

MAKETU - THE WHARF THAT WASN'T BUILT

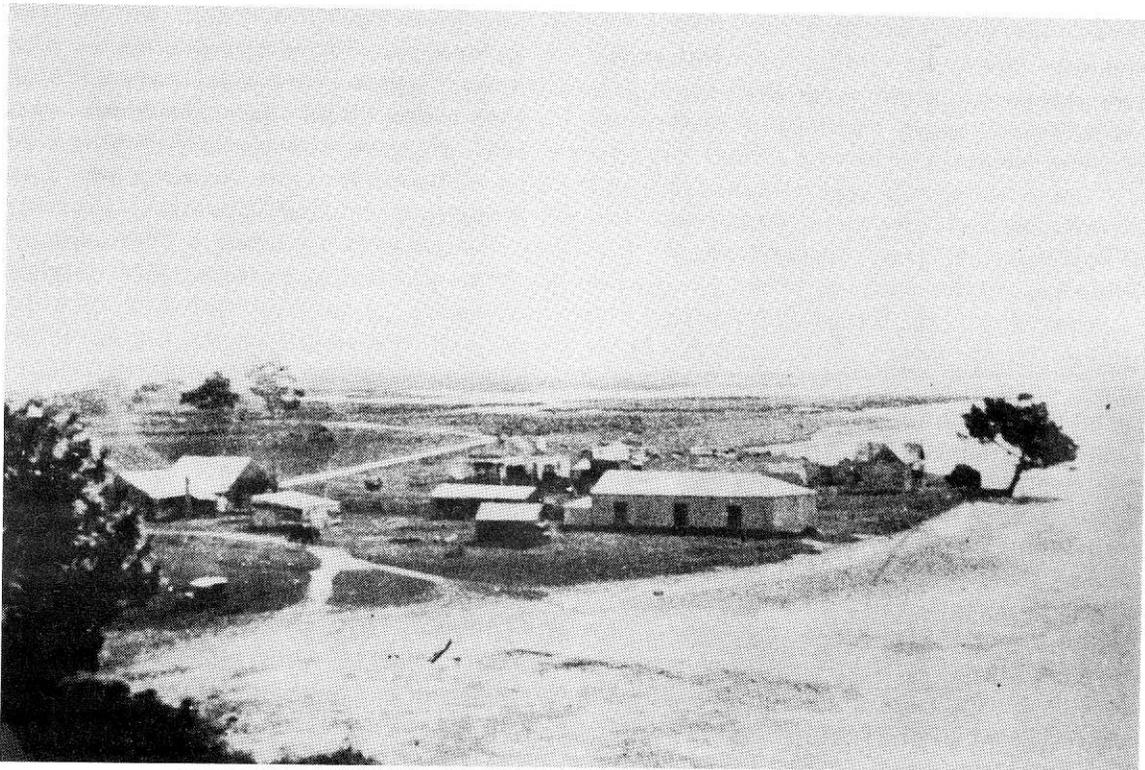
by Alister Matheson

There is a widespread belief that at one time in the early days there was a wharf, or at least a jetty of some sort, in the little harbour of Maketu, on the waterfront north of the township. However, there is no evidence of this in early plans and photos of the area. And while there is a reference in the **Bay of Plenty Times** of 22 January 1915 to a "certain jetty", to which the supplies for the Rotorua Boy Scout's camp at Maketu were brought by boat (presumably down the Kaituna River from Canaan Landing, near Te Puke), it seem probable that this was on the Otumakoro Creek, which drained into the Kaituna estuary below, and north-east of, the Scout's camp at Wharekahu, Maketu. This creek, which was, and still is, crossed by the Maketu-Te Puke road, would have been the closest place a boat could bring supplies to the Scout's camp.

It is a fact, though, that a wharf would have been built had not the Kaituna River formed a new outlet at Te Tumu, several kilometres west of Maketu, during the great flood of January 1907.

The question of building a wharf at Maketu had been under discussion from time to time by the settlers in the neighbouring districts and by the Tauranga County Council, as early as 1889. Ten years later, a sum of £200 (which was thought to be inadequate) for the proposed wharf was granted by the Government, and in January 1900 Mr Perham, of the Marine Department, made a survey of the Maketu harbour.

Mr Perham's plan for a wharf at the end of a rock causeway projecting into the harbour for about 90 yards in a north-easterly



The causeway to the planned wharf at Maketu was to have been built from the beach between the pine tree (right) and Mr King's long tin shed. A view from the cliffs of Maketu pa site in about 1917. Scout camps were later held under the bluegums (top left).

PHOTO: Tauranga Museum

direction from the shore north of the township, however, met with considerable objection. The Maketu people believed that the extra amount of seawater driven into the harbour during stormy weather would be trapped between the causeway and the cliffs and be prevented from moving up the Kaituna estuary, and so would be likely to cause flooding of the low-lying land near the township. It was felt, therefore, that a structure built of wood instead of rocks, which would allow the water to pass through, would be more satisfactory. However, some years passed before any action was taken.

In about 1906 the Government appears to have agreed to an increased grant of £300. At any rate,

on 4 January 1907 the **Bay of Plenty Times** reported that the Tauranga County Council had decided to apply to the Government for authority to expend the £300 grant for the Maketu wharf, and Mr G.A. Ward was to be asked to prepare plans and specifications for a wharf to be submitted at the next meeting of the Council. The breaking out of the Kaituna River at Te Tumu shortly afterwards and the almost immediate use of the new outlet by shipping going to and from Canaan Landing put an end to the plans for a wharf and also to the commercial importance of Maketu. Within a few years the old outlet had completely filled up with wind and water-borne sand, reducing Maketu Harbour to a backwater, or lagoon.

REFERENCES

Bay of Plenty Times early files, Tauranga Public Library Archives.

Mr Perham's plan of Maketu Wharf, 23 February 1900, MD 2339, (photocopy) Whakatane Museum.

