

EARLY HISTORY HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM

Curated From The Te Ahu Museum Collections



Centennial Memorial Library and Rest Room in 1940 it was officially opened by W E Parry, the Minister of Internal Affairs. Te Ahu Museum Photographic Collections.

On Friday 18 October 1940, the Centennial Memorial Library and Rest Room was officially opened by the Hon. W.E. Parry, Minister of Internal Affairs. Funded by public subscription and government subsidy, the building was the district's New Zealand Centennial Memorial.

By 1967, the library had outgrown the premises and as interest in establishing a museum grew, a suggestion was put to the council that the old the library building would be suitable as a repository to house artefacts and documents relating to our Far North people and district. The council agreed, providing funds were raised by the public to relocate the library and establish a museum.



Centennial Memorial Library and Rest Room in 1963. Te Ahu Museum Photographic Collections.



Queen Carnival held on the A & P showgrounds in Kaitaia, 1968. Te Ahu Museum.

Fundraising commenced in 1968 when Ivan Berghan, County Chairman, and Des Bell, Mayor of Kaitaia, formally made donations. Foundation Memberships were available to the public for \$100, and Life Membership for \$20.

In early November 1968, a "Museum Carnival Week" was held to provide publicity and it raised \$4,000 towards establishment costs.

As part of the Queen Carnival, a 'mini museum' was set up on the top floor of Vegars Drapery Store in Commerce Street where Arthur Northwood's Collection of over 400 photographs were displayed for the first time. As interest grew to establish a museum, the committee received numerous donations of display items for the exhibits.

Generous financial support also came from the regional councils but numerous private donations were made and public fundraising events. It was a community effort with many practical donations of time, equipment, cartage, storage, painting of the building and maintenance and materials given at near cost.

Final fundraising efforts came from the Kaitaia Businessmen's Association raised another \$2,000 and the Far North Regional Museum (Mangonui County) was established in 1969.



Vegars Drapery Store on Commerce Street. Northwood brother photographic collection. Te Ahu Museum.



Long time support and museum trustee David Russell with the anchor inside Te Ahu Museum

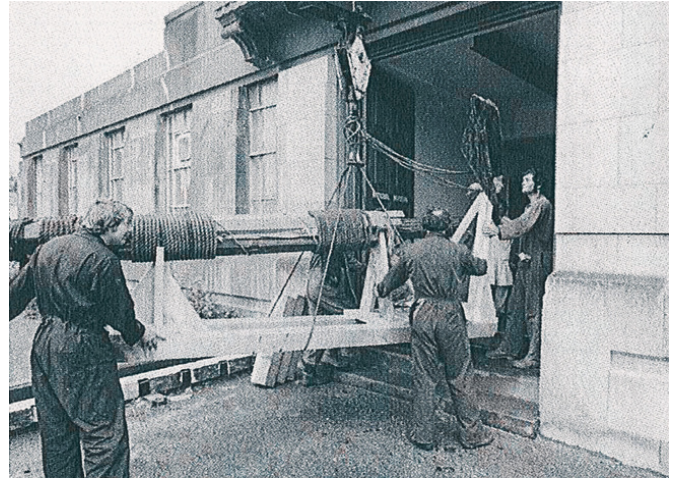
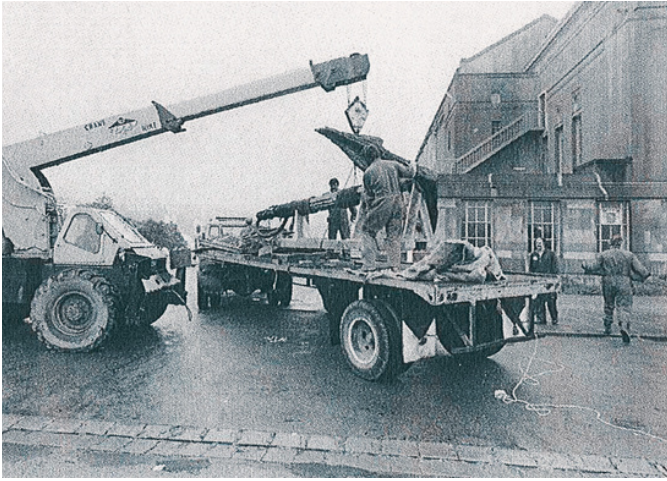
Our history in New Zealand's Far North region has deep roots, commencing with the presence of Maori and the arrival of the French explorer Jean-François-Marie de Surville in Doubtless Bay in 1769. Three decades later, whaling ships began dropping anchor in Mangonui Harbour. The establishment of an Anglican Mission Station in 1834, along with a flourishing industry centered around kauri timber, spars, flax, and kauri gum, all contributed to the development of a vibrant community.

The de Surville anchor serves as a profoundly significant and tangible reminder of our early European maritime history. This anchor is one of three left behind by the French navigator Jean François Marie de Surville when his ship, the St Jean Baptiste, encountered a storm in Doubtless Bay (Tokerau), Northland, in December 1769.

In 1974, two of these anchors were discovered, one by Mike Bearsley and the other by Kelly Tarlton. A team of divers, including Bearsley and Tarlton, recovered them and carried out conservation work in Kaitaia.

The discovery of the de Surville anchors garnered significant attention for the museum, leading to the addition of a new building to accommodate the anchor. The response from the Far North Community was overwhelmingly positive.

As the museum prepared for its imminent relocation to the new Te Ahu Centre, the primary focus revolved around carefully disassembling the present anchor display and transporting it with great care to the new facility.



The shifting of the anchor in 2011, headin to it's new home at Te Ahu Centre. Te Ahu Museum.

Numerous businesses and individuals generously contributed time, materials, and facilities to support this project. After a year of conservation work carried out by local diver Mike Bearsley, both anchors were prepared for public display.

The first anchor, originally discovered by Kelly Tarlton, made its way to the Dominion Museum in Wellington. Meanwhile, the second anchor, which was under the care of Bearsley, took center stage at Kaitaia's Far North Regional Museum, where it has been on display for 35 years.

Of the three de Surville anchors, these artifacts are the oldest European items found in New Zealand. Their historical significance has elevated them to the status of New Zealand National Treasures, and we are fortunate that the Te Ahu Museum houses such a significant piece of history within its community collection.

In 2006, the idea of consolidating all Council and community amenities within a single facility took shape. This vision became a reality with the completion of the Te Ahu Centre in 2011, which encompasses the I-Site, Library, Cinema, Cafe, Auditorium, Council Services, and the newly renamed Te Ahu Museum.

The Olwyn Ramsey Archives, which functions as the research section of Te Ahu Museum, boasts an impressive collection of records related to local and family history. Researchers can access and utilize these records for their research needs.

In summary, the Te Ahu Museum's history is intertwined with the Far North's cultural and historical development. Notable highlights include the discovery of a de Surville anchor, prompting the museum's growth and community support. As it moved to the Te Ahu Centre, efforts were made to preserve its rich heritage. The museum remains a vital cultural institution, offering insights into the region's past and a symbol of community dedication.