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NEW ZEALAND.

HISTORY OF THE CARVED HOUSE "MATATUA."

(EXHIBITED BY THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT AT THE SYDNEY EXHIBITION.)

Presented to both Houses of the Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

HISTORY OF CARVED HOUSE "MATATUA," EXHIBITED BY THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT AT THE SYDNEY EXHIBITION.

MANY generations ago, while some of the ancestors of the Ngatiawa tribe were preparing a repast of fern-root at Whakatane for a stranger named Taukata, he showed them some kumaras. They asked him where he got them, and if they were good for food. He replied that they were from Hawaiki, and were their main sustenance; and that, if they would make him a canoe, he was quite willing to take them to his island for the purpose of bringing back some seed to New Zealand.

They complied with his request, and named the canoe "Te Aratawhao," and started under the guidance of Toroa and Tamakihikurangi. Taukata remained behind, but told them the direction in which to steer, with orders to dig the kumaras from a hill called Parinuitera, and not to take them from near the sea-beach. Also, to take precautions to prevent *pakura* (water hens) or rats getting on board.

On their arrival at Hawaiki it was found that "Te Aratawhao" was too small to bring a cargo. Consequently they were obliged to make another canoe, which they called "Matatua," which was accordingly laden with kumaras; but they quite forgot the caution about the *pakura* and rats, hence the first introduction of these to New Zealand.

"Matatua" left in company with a canoe named "Te Arawa," which was commanded by Ngatoroirangi. The crew of "Te Arawa" were on the same mission—namely, to get kumaras; but the two canoes had not left New Zealand together. They parted company, and "Matatua" landed at Whakatane, where the Ngatiawa pa now stands.

Immediately the canoe reached the Whakatane shore, the Natives in the stern of the canoe jumped out and went inland, and subsequently made their way to Taranaki, where their descendants still live, and retain the name of Ngatiawa. Those in the stern of the canoe did not land at once; but, when they did, they settled there and then on the spot, and so named themselves Ngatiawa proper, while they called the deserters "Te Roro Ngatiawa" (wanderers). Those who remained at Whakatane are the ancestors of Ngatiawa, Ngaiterangi, Urewera, Whakatohea, Whanauapanui, and other tribes. The "Matatua" was dragged to the spot where the Ngatiawa pa now stands. Here she was left to decay, and years after two trees grew up. One was a puriri, which was afterwards cut down by the Ngapuhi tribe when they made a raid on Whakatane; the other was a rata, which was called "Te-Puhi-o-Matatua," and was destroyed by the troops under Colonel Fraser in 1867. Taukata did not benefit much by his charitable action in giving information about the kumaras, for the residents of his island gave instruction to the tribe to kill Taukata as soon as the kumaras came up, or else the gods (under his influence) would bewitch their crop, and kumaras would never grow in their land: so they seized an opportunity and cruelly murdered him in a kumara pit.

The idea of the house first originated with Hohaia Matatehokia, chief of the Ngatipukeko tribe, who consulted with Wepiha Apanui and other Natives, and with Major Mair. The matter was left in abeyance for about two years, when the whole tribe took up the matter, and decided to build a house and represent all their ancestors in it.

Another object in building this house was to reconcile the tribes Ngatiawa and Urewera, between whom there existed much ill-feeling in consequence of murders perpetrated by the latter tribe during the war. The house was completed in 1874. In March, 1875, it was opened by the late Sir Donald McLean with great demonstrations, in the presence of many hundreds of Native and European visitors. The image on each post represents the ancestor of some tribe or sub-tribe. The principal one is Toi, from whom the whole Native race is supposed to have sprung; his figure is carved on the bottom of the middle post, in company with Awa and Toroa. The front pole represents the figure of Kahungunu, ancestor of the Hawke's Bay Natives, Rongowhakaata, ancestor of the Poverty Bay Natives, and Te Whatuiapiti, another ancestor of the Hawke's Bay Natives. The small image represents Te Ngarara, who was killed many years ago while trading off Whale Island. The second small image represents Te Maitaranui, grandfather of Wepiha Apanui, and of Mr. Faloon, who was murdered at Whakatane some years ago. The carving on the ridge-pole in front of the