

# Picking the places: the Commission 1904–06



Scenery Preservation Commission. LEFT TO RIGHT: Major H. Tunuiarangi (Ngati Kahungunu); W.J. Marchant (Surveyor-General); S. Percy Smith (Former Surveyor-General and co-founder of the Polynesian Society); H.J. Matthews (Government Forester); W.W. Smith, (expert horticulturist and curator of the Ashburton Domain and Pukekura Park). CANTERBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY COLLECTION: *The Weekly*

Press, 27 April 1904, p. 35

## THE SCENERY PRESERVATION COMMISSION

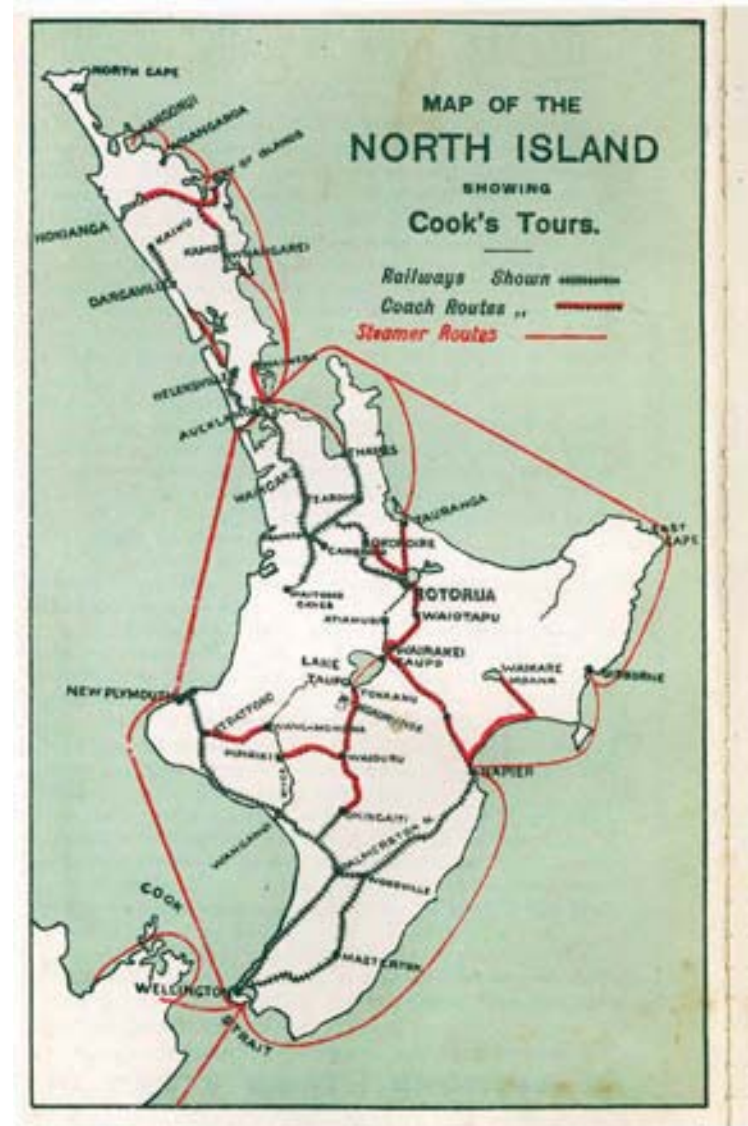
**T**he Scenery Preservation Commission was appointed in March 1904 under the chairmanship of a former Surveyor-General, Stephenson Percy Smith. The other four members of the Commission were Henry Matthews, the Government's Chief Forester; John Marchant, Surveyor-General; William Smith, horticulturalist and amateur ethnologist; and Major Hoani Tunuiarangi, a Rangitane and Ngati Kahungunu leader and member of the Maori Parliament (Kotahitanga).

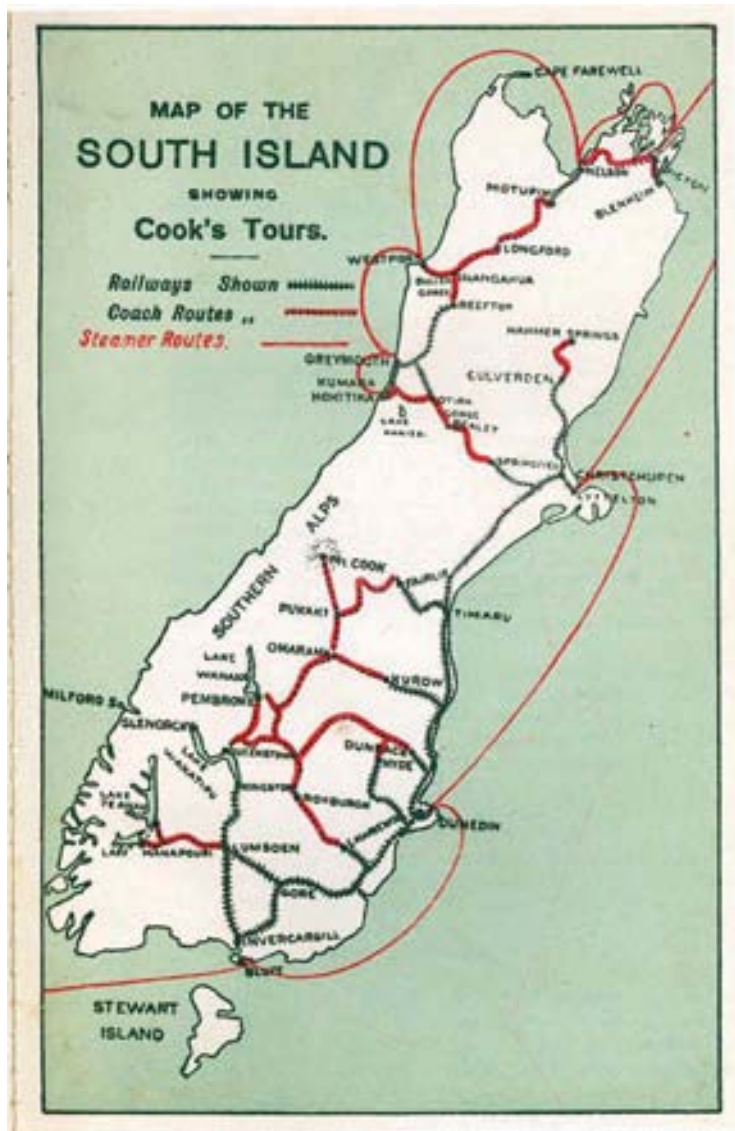
The Commission's legal mandate was to inspect any lands considered to possess scenic interest and to recommend scenic, thermal or historic reserves be acquired regardless of

whether they were in Crown, private or Maori ownership. The Commission was administered under the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts and initially operated from Wellington. In its second year it visited 74 localities from Northland to Southland, convening in seven different centres.

Suggestions for reserves came from a variety of sources, including from MPs keen to promote the scenic attractions of their local electorates, and from the Minister, Sir Joseph Ward, who submitted a list of 18 potential reserves from throughout the country. Percy Smith had a preference for making reserves along large navigable rivers, which he considered to be of interest to tourists and travellers. Rail and road routes were also a focus of attention. At their first meeting, members decided that hundreds of roadside beauty spots would be reserved and that each reserve would have an open area cleared for holding bush picnics. Tunuiarangi and Smith, in particular, drew attention to pa sites as potential historic reserves.

During the two years of its existence, the Commission furnished 14 interim reports





containing 383 recommendations, but only 61 reserves were gazetted, totalling 15 000 acres (6075 ha), at a cost of £7,000. Most were small and located on land unsuited for settlement, with a strong emphasis on bush-covered areas. Several of these were high-profile sites such as Otari/Wilton's Bush in Wellington and Kennedy's Bush in Christchurch. Other early reservations included the Waitomo Caves in Te Rohe Potae (King Country) and Flagstaff Hill near Dunedin. By 1906, only a few pre-historic and historic sites had been established: Motukaraka Island, a Ngati Paoa pa site near Beachlands was gazetted in March 1905, thereby becoming the first historic category scenic reserve. Te Kawau Pa and Turuturu-mokai Pa in Taranaki, and Ship Cove—Cook's landing site in the Marlborough Sounds—were also early reservations.

The Commission and then the board were mindful to make scenic reserves in areas frequented by tourists. Quite a few tourist routes were already recognised. This Cook's Guide of 1902 shows the national tours featuring the geothermal districts in the North Island and the Southern Lakes and Fjords.

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)



Robert McNabb, historian and former Minister of Lands in the Liberal Government, was closely associated with the development of the Ships Cove monument in Queen Charlotte Sound. This is where Cook spent the most time in New Zealand throughout his voyages. The monument was unveiled on 11 February 1913 and can still be seen on the Queen Charlotte Walkway. The reserve pre-dates the Scenery Preservation Act and was established in 1896. The area remains of continuing interest to historians and anthropologists. AJHR: AJHR, vol 2, 1913, C-6, opp. p. 10, T. Adams;

ATL: C- 26516-1/2

BACKGROUND OPPOSITE: Otatara and Hikurangi Pa sites (see p. 64). Kevin Jones, DOC

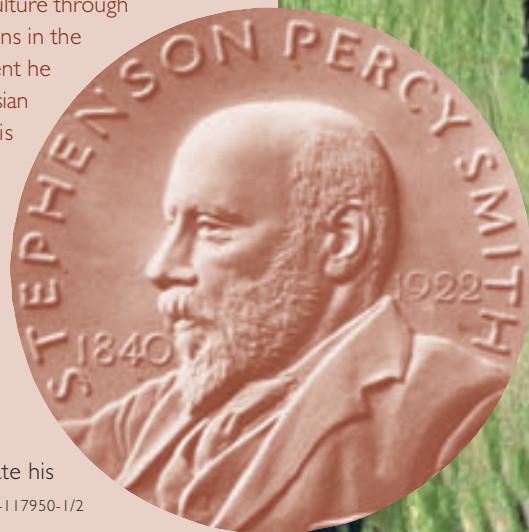
## Stephenson Percy Smith (1840–1922)



ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: photographer unknown, 1905, F-4600-1/2

Smith grew up on a family farm in Taranaki from 1850, trained as a survey cadet and worked as a professional surveyor throughout much of the northern half of the North Island. During a long career in the civil service he became Chief Surveyor and Commissioner of Crown Lands in the Auckland district, and from 1889 until his retirement in 1900 he was Surveyor-General and Secretary of Lands and Mines. He acquired an extensive knowledge of plants, animals and landscapes, and a strong interest in Maori history and culture through surveying and private excursions in the countryside. After his retirement he became recognised as a Polynesian scholar of note, although his reputation in this area has come under considerable scrutiny

since his death and many of his conclusions have now been rejected. He served on numerous local and national bodies involved with surveying, land and Native reserves. He was chairman of the Scenery Preservation Commission 1904–06 and undoubtedly influenced the Commission's interests in acquisition of Maori pa sites for reservation.



The New Zealand Institute struck this coin to commemorate his achievements. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: photographer unknown, F-117950-1/2

## Hoani (Hone) Paraone Tunuiarangi (1833/4–1933)



Hone with his granddaughter. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY:

photographer unknown, F-4158-1/2

Born in southern Wairarapa to a Pakeha whaler and Maori mother, he became a chief of Ngati Kahungunu, and a professional soldier, known in later life as Major Brown. As a young man in the 1860s he acted as guide and interpreter for the Government forces. Appointed as an assessor in the Native Land Court, he spent much time during the 1880s and 90s presenting his own claims and those of his people. He was also a member of the Kotahitanga (Maori Parliament) from 1892. Partly in recognition of his role in the sale of the Wairarapa lakes he accompanied Premier Seddon to Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee celebrations in 1897. While in London he petitioned the British Government over reserving in perpetuity all remaining Maori land in the colony, which influenced the passing of the Maori Land Administration Act 1900. Recognised among the most influential leaders of Wairarapa and the wider Maori society, he served on many committees and councils, and was an administrator for the Wairarapa Lake Reserves. In 1901 he established a school near his Pirinoa property. During his time on the Scenery Preservation Commission he published several papers in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* on Maori lore and history. It is likely that he particularly influenced the recommendations for reserving pa sites in the Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay.

## Henry John Matthews (1859–1909)

Matthews was the son of a prosperous Dunedin nurseryman, taking over the management of the family horticulture business in 1880. Through pioneering efforts in mail-order operations, he fostered both at home and abroad the use of New Zealand species as garden plants. He collected plants extensively from the wild, especially from the mountains of western Otago, and is credited with the discovery of several new species and contribution to knowledge of plant distributions. In 1896 he was appointed as the country's Chief Forester, and was responsible for establishing government nurseries that supplied major exotic forest plantations, including those on the Kaingaroa Plains. His practical handbook on tree growing, written to encourage private afforestation, was published in 1905, four years before his death at the age of 49.

## William Walter Smith (1853–1942)

Smith was born in Scotland and in his youth worked as a gardener in several English country houses. His family emigrated and took up a pioneering farm in the Ashburton area of Canterbury, where William was to be employed on the Mt Peel and Albury pastoral stations. Developing an interest in natural history and archaeology he became an avid collector, particularly of fossil moa bones that he supplied to Julius von Haast and Walter Buller. He recorded the Opihi and Totara Valley rock-paintings and excavated floors of rock shelters and caves. His large collection of stone tools was deposited in the Canterbury Museum. In 1894 he was appointed as resident custodian of the Ashburton Domain, and became a prominent member of local beautifying and horticultural societies. His appointment to the Scenery Preservation Commission was the climax of his efforts in promoting the protection of native species. Later, he was appointed as curator of Pukekura Park in New Plymouth, where he developed the park and successfully bred kiwi. A founding member of the Polynesian Society, he served as its secretary for 11 years and published seven papers on prehistory in professional journals. In 1931 he was appointed an honorary life member of the New Zealand Native Bird Protection Society.



## John W.A. Marchant (1841–1920)

Marchant settled in New Zealand in 1863 and practised as a surveyor in Invercargill. He joined the Department of Lands and Survey and rose through the ranks to become Surveyor for Wellington Province in 1879, a Commissioner of Crown Lands in 1884, and was appointed Surveyor-General in 1902. He held this post while serving on the Scenery Preservation Commission, retiring in 1906.

ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: photographer unknown, F-27772-1/2

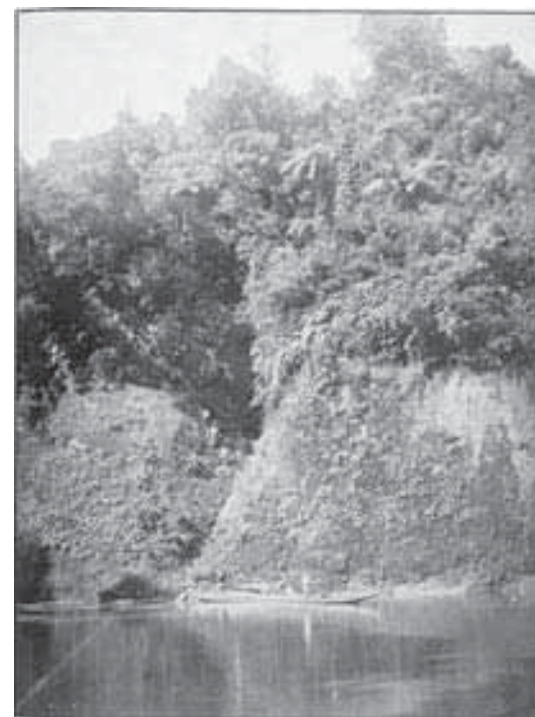


Many waterfalls have been reserved for scenic purposes. The Marokopa Falls near Kawhia were first reserved in 1925. AJHR: photographer unknown, AJHR, vol 2, 1908, C-6, opp. p. 12; ATL: C-26509-1/2



Rangitoto Island was gazetted as a public domain in 1890. Rangitoto's name is derived from the phrase 'Te Rangi i totongia a Tamatekapua'—the day the blood of Tamatekapua was shed. Tamatekapua was chief of the Arawa waka (canoe) and he was engaged in (and lost) a major battle with Tainui at Islington Bay. As a scenic reserve the island reflects multiple values, including its recent volcanic evolution, its significance to tangata whenua, its pohutukawa forest, its historic bach/cottage community and its high recreational use. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: photographer unknown, F-16627-1/4





River scenery was highly prized. The Whanganui River was already developing a reputation as 'the Rivera of the Pacific' by the late 19th Century. Although the claims were exotic, the river was part of the main route from Auckland to Wellington. This detour was unavoidable as long as access to Te Rohe Potae (King Country) was restricted during and after the New Zealand Wars. The main trunk railway line between Auckland and Wellington was completed in 1908 and river traffic declined. AJHR: A. Martin, vol 2, 1908, C-6, opp. p. 12; ATL: C-26511-1/2

Whanganui River—Mangaero. AJHR: photographer unknown, AJHR, vol 2, 1908, C-6, opp. p. 12; ATL: C-26510-1/2

Delays in gazetting reserves were created by the need to negotiate land prices with owners and the time required for surveys. The Commission encountered several other problems in reserving areas. Policies of the Lands Department confined reserves to rugged lands of poorer quality, to avoid compromising land suited to agriculture. Some Maori were opposed to the taking of their land (whenua) and resources for scenery purposes, objecting in particular to the manner and method of reservation. Some settlers opposed reserves because they considered them a fire hazard or source of noxious weeds. Farmers objected to the loss of tax relief they derived

A scenic corridor of small reserves was created along the main trunk railway line through the Upper Whanganui and Te Rohe Potae (King Country) districts in the decade following the opening of the main trunk railway in 1908. These included such reserves as the Ohinetonga, Whakapapa and Manga Te Pahi Scenic Reserves.

AJHR: Weekly Press, AJHR, 1907, C6, opp. p. 38; ATL: C-26960-1/2






Premier Seddon was nostalgic about his first views of the Buller Gorge in the 1870s in his speech introducing the scenery preservation Bill. Scenic reserves were established in the Upper and Lower Buller Gorge in 1907 and these have been added to since that time. ALEXANDER TURNBULL

LIBRARY: Tyree Brothers, PAColl-3064, G-626-10 8

from clearing the bush, which was considered a land improvement measure. Many landowners complained that they received insufficient compensation for loss of their land. Some MPs complained that the Commission had neglected their local districts, while others criticised the Commission for reserving areas without actually inspecting them.

Despite these criticisms the Commission created a strong basis of the reserves network and many recommendations for reserves that were adopted later. The Commission's work remains highly visible in the reserves system of today. 



South Island saddleback, 1979. Dick Veitch, DOC



The Scenic Reserve at Ulva Island, Patterson Inlet on Stewart Island was established in 1922. As the result of an extensive eradication programme, the island was declared rat-free in 1997, and South Island saddlebacks were released there in 2000. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY: Frederick George Radcliffe, PA Coll-4950, G-7344-1/2, F.G. Radcliffe Collection