

Although Brees is among the best known names of earlier New Zealand artists, it must be conceded that his reputation rests largely upon Melville's engravings of his watercolours and the fact that the published volume is available in relatively large numbers. Brees was also fortunate in having been in New Zealand at the particular period he was and in the lasting historical interest of many of his subjects. The original watercolours have not, in general, been widely exhibited, and have been almost ignored by the critics.<sup>1</sup> Because his paintings as such are not well known, being very different from the engravings, and because he did not sign them, it is possible that many still exist, unknown, in private hands in this country or in England. Some fifty or so which were used in the *Pictorial Illustrations* . . . have not yet been located, although it may be that some of these lie in the Sir George Grey collection in the British Museum, unidentified.

Brees appears in Graves<sup>2</sup> as a Birmingham artist, exhibiting landscapes between 1832-7, seven being at the Royal Academy, eleven at the Society of British Artists exhibitions, and one at the New Watercolour Society, afterwards the Royal Institute. A number of the watercolours in the Turnbull collection are quite charming, although they are not very positive in character. Others suffer from some flatness in treatment. In many, the artist's attempts to emphasize highlights by use of a varnished effect, detract from the appearance of the painting. Unlike most of his contemporary surveyors, Brees unfortunately did not produce crisply detailed views. His landscapes are over careful in their painting, yet remain rather indistinct. Close inspection reveals that the figures, whether human or animal, are crudely primitive. Yet Brees was a reasonable colourist and his watercolours are pleasant to view.

The most important Brees original in New Zealand is probably that in the Hocken Library, *A 'tangi' at Kopekehinga, Wairarapa. E Koro, the chief of Kaikokerri, meeting some of the Huangaroa natives*. Another of great interest, and one of his best artistically, is the painting of Barrett's Hotel, owned by Mr Bruce Anderson, who also has a second original. The Barrett's picture was reproduced on the dust-jacket of the Library's *Journal of Ensign Best*. An Auckland owner also has an original Brees, but others are not known. One of the most attractive of the Library's watercolours is *View of Petoni from the western shore of Port Nicholson*. As in much of his work, Brees here has the feeling of the New Zealand hills above the low-keyed cool reflections of the harbour. Again, a scene which is probably on the Porirua coast has much New Zealand appeal; an animated view as Maoris launch their canoes. A landscape, apparently in the Upper Hutt, is also very obviously a local scene and has a sunlit warmth in its pastoral tranquillity. Two refreshingly lively