

Special places: the passing of the Scenery Preservation Act 1903

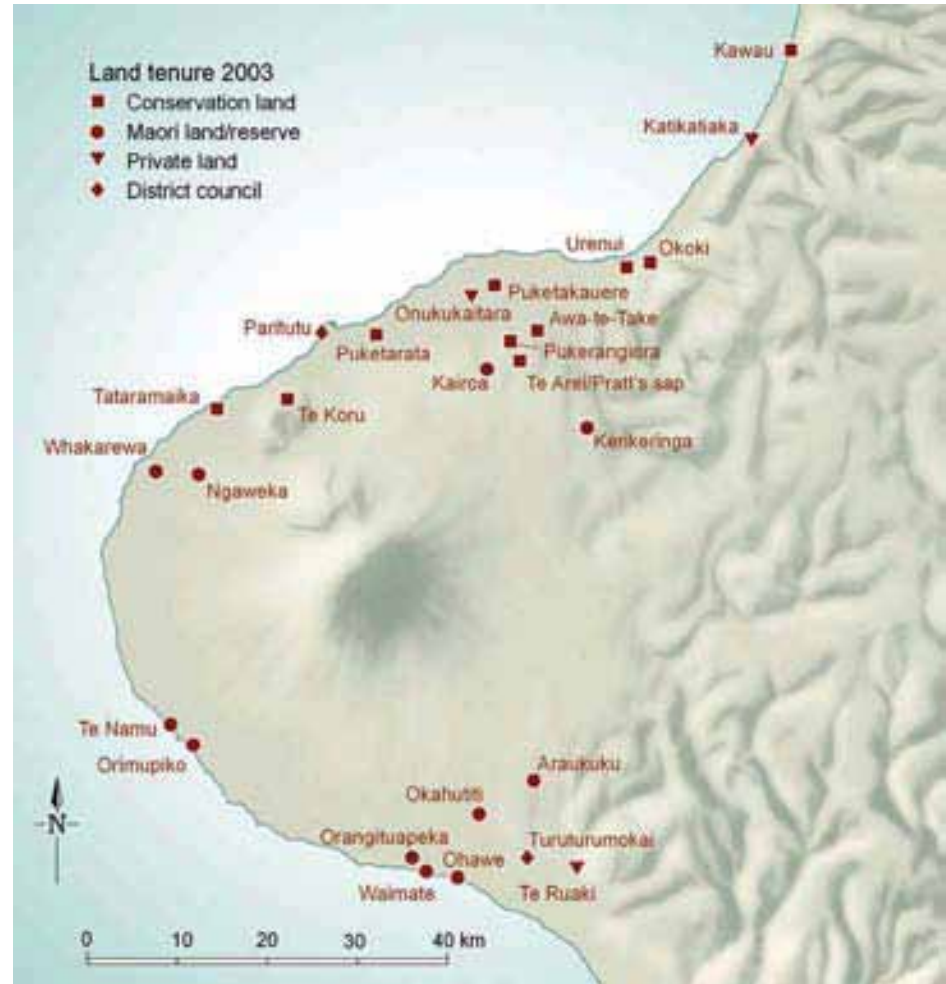
THE PREMIER'S PLACES

When introducing the Scenery Preservation Bill to Parliament, Premier Seddon noted that the proposed legislation was to halt the widespread destruction of beauty spots, an issue attracting increasing public, media and political attention. Extolling the beauties of the colony's rivers and bush, he observed that international visitors often recognised and valued the country's beautiful places more than New Zealanders themselves. He pointed out that it was necessary to preserve scenery on all land no matter what the tenure or ownership, and he stressed that reservation should be controlled by the highest authority in the country—the Parliament—to ensure absolute security of protection.

In December 1905 Premier Seddon laid the stone for the Christchurch International Exhibition held in 1906. Seddon wanted the world to know about New Zealand's resources and its beauty. The Tourist and Publicity Department had a high profile at the Exhibition and New Zealand's scenic areas were a feature of the display.

ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: Leslie Hinge, PAColl-3050, G-22032-1/1

The debate in the house that followed reflected the wide-ranging interests, motives and events that prompted the legislation. The diversity of these factors largely explains the innovative conservation measures introduced by the Act.



Historic Reserves recommended by the Scenery Preservation Commission 1906. MAP: Chris Edkins, DOC

SCENERY PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION OF HISTORIC PLACES

The Act provided for the protection of historic places in addition to preserving scenery and thermal areas. However the distinction between historic, scenic and iconic should not be overstated. Members of Parliament commented that iconic images of bush-clad mountains and associated rivers and lakes were already familiar representations of the country's unique character. Beautifying societies and horticulturists were beginning to promote native plants for garden use, and a frequently expressed nostalgia for scenery as it had been in 1840 suggests the emergence of an interest in the indigenous character of the country. The identification of key places, events, images, flora and fauna were part of New Zealanders' national association with the landscape. This was reinforced by the emergence of the Polynesian Society in the 1890s, concerned with preserving Maori knowledge and places. New Zealand Natives Societies (meaning New Zealand-born Europeans) had been established in the 1880s and 1890s in an attempt to



The first landing site of James Cook's crew at Gisborne was commemorated with erecting a monument in 1906. This reserve contains a garden of the plants Joseph Banks collected on the East Coast on Cook's first voyage. The reserve is now landlocked because of reclamation. This site is also recognised as the landing place of the *Horouta* and *Te Ikaroa-a-Rauru* waka which brought Maori to Aotearoa several centuries before European explorers. When Captain Cook landed on 8 October 1769 the district was occupied by Rongowhakaata, Ngai Tahu (Ngai Tamanuhiri), Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki and Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti iwi. In 1990 the site was designated a National Reserve and placed under the guardianship of the Department of Conservation.

ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: T. Adams, 1906, F-70446-1/2



differentiate between the generation of settlers who had migrated and their children who had known no other home.

The origins of reserving lands can be traced right back to the 1840 Royal Instructions. The country's first Governor, William Hobson, was required to reserve areas for the purpose of public convenience, utility, health and enjoyment. By 1902, 105 scenic, historic and thermal reserves existed under the 1892 Land Act. These reserves were subsequently converted into reserves under the Scenery Preservation Act 1903. It was not always obvious how best to reserve land or whether an area would be more appropriately recognised with a scenic reserve or national park status. Peel Forest was initially created as a national park in 1902 but it soon became clear that it was too small. It subsequently became a scenic reserve.

SCENERY PROTECTION, ANIMALS AND PLANTS

Harry Ell, a Liberal Member of Parliament from 1899 to 1919, was a high-profile advocate of scenery preservation in Government at the turn of the 20th Century. He was strongly influenced by voices within the scientific community concerned about the wholesale loss of native plants and animals as well as about the impacts of introduced mammalian predators and pests. Taking their lead from Thomas Potts, who in 1878 proposed the establishment of 'national domains' as refuges for

Horahora Kakahu was an early historic reserve. It was at this Island Pa that the Proclamation of British Sovereignty over the Middle (now South) Island was made on 17th June 1840, by Major Bunbury, 80th Regiment, and Captain Nais, of HMS *Herald*, vide Major Bunbury's report to Governor Hobson: 'The Marines were landed, and the Union Jack hoisted on the Horikakau Pa under a salute of 21 guns. The yards were also manned, and three cheers were given.' Draftsman unknown, AJHR, vol 2, 1913, C-6, opp. P 10; ATL: C-26516-1/2

Henry George (Harry) Ell (1862–1934)



ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: William Henshaw Clarke, 1899–1908, PAColl-0838

Ell was raised on the family farm at Halswell near Christchurch. In the period 1881–84, as a volunteer in the Armed Constabulary, he served at Parihaka in the Taranaki Wars. He worked in the printing trade, then as a salesman and surveyor. Ell began his involvement in politics from 1884, was a member of parliament for 20 years and briefly a cabinet minister in 1912. He was a Liberal with a strong interest in welfare and labour issues. An enthusiastic naturalist, he argued for retention of forests in the interest of soil and water conservation, and for reserves and afforestation programmes to ensure adequate timber supplies, along with improved training of scientific foresters. His visionary campaign for establishment of reserves on a systematic basis during land settlement was influential in the passing of the Scenery Preservation Act. Following his parliamentary defeat in 1919 he became passionately devoted to his Summit Road scheme—a

grandiose plan for a network of reserves on the Port Hills above Christchurch, linked by a specially constructed road with regularly spaced rest houses constructed of the local stone and modelled on English inns. Three rest houses, the Signs of the Kiwi, Packhorse, and Bellbird, as well as a substantial length of road were built. His last years were devoted fanatically to construction of the fourth rest house, the Sign of the Takahe, but it was not completed until 1949, 15 years after his death.

native birds, scientific societies played a significant role in the proclamation of offshore islands as flora and fauna reserves, notably over Resolution Island (1891), Secretary Island (1893), Little Barrier Island (1895) and Kapiti Island (1897). Another who influenced Ell was Leonard Cockayne, the country's leading botanist. When addressing the 1901 New Zealand Fruitgrowers and Horticulturalists Conference he expressed the view that the colony's greatest asset was its scenery. A conference resolution urged the Government to preserve certain portions of native forest of the colony for flora and fauna purposes. This prompted in 1903 a report by the Surveyor-General on the climatic and scenic aspects of forest conservation, which acknowledged the recent neglect of forests and the unsatisfactory state of many reserves.

Scenery preservation societies

Scenery Preservation Societies were formed in the 1880s and the movement became popular in the 1890s. They were largely urban-based citizen groups, formed in Dunedin, Taranaki, Nelson, Wellington, Christchurch



Sir Joseph George Ward (1856–1930) was the Minister of Tourism and Publicity responsible for introducing and administering the Scenery Preservation Legislation. Tourism was only one of his many portfolios but it was one in which he, like Seddon, recognised the value of preserving scenery to encourage visitors from outside New Zealand.

ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: Herman John Schmidt, 1920s, PAColl-3059, G-1891-1/1

OPPOSITE PAGE BACKGROUND: Otari/Wilton's Bush from Wilton Bowling Club, 1996.

INSET: 1906. © Wellington City Council

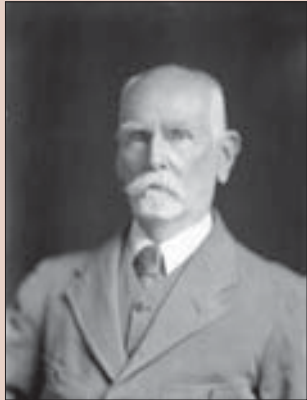
and Auckland. They influenced the establishment of reserves, particularly some urban reserves such as Christchurch's Kennedy's Bush. The Taranaki Society, headed by former Surveyor-General Stephenson Percy Smith, had an influence which extended beyond Taranaki. The Nelson Society led a popular call for the creation of a National Park in the Rai Valley in 1898. While the bid failed and reinforced the parochial tensions between Nelson and Marlborough, it was the first significant public campaign to create a national park. Some societies endured but most had waned by the 1920s, although the term 'scenery preservation' was widely understood until the 1960s.

Support from the public at large may not have been particularly influential in the passing of the legislation. Whereas specialist scientific and horticultural groups were active in the scenery preservation movement, a view was expressed in the parliamentary debate that public awareness of scenery needed raising through advertising, and through promotion of scenic assets overseas—everyone was aware that New Zealand produced frozen mutton, but few knew about its beauties. Another member suggested a contrary view that the colony's settler population had long known of the beauty spots and wanted protection legislation.

Scenery preservation as a means of halting forest loss

As colonial settlement took hold in a rapidly expanding agricultural economy, the Austrian Ferdinand Hochstetter drew the consequent wholesale loss of indigenous vegetation to world attention as early as the 1850s. He deplored the devastation of the country's forests. In 1868, Thomas Potts urged improved forest conservation to withstand the 'barbarous improvidence' of forest destruction and subsequent increased river flooding. During the next two years, W.T.L. Travers,

Leonard Cockayne (1855–1934)



ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: Stanley Polkinghorne Andrew, 1928, PAColl-3739, F-18377-1/1

Cockayne is widely regarded as New Zealand's greatest botanist and among the country's leading scientists. Born near Sheffield, England, he was a lonely child who developed a keen interest in the natural world. With some grounding in botany from preliminary medical studies, he emigrated to Australia in 1877, where he taught for several years before moving to New Zealand to take up other teaching positions in Otago. An inheritance from his father allowed him to purchase a small farm at Styx near Christchurch, and later a property near New Brighton, where he established the experimental garden Tarata. He made contacts with eminent botanists both at home and abroad; he soon became a recognised authority on New Zealand plants and vegetation. Cockayne obtained some official support for botanical surveys, undertaking in the period 1901 to 1903 expeditions to the Chatham Islands, the

South Island West Coast, Fiordland and the subantarctic islands. He also produced major reports on Waipoua kauri forest, Tongariro National Park, and Stewart Island. His book *The Vegetation of New Zealand*, published in 1921, became the standard reference for 70 years. Cockayne won a host of awards and held many eminent positions in scientific and conservation organisations. He was the scientific voice behind Harry Ell's successful promotion of the cause of scenery preservation, and he was influential in persuading the Government to establish the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. In 1927 he was responsible for establishing the Otari Open Air Plant Museum at Wilton, Wellington. He and his wife are buried and commemorated there.



using comparisons from George Perkins Marsh's classic work *Man and Nature*, drew the attention of the New Zealand Institute to increased flooding resulting from land clearance and the intrusion of exotic animals. In 1873 Charles O'Neill observed in Parliament that through destruction of forests a fertile country was in danger of becoming a desert.

From 1874, successive governments introduced legislation to facilitate forest reservation to retain forests for timber. Some areas were reserved to retain soils and water. The most notable of these was the reservation of land around Mount Taranaki/Egmont. The Lands Department recognised the scenic values of forests at the time of the scenery preservation legislation. In his 1903/04 report, the Surveyor-General recorded that forest conservation was considered secondary to the profitable occupation and utilisation of land, except where milling of timber was involved or special beauty spots were to be found. Land legislation after 1884 was distinctive because it placed a value on land for its scenery value as well as its productive value.



From 1840 until the first decades of the 20th Century, mass burn-offs were a feature of farmland development. By 1920 the farmland area of New Zealand had reached its peak although fields of blackened stumps remained a feature for many decades thereafter.

ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: Frederick Ashby Hargreaves, G-23274-1/1



The slopes of Mount Taranaki/Egmont were originally reserved to protect the surrounding farmlands from the effects of erosion and flash flood. In 1900 these reserved lands became New Zealand's second national park. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: photographer unknown, F-117279-1/2

Scenery and tourism

Behind the Scenery Preservation Act was an explicit drive to promote the country's tourism industry. Sir Joseph Ward, the Minister of the fledgling Tourist and Health Resorts Department, was the Minister responsible for the legislation. Ward had a keen appreciation of the value of scenery for attracting international visitors. This was not the first political initiative to create scenic reserves. William Fox in 1874 had drawn the attention of Parliament to the desirability for preservation of Rotorua's thermal areas, a call echoed by Thomas Potts' concept of sanatoria in his paper on national domains in 1878. From the 1880s Rotorua had grown markedly as a tourist destination, especially under the stimulus of the Thermal Springs District Act 1881.

Public ownership of scenic reserves

Many settlers jealously guarded their private land rights, whereas some Maori were very suspicious of having any dealings with the Crown over land. The Crown had not sought powers of compulsory acquisition for scenic

reserves held in private hands in the 1892 Land Act. By 1903 Seddon and Ward wanted to be able to compulsorily acquire freehold and Maori freehold lands to ensure public ownership of key scenic areas. This legislative power remained controversial and was used mostly between 1910 and 1920.

The Member for Northern Maori, Hone Heke Ngapua, welcomed the legislation as a means of preventing further loss of kauri forests and for protecting totara, yet he objected to the way compensation was made available to Maori. He argued that the value of Maori lands should be assessed not by the Native Land Court but by the same courts that assessed general lands.

In one of his first speeches in Parliament in 1906, Apirana Ngata raised objections to the compulsory taking of Maori land for scenic reserves. He was particularly critical of the Commission's reluctance to meet with Te Arawa over proposed compulsory acquisition of land in the Rotorua area. In response to the concerns, provisions for acquiring Maori land for scenery purposes were removed in the 1906 legislation. The Scenery Preservation Act 1910 returned the

Thomas Edward Donne (1860–1945)



ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY:
photographer unknown, F-38683-1/2

Donne became Secretary of the new Department of Tourism and Publicity in 1900. He enthusiastically supported his minister, Joseph Ward, in tourism promotion; during Donne's nine years as manager of Rotorua, the town became a major tourist destination. He served as a member of the Scenery Preservation Board and the Tongariro National Park Board. He authored several important books on wide-ranging subjects, including *The Maori—Past and Present*, *Game Animals of New Zealand* and *Fishing in New Zealand Waters*. He established the rudiments of a nationwide accommodation network, and oversaw the establishment of the scenic reserve network. Despite his department's considerable efforts, tourist numbers did not grow as rapidly as had been anticipated. Donne left the department in 1909 and had a subsequent career in London working for New Zealand's diplomatic representatives. He died there at the age of 85, having survived the blitz and the V2 bombs.



Hone Heke Ngapua (1869–1909) was the Member for Northern Maori who, in the 1903 debate on the second reading of the Scenery Preservation Bill, sought an equivalent compensation assessment system for Maori and Pakeha land taken under the proposed legislation. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: photographer unknown, PAColl-838



Apirana Ngata (1874–1950) was critical of compulsory acquisition of Maori land under the Scenery Preservation Commission. His efforts led to no Maori land being taken between 1906 and 1910, after which acquisition was resumed. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: William Henshaw Clarke, PAColl-838



The Union Steam Ship Company operated tours to Milford Sound from 1878. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: Burton & Coxhead, P919.31 MACH 1892, B-K 569-opp. TITLE

right of the Crown to take Maori land. That Act also validated the previous land acquisition under the Public Works Act, and provided for appointment of the Under-Secretary of the Native Department to the Board.

There was considerable reluctance among some Maori to relinquish customary resource-use areas for scenic reserves. The 1910 legislation provided for Maori to have right of access to reserves over former ancestral lands to take birds and to bury their deceased in any urupa (burial place), but there is little evidence of these provisions being used. Crown officials generally treated reserves as places where hunting and fishing were prohibited. In 1920 notices were posted, in English and Te Reo Maori, notifying that unauthorised use of customary resources in reserves would be prosecuted.

In 1913, 59 reserves were gazetted of which 22 were formerly Maori land. By 1917, some 63 scenic reserves had been created from Maori lands. By 1920 the original purchase money had been spent and the acquisition of reserves from private owners slowed to a trickle.



White terraces, 1885. James Anthony Froude, an English historian and travel writer, stayed with his friend Sir George Grey at Kawau Island during his visit in 1885. He wrote about the pink and white terraces a year before they were destroyed. His book *Oceana* was a positive account and travel guide that many New Zealanders took as an endorsement of the colony's beauty and uniqueness. SC PEARSON, ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: P919 FRO 1886, B-K 569-opp. p. 246



When Charles Blomfield painted the pink terraces they were already long gone. His highly romantic paintings strove for an aesthetic ideal. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: Charles Blomfield, 1890, G-597

Maintaining scenic reserves

Premier Seddon stressed the importance of providing absolute long-term security for scenery preservation through central government (and parliamentary) control. Robert McNab went further in deploring the prospect that control of reserves might be vested in local authorities, which he described as often acting like environmental ‘vandals’. One idea favoured was the establishment of quasi-official, voluntary groups, such as amenity societies, throughout the country to care for scenic reserves.

Several members of parliament questioned the validity of small bush reserves, suggesting that small isolated areas would be difficult to maintain. They recounted episodes where small areas were destroyed because of exposure to wind, fire or inappropriate grazing.

From 1915 the Government appointed locals as honorary inspectors of scenic reserves, especially in areas where settlement was sparse. Eventually, Scenic Boards were established. These comprised local residents, with powers to provide for the maintenance of reserves and improvements where necessary. 🍷



The Waimangu landscape was created by the Tarawera eruption. A scenic reserve was created in 1907 but tourist operators found the active site difficult. Frying pan crater erupted so violently in 1917 that it destroyed the villa built to accommodate sightseers. ALEXANDER TURNBULL

LIBRARY: Shepherd, c. 1903, F-38135-1/2

Donald Sutherland identified The Sutherland Falls in 1880 while searching for gold. The government financed the cutting of a track in 1888 from Milford Sound to the falls and the erection of huts along the way. This was the genesis of the world-renowned Milford Track. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: artist unknown, C-26574-1/2



The Otari/Wilton's Bush Scenic Reserve was established in March 1906 and was administered first by the Tourist and Publicity Department and then the Lands Department. In 1918 the enlarged reserve was transferred to Wellington City Council. Botanist Leonard Cockayne was closely associated with the establishment of the Otari Open Native Botanic Garden in 1927. Cockayne also instigated possum control at Otari in 1928—possibly the first systematic attempt to manage the pest on a reserve. The distinguished botanist and his wife are buried and commemorated in the reserve. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: Harold Stephens Hislop, 1906, C-2459-1/2

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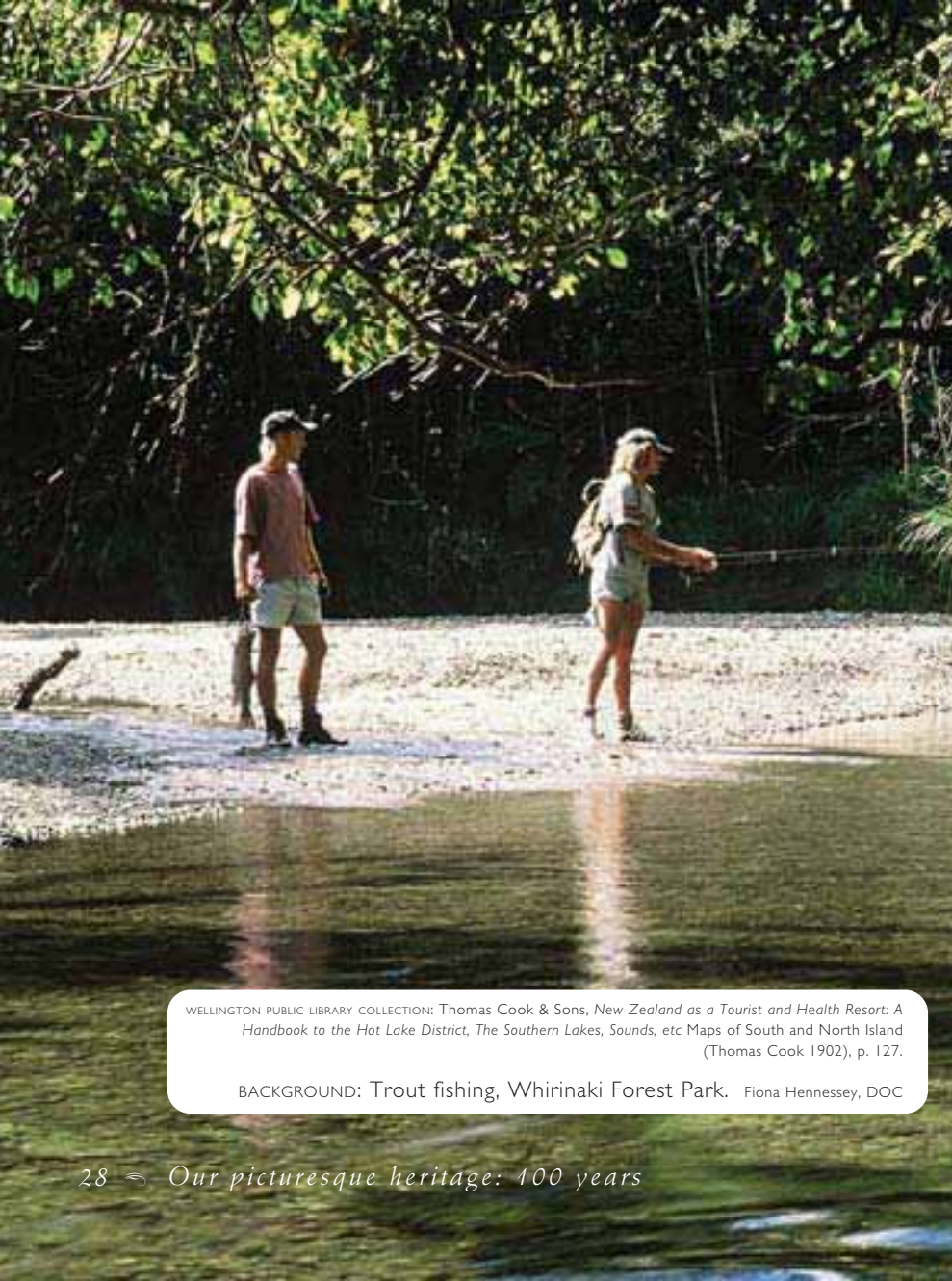
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ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: P919.31 MACH 1892, B-K 569-134



WELLINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY COLLECTION: Thomas Cook & Sons, *New Zealand as a Tourist and Health Resort: A Handbook to the Hot Lake District, The Southern Lakes, Sounds, etc* Maps of South and North Island (Thomas Cook 1902), p. 127.

BACKGROUND: Trout fishing, Whirinaki Forest Park. Fiona Hennessey, DOC

TOURIST AND HEALTH RESORT. 127

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