

## Appendix: Background Information for Kohukohu Wharf Piles

Source Material:

Google Street View Jan 2013 (accessed 2016)



Wharf piles east of Kohukohu Road, south of Kohukohu township

Source Material:

Google Street View Jan 2013 (accessed 2016)



Area of reclamation, south of Wharf piles and east of Kohukohu Road



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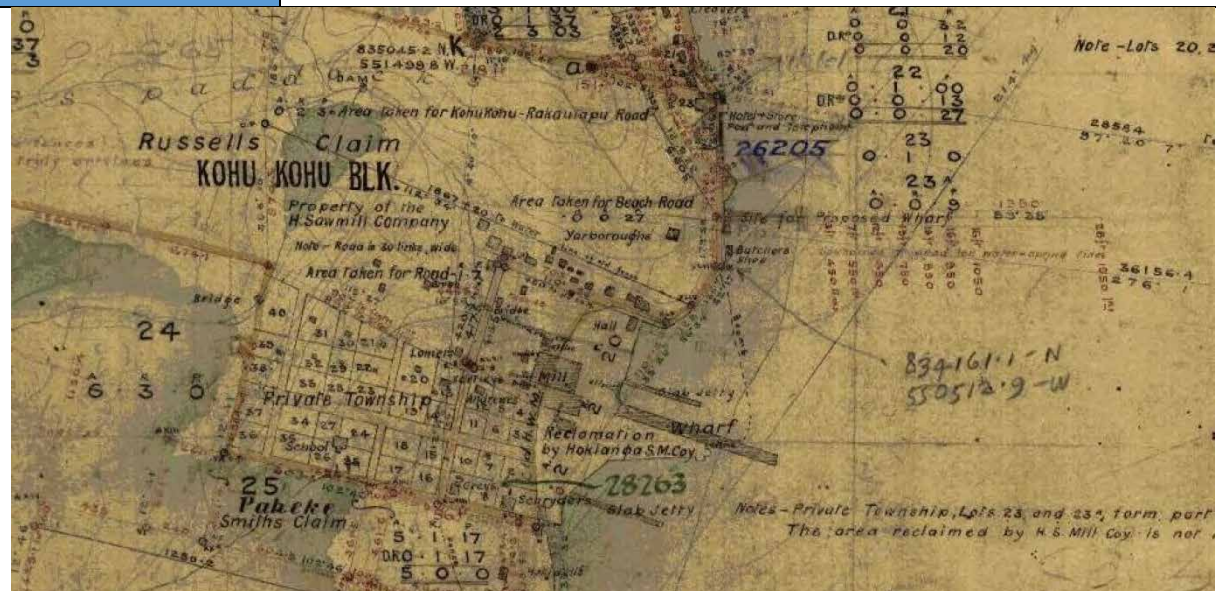
## Source Material:

Excerpt from DP86, Stamped 1879. Note the forest edge depicted in green, and no wharf is shown. The name 'Hokianga Sawmill Co.' is recorded (Source: Quickmaps 2016)



## Source Material:

Excerpt from SO 3976, dated 1885 (Source: Quickmaps 2016)



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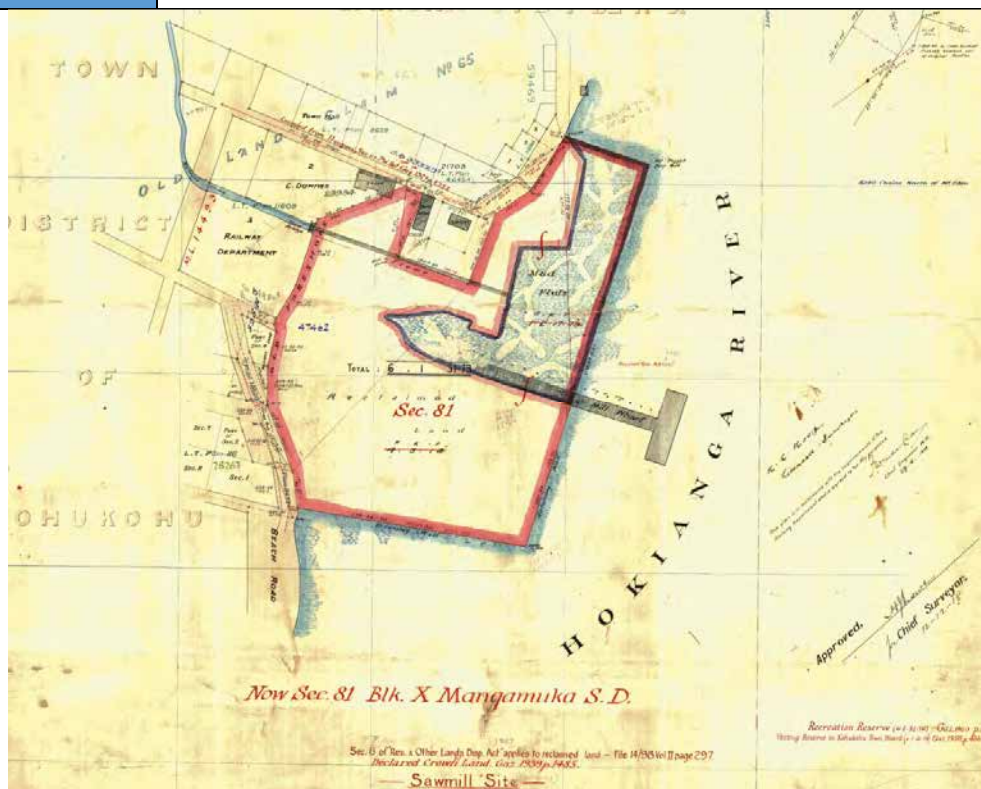
Source Material:

Excerpt from SO 3976, dated 1885 (Source: Quickmaps 2016)



Source Material:

Excerpt from SO20286 dated 1918. The T-shaped wharf, a parallel line of piles, a reclamation retaining wall and a 'flume' are all shown (Source: Quickmaps 2016)





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## Source Material:

Kohukohu, Hokianga, Northland, January 1894, photographed by Henry Wright. By the harbour. Shows the ships 'Zeno' (foreground), and 'Handa Isle', used for timber transportation (Ref: 1/1-020615-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22435083>)



## Source Material:

Photo dated 1890 – 1909. Showing Kohukohu with Mill Wharf (source: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 1142-D109)



## Appendix: Background Information for Kohukohu Wharf Piles

**Source Material:**

Photo dated 1890 – 1909. Showing Kohukohu with Mill Wharf (source: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 1142-D295)

**Source Material:**

The barque Ashmore (left) and the scow Korora being loaded with Kauri spars at Kohukohu. Shows a boom in the foreground. Photograph taken by the Northwood Brothers circa 1910. (Ref: PA1-q-180-58. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22855558>)





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## Source Material:

Taken from the supplement to the Auckland Weekly News (23 JUNE 1910 p011) showing 'A Busy Centre Of New Zealand's Great Timber Industry: Rangiora Sawmilling Settlement, Near Kohukohu, Hokianga, Auckland' (Source: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19100623-11-3)



A BUSY CENTRE OF NEW ZEALAND'S GREAT TIMBER INDUSTRY: RANGIORA SAWMILLING SETTLEMENT, NEAR KOHUKOHU, HOKIANGA, AUCKLAND  
W. Gordon Jones. Photo.

## Source Material:

Photograph by Dawes, Charles Peet c. 1913, showing the remains of the Kohukohu Sawmill with a steamship alongside Mill Wharf (Source: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 1142-D226)



## Appendix: Background Information for Kohukohu Wharf Piles

## Source Material:

Auckland Weekly News (7 April 1937 p045), Serious Fire In North Auckland Township: Sawmill, Box Factory And Store And Kohukohu Destroyed (Ref: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19370407-45-1)



## Source Material:

E. Clark. 16 March 2016. Historical Background Research: Former Saw Mill Wharf Kohukohu. Report for Clough & Associates.

## Early Saw Milling near Kohukohu

George Frederick Russell established himself in the kauri timber trade in 1839 after spending eight years at Horeke, across the harbour east of Kohukohu, with Thomas McDonnell. When Russell died in 1855, the business was taken over by his son-in-law John Webster.<sup>1</sup>

Webster began the process of importing a steam powered sawmill during early 1864. *"Hokianga is likewise to have its own steam saw mill, arrangements for the erection of which are, we have been given to understand being made by Mr Webster and a gentleman in Sydney"*<sup>2</sup> By 1866, Webster had a steam-powered saw mill erected; his brother George Webster advertised at the end of October 1866 for men to work the mill.<sup>3</sup> Webster, through his agent J.S. McFarlane, placed his thriving mercantile and saw milling business, consisting of stores, warehouses and a saw milling plant on the market, through advertisements in December 1869. *"The saw mill and plant are of the best description fitted for turning out timber in large dimensions, and of extreme lengths, with an unlimited supply of kauri logs of the finest quality, at a minimum first cost"*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> RUSSELL, George Frederick', from *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, edited by A. H. McIntock, originally published in 1966. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 23-Apr-09

URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/1966/russell-george-frederick>

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Southern Cross*, 31 March 1864 p4

<sup>3</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 November 1866 col.4 p4

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Southern Cross*, 31 December 1869 col.5 p2

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The mercantile and saw mill business were subsequently taken over by the partnership of Andrewes and Yarborough in 1874.<sup>5</sup> It would appear that Andrewes and Yarborough did not take over the Kohukohu sawmill in 1881 as indicated on the NZAA Site Record Form (O05/229).

### Kohukohu Sawmill and Wharf

According to local history, the saw mill at the Kohukohu site was established in 1879 by “Greenfield and Stewart”.

*“The first power timber mill was built in Kohukohu in 1879 by a Sydney firm, Greenfield and Stewart. The capacity of this mill was 4 million feet a year as was later expanded to 6 million feet a year.”<sup>6</sup>*

This is according to the Kohukohu website (under the webpage title “Mill Town”) and also the NZAA Site Record Form (O05/229). No sourcing is cited for the information provided,<sup>7</sup> therefore the accuracy of this information was further investigated using digital resources and the *Papers Past* website. One reference to the partnership of ‘Greenfield and Stuart’ rather than ‘Greenfield and Stewart’ was found in the *New Zealand Herald* (6 December, 1879) in relation to the erection of a saw mill near Hokianga. *“On the West Coast Messrs. Greenfield and Stuart are erecting an extensive saw-mill near Hokianga, where there are several large squaring stations, a trade in junk and squared timber being carried on with South Australia and China.”<sup>8</sup>* The location is noted as being on the west coast “near Hokianga”.

It would appear more likely that the Kohukohu mill was established in 1878 by Brownlee & Co. An earlier report from the *Auckland Star* (25 September, 1878) refers to the location of the mill as being at Kohukohu and the ownership being under Brownlee & Co. (spelt as Browney) . *“We have already noticed the advent of Southern purchasers; another one has gained a footing at Kohukohu.....At this place, a mill is in the course of erection for Messrs Browney & Co who have undertaken to ship 200,000 ft. of timber South every month....It will be under the management of Mr John MacFarlane formerly of Whangapoua....”<sup>9</sup>*

In February 1878, Marlborough-based company Brownlee & Co., through their agent John McFarlane, obtained the consent of Ngatitiro for cutting rights to the kauri on their land in return for an agreed royalty.<sup>10</sup> In March 1879, after the agreement had been negotiated, an ‘influential agent’ advised Brownlee & Co. that the land could be purchased for the amount of £500, which the company had refused to pay. Consequently, the Chairman of the Hokianga County Council sent a telegram to Wellington requesting for the government to purchase the land from Ngatitiro for the general public, which was acted upon.<sup>11</sup> In early 1878 comes the first mention of the mill being in the course of construction by May.<sup>12</sup> To gain access to the new mill site a large wharf was constructed by Auckland shipwright Mr Lowe, with labour provided by local Maori. *“The wharf is 447 ft. long; piles*

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<sup>5</sup> *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Auckland Provincial District]* Vol. 2, 1902 p616

<sup>6</sup> *Mill Town*, History, Kohukohu.co.nz website: Website URL: <http://kohukohu.co.nz/History/Mill/> Retrieved 16 March 2016

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 December 1879, p6

<sup>9</sup> *Auckland Star*, 25 September 1878, p2

<sup>10</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 27 March 1878, p5

<sup>11</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 5 March 1879, p2

<sup>12</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 2 May 1878, p3



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*16 in. in diameter; commencing with a length of 30 ft. and ending with a length of 57 ft.; mooring and fender piles, complete; double-head stocks 12 by 5. The whole work is finished except some stringers, which cannot be obtained until the mill is at work (expected around Christmas). The depth of water at the end of wharf is 10 ft. at low tide, giving splendid shipping facilities. A tramway has been laid from the mill to the end.*"<sup>13</sup>

The saw mill had been erected in two stages, thus allowing production to begin earlier. *"Steam is derived from two multi-tubular boilers, built in with brick and detached from both engine room and mill. The mill itself has been put up in two portions, the first part having been at work the last six months, and the other is now about ready for a start. The building is two storeys in height, under two roofs, the ground floor being occupied by the saws, and the upper being intended for a manufactory of doors and sashes etc....Turning to the other half of the mill we come first to the German saw, which is to be used for breaking down all logs too large for the twin circulars to cut....I must not forget to mention the wharf which is 450 ft. in length, by 30 ft. in width, and is a most substantial structure, and a credit to the builders being far superior to the usual style of the wharf to be seen at saw mills, and quite equal to most of the Government ones. The piles are all squared totara, and the rest of the timber used in its construction is heart of kauri. Vessels drawing up to 20 ft. of water can load here in perfect safety."*<sup>14</sup>

Brownlee & Co. appear to have sold the operation shortly after construction to the Hokianga Saw Mill Company Ltd.<sup>15</sup> The mill was forced to temporarily shut down operations in May 1882 after a large flywheel weighing 3 tons had come off its mounting and had destroyed the engine and boilers that ran the sawmilling plant.<sup>16</sup> The Hokianga Saw Mill Company continued with the milling operations during the long economic depression (1879 – 1891) until 1886, when the company went into liquidation. The assets, which included the mill and its accompanying wharf, were advertised for sale in 1887, by the appointed company liquidators J. Milne and J. Atkin Connell.<sup>17</sup>

An 1885 plan (SO 3976) shows the layout of the timber mill at that time and 'property of the H. Sawmill Company'. The plan shows the old high-water mark and area of reclamations, infilling a small bay. The NZAA Site Record Form (O05/229) states that mill slabs were overlain by rock and soil on the intertidal flats during the 1870s–1880s over a distance of around 200m, including a large area south of the wharf. This area of reclamation is clearly evident on the 1885 plan, which also shows one large mill building (and possibly two others) to the west of the wharf under the present day grassed area west of Kohukohu Road. There were two other jetties shown and a 'private township' west of the mill, as well as a nearby hall and bridge.

In 1888 the formation of the Melbourne-based Kauri Timber Company<sup>18</sup> brought about a new era in timber milling across New Zealand. The company acquired numerous assets and cutting rights from a multitude of companies including the saw mill, wharf and timber owned by the Hokianga Timber Company at the Kohukohu site.<sup>19</sup> The Kauri Timber Company expanded the site in 1892, with some reclamation work using fill composed of sawdust and ships' ballast for future development.<sup>20</sup> The Kohukohu site experienced a number of temporary shutdowns due to shortages of timber in March

<sup>13</sup> *Auckland Star*, 25 September 1878, p2

<sup>14</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 12 November 1879, p3

<sup>15</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 12 November 1879, p3

<sup>16</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 4 May 1882, p6

<sup>17</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 15 February 1887, p4

<sup>18</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 20 July 1888, col. 4, p1

<sup>19</sup> *The Press*, 27 July 1888, col.3, p3

<sup>20</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 12 March 1892, p1

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1892<sup>21</sup> and September 1895 respectively.<sup>22</sup> By 1911, output at the Kohukohu mill had significantly reduced, with the production at the Rawene Sawmill exceeding that of Kohukohu.<sup>23</sup>

According to the web page 'Mill Town' on the Kohukohu website the mill was the largest in the Southern Hemisphere.<sup>24</sup> No evidence has been found to verify that the site was the largest mill in the Southern Hemisphere in its heyday, however it was certainly a large scale operation until 1911. There are varying accounts about when the Kohukohu mill closed down, was then dismantled and when the fire occurred on the site.

Based on this research it is likely the Kauri Timber Company mill at Kohukohu continued until around November of 1913, when there is a brief mention of the scow *Moa* loading kauri at the wharf for the Kauri Timber Company.<sup>25</sup> The *Wises Directory* from 1914 shows an entry under Kohukohu for the Kauri Timber Company, but no further listings appear after that year.<sup>26</sup> This is also around the time an Order in Council was issued (on 4 August 1913) revoking the Kauri Timber Company's right to occupy the foreshore at Hokianga<sup>27</sup>. Within the same annual report from the Marine Department the Marine Department discusses the taking over of the reclamation done by the Kauri Timber Company at Kohukohu (ibid).

It is possible the original mill buildings were dismantled during 1913 or 1914 based on historic photographs<sup>28</sup>, however the wharf and possibly also the wharf shed appear to have survived, as part of another sawmill operation which was built on the same site as the previous one in 1923<sup>29</sup>. A newspaper article reports on a serious fire in 1937 at Kohukohu, which destroyed the second Kohukohu Sawmill plant and buildings, as well as a box factory that supplied dairy companies in the North (K.D.V. boxes Ltd)<sup>30</sup>. The same article refers to the sawmill as being the largest in the North at this time (ibid). 70 employees in the mill and box factory were put out of work as a result of the fire. It would appear however that the wharf survived the fire<sup>31</sup>, but that the mill was never replaced.

In 1925 the Rangiora Timber mill, which was about 4.8km further along the same shoreline, also met with the same fate. The Rangiora mill was damaged by fire at this time, and a significant portion of the wharf and timber stacks were also burned.<sup>32</sup> This however was a separate event from the 1937 fire at the Kohukohu Sawmill site.

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<sup>21</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 2 April 1892, p4

<sup>22</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 5 September 1895, p6

<sup>23</sup> *Auckland Star*, 25 April 1911, p11

<sup>24</sup> *Mill Town*, History, Kohukohu.co.nz website: Website URL: <http://kohukohu.co.nz/History/Mill/> Retrieved 16 March 2016

<sup>25</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 November 1913, p6

<sup>26</sup> *Wise's New Zealand Post Office Directory*, 1914 Edition, H Wise & Co (NZ) Ltd, p567

<sup>27</sup> *Marine Department: Annual Report For 1913-14*. Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1914 Session I, H-15 pp 5-6 and p60, accessed 07/04/206  
<http://atojs.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/atojs?a=d&cl=search&d=AJHR1914-I.2.3.2.23&srpos=1&e=-1914---1914--10--1-----Okauri+timber+company+kohukohu-->

<sup>28</sup> *Sir George Grey Special Collections*, Auckland Libraries, ref 1142-D226

<sup>29</sup> *Heritage New Zealand Registration Report for a Historic Place: Stone Bridge, Kohukohu*, Heritage New Zealand, List Number 7741

<sup>30</sup> *Sawmill Fire New Zealand Herald*, Volume LXXIV, Issue 22692, 2 April 1937, Page 10

<sup>31</sup> *Sir George Grey Special Collections*, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19370407-45-1

<sup>32</sup> *Auckland Star*, 4 April 1925, p6



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An article reports the former mill site was vested in the Kohukohu Town Board for use as a reserve site by the Railway Department in 1939 <sup>33</sup>. The board planned to put a road across the area and utilise the balance of the land for a children's playground, indicating that the mill wharf was no longer in use and possibly dismantled (ibid). The wharf piles remains are a rare surviving example of a 19th century transportation facility linked with a large scale timber saw mill operation.

Elizabeth Clark

16 March 2016, updated by Adina Brown 7 April 2016

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URL: <http://kohukohu.co.nz/History/Mill/>

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<sup>33</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 13 February 1939, p5