

RAWINIA AND HENRY DUNBAR JOHNSON

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

## RAWINIA AND HENRY DUNBAR JOHNSON

**Abstract:** *Rawinia (Lavinia to Pakeha) Manukau, of Ngāti 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 local iwi, despite his being protected by a rangātira. 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 rangātira related to his wife wished her to settle there. Rawinia obtained interests in several blocks of land in Ohinemuri, and her husband also acquired some land. He prospected Karangahake mountain from 1866 onwards, despite Māori opposition, and in 1875 and the following year actively mined there, unprofitably; Rawinia was not involved with this field, but did (as Lavinia) acquire interests in two claims when the Te Aroha one opened.*

*A petty squabble with a Thames neighbour resulted in Rawinia telling the latter to go back to England – she was feisty in defending her heritage. Through his marriage and close contact with Māori, Johnson came to understand and admire the Māori language, leading to his being appointed a licensed interpreter in 1872. After his years in Paeroa, in 1879 he went to Wellington to work in the Native Office, leaving his wife and family behind for a while. She was employed by Pakeha both as a nurse and midwife.*

*In 1885 Johnson was appointed to oversee the development of Rotorua, where he attempted to educate Māori children 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 1890s he obtained more official positions, and from 1896 to 1910 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 Māori in the original sense but was accepted by Māori when he was living in Paeroa and as a judge tried to be kind to poverty-stricken Māori, although in time he viewed Māori as becoming lazy compared with those he had lived amongst during his first two decades in New Zealand.*

Only 19 women held interests in their own names in Te Aroha mines. Of these, 15 were Pakeha, three were Māori (Ema Lipsey, Rawinia Johnson,<sup>1</sup> and Mereā Wikiriwhi), and Alice Grey Dearle was a half-caste.<sup>2</sup> All of these four were married (unofficially in the case of Mereā 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. Rawinia Johnson took out a miner's right (as Lavinia, the Anglicised version of her name) on the opening day of the Te Aroha goldfield, and with other Māori was a shareholder in two Tui claims in December 1880,<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

## FAMILY

Rawinia Manukau was born at Waiuku in 1847 to Henare Manukau and a Māori mother whose name was not recorded on her death certificate,<sup>5</sup> indicating that whichever descendant provided the information did not know it. Whakapapa constructed by other descendants record her mother's name as being Te Kotutu and reveal that Rawinia had two sisters: Heiraukawa Parewehi and Roka.<sup>6</sup> In a letter about Māori place names, her husband, Henry Dunbar Johnson, wrote that Rawinia was 'the eldest daughter of Henare Manukau, a chief of the Ngāti Huakatoa branch of the

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<sup>1</sup> As Rawinia preferred to use this name rather than the English transliteration of Lavinia, in this revised version of this paper Rawinia is used throughout.

<sup>2</sup> See papers on these women.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 4 January 1883, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Death Certificate of Rawinia Manukau Johnson, 17 April 1933, 1933/43; Birth Certificate of Katherine Marjorie Johnson, 2 June 1877, 1877/6381, BDM.

<sup>6</sup> 'Kawai: Nga Uir o Ue-rata' and 'Ancestors of Henare Manukau', provided by Angela Moon to Philip Hart, 7 January 2023, email.

descendants of Hoturoa, the captain of the Tainui canoe, and connected with Ngāti Mahuta, Ngāti Koroki, and other Waikato Kawhia tribes'.<sup>7</sup>

According to Rawinia's statement in a petition to parliament in 1913 concerning her interests in land, her mother's name was Makuru (Rawinia never referred to her as Te Kotutu), who had been born at Hamua in Taranaki and was a member of Ngāti Ruanui.<sup>8</sup> Makuru 'was taken away to Waikato while quite young', where she married Henare Manukau, who belonged to Ngāti Mahuta and Ngāti Koroki.<sup>9</sup> In 1910, in giving evidence about her claim to part-ownership of the Moerangi block, in the hills to the north-east of Kawhia Harbour, she based her claim on being a member of the Ngāti Kiriwai hapu of Ngāti Whare and traced the whakapapa relevant to this land:

Mahange, who had two wives, Kiriwai and Wharewaiata.  
 Tupana  
 Rawhangai, who married Tapane  
 Te Putu  
 Hekenui  
 Taiha, who married Raunikau  
 Huhikawa  
 Henare [Manukau, her father].

After listing seven places (two of them in the Rohe Potae, otherwise the King Country) where 'my ancestors and elders' had lived, she then listed three other sites close to Kawhia Harbour. 'These are the only kaingas that I know of where my elders lived. Several of our dead are buried at Te Kopua',<sup>10</sup> in the Waipa district.

Rawinia was also a member of the Uriwha hapu of Ngāti Tamatera.<sup>11</sup> In 1890, when she gave her iwi as Ngāti Hua,<sup>12</sup> she provided details of her

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<sup>7</sup> Letter from H. Dunbar Johnson, *New Zealand Herald*, 24 September 1921, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Petition of Rawinia Manukau Johnson and Te Weurengi, 1913, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1/1106, 1913/2124, ANZ-W; Tony Sole, *Ngāti Ruanui: A history* (Wellington, 2005), p. 394.

<sup>9</sup> Petition of Rawinia Manukau Johnson and Te Weurengi, 1913, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1/1106, 1913/3124, ANZ-W.

<sup>10</sup> Maori Land Court, Mercer Minute Book no. 14, p. 42.

<sup>11</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 14, p. 186.

<sup>12</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, p. 76.

father's illustrious whakapapa when applying on behalf of her hapu, Ngāti Huakatoa, for interests in the Hoeotainui block:

I can state my right by ancestry – Huakatoa is my ancestor -  
 Mahuta  
 Uerata  
 Huakatoa  
 Mauwi (m)  
 Nuku (m)  
 Tuhanga (f)  
 Punatoto  
 Kahupourera  
 Henare Manukau  
 Rawinia Manukau<sup>13</sup>

(Kahupourera was her father's mother.<sup>14</sup>) Also in that hearing, she gave some details of her early life. During the Waikato War, she moved with her hapu from Waitawheta pa (near Waihi) to Hoeotainui, in what would become the Piako district. 'I was a big girl then – a man would have called me woman then – I only remained about six months at Hoeotainui – my old people lived there'.<sup>15</sup> To be precise, her father's 'mother and father lived at Whareroa, which was 'about a hundred yards from' Hoeotainui pa.<sup>16</sup> At the time of the battle at Rangiriri in November 1863 and immediately afterwards she lived at several places (most of them not now locatable) near Hoeotainui that were later within the area confiscated by the government. Her father lived at the Hoeotainui pa after the war ended, and presumably she did as well but this was not recorded.<sup>17</sup>

On 12 November 1868, at the age of 21, Lavinia Winnie Manukau, as her name was recorded, married Henry Dunbar Johnson,<sup>18</sup> a 23-year-old storekeeper, in All Saints Church, Auckland.<sup>19</sup> He had been born in London

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<sup>13</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, p. 195.

<sup>14</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, p. 214.

<sup>15</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, pp. 197-198.

<sup>16</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, p. 214.

<sup>17</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, pp. 213-214.

<sup>18</sup> For a photograph of him in old age, see *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

on 23 December 1844.<sup>20</sup> His father, John, a government official, had educated his son at ‘various private schools’. First employed by a London marine insurance broker and later by Lloyds, he ‘was afterwards employed by a cousin in the bookselling, stationery, and printing business’.<sup>21</sup>

Official marriages between Māori and Pakeha were rare at this time, and her ancestry was ignored by newspapers, although possibly hinted at in a comment in the *Observer* when 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’.<sup>22</sup> Presumably she was the woman standing beside him in a murky photograph captioned ‘Dunbar’s choice’ in a series of photographs about the 1919 general election.<sup>23</sup> She was commonly known as Rawinia Manukau Johnson.<sup>24</sup>

Their ‘close association’, as the *Observer* put it, had resulted in the birth, three months after their marriage, of Henry Dunbar Paeroa, on 6 February 1869.<sup>25</sup> Subsequently, 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 officially registered and all the children were baptized into the Church of England.<sup>26</sup> 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, Henry Dunbar Paeroa, died in December 1887, and another son, William Ernest Digby, in

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<sup>20</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10; Death Certificate of Henry Dunbar Johnson, 14 February 1924, 1924/7559, BDM.

<sup>22</sup> *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> *Observer*, 5 May 1917, p. 19, photograph 7.

<sup>24</sup> For example, Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, 195; 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.

<sup>25</sup> Birth Certificate of Henry Dunbar Paeroa Johnson, 6 February 1869, 1869/12647, BDM.

<sup>26</sup> 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.

September 1891.<sup>27</sup> Henry Dunbar Paeroa's flattering obituary omitted to mention that he was a 'half-caste', to use 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 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.<sup>28</sup>

Johnson ensured that his children received a good education. Describing himself as taking 'a lively interest' in education, he was secretary of the Ohinemuri school committee and, later, chairman of the Newtown (Wellington) and Rotorua committees.<sup>29</sup> One of his daughters, when aged 15 years, was the oldest pupil at Te Aroha,<sup>30</sup> presumably because she struggled with her schoolwork. Recalled as being 'always interested in education matters', he was 'a great advocate for pure English'.<sup>31</sup> He also supported military training in schools.<sup>32</sup>

#### JOHNSON AT THE COROMANDEL GOLDFIELD

Arriving in Auckland on the 'Devonshire' on 7 February 1863, he received the usual land grant,<sup>33</sup> but immediately went to the Coromandel goldfield, where he ran Edward Wood's<sup>34</sup> Junction Store, at Driving Creek, which had been established in the previous year.<sup>35</sup> In addition he 'was

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<sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 December 1887, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 143.

<sup>30</sup> Te Aroha School, Class List, November 1888, YCAF 4135/24a, ANZ-A.

<sup>31</sup> *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 5; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 143.

<sup>32</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Register of Land Grantees 1862-1863, Land Order A1665, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 4115/1b, ANZ-A.

<sup>34</sup> For Wood's life, see *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 September 1905, p. 22.

<sup>35</sup> Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 1 nos. 3, 6, 8, ANZ-A.

engaged in ... mining and battery work'.<sup>36</sup> In late 1910 and early 1911, his reminiscences were 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

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<sup>36</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142.

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 Ngātīmaru 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. *Esk*<sup>37</sup> 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, sometime 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.<sup>38</sup>

These events were the basis of the bland 1906 comment that he 'had some exciting experiences among the turbulent Maori tribes'.<sup>39</sup>

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 on the verandah after he had locked the store before going to the beach.<sup>40</sup> Wood also lived in Coromandel for at least part of the time, for he owned the little-worked Junction claim,<sup>41</sup> and in April 1864 was

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<sup>37</sup> Recorded as 'Brisk'; for proof that it was the 'Esk', see James Cowan, *The New Zealand Wars* (Wellington, 1922), vol. 1, p. 321.

<sup>38</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 6 December 1910, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 November 1906, p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> 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.

<sup>41</sup> 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.

assaulted outside one of the hotels.<sup>42</sup> Two years later, Wood claimed £360 in compensation for losses during 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.<sup>43</sup>

In September 1864, Johnson ‘removed to Auckland, under engagement as town traveller’ to an aerated water manufacturer.<sup>44</sup>

### AN EARLY SETTLER AT PAEROA

Johnson would describe himself as ‘the first white resident on the block which is now the site of the flourishing township of Paeroa’.<sup>45</sup> In his own words, he ‘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 described as being ‘just above Ohinemuri’.<sup>46</sup> In December that year he gave his address as ‘Te Paeroa, Ohinemuri’.<sup>47</sup> 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

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<sup>42</sup> Coromandel Magistrate’s Court, Criminal Cases Notebook 1863-1868, hearing of 29 April 1864, BACL 14442/1b, ANZ-A.

<sup>43</sup> 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.

<sup>44</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142.

<sup>45</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 24 September 1878, p. 3, 21 May 1897, p. 2; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 15 June 1910, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> 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.

<sup>47</sup> 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.

before the Lower Thames opened' for mining, in August 1867.<sup>48</sup> Wood's riverside house had a jetty for the river trade.<sup>49</sup>

(Although he claimed to be the pioneer of Paeroa, since about 1841 the Thorp family had lived on their Belmont farm near the junction of the Ohinemuri and Waihou rivers, near the site of the future Paeroa.<sup>50</sup>)

Johnson remembered 'some exciting times, among a large Maori population, consisting principally of Waikato and East Coast rebel refugees'.<sup>51</sup>

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

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<sup>48</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1910, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 November 1868, p. 22.

<sup>50</sup> 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.

<sup>51</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142.

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 responsible for the wounds. My old native guardian (Paraone Te Maupu)<sup>52</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup>

As his first child was named Henry Dunbar Paeroa,<sup>54</sup> it is likely that he met his future wife there. In December 1866, he wrote to Thomas Samuel Grace, a missionary,<sup>55</sup> conveying Te Hira's<sup>56</sup> 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.<sup>57</sup>

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

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<sup>52</sup> 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.

<sup>53</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1910, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Birth Certificate of Henry Dunbar Paeroa Johnson, 6 February 1869, 1869/12647, BDM.

<sup>55</sup> See *Bay of Plenty Times*, 1 May 1879, p. 3, 6 May 1879, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> For this raNgātira'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.

<sup>57</sup> 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.

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. 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,<sup>58</sup> 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].<sup>59</sup> 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 Kokako<sup>60</sup> 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,<sup>61</sup> thefts requiring both Kingites and Queenites to work together to discover the culprits. For unstated reasons, Johnson did not join this venture.<sup>62</sup> 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

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<sup>58</sup> See advertisement, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 February 1877, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 5 ed. (Oxford, 1964), pp. 1257-1258.

<sup>60</sup> See Thames Correspondent, *Daily Southern Cross*, 26 June 1866, p. 4; *Waikato Times*, 19 August 1873, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> For Albert John Nicholas, see paper on Maori land in Hauraki.

<sup>62</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1910, p. 4.

not been bad' and he would probably be allowed to stay.<sup>63</sup> He was, and in the following November stated that he was the only storekeeper at Ohinemuri; during the past three years he had noted traces of gold.<sup>64</sup> 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.<sup>65</sup>

In late January 1869, Te Hira told both Wood and an unnamed Pakeha living on his land to leave.<sup>66</sup> 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.<sup>67</sup> On the first attempt, by three Pakeha in late 1869, Maori women threw many of their surveying pegs into the river.<sup>68</sup> Mere Kuru, Te Hira's sister and a leading opponent of settlement,<sup>69</sup> 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'.<sup>70</sup> 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.<sup>71</sup>

## INVOLVED IN THAMES MINING

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<sup>63</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 March 1868, p. 19.

<sup>64</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 November 1868, p. 22; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

<sup>65</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1910, p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 January 1869, p. 10.

<sup>67</sup> 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.

<sup>68</sup> James Stitchbury, 'The Opening of the Upper Thames. A Curious Incident', *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 March 1890, p. 8.

<sup>69</sup> 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.

<sup>70</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 February 1870, p. 4.

<sup>71</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 25 December 1869, p. 5.

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.<sup>72</sup> When he married in November 1868, his pregnant bride had spent the previous three months living at Mount Saint Mary, at Ponsonby in Auckland, whereas he had spent only five days there.<sup>73</sup> 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.<sup>74</sup>

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.<sup>75</sup> He invested in only one mining company, and in December 1873 was threatened with the forfeiture of his 32 shares in it if a call remained unpaid.<sup>76</sup> 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.<sup>77</sup>

#### LIVING AT PAEROA BEFORE 1875

At the start of 1870, Wood's surveyor sent timber for making pegs to the junction of the Ohinemuri and Waihou rivers, from whence Johnson and Peter Austin<sup>78</sup> were to take it to peg out the site of their intended store and a potential township. Johnson described what happened next:

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<sup>72</sup> 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 no. 10, p. 63; H.D. Johnson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 July 1920, Mines Department, MD 20, 21/1, ANZ-W.

<sup>73</sup> 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.

<sup>74</sup> Birth Certificate of Henry Dunbar Paeroa Johnson, 6 February 1869, 1869/12647, BDM.

<sup>75</sup> 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.

<sup>76</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 15 December 1873, p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 13 December 1910, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> 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.

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.<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup>

In February, after returning to Thames, Johnson complained to Sir Donald McLean, the Native Minister, about thus being ordered off the land for having helped 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”<sup>81</sup> 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

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<sup>79</sup> 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.

<sup>80</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, ‘Reminiscences’, *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1910, p. 4.

<sup>81</sup> 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.

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.<sup>82</sup>

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; eventually, five years, later the government awarded him £15.<sup>83</sup>

In August 1870, a visitor recorded his impressions of the site of the proposed settlement:

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 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’ once given permission to survey.<sup>84</sup> (Wood had sold his business early that year to Henry Samuel Andrews, a Mangare farmer,<sup>85</sup> who did not retain it for long. After Wood took back his store, he was still operating it in December 1871; in the following May there was a reference to ‘Wood’s Landing’, but he left the district well before 1875.<sup>86</sup>)

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<sup>82</sup> H. Dunbar Johnson to Donald McLean, 11 February 1870, McLean Papers, MS-Copy-Micro-0535-062, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>83</sup> Petitions, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1870/13, ANZ-W; *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 October 1875, p. 10.

<sup>84</sup> ‘ZZZ’, ‘A Holiday at Ohinemuri’, *Thames Advertiser*, 31 August 1870, p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 December 1870, p. 9, 6 May 1871, p. 18, 20 February 1875, p. 10, 22 July 1876, p. 23.

<sup>86</sup> 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'.<sup>87</sup> 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 storehouse; 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.<sup>88</sup>

Rihitoto Mataia, wife of William Grey Nicholls,<sup>89</sup> stated in her 1878 evidence concerning 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'.<sup>90</sup> 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.<sup>91</sup> 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

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

<sup>87</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142.

<sup>88</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1910, p. 4.

<sup>89</sup> See paper on their lives.

<sup>90</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 11, p. 41.

<sup>91</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 11, p. 45.

the Court'.<sup>92</sup> 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',<sup>93</sup> meaning half-caste, Johnson's eldest son.

## LAND

Like the other owners of Ohinemuri, Rawinia (incorrectly recorded as 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.<sup>94</sup> In 1878 she and her husband were jointly granted the Hararahi No. 2 Block, of 50 acres.<sup>95</sup>

In 1890 Rawinia gave evidence for the only time in the land court, when Ngāti Hua sought interests in the Hoeotainui block.<sup>96</sup> She was reluctant to do so, and stepped aside when a senior rangatira, Piripi Whanatangi, arrived to take over the case.<sup>97</sup> She explained that 'I don't understand maps' (a common problem for many Māori giving evidence) and said 'I prefer the next witness', Piripi Whanatangi, 'to give all the genealogies'.<sup>98</sup> (Piripi Whanatangi, described three years earlier as 'chief of the Maungatautari natives', gave evidence in many land court hearings.<sup>99</sup>) She claimed on behalf of Ngāti Hua, Ngāti Mahuta, Ngāti Ringatahi, 'and

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<sup>92</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 11, pp. 58-59.

<sup>93</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 11, p. 59.

<sup>94</sup> 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.

<sup>95</sup> Land Information New Zealand, Memorial of Ownership of Hararahi No. 2 (with plan), ABWN, W 5278, 8910, box 25, no. 3569, ANZ-W; Nominal Primary Index no. 3, folios 191, 646, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.

<sup>96</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, p. 195.

<sup>97</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, pp. 76, 213; no. 25, p. 96.

<sup>98</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, pp. 195, 213.

<sup>99</sup> See *Waikato Times*, 19 August 1873, p. 2, 3 March 1887, p. 2; *Auckland Star*, 24 October 1887, p. 5; *New Zealand Herald*, 18 May 1892, p. 3.

the descendants of Ngautoka – N. Tangaroawha and N. Koura'.<sup>100</sup> To prove her claims on the grounds of conquest, ancestry and occupation, she gave details of quarrels and battles over nine generations.<sup>101</sup> In its judgment, the court dismissed the arguments put forward by Ngāti Hua's representatives: they 'fail in all the points necessary to sustain their claim'.<sup>102</sup>

In 1913 Rawinia, along with another woman, Te Weurangi, petitioned parliament for a rehearing of the succession to the interests allotted in interests in the Hamua Block, near Hawera in Taranaki. She explained that the owners of this block were the brothers Kaiti and Tauwhiripuka and their sister Makuru, her mother. Rawinia had recently visited Taranaki for the first time and met Te Weurangi, who 'desires to duly return the interest which has been wrongly awarded to her'. She had 'guided' Rawinia to the land court office in Whanganui 'and duly explained to the Official there present her desire that the succession order should be corrected, and the said Official replied, "Too late" '. Johnson, who had investigated the case, was told by a senior politician that the only solution was to submit this petition. The department agreed that Rawinia had a just claim and after an investigation she was allotted an interest.<sup>103</sup>

Through Rawinia, the family had interests in several blocks in the Ohinemuri and Te Aroha districts. Except for Rawinia's land, all Ngāti Rahiri reserves were on the eastern side of the Waihou River.<sup>104</sup> 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'.<sup>105</sup> In 1880 the land court listed Rawinia, again recorded as a half-caste, as an owner of the small Aorangi Block in Ohinemuri.<sup>106</sup> Two years later, she became an owner of the Moanakapiti Block, near Paeroa.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, pp. 83-84.

<sup>101</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, pp. 195-197, 212-214.

<sup>102</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 25, p. 101.

<sup>103</sup> Petition of Rawinia Manukau Johnson and Te Weurangi, 1913, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 1106, 1913/3124, ANZ-W; Native Affairs Committee, *AJHR*, 1913, I-3, pp. 15, 34; Aroha Block XI Lot 4 of South Portion of Sections 5 and 7C, Block Files, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A102/6472, ANZ-A.

<sup>104</sup> 'Theodolite', 'On the Survey of Te Aroha', *Te Aroha News*, 18 February 1911, p. 3.

<sup>105</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 6 July 1882, p. 928.

<sup>106</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 13, p. 233.

<sup>107</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 14, p. 186.

In 1914, despite selling or transferring some of her land to her daughter Lavinia Claribel Moon, Rawinia retained a one-third interest in 20 acres in the parish of Whangamarino, a third-interest by 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.<sup>108</sup>

In January 1868, Johnson received a Crown grant in an unspecified district.<sup>109</sup> In 1877 he was granted a 50-acre agricultural lease near Paeroa,<sup>110</sup> but in 1880, when residents wanted a cemetery, they applied to obtain 'the Hummocks', 50 acres owned by Johnson that were 'unsuitable for cultivation'.<sup>111</sup> If this was the same property, the residents had to find other land. In 1885 a surveyor noted that no improvements had been made on this 'Rough Land close to Paeroa'.<sup>112</sup> Twelve years later Johnson obtained the freehold.<sup>113</sup> In 1878, he was appointed trustee for his eldest son 'during his minority, for property situated in the Ohinemuri district'.<sup>114</sup> 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.<sup>115</sup> In 1893 he owned Block X111 Section 12 Ohinemuri, and in 1909 a block in Taupo township.<sup>116</sup> In 1908 he was recorded as the owner of over 25 acres, part of Hararahi No. 2, valued at £255.<sup>117</sup> When he died he

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<sup>108</sup> Aroha Block X1 Lot 4 of South Portion of Sections 5 and 7C, Block Files, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A102/6472, ANZ-A.

<sup>109</sup> *Daily Southern Cross*, 22 January 1868, p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Agricultural Leases, Ohinemuri, 1875-1893, folio 71, ZAAP 13784/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>111</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 15 May 1880, p. 3.

<sup>112</sup> J.A. Cheal to S. Percy Smith, 15 January 1885, Ohinemuri Agricultural Leases, Section 156, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1888/128, ANZ-W.

<sup>113</sup> 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, BAAL 14458/1b, ANZ-A.

<sup>114</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 December 1878, p. 8.

<sup>115</sup> *A Return of the Freeholders of New Zealand ... 1882* (Wellington, 1884), p. H 15.

<sup>116</sup> Nominal Primary Index, vol. 3, folio 646, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.

<sup>117</sup> Ohinemuri County Council, Paeroa Riding, 31 March 1908, folio 121, Valuation Department, BBBC A150/653, ANZ-A.

left his children land at Taupo, Rotorua, Waikowhai on the Manukau Harbour, and his home in Mount Roskill, Auckland.<sup>118</sup>

### RACIAL CONFLICT

In the 1870s, his family owned a house at Karaka Creek, Shortland, Thames.<sup>119</sup> 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,<sup>120</sup> was charged with striking Rawinia ‘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]<sup>121</sup> 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

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<sup>118</sup> Probate of H.D. Johnson, Probates, BBAE 1569/17033, ANZ-A.

<sup>119</sup> Thames Electoral Roll, August 1873-September 1874, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFM 8183, 3015/73, ANZ-A.

<sup>120</sup> See *Auckland Star*, 12 January 1932, p. 3, 14 January 1932, pp. 3, 8.

<sup>121</sup> Marriage Certificate of James Stichbury, 1865/4175, BDM.

water over him, and attempting to strike him with a piece of wood. – This action was dismissed.<sup>122</sup>

Despite this prompt from her unfriendly neighbours, the family did not return to Ohinemuri permanently. Although daughters were born there in July 1873 and August 1876, in May 1876 they were living at Karaka Creek, at Thames.<sup>123</sup> When in Ohinemuri, they lived on their land at Hararahi.<sup>124</sup>

### LICENSED INTERPRETER

After Johnson was licensed as an interpreter in April 1872, he advertised his services in the Thames press.<sup>125</sup> In this role he ‘had a good deal to do with the dealings with the Maori owners of land around Ohinemuri’.<sup>126</sup> As an example, in early 1875 an ‘excursionist’ saw Alfred Joshua Thorp, a surveyor and local farmer,<sup>127</sup> and Johnson, along ‘with several Maori lads, laying out the township’ of Paeroa.<sup>128</sup> 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.<sup>129</sup> When a new track was blazed from Paeroa to Waitekauri, he was employed ‘to inform and get, the consent, of whatever native, or natives, the ground belonged to’.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Magistrate’s Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 27 January 1873, p. 3.

<sup>123</sup> 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.

<sup>124</sup> Birth Certificate of Katherine Marjorie Johnson, 2 June 1877, 1877/6381, BDM.

<sup>125</sup> 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.

<sup>126</sup> *Observer*, 1 December 1906, p. 5.

<sup>127</sup> See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 856; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 30 December 1912, p. 3.

<sup>128</sup> ‘An Excursionist’, ‘Ohinemuri’, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 January 1875, p. 3.

<sup>129</sup> H.D. Johnson to J.M. McLaren, 13 January 1876, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFM 8180, 114/76, ANZ-A.

<sup>130</sup> J.M. McLaren to Reader Wood, 1 March 1876, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFM 8180, 501/76, ANZ-A.

Johnson was also in close contact with George Thomas Wilkinson,<sup>131</sup> 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.<sup>132</sup> In 1881, when Wilkinson was having a particularly complicated private life, he wrote several long private letters to Johnson.<sup>133</sup>

### THE OHINEMURI GOLDFIELD

Johnson claimed to have done 'a little' prospecting at Ohinemuri in 1866.<sup>134</sup> 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. Not 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.<sup>135</sup> He managed to prospect 'without the knowledge of the natives'.<sup>136</sup>

When making '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'.<sup>137</sup> His discovery was above the Prospectors' Claim, 'where he says he got gold some time ago'.<sup>138</sup> In selecting and naming this ground he had been attracted by the colour of the quartz and because the formation was similar to that at Coromandel,

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<sup>131</sup> See paper on Merea Wikiriwhi and George Thomas Wilkinson.

<sup>132</sup> G.T. Wilkinson, diary, entry for 19 January 1904, University of Waikato Library.

<sup>133</sup> For example, G.T. Wilkinson, diary, entry for 14 March 1881, University of Waikato Library.

<sup>134</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 24 September 1878, p. 3.

<sup>135</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 10 December 1910, p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> H.D. Johnson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 July 1920, Mines Department, MD 20, 21/1, ANZ-W.

<sup>137</sup> H.D. Johnson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 July 1920, Mines Department, MD 20, 21/1, ANZ-W; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

<sup>138</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 9 March 1875, p. 3.

Kuranui Hill, and ‘the old Shotover’: ‘a kindly sandstone with quartz leaders’.<sup>139</sup> ‘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’,<sup>140</sup> as their manager. Details of their mining is lost to history because this page of his reminiscences is torn,<sup>141</sup> 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.<sup>142</sup> Subsequently, the Golden Knob became part of the very successful Woodstock mine.<sup>143</sup>

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’.<sup>144</sup> In 1910, when John Neves<sup>145</sup> died, Johnson described how Neves’ 1875 discovery had prompted a rush; he was pleased to have prevented the postal service from changing the name of Nevesville into Neavesville.<sup>146</sup> 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 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

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<sup>139</sup> 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.

<sup>140</sup> See *Thames Advertiser*, 30 April 1874, p. 2, 11 February 1876, p. 3, 1 April 1878, p. 3, 16 September 1890, p. 2.

<sup>141</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, ‘Reminiscences’, *Te Aroha News*, 10 December 1910, p. 1.

<sup>142</sup> 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.

<sup>143</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

<sup>144</sup> H.D. Johnson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 July 1920, Mines Department, MD 20, 21/1, ANZ-W.

<sup>145</sup> See *Thames Advertiser*, 4 June 1875, 3, Warden’s Court, 16 June 1875, p. 3, 19 June 1875, p. 3.

<sup>146</sup> 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.

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.<sup>147</sup>

Ten years later he commented: 'Although my original selection was thus justified, it was not my luck to be in it'.<sup>148</sup>

In August 1875, he became an owner of a Waitekauri claim.<sup>149</sup> Because of his knowledge of this area he was one of four men chosen in October by a Paeroa meeting to blaze a trail for carting machinery.<sup>150</sup> In the following year, he acquired shares in the All Nations Company, which mined at Karangahake, and was elected a director.<sup>151</sup> He also had shares in the Banyan Company, which mined at Te Ranga, being appointed its manager in February.<sup>152</sup> When the mining inspector discovered that little work had been done by September, he was told 'to get the claim to work'. After receiving another warning five months later, Johnson forfeited it in March.<sup>153</sup> At Waitekauri, in 1876 he had shares in one company and was a director of another.<sup>154</sup> His last involvement in Ohinemuri mining was as secretary of the Ohinemuri Prospectors' Association, for only four months, in 1878.<sup>155</sup>

## STOREKEEPER

After Ohinemuri was opened to settlement in 1875, Johnson opened a 'bookselling and stationery business' as well as being an agent for a Thames

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<sup>147</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 13 December 1910, p. 2.

<sup>148</sup> H.D. Johnson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 July 1920, Mines Department, MD 20, 21/1, ANZ-W.

<sup>149</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Ohinemuri Claims 1875, folio 58, BBAV 11568/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>150</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 8 October 1875, p. 3.

<sup>151</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 April 1876, p. 309; *Thames Advertiser*, 7 April 1876, p. 2.

<sup>152</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 15 June 1876, p. 419; *Thames Advertiser*, 3 February 1876, p. 3.

<sup>153</sup> Thames Warden's Court, Report Book of the Mining Inspector 1876-1878, folio 12, BACL 14451/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>154</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 August 1876, p. 635; *Thames Advertiser*, 29 August 1876, p. 3.

<sup>155</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 3 May 1878, p. 3, 3 September 1878, p. 3.

chemist (he described himself in 1877 as a 'druggist').<sup>156</sup> In 1877, writing as 'our own correspondent' in Ohinemuri for the *Thames Advertiser*,<sup>157</sup> 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 cashbox 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 place<sup>158</sup> 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.<sup>159</sup>

In giving evidence at the trial, 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

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<sup>156</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1 p. 142; Police Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 25 July 1877, p. 3.

<sup>157</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 19 May 1876, p. 3.

<sup>158</sup> See Police Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 25 July 1877, p. 3, and paper on his life.

<sup>159</sup> 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.<sup>160</sup> 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.<sup>161</sup> 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 was given of his active involvement in the police search, another witness described how the shop window had been 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 living at Paeroa, and that he spent his evenings at the hotel, about five chains from his shop,<sup>162</sup> 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.<sup>163</sup>

Reporting 'for a number of years' as the Ohinemuri correspondent for the *Thames Advertiser* and *New Zealand Herald*,<sup>164</sup> Johnson was appointed the Ohinemuri agent for the former in May 1875.<sup>165</sup> A leading figure in the district, in April 1872 he was secretary of the Ohinemuri Races.<sup>166</sup> Four

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<sup>160</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>161</sup> See paper on William Nicholls.

<sup>162</sup> Police Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 25 July 1877, p. 3.

<sup>163</sup> Supreme Court, *New Zealand Herald*, 3 October 1877, p. 3.

<sup>164</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10; *Observer*, 28 March 1896, p. 19; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 142.

<sup>165</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 21 May 1875, p. 2.

<sup>166</sup> *Thames Guardian and Mining Record*, 17 April 1872, p. 2.

years later he was elected to the first school committee,<sup>167</sup> and re-elected two years later, when he became its secretary.<sup>168</sup> When appointed both secretary and treasurer in 1879, the committee decided to pay him £25 a year for his services. The secretary of the Auckland Board of Education felt this 'would be a very dangerous precedent. From the number of letters which Mr Johnson now wrote, it would be terrible to think what he would do if he were paid'. Heeding his warning, the board 'resolved not to approve of the expenditure'.<sup>169</sup>

In 1877 he was a member of a delegation of agricultural settlers seeking government aid.<sup>170</sup> He also assisted to register local births, deaths, and marriages.<sup>171</sup> The following year, in an election for the Ohinemuri Riding of the Thames County Council he seconded the nomination of another Paeroa storekeeper.<sup>172</sup> 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 as secretary and one of the two sergeants, later becoming a staff-sergeant.<sup>173</sup> As another indication of his status in the community, in 1879 he helped to drive the first pile of the Paeroa bridge.<sup>174</sup>

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.<sup>175</sup> 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

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<sup>167</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 9 May 1876, p. 3.

<sup>168</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1878, p. 2, 7 March 1878, p. 3.

<sup>169</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 8 February 1879, p. 6.

<sup>170</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 6 February 1877, p. 3.

<sup>171</sup> 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.

<sup>172</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 1 November 1878, p. 3.

<sup>173</sup> 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.

<sup>174</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 18 March 1879, p. 3.

<sup>175</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 26 June 1879, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 August 1879, p. 1113.

language was marked'.<sup>176</sup> At this meeting 'he first attracted the notice of a Minister. His smartness as a man did it', according to the *Observer*,<sup>177</sup> 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 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'.<sup>178</sup>

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.<sup>179</sup> In 1881 Rawinia was working as a midwife in Paeroa, in September being forced to sue one client who failed to

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<sup>176</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

<sup>177</sup> *Observer*, 28 March 1896, p. 19.

<sup>178</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 28 June 1879, p. 2.

<sup>179</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 30 June 1879, p. 2, 27 February 1880, p. 2.

pay for her services.<sup>180</sup> Her occupation was given as nurse as well as midwife,<sup>181</sup> but no details of her work in either capacity have been traced. Because he retained land there, Johnson remained an Ohinemuri ratepayer,<sup>182</sup> and occasionally revisited Paeroa. In 1891, for instance, as a Justice of the Peace he sat on the Paeroa Bench.<sup>183</sup>

Johnson retained fond memories of his years at Paeroa. In 1917, he recounted one of what must have been many stories about life there:

The mistake made by an Auckland hotelkeeper who opened his bar on Sunday under the impression that it was Monday, has awakened memories of similar slips made in the early days. One was recorded last week. Mr Dunbar Johnson recalls another that occurred at Paeroa fifty years ago, when Paeroa was in its infancy. The storekeeper's books were the only available record at the days of the week, and the storekeeper somehow skipped a day and solemnly closed his store on Saturday. A customer happened along and demanded a pound of candles, but the selling of candles on Sunday was against the spirit of storekeeping in those days. The customer contended that the day was Saturday, but the records were against him, and the storekeeper, unconvinced, closed the argument by giving the wayfarer a gift of candles. Next day the store was open, and the few inhabitants were active in the fields. Then along came some travellers dressed in their Sunday best, on their way to church. Paeroa was convinced it had made a mistake, the shutters went up on the store, and there was rest for the remainder of the day.<sup>184</sup>

Could this unnamed storekeeper have been Johnson himself?

## 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

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<sup>180</sup> Paeroa Magistrate's Court, Plaintiff Book 1881-1896, 25/1881, BACL 13745/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>181</sup> Paeroa Magistrate's Court, Plaintiff Book 1881-1896, Judgment Summons 4/1881, BACL 13745/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>182</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 June 1886, p. 3.

<sup>183</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10; *Thames Advertiser*, 5 March 1891, p. 2.

<sup>184</sup> Mercutio, 'Local Gossip', *New Zealand Herald*, 24 February 1917, Supplement, p. 1.

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'. Later, because of a demand for business sites, the warden, Harry Kenrick,<sup>185</sup> proposed removing nine acres from the reserve to be used 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.<sup>186</sup>

Because of the loss of the relevant files, Johnson's account cannot be confirmed; and Kenrick did not need his prompting to extend rather than to contract the size of the domain.<sup>187</sup>

## ROTORUA

In Wellington, for a time he was acting private secretary to John Ballance after the latter became Minister of Native Affairs in September 1884.<sup>188</sup> At the beginning of January 1885, a new Second Clerk replaced him after he was 'transferred'.<sup>189</sup> Appointed as government agent at Rotorua, a newspaper noted that Johnson was 'well known to the natives'.<sup>190</sup> In that year he was also made a Justice of the Peace.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>186</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1911, p. 2.

<sup>187</sup> See *Te Aroha News*, 21 August 1886, Supplement, p. 3.

<sup>188</sup> *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 13.

<sup>189</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 2 January 1885, p. 8.

<sup>190</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 January 1885, p. 17.

<sup>191</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

Johnson chaired the Rotorua Town Board, ‘and had charge of the Sanatorium and native affairs generally’.<sup>192</sup> His work there has not been researched in depth, but according to his own account he ‘was successful in completely reorganising the Sanatorium, and putting it into a proper workable condition, for which he received the thanks of Ballance.’<sup>193</sup> But Johnson was not universally popular;<sup>194</sup> for instance, in January 1886 a reporter of the *Hot Lake Chronicle* who greeted him in the street was snubbed and felt insulted.<sup>195</sup> That year Johnson 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.<sup>196</sup> He was particularly anxious to educate Māori 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, Johnson resigned, his resignation letter noting 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 likely to result from their being also associated in schools where proper discipline is observed.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 29 January 1885, p. 166; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

<sup>193</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 142.

<sup>194</sup> R.F. Keam, *Tarawera: The volcanic eruption of 10 June 1886* (Auckland, 1988), pp. 44-46.

<sup>195</sup> *Waikato Times*, 12 January 1886, p. 2.

<sup>196</sup> D.M. Stafford, *The Founding Years in Rotorua: A history of events to 1900* (Auckland, 1986), p. 181.

<sup>197</sup> Letter from Henry Dunbar Johnson, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 September 1888, p. 15.

Johnson was ‘conspicuous’ after the Tarawera eruption.<sup>198</sup> ‘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’.<sup>199</sup> 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’.<sup>200</sup> The following month a Rotorua correspondent wrote that Ngāti 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 Ngātiwhakaue 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.<sup>201</sup>

In October he was one of four men entrusted with distributing funds collected in Wellington for the victims.<sup>202</sup> When he visited Auckland that month one newspaper commented that he had had ‘an exceedingly busy and harassing time of it during the past few months’.<sup>203</sup> In January 1887 he was appointed clerk of the magistrate’s court at both Rotorua and Maketu.<sup>204</sup> In mid-year, three Rotorua Maori were convicted of obtaining money from him

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<sup>198</sup> *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.

<sup>199</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

<sup>200</sup> Rotorua Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 26 June 1886, Supplement, p. 2.

<sup>201</sup> Rotorua Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 July 1886, p. 22.

<sup>202</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 October 1886, p. 19.

<sup>203</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 October 1886, p. 18.

<sup>204</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 January 1887, p. 138.

under false pretences.<sup>205</sup> 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.<sup>206</sup> ‘One of the victims of the great retrenchment’ of that year, as he expressed it, his departure from Rotorua was ‘very much regretted’.<sup>207</sup>

His family retained an affection for the district, for instance holding a social in the Rotorua schoolhouse in 1898 for the coming of age of his youngest daughter.<sup>208</sup>

## TE AROHA WEST

After leaving Rotorua, in May 1898 Johnson settled 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’.<sup>209</sup>

He first participated in local affairs in September 1888, when he consented to stand for the Waitoa Riding of the Piako County Council, according to the *Waikato Times*, or the Waitoa Road Board, according to the *Te Aroha News*.<sup>210</sup> 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’.<sup>211</sup> However he withdrew his candidacy almost immediately.<sup>212</sup> At the end of the year, at a public meeting in Te Aroha West he seconded a motion calling for placing a punt at the Waiorongomai Landing, and was elected to a committee to draw up a petition and obtain signatures.<sup>213</sup> The following year, he stood for the

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<sup>205</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 17 June 1887, p. 2.

<sup>206</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 April 1888, p. 459.

<sup>207</sup> *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.

<sup>208</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1898, p. 2.

<sup>209</sup> *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.

<sup>210</sup> *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.

<sup>211</sup> *Waikato Times*, 29 September 1888, p. 2.

<sup>212</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 3 October 1888, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 4 October 1888, p. 2.

<sup>213</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1888, p. 7.

Waitoa Road Board, unsuccessfully, receiving the second lowest number of votes, 52; the top candidate had 102.<sup>214</sup> On occasions, as a justice of the peace he heard cases in the Te Aroha court.<sup>215</sup> In 1889 he became a trustee of the Te Aroha cemetery, and in 1891 a member of the domain board.<sup>216</sup>

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’.<sup>217</sup> 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’.<sup>218</sup> A year later, he stood for the Piako Riding of the county council, but came bottom of the poll with 46 votes, whereas the three successful candidates received 64, 61, and 59.<sup>219</sup> Subsequently he was involved in a 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 his action being ‘unique’ and not contemplated in the Act.<sup>220</sup> Johnson responded with his own version of the legalities. As his scrutineer had been unable to do the job at the last minute 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”’.<sup>221</sup>

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.<sup>222</sup> 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,

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<sup>214</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 31 July 1889, p. 2.

<sup>215</sup> For example, *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1889, p. 2.

<sup>216</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 September 1889, pp. 986-987, 19 March 1891, pp. 365-366.

<sup>217</sup> *Waikato Times*, 2 October 1890, p. 2.

<sup>218</sup> *Waikato Times*, 9 October 1890, p. 2.

<sup>219</sup> *Waikato Times*, 15 November 1890, p. 3.

<sup>220</sup> *Waikato Times*, 9 December 1890, p. 2.

<sup>221</sup> Letter from Henry Dunbar Johnson, *Waikato Times*, 13 December 1890, p. 2.

<sup>222</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 13 July 1889, p. 2.

Mangauhenga', Te Aroha West, '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'. After the Anglican clergyman 'made a felicitous speech and also cut the cake', a 'sumptuous supper' was served.<sup>223</sup>

One of his favourite relaxations was reading. After his death, his estate contributed 350 volumes of 'general literature' to the Auckland Public Library, and a smaller selection was presented to the Te Aroha library.<sup>224</sup> Either Rawinia and her children didn't share his enthusiasm for books, or they had read them and saw no need to retain them.

### 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.<sup>225</sup> Two weeks after John Ballance became Premier and Native Minister in January 1891, Johnson 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]<sup>226</sup> now'. He offered himself as resident magistrate for Taupo and Rotorua,

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

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<sup>223</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 24 November 1893, p. 4.

<sup>224</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 19 April 1924, p. 10; *Te Aroha News*, 23 October 1924, p. 5.

<sup>225</sup> 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.

<sup>226</sup> Jonathon Green, *The Cassell Dictionary of Slang* (London, 1998), p. 872.

some of his Rotorua enemies.<sup>227</sup> This application 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'.<sup>228</sup> Or, as the *Observer* had it, 'somehow Dunbar managed to hold on to the tail of the Ministerial coat' and obtained another appointment.<sup>229</sup> In January 1894, he was transferred from the Native Land Office in Auckland to be Native Land Registrar in Wellington.<sup>230</sup> An Auckland newspaper which considered he had been an 'excellent' official was 'glad that he has received an advancement of rank'.<sup>231</sup> In May 1896 he became a judge of the land court.<sup>232</sup> His work in this court has not been traced, but the *Observer*, which had commented favourably on his work as a judge,<sup>233</sup> wrote in late 1906 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.<sup>234</sup>

Johnson was aware of the falsehood of some evidence given in this court, commenting that he had to deal with 'Maori Roger Tichborne' cases,<sup>235</sup> a reference to a famous Victorian impersonation. In January 1907, he was appointed as Maori land purchase officer for Whanganui and Taranaki.<sup>236</sup> When required to retire in 1910 because of his age, the *Observer* noted that he had 'devoted a lifetime to native affairs'.<sup>237</sup> Once

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<sup>227</sup> H.D. Johnson to John Ballance, 8 February 1891, John Ballance Papers, MS-Copy-Micro-190, reel 1, folder 3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>228</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10.

<sup>229</sup> *Observer*, 28 March 1896, p. 19.

<sup>230</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 11 February 1892, p. 297, 3 May 1894, p. 668; *Auckland Star*, 20 February 1894, p. 2.

<sup>231</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 March 1894, p. 18.

<sup>232</sup> *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 5.

<sup>233</sup> *Observer*, 20 May 1905, p. 4.

<sup>234</sup> *Observer*, 1 December 1906, p. 5; see also 19 January 1907, p. 4.

<sup>235</sup> *Observer*, 31 December 1904, p. 4.

<sup>236</sup> *Observer*, 19 January 1907, p. 4.

<sup>237</sup> *Observer*, 12 February 1910, p. 17.

back on his Te Aroha West farm, he published some reminiscences in the local newspaper.<sup>238</sup>

### ATTITUDES TO MAORI

Johnson was always interested in all things Maori, especially the language. In 1910, he informed the Auckland City Council that the district commonly recorded as Waitakerei was correctly Waitakere.<sup>239</sup> In accepting his advice, the mayor referred to him as ‘one of the best living authorities on the Maori language’.<sup>240</sup> When he retired as a land court judge in that year, the *Observer* recorded that 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’.<sup>241</sup> A member of the Auckland Institute, he was also a founder of the Polynesian Society, becoming a member of its council in 1897.<sup>242</sup> Eight months before his death, he was elected to the committee of the ‘anthropological and Maori race section’ of the Auckland Institute.<sup>243</sup> 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.<sup>244</sup>

In his reminiscences he expounded on the negative impact of Pakeha settlement on Maori. During his first years in the colony, he had been most impressed with ‘the natural aptitude of the natives for engineering

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<sup>238</sup> 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.

<sup>239</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 18 November 1910, p. 4.

<sup>240</sup> *Auckland Star*, 18 November 1910, p. 4.

<sup>241</sup> *Observer*, 12 February 1910, p. 17.

<sup>242</sup> *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 5; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, p. 143.

<sup>243</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 19 June 1923, p. 8.

<sup>244</sup> ‘Pakeha’, *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 13.

undertakings', as illustrated by their military engineering and the locks they created to bring their produce to Auckland by canoe.<sup>245</sup> During the 1870s Maori continued to be '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'.<sup>246</sup> His experiences in Rotorua during the 1880s confirmed to him that Maori had ceased being hard-working: the arrival of the Pakeha, and 'especially of the tourist', 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'.<sup>247</sup>

During the 1870s, he was the Ohinemuri Correspondent for the *Thames Advertiser*, and many of his reports were reprinted in the *New Zealand Herald*.<sup>248</sup> He regularly provided details of relations between Pakeha and Māori, and, in particular, reported on efforts to open land to Pakeha settlers and to develop the district. As one of the earliest settlers, unsurprisingly his reports supported Pakeha intrusion into Māori-owned land and deplored Māori 'obstruction', especially when he considered the government was pandering to the 'obstructionists'. His report of 8 September 1871 sarcastically described what he clearly viewed as outrageous behaviour:

The zeal of our Government native officials is beginning to make it rather uncomfortable for the European residents here. When we find Maoris summoning, sitting in judgment, and imposing fines on white men, I imagine it is time to cry out. I should like to know from whom they get their authority for so doing. We have a regular staff of paid Government officials, from native assessors down to native policemen, with salaries ranging from £50 to £10 per annum. Receiving this money from Government, and having nothing to do, they have opened a Court on their own account and put the machinery of the law in active operation. A European who has been a resident in the district for some time, received a note signed by one of the Government assessors, requesting him to attend at the "court-house", Ohinemuri, on Thursday, at 10 o'clock a.m., for what purpose the summons did not state. To make sure of his finding the locale, a policeman was sent to

<sup>245</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1911, p. 2.

<sup>246</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1910, p. 5.

<sup>247</sup> H. Dunbar-Johnson, 'Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1910, p. 4.

<sup>248</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 19 May 1876, p. 3; *Observer*, 28 March 1896, p. 19; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 10; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 142.

escort the gentleman before “his betters.” The court-house is a large whare, which is generally used by the natives as a meeting house. On arriving at this Maori whare, now flourishing under the name of “court-house,” the pakeha learned that he was to stand his trial for the theft of a small box of paints and brushes. This he did not learn from the dignitaries of the Court, as no charge whatever was read to him. The “bobby” pushed the poor culprit most unceremoniously into the august presence of the presiding Maoris, who, with faces duly elongated to suit the great occasion and their onerous duties, were seated on boxes at a table, on which was placed the stolen property. In the centre of the “court-house” a porter [beer] case was stuck on end to do the duties of a witness box. “The Court” opened proceedings by swearing in an interpreter, the which being satisfactorily done, the first witness was placed in the “porter case.” He swore to the buying of the articles from the prisoner. The next and last witness, after being duly packed in “the case,” swore the things were his property. This being the whole case for the prosecution, the prisoner was then put upon oath. He stated he bought the articles he was said to have stolen from a digger, whose name was “Jim.” He had no evidence to bring before the “Court” to substantiate his statement. He trusted “their Worships” would give due weight to what he had stated and honourably acquit him. “Their Worships” summed up after the most approved manner – found the prisoner guilty of the theft – he would therefore have to pay thirty shillings, the value of the property stolen, thirty shillings for the “takai” (theft), and four shillings for the summons. This was a pill for the poor fellow, but swallow it he must, as the alternative was something horrible – “in the event of the money not being paid immediately, the case to be taken to a higher Court.” Where or what the higher Court was they did not state. I suppose their Royal Highnesses Te Hira and Mere Kuru must be the Judges of Appeal. We all know their decisions are full and final.<sup>249</sup>

It was typical of his reports that whenever Johnson mentioned a Māori by name it was in approbation; in this case those mentioned were leading opponents to Pakena intrusion. Almost six months later, he was delighted to report that the result of a meeting of about 300 Māori ‘was everything that could be wished for in reference to the opening of the country. From all appearance there seems to be a split among the natives: everyone accustomed to Maori usages will know what the end of this will be’.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Ohinemuri Correspondent, written 8 September, *Thames Advertiser*, reprinted in *New Zealand Herald*, 19 September 1871, p. 3.

<sup>250</sup> Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, reprinted in *New Zealand Herald*, 9 March 1872, p. 2.

Another six months later, he lamented the latest government proclamation concerning the sale of Māori land:

The greatest injustice of all will be the tendency that proclamation will have of keeping this district closed for years against the Government or Europeans; and it will be used successfully by the Hauhau or King party as a very just objection to the opening, which will be found very hard for the friendlies [otherwise Queenites, who supported the government] to overcome. Te Hira and the rest of the natives are very indignant with Government for issuing this proclamation, which to them appears like confiscation. It is to be sincerely hoped that it will not have an evil effect on the Hauhaus. We are all anxious to see the country opened by just means as soon as possible. The Government are very much to blame for the long delay, and not the friendly natives, who have left everything in the hands of the Government for them to move in the matter; but Government have done nothing, and worse than nothing; they have neglected the friendlies, and backed up Te Hira against them, thus making the Queen natives say it is far better to be a Hauhau than a Queen native. We certainly require a very great change in the native policy all through the country.<sup>251</sup>

In May 1873, he was pleased to report that a meeting of Māori, to discuss the killing of surveyor Timothy Sullivan for intruding into Tawhiao's territory, had resolved that 'it was desirable that there should be no more killing of pakehas – at least for the present!'<sup>252</sup> In the following February, he was frustrated because he expected that the Māori meeting 'which was to do great things will end all in smoke' and he did not expect officials to attend. 'I am at a loss to conceive how long these farces will be allowed to continue. The British spirit in this part of the world seems to me to have gone'.<sup>253</sup>

Once Ohinemuri was opened to settlement, he raised some justified criticisms of government policy. He wanted land reserved for Māori to be defined, 'so that trouble may not arise when the agricultural lease regulations' were put into effect. 'These undefined reserves are a nuisance to the community, and a disgrace to the Government. Unless the reserves are specified before the leasing regulations are laid, there is sure to be a

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<sup>251</sup> Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, reprinted in *New Zealand Herald*, 10 September 1872, p. 2.

<sup>252</sup> Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, reprinted in *New Zealand Herald*, 9 May 1873, p. 2.

<sup>253</sup> Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, reprinted in *New Zealand Herald*, 21 February 1874, p. 2.

collision, as the Europeans will take the best pieces of the land, which the natives will also naturally claim'.<sup>254</sup>

In 1877, describing a potential conflict between Ngāti Rahiri and Ngāti Tamatera<sup>255</sup> as 'a rumpus', being unimpressed by two pa erected by the latter iwi. 'Neither of the fortifications, as some are pleased to term the collection of ti-tree scrub, call for special comment, but prove that the erectors have not the least intention of fighting'. He reported that those involved expected the Native Minister to visit 'to settle their dispute. I suppose this means another payment to them'.<sup>256</sup> In the following month he wrote that with a mediator appointed 'a few trips backwards and forwards [up and down the river] will doubtless bring about a reconciliation. Meantime, the natives here intend keeping up appearances to the last' by enlarging and strengthening one of their pa.<sup>257</sup> He was amused by the end of 'the war' when Ngāti Tamatera, after mediation, 'raised the blockade, and shot the booms [in the river]. One casualty took place while the firing was going on, Paora Tuinga's dog having unluckily come in the way of one of the balls. So ends the war in Ohinemuri!'<sup>258</sup>

In March 1877, Johnson had a much more important conflict to report, namely obstruction of improvements on the road from Thames to Paeroa, which passed through 'some of the wild, uncultivated wastes still in the hands of native owners'. As these owners were not consulted, according to Johnson they saw this as 'an excellent opportunity to "make a rise" ... out of the Government'. He was delighted that 'the County Council do not intend to humour these Native Office pets. They intend to make the road passable as often as the natives obstruct it, and for that purpose will keep the men employed on the road instead of taking them off and so gratifying the wishes of the natives'.<sup>259</sup>

Sometimes Johnson detected Pakeha troublemakers stirring up Maori opposition to necessary developments (presumably, though he didn't say so, to extort more money from the government). In April 1878, when Tukukino, a leading rangātira he described as the 'boss savage', ordered all road works

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<sup>254</sup> Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, reprinted in *New Zealand Herald*, 15 July 1875, p. 2.

<sup>255</sup> For paper on 'Ngāti Rahiri versus Ngāti Tamatera'.

<sup>256</sup> Ohinemuri Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 12 February 1877, p. 4.

<sup>257</sup> Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, written 8 March, reprinted in *New Zealand Herald*, 14 March 1877, p. 2.

<sup>258</sup> Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, written 21 April, reprinted in *New Zealand Herald*, 24 April 1877, p. 2.

<sup>259</sup> Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 March 1877, p. 2.

in Ohinemuri to cease, he was ‘inclined to think that the natives are not the only ones to blame for the road obstruction, but that some of our pale-faced population are also to blame. If such is the case, and the culprits are found out, an example of them should be made’.<sup>260</sup> Shortly before moving to Wellington in 1879, he referred to the latest obstruction of road making:

There are also one or two black sheep amongst us in the shape of white men, one of whom, immediately Tukukino had finished his work, was seen clapping him on the back, and vociferously exclaiming, “Kapai” [‘well done’]. This person has been known to aid and abet the obstructionists to the best of his ability on previous occasions. Tarring and feathering is what the scoundrel requires, and afterwards to be drummed out of the district.<sup>261</sup>

### FINAL YEARS

In 1898, a notice published under Johnson’s name warned that anyone trespassing with a gun on his farm, Mangauhenga, being sections 6 and 7 and part of 5 Block X1 Aroha, would be prosecuted. ‘Dogs shot, poison laid’.<sup>262</sup> When writing to the press about mistakes in the dates for the 1902 celebrations of the founding of New Zealand, he was still living there.<sup>263</sup> In 1905 the rateable value of sections 55 to 57 Block 1X Aroha, 299 acres owned by his wife and children, was £900.<sup>264</sup>

All their daughters married Pakeha, with the exception of their eldest daughter, Lavinia Claribel Moon, who married another ‘half-caste’, William More Moon.<sup>265</sup> Moon was the son of William Moon and Titipo, a member of Ngāti Koroki and Ngāti Haua, and according to unconfirmed family legend

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<sup>260</sup> Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, reprinted in *New Zealand Herald*, 27 April 1878, p. 2.

<sup>261</sup> Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, reprinted in *New Zealand Herald*, 13 March 1879, p. 2.

<sup>262</sup> Public Notice, *Te Aroha News*, 16 April 1898, p. 2.

<sup>263</sup> Letter from Henry Dunbar Johnson, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 November 1906, p. 28.

<sup>264</sup> Piako County Council, Rate Book 1905-1906, Waitoa Riding, no pagination, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

<sup>265</sup> 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.

was related to Te Uranga, the mother of King Koroki.<sup>266</sup> His father was another example of a Pakeha who, despite fighting against Māori, married Māori women (in his case two) and was in close contact with many (not always to their advantage, as he assisted in the purchase of Maori land).<sup>267</sup> William Moon's children were brought up as Pakeha; indeed, one official recorded Lavinia's husband as being European.<sup>268</sup> 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'.<sup>269</sup> Subsequently this block was 'Europeanised'.<sup>270</sup> Also in 1911, Rawinia's daughter Katherine Marjorie received permission to transfer 42 acres, Section 7A of Block IX, to her sister Lavinia. She was married to a Pakeha, and the land 'was of no benefit to her and ... she desired to utilise the purchase-money (£336) in helping her husband to extend his bakery business'.<sup>271</sup> Johnson supported this arrangement, for Lavinia was 'the only member of my family who has permanently occupied' this land. Katherine had '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

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<sup>266</sup> Angela Moon [a descendant] to Philip Hart, 30 July 2017, 31 July 2017, 1 August 2017, emails; 'King Koroki', Te Ara.govt.nz; discussion with Angela Moon on 13 January 2025.

<sup>267</sup> See William Moon, unpublished reminiscences (1923), MS 551, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Library; Moon Family Papers, Cambridge Museum [includes photograph of Moon with his second wife, Karawhira Kapu]; *Waikato Times*, 21 November 1885, p. 3; *New Zealand Herald*, 22 January 1886, p. 6; for painting of Karawhira Kapu, see *Gottfried Lindauer's New Zealand: The Maori portraits*, ed. Ngahiraka Mason and Zara Stenhope (Auckland, 2016), plate 43.

<sup>268</sup> Ohinemuri Goldfields, Series 1, 11/206, 1911 entries, Maori Affairs Department, MA 13/546, ANZ-W.

<sup>269</sup> 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.

<sup>270</sup> 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.

<sup>271</sup> 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.

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 Māori land at Maungatautari, and was 'entitled to shares in other lands after her mother's death'.<sup>272</sup> Lavinia's land was Europeanised in 1912.<sup>273</sup>

In December 1912, Johnson was one of the two conveners of the committee to organise the jubilee celebration of the arrival in Auckland in February 1863 of the 'Gertrude' and the 'Devonshire'.<sup>274</sup> 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'.<sup>275</sup> He continued to have this role in subsequent years;<sup>276</sup> an obituary stated that he went to much trouble to locate passengers and descendants of those who had arrived on these ships.<sup>277</sup> Shortly before his death, when he was seriously ill, an Auckland newspaper noted that there had been 'no more conspicuous figure' in the celebration of the anniversaries than Johnson. 'Year after year his cheery personality has brightened the assembly of old colonists'.<sup>278</sup> Passengers and descendants presented him with a silver salver 'suitably engraved' thanking him for arranging the reunions, and 'further cheered his spirits with recollections of the good old days passed on the high seas in the long journey to the colony'; hopes for his recovery were given with 'musical honours'.<sup>279</sup>

Johnson died in February 1924, aged 79, at the home of one of his daughters.<sup>280</sup> 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

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<sup>272</sup> H.D. Johnson to Under-Secretary, Native Department, 30 March 1911, Maori Land Blocks, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 11/205, ANZ-W.

<sup>273</sup> Peter Gilchrist to Registrar, Maori Land Court, Auckland, 23 September 1912, Te Aroha: No. 1 file, H792, Maori Land Court, Hamilton.

<sup>274</sup> *Observer*, 21 December 1912, p. 3.

<sup>275</sup> *Observer*, 15 February 1913, p. 4; *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 February 1913, p. 19.

<sup>276</sup> For example, *Observer*, 2 February 1917, p. 9, 17 February 1917, p. 19, photograph 5.

<sup>277</sup> *Observer*, 23 February 1924, p. 5.

<sup>278</sup> *Auckland Star*, 8 February 1924, p. 4.

<sup>279</sup> *Auckland Star*, 8 February 1924, p. 4; *Observer*, 16 February 1924, p. 5.

<sup>280</sup> Death Certificate of Henry Dunbar Johnson, 14 February 1924, 1924/7559, BDM; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 February 1924, p. 1.

tomb in Waikumete cemetery, Auckland.<sup>281</sup> His widow died nine years later, aged 89 according to her death certificate (thereby adding two years to her age), at the home of her eldest daughter on the Te Aroha West farm.<sup>282</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Rawinia's life is hard to trace because she was rarely mentioned in newspapers; her large family must have been the main focus of her life. Being for a time a midwife for Pakeha women and once involved 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 Māori communities he held a succession of government posts which utilised his knowledge of Māori and their language. Not a Pakeha Māori in the original sense of this concept, his marriage to a Māori and close connection to many Māori people for most of his life makes him an interesting case study of someone working in both Pakeha and Maori worlds.

### *Appendix*

*Figure 1:* Photograph of Rawinia Manukau Johnson, as a young woman, n.d., in possession of Manukau Lewis [a descendant], Te Kuiti.

*Figure 2:* Another photograph of Rawinia Manukau Johnson, also as a young woman, n.d., in possession of Manukau Lewis.

*Figure 3:* Photograph of Henry Dunbar Johnson with his nephew, Alan Moon, n.d. [taken during the First World War?], in possession of Manukau Lewis.

*Figure 4:* '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.

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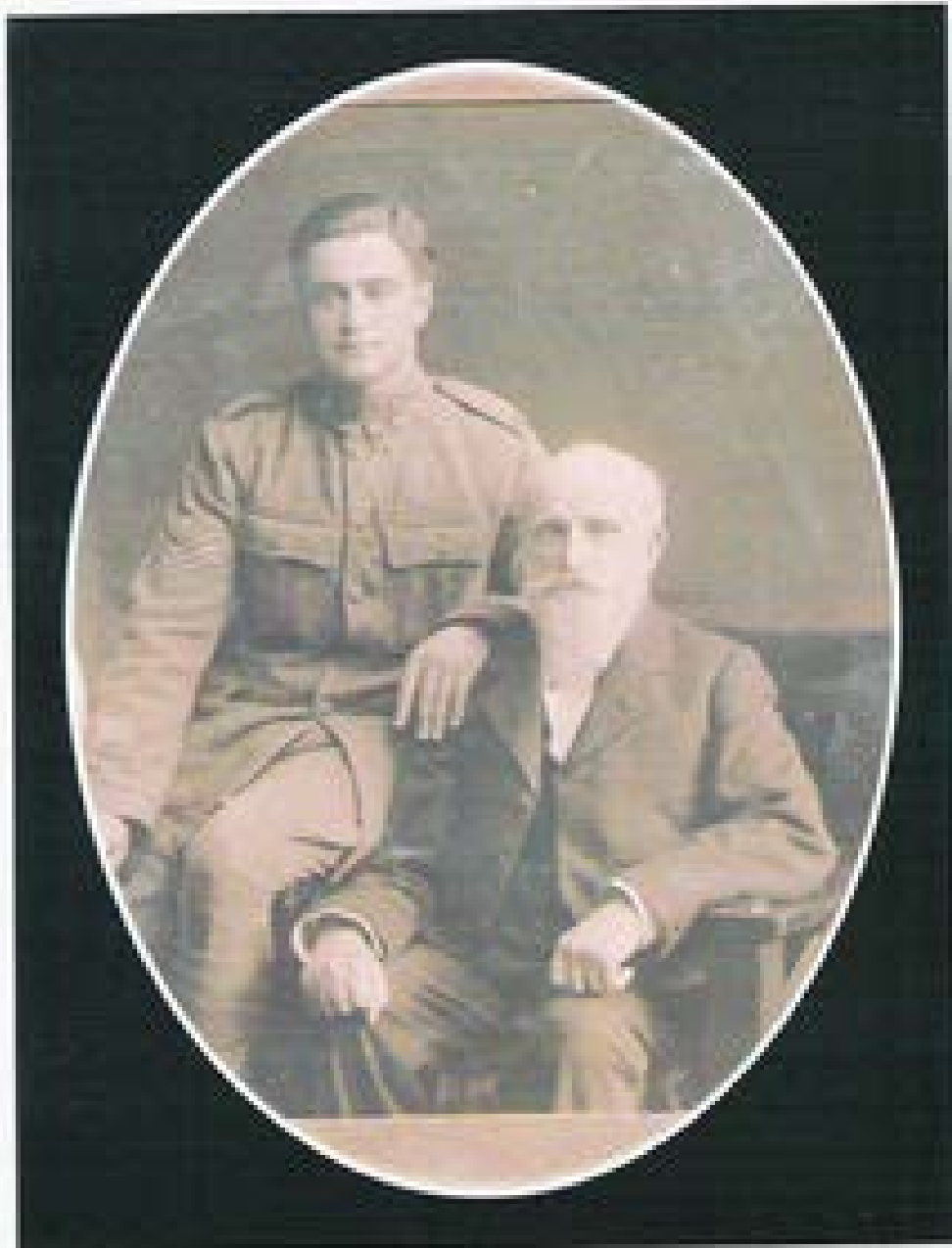
<sup>281</sup> Probate of Henry Dunbar Johnson, Probates, BBAE 1569/17033, ANZ-A.

<sup>282</sup> Deaths Certificate of Rawinia Manukau Johnson, 17 April 1933, 1933/43, BDM.

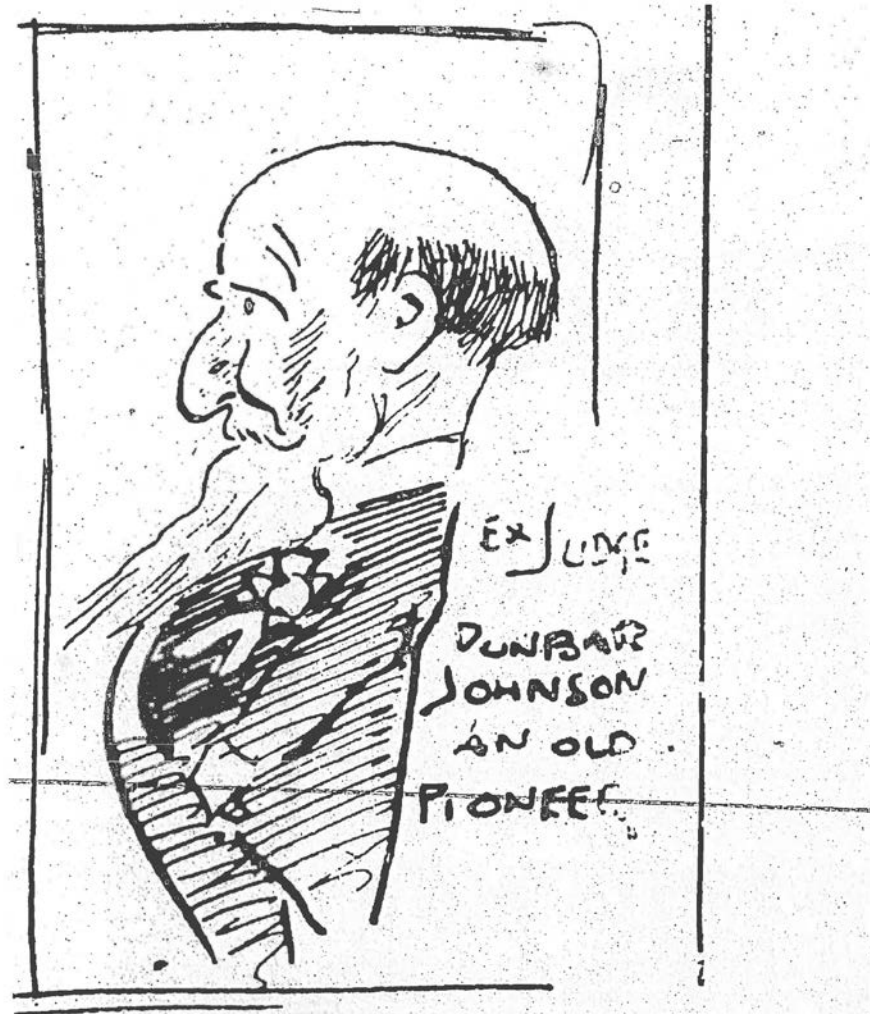


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