

FROM THE BOOK
PIONEERING IN SOUTH OTAGO

BY Hon Fred Waite
Published 1948

Page 117 **TUAPEKA MOUTH**

As early as 1842, William Palmer, the whaler from Tuatuku, with a boat's crew of Maoris, ventured up the river as far as Tuapeka Mouth. And Willsher told Tuckett that he had been up there before 1844. These may have been the first pakeha visitors. The next were the runholders - Pinkerton in 1856 on the west side, and Wight on the east side in 1854.

But it was the discovery of gold that brought the population, and in 1862 we find Robert Grigor surveying a village settlement at the mouth. This was to be known as Dalhousie, after the administrator in India. This name had only a short survival, for when the post office was opened in 1871, the old name was used. Tuapeka Mouth has always been the official post office address.

The Tuapeka made this its inland port of call in 1863; In the same year two hotels were built, and A McBeath opened a store. Taylor brothers had an orchard above the Surveyed sections. To meet the demand for timber, McColl's Mill was established in 1869.

The school was built in 1870. This was a memorable year; another hotel was built; a successful race meeting held; and Peter's blacksmiths shop opened. The first time we find a printed record of the business men of the town is in 1873: Dalhousie (Tuapeka Mouth). Hotels: Tuapeka Mouth, J Taylor; Bridge, O. Dawson. Store-keepers: A. Taylor and A. McBeath (post office). Butcher; A. Brown. Sawmill: Herbert & Co. Storekeeper, George Hall. Postmaster, A. Mc Beath" But we know that the school-teacher at that time was Mr. A. Drain, whose lamented death occurred in 1890.

The "Great Flood" of 1878 caused severe losses of sheep and cattle, and large quantities of timber and many small buildings were swept down the river. Many settlers on the low-lying ground took refuge in the school. Crossing the river had always been a great problem, and in 1890 a ferry was inaugurated, and although not without its dangers, gave valuable service for many years.

Road access to Tuapeka Mouth was not easy; and the river service was not reliable, so it was natural that better communications should be sought. In 1879 a mail service was set up to Lawrence, by way of Tuapeka West, and all early communication was with Lawrence and Dunedin, and not down the river to Balclutha.

THE PROPOSED RAILWAY

Other districts had a branch railway, so why not Tuapeka Mouth? A survey of the proposed railway routes was published in 1908. The alternatives were to go up the east bank of the river from Stirling, or up the west bank from Balclutha. The route from Stirling kept close to the banks of the river - much as the road does to-day - and terminated at Tuapeka Mouth, a distance of 21 miles of line.

The route up the west bank was longer, going up 27 miles, about two miles past the Black Cleugh, thus serving the Clydevale Estate and Rongahere. An alternative third route was to go up the west bank as far as the south bank of the Pomahaka, and continuing along it, joining the Tapanui branch line about two miles north of Waipahi station - a total distance of 36 miles from Balclutha.

To the disgust of the settlers all these schemes came to nothing: but the problem was solved by the advent of motor transport, and the construction of the gravelled highway up the east bank of the Clutha River, and the building of a concrete bridge at Clydevale.

THE DISTRICT BRIDGE AND HIGH SCHOOL

When communications were bad and slow, and when the two big estates of Clydevale and Greenfield were separated by the unbridged Clutha River, the little communities of Tuapeka Mouth, Clydevale and Greenfield lived very much apart.

The little river steamers were almost their only community of interest. But the new road up the river, opened in 1924, was the first factor to break down isolation. And in 1939, the battle of the bridge sites being over, a handsome concrete bridge knitted the communities together. The new structure was 700 feet long with six piers, making seven spans. It was a big day on March 27th, when the punt ran for the last time and Mrs. E.M. Miller and Mrs. William Smith (two old residents of the district) cut the ribbons at the opening ceremony; and Mr. A.V. King the councillor for the Clydevale Riding, drove the first of a procession of cars across the new link in the highway.

With this improvement in the communications, it was possible to consolidate the educational facilities of the district. A modern school was built in 1938, and in 1939 the Clutha Valley District High School was opened. To-day all the little schools are closed, with the exception of Tuapeka Mouth.

A necessity born of war caused a linen flax factory to be erected in the district in 1944. Having served its purpose, it was closed in 1946; the shell of the factory and the heaps of flax waste being all there is to remind passers-by that during the war years it was deemed a necessity.

More extracts from this book will be included in the future:

THE FIRST GOLD DISCOVERIES
“BLACK PETER” DISCOVERS A FIELD
THE *PIONEER* STEAMS UP THE CLUTHA
THE DECLARATION OF A GOLDFIELD
A YOUTHFUL PIONEER

STARTING ON THE RUNS
THE START OF GREENFIELD
WHEAT AND WOOL
THE NEW HOMESTEAD
PROGRESS IN ALL DEPARTMENTS
HORSE AND CHAFF
THE WORK OF A PIONEER
THE GREENFIELD SETTLEMENT
THE CLYDEVALE ESTATE
THE NAMES OF THE PADDOCKS
THE TOWNSHIP EMERGES
CLYDEVALE IS CUT UP
RONGAHERE