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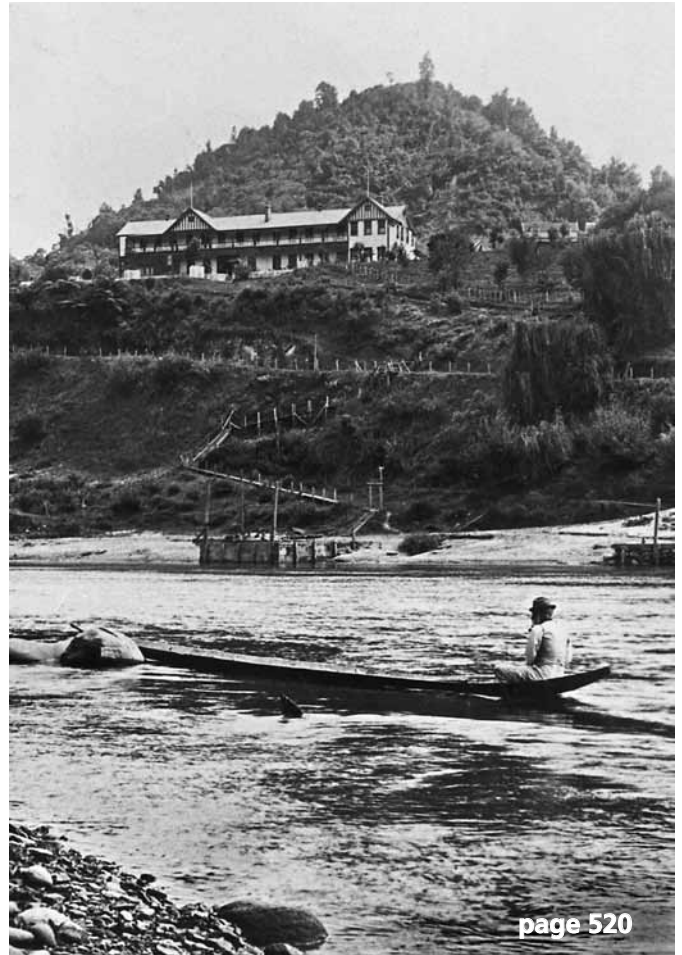
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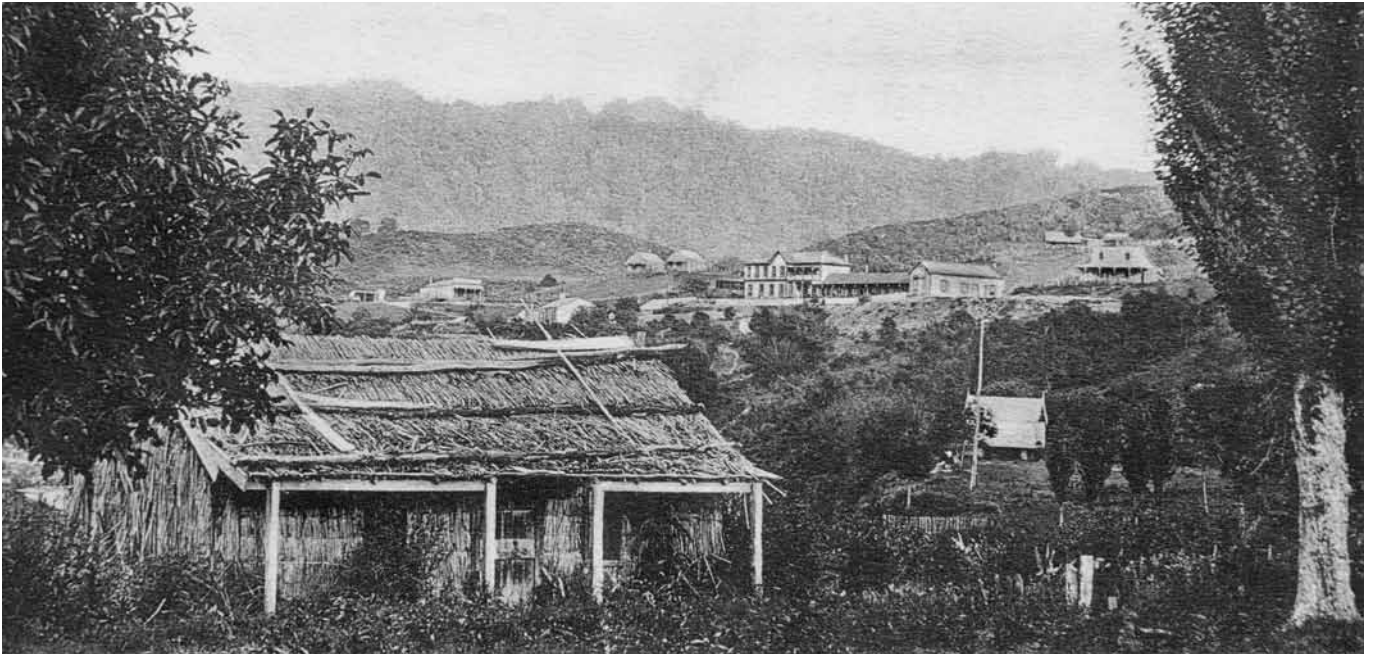
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*It seems Pipiriki House was photographed from every conceivable angle and Mr F J Denton, a Wanganui photographer, used his imagination to capture this unusual and historic shot from the Maori village located on the opposite bank. The Pipiriki House pictured was during the period of Mrs Quin's management which would date this photo around 1900 or 1901.*

*- photo courtesy Arthur Bates collection (ref. 14333).*

# The romance of Pipiriki House

*The excellent article following was kindly loaned by members of The Whanganui Historical Society. Although it is being reproduced unedited from the original Wanganui Herald report (dated Saturday, 3 January 1903), the paragraphs have been shortened and sub headings added. Another point worth remembering is that while the article describes Pipiriki House during the ownership of Gibbons & Hatrick, some interior photographs have been used here of the last "House". This is not meant to be misleading. The problem is a lack of photos featuring the earlier buildings especially the ones featuring in this story as it was only in existence six years before being burnt down in 1909. Meanwhile here's the 1903 article . . .*

## **Eleven years ago—on 18 December 1891—Messrs Hatrick & Co's first steamer, Wairere, made her first trip to Pipiriki. What was Pipiriki then? What was the tourist traffic and the settlement on the river and in the interior?**

There was a very primitive accommodation house at Pipiriki, owned and run by Messrs Huddle Bros, and a few Maori whares. There was absolutely no tourist traffic; there was then no road open for vehicular traffic, a bridle track alone leading into Pipiriki.

Raetihi was not then thought of as a township, its present site being then a standing forest, and it was not laid out and sold till a subsequent date.

There were only six white settlers in the whole of the district—Messrs E McDonell (Karioi), Geo Manson (Ohakune), Brass, Cowie, Huddle and a Frenchman who lived an isolated life in a whare halfway between Pipiriki and where the township of Raetihi now stands.

The River Trust Board, although formed before the launch of the *Wairere*, had done nothing practically to improve the river for the purposes of navigation, simply because they had not had the time and money to have accomplished much then and consequently

navigation under the then existing conditions was very dangerous and hazardous.

The master and crew of the boat had not then the experience they have gained since and this intensified the risks.

The riverboats were not insurable excepting at excessive premiums and consequently were not insured and an accident may have spelt a dead loss of thousands of pounds.

### **A FAILURE**

Five years, about, previous to the date mentioned at the commencement of this article the Wanganui Up-river Steamship Navigation Company's stern-wheeler *Tuhua* was tried and proved a failure, and her bones are lying near Galatea.

These were briefly the conditions obtaining in 1891, when Mr Hatrick, single-handed, decided to try his fortune where others had tried and failed; where the conditions and prospects would have appalled most other men.

But Mr Hatrick laid his plans for the future. He foresaw the opening up for settlement of a fine district and what was of more importance the opening up of a tourist route which would one day become famous the world over.

The magnificent scenery of the Wanganui

River would attract tourists in yearly increasing numbers and Pipiriki would be an important terminus.

With this vision before him, Mr Hatrick sent the *Wairere* on her first trip 11 years ago, knowing the difficulties to be overcome the first few years and prepared to meet them.

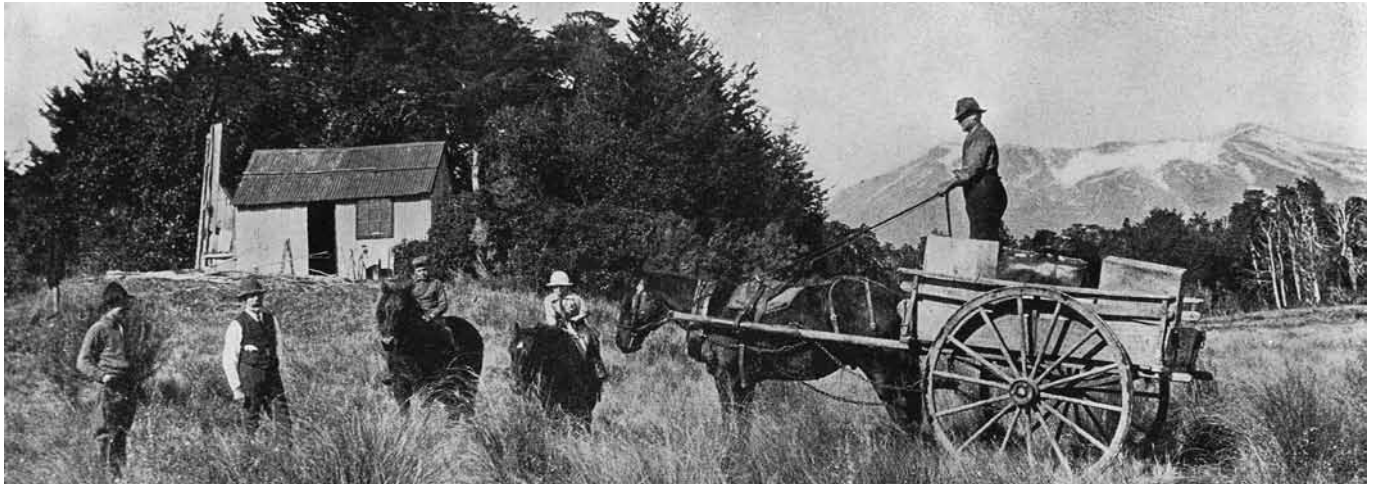
### **SPIN OF A COIN**

The initial trips of that first steamer were fraught with an intense anxiety to the owner. The difficulties of navigation were so great that it seemed almost the spin of a coin whether the steamer would get through safely or whether her owner would awake to discover that he had lost some thousands of pounds.

However, "fortune favours the brave." Month by month the anxiety of those weekly trips began to diminish and after a year or two the unpromising outlook was soon to be lost in the dawn of tourist traffic and settlement in the Waimarino.

Year by year the trade grew. In 1894 the first vehicle passed over the road between Pipiriki and Karioi and it was driven by Messrs J H Nixon and A Hatrick.

The road, however, was not then completed and their vehicle was at one place—the Mangaio Stream—hauled over by  
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*This historic photograph, from the Auckland Weekly News of 23 October 1919, shows the first vehicle to arrive at what was known as "The Haunted Whare."*  
*- photo was credited to Telsa Studios (ref: 14316).*

## The mystery of the Haunted Whare

*Now and again one hears the question: "Where is this Haunted Whare that is mentioned among the older people of the central North Island?" Well, to get down to reality there was no Haunted Whare, but—there was, once upon a time, a building standing not far from the Chateau Tongariro in the National Park which bore the name, the Haunted Whare. BOB THOMAS, former editor of Taumarunui Press, explains . . .*

**T**here would be few people today who had seen, or had stood inside the so-called whare; that is, the original whare.

As the accompanying photographs show it was a typical King Country "shack," with corrugated iron, New Zealand's handy but un-beautiful building material, used freely. The familiar broad chimney, which often produced more smoke than heat, towered majestically above the shack.

The Haunted Whare stood on a small knoll on the left-hand side of the access road leading from the National Park-Tokaanu highway to Chateau Tongariro.

It was sheltered by strong-growing trees and shrubs most of which are gracing the site today. As far as my memory goes the whare stood there until the 2nd World War, when roofing iron became scarce and the building

disappeared piece-by-piece.

It was rebuilt but some time later it vanished again, this time in flames. I cannot guarantee these disasters as fact; they have come to me from conversations I have heard from time to time.

During its chequered career the whare was occupied now and then by tramping parties who came to climb the mountains, and so I am told, rightly or wrongly, by workmen who were engaged by the Park Board.

A notice board did stand on the knoll stating that this was the site of the Haunted Whare. When I later visited the Chateau, in the Tongariro National Park, the notice board had disappeared and the knoll stood alone with its trees and shrubs and not even a single plank of the building to bear testimony to anything that man had constructed, haunted or otherwise.

How came it, that this roughly built shack, was widely known in the early days of last century as the Haunted Whare?

A Maori friend of mine once told me there were people who claimed that, during lonely nights spent in the whare, they had seen a ghost-like figure of a girl wandering forlornly about the building. Shepherds who spent nights in the whare in the early days after hours of toil among their sheep claimed that their dogs cringed and whined in the corner of the building; that they growled at something that could not be seen.

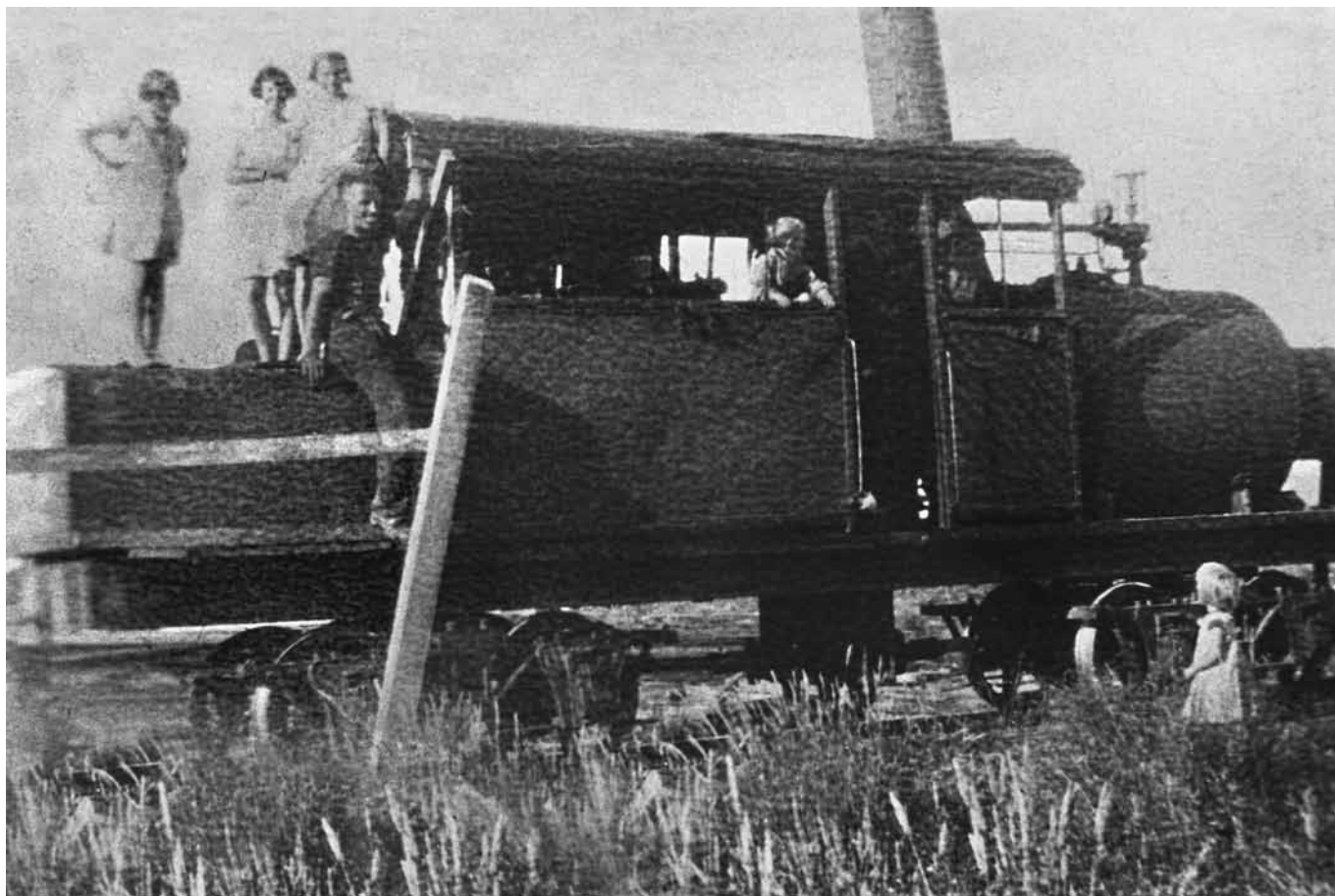
True or just a far-fetched story told by someone to the youngsters getting ready for bed? Who knows?

If it was a ghost why had it chosen the shack as its home, and for its nightly wanderings?

The story that I listened to one night during the 1920s told of a passionate love affair



*A bullock team approaches the haunted whare with a load of timber to build a double hut on the mountain. The caption of this January 1920 Auckland Weekly News photo stated: "The work of erecting the hut is now in progress. During the holidays the contractor, Mr W Salt of Wanganui, received voluntary assistance from members of the Ruapehu Ski Club."*  
*- photo was credited to R M Algje (ref: 14317).*



*The only known photograph of Weir & Kenny's home-made bush locomotive, Galloping Gertie. This lokey only worked at Mangatepopo and came to a sad end while working on the company's four mile tramway. Pat Joines is sitting on the bunker. The names of the children are unknown.*

*-photo courtesy Harold Kenny, Hamilton (ref: 14389).*

## **Galloping Gertie built by blacksmith**

*The ingenuity and good old fashioned enterprise of the old bushman was never in doubt when one considers the many fine examples of their engineering ability. It is truly amazing what they achieved without having "letters after their name". . .*

**H**aving the trade qualifications and engineering degrees demanded today might produce a better design and better looking product but the bushman went for practicability rather than good looks.

The old bush locomotive pictured above was the result of a couple of sawmill owners and their blacksmith putting together a functional machine from bits and pieces lying around the mill.

It was in the days when there was not a lot of money around to purchase new machinery. The year was 1931 and this was the first locomotive that Weir & Kenny were to own. It was said to be a true "bitsa".

### **ENTERPRISE**

Jock Weir sought the help of John Watkins, an enterprising character who formerly owned sawmills at Kakahi and Owhango, and Ben Le Prou, the village "Smithy" who worked most of his life around sawmills, to painstakingly assemble *Galloping Gertie* as she was affectionally known to all.

Weir & Kenny's mill, which employed about 15 or 16 men, was at Mangatepopo, about 15 miles along State Highway 47 from National Park.

The mill was situated about halfway between the larger Egmont Box Company at Taurewa and the Ketetahi Timber Company which was located on the opposite side of the Mangatepopo Stream.

### **FIRST MILL WAS AT TE RENA**

This was the third sawmill operated by the partnership of Weir & Kenny after they had successfully ventured into the timber industry at Te Renua, near Kakahi, in 1927.

Other sawmills followed later at Pukawa-Waihi and at Waimanu, near the headwaters of the Whanganui River. They also had an interest in a mill at Atiamuri, working pine logs.

In 1946 a partnership consisting of Jock Weir, A M Collier and Mr Weir's two sons, Ian and Roy ("Tiger"), later formed the Taumarunui Timber Co Ltd, which traded from yards in Ward Street, Taumarunui.

### **WATKINS HELPED**

Ian Weir could recall very little about the actual construction of *Galloping Gertie* but he thought some of the parts came from Watkins Bros sawmill at Kakahi.

After Watkin's mill had closed in 1931 (after it was shifted to Owhango) the owner, John Watkins and his blacksmith Ben Le Prou, both shifted to Mangatepopo to work for Weir & Kenny. It was during this period that this "one-off" locomotive was built.

John Watkins was apparently the right man for the job as he was no stranger to solving engineering problems. A report in the *NZ National Review* summed up his ability after his tragic death in 1942.

They said: "His mechanical ability and peculiar facility for adapting and renovating mill machinery and appliances was quite remarkable, and it would appear that this particular bent, which had become almost a hobby with him, contributed to the accident which caused his death.

"For he was fatally injured when starting up a motor truck which he had renovated  
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- photo courtesy Des Hogan, Taumarunui (ref: 14448).

## **LODGE: Harmony without Hassle**

The Mountain Lodge was a mammoth undertaking made possible only by the efforts of all the school, most of the parents and a large section of the community.

In particular, Messrs Merv Ogg, Des Hogan and their technical boys and girls must always be remembered for their efforts in constructing this building under climatic difficulties. Ken Leckie from the High School staff gave many hours to the interior decorating of the lodge as well as giving valuable assistance to Merv Ogg and Des Hogan in many aspects of the building.

The electrical work was carried out free of charge by the

Taumarunui Institute of Electricians, and plumbing was done by the combined plumbers under the direction of Stan Adams.

During this project a bond of understanding between staff and pupils developed. They worked together in rain, mud and snow, each respecting the other, and laughing at adversity. It was truly a memorable experience.

The Lodge was opened on 22 November 1975 by Phil Amos, Minister of Education. In the photo above are the four under whose control the building programme was carried out. From left are: Des Hogan, Terry Moyle, Ken Leckie and Merv Ogg.



**HAUAROA MAORI ENTERTAINMENT GROUP:** As the young men of the district were called up for the Forces in the 2nd World War they were farewelled at social functions and entertained by various groups. These groups were available at any hour and would meet every troop train that passed through Taumarunui. Their performances during the early 1940s were well remembered and appreciated by these young men leaving to serve their country. One of these entertainment groups was made up of members of the Ngapuwaitaha Marae and known as the Hauaroa Maori Group. Not all members were present when this photograph was taken but those shown in front of the Ngapuwaitaha meeting house are: **STANDING** (from left): Fred Hinerau, Ray Wallace, Mrs Rangī Marie Rukuwai Toitaha, Kahurangi Kaka, "Hunka" Oneroa, Mrs Ruby Te Hore, Sam Haehae, Rangī Yates, Mrs Waikauri Thomas (or Hurst), Chief Tu Korehu Ahipu. **IN FRONT:** Tommy Te Hare, Mrs Rangī Phillips, Queenie Te Hore (sitting), Mrs Meri Bell, Clarence ("Gus") Piohipi (sitting), Lucy Davis, Tommy Kumeroa (or Patu-One). Doug Bell adds that the photograph above was taken in 1940 during celebrations of New Zealand's centenary (1840-1940).

- photo courtesy Taumarunui Press collection (ref: 14421).



**HAUAROA MAORI YOUTH CLUB 1954:** **BACK ROW** (from left): Grace Taiaroa, Taylor Fox, Kevin Amohia, Sam Hae Hae, Archie Taiaroa, Dinny Edwards, Patricia Williams. **CENTRE ROW:** Georgina Haddon, Hemo Fox, Lucy Allen, Rita Fox, Polly Kuru, Celia Amohia, Marion Hae Hae. **IN FRONT:** Shirley Fox, Doreen Thompson.

- photo by Colin Seccombe, Taumarunui (ref: 15208).