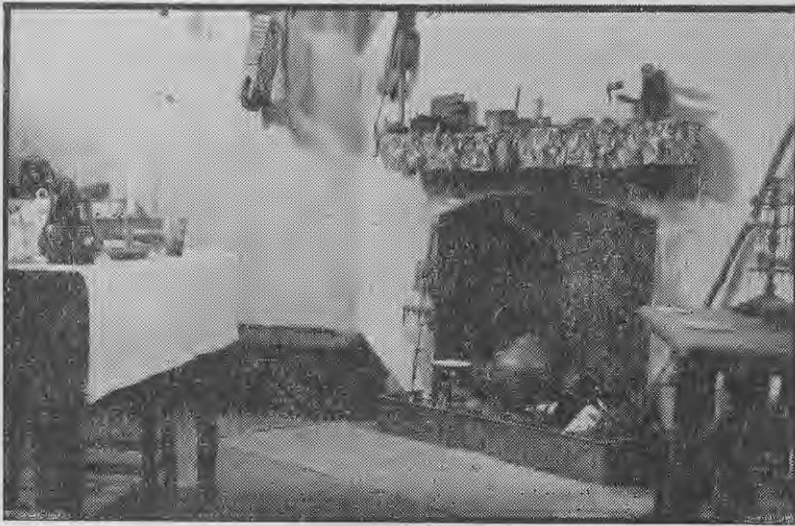


THE MUSEUMS OF NEW ZEALAND



The interior of the kitchen in the model of a pioneer's cottage set up in the museum. The cottage is 3 roomed and the furnishings are typical of those in use in a pioneer's home 100 years ago.

termed barracks. Winter came early to Otago that year and the picturesque grass thatch was not proof against the incessant rain and there was no cheerful open fireplace or stove of any kind to offset the chill winds which penetrated the flimsy walls. Umbrellas were de rigueur indoors and the puddles underfoot changed the clay floors into miniature ponds and patches of bog which were at times "mid-leg deep".

No wonder the womenfolk, whenever possible, set to work to help their husbands to build their homes, tackling such unaccustomed tasks as lugging newly sawn timber from the bush, gathering materials for thatching, and mixing clay, chopped tussock, and water to form a crude plaster to fill in the narrow, grass-laced interstices between the walls of wattles and saplings. Wattle-and-daub construction was most generally used, though sods, tree ferns, and sun-dried bricks also had a place in this primitive housing programme. A model house of this kind can be inspected in the museum, entrance being effected through a door in an appropriate mural, one of a striking series depicting pioneer life in Otago painted for the centennial exhibition by J. W. Brock and C. V. Wheeler.

Household Equipment

The museum also has a full complement of pioneer household equipment: Candle moulds, charcoal irons, and an antiquated coffee mill; a portable camp oven like a gargantuan preserving pan with a circular lid on which to heap the hot embers; its more elaborate counterpart, a colonial oven resembling a small coffin with a door in the side and conveniently fitting into a fireplace so that a fire could be kindled both on top and beneath according to the degree of heat required; a hook and swivel with a heavy iron kettle attached; and a choice selection of churns, including the settlement's

premier model, contrived with characteristic Scottish thrift and ingenuity in making the best use of available material—a water cask from the Philip Laing. Sawn-down barrels also did duty for seats as did vertebrae of whales brought from the Heads. Packing cases, too, were pressed into service as furniture until there was opportunity to try cabinet-making with native timbers. The museum possesses many examples of the early work of the amateur craftsmen, also 3 carved chairs used by the Otago Provincial Council, which held its first meeting in the Mechanics' Institute on December 30, 1853.

Chair for First Judge

Another interesting item is the chair made by Mr. John Hill for the first

Judge of the Supreme Court of Otago, Mr. Sidney Stephen, whose appointment by Governor Grey was far from popular with the Scots for his salary of £800 a year was considered a severe and unnecessary drain on the limited finances of the young province. A more law-abiding community would have been hard to find. Indeed, the local lock-up was so little used that it often served as a meeting place for the Methodists when the Rev. Creed held church services when visiting Dunedin. Moreover, the Anglicans, having neither church nor cathedral, gathered for worship in the Supreme Court building, now the site of the present gaol, the services being brightened by the acquisition of a barrel organ which played 36 hymn tunes and had been brought to New Zealand by Dr. Frederick Hall Richardson, who arrived in Otago in 1851. (This was the instrument which greatly interested our present King when, as Duke of York, he inspected the museum on his New Zealand tour in 1927, the joyous strains of "O Come All Ye Faithful" reverberating through the museum as he vigorously turned the handle.)

Nevertheless, the half-yearly sittings of the Supreme Court were conducted with the utmost ceremony, many of the jurors travelling long distances to attend, even though there was a complete absence of crime on the calendar. These farcical proceedings came to an end in 1850 when the Judge himself brought an action against a popular Dunedin belle, with whom he had been conspicuously friendly, for "willingly and wickedly conspiring" with two well-known citizens to damage his reputation. One of the lady's champions immediately retaliated by beginning proceedings against the Judge for threatened assault in a public thoroughfare.

Both charge and countercharge held that element of drollery which would have delighted the British dramatist W. S. Gilbert, and the legal comedy concluded on an unexpectedly sensational note when His Honour, after having been exonerated by the Bench, which comprised no fewer than 11 Justices of the Peace, was roundly



A mural painting of a mill forms an appropriate setting for a large water-wheel displayed in the Pioneers' Hall of the museum. This mural is one of an extensive series depicting typical Otago scenes painted by the artists J. W. Brock and C. V. Wheeler for the centennial exhibition which opened in February, 1948.