

# THE MUSEUMS OF NEW ZEALAND

THE nine previous articles in this series by Enid B. V. Phillips have described different museums from Whangarei to Invercargill which range in size from the impressive metropolitan museum to the small-town museum of parochial interest. In this article she deals with the museum of the place with the greatest historical significance in New Zealand—Waitangi.

## The Waitangi Museum

WHEN the chiefs at Kerikeri petitioned William IV, praying that he should extend his protection to these islands, the King responded by appointing James Busby, an Australian colonist then visiting England and a man whose pen revealed him to be thoroughly au fait with Antipodean affairs, as British Resident in the Bay of Islands. (Busby, who had been thoroughly educated in the classics during his student days in Edinburgh and who was equally well versed in botany and geology, had supplemented his course of studies by travelling through France and Spain to acquaint himself with the most up-to-date methods of viticulture. The result was not only a most pleasingly written technical "Treatise on the Vine", a Sydney publication dated 1825, but three collections of vines totalling more than 1200 plants and including specimens from the Montpellier Botanic Gardens and the national garden at Luxembourg, which completely filled two cabins aboard the Matilda, the vessel that transported them to Australia.)

Busby's house requirements in New Zealand were extremely modest, considering that the proposed residence had to be of a style sufficiently impressive to uphold the prestige of the Crown and at the same time conform to the needs of a young man contemplating matrimony. Nevertheless, though the plans prepared by the Sydney architect J. Verge estimated the entire cost at a mere £592 15s. 4d. for "a house in a frame", the technical term was misconstrued to mean "the frame of a house", and there was much alteration before the plans, considerably modified by a Mr. Hallen (presumably the Colonial Architect), were eventually approved.

### Help from Missionaries

In the meantime Busby, who had arrived in New Zealand in May, 1833, was pleased to avail himself of the hospitality of the missionaries, who, being as proficient in practical matters as they were in theology, gave him much help with the building of his house. The timber sections arrived from Australia for two rooms and a vestibule, all that the authorities would allow him. Commenting on this, the Waitangi historian T. Lindsay Buick says: "At no stage in his career was Mr. Busby embarrassed by official generosity!" The framing was of jarrah, the hall flooring of Australian ironbark, the windows and doors of cedar, and the weather boards of jarrah and cedar. The foundations of the house were of boulders, and Sydney sandstone was used for the fireplace hearths and the flagstones paving the wide veranda.

Busby was soon comfortably settled in his new abode and it is recorded that on March 20 the next year, after taking part in the presentation of a national flag to the principal northern chiefs, he invited the officers of H.M.S. Alligator to the Residency, where they were regaled with "a cold collation". (Incidentally, Busby had received high praise from Australian quarters the previous month. The Chief Justice and the Colonial Secretary, having completed their examination of the vines in the New South Wales Botanic Garden which Busby had collected in France, advised His Excellency Major-General Richard Bourke that "the inhabitants of Australia are under great obligations to Mr. Busby for having transferred to these shores a national collection of vines such as was acquired in France after the Napoleonic Wars by the Minister of the Interior, having at his command the means and resources of the French Empire".) Apparently naval nomenclature of the period favoured the more deadly species of reptiles as being symbolic of their death-dealing propensities in battle, for the vessel which brought Captain William Hobson, R.N., to these shores 3 years later was called H.M.S. Rattlesnake.

### Hobson's Delicate Mission

As a result of his report to the Marquis of Normanby, the Colonial Secretary, Hobson was sent out again to New



[National Publicity Studios photo.]

The Treaty House, Waitangi, the residence of James Busby. The anchor under the giant pohutukawa came from the brig Pioneer.

Zealand, this time as British Consul, and entrusted with the delicate mission of persuading the Maoris to cede the sovereignty of the country to the British Queen. At Waitangi (Weeping Waters) on February 5, 1840, he met the chiefs in a large marquee made from a framework of spars covered with sailcloth which had been erected on the sloping lawn of the Residency. Here, with the invaluable help of the Rev. Henry Williams, head of the Anglican Mission, as interpreter, he discussed the terms of the Treaty, being greatly aided in his negotiations by Busby.

Next day, the signing of the Maori Magna Carta, as the venerable Arawa leader Mita Taupopoki termed it, took place, many of the chiefs attaching their moko (face tattoo mark) to the document in lieu of signature. And as the Union Jack was unfurled from the flagstaff at Waitangi and a salute of 21 guns sounded from the frigate which brought him to the Bay of Islands from Sydney Hobson summed up the true significance of the event in the historic phrase: "He iwi tahi tatou—we are now one people."

In accordance with Lord Normanby's instructions Captain Hobson was now entitled to become Lieutenant-Governor of the colony, thus superseding Busby. However, this did not necessitate the former Resident's leaving his home; as his family responsibilities increased the Residency had to be correspondingly enlarged and so a wing built of New Zealand timbers was added to the south side of the original building and another to the northwest.

Busby had also purchased additional land from the Maoris and he continued to look after his estate with the utmost efficiency. The slopes of Waitangi are reputed to have been "festooned in vines" which produced grapes par excellence. He died while on a visit to England in 1871 and was buried in London. (Mrs. Busby's grave and those of two of her children are in the old churchyard at Paihia.)

Ultimately the whole property passed into the hands of strangers, and its prosperity gradually diminished with the passing of the years until 1932, when the Governor-General, Viscount Bledisloe, and his wife, who were touring the Bay of Islands at the time, decided to acquire the Treaty House and surrounding lands to the extent of about 1000 acres and present them to the people of New Zealand.

### Restoration of Residence

Under the direction of the Waitangi National Trust Board's honorary architects, W. H. Gummer, of Auckland, and W. M. Page, of Wellington, the work of restoring this gem of Georgian architecture, with its simple white-columned veranda and moss-grown grey roof of kauri