

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

(ROBERT M. HOUSTON, Commissioner.)

KAITAIA, 10th MAY, 1907.

Timoti Puhipi (sworn) states: I will first say that I am glad Providence has preserved me to give evidence to-day. I will now refer to the land itself, Tangonge. The land was returned by the Rev. J. Matthews to my father. Mr. Matthews went with me and we saw the boundaries, and they are still extant. The boundaries were located by a raised bank which is now to be seen; it is 6 ft. or 8 ft. high. It reaches to the hill here [Pukemiro]. That was the boundary of the land returned by Mr. Matthews to my parent. The land was originally sold by my parent to Mr. Matthews. A portion of Mr. Puckey's land was returned to us, and our people are now living on it. These were the Church people, Messrs. Matthews and Puckey. Mr. Matthews suggested to me that we should have the boundaries defined, for fear we might have trouble with the Government. When the gum was discovered in the lake I laid claim to the royalty. I was told by the Europeans that the land belonged to the Government, and that I had no right to expect royalty from them. My son went to Auckland and found from the plans that the Government had taken it. It was then I sent a petition to Parliament, and that petition was signed by the Rev. Mr. Matthews. The Government replied that the land had been taken by the Commissioner. We sent a second petition, which was also signed by Mr. Matthews. He said his name could not be questioned. When Mr. Houston became member of Parliament I asked him what had been done with this petition which had been signed by Mr. Matthews. Mr. Houston said he thought the land would be returned to us. My father sold this land to Mr. Matthews. There was a Commission set up to inquire as to what was the area allowed. The Commission was set up to inquire what lands were sold. Mr. Puckey and Mr. Matthews told the Commissioners that they had returned these lands to my parent. I do not know what the area was. It included a portion of Lake Tangonge. In Pukepoto Block there is a portion of the lake. I do not know the extent and area of land—there is about 1,000 acres. I cannot say what is its area outside the lake. There was both dry land and swamp returned by Mr. Matthews. When Mr. Matthews returned from Mangonui he said that these lines had better be defined. Mr. Matthews said this land had been returned to the petitioners. I would ask the Commissioner to view the land; it is close by.

(The Commissioner here adjourned to view the land, and was accompanied by Mr. R. H. Matthews and the Natives.)

Riapo Puhipi (sworn) states: The land referred to by Timoti is the land. It was sold by my grandfather, Puhipi, to Mr. Matthews, and this land has not been disposed of since. There were other lands sold by my grandfather to Mr. Matthews, and some land sold by him to Mr. Puckey. I do not know when the land was returned by Mr. Matthews, but my grandfather told me of it. In 1895 the gum was taken from the land. There were certain arrangements made with my father about digging the gum. It was then we were told that the land belonged to the Government. It was then we came to the Rev. J. Matthews. My father said to Mr. Matthews, "This land has not been returned to my father." Mr. Matthews said he would not obstruct. Mr. Matthews told us that the land was returned and the land belonged to my father. Mr. Matthews suggested we should send a petition, and that he would sign it. It was then that Herepete Rapihana [Herbert Robson] went to Auckland. He brought down the plans. It was the first time we were aware that the Government claimed that 1,000 acres. There are 1,000 acres, and that petition is for that 1,000 acres. My father has told me that there were two other lands returned to my grandfather. Both these lands were returned at the same time. The land returned by Mr. Puckey is now in our possession. I cannot think that, if this land returned by Mr. Puckey was right, the return made by Mr. Matthews was void. If Mr. Matthews had not intended to return this land, why should he have signed the petition? Mr. Davis told me that he remembered the transaction, and I do not know any reason why the Government should claim it.

Herbert Robson (Herepete Rapihana), (sworn) states: I will speak of the portion that I know of. The evidence given by Timoti Puhipi has been handed down to us, down to the time when the gum was discovered in the swamp. We always understood the land belonged to us. It was when we were about to make arrangements for the gum that we found it would not be complete. Then we came to see Mr. Matthews about the boundary-line. I heard from Mr. Matthews that he had returned this land. I agree with Leopold (Riapo) as to what he says. Mr. Matthews said, "Send a petition away during my lifetime." We did so, and the petition was signed by us and by him. The lake is not included in the 1,000 acres. The petition includes the land up to the lake (up to the bank of the lake).

Motuopao Island.

Rewiri Hongi (sworn) states: When our elders sold a piece of land at Muriwhenua they arranged to leave out a portion of the land purchased, which was the land in question. It was because there were sacred spots there. They made an application before the sale of Muriwhenua