on Woodville exists. This research exercise attempts to fill a marked void in the story of bush settlement,<sup>7</sup> complementing the works of Arnold, Heerdegen and Gordon.<sup>8</sup>

But research in this area was not all plain sailing: problems concerned with methodology arose directly out of the nature of the demands and source materials. First, the nature of demands posed certain difficulties concerning organisation, selectivity, continuity and control of material. A social history, by its very nature, covers a broad spectrum, and this created the danger of treating the material in a superficial manner. A good example of this was the handling of the profusion of voluntary associations. Selectivity was rigidly enforced by choosing only a few examples to illustrate a central theme.

One of the major specific problems concerned the definition of Woodville's boundaries. Frontier borders are marked by great confusion and ambiguity. Provincial demarcations are simple: Woodville being at the south-western most extremity of Hawke's Bay

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7. As evidenced by the noticeable lack of references and blatant inaccuracies concerning Woodville in secondary accounts. See Errol Braithwaite, The Companion Guide to the North Island of New Zealand (Auckland, 1970), 280:

Woodville was established by Scandinavian immigrants, sturdy Danes and Swedes who passed through the Seventy-Mile Bush from the north-east .... You can almost trace their passage to the east of Woodville on the farm mail boxes! names like Svensen, Anderson, Sorenson ...

Obviously Braithwaite is confusing Woodville with the Dannevirke cultural periphery; c.f.8-10 below. See also A.H. McLintock (ed.) An Encyclopedia of New Zealand (Wellington, 1966) Vol.3, 682; which claims "The first settlers arrived from Southern Hawke's Bay in 1862. By 1870 a township had emerged on an old route between the Manawatu and Hawke's Bay districts". c.f.11-12 below.

8. L(eslie). G(eoffrey) Gordon, "Immigration into Hawke's Bay, 1858-1876" (M.A. Thesis, Victoria University, 1965).

borders the Wellington provincial district. On the local level however, the fluctuating nature of Woodville's boundaries makes political delimitation difficult. Boundary changes occurred when Woodville was constituted a Highway District in 1878, a Town District in 1884, and a Borough in 1887. But these lines were greatly complicated by the competing attempts to stabilise boundaries between local government bodies and the Waipawa County Council. Apart from further political demarcations, such as electoral boundaries, Woodville was also a Licensing District and a Resident Magistrate District. On top of this several indefinable boundaries existed. Concentric zones of frontier activity, external business and social affiliations, the influence of state agencies, the natural centre of gravity at Napier, trade and communication patterns, and the penetration of a small farmer ideology provided added ambiguity. The most efficient way to delimit Woodville's boundaries was through a map and accompanying appendix displaying the physical features which delimit Woodville as a compact region (Figure 1 and Appendix A).

The use of sociological concepts may present problems of under- and over-conceptualisation of ideas. Provision has been made, either in the text or footnotes, to provide an accurate application and definition of the concepts used.

The nature of the source materials also presented problems. Because of the death of early inhabitants it was difficult to provide an accurate account of the origins and movements of the original settlers, thus forcing the researcher to speculate. The available information was scattered in four separate localities (in order of importance): Wellington, Napier, Woodville and Palmerston North, with the bulk of the material being located at Wellington. Apart from problems of distance, the source material was unbalanced. Between 1874 and 1883 the information was very patchy and required an eclectic synthesis of external newspaper correspondents' reports, archival material, memoirs and maps. But from 1883 the Woodville Examiner supplied an overabundance of material: a balance had to be achieved. The compilation of statistical information also posed difficulties. Before 1891, statistical breakdown of

information in official publications was limited to population, sheep returns, court records and school attendance. In some instances the 1891 Census, although outside the bounds of the study, was used to provide an impression to offset partially this limitation.

But the researcher cannot underestimate the utility of the existing sources. Newspapers, particularly the Woodville Examiner, supplemented by the Hawke's Bay Herald, The New Zealand Mail and the Waipawa Mail, provided a valuable resource. In the Woodville Examiner, local advertisements were important in supplying information on local and outside business interests, the type of and relative demand for various services and goods, price indices, indicators of pace, relative wealth and institutional growth of the community, land sales, official announcements, entertainments and meetings. Apart from the editorials (which were important reflections as well as creators of local opinion), gossip and correspondence columns; the newspaper also provided reports on election speeches, road board meetings and resident magistrate court sittings. The supplementary newspapers often served as a balance to the Woodville Examiner, particularly concerning the controversy over the siting of the Woodville railway station in 1885.

Official sources were very helpful to confirm and resolve conflicting newspaper reports. The Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives, Statistics of the Colony of New Zealand, The Hawke's Bay Gazettes, and The New Zealand Gazettes, through persistent cross-referencing, provided valuable information concerning the impact and interaction of the state on the frontier. Archival material and memoirs played the role of gap-fillers.

Secondary source material, although limited, was useful in building up a framework of the study. Oliver's lecture on Towards a New History? and his Challenge and Response,<sup>9</sup> helped to formulate

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9. W.H. Oliver and Jane M. Thomson, Challenge and Response, a study of the development of the Gisborne and East Coast Region. (Gisborne, 1971).

a working hypothesis as well as providing a suitable methodological substructure. This base was largely assisted by two American works, Boorstin's The Americans: 2 The National Experience and Billington's America's Frontier Heritage.<sup>10</sup> For the provision of a contextual base, Arnold's, Franklin's and Gordon's works were the greatest assets.

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10. Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans Volume Two The National Experience (? 1969), and Ray Allen Billington, America's Frontier Heritage (New York, 1966).

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<u>AJHR</u>	<u>Appendices to Journal of the House of Representatives</u>
<u>HB</u>	<u>Hawke's Bay Archives</u> (held at National Archives, Wellington)
<u>HBC</u>	<u>Hawke's Bay Provincial Council's Votes and Proceedings</u>
<u>HBG</u>	<u>Hawke's Bay Provincial Gazettes</u>
<u>HBH</u>	<u>Hawke's Bay Herald</u>
<u>NZG</u>	<u>New Zealand Gazette</u>
<u>NZM</u>	<u>New Zealand Mail</u>
<u>NZS</u>	<u>Statistics of the Colony of New Zealand</u>
<u>PD</u>	<u>Parliamentary Debates</u>
<u>WE</u> adv.	<u>Woodville Examiner</u> (advertisements)
<u>WM</u>	<u>Waipawa Mail</u>