

LAVINIA AND HENRY DUNBAR JOHNSON

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LAVINIA AND HENRY DUNBAR JOHNSON

Abstract: *Rawinia Manukau, of Ngati Tamatera, married Henry Dunbar Johnson in 1868, when aged 21. Johnson had been a storekeeper at Coromandel from 1863 onwards and after 1866 had the first store at the site of the future Paeroa. In both places, but particularly in the latter, there was always the fear of conflict with the local Maori population, despite his being protected by a rangatira. After spending time at the new Thames goldfield, from 1871 onwards he was a partner in another Paeroa store, being able to erect a house because a rangatira related to his wife wished her to settle there. Lavinia (as she was known to Pakeha) obtained interests in several blocks of land in Ohinemuri, and her husband also acquired some land for a farm. He prospected Karangahake mountain from 1866 onwards, despite Maori opposition, and in 1875 and the following year actively mined there, unprofitably; Lavinia was not involved with this field, but did acquire interests in two claims when the Te Aroha one opened.*

A petty squabble with a Thames neighbour resulted in Lavinia telling the latter to go back to England – she was feisty in defending her heritage. Through his marriage and close contact with Maori, Johnson understood and admired the Maori language, leading to his being appointed a licensed interpreter in 1872. After being a leading pioneer of Paeroa, in 1879 he went to Wellington to work in the Native Office, leaving his wife and family behind for a while; after then she was employed by Pakeha as a nurse and midwife.

In 1885 Johnson was appointed to oversee the development of Rotorua, where he attempted to have Maori children educated (as his own were) and had to cope with the aftermath of the 1886 Tarawera eruption. Retrenched in 1888, he farmed for a while on his wife's land at Te Aroha West, becoming involved in local issues and local politics. During the 1890 he obtained more official positions, and from 1896 to 1906 was a land court judge.

The Johnson family was well integrated into the dominant culture, all his daughters marrying Pakeha apart from one who married a 'half-caste' who had been brought up as a Pakeha. Johnson was not a Pakeha Maori in the original sense, but was accepted by Maori when living in Paeroa and as a judge tried to be kind to poverty-stricken Maori, although in time he viewed Maori as becoming lazy compared with those he had lived amongst during his first two decades in New Zealand.

WOMEN AND MINING

Only 19 women held interests in their own names in Te Aroha mines. Of these, 15 were Pakeha, three were Maori (Ema Lipsey, Lavinia Johnson, and Merea Wikiriwhi), and Alice Grey Dearle was a half-caste.¹ All of these four were married (unofficially in the case of Merea Wikiriwhi) to Pakeha with some knowledge of mining, who probably recommended their choice of claims to invest in, and who may have used their wives as dummies. Lavinia Johnson (correctly Rawinia, but known to Pakeha by the former transliteration) took out a miner's right on the opening day of the Te Aroha goldfield, and was a shareholder with other Maori in two Tui claims in December 1880,² but was not involved in any other mines, here or elsewhere. Her husband's only involvement with this field was in 1883, when he obtained samples of ore from several Waiorongomai mines and arranged for them to be displayed in Wellington.³

FAMILY

Rawinia Manukau, in her early years known as Rawinia Winnie Manukau, was born at Waiuku in 1847 to Henare Manukau and an unknown Maori mother.⁴ She was a member of the Uriwha hapu of Ngati Tamatera.⁵ On 12 November 1868, at the age of 21, Lavinia Winnie Manukau, as her name was recorded, married Henry Dunbar Johnson,⁶ a 23-year-old storekeeper, in All Saints Church, Auckland.⁷ Official marriages between Maori and Pakeha were rare, and her ancestry was ignored by newspapers, although possibly hinted at in a comment in the *Observer* when

¹ See papers on these women.

² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Miner's Right no. 636, issued 25 November 1880, Miners' Rights Butt Book 1880, BBAV 11533/1e; Notices of Marking Out Claims 1880, BBAV 11557/1a; Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 204, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

³ *Te Aroha News*, 4 January 1883, p. 2.

⁴ Death Certificate of Rawinia Manukau Johnson, 17 April 1933, 1933/43; Birth Certificate of Katherine Marjorie Johnson, 2 June 1877, 1877/6381, BDM.

⁵ Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 14, p. 186.

⁶ For a photograph of him in old age, see *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 13.

⁷ Notices of Intentions to Marry, Births Deaths and Marriages, BDM 20/13, folio 146, ANZ-W; Marriage Certificate of Lavinia Winnie Manukau, 12 November 1868, 1868/4568, BDM.

her husband died that, as well as being a judge of the land court, he had had a 'close association with the native race in other capacities'.⁸ Presumably she was the woman standing beside him in a murky photograph captioned 'Dunbar's choice' in a series of photographs on the 1919 election.⁹ By then she preferred to be known as Rawinia Manukau Johnson.¹⁰

Their 'close association' resulted in the birth, three months after their marriage, of Henry Dunbar Paeroa, on 6 February 1869.¹¹ Percy James Bell was born in June 1870; Margaret Sarah in December 1871; Lavinia Claribella (as Claribel's name was recorded) in July 1873; William Ernest Digby in June 1874; Beatrice Eleanor in August 1875; Katherine Marjorie in June 1877; and John Steen Dunbar in June 1879. All these births were registered and the children were baptized into the Church of England.¹² Their first daughter died when aged 14 months; their last-born son died aged eight months in February 1880 from diarrhoea, their first-born son died in December 1887, and another son, William Ernest Digby, in September 1891.¹³ Henry Dunbar Paeroa Johnson's flattering obituary omitted to mention that he was a 'half-caste', in the contemporary designation:

The young man came to Auckland a few years ago, and for some time served as a compositor in the HERALD office. He was amiable, steady, and well-behaved, and anxious to qualify himself for the duties of life. It was found however that the labour of a compositor, with the late hours which necessarily have to be

⁸ *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 13.

⁹ *Observer*, 5 May 1917, p. 19, photograph 7.

¹⁰ Will of Henry Dunbar Johnson, 12 January 1924, Probates, BBAE 1569/17033, ANZ-A; Death Certificate of Rawinia Manukau Johnson, 17 April 1933, 1933/43, BDM.

¹¹ Birth Certificate of Henry Dunbar Paeroa Johnson, 6 February 1869, 1869/12647, BDM.

¹² Birth Certificates of Percy James Bell Johnson, 16 June 1870, 1870/17601; Margaret Sarah Johnson, 7 December 1871, 1872/17288; Lavinia Claribelle Johnson, 3 July 1873, 1873/29683; William Ernest Digby Johnson, 27 June 1874, 1874/33193; Beatrice Eleanor Johnson, 29 August 1875, 1875/12671; Katherine Marjorie Johnson, 2 June 1877, 1877/6381; John Steen Dunbar Johnson, 28 June 1879, 1879/4469, BDM; Thames Baptism Register 1874-1880, nos. 501-505, 885, Anglican Archives, Auckland.

¹³ Death Certificates of Margaret Sarah Johnson, 1873/4660; John Steen Dunbar Johnson, 26 February 1880, 1880/4855; Henry Dunbar Paeroa Johnson, 16 December 1887, 1887/3877; William Digby Johnson, 1891/1811, BDM.

endured, was too much for him, and at length he went back to Rotorua.

He died of consumption in Auckland, in his father's presence.¹⁴

Johnson ensured that his own children and children generally received a good education. He described himself as taking 'a lively interest' in education, and was secretary of the Ohinemuri school committee and chairman of the Newtown (Wellington) and Rotorua committees.¹⁵ One daughter, when aged 15 years, was the oldest pupil at Te Aroha,¹⁶ presumably because she struggled with her schoolwork. 'Always interested in education matters', he was a member of the Auckland Institute and a founder of the Polynesian Society, becoming a member of its council in 1897. 'He was a great advocate for pure English'.¹⁷ He also supported military training in schools.¹⁸

ON THE COROMANDEL GOLDFIELD

Johnson was born in London in December 1844 to John, a government official, and educated at 'various private schools'. First employed by a London marine insurance broker there and later by Lloyds, he 'was afterwards employed by a cousin in the bookselling, stationery, and printing business'.¹⁹ Arriving in Auckland on the 'Devonshire' in February 1863, he received the usual land grant,²⁰ but immediately went to the Coromandel goldfield, where he ran Edward Wood's²¹ Junction Store at Driving Creek, established in the previous year.²² In addition he 'was engaged in ... mining and battery work'.²³ In late 1910 and early 1911, his reminiscences were

¹⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 December 1887, p. 14.

¹⁵ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 143.

¹⁶ Te Aroha School, Class List, November 1888, YCAF 4135/24a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷ *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 5; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 143.

¹⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

¹⁹ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142; Death Certificate of Henry Dunbar Johnson, 14 February 1924, 1924/7559, BDM.

²⁰ Register of Land Grantees 1862-1863, Land Order A1665, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 4115/1b, ANZ-A.

²¹ For Wood's life, see *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 September 1905, p. 22.

²² Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 1 nos. 3, 6, 8, ANZ-A.

²³ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142.

published in the *Te Aroha News*, but as its files are incomplete the first instalment or instalments have been lost. The first to survive described how the outbreak of war in the Waikato in 1863 caused 'native matters' to become 'very much disturbed':

The miners held a mass meeting and asked the Government to provide arms, a request which was at that time refused. Later on things got worse, and all storekeepers were prohibited from selling edged tools, explosives, or even matches to the natives, for fear they might be used as munitions of war. Next, an order came up that all gunpowder was to be removed and it was taken away by the Government gunboat, Sandfly.... Captain Harrison and Mr Chamberlain came down and convened a meeting, at which they suggested that arms be given to the people, but at that time the population had greatly decreased owing to the fact that the Government had proclaimed general protection for all mining rights. A considerable number of proprietors, chiefly Auckland shareholders who had come to the goldfields, took advantage of this protection to return to Auckland, knowing that when the disturbances were over and peace restored there would be no legal difficulty in the way of taking up their claims again. The men employed on these claims were thus deprived of their occupation, and naturally there was a great exodus of miners, many of them joining the Forest Rangers, enlisted by [Gustavus] Von Tempsky who, at that time, owned one of the claims at Coromandel. The result was that, the ranks being depleted, those who remained declined the offer of arms with thanks saying that, as they were refused in the first place when they were strong enough to hold their own, it would be folly to arm now that their ranks were depleted. It would be nothing but a temptation to the natives to attack them. Our numbers were finally reduced to about thirty, including McIsaac's bush party, and a man named Ellis, more familiarly known as Screwjack, together with his wife and family. I remained in charge of Wood's store. When the Government called in the powder, and things were looking so blue, we decided to close up, and gave the head storeman notice. Having heard, however, that one party, Kelly's of the Southern Cross, who had gold left in their workings and were putting in machinery, had received a guarantee of protection from a native woman (Ria Karepe) and her family of grown-up sons, and intended to stop, I said to my partner "If you will chance the stock I will chance myself till the trouble is over." I was influenced by the fact that Major Drummond Hay and party, who had been prospecting in the Upper Thames District, were supposed to have found good gold in Ohinemuri, and it was expected that the field would open the following season. I knew that if I went to Auckland I should be taken possession of by the Prevost, and

being under orders, would not be at liberty to take part in any rush that might occur.... I remained at Coromandel till things began to improve. I was in charge of the store during the whole of that time, but worked also in the mines as they were short handed. At one time, the Ngatimaru natives, living at Kennedy's Bay, came across the range to the Kapanga side, with the intention of proceeding to the Waikato to take part in the war, but on arrival at the native settlement the local natives decided that it would probably be regarded as a breach of loyalty on their part to allow a hostile band to cross their territory in order to make war against the English Queen. At this time the Thames Gulf was blockaded by H.M.S. Esk²⁴ and other men of war, and the natives had to return to their homes by way of the East Coast. We heard later from native sources of the great defeat sustained by the Waikato Maoris at Rangiriri. In November '63, some time later, the commander of one of the warships landed at Kapanga and, holding a meeting of natives to ascertain their attitude, discovered from admissions made by them, that they had been wavering, but that news of the defeat had confirmed their loyalty. They thus escaped confiscation.²⁵

These events were the basis of the later comment that he 'had some exciting experiences among the turbulent Maori tribes'.²⁶ In January 1864 Johnson was a witness in a case concerning alleged non-delivery of tobacco to the Junction store, in which he was living; the goods had been left of the verandah after he had locked it and gone to the beach.²⁷ Wood also lived in Coromandel for at least part of the time, for he owned the little-worked Junction claim,²⁸ and in April 1864 was assaulted outside one of the hotels.²⁹ Two years later he claimed £360 in compensation for losses during

²⁴ Recorded as 'Brisk'; for proof it was the 'Esk', see James Cowan, *The New Zealand Wars* (Wellington, 1922), vol. 1, p. 321.

²⁵ H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 6 December 1910, p. 2.

²⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 November 1906, p. 28.

²⁷ Coromandel Magistrate's Court, Civil Cases 1863-1868, hearing of 24 January 1864, BACL 14442/1a; H.C. Lawlor to Secretary, Crown Lands, 22 January 1864, Coromandel Warden's and Resident Magistrate's Letterbook, 1862, letter 197, BACL 14446/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁸ Coromandel Warden's Court, Crown Land and Goldfields Commissioner's and Warden's Letterbook 1862-1870, 69, 88, 114, 127, 135, 150, 153, 165, 180, 184/1864, BACL 14143/7a, ANZ-A.

²⁹ Coromandel Magistrate's Court, Criminal Cases Notebook 1863-1868, hearing of 29 April 1864, BACL 14442/1b, ANZ-A.

the war: book debts of £200, £15 for removal and return of goods, £40 for lost mining tools, £100 for loss of store profits, and £5 for loss on sale of gunpowder taken by the 'Sandfly'. The latter was the only claim allowed.³⁰

In September 1864, Johnson 'removed to Auckland, under engagement as town traveller' to an aerated water manufacturer.³¹

AN EARLY SETTLER AT PAEROA

As he later explained, Johnson 'first went to Paeroa as the resident partner in a trading business which was started there in February, 1866'. He was Wood's partner in a store at or near the site of the future Paeroa, or, as it was described at the time, 'just above Ohinemuri'.³² In December that year he gave his address as 'Te Paeroa, Ohinemuri'.³³ After Wood 'secured the chance of a location' there, he offered Johnson a partnership because 'he fully believed the field would be soon opened for mining. Under that impression I accepted his offer and reached Paeroa just eighteen months before the Lower Thames opened' for mining, in August 1867.³⁴ Wood's riverside house had a jetty for the river trade.³⁵ Johnson later described himself as 'the first white resident on the block which is now the site of the flourishing township of Paeroa'.³⁶ Although he was the pioneer of Paeroa,

³⁰ Commission on Compensation Claims for Maori Wars, 1866: Return of Compensation Claims, 1866, Maori Affairs Department, MA 61/3; Notes on Claims: Coromandel, p. 6, Maori Affairs Department, MA 61/2, ANZ-W.

³¹ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142.

³² H.D. Johnson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 July 1920, Mines Department, MD 20, 21/1; Petition of Peter Austin, no. 122, Native Affairs Committee, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1880/6, ANZ-W; *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 5; *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 March 1868, p. 19; for map showing 'Wood's Store, see Caroline Phillips, *Waihou Journeys: The archaeology of 400 years of Maori settlement* (Auckland, 2000), p. 93.

³³ H.D. Johnson to T.S. Grace, 4 December 1866, in Thomas Samuel Grace, *A Pioneer Missionary Among the Maoris, 1850-1879* (Palmerston North, 1928), pp. 158-159.

³⁴ H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1910, p. 3.

³⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 November 1868, p. 22.

³⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 September 1878, p. 3, 21 May 1897, p. 2; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142.

since about 1841 the Thorp family had lived on their Belmont farm near the junction of the Ohinemuri and Waihou rivers.³⁷

Johnson remembered ‘some exciting times, among a large Maori population, consisting principally of Waikato and East Coast rebel refugees’.³⁸

I used to trade in gum and produce. They were particularly vigilant lest there should be any prospecting, and if one was away, even for a short time, their suspicions would be aroused, and, on returning, one would be cross-examined and catechized in true Maori fashion. At this time my knowledge of Maori was very limited, and I was compelled to secure the services of a European, who was working on the place, to act as interpreter while I was learning. I also had a native guardian – an old chief who lived on the premises, and acted as a kind of buffer between me and the tribesmen. I found his assistance and protection of the greatest service on more than one occasion. About this time there were a number of flax-cutters on the river supplying the Mill at Kopu with green fibre, who, when working on the Waihou, came across what appeared to be a deserted Maori settlement. Fossicking round, they lighted on a number of pots and pans, which, naturally enough, they appropriated. As it happened, an old Maori had been living there by himself, and shortly afterwards, the natives came down and found the old man dead covered with wounds. There was great excitement, and it was freely alleged that the Europeans had done the deed with the object of stealing his property. Mr James Mackay, Civil Commissioner, was sent for, and, of course, found the pots and pans in the possession of the flax-cutters. It was naturally concluded that they were guilty of the old man’s death, but further investigation made it pretty clear that he had died from natural causes, and that rats were

³⁷ For varying details about the date they first settled and of their farm, see G.S. Cooper, *Journal of an Expedition Overland from Auckland to Taranaki by way of Rotorua, Taupo, and the West Coast: Undertaken in the summer of 1849-50, by His Excellency the Governor-in-Chief of New Zealand* (Auckland, 1851), pp. 16, 18, 20; *The Thames Journal of Vicesimus Lush*, edited by Alison Drummond (Christchurch, 1975), pp. 41, 43-44; *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 March 1868, p. 19, 4 June 1870, p. 9; *Thames Advertiser*, 31 August 1870, p. 3, 8 May 1873, p. 3; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 856; Goldfields and Mines Committee, ‘Reports on the Petitions Relating to the Silting of the Ohinemuri and Waihou Rivers; Together with Minutes of Evidence’, *AJHR*, 1907, I-4A, p. 30; ‘Waihou and Ohinemuri Rivers (Report of Commission Appointed to Inquire into Silting of); Together with Minutes of Evidence and Exhibits’, *AJHR*, 1910, C-14, p. 15.

³⁸ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142.

responsible for the wounds. My old native guardian (Paraone Te Maupu)³⁹ told me the tribesmen were wildly excited and that he didn't know what the end would be. He thought it very probably they would take possession of the European settlement, in which event he gave me to understand that he would look after my goods and chattels, but could not guarantee the safety of the cash. I would have to look after that myself. Accordingly, taking every precaution to escape observation, I made my way to the tea-tree at the back of the store and there buried the cash box in what is now the main street of Paeroa. Mine was thus the first deposit bank in that town. I used to take my bearings by cabbage trees, and you may be sure kept a bright look out whenever I visited my banker.

After Mr Mackay's investigation the disturbance subsided, and native matters were, for some time, very quiet.⁴⁰

From the fact that his first child was named Henry Dunbar Paeroa,⁴¹ it may be assumed that he met his future wife there. In December 1866, he wrote to Thomas Samuel Grace, a missionary,⁴² conveying Te Hira's⁴³ regrets at missing Grace when he visited Paeroa a few days previously. Johnson considered that if Grace returned he would be able to return the greater part of the Maori residents to Christianity.⁴⁴

I was usually by myself, but on one occasion had a visitor. While he was at Thorp's, a station ten miles below, getting change, a party of natives came to sell me some gum. I looked at the gum, and made an offer, with which, however, the Natives were not satisfied. I refused to give more. My Maori guardian was still there, but unfortunately he sided with the natives, who asserted they could get more from traders lower down the river. The leader was a very heavily tattooed Waikato Maori named Hare Rewiti.

³⁹ See *New Zealand Herald*, 28 November 1874, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 2 December 1874, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 3 December 1874, p. 3, 9 December 1874, p. 3, 22 December 1874, p. 3.

⁴⁰ H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1910, p. 3.

⁴¹ Birth Certificate of Henry Dunbar Paeroa Johnson, 6 February 1869, 1869/12647, BDM.

⁴² See *Bay of Plenty Times*, 1 May 1879, p. 3, 6 May 1879, p. 3.

⁴³ For this rangatira's opposition to opening Ohinemuri, see Paul Monin, *Hauraki Contested 1867-1875* (Auckland, 2006), pp. 171, 182, 184, 196, 218-220, 227, 232, 239, 242-244, 250.

⁴⁴ T.S. Grace, *A Pioneer Missionary Among the Maoris, 1850-1879: Letters and journals*, edited by S.J. Britten, G.F., C.W., and A.V. Grace (Palmerston North, 1928), pp. 158-159.

He looked very fierce and as he became excited and brandished his tomahawk I began to feel uneasy and anxiously looked out for my friend. After rolling his eyes and prancing round for a bit Rewiti found that he could not intimidate me and the whole thing ended in smoke and the natives, disappointed in the deal, sulkily went off with their gum. On another occasion Wiremu Hopihona,⁴⁵ who was a chief of very high rank, came to sell me a pig. I had previously been buying pigs by weight, but had discontinued this and was now buying by the lump. This gentleman however objected to the change and insisted on having his animal weighed. I told him that I had given up weighing pigs, at which he lost his temper and rushed off for my steelyards [a balance].⁴⁶ Returning, he said the pig must be weighed, and when I still refused he danced about and finally dashed the machine to the ground with such violence as to break off the knob at the end. This sort of thing could not be allowed to pass, and accordingly I set the law in motion. In those days the Queen's writ did not run in the Ohinemuri. We had a King's assessor named Hemi Kokako⁴⁷ who issued a summons which was served on the offender. The native who made the service reported that Wiremu tore the writ to pieces with his teeth and said he was as big a chief as anybody, and was not going to answer any summons. As the King's assessor was not strong enough to force his attendance, the proceedings fell through.

Johnson also referred to Wood's problems after opening a store near Hikutaia with the Nicholas brothers,⁴⁸ thefts requiring both Kingites and Queenites to work together to discover the culprits. For unstated reasons, Johnson did not join this venture.⁴⁹ It was possibly the consequences of establishing this store that were referred to in March 1868, when Wood, described as 'comparatively a recent settler', was told that a Maori meeting would take his case 'into consideration. The natives say that his works have not been bad', and he would probably be allowed to stay.⁵⁰ He was, and the following November stated that he was the only storekeeper at Ohinemuri

⁴⁵ See advertisement, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 February 1877, p. 2.

⁴⁶ *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 5 ed. (Oxford, 1964), pp. 1257-1258.

⁴⁷ See Thames Correspondent, *Daily Southern Cross*, 26 June 1866, p. 4; *Waikato Times*, 19 August 1873, p. 2.

⁴⁸ For Albert John Nicholas, see paper on Maori land in Hauraki.

⁴⁹ H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1910, p. 4.

⁵⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 March 1868, p. 19.

and during the past three years had noted traces of gold.⁵¹ Johnson did not give a date for when he ‘withdrew from the partnership’ with Wood, but it must have been before early 1869, when he moved to Thames.⁵²

In late January 1869, Te Hira told both Wood and an unnamed Pakeha living on his land to leave.⁵³ Although Wood had obtained a 21-year lease of the 165-acre Paeroa Block ‘some years’ before 1870 from one owner, on three occasions other owners prevented him surveying it for a township.⁵⁴ On the first attempt, by three Pakeha in late 1869, Maori women threw many of their surveying pegs into the river.⁵⁵ Mere Kuru, Te Hira’s sister and a leading opponent of settlement,⁵⁶ admitted that Wood had leased the land ‘for the purpose of buying pigs, potatoes, corn, etc, and keeping a store, but he had no right to give it to other pakehas’.⁵⁷ In December, when Wood told Maori that the store ‘at present’ was ‘not paying him’ and that ‘he held the right of no store or public-house being erected until the township was sold’, they threw timber brought by a speculator to erect a store and hotel into the river, damaging his goods when his boat filled with water.⁵⁸

THAMES AND MINING

Johnson acquired a miner’s right for the Thames goldfield early in July 1868, but according to his later statements did not settle there until the following year.⁵⁹ When married in November 1868, his pregnant bride had

⁵¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 November 1868, p. 22.

⁵² H. Dunbar-Johnson, ‘Reminiscences’, *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1910, p. 4.

⁵³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 January 1869, p. 10.

⁵⁴ Petition of Edward Wood, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1870/13, ANZ-W; *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 October 1869, p. 11, 22 January 1870, p. 9, 12 February 1870, p. 3; *New Zealand Herald*, 8 February 1870, pp. 4, 5.

⁵⁵ James Stitchbury, ‘The Opening of the Upper Thames. A Curious Incident’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 March 1890, p. 8.

⁵⁶ For her (and Te Hira’s) opposition, see for example *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 April 1867, p. 11, 18 March 1871, p. 17; *New Zealand Herald*, 16 November 1867, p. 3, 8 February 1870, pp. 4-5; Monin, 236, 244.

⁵⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 February 1870, p. 4.

⁵⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 25 December 1869, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Miners’ Rights 1868-1869, no. 7209, BACL 14358/2a, ANZ-A; evidence by H.D. Johnson, Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book

spent the previous three months living at Mount Saint Mary, at Ponsonby in Auckland, whereas he had spent only five days there.⁶⁰ He may have gone to Thames early in 1869, soon after travelling to Auckland for the birth of his first child on 6 February, when he recorded his occupation as a storekeeper in Ohinemuri.⁶¹

Details of Johnson's life in Thames between 1869 and 1871 have not survived. He lived at Karaka, where his second son was born in June 1870 and his first daughter in December 1871.⁶² In 1910 he noted the impact on Maori of Pakeha settlement. In the 1870s Maori were 'self-reliant and industrious, but the advent of the white man and especially of the tourist has spoiled them. They then raised produce in abundance, but the Thames had not been opened six months before I noticed a change for the worse. The age of parasitism had set in'.⁶³ He invested in only one mining company, and in December 1873 was threatened with the forfeiture of his 32 shares if a call remained unpaid.⁶⁴ Possibly he had unrecorded interests, for his later abhorrence of the 'incubus' of sleeping partners implied personal experience. He had kept in touch with Edward Wood, for he recorded that one man had sold the sleeping half of his share in the Manukau to Wood for the cost of a miner's right.⁶⁵

AT PAEROA IN THE EARLY 1870s

In August 1870 a visitor noted that

A store, kept by Europeans, is situated on the banks of the river, at a place called Te Paeroa, and has very excellent accommodation for travellers to and from Tauranga and Shortland. The Proprietor, until lately, was Mr Andrews, assisted

no. 10, p. 63; H.D. Johnson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 July 1920, Mines Department, MD 20, 21/1, ANZ-W.

⁶⁰ Notices of Intentions to Marry, Births Deaths and Marriages, BDM 20/13, folio 146, ANZ-W; Death Certificate of Henry Dunbar Johnson, 14 February 1924, 1924/7559, BDM.

⁶¹ Birth Certificate of Henry Dunbar Paeroa Johnson, 6 February 1869, 1869/12647, BDM.

⁶² Birth Certificates of Percy James Bell Johnson, 13 June 1870, 1870/17601; Margaret Sarah Johnson, 7 December 1871, 1872/17288, BDM; *Thames Star*, 1 August 1913, p. 5.

⁶³ H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1910, p. 5.

⁶⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 December 1873, p. 2.

⁶⁵ H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 13 December 1910, p. 2.

by his two sons, who have the good name and wishes of both Maoris and Europeans, having lived there nearly two years, hoping to make a “pile” at the opening. The leaseholder of the land,

meaning Wood, was ‘now in occupation, whose intention is to cut the land up into allotments to form the township’ when given permission to survey.⁶⁶ Earlier that year, Wood’s surveyor had sent timber to make pegs to the junction of the Ohinemuri and Waihou rivers, from whence Johnson and Peter Austin⁶⁷ were to take it to the site. Johnson described what happened next:

There was opposition of course to the proposal, but we thought we could get through without the Maoris knowing anything about it. When we had towed the raft some distance above the Junction we were stopped and turned back by a large party of natives. They thought we were following their instructions, but as soon as we were out of sight we took the first opportunity of pulling under the bank, where we remained till night. We then made another attempt, and this time were successful in getting up as far as the settlement of a chief called Rapata Te Arikai, afterwards known as Te Pokiha.⁶⁸ He was one of the owners of the Paeroa Block who had leased the land to Mr Wood, and so was a Queen native in opposition to the other tribesmen of the district. He assisted us in landing and stacking the timber, and after breakfast, next day, we began making pegs, having the use of a large Maori house. While working, we found that a party of natives, under the famous Mere Kuru were coming to clear us out, and though we did our best to keep them off, they proved too many for us, and after throwing our pegs outside they forced us to retire. Thus ended the first attempt to survey the township of Paeroa.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ ‘ZZZ’, ‘A Holiday at Ohinemuri’, *Thames Advertiser*, 31 August 1870, p. 3.

⁶⁷ See ‘Orphan’, ‘The Good Old Days of Yore’, *Waihi Miner*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 14 April 1899, p. 3; *Evening Post*, 3 December 1927, p. 11.

⁶⁸ He supported opening Ohinemuri to Pakeha: see *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 November 1867, p. 11, 9 November 1867, p. 17, 6 June 1868, p. 7, 17 October 1868, p. 7, 7 November 1868, p. 7, 24 July 1869, p. 12, 21 August 1869, p. 22, 4 December 1869, p. 5, 12 March 1870, p. 19, 1 April 1871, p. 15, 29 July 1871, p. 10.

⁶⁹ H. Dunbar-Johnson, ‘Reminiscences’, *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1910, p. 4.

In February 1870, after returning to Thames, Johnson complained to Sir Donald McLean, the Native Minister, of being ordered off the land for helping to cut 500 pegs:

We stacked them in the whare, & thought that no further notice would be taken. But alas! just after sunset a division of the “ngehe”⁷⁰ arrived &, after prayers, ordered us to leave at once & take away the timber. Of course we would not go, so they broke into the whare & commenced to carry away the pegs. We hindered them as far as we were able without having recourse to violence. I went to look for Rapata [Te Pokiha], who was up the river digging potatoes. By the time we returned to Pukateawairahi the natives had gone back to Papaturoa, taking with them (in their canoe) 175 pegs. I believe they said that they would be with us again in the morning. I took a letter from Rapata to Te Hira & Mere Kuru & received another in reply which was simply a repetition of the order given by the “ngehe.” The timber will be safe now that we have left the district. But what is to be done? Ought not an information to be laid against the natives for theft.⁷¹

For reasons of national policy, it was not. Wood’s 1870 petition for compensation for losses sustained from the stopping of the survey failed because it was considered he had to accept the risks involved in dealing with Maori in a district beyond the rule of Pakeha law, but five years later the government gave him £15.⁷² Wood still had his store in December 1871, and the following May there was a reference to ‘Wood’s Landing’, but he left the district well before 1875, having sold his business in 1870 to Henry Samuel Andrews,⁷³ a Mangare farmer who did not retain it for long.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Ngehe means peaceful and calm and is always associated with women; the women ordered the men to leave in a non-aggressive way? Information about the meanings associated with this word provided by Tom Roa, University of Waikato.

⁷¹ H. Dunbar Johnson to Donald McLean, 11 February 1870, McLean Papers, MS-Copy-Micro-0535-062, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁷² Petitions, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1870/13, ANZ-W; *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 October 1875, p. 10.

⁷³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 December 1870, p. 9, 6 May 1871, p. 18, 20 February 1875, p. 10, 22 July 1876, p. 23.

⁷⁴ See *New Zealand Herald*, 31 October 1866, p. 5, 11 April 1867, p. 3, 18 January 1869, p. 5, 12 April 1870, p. 3, 23 April 1870, p. 4, 21 August 1871, p. 3, 15 September 1871, p. 3,

Johnson returned to Paeroa in 1871 to become a partner with Austin 'for a time in the original store'.⁷⁵ Shortly after the attempt to survey the township,

I had another experience with my old friend Wiremu who had studiously avoided me for a long time after the pig incident. He had come up with other natives in a big canoe bringing this time a sack of wheat. His companions brought their produce, gum, corn, etc, and I weighted it on a big spring balance which I had suspended from a beam in the store-house; but when Wiremu tendered his wheat, he presented therewith a pair of steelyards and demanded that these should be used to ascertain the weight. I had not forgotten the previous incident and was not prepared to yield an inch. I therefore pointed to the balance and said, "That is what I weigh with." He fumed and argued the point and at last exclaimed, "It is my wheat, and my steelyards," to which I replied, "It is my money and my spring balance." My reply amused the other natives, but they did not like to show it as they were afraid of offending the big chief. Wiremu departed in wrath.⁷⁶

Rihitoto Mataia, wife of William Grey Nicholls,⁷⁷ stated in her 1878 evidence about the Hararahi Block that her father, Mataia, 'placed' Johnson on the land, where he built a house. 'He is simply squatting there. I am the sole owner of the land'.⁷⁸ Pahara Te Paeroa stated: 'My father went to Mr Johnson about the building of the house'. Johnson told him he had 'paid Mataia £5 as rent', but later ceased paying it.⁷⁹ In his evidence, Johnson gave his occupation as a licensed surveyor (no evidence of his doing any surveying has survived). He had lived on this block, building his house 'by permission of Hoani Mataia and Periniki. My wife is related to the Claimants and she was living at the Thames and they wished her to come'. He had never been disturbed in his occupation, and when 'one or two spoke to me some time since about the house' he 'told then it could be settled by

10 February 1872, p. 2, 9 May 1884, p. 5; Auckland Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 30 January 1899, p. 2.

⁷⁵ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142.

⁷⁶ H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1910, p. 4.

⁷⁷ See paper on their lives.

⁷⁸ Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 11, p. 41.

⁷⁹ Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 11, p. 45.

the Court'.⁸⁰ On Rihitoto Mataia's request, the land was split between herself as sole owner of one block and the other, Hararahi No. 2, 'in favor of Rawinia Manukau Johnson and Henry Dunbar Paeroa Johnson HC',⁸¹ meaning half-caste, Johnson's eldest son.

LAND

Like the other owners of Ohinemuri land, Lavinia (incorrectly labelled a half-caste) received payment for her interest when it was sold to the Crown. She signed a deed of conveyance of Ohinemuri 14 before her interests had been ascertained, and after being paid £25 was granted only five acres, meaning she had been overpaid either by £20 or £23 15s (two calculations were made), which the Native Minister in 1882 wanted charged against her other land.⁸² In 1897 she and her husband leased the Hararahi No. 2 Block,⁸³ which they had not lived on since the 1870s.

Through his wife, Johnson's family had interests in several blocks in the Ohinemuri and Te Aroha districts. Except for Lavinia's land, all Ngati Rahiri reserves were on the eastern side of the Waihou River.⁸⁴ When the government announced in July 1882 that 'Her Majesty has ceased to have any Interest in certain Native Lands', including all these reserves, one was 'Rawinia Manukau Johnson and children's Reserve, containing 300 acres, more or less'.⁸⁵ In 1880 the land court listed Lavinia Johnson, again recorded as a half-caste, as an owner of the small Aorangi Block in Ohinemuri.⁸⁶ Two years later, she became an owner of the Moanakapiti Block, near Paeroa.⁸⁷ In 1914, despite selling or transferring some of her land to her daughter Lavinia Claribel Moon, Lavinia retained a one-third interest in 20 acres in the parish of Whangamarino, a third-interest by

⁸⁰ Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 11, pp. 58-59.

⁸¹ Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 11, p. 59.

⁸² R.J. Gill, Notes and Memoranda on Ohinemuri Goldfield, Paeroa, May-June 1882, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/54b; 'Statement of the Facts and Circumstances Affecting the Ohinemuri Block', Appendix H, Appendix I, Lands and Survey Department, LS 1, 36/25a, ANZ-W.

⁸³ Nominal Primary Index no. 3, folios 191, 646, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.

⁸⁴ 'Theodolite', 'On the Survey of Te Aroha', *Te Aroha News*, 18 February 1911, p. 3.

⁸⁵ *New Zealand Gazette*, 6 July 1882, p. 928.

⁸⁶ Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 13, p. 233.

⁸⁷ Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 14, p. 186.

succession in one allotment in Hamilton East and the same in another by purchase, had a sixth-interest in just over five acres at Maungatautari, near Cambridge, and interests in the Hamua Block, in Taranaki.⁸⁸

In 1877 Johnson was granted a 50-acre agricultural lease near Paeroa,⁸⁹ but in 1880, when residents wanted a cemetery, they applied to obtain 'the Hummocks', 50 acres owned by Johnson that were 'unsuitable for cultivation'.⁹⁰ If this was the same property, they had to find other land. In 1885 a surveyor noted that no improvements had been made on this 'Rough Land close to Paeroa'.⁹¹ Twelve years later Johnson obtained the freehold.⁹² In 1878, he was appointed trustee for his eldest son 'during his minority, for property situated in the Ohinemuri district'.⁹³ He also held property in his own right, in 1882 owning two lots of freehold land: 19 acres in Hobson County worth £5 and 50 acres in Thames County worth £100.⁹⁴ In 1893 he owned Block X111 Section 12 Ohinemuri, and in 1909 a block in Taupo township.⁹⁵ In 1908 he was recorded as the owner of over 25 acres, part of Hararahi No. 2, valued at £255.⁹⁶ When he died he left his children land at Taupo, Rotorua, Waikowhai on the Manukau Harbour, and his home in Mount Roskill, Auckland.⁹⁷

ETHNIC CONFLICT

⁸⁸ Aroha Block X1 Lot 4 of South Portion of Sections 5 and 7C, Block Files, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A102/6472, ANZ-A.

⁸⁹ Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Agricultural Leases, Ohinemuri, 1875-1893, folio 71, ZAAP 13784/1a, ANZ-A.

⁹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 May 1880, p. 3.

⁹¹ J.A. Cheal to S. Percy Smith, 15 January 1885, Ohinemuri Agricultural Leases, Section 156, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1888/128, ANZ-W.

⁹² Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Agricultural Leases, Ohinemuri, 1875-1893, folio 71, ZAAP 13784/1a; see also Thames Warden's Court, Clerk's Outwards Letterbook, p. 225, BACL 14458/1b, ANZ-A.

⁹³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 December 1878, p. 8.

⁹⁴ *A Return of the Freeholders of New Zealand ... 1882* (Wellington, 1884), p. H 15.

⁹⁵ Nominal Primary Index, vol. 3, folio 646, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.

⁹⁶ Ohinemuri County Council, Paeroa Riding, 31 March 1908, folio 121, Valuation Department, BBBC A150/653, ANZ-A.

⁹⁷ Probate of H.D. Johnson, Probates, BBAE 1569/17033, ANZ-A.

In the 1870s, despite having a house near the future Paeroa, his family retained a house at Karaka Creek, Shortland, Thames.⁹⁸ In January 1873 a squabble revealed the racial tensions that they must have encountered on many occasions. James Stichbury, later to be a prominent Auckland resident,⁹⁹ was charged with striking Lavinia ‘on the face with his clenched hand’.

The complainant being a Maori, Mr Grace was sworn as interpreter. Complainant deposed that defendant resided next to her house. There was a paling fence between, taller than herself. On Sunday last, she saw defendant on his premises. Her little boy was in her own yard, and defendant’s boy was in his; and they were throwing gravel and stones at each other, against the fence. The defendant’s boy dipped a little bit of sponge in dirty water, threw it over the fence, and struck her. She poured some water against the fence, not intending to touch the boy. Defendant then jumped onto a bench and poured some water over her. He threw two buckets of dirty water over her, which wet her and her children. Defendant’s wife [Mary Amelia]¹⁰⁰ said, “You had better go back to Ohinemuri.” Witness answered, “Then you had better go back to England. England is your country, New Zealand is mine.” She was standing on the rail of the fence looking over, when the defendant struck her on the mouth, telling her to go to hell. Her mouth bled. After she was struck, she had a piece of broken gate in her hand. None of the water she threw on the fence went onto the boy. She threw it to frighten the child. – Te Otewhira, a girl of about 13, niece of the complainant, was examined. – Defendant was fined 40s and costs, amounting altogether to £5 1s.

A cross action: Lavinia Johnson was charged with assaulting James Alfred Stichbury, a boy of about seven or eight years, son of the defendant in the previous case, by throwing a bucket of water over him, and attempting to strike him with a piece of wood. – This action was dismissed.¹⁰¹

Despite this prompt from her unfriendly neighbours, the family did not return permanently to Ohinemuri. Although daughters were born there in

⁹⁸ Thames Electoral Roll, August 1873-September 1874, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFM 8183, 3015/73, ANZ-A.

⁹⁹ See *Auckland Star*, 12 January 1932, p. 3, 14 January 1932, pp. 3, 8.

¹⁰⁰ Marriage Certificate of James Stichbury, 1865/4175, BDM.

¹⁰¹ Magistrate’s Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 27 January 1873, p. 3.

July 1873 and August 1876, in May 1876 they were living at Karaka Creek.¹⁰² When in Ohinemuri, they lived on their land at Hararahi.¹⁰³

LICENSED INTERPRETER

After Johnson was licensed as an interpreter in April 1872, he advertised his services in the *Thames* press.¹⁰⁴ On his death, 'Pakeha' recalled that he

was best known as an ardent exponent of the beauties of the Maori language, and one of the most, perhaps the most, indefatigable corrector of the frequent errors that creep into the spelling and pronunciation of native words. Often his efforts in this direction proved a somewhat thankless task, but he never grew weary of this self-imposed duty.¹⁰⁵

In his role as interpreter he 'had a good deal to do with the dealings with the Maori owners of land around Ohinemuri'.¹⁰⁶ As an example, in early 1875 an 'excursionist' saw Alfred Joshua Thorp, a surveyor and local farmer,¹⁰⁷ and Johnson, along 'with several Maori lads, laying out the township' of Paeroa.¹⁰⁸ The following year, at the council's request he obtained the approval of the Maori landowners to alter the line of the Paeroa to Mackaytown road; he recommended using Maori labour where practicable.¹⁰⁹ When a new track from Paeroa to Waitekauri was blazed, he

¹⁰² Birth Certificates of Lavinia Claribella Johnson, 3 July 1873, 1873/29683; Beatrice Eleanor Johnson, 29 August 1875, 1875/12671, BDM; *Auckland Directory 1875-76* (Auckland, 1875), p. 56; *Thames Advertiser*, 23 May 1876, p. 5.

¹⁰³ Birth Certificate of Katherine Marjorie Johnson, 2 June 1877, 1877/6381, BDM.

¹⁰⁴ Memorandum by F.D. Fenton, 13 April 1872, Maori Land Court, Memoranda Book 1867-1879, p. 87, BAIE 4307/1a, ANZ-A; *Thames Guardian and Mining Record*, 17 April 1872, p. 2, advertisement, 19 June 1872, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 April 1872, p. 237.

¹⁰⁵ 'Pakeha', *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ *Observer*, 1 December 1906, p. 5.

¹⁰⁷ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 856; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 30 December 1912, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ 'An Excursionist', 'Ohinemuri', *Thames Advertiser*, 16 January 1875, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ H.D. Johnson to J.M. McLaren, 13 January 1876, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFM 8180, 114/76, ANZ-A.

was employed 'to inform and get, the consent, of whatever native, or natives, the ground belonged to'.¹¹⁰ Johnson was also in close contact with George Thomas Wilkinson,¹¹¹ who after meeting Johnson in 1904 for the first time in many years noted in his diary that they were 'very old friends'; they had a long talk.¹¹² In 1881, when Wilkinson was having a particularly complicated private life, he wrote long private letters to Johnson.¹¹³

THE OHINEMURI GOLDFIELD

Johnson claimed to have done 'a little' prospecting at Ohinemuri in 1866.¹¹⁴ Two years later, having heard of 'the fresh discovery at the Shotover' in Thames and that 'gold had been found at a waterfall in the Kuranui Creek, I conceived the idea that I might possibly light on a waterfall with equally good results. No long afterwards when ascending Taukanihi (the Bald Hill) in the fork of the Ohinemuri and Waitawheta' rivers he saw a waterfall on Karangahake mountain that looked promising. 'I fully resolved that to prospect here would be the object of my next excursion. I camped on the ground in March '68 and found favourable indications, but though I visited my find from time to time' could not peg out until the field was opened in 1875.¹¹⁵ He managed to prospect 'without the knowledge of the natives'.¹¹⁶

When he made 'other visits' to Karangahake, he observed rival prospectors and tested 'the small knobbly hill projecting from the side of Karangahake, where my party afterwards pegged off a claim (called the Golden Knob) on the morning of the opening'.¹¹⁷ His discovery was above

¹¹⁰ J.M. McLaren to Reader Wood, 1 March 1876, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFM 8180, 501/76, ANZ-A.

¹¹¹ See paper on Merea Wikiriwhi and George Thomas Wilkinson.

¹¹² G.T. Wilkinson, diary, entry for 19 January 1904, University of Waikato Library.

¹¹³ For example, G.T. Wilkinson, diary, entry for 14 March 1881, University of Waikato Library.

¹¹⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 September 1878, p. 3.

¹¹⁵ H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 10 December 1910, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ H.D. Johnson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 July 1920, Mines Department, MD 20, 21/1, ANZ-W.

¹¹⁷ H.D. Johnson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 July 1920, Mines Department, MD 20, 21/1, ANZ-W.

the Prospectors' Claim granted in 1875.¹¹⁸ In selecting this ground, which he named, he had been attracted by the colour of the quartz and because the formation was similar to Coromandel, Kuranui Hill, and 'the old Shotover': 'a kindly sandstone with quartz leaders'.¹¹⁹ 'Though we had got a little gold before the field opened, after we began to work in real earnest we never succeeded in getting any more. At one time we had with us an experienced old miner from the Thames, Simon Dryden',¹²⁰ as their manager. Details of their mining is lost to history because this page of his reminiscences is torn,¹²¹ but they did not find anything worthwhile. In March 1875, Johnson was one of the ten owners of the Golden Knob and All Nations claims, abandoning his interest in the former in August.¹²²

Johnson did not apply for the reward for discovering a new goldfield because he had not found payable quantities. 'When the rush to Neves' find near Tairua took place, our party broke up and abandoned the claim'.¹²³ In 1910, when John Neves¹²⁴ died, Johnson described how Neves' 1875 discovery had prompted a rush; he was pleased to have prevented the postal service from changing Nevesville into Neavesville.¹²⁵ Also in 1910 he recorded that, when Karangahake mining revived, the Golden Knob

was again taken up by a party which included one of the old shareholders. This party continued to drive on the lead which we

¹¹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 March 1875, p. 3.

¹¹⁹ H.D. Johnson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 July 1920, Mines Department, MD 20, 21/1, ANZ-W; H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 13 December 1910, p. 2.

¹²⁰ See *Thames Advertiser*, 30 April 1874, p. 2, 11 February 1876, p. 3, 1 April 1878, p. 3, 16 September 1890, p. 2.

¹²¹ H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 10 December 1910, p. 1.

¹²² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Ohinemuri Claims 1875, folios 26, 30, BBAV 11568/1a; Thames Warden's Court, Record of Warden's Decisions, Warden's Court, Ohinemuri, 1873-1876, folio 30, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

¹²³ H.D. Johnson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 July 1920, Mines Department, MD 20, 21/1, ANZ-W.

¹²⁴ See *Thames Advertiser*, 4 June 1875, 3, Warden's Court, 16 June 1875, p. 3, 19 June 1875, p. 3.

¹²⁵ Letter from H.D. Johnson, printed in 'Mercutio', 'Local Gossip', *New Zealand Herald*, 26 November 1910, Supplement, p. 1; H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 10 December 1910, p. 1.

had begun, and at a hundred feet cut a reef which they called the Maria. Even then they did not succeed in making a pile, as the ore was refractory and the battery could not save the gold. Eventually the ground was merged in the Woodstock and some very good gold was taken out by Hansen on tribute. This now forms part of the wealthy Talisman.¹²⁶

Ten years later he commented: 'Although my original selection was thus justified, it was not my luck to be in it'.¹²⁷

In August 1875, he became an owner of a Waitekauri claim.¹²⁸ Because of his knowledge of this area he was one of four men chosen two months later by a Paeroa meeting to blaze a trail for carting machinery.¹²⁹ The following year, he acquired shares in the All Nations Company, mining at Karangahake, and was elected a director.¹³⁰ He also had shares in the Banyan Company, which mined at Te Ranga, of which he had been appointed manager in February.¹³¹ When the mining inspector discovered that little work had been done by September, he was told 'to get the claim to work'. After another warning five months later, Johnson forfeited it in March.¹³² At Waitekauri, he had shares in one company and was a director of another.¹³³ His last involvement in Ohinemuri mining was as secretary of the Ohinemuri Prospectors' Association for four months in 1878.¹³⁴

STOREKEEPER

After Ohinemuri was opened to settlement, Johnson opened a 'bookselling and stationery business' as well as being an agent for a Thames

¹²⁶ H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 13 December 1910, p. 2.

¹²⁷ H.D. Johnson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 July 1920, Mines Department, MD 20, 21/1, ANZ-W.

¹²⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Ohinemuri Claims 1875, folio 58, BBAV 11568/1a, ANZ-A.

¹²⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 October 1875, p. 3.

¹³⁰ *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 April 1876, p. 309; *Thames Advertiser*, 7 April 1876, p. 2.

¹³¹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 15 June 1876, p. 419; *Thames Advertiser*, 3 February 1876, p. 3.

¹³² Thames Warden's Court, Report Book of the Mining Inspector 1876-1878, folio 12, BACL 14451/1a, ANZ-A.

¹³³ *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 August 1876, p. 635; *Thames Advertiser*, 29 August 1876, p. 3.

¹³⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 May 1878, p. 3, 3 September 1878, p. 3.

chemist (he described himself in 1877 as a ‘druggist’).¹³⁵ In 1877, as ‘our own correspondent’ in Ohinemuri for the *Thames Advertiser*,¹³⁶ he reported a robbery of his store:

On Thursday evening a most daring robbery was committed at Mr H.D. Johnson’s shop, in the Normanby Road. Some persons broke the front window and got into the shop while he was away getting his tea. About £11 in money and sundry articles was stolen, but it is evident that money was what the thieves went for, as they did not touch anything beyond the place where the cash-box was concealed. This is the first case of housebreaking that has occurred in the township, and I am glad to say the crime has been nipped in the bud, one of the natives concerned having quickly been arrested, and a portion of the stolen property recovered, so that it is unlikely others will be tempted to follow their example. Mr Johnson suspected that a native named Himiona had something to do with the robbery, and from information received he was enabled to accompany constables Gordon and Day to the place where Himiona was sleeping. After arresting him they proceeded to Hoera [Te Mimiha]’s place¹³⁷ and got a part of the money, and then went to Puketeawairahi to arrest a young native named Mohata, who had been accused by Himiona as being the actual thief. The constables deserve praise for having asserted themselves so much on a dirty wet night, as they were out until daylight yesterday morning.¹³⁸

In court, Johnson said he lived on the premises. At 5.30 on the evening of the robbery, he had locked both doors before going to the Criterion Hotel for his evening meal.

Witness knew the three prisoners. Himiona and Whango had been in the witness’s shop before. He did not remember ever having seen Mohata there. Witness saw Himiona at the Criterion Hotel on the evening of the 19th instant while waiting for tea. Persons passing by might see where witness put the cash box if they were looking through the window. Witness only saw Himiona in the hotel for about a minute. About two hours after witness had left his shop, he heard that it had been robbed. In

¹³⁵ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1 p. 142; Police Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 25 July 1877, p. 3.

¹³⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 May 1876, p. 3.

¹³⁷ See Police Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 25 July 1877, p. 3, and paper on his life.

¹³⁸ Ohinemuri Correspondent, ‘The Ohinemuri Goldfield’, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 July 1877, p. 3.

consequence of this information, he went across to his shop, and found that a pane of glass in the window had been broken, and some boards nailed to the sash. Both the doors were locked, as when he had left them. He opened the door, and found that some articles had been disturbed and purloined. The cash-box was missing.... He informed Constables Day and Gordon of the burglary, and in company with them he went to [Aihe] Pepene's tent.¹³⁹ Pepene and his wife and prisoner Himiona were in the tent. But the latter was asleep and appeared the worse for liquor. Witness was a Native interpreter. Through the constable he accused Himiona of having stolen the money and goods. Himiona said: "I did not take the money. Let's sit down and have a talk. As I am accused of this offence won't you take a horse and let the matter drop." Witness said he did not want a horse. He asked prisoner if he had received any money from [James Ponui] Nicholls.¹⁴⁰ Witness saw a box of matches in the tent which attracted his attention. There was a box similar to the one witness had lost. Prisoner denied that the box was his.

After evidence showed his active involvement in the police search, another witness described how the shop window was smashed with a manuka stick. The prisoners were committed for trial in the Supreme Court. From his evidence it was clear that his family was not then at Paeroa, and that he spent his evenings at the hotel, about five chains from his shop,¹⁴¹ for both meals and company. In the Supreme Court, Himiona, aged 20, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to six months' hard labour; Mohata, also 20, and Whango, 30, were found not guilty, the prosecution accepting that they had not been involved.¹⁴²

'For a number of years' the Ohinemuri correspondent for the *Thames Advertiser* and *New Zealand Herald*,¹⁴³ Johnson was appointed the Ohinemuri agent for the former in May 1875.¹⁴⁴ A leading figure in the district, in April 1872 he was secretary of the Ohinemuri Races.¹⁴⁵ Four

¹³⁹ See paper on his life.

¹⁴⁰ See paper on William Nicholls.

¹⁴¹ Police Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 25 July 1877, p. 3.

¹⁴² Supreme Court, *New Zealand Herald*, 3 October 1877, p. 3.

¹⁴³ *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10; *Observer*, 28 March 1896, p. 19; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142.

¹⁴⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 May 1875, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ *Thames Guardian and Mining Record*, 17 April 1872, p. 2.

years later he was elected to the first school committee,¹⁴⁶ and re-elected two years later, when he became its secretary.¹⁴⁷ In 1877 he was a member of a delegation of agricultural settlers.¹⁴⁸ He also assisted to register local births, deaths, and marriages.¹⁴⁹ The following year, in an election for the Ohinemuri Riding of the Thames County Council he seconded the nomination of another Paeroa storekeeper.¹⁵⁰ In 1878 and 1879 he 'helped to promote the Thames Scotch No. 3, a volunteer company established at Paeroa', and was one of its first members, being immediately elected one of the two sergeants and later becoming a staff-sergeant.¹⁵¹ As another indication of his status in the community, in 1879 he helped to drive the first pile of the Paeroa bridge.¹⁵²

Three months after this ceremony, the farewell to this 'most useful settler' was reported, for he was leaving to become a clerk and interpreter in the Native Office in Wellington.¹⁵³ This appointment had resulted from his being 'specially engaged' by the editor of the *New Zealand Herald* early that year to assist 'in reporting the great meeting between Sir George Grey and Tawhiao at Te Kopua', near Pirongia, when 'his knowledge of the Maori language was marked'.¹⁵⁴ At this meeting 'he first attracted the notice of a Minister. His smartness as a man did it', according to the *Observer*,¹⁵⁵ which would publish several favourable reports about him over the years. At his farewell in the public hall 'there was a goodly number of the inhabitants to take leave of one who had borne the "burden and heat of the

¹⁴⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 May 1876, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1878, p. 2, 7 March 1878, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 February 1877, p. 3.

¹⁴⁹ H.D. Johnson to Registrar, Births Deaths and Marriages, 12 September 1877, Thames Registrar, Births Deaths and Marriages, Inwards Correspondent, BACL 1346/1, ANZ-A.

¹⁵⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 November 1878, p. 3.

¹⁵¹ H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1911, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 17 February 1879, p. 3; Thames Scottish No. 3 Company, Capitation Rolls 1879-1880, Army Department, ARM 41, 1880/1o, 1880/1p, ANZ-W; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

¹⁵² *Thames Advertiser*, 18 March 1879, p. 3.

¹⁵³ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 June 1879, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 August 1879, p. 1113.

¹⁵⁴ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

¹⁵⁵ *Observer*, 28 March 1896, p. 19.

day” and had always done his utmost to promote the welfare of the district’. He was presented with a purse of sovereigns and an address:

Sir,- Having heard that you intend leaving Ohinemuri district tomorrow morning, we have to assure you that, while rejoicing in the fact that you have received an appointment under the General Government, we sincerely regret that it necessitates a change of abode. As one of the oldest settlers in this district you have always taken a prominent part in public movements, and we fully recognise the value of the services rendered by you. From what we know of you, we feel assured that you will succeed in your new sphere of life. Owing to the very short notice as to your intended departure, many friends residing out of the township have not had an opportunity in expressing their good-will towards you, but we can safely do so on their behalf, as no person in the district is more generally esteemed than yourself. We have much pleasure in requesting your acceptance of the accompanying purse, with which you will please purchase some small memento to keep us in remembrance. With best wishes for the future prosperity for yourself and your family, and hoping that circumstances may lead to your speedy return to this district, we remain, etc....

‘Many settlers expressed their admiration’ for his ‘conduct’ as a resident, ‘and their regret at losing him’. When he left on the following morning, he was accompanied to the steamer ‘by a large number of the inhabitants, who wished him success in his new sphere’.¹⁵⁶

His family did not follow him to Wellington at first, for immediately after he left Paeroa his wife gave birth in a Thames hotel to a son who died eight months later in the same hotel.¹⁵⁷ In 1881 Lavinia was working as a midwife in Paeroa, in September being forced to sue one client who failed to pay for her services.¹⁵⁸ Her occupation was given as nurse as well as midwife,¹⁵⁹ but no details of her work in either capacity have been traced. Because he retained land there, Johnson remained an Ohinemuri ratepayer,¹⁶⁰ and occasionally revisited Paeroa. For instance, having been

¹⁵⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 June 1879, p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 June 1879, p. 2, 27 February 1880, p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ Paeroa Magistrate’s Court, Plaintiff Book 1881-1896, 25/1881, BACL 13745/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁵⁹ Paeroa Magistrate’s Court, Plaintiff Book 1881-1896, Judgment Summons 4/1881, BACL 13745/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 19 June 1886, p. 3.

appointed a justice of the peace in 1885, he sat on the Paeroa bench in 1891.¹⁶¹

TE AROHA

Little more than traces of his work in the Wellington bureaucracy can be unearthed, because he worked for the Native Office in several capacities for most of the rest of his life and a series of disasters destroyed much of its records. He continued to keep an interest in the Ohinemuri and Te Aroha districts, as illustrated by a reminiscence about the opening of the latter goldfield. ‘Prior to the opening, I expected there would be some complication with respect to the hot springs reserve, of which I knew the position from having been present’ when, in 1878, the court determined the ownership of the Aroha Block and 20 acres around the hot springs became a public reserve. ‘In order that there should be no miscarriage, on learning of the proclamation’ of the goldfield he contacted senior ministers and, ‘as a result of my representations, the Hot Springs reserve was specially gazetted in the goldfields proclamation’. Some time later, because of a demand for business sites, the warden, Harry Kenrick,¹⁶² proposed removing nine acres from the reserve for these.

Knowing the interest I had taken in the reserve prior to the opening of the field, the Under-Secretary for Mines brought down (unofficially) Warden Kenrick’s letter for my perusal and asked my opinion. I said “Not an inch. Rather add to the reserve.” Warden Kenrick’s proposal was therefore not acted on, and thus was saved what has since become Te Aroha’s chief attraction.¹⁶³

Because of the loss of files, his account cannot be confirmed; and Kenrick did not need his prompting to extend rather than contract the size of the domain.¹⁶⁴

ROTORUA

¹⁶¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10; *Thames Advertiser*, 5 March 1891, p. 2.

¹⁶² See paper on his life.

¹⁶³ H. Dunbar-Johnson, ‘Reminiscences’, *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1911, p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ See *Te Aroha News*, 21 August 1886, Supplement, p. 3.

In Wellington, for a time he was acting private secretary to John Ballance after the latter became Minister of Native Affairs in September 1884.¹⁶⁵ At the beginning of January 1885, a new Second Clerk replaced him after he was ‘transferred’.¹⁶⁶ Appointed government agent at Rotorua, a newspaper noted that he was ‘well known to the natives’.¹⁶⁷

He chaired the board controlling Rotorua.¹⁶⁸ His work there has not been researched in depth, but according to his own account he ‘was successful in completely reorganizing the Sanatorium, and putting it into a proper workable condition, for which he received the thanks of Ballance.’¹⁶⁹ He was not universally popular;¹⁷⁰ for instance, in January 1886 a reporter of the *Hot Lake Chronicle* who had greeted him in the street was snubbed and felt insulted.¹⁷¹ That year he erected ‘by far the most elegant residence in the district’, a villa on the slopes of Pukeroa Hill, and was energetic in having trees planted in the township.¹⁷² He was particularly anxious to assist the education of Maori children, as indicated in his letter of September 1888 concerning their right to attend public schools. Earlier that year, as chairman of the school committee he had sought support from the Auckland Education Board and the Education Department for his opposing the intention of some members to ‘immediately expel [the] few Maori children already admitted’, despite their being ‘well-behaved and making good progress’. Being a lone voice against expulsion, he resigned, and in his resignation letter noted that an example of ‘obscene writing’ in an Auckland school proved

that the lowest depths of depravity may exist even where there may be no Maori children. In native districts, like Rotorua, many of the European children mix and play with the Maori children in the village, and I certainly cannot see that any special harm is

¹⁶⁵ *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 13.

¹⁶⁶ *New Zealand Gazette*, 2 January 1885, p. 8.

¹⁶⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 January 1885, p. 17.

¹⁶⁸ *New Zealand Gazette*, 29 January 1885, p. 166; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142.

¹⁶⁹ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142.

¹⁷⁰ R.F. Keam, *Tarawera: The volcanic eruption of 10 June 1886* (Auckland, 1988), pp. 44-46.

¹⁷¹ *Waikato Times*, 12 January 1886, p. 2.

¹⁷² D.M. Stafford, *The Founding Years in Rotorua: A history of events to 1900* (Auckland, 1986), p. 181.

likely to result from their being also associated in schools where proper discipline is observed.¹⁷³

Johnson was 'conspicuous' after the Tarawera eruption.¹⁷⁴ 'He was the third man to arrive at Wairoa on the fateful morning of June 10, 1886, to assist in the rescue of Mrs Haszard'.¹⁷⁵ Two weeks later he was beginning 'to look careworn. The constant anxiety which his position entails seems to be undermining his health. His office is besieged all day long with needy natives'.¹⁷⁶ The following month a Rotorua correspondent wrote that Ngati Whakaue had asked the government to provide them with rations for six months, as they had nearly exhausted their 'means of living' by providing so much food to the Tuhourangi:

It is very unlikely that the Government will agree to such a request, as the officer here received instructions from the first to supply rations to those in distress, a duty by no means a pleasant one, which Mr Johnson has carried out most faithfully to all concerned, so there was really no occasion for the Ngatiwhakaue to exhaust their supplies in the manner they have done. There has been a considerable amount of double-dealing going on, and Mr Johnson has had occasion to be very careful in giving and limiting the supplies, so as to prevent a feast and famine afterwards. The duties of our Government officer since the late disaster have been arduous and severe, making his position far from being a sinecure. He has been deluged with demands of all sorts, and has had to use the utmost discretion in guarding against some of the most wily, who tried to enlist his sympathy with pitiful stories of distress, but who in reality were already well-provided for.¹⁷⁷

In October he was one of four men entrusted with distributing funds collected for the victims in Wellington.¹⁷⁸ When he visited Auckland that month one newspaper commented that he had had 'an exceedingly busy and

¹⁷³ Letter from Henry Dunbar Johnson, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 September 1888, p. 15.

¹⁷⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 19 June 1886, p. 3; for details of his energetic response, see Keam, pp. 124, 126, 138, 162, 185-187, 248-256.

¹⁷⁵ *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

¹⁷⁶ Rotorua Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 26 June 1886, Supplement, p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ Rotorua Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 July 1886, p. 22.

¹⁷⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 October 1886, p. 19.

harassing time of it during the past few months'.¹⁷⁹ In January 1887 he was appointed clerk of the magistrate's court at Rotorua and Maketu.¹⁸⁰ In mid-year, three Rotorua Maori were convicted of obtaining money from him under false pretenses.¹⁸¹ In April 1888 he resigned from his post of receiving license fees for springs and baths, from the town board, and from the licensing committee.¹⁸² 'One of the victims of the great retrenchment', as he expressed it, his departure from Rotorua was 'very much regretted'.¹⁸³

His family retained affection for the district, holding a social in the Rotorua schoolhouse in 1898 for the coming of age of his youngest daughter.¹⁸⁴ But his 1910 reminiscences revealed that his experiences after the Tarawera eruption soured his view of Maori. During his first years in the colony he had been most impressed with 'the natural aptitude of the natives for engineering undertakings', as illustrated by their military engineering and the locks they created to bring their produce to Auckland by canoe.¹⁸⁵ Since then, Maori had ceased being hard-working because of the arrival of the Pakeha and 'especially of the tourist', which had 'spoiled them'. If his readers wanted to see to what 'the age of parasitism' had developed into, he recommended they 'spend a few weeks among the spongers of Rotorua'.¹⁸⁶

TE AROHA WEST

After leaving Rotorua, Johnson lived on his wife's land at Te Aroha West, the first time he was 'permanently located' there, although he had visited it 'on several occasions'.¹⁸⁷ How much farming he did is not known. He first participated in community affairs in September 1888, when he consented to stand for the Waitoa Riding of the Piako County Council,

¹⁷⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 October 1886, p. 18.

¹⁸⁰ *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 January 1887, p. 138.

¹⁸¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 17 June 1887, p. 2.

¹⁸² *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 April 1888, p. 459.

¹⁸³ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142; H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1911, p. 2; *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 5; Stafford, p. 182.

¹⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1898, p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1911, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1910, p. 4.

¹⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 1 December 1888, p. 2; H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1911, p. 2; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 143.

according to the *Waikato Times*, or the Waitoa Road Board, according to the *Te Aroha News*.¹⁸⁸ The former newspaper commented that his ‘thorough knowledge of the wants of the district, combined with his long colonial experience in the service of the Government, and his having occupied previously very high positions in local politics elsewhere’, rendered him ‘particularly suitable for the position’.¹⁸⁹ However he withdrew his candidacy almost immediately.¹⁹⁰ At the end of the year, at a public meeting in Te Aroha West he seconded a motion seeking a punt at the Waiorongomai Landing, and was elected to a committee to draw up a petition and obtain signatures.¹⁹¹ The following year, he stood for the Waitoa Road Board, unsuccessfully, receiving the second lowest number of votes, 52; the top candidate had 102.¹⁹² On occasions he heard cases in the Te Aroha court.¹⁹³ In 1889 he became a trustee of the Te Aroha cemetery, and in 1891 a member of the domain board.¹⁹⁴

He had a brief flirtation with national politics in 1890, planning to stand in the Te Aroha electorate as ‘a strong supporter of the Ballance and Stout party’.¹⁹⁵ A week later, ‘finding that most of his friends had already pledged themselves’, he withdrew. The *Waikato Times* considered that, had he announced earlier that he intended to stand, he would have had a ‘fair chance’.¹⁹⁶ A year later, he stood for the Piako Riding of the county council, but came bottom of the poll with 46 votes, whereas the other three, successful, candidates, received 64, 61, and 59.¹⁹⁷ Subsequently he was involved in controversy with the returning officer at Morrinsville because of appointing himself as his own scrutineer there. The council disapproved, but did not feel it could act, despite Johnson’s action being ‘unique’ and not contemplated in the Act.¹⁹⁸ Johnson responded with his own version of the

¹⁸⁸ *Waikato Times*, 29 September 1888, p. 2, 4 October 1888, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 29 September 1888, p. 2, 3 October 1888, p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ *Waikato Times*, 29 September 1888, p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 3 October 1888, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 4 October 1888, p. 2.

¹⁹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1888, p. 7.

¹⁹² *Te Aroha News*, 31 July 1889, p. 2.

¹⁹³ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1889, p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 September 1889, pp. 986-987, 19 March 1891, pp. 365-366.

¹⁹⁵ *Waikato Times*, 2 October 1890, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ *Waikato Times*, 9 October 1890, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ *Waikato Times*, 15 November 1890, p. 3.

¹⁹⁸ *Waikato Times*, 9 December 1890, p. 2.

legalities. As his scrutineer had been unable at the last minute to do the job and he could not get a replacement, he had decided to be one himself. ‘Judging from what took place at the Waitoa Road Board election last year, it was highly necessary to keep a sharp lookout there’. Furthermore, he had obtained approval from the returning officer at Te Aroha, and if the Governor could appoint himself Honorary Colonel of the Canterbury Yeomanry Volunteers, he could appoint himself as he had done. ‘I am quite content to share the honour of establishing “a bad precedent”’.¹⁹⁹

His family’s involvement in the community is lost to history, apart from ‘Miss Lavinia Johnson’ being the queen in tableaux about Mary Queen of Scots in a children’s entertainment in 1889.²⁰⁰ In 1893, ‘a very pleasant evening was held’ in the public hall to celebrate their silver wedding. ‘It was originally intended to hold a garden party at Mr Johnson’s residence, Mangauhenga, but owing to the inclemency of the weather’ the festivities were transferred to the hall, where ‘dancing and games were indulged in by the young people’. A clergyman ‘made a felicitous speech and also cut the cake’, and a ‘sumptuous supper’ was served.²⁰¹

LAND COURT JUDGE

Johnson continued to have some involvement with Maori issues on behalf of the government, for instance signing the lease of Paeroa township in 1890.²⁰² Two weeks after John Ballance became Premier and Native Minister in January 1891, he reminded him ‘of the manner in which I was treated’ at Rotorua through the ‘machinations’ of two men. ‘Not having been able to get into regular employment, I have had a very rough time since I left the Government service, more especially during the last twelve months, in consequence of sickness in my family – in fact, I am nearly on my beam-ends [in financial difficulties]²⁰³ now’. He offered himself as resident magistrate for Taupo and Rotorua,

¹⁹⁹ Letter from Henry Dunbar Johnson, *Waikato Times*, 13 December 1890, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 13 July 1889, p. 2.

²⁰¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 24 November 1893, p. 4.

²⁰² Jackson and Russell to Phillip Bennett, 15 February 1890, Letterbook no. 42, p. 28, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Library.

²⁰³ Jonathon Green, *The Cassell Dictionary of Slang* (London, 1998), p. 872.

with general charge of the Sanatorium & Native affairs. I have held the position of Govt Agent, & have had some experience as a J.P., both at Rotorua and here. If you think I should be suitable for the position, I can only say that I should accept it most thankfully. The status as RM would render the position safer against future attacks on the part of

some of his Rotorua enemies.²⁰⁴ This appeal was unsuccessful, but after being 'occasionally employed in sittings of the Native Land Court, in 1892 he again received a permanent appointment in the Civil Service as clerk and interpreter for the Waikato district'.²⁰⁵ Or, as the *Observer* had it, 'somehow Dunbar managed to hold on to the tail of the Ministerial coat' and obtained another appointment.²⁰⁶ From mid-March 1894 he was registrar of the land court in Wellington.²⁰⁷ An Auckland newspaper which considered he had been an 'excellent' official was 'glad that he has received an advancement of rank'.²⁰⁸ In May 1896 he became a judge of this court.²⁰⁹ His work in this court has not been traced, but the *Observer*, which had commented favourably on his work as a judge,²¹⁰ wrote on his planned retirement, in late 1906,²¹¹ that he was

said to be a victim of his own good nature. Too kindly by disposition to refuse to hear any evidence offered by a native claimant, however shadowy his pretensions to a title, or to shut down the gabble of garrulous witnesses, he has prejudiced his health by long and laborious sittings, hence his retirement.²¹²

Johnson was aware of the falsehood of some evidence given in this court, commenting that he had to deal with 'Maori Roger Tichborne' cases,²¹³ a reference to a famous Victorian impersonation. In January 1907

²⁰⁴ H.D. Johnson to John Ballance, 8 February 1891, John Ballance Papers, MS-Copy-Micro-190, reel 1, folder 3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

²⁰⁵ *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

²⁰⁶ *Observer*, 28 March 1896, p. 19.

²⁰⁷ *New Zealand Gazette*, 11 February 1892, p. 297, 3 May 1894, p. 668.

²⁰⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 March 1894, p. 18.

²⁰⁹ *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 5.

²¹⁰ *Observer*, 20 May 1905, p. 4.

²¹¹ *King Country Chronicle*, 30 November 1906, p. 3.

²¹² *Observer*, 1 December 1906, p. 5; see also 19 January 1907, p. 4.

²¹³ *Observer*, 31 December 1904, p. 4.

he was appointed as Maori land purchase officer for Whanganui and Taranaki.²¹⁴ When he finally retired in 1910, the *Observer* wrote that he had ‘devoted a lifetime to native affairs’. He had a ‘valuable store of knowledge of Maori matters, besides an appreciation of the words and behaviour of the witnesses’, making him less dependent than other judges on interpreters and better able ‘to see through witness-box wiles’.²¹⁵ Once back on his farm at Te Aroha West, he published his reminiscences in the local newspaper.²¹⁶

LAST YEARS

In 1898 a notice published under Johnson’s name warned that anyone trespassing with a gun on his farm, named Mangauhenga, sections 6 and 7 and part of 5 Block X1 Aroha, would be prosecuted. Dogs shot, poison laid.²¹⁷ When writing to the press about mistakes in the dates for 1902 celebrations of the founding of New Zealand, he was still living on it.²¹⁸ In 1905 the rateable value of sections 55 to 57 Block 1X Aroha, 299 acres owned by his wife and children, was £900.²¹⁹

All their daughters married Pakeha, with the exception of their eldest daughter, Lavinia Claribel Moon, who married another ‘half-caste’, William More Moon.²²⁰ Moon was the son of William Moon and Titipo, a member of Ngati Koroki and Ngati Haua, and related to Te Uranga, the mother of King Koroki.²²¹ His father was another example of a Pakeha who fought

²¹⁴ *Observer*, 19 January 1907, p. 4.

²¹⁵ *Observer*, 12 February 1910, p. 17.

²¹⁶ H. Dunbar-Johnson, ‘Reminiscences’, *Te Aroha News*, 6 December 1910, p. 2, 8 December 1910, p. 3, 10 December 1910, p. 1, 15 December 1910, p. 4, 17 December 1910, p. 4, 23 February 1911, p. 2; others were published, but have been lost because the files of the newspaper are incomplete.

²¹⁷ Public Notice, *Te Aroha News*, 16 April 1898, p. 2.

²¹⁸ Letter from Henry Dunbar Johnson, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 November 1906, p. 28.

²¹⁹ Piako County Council, Rate Book 1905-1906, Waitoa Riding, no pagination, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

²²⁰ Marriage Certificates of Lavinia Claribel Johnson, 5 January 1895, 1895/334; Beatrice Eleanor Johnson, 4 June 1906, 1906/3950; Katherine Marjorie Johnson, 28 November 1906, 1906/5989, BDM; *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1895, p. 2.

²²¹ Angela Moon [a descendant] to Philip Hart, 30 July 2017, 31 July 2017, 1 August 2017, emails; ‘King Koroki’, Te Ara.govt.nz.

against Maori yet married one and was in close contact with many (not always to their advantage, as he assisted in the purchase of Maori land).²²² His children were brought up as Pakeha; indeed, one official recorded Lavinia's husband as being European.²²³ As the only child to remain at Te Aroha West, in 1911 Lavinia was gifted her mother's land there through 'natural love and affection'.²²⁴ Subsequently this block was 'Europeanized'.²²⁵ Also in 1911, her daughter Katherine Marjorie received permission to transfer 42 acres, Section 7A of Block IX, to Lavinia. She was married to a Pakeha, and the land 'was of no benefit to her and ... she desired to utilize the purchase-money (£336) in helping her husband to extend his bakery business'.²²⁶ Johnson supported this arrangement, for Lavinia was 'the only member of my family who has permanently occupied' this land. Katherine 'left home and came to reside in Auckland (where she obtained employment) long before she was married, and has no intention of going back to the land. She and her husband have taken a lease of a shop and bakehouse in Symonds Street, Auckland', using money provided by Lavinia. Although Katherine would be 'technically "landless" within the meaning of the Act', she owned her house, had an interest in 2 1/2 acres of freehold Maori land at Maungatautari, and was 'entitled to shares in other

²²² See William Moon, unpublished reminiscences, 1923, MS 551, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Library; *Waikato Times*, 21 November 1885, p. 3; *New Zealand Herald*, 22 January 1886, p. 6.

²²³ Ohinemuri Goldfields, Series 1, 11/206, 1911 entries, Maori Affairs Department, MA 13/546, ANZ-W.

²²⁴ Aroha Block X1 Sections 6, 7C, Southern Part of Section 5 Lot 3, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A102/2708; Aroha Block X1 Southern Part of Section 5 Lot 3, Section 7C, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A102/6472, ANZ-A; Aroha Block X1 Lots 1, 2 Section 5 (Southern Part), Lot 3 Section 5 (Southern Part), Section 6, Section 7 Lots A-C, H1628, Maori Land Court, Hamilton; Aroha Block X1 Section 7A, Maori Land Blocks, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 11/205, 11/206, ANZ-W.

²²⁵ Peter Gilchrist [a Te Aroha lawyer] to Registrar, Native Land Court Office, Auckland, 23 September 1912, 'Te Aroha: No. 1 file', H792, Maori Land Court, Hamilton.

²²⁶ W.H. Bowler (President, Waikato-Maniapoto to District Maori Land Board) to Under-Secretary, Native Department, 28 March 1911; decision of Cabinet, 3 April 1911, Maori Land Blocks, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 11/205, ANZ-W.

lands after her mother's death'.²²⁷ Lavinia's land was Europeanized in 1912.²²⁸

In December 1912, Johnson was one of the two conveners of the committee to organize the jubilee celebration of the arrival in Auckland in February 1863 of the 'Gertrude' and the 'Devonshire'.²²⁹ He was secretary and the main organiser of the committee that brought former passengers together at Takapuna, being noted as 'a bunch of perspiring energy on that occasion'.²³⁰ He continued to have this role in subsequent years;²³¹ an obituary stated that he went to much trouble to locate passengers and descendents of those who arrived on these ships.²³² Just before his death, passengers and descendents presented him with a silver salver 'suitably engraved' thanking him for arranging the reunions; hopes for his recovery were given with 'musical honours'.²³³

Johnson died in February 1924, aged 79, at the home of one of his daughters.²³⁴ He left an estate of £1,545 11s 10d to his children; 'my wife Rawinia Manukau Johnson is already provided'. His will requested that the names of his two deceased sons and a deceased grandson be inscribed on his tomb.²³⁵ (Why not the name of his deceased daughter also?) His widow died nine years later, aged 89, at the home of her eldest daughter on the Te Aroha West farm.²³⁶

CONCLUSION

Lavinia's life is hard to trace, because she was rarely mentioned in the newspapers; her large family must have been the main focus of her life for

²²⁷ H.D. Johnson to Under-Secretary, Native Department, 30 March 1911, Maori Land Blocks, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 11/205, ANZ-W.

²²⁸ Peter Gilchrist to Registrar, Maori Land Court, Auckland, 23 September 1912, Te Aroha: No. 1 file, H792, Maori Land Court, Hamilton.

²²⁹ *Observer*, 21 December 1912, p. 3.

²³⁰ *Observer*, 15 February 1913, p. 4; *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 February 1913, p. 19.

²³¹ For example, *Observer*, 2 February 1917, p. 9, 17 February 1917, p. 19, photograph 5.

²³² *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 5.

²³³ *Observer*, 16 February 1924, p. 5.

²³⁴ Death Certificate of Henry Dunbar Johnson, 14 February 1924, 1924/7559, BDM; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 1.

²³⁵ Probate of Henry Dunbar Johnson, Probates, BBAE 1569/17033, ANZ-A.

²³⁶ Deaths Certificate of Rawinia Manukau Johnson, 17 April 1933, 1933/43, BDM.

many years. For a time a midwife for Pakeha women, as a participant in a petty squabble with a Pakeha neighbour she revealed she was in no way subservient to Pakeha. Johnson's life was much more in the public eye, for after his early years as a pioneer storekeeper in largely Maori communities he held a succession of government posts which utilized his knowledge of Maori and their language. Not a Pakeha Maori in the original sense of this concept, his marriage to a Maori and close connection to many Maori for most of his life makes him an interesting case study of someone working in both Pakeha and Maori worlds.

Appendix

Figure 1: 'Blo' [William Blomfield], 'Ex Judge Dunbar Johnson an old pioneer', sketch included in 'We'll go Back to Thames! Thames! Thames! Faces and Forms of Re-unionists at the Gathering of Good Old Thamesites', Observer, 22 February 1913, p. 12.

