

248. In 1877, when these leases fell in, had they then been cut up in quarter-acre sections they would have fetched more money?—No doubt in my mind.

249. What would have been the increase?—A hundred to a hundred and fifty per cent.

250. Is not Wanganui like other places—the land is subject to vary in price? That being so, do you not think that persons residing there are better able to look after it than if they were living at a distance?—I should consider so.

251. You say Mr. Churton lives on part of the reserve himself. How many acres has he?—One or two acres, I think.

252. Would it not be five acres?—It might be.

253. *His Lordship.*] Are you aware that Mr. Churton got that section before he became agent of the Trustees?—I could not say how long he has been agent.

254. Do you know who was manager before Mr. Churton?—I think Mr. Dooley was.

255. *Mr. Bain.*] Do you think an agricultural school, properly conducted, would be well attended by Europeans?—I am very doubtful about it myself.

TUESDAY, 4TH NOVEMBER, 1879.

Mr. H. C. FIELD examined.

255A. *The Chairman.*] Mr. Field, you are familiar with the Industrial School estate at Wanganui?—I have known it from the first, and all connected with it. I was in Wanganui at the time the grant was made, and took considerable interest in it, because I hoped it might be a means of raising the Maori race; and for many years, as one of the trustees of the parochial district, I had constant opportunities of knowing all that was going on in connection with it. For some years past I have had a son there.

256. You were there in 1852, when the grant was first made?—Yes; I came to Wanganui in 1851.

257. You have resided there since 1851?—Yes.

258. So that you were there when the grant was made?—Yes.

259. Was the grant utilized from the beginning?—As soon as it possibly could be. The land, in the first instance, consisted of deep swamps, intersected by sand-ridges, and none of it could be let until about £300 had been spent in digging main and outfall drains. The property was then subdivided, and as soon as that was done, nearly the whole of it was let by public tender. A certain portion was reserved for the school and for cultivation. There was a portion at the north-western end which could not be let because it was too wet, until the drains were deepened and widened, at a further cost of about £100, when the ground had sufficiently consolidated several years afterwards.

260. Was this a portion of the Town of Wanganui?—Not at that time. Up to 1862 it formed part of country highway districts. In the first instance, it formed part of what was surveyed by the New Zealand Company as the Town of Petre, but the Company, finding they could not sell the land so fast as they had anticipated, cut it down to about one-third the original dimensions. This was about 1848. They struck the new boundary line at Ingestre Street, and offered the land between that street and the town belt for sale, in suburban blocks of about five acres each, at £5 an acre. There were about eighty of these blocks, and of these about thirty are included in the school estate. They only succeeded in selling eight out of the eighty, and the rest were unsaleable up to the time these grants were made.

261. What was done with the remainder?—At the same time as this grant was made, some were granted for hospital reserves. This tended to raise the price of the rest, but the Government could not sell them until they undertook to make a main drain up Harrison Street. The Government could not sell them, on account of the expense of draining them, and the absence of any law under which purchasers could combine to effect the drainage.

262. You say originally it was part of the town?—But when the town was cut down it became part of the suburban land.

263. When did it first become a portion of the town district?—In 1862. At the time the grant was made, this land was not worth in the market more than 25s. an acre.

264. When was the school first established?—Very shortly after the grant was made; about the same time the lands were let, or very shortly afterwards.

265. On what basis was it established? Was it a free school, or a school for the teaching of industries?—Up to the time at which the grant was made the only school in Wanganui had been one established in connection with the English Church, and supported partly out of Church funds. This school was then given up and merged in the new school. Efforts were also made to get the Natives to send their children to it, and for a time with some success.

266. Did they charge fees?—Fees were charged to the European pupils, but not to the Maori ones.

267. Do you know what the school fees were?—About 1s. a week.

268. That is to say all the year round?—Yes; during the time the school was open.

269. When did the Maoris cease to go to the school?—At the next harvest time. When the harvest came round these Maori boys disappeared. Some of them, whose parents I had induced to send them to the school, returned to their homes at Waitotara. I asked them why they went away, and they told me that some settlers tempted them by offer of wages to go and help in the harvest; that the master's son had followed them and threatened that unless they returned they should be arrested for taking away the school clothes, and that they were so alarmed that next morning they threw the clothes into the school premises and ran away home.

270. Was any further attempt made to induce the Maori boys to attend the school?—There were a few boys there for some years.