



Keeping in Touch

Newsletter for New Zealand History Federation Inc

Te Kotahitanga o nga Hitori o Aotearoa

KIT Editor: Lisa Truttman

nzhistoryfederation@gmail.com

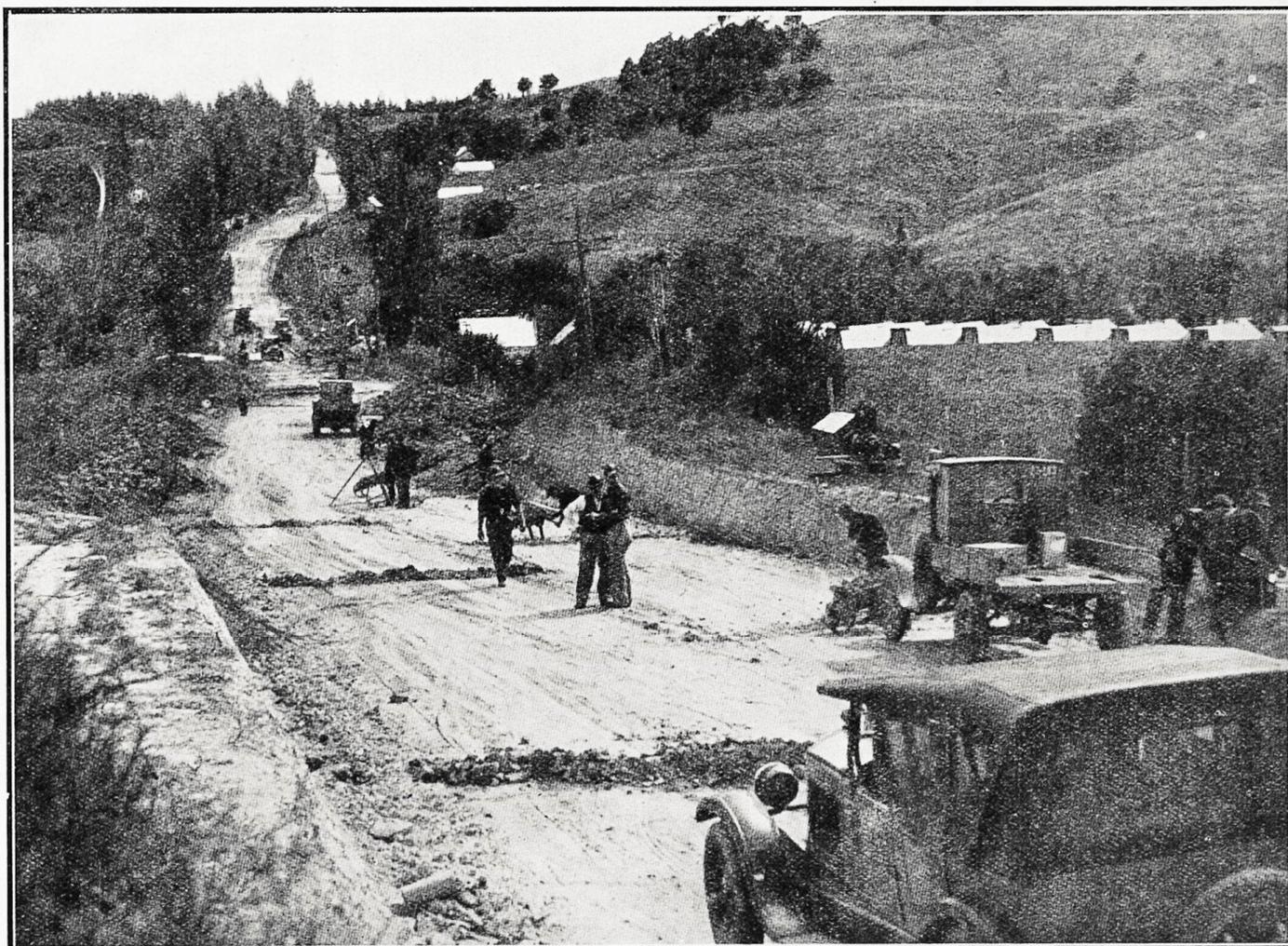
www.nzhistoryfederation.org.nz

May 2025

New Zealand History Federation Inc Conference and AGM 17 to 18 May 2025

Te Hana Cultural Centre, Te Ao Marama,
311 State Highway 1, Te Hana, Wellsford

Hosted by Albertland Heritage Museum Inc

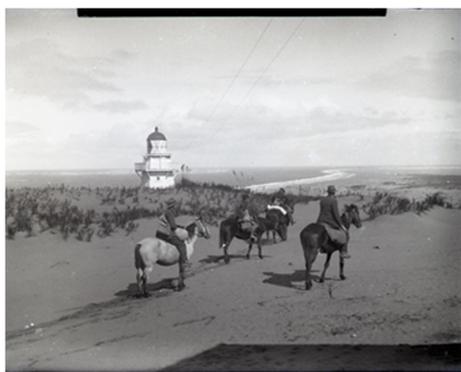


“Work on the road between Te Hana and Wellsford. When the photograph was taken day and night shifts were being worked on the section in foreground, in an effort to complete it before the wet season set in, and allow the transport of metal for winter construction work.” Photographer: Tudor W Collins.

Auckland Weekly News 1 May 1929, Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections AWNS-19290501-49-04

Special Announcement from the Albertland Museum:
**The Guest Speaker for the History Federation Conference
will be Art Historian Mikayla Journée with her talk entitled:**

**Harold Marsh (1876-1948): Photographing, mapping and written
oral histories of Ōruawharo and Northern Kaipara**



(Left to right) Pouto Expedition Easter 1926 (2004.2.00.342) At Pouto Lighthouse (2004.2.00.343), Harold Marsh preparing to photograph an eclipse (2004.2.98.1422).

Over the Easter weekends of 1925 and 1926, W H (Harold) Marsh, a photographer-farmer based on the Ōruawharo River, set about exploring the remote region of Pouto North Head with a small group of friends, taking around 100 glass-plate photographs, mapping the landscape and shorelines, recording Māori place names and Māori oral histories. These were just two trips within a far broader and life-long project, where these like-minded sons of Albertland settlers were enthusiastically and seriously generating an enormous collection of photographs and historical and geographical research centred around the Ōruawharo river in Kaipara.

This talk will introduce the life and works of photographer Harold Marsh and share insights from recent and ongoing research to understand, interpret and contextualise this collection, his partnerships, intercultural relationships and intimacies hidden in archives of manuscripts and letters. What emerges is a stunningly pictured early twentieth century Kaipara, a rich written source of local histories, and both surprising and complex stories of Māori-Pākehā relationality and history.

About the speaker:

Mikayla Journée is a postdoctoral research fellow at University of Auckland working across the disciplines of art history and history, and is a descendent of Harold Marsh. Her research focus is art in relation to oral histories of place, socially engaged public art, intercultural and collaborative creative practices, and themes of mapping and legacies of colonialism in art from Aotearoa.

Remember to complete your registration and we look forward to meeting you all.



2025 Annual General Meeting and Conference of the New Zealand History Federation at Te Hana Cultural Centre, 17th to 18th May

**DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER
DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER
DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER**

I really can't emphasise that enough, folks. The good people at Albertland Museum organising this year's event have had a good response so far, but they would really love for as many people as possible to come along and enjoy their programme which they have worked very hard to put together. One of the main reasons why there is a History Federation in the first place is that we support each other, and take advantage of opportunities like this one to get together, and share ideas and information as to how to strengthen each of our organisations' efforts to promote and preserve local history.

— *Lisa J Truttman*



2025 Subscriptions Update

Last call for the 2025 Subscriptions

Around two-thirds of full member organisations have resubscribed to the NZ History Federation, despite these tough and challenging times. Those who have done so — thank you for your continued faith and support.

If your organisation is intending to resubscribe, and have a vote at this year's AGM — please do so now. Only those organisations who are fully paid members of the History Federation can have a voting delegate each at our general meetings.

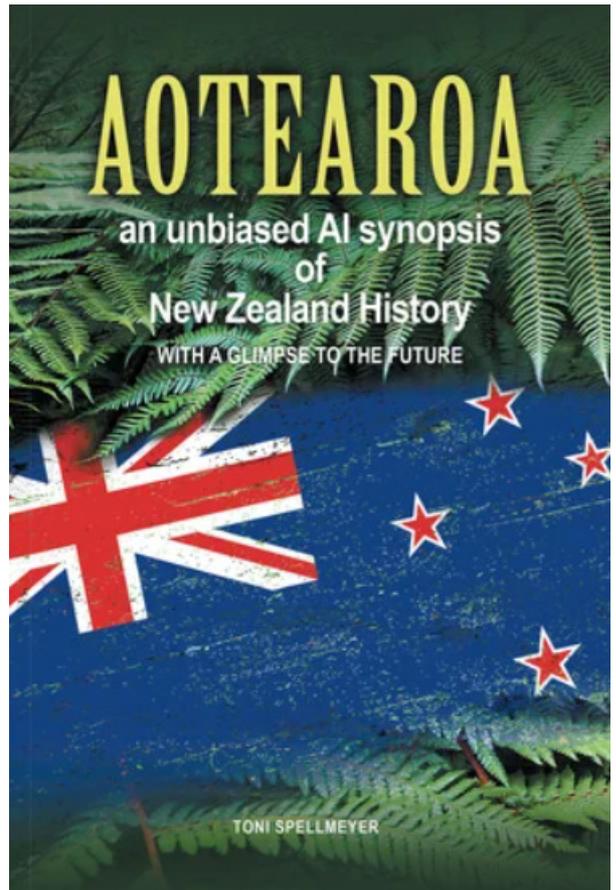
This year, at the AGM, I will personally be supporting a 50% reduction in our subscription rate across the board. I can't speak for the rest of the Federation Committee, who have not had a chance to meet to decide on a recommendation to the AGM this year, but (as a delegate from the Avondale-Waterview Historical Society) I will be voting against status quo. The Federation's accounts are healthy, we aren't producing the overly-expensive hard-copy *NZ Legacy* anymore, and until we decide what other programmes to put in place that would require funding and would benefit our members, I think the subscription rates should be reduced. Had I attended at Taumarunui last year, I would have said the same.

— *Lisa J Truttman*

Authors using AI to write about NZ history: not such a good idea

As a bit of an introductory note, I received an email via the NZ History Federation website from author Toni Spellmeyer last year, where she asked for her book on NZ history to be promoted via our usual channels to members. When I read that she had composed it using Artificial Intelligence (AI) — I was frankly sceptical as to its value as a piece of research material. I asked if it had been peer reviewed, and Spellmeyer had no idea what that meant. My scepticism deepened.

I referred the matter to a friend of mine, Liz Clark, who is a professional writer, journalist, and heritage researcher specialising in Northland history. She took it upon herself to purchase an e-book of the publication, read it, then submitted the following review.



Aotearoa an unbiased AI synopsis of New Zealand history: With a Glimpse to the Future by Toni Spellmeyer, Xlibris 2024

After reading the initial title, I wondered if artificial intelligence could really write history. So, the question initially posed was: Can AI author a book at all? After a few searches via the Google search engine, the answer that best fitted my enquiry was from the website publishdrive.com, which provides a comprehensive guide on using AI as a writing tool.

Publishdrive's answer was straightforward enough: *'Can AI write books? Yes, but not without a human's input and authenticity.'*

In other words, it is human-directed rather than an independent, free-thinking intelligence. Other commentary in several forums pegs AI as useful, but it also has its flaws, such as repetition of phrases, copyright breaches, and poor referencing — all the things one should more than avoid when writing anything about history.

Spellmeyer's attempt at writing a general history about Aotearoa - New Zealand is all about overkill on the adjectives. Phrases such as 'mist covered mountains' are peppered throughout this publication. I avoided the review inserted at the beginning of the book hoping it would redeem itself before I had even got beyond the first chapter.

Chapter one falls down with Spellmeyer's drift into already debunked alternative history.

She writes:

'Have you ever pondered the possibility that the history we accept may not be the complete story? This question became the seed for a remarkable journey into New Zealand's past, leading to the creation of this book. Unlike the traditional narratives that often echo through classrooms and textbooks, this account begins with a provocative inquiry: What if New Zealand had been discovered not just by its recognized Polynesian explorers but also by ancient civilizations such as China and Greece?'

The reference to 'unlike the traditional narratives' but no reference to 'which' narrative is being referred to. One can only assume that Spellmeyer is referring to the curriculum for New Zealand history prescribed by the Ministry of Education for primary to secondary school-level students.

From a reading perspective, the overuse of adjectives and words well above, in many cases, people's average reading level makes it laborious to wade through paragraphs, where some may have to use a dictionary to glean the meaning of some of the words inserted into the text. Moreover, instances of repetition, the downside of AI apps, are easily spotted. Opinions are here and there throughout the book.

The second question I posed for this book was: Would I use this book as a referencing tool in my heritage research? No.

The author seems to be confused about which war was which in reference to the skirmishes between tangata whenua and the British. All of these are well documented in academia and a multitude of books by well-recognised historians such as Michael King, James Belich, Vincent O'Malley and many others out there in the field of award-winning authorship.

In part 2.4 of chapter 2, Spellmeyer writes about the Musket Wars, which started in the early 1800s Ngāpuhi rangatira Hone Hika and resulted in genocide, which is well documented in other publications. In another subsection of the same chapter, 2.6: "Musket and Land Wars and the Struggle for Sovereignty", the author has muddled the wars of the early 1800s to the 1830s with the Waikato and Taranaki Land Wars of the 1860s with that titling.

I have to admit I struggled to read this book. There's no continuity, and it jumps from one subject to the next without addressing a timeline format, which would give better context for what Spellmeyer is trying to get at — that appears to be unclear.

Is it a book on history or a book promoting this country as a tourist destination? It seems to be a confused mix of all kinds of subjects broached within the overview of Aotearoa - New Zealand. The references I expected would be there were not. Instead of good scholarship using sources such as academia, archives and other sourcing such as Papers Past, for example, encountering Wikipedia and other Internet-derived sources led me to the conclusion you might as well save your money because everything referenced as a source is accessible free of charge on the world wide web.

Liz also found another review published this year of the Spellmeyer book which you may find interesting. The reviewer does not mince words right from the title: "A humdrum history conveyed in (literally) robotic prose."

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/toni-spellmeyer/aotearoa-an-unbiased-ai-synopsis-of-new-zealand-hi/>

News from the NZHF members



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF EASTBOURNE PRESENTS

PICTURE PERFECT



**A CENTURY OF PAINTINGS
AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE
EASTERN BAYS**

**A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY
TO SEE ORIGINAL
ARTWORKS AND RARE
HISTORICAL
PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE
SOCIETY'S COLLECTION**

**WEDNESDAY 7 MAY TO SATURDAY 17 MAY.
10AM-4PM DAILY.**

**HUTT ART CENTRE
9-11 MYRTLE STREET, LOWER HUTT**

FREE ENTRY

John Kinder House Society

From the Society's May newsletter. Reproduced by permission of the author, John Webster.

During 2024 the Moths and Butterflies of New Zealand Trust held an exhibition at John Kinder House of photos featuring moths and butterflies. They were superb studies of the varieties we have in the country.

Unknown at the time, and certainly for many years, to the committee and members, is the fact that John Kinder's sister, Fanny, had an attraction to silkworms, which are the hatchlings of a moth. In the Victorian times they were called Ailanthus Silkworms, and Ailanthus

moths, receiving the first part of its name because it ate the leaves of the plant ailanthus. It was also known as Samia Cynthia.

Research on Google informed me that the moth was a saturiid moth used to produce silk, but was not the domestic silkworm, Bombyx mori.

The information of the interest by Fanny Kinder is found in a newspaper report of a meeting of the Acclimatisation Society in Auckland, during August 1868. At the meeting the chairman of the Society was handed a letter requesting that the Society obtain some ailanthus plants and send them to the inquirer in Raglan. The Chairman stated that it was not worthwhile as the rain was too heavy here and the silk produced was so short as to be worthless.

He added that it “had been introduced into Parnell by Miss Kinder, and after two generations there were no more worms than had been started with.”

Fanny Kinder (1820-1909), the eldest of John’s four sisters came with him and their mother to New Zealand. With John, and his wife, Celia, and the mother, she lived at the house in Ayr Street, until John departed for St John’s College in 1872. Fanny and mother then moved to a cottage near Bishopscourt in Parnell remaining there until 1878 when the mother died. Subsequently she lived with John and Celia and the adopted children of their brother, Henry Kinder, and later again at their home, Woodcroft, in Arney Road.

One can only imagine if Fanny’s experiments had been successful how John Kinder House may have become the founding headquarters of a thriving silk industry for New Zealand, with shows by the Moths and Butterflies of NZ Trust being appropriately, “right at home.”

Onehunga and Fencible Historical Society

From their April newsletter

“Unfortunately in the summer of 2025, it has become apparent from the most regular of OFHS members that visit for leisure or to do work for us in Jellicoe Park, around Journey’s End in particular. It has become quite often become an unprecedented dumpsite from mess from squatters. From further research and discussion with committee members, it has become apparent that ‘almost everything under the sun that is inappropriate you can think of’ is happening here, including illegal plant cultivation! Unsurprisingly, evidence has been left behind in the form of a poorly destroyed legal letter as to the identity of the culprit. It’s a tremendous insult and shame that our corner of Jellicoe Park is being defiled and trashed. Despite the fact that outside the Blockhouse there is an emptied daily rubbish bin barely 35 metres away.

“We have also had at one stage, our smoke detection systems obstructed by the squatters. One of our members thought if it wasn’t rectified immediately, it would become a hazard and set the smoke detectors off. Well, the worst-case scenario one evening recently UNBELIEVABLY actually happened. One of our members did a spot check for any damage or rubbish before dusk one night and lo and behold, found an active PVC glue fire on the main

southern entry porch for Journey's End IMMEDIATELY beneath one of our smoke detectors! Emergency Services were called promptly and unfortunately the possible pyromaniac suspiciously lingering around Journey's End when the fire was happening wasn't caught. The team from our local fire brigade came and dealt with the PVC glue fire within moments. This is our VERY first ACTUAL fire in or around our buildings in our 51 year history. It's a terrible shame that we are victims of squatting and arsonists and that our corner of the park is being trashed unnecessarily. With your help and information and visits to Jellicoe Park, we can actively work with Police, our Patrons, Maungakiekie-Tamaki Local Board members, park neighbours and passers-by such as businesses that go past here regularly, to keep an heightened eye on our premises, while we try and work out solutions, to stop antisocial activities happening around our leased premises and another fire or anything else nefarious happening. Since the PVC glue fire, the rubbish problem seems to have been 'permanently resolved' from our member's regular spot checks, but we never know what worst case scenario can happen to us again, if we don't keep our vigilance up and your help."

Mt Albert Historical Society

The Society have introduced a pamphlet to assist locals relating their stories for inclusion in the Society's archives. For more details, contact the Society at

info@mtalberthistoricalsociety.org.nz

WRITING MEMORIES A GUIDE



MT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

info@mtalberthistoricalsociety.org.nz

www.mtalberthistoricalsociety.org.nz

Mt Albert Historical Society collects and tells Mt Albert's stories.

This includes all sorts of written and oral stories - the story of the suburb is the story of the people who live and work here.

Everyday stories are as important as stories about special events and famous people.

Every one of us is full of stories.



We can help you collect your stories by doing a formal or informal oral history interview with you.

We can support you with tips and encouragement in your own story writing or recording.

We would love to add your memories and stories to our archival collection, if you would be willing to share them.



Tuakau and District Museum

Volunteers and members of the community have been hard at work since early March with the project of resiting Feather Cottage on the museum's grounds in Liverpool Street. The photos above are just a snipped sample of many the Museum have put up on their Facebook page of their progress.

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064420402945>

The Feather family had lived in the formerly West Street cottage for almost 50 years.

Waikato Historical Society

After quite an extended period of discussion within their Society, judging by their newsletters over the past few years, Waikato decided at a recent Special General Meeting not to renew their lease of their Hockin House base which expires in March of next year. The Society have had the present lease for 19 years. They are going through a redistribution and deaccessioning process for books and other items within the house while planning for the Society vacating the premises.