Albertland Heritage Museum Inc

Patron:
Mr Richard Te Haara

Marsh Family - Musical Evening

November 2025

Open Hours

Monday, Tuesday - Closed
Wednesday - Saturday - 11am to 3pm
Sunday - 1pm to 3pm
The Museum is open for visitors

Contents:

Editors Message:

At the time of writing this newsletter, there are only 26 days until Christmas. Decorations are going up in the shops and the Black Friday sales are in full swing. Oh, for the quieter days—simple presents wrapped in brown paper and string, and fruit and nuts in a stocking. Christmas dinner made with fresh vegetables and fruit from the garden, and meat from the farm or the local butcher. And, best of all, no bombardment of endless TV advertisements insisting we absolutely must buy this or that for our families!

Instead of the hustle and bustle, imagine having plenty of time for the things that really matter: family, friends, and a bit of old-fashioned cheer. As we enter this season of peace and goodwill, let's hold onto that spirit.

Take time for the people you love, and perhaps enjoy an evening of singing, fun, and laughter—just like the stories sprinkled through this newsletter.

Good luck with your Christmas preparations, and we'll be back once more in December to wrap up what has been an exceptionally good year for our Museum.

Thank you all for your wonderful support.

Warm regards,

Rose and Rob

Port Albert History – A Ramble Through the Old Boarding House

In September 1950, a reporter from the Rodney Courier travelled to Port Albert in search of a story about the preservation of the old wharf. Sixty-five years after its construction, it was hoped that renewed interest in the wharf might make worthwhile news.


2004-2-96-445

However, the reporter never made it that far. Instead, he was stopped in their tracks by the sight of the old boarding house—owned by the Bennett family and at that time occupied as a private residence by the Morgan family. The eighteen-room, two-and-a-half-storeyed house, with its church-like entrance, wide verandas, and attic windows, drew far more attention than the wharf just a stone's throw away.

Mrs Morgan kindly overlooked the reporter's impertinence and agreed to show him through the house.
Entering through the front door, the hall ran the entire length of the building—a familiar feature of early colonial homes and, as many will remember, a perfect conduit for draughts. At the far end, a glass door opened onto the veranda, revealing a magnificent vista over the Oruawharo River.

To the left stood the old breakfast room, a cosy space with a large fireplace partially bricked in to accommodate a coal range. In the opposite corner sat a more modern electric stove, looking somewhat out of place in such historic surroundings. Further along on the same side of the hall was the dining room: large, beautifully proportioned, with another tremendous fireplace backing onto the breakfast room. Windows stretching nearly from floor to ceiling spanned the opposite wall, offering yet another sweeping view of the river.
Across the hall lay what had once been the smoking room, later used as a bedroom.

Near the glass door to the patio, a steep flight of stairs led down to the basement. Guided by Mrs Morgan and armed with a torch, the reporter descended carefully into a twisting passageway that linked several small bedrooms. These rooms were used only when the house overflowed with guests. Fortunately for those who slept in them, each could also be accessed by an outside door that opened onto the lower veranda.

The stairway to the upper storey rose from the kitchen and could be reached through either the breakfast or dining rooms. At the top, one had to stoop to avoid the low rafters where the ceiling followed the slope of the roof. Only a small attic window lit the passage. Overlooking the wharf was a newer addition, used by the lady of the house as a sewing room. The upstairs rooms, with their sloping ceilings and boldly patterned wallpaper, revealed the true age of the structure. In one room stood an old carved wooden bed head, but the dim, shadowy quiet of the unused upper floor gave the reporter a faintly uneasy feeling—as though the very walls had stories they wished to tell.

Back in the kitchen, the reporter discovered a portion of an old newspaper pasted on the wall—an Auckland evening paper dated June 1879, discoloured and torn but still readable. Its age indicated that the house had been built before that date. "The Albertlanders" by Sir Henry Brett and Henry Hook, notes that the house was built by Mr Bradbury in the early 1870s, yet a well-known photograph of the Port Albert waterfront from the 1880s shows no sign of it, leaving some doubt as to its exact construction date.

The first manager of the house was Mr George Plummer, a passenger on the Matilda Wattenbach. Later, it was taken over by Mr and Mrs John Shepherd, who were succeeded by their daughter and her husband, Mr George Bennett. Mrs Bennett—remarkably, the first girl born at Port Albert—continued to run the boarding house on her own for several years after her husband drowned in the Kaipara in 1910.
Although a little unclear it is thought that George bought a building which had been Arnold & Leichenstein's

store, which he transferred to the vicinity of the boarding house, and this building was used for football and hockey dinners and other community functions. This building was moved some years later and can still be found today alongside the Port Albert Methodist Church Hall on Church Hill Road.

At the time of the 1950 visit, the reporter noted that the house looked much the same as it had in photographs taken many years earlier. The ground-floor rooms were spotless, while the upstairs and basement rooms, though dusty, remained sound. The solid kauri timbers had resisted borer, and aside from a few exposed places, the house appeared as sturdy as the day it was built.

A later report—sadly undated—described the demolition of this beautiful landmark. The front wall had been covered in Virginia creeper, and the distinctive entrance projected like a church porch, with a sharply sloped roof over a curved-top door and a house roof that rose in two angles from wall to peak. The building had been constructed from the finest kauri, two stories at the front and three at the back as the land dropped towards the river. Beneath the iron roofing lay the original wooden shingles. The roof was originally a double gable before being altered at some stage.

The great kitchen chimney—seven feet wide and five feet deep—held the wood range. Its breastwork was concrete, backed with river shingle at the base, and the remainder was brick. Behind it lay the large dining-room fireplace. The dining room measured roughly 28 feet by 14 feet and contained a remarkable table made from a single piece of timber, about 12 feet long and 4 feet wide. It appears to have been cut down at some point, but it survives today—standing proudly in our Marsh Gallery, still used just as it once was.

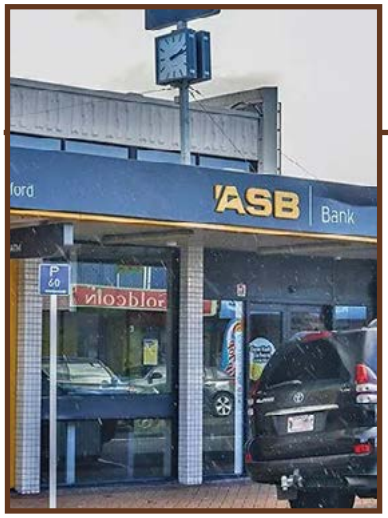
Several years ago, the late Veena Halliway (née Curel) sat at that very table, recalling vividly how she and her siblings used to sit at one end when staying at the boarding house. Another sweet memory was that of Mrs Herbert Neal, daughter of Mrs George Bennett, who remembered a beautiful “Cloth of Gold” rose that once climbed over much of the house. When in bloom, its flowers could be picked from the upstairs windows.

Rosa ‘Cloth of Gold’

Noisette Rose.

Under good conditions this is a very vigorous climber, producing magnificent spring and autumn flushes of very double, lemon-yellow, delightfully fragrant flowers. It produces smaller flushes of flowers throughout the growing season.

https://heritageroses.org.nz/rose-register/



Did you know that back in 1966 the Trustees of the Auckland Savings Bank donated a brand-new clock (a sizeable 2 ft 6 in square!) to sit proudly above the verandah of the new ASB Branch in Wellsford? The announcement was made by Bank President Mr K. N. Buttle at the official opening of the freshly built branch.

For the past sixty years, that clock has quietly kept Wellsford running on time. It’s been taken down for repairs more than once—sometimes for quite a spell—but has always managed to make its way back to its perch.

Now, with the recent closure of the ASB branch, one can’t help but wonder: who will care for Wellsford’s faithful old clock in the years ahead?

The Curator's Chronicle

The Stereoscope

This month we look at the stereoscope, a device that lets you view two separate images – one for each eye – as a single 3D picture. Each eye sees the scene from a slightly different angle, just like in real life. The stereoscope uses lenses to enlarge the images and line them up correctly, while a divider keeps each eye from seeing the other image. Some people can view stereoscopic pairs without a device, but it usually causes eye strain because the eyes must focus in an unnatural way.

Today the word "stereoscope" usually refers to the classic viewers used for stereo cards between the 1850s and 1930s. Devices like polarized glasses or VR headsets work differently, even though they also create 3D effects.
The first stereoscopes were invented in 1832 by Sir Charles Wheatstone, who used mirrors and drawings (since photography did not yet exist). In 1838 he showed how the brain combines two slightly different images to create the feeling of depth.

David Brewster, often wrongly credited as the inventor, improved Wheatstone's idea by added lenses in 1849. This made stereoscopes smaller and easier to use. These handheld "Brewster stereoscopes" became popular after being shown at the Great Exhibition in 1851.

In France, Jules Duboscq further developed the stereoscope, and soon thousands were being made. Photographers travelled worldwide to create stereo cards, which became a major form of home entertainment.
In 1861, Oliver Wendell Holmes designed a simple and inexpensive stereoscope that remained in production for more than a century. Later, more advanced models were developed that could hold and rotate through multiple images at once. The most famous of these was the Taxiphote, patented by Jules Richard in 1899.

By the mid-1900s, the View-Master had become a popular stereoscope, using rotating discs of small colour photographs. In the 2010s, stereoscope-style devices returned once again with products like Hasbro's My3D and Google Cardboard, which use smartphones and can even function as basic VR viewers. Despite these modern updates, the fundamental principle is the same as that used in the earliest stereoscopes, and artists and photographers continue to create stereoscopic images today.

Stereoscopes offer several advantages: they reduce eye strain by adjusting the focus, enlarge images so users can see more detail, and prevent each eye from seeing the opposite picture. Larger models use mirror systems to view bigger and more detailed images.

Early arcade machines also relied on stereoscopic images, displaying moving 3D scenes by rapidly flipping through a series of stereo cards mounted on a rotating drum. Some of these machines can still be found in museums.

One drawback of physical stereo cards is that they can deteriorate unevenly. Scratches or fading on one side can cause distracting visual effects and discomfort when viewed.

F. G. Radcliffe and the Albertland Collection

Many of the stereoscopic slides in the Albertland Heritage Museum's collection are stamped with the name of their maker, Frederick George Radcliffe. Born in Liverpool, England, Radcliffe was educated at Audlem Grammar School in Cheshire and later attended school in Belgium, where he learned to play the oboe. In 1885 he served as a lieutenant in a Lancashire volunteer rifle corps, and in 1886 he married Kate Litherland.

Seeking a climate better suited to his health, Radcliffe travelled to New Zealand as a first-saloon passenger on the Rimutaka in 1893.
Captivated by the country, he decided to remain. He settled in Paparoa, close to Kate's brothers, and purchased 150 acres which he named Utopia. Kate and their two daughters joined him in 1894, though daughter Eva later returned to England for schooling while Olive was enrolled at St Cuthbert's in Auckland (formerly Mount Eden College).

A passionate photographer, Radcliffe quickly rose to prominence. His beautifully crafted images were widely

admired, and demand for his work grew rapidly. For twenty years he travelled the country capturing scenes of rural towns, major cities, rivers, gardens, buildings, wharves, forests, lakes, coastlines and streets. In 1905 he sold the farm and the family moved to Auckland.

Radcliffe was also deeply involved in musical circles. In Whangārei he supported the Musical Society and similar groups, often serving as conductor. A talented instrumentalist, he excelled on both the oboe and the cor anglais (a double-reed woodwind instrument closely related to the oboe). He was a member of the orchestra at the Christchurch International Exhibition of 1906–07.

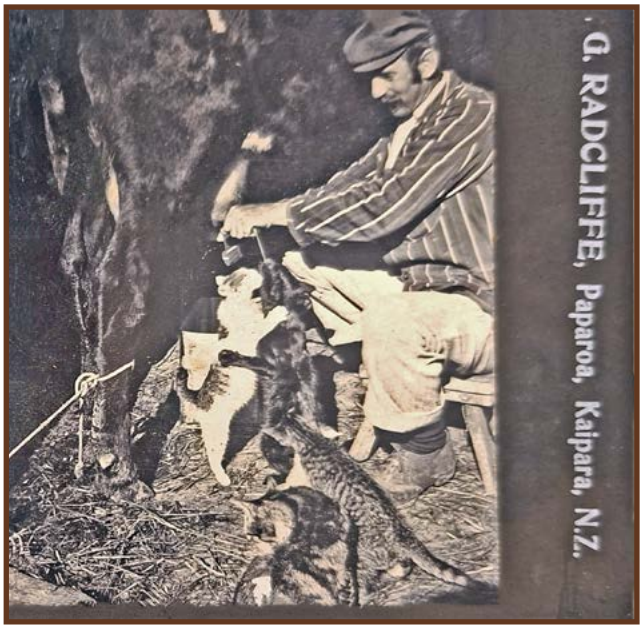
In 1908 the family moved back to Whangārei. After selling his Cameron Street studio, Radcliffe established his photographic business at his home, Stony Hill, on Mill Road. Set among an established orchard and bushland along the Hātea River, it became the base for his extensive postcard enterprise. From 1909 onwards, Kate and Olive assisted with processing and organising the postcards, each marked with a neatly printed title, consecutive number, and Radcliffe's initials FGR.

His scenic photographs were frequently sought by the New Zealand Tourist Department, and several were displayed in the High Commissioner's Office in the Strand, London. Today, postcard collectors easily recognise his distinctive initials on countless views of New Zealand's beauty spots.

Acknowledgement:

Portrait of F. G. Radcliffe by Thomas Middleton, Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 35-R0000.

The Radcliffe Collection was acquired by Auckland Libraries before 1975 and includes around 2,000 glass negatives spanning the length of the country, from Northland to Stewart Island. These early-20th-century images document New Zealand's landscapes, settlements, industry, and everyday life, photographed by Radcliffe and a small number of other contributors.



Radcliffe died in 1923 after contracting influenza, which developed into pneumonia. He was 59.

If you would like to explore more of his work, visit the following link:

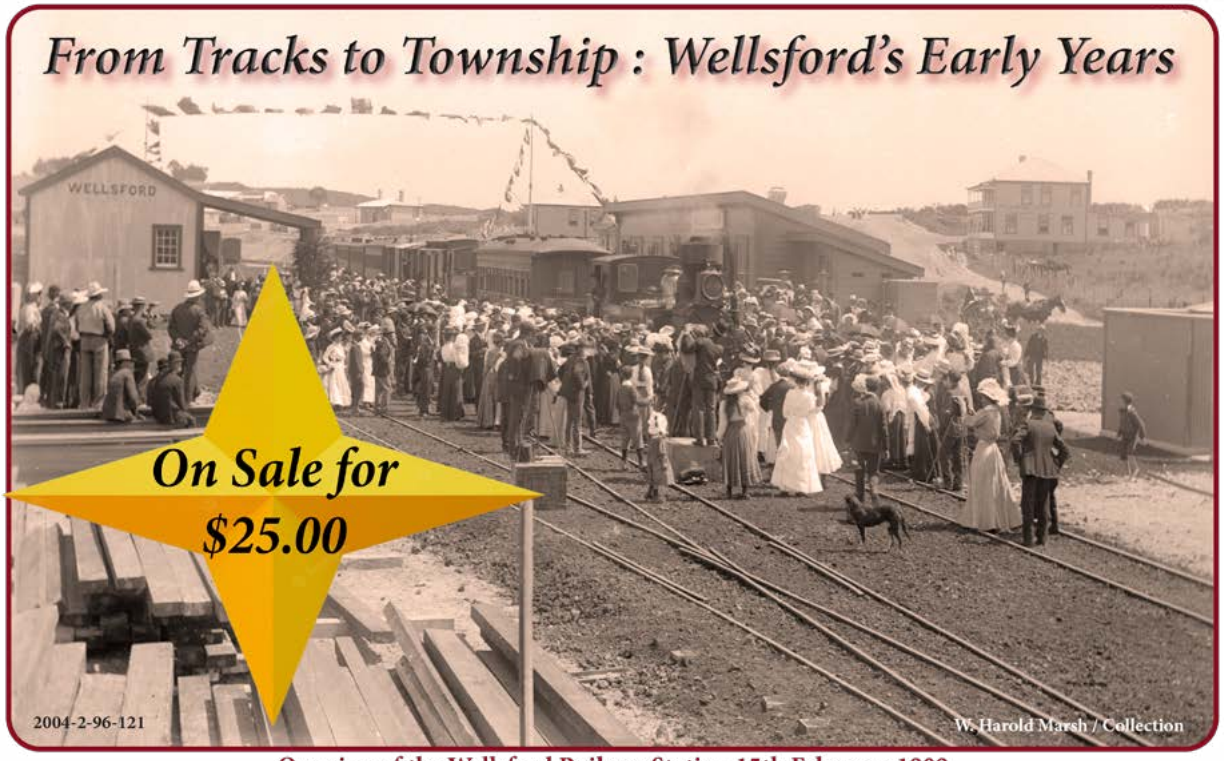
https://canterburyphotography.blogspot.com/2009/02/frederick-george-radcliffe.html

QUOTATION FOR NOVEMBER

"There is no doubt that it is around the family and the home that all the greatest virtues … are created, strengthened and maintained." –

Winston Churchill

2026 Calendar



Opening of the Wellsford Railway Station 15th February 1909

Albertland Heritage Museum Inc, Library Plaza, 15 Port Albert Road, Wellsford. 0900
www.albertland.co.nz - email: albertlandmuseum@gmail.com - Ph : +64 09 423 8181

Our 2026 Calendar – From Tracks to Township – Wellsford early years -::- is here!

Celebrate the first 50 years of Wellsford's growth following the arrival of the railway in 1909. Discover the people who shaped the town, see how it looked in those early days, and learn what brought about another wave of change in 1955.

This special edition calendar is a wonderful keepsake and a perfect gift. Be quick—copies are selling fast! $25.00 from the museum or $37.00 online delivered.

This Calendar is proving very popular and going out the door very quickly. Almost Sold Out

Website address link: *https://albertlandmuseum.co.nz/product/calendar-2026/*

Birthday Wishes for November

I need your help! Our November birthday book is looking a bit bare, in fact, at the moment its just the Reid family holding down the fort (Happy Birthday Terry and Tim!).

If you have celebrated a birthday this month, we'd love to shine a little spotlight on you too. Don't be shy – send your birthdays in so we can add them to our list and make November look a bit more popular!

A Light-Hearted Look Back at the Wellsford Veterinary Club

If you've popped into the Wellsford Veterinary Club lately, you'll know things are looking a little different. Renovations are in full swing, tools are humming, and the vets are heroically stepping around building materials while still tending to every cow, cat, dog, lamb and llama that crosses their path.
So, while the clinic is getting its makeover, here's a ramble back through its early days—because this place has quite a story.

The Wellsford District Veterinary Club officially came to life on 1 April 1969 (an unfortunate date but never the less an important one for the farmers of Wellsford). By September, construction of the new premises was already underway. The Rodney Times proudly reported that Messrs F. Pool, Builders Ltd of Wellsford had won the tender to erect a "modern building" of 1300 square feet—right next to the public library—at the princely sum of $13,231.

The design included a smart canopy over the entrance, a dispensary and reception area at the front, with the surgery and office tucked behind. A curved driveway would deliver farmers—and their occasionally uncooperative animals—straight to the surgery for attention. There was even room for parking down the back.
Hopes were high that everything would be finished by Christmas—always the busiest time for vets, animals, and builders alike.

To help keep up with demand, the club appointed a third vet: Mr Brian Lord, an experienced vet from the Rangitaiki Dairy Company in Edgecumbe. He was set to start on 15 December—keen to help the two already busy vets.

Dairy factories first started hiring vets to keep their suppliers' animals healthy and it was with the support of the Albertland Dairy Factory at Te Hana who helped to guarantee financing for the newly formed Veterinary Club. Eventually, the government formed the Veterinary Services Council and encouraged farmer-owned vet clubs like the one in Wellsford.

The brand-new clinic opened early in 1970, with MP Peter. I. Wilkinson cutting the ribbon and declaring it "a worthy addition to the amenities of the town." The final price tag was $17,000—a little above budget, proving that some things never change.

Seven elected farmers ran the club in those early days.

And as the practice expanded, so did the building with several renovations over time.


WARKWORTH, NEW ZEALAND, 17 SEPTEMBER, 1969

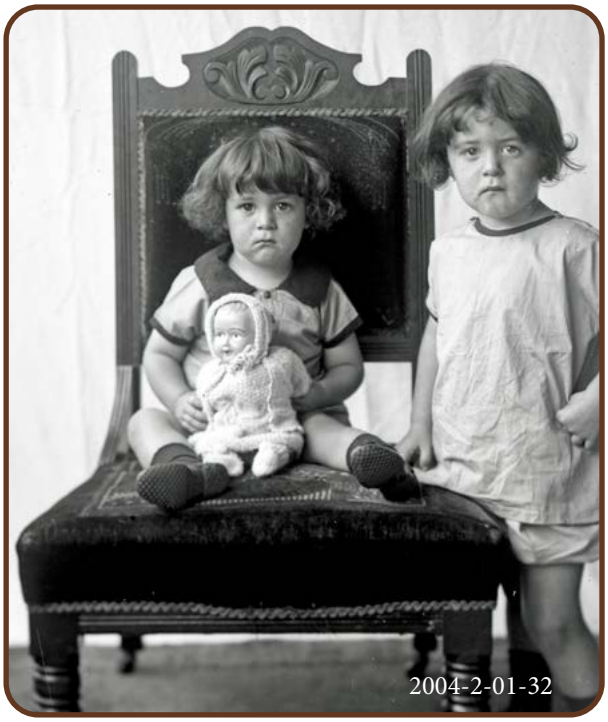
New Building For Veterinary Club

Did you know?

On average a four-year-old child asks 437 questions a day.

Today is always different to yesterday.

In a year the average person walks 6.43 kilometres making their bed.



unknown children

What's On

Sunday 7 December
The Settlers Market – Xmas Market
Port Albert Hall, 980 Port Albert Road, Wellsford (variety of stalls and food and drink available)
9.00 am – 1.00 pm

Saturday 13 December
Wharehine Community Hall Variety Show
See the Wharehine Hall Facebook page for more information.
https://www.facebook.com/p/Wharehine-Community-Hall-100064529896172/

Sunday 14 December
Port Albert Church Service
Community-run service at 1.30 pm — bring a plate for a shared afternoon tea.

Sunday 28 December
Minniesdale Chapel Anniversary Service
See attached flyer for details.

Minniesdale Chapel

Shegadeen Road, Wharehine

2025 Anniversary Service

The next Anniversary Service in our historic Chapel will take place on Sunday 28th December 2025 at 1.30 pm.

We remember the original settlers on this day who paved the way for the generations that have followed.

After the service all are invited for afternoon tea at Wharehine Hall. In true country tradition please 'bring a plate' with something to share at the table.

The Rocking Chair

GREAT-GRANDMA loved her rocking chair,
Over in the corner there,
She'd sit rocking to and fro,
Telling tales of long ago.

Times that never will return
When milk came to the house in churn,
Days of carriages and pairs,
And pedlars calling out their wares.

Watercarts sprayed dusty streets,
Clip-clopping came the horses' feet,
With long, hooked poles,
lamplighters came
To switch on the gas lamps,
light the flame.

Crinkled skin, and shrewd grey eyes,
Always kind, and always wise,
In her chair she'd rock and croon,
Humming a half-remembered tune.

Great-Grandma, though those
days are gone,
In memory you'll still live on,
Rocking gently to and fro,
Telling tales of long ago.

— *Dorothy M. Loughran.*

The Changes in Daily Life Through the Decades

Today, most of us spend our time in paid employment, watching television or scrolling on our phones, eating and drinking, and catching up with friends. Add in sleep and the voluntary extras—sport, gardening, housework, reading, shopping, and going out—and our days are pretty well packed.

In the "olden days," daily life followed a different rhythm, shaped by the seasons, the phases of the moon, and the days of the week. Life was still managed by the calendar and the clock, but it felt far more connected to nature. There were clear workdays and play days: plenty of activity in summer, and much less in winter when people stayed indoors to keep warm. Events and dances were often planned around the moon—travelling home after dark was much easier under the light of a full moon. Saturday was a half-holiday, usually payday, and a popular time for sports matches. Sundays were reserved for church or Sunday School and visiting friends and family.

Beyond getting up, getting dressed, and eating breakfast, children were expected to help with household tasks, although many still enjoyed considerable freedom. This changed once education became free and compulsory in 1877. By 1901 most children were attending school, though many still left at about age 13 to start work. As secondary schooling became more common, the school-leaving age was raised to 15 in 1944.

Most nineteenth-century settlers worked hard to build their new lives, but they still made time for leisure. The New Zealand climate encouraged outdoor activity, and sport quickly became a favourite pastime.

But what happened in the evenings, when the day's work was done?

Music was a major source of entertainment. Many settlers brought instruments with them to the colony. The first piano believed to have arrived in New Zealand belonged to George Hunter, who came in 1840 and settled at Britannia in Petone. Making or listening to music brought back memories of home. British musical trends were strong influences, and a family sing-song around the piano was common. Sometimes one or two people performed; other times the whole household joined in. Tin dishes, fiddles, concertinas—anything that made a noise—were put to work.


The 'Down and Outs' musical group 2004-2-99-482

These casual gatherings often led to more organised events. Amateur choral societies formed, local halls hosted concerts, and travelling opera companies visited even small settlements. There were some excellent musicians amongst the first settlers of Port Albert, and it wasn't long before they had a little musical society going. One half-day a week they would gather for singing with Mr. W. Armitage the conductor and Captain Gooch the organist with the organ lent by the Rev. Samuel Edger. When a commercial traveller who was a keen amateur performer himself came along to a "country concert" at Port Albert he was overwhelmed by the quality of the performances given and could not wait to visit Port Albert and attend another concert.

New Year's Eve parties were especially popular, with dancing and singing right through to midnight. For those who preferred quieter evenings, reading was a favourite pastime. Books, magazines, card games, and board games were all popular, and with settlers hungry for reading material, libraries of all sorts began to appear.
So, what was a typical evening like for an early settler?

In the 1800s, the midday meal was called dinner, while the evening meal—supper—was usually lighter. Supper might include cold bread, milk toast, frizzled beef, a simple cake, or stewed fruit.
Personal hygiene looked very different from today. A bowl and pitcher of room-temperature water were usually all that was available for washing one's face and hands.


Bath time, John Marsh in bath with Belle and Bess watching on 2004-2-97-454

Without indoor plumbing, a hot bath was a luxury, requiring water to be heated over a fire. Some settlers bathed in rivers and streams; others used a tin washtub, with family members taking turns—often in the same water. Homemade soap, used mainly for laundry, was common until commercial soaps became more widely available.

Tooth care was also basic. Working-class people were more likely to use toothpicks than toothbrushes. Those who did own a toothbrush might find it made of bone and boar bristles. Chewing twigs or mint to freshen the breath was common. Commercial toothpaste was rare before the 1870s, so families made tooth powders from table salt, chalk, or even soap.

Outhouses were standard. With no public sewage systems or indoor plumbing, keeping unpleasant smells outside was essential. During storms or at night, chamber pots were used indoors and emptied into the outhouse pit the next day.

Beds, too, were different from modern ones. Instead of thick foam and springs, mattresses were cloth "ticks" stuffed with dried grass, wool, feathers, straw, or hay—which needed to be replaced yearly. Bed frames were

wooden, with the mattress supported by a criss-cross of ropes. Quilts and wool blankets were piled up to keep warm.

But evenings weren't all work and inconvenience. Women often sat together knitting or doing handcrafts—recreational, but also necessary for clothing the family.


2004-2-98-1459
Unknown playing cards at Marsh's home


2004-2-99-347
Dot and John Marsh studying at home

They told stories to the children and to each other, or gathered at the piano to sing hymns and folk songs. For those who could read, novels by Walter Scott or Charles Dickens, books of poetry, and well-thumbed magazines were favourites. Newspapers passed from hand to hand and were often re purposed to line walls or block draughts. Card games and chess games were very popular with the menfolk.

Children entertained themselves with string games, spinning tops, knucklebones, and staging little performances for the adults. Making silhouettes behind a sheet by candlelight was a popular amusement. Painting, jigsaws, cutting out pictures for scrapbooks, and collecting stamps or postcards—often swapped among friends—were also common pastimes.


2004.2.98.515
Miss Hill, Port Albert School teacher reading Epimondis to the Marsh children.

Interesting Fact

Usually, settlers went to bed when the sun went down. Based on historical and anthropological research, early settlers likely practised biphasic sleep—a segmented pattern with two main sleep intervals each night. This was common in Western societies before electric lighting extended evening hours.
This biphasic sleep consisted of:

First sleep:
Settlers typically went to bed shortly after sunset, around 9 p.m., sleeping for about 3 to 3½ hours.

Waking period:

Around midnight, people naturally woke for an hour or more. They might perform quiet chores, stoke the fire, talk, read by fire or lamplight, or reflect on their days work.

Second sleep:
They then returned to bed for their "second sleep," which lasted until dawn.

YES: It is that time of the year where Memberships come up for renewal 1st January 2026

ALBERTLAND HERITAGE MUSEUM INC.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION : 1st January 2026 to 31st December 2026

- For only $20 per year you receive free entry to the Museum for that year, invitations to Museum functions, and regular newsletters in addition we have a family Membership at $30.00 which includes 2 Adults and Children

Membership fees go towards the care and preservation of the many irreplaceable items in our collections.
Your support is greatly appreciated.

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12-3094-0077415-01

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Albertland Heritage Museum Inc

Albertland Heritage Museum, Memorial Park, 15 Port Albert Road, C/- 236 Rodney Street. Wellsford, 0900

Office Use: Payment Received ……/……/202 Receipt No ……

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