



Our Picturesque Heritage
100 years of scenery
preservation
in New Zealand

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Published by
Science & Research Unit
Department of Conservation
PO Box 10-420
Wellington, New Zealand

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Department of Conservation *Te Papa Atawhai*

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FLAPS, TITLE PAGE, p. 68: Mt Cook lily, Fiordland, 2001. Rosalind Cole, DOC

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ISBN 0-478-22491-5

Design and layout: Ruth Munro, Flying Frog®, Paraparaumu Beach.

Publication was approved by the Manager, Science & Research Unit, Science Technology and Information Services, Department of Conservation, Wellington.

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Foreword

New Zealand's nationwide reserve network is a product of an enduring and widespread passion for our unique landscapes. Over the past century four generations have chosen their special places and sought to protect them. Today there are more than 1,500 scenic and historic reserves. Central government, local bodies, and trusts administer them and maintain public access. These treasures are experienced, not locked away. They are promoted and visited. They are nurtured and handed down intact to future generations. We want visitors to see our best places so that they can understand this important part of our relationship with the land.

The Scenery Preservation Act 1903 was the first law that allowed the Crown to systematically establish a national series of reserves. Beautiful, interesting and significant places were reserved only after wide community consultation. The passing of the Act was remarkable because it had broad political support within parliament at a time when government was more accustomed to passing legislation to clear land for farming. Deciding to promote such legislation was a politically courageous move in

a country where private property rights were highly valued. The legislation was also bold in international terms. The Crown's power to establish reserves was much more extensive than in the United States, for example, which established federal legislation in 1906.

The story of our relationship with place is still being written. Today New Zealand is reaping the benefits of the foresight and energy of those who were responsible for establishing and expanding the scenic reserve network and we now recognise the indirect contribution that scenery preservation has made to the protection of biodiversity. As new reserves are created we augment and enrich our relationship with the land. We also provide unique recreational opportunities for both New Zealanders and international visitors.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Hon. Chris Carter
MINISTER OF CONSERVATION

Acknowledgements

Many people assisted us in the preparation of this booklet. Geoff Park, Jock Phillips and Walter Cook discussed the romantic idealism associated with the period and recommended various avenues for reading. Michael Roche discussed his thesis work from the 1970s and suggested illustrations. Janelle Warren-Findley put us in contact with some of the historiography on the creation of national monuments in the United States. Bronwyn Dalley of the Historical Group of the Ministry of Culture and Heritage was supportive, while two contract historians with the Group, David Young and Margaret McClure, provided useful source material on the history of conservation and tourism, respectively.

All the Department of Conservation staff approached in this project have generously offered information and advice. We would particularly like to mention Evaan Aramakutu, Steve Bagley, Pam Bain, Jackie Breen, Rachel Egerton, Sarah Macready and Dawn Patterson. Kevin Jones provided advice on images and Tony Walton supplied the information to map Taranaki sites.

The Alexander Turnbull Library images staff provided advice and service that was vital for this publication. Thank you to Marion Minson, John Sullivan, Joan McCracken and Heather

Massey in particular. Tonia Dingwall and Gabor Toth from Wellington Public Library also assisted with finding and providing images, as did Christchurch City Library staff.

Special thanks to: Pam Salmon and Reed Publishing for permission to reproduce the cover of *Heritage Destroyed*; Reed Publishing New Zealand (various images from their publications); Thomas Cook AG (maps from their 1902 guide); the *Herald* (Minhinnick cartoon).

The publication section of DOC Science and Research guided the manuscript to publication. Jaap Jasperse (project management, editing) and Sue Wilkins (print management) were supportive in our efforts to meet a tight timeframe and Chris Edkins demonstrated his skill in the drafting of maps.

Ruth Munro (Flying Frog®) brought her considerable flair to the design and layout and ensured the deadlines were met.

Scenic Reserves: a beautiful idea

A century ago the New Zealand Parliament passed the Scenery Preservation Act—our first law that permitted the government to set aside land for aesthetic, scientific, historic and natural curiosity values. Richard John Seddon, the populist Liberal premier, was at the peak of his power in 1903. The extrovert Seddon extolled the virtues of ‘God’s own Country’ and when introducing the legislation said:

The time has arrived in the history of our colony when our scenery should be preserved, when the historic and beautiful places should be for all time conserved, and when we should do something to protect the thermal springs, which are of so great value to the country, from being destroyed and from falling into the hands of private individuals.

In a parliament more accustomed to promoting legislation to clear areas for farming, the Scenery Preservation Act represented a new way

Premier Seddon photographed while visiting the terminal face of Franz Josef glacier. The premier was an avowed imperialist, but he was anxious to promote New Zealand’s beauty and identity to the world.

ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: 1905, F-71280-1/2

of looking at the land, one in which aesthetics were important and the New Zealanders' relationships with the landscape could be expressed. Many factors coincided to make this politically possible. Scientists were voicing concerns about losing indigenous flora and fauna even before many species were recorded. Authors such as John A. Lee and Blanche Baughan's writings about the period reflected a popular nostalgia for the bush as early settlers remembered it. The Liberals and particularly the Minister of Tourist and Publicity, Sir Joseph Ward, wanted to develop a successful in-bound tourist industry based on New Zealand's spectacular scenery. At the same time the Polynesian Society was enthusiastically supporting the reservation of pre-historic and historic sites. Robert McNab, historian and later Minister of Lands, emphasised the importance for New Zealand's sense of identity of reserving historic sites—particularly places where the Treaty of Waitangi had been signed. There were also those who recognised the value of scenic reserves for recreational activities for an increasingly urbanised and leisured population.

Romantic



William Fox painted the glacier named after him—Fox Glacier (Te Moeka o Tuawe at Weheka)—in 1872. The five-time premier was an extensive traveller who painted scenic wonders in the United States, Middle East, Europe and the Caribbean. Fox Glacier was made a scenic reserve in 1930. It was one of those incorporated into the Westland National Park in 1960 to commemorate the centennial of the Westland Province. It is now part of Te Wahipounamu—a World Heritage site designated in 1990. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: William Fox 1872,

B-113-018

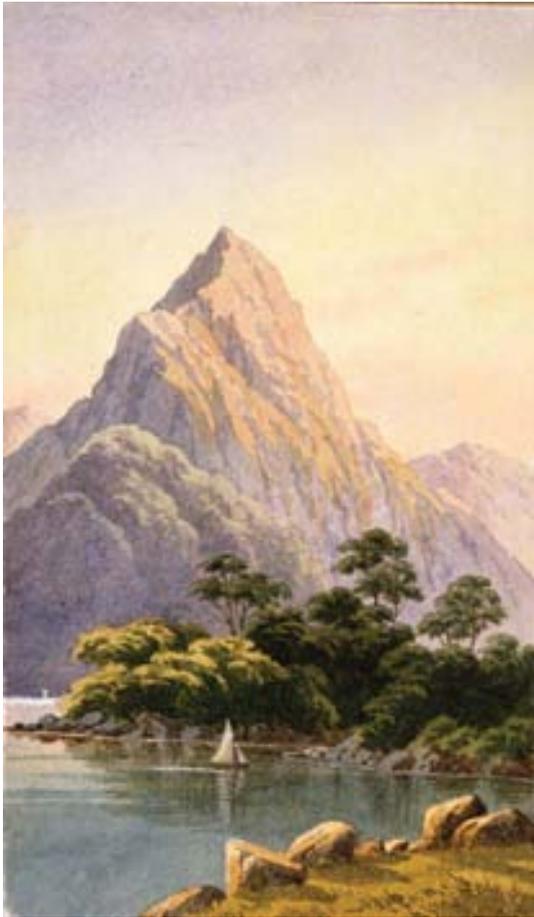
i m a g e s



John Backhouse painted this romantic view of Lake Taupo in the 1880s. The scene seems an unlikely one with a clear view of all three main volcano peaks: Tongariro, Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe, now part of the Tongariro National Park and World Heritage Cultural Landscape. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: John Philemon Backhouse, 1880s, G-452-1-1

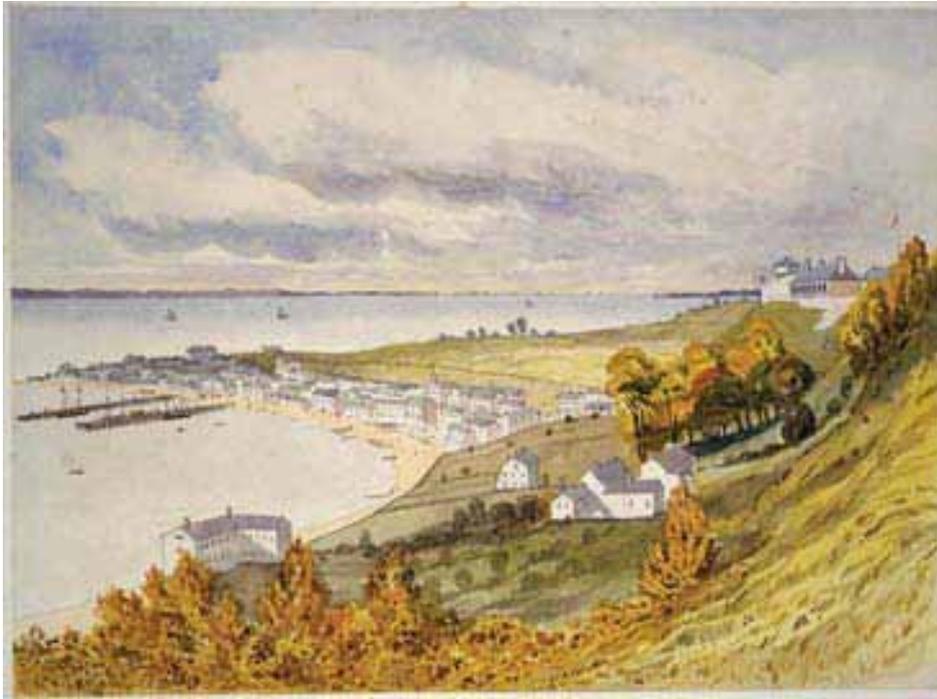
THE SCENIC IDEAL

Seventeenth-century landscape painters developed a strong sense of what was an ideal scenic landscape. As Europeans became more urbanised during the Industrial Revolution, the wealthy and middle classes increasingly valued rural tranquillity and beauty. The term scenery, which had referred only to theatre backdrops, was applied to the outdoors. Early tourists undertook grand tours to see the sites of rural England and Europe so that by the latter half of the 19th Century, when New Zealand was settled, there were the beginnings of a tourist industry. The concept of scenery and beauty allowed not only tourists, but also colonists, to rapidly identify with their new surroundings. By 1872 there were already over 400 published tourist diaries about visitors' New Zealand experiences. While tangata whenua knew their land intimately from time immemorial, by 1870 colonists had identified and valued scenic areas. It took another 30 years for a government to pass comprehensive legislation to reserve these special places.



John Barr Hoyte produced this painting in the 1870s at a time when few Europeans visited Lake Waikaremoana. Such images began to create an understanding of New Zealand's less accessible scenery amongst the wider public. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: John Barr Clarke Hoyte, 1872, C-079-012

Mitre Peak has been captured in many representations. Hoyte's 1870s image softens its ridges and reduces its scale. Milford became accessible by track in 1888 and has remained a premier tourist destination ever since. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: John Barr Clarke Hoyte, 1870s, A-253-007



Premier William Fox painted Fort Michilimacknac during his visit to the United States in 1853. The British built the fort site during the American Revolution and it was one of the early national monuments. The island park is now a state park and there are five historic buildings associated with the fur-trade era. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: William Fox, 1853, WC-251

GRAND TOURS FOR ALL

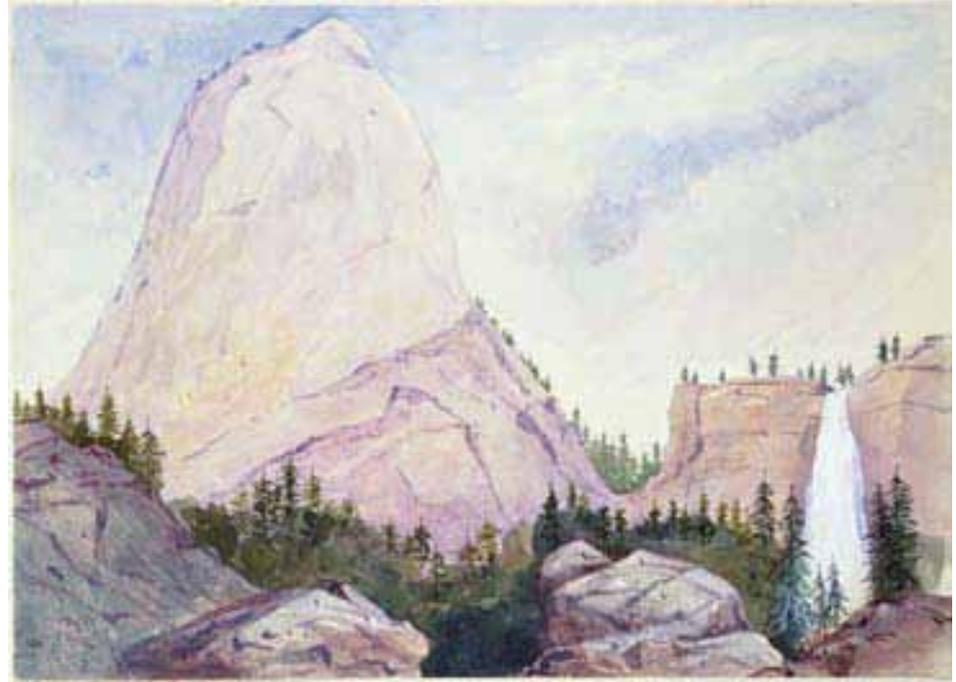
Popular tourism provided the services and products so that visitors could comfortably ‘experience’ New Zealand. Thomas Bracken may have been the lofty drafter of the poem ‘God Defend New Zealand’ that became the National Anthem; he earned his income as a journalist. Bracken wrote his florid and romantic guide *The New Zealand Tourist* in 1879 and this was updated periodically. However, the origins of popular tourism are probably most easily identified with the rise of the firm Thomas Cook. That British company organised its first international tour in 1841 and employed a New Zealand agent in Auckland from 1881.

Its early tours in New Zealand were promoted in a guide—*New Zealand as a Tourist and Health Resort: A Handbook to the Hot Lake District, the Southern Lakes, Sounds, etc.* The guide highlighted thermal attractions at Rotorua and Te Aroha in the North Island and mountain, lake and fiord scenery in the South.

INFLUENCES

New Zealand followed the example of the United States in reserving National Parks but preceded the United States by three years with its scenery preservation legislation. President Theodore Roosevelt (president 1901–09) was an outdoor enthusiast who rapidly created a series of national monuments (the American equivalent of the scenic reserve) after 1906, including natural curiosities such as Devil's Tower in Wyoming, the Petrified Forest in Arizona and the Muir Woods pines in California. Roosevelt also created a national monument at the Grand Canyon that was later expanded into a National Park. Amalgamation has also been seen in New Zealand. The Arthur's Pass and Westland National Parks began as a network of scenic reserves.

From 1840 on, there had been reserves created in New Zealand for public recreation areas and domains. The Land Amendment Act 1884 permitted the establishment of reserves for mineral springs and 'natural curiosities'. The earliest reference to scenery in legislation was in the Land Act 1892. However it was only with the



The Cap of Liberty at Yellowstone, California. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: William Fox, 1853, WC-222



Mt Vernon, the home of George Washington, was an early national monument. ALEXANDER TURNBULL

LIBRARY: William Fox, 1853, WC-305

Scenery Preservation Act in 1903 that the Crown could establish historic reserves. The legislation also provided for the compulsory purchase of some sites from private owners. The Liberal Government demonstrated genuine commitment to scenery preservation by providing £100,000 for land purchase.

A Scenery Preservation Commission and then Board made many recommendations for the creation of scenic reserves; it became impossible for the Crown to keep up. Early scenic reserve management was poor and sometimes sites were destroyed by uncontrolled burn-offs of adjacent land. While the number of scenic reserves grew steadily, some reserves that were no longer considered appropriate were removed from reservation. By 1940 there was a network of over 1000 reserves nationwide.

RESERVES

Seddon had a very broad vision of the types of reserves that should be made. It included virtually any 'special place'.

Geothermal areas were special places for many Europeans, both as scenic wonders and health resorts. The pink and white terraces at Tarawera had been internationally renowned by the time of the 1886 eruption. The loss of those attractions was deeply felt. Many of the painted images we now see of the terraces are romantic death masks. The Crown determined to purchase and protect public access to such areas even if it could not preserve them against overwhelming natural disaster. 🌊



Nugget Point Lighthouse. Illustrator: JM, *Illustrated New Zealand News*, 31 August 1885, p. 7; ATL: C-26575-1/2