

BANK STREET

From Lava to City Street — Te Ao Maori

About 300,000 years ago, lava from the Hurupaki eruption formed an elevated ridge we now know as Bank Street. Originally known as Pitoitoi, or ‘Scoria Hill’, the ridge was conducive to human settlement as it was above the harbour and low-lying swampy land — known as He Unga Waka, where waka could land (now Laurie Hall Park). Bank Street lies within an area of significance to Maori. Pihoi Pa was at the site of the current Presbyterian Church. According to early settler Robert Mair, writing in 1842, it was not a fighting pa as the stakes used in the pa’s defences were tea tree (Manuka) not more than four inches in circumference.



Above: This fishing lure is a Polynesian design but has used materials from Aotearoa (paua shell). When Maori came to this land they brought with them a Polynesian culture that changed over time to a distinctive Maori culture.

Right: The first interactions between Maori and European took place on the sea. This painting of a ship entering Whangarei harbour with waka in the foreground illustrates this early interaction.



In colonial times the wider location of Bank Street was the site of meetings between rangatira and missionaries, and the place where the first chapel was built in the Whangarei area. In 1839, the missionary printer William Colenso (right) and the then British Resident at the Bay of Islands, James Busby, visited the Whangarei area on the vessel *Black Joke*. Colenso paid five visits to Whangarei, and in April 1840 a timber chapel was built by Maori at Pihoi who Colenso identifies as ‘Abraham, Steven and the chiefs’.

During his time spent in the Whangarei area Colenso met with a number of influential rangatira and tohunga, including Iwitahi, Toka-tutahi, Karekare, Whaka-ariki, Tipene (Steven) and Horomona (Solomon).



Above: A modern scene of waka on the upper Hatea (Hoteo) River near the centre of Whangarei. In pre-European times, He Unga Waka — now Laurie Hall Park — was a launching place for waka.



Above: The eruption of Hurupaki 300,000 years ago created key features of Whangarei, including sites where Maori first settled in the area. One of these later became Bank Street.

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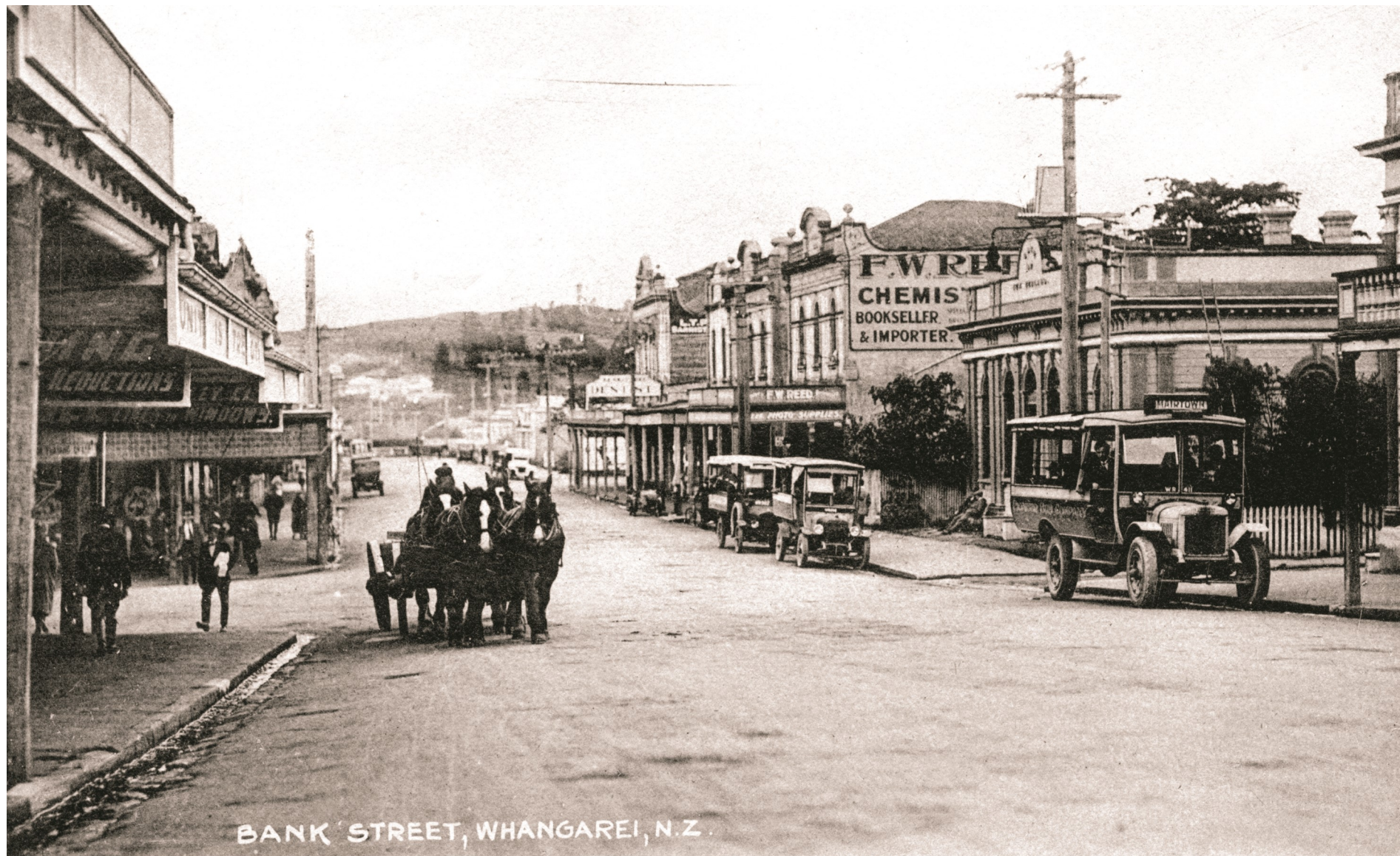
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From Lava to City Street — Colonial Days

Pihoi Pa and He Unga Waka (waka landing) were extensively modified by the development of the colonial town and from the mid-19th Century the swampy scrub land between the basalt ridge and harbour was gradually cleared, drained and filled. European settlers named what is current-



Above: Bank Street towards the end of horse and buggy days.

Right: Two local lads very much at home on Bank Street. The image was taken in 1896 from the bottom of Bank Street looking up the hill. The distinctive white fire tower can be seen in the distance mid-picture while the trees on the opposite side of the road are the original site of Pihoi Pa.



Above: The Post and Telegraph Office on Bank Street which is sadly no longer standing.



Above: Bank Street before the arrival of 20th Century technology like cars or electricity. Bank Street would become the bustling main commercial centre of Whangarei, and the economic centre of the North. The original Whangarei branch of the Bank of New Zealand is on the right of the photo.



Above: The landmark Commercial Hotel at the bottom of Bank Street. With the railway station located just across the road (see small building on right of photo) and the business district within easy walking distance, the Commercial Hotel was perfectly positioned to provide accommodation to visitors to Whangarei.

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From Lava to City Street — Commerce

As the land around Bank Street was elevated and dry it was developed into the commercial centre of Whangarei. Bank Street includes prominent buildings associated with commerce and trade including the Public Trust Office (Former) and the Town Hall (Former). It is also the former financial and banking centre of Whangarei. Bank Street is a mix of buildings and structures that reflect change over time. The area is associated with early Maori and European settlement because of its elevation above the low-lying land and harbour. Bank Street has a multifaceted history —



Above and Right: Two views of the Butter Factory (built 1905). Original owner, James Harrison, saw the advantage of having a ready supply of clean artesian water on-site, as well as proximity to a nearby stream which enabled transportation of the finished product by punt to the Hatea (Hoteo) River for loading onto refrigerated vessels bound for Auckland. Plenty of basalt on-site meant stone was the obvious building material to use — which also kept the building, and the butter, cool in summer.



The former Public Trust Building (left) is of stripped Classical design incorporating columns, pilasters, cornices and other Classical architectural elements — all of which give the building a feeling of security, tradition and permanence. The more modern Public Trust building (above) at 92 Bank Street was built in 1938 and is smaller and less ornate, perhaps reflecting changing business practice and values over the years. Above Right: The Bank Street Chambers building — another Bank Street landmark.



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The Henderson Reeves Connell Rishworth Building (above). Like many buildings in Bank Street it is constructed from masonry; a response to a fire that wiped out many of Whangarei's earliest timber buildings. Masonry also gave buildings an air of permanence and solidity, appropriate for the commercial centre of town.

The Municipal Building (left) was opened in 1913. Ornate in its styling — with distinctive central bell tower, curved windows and arch with portico over the front steps — the building was originally designed with reading rooms, and included a stage and seating for 100 people.



Owned by local businessman J. K. Walker in 1920, this substantial brick and concrete commercial building is situated on a busy corner.

Built in 1923, the former AMP building (left) was designed to take full advantage of the site on the corner of Hunt and Bank Streets. The building's Corinthian columns, portico and large wooden front doors give a sense of tradition and 'bank-like' proportion.



Left and Inset: The original hotel on this site was built in the 1870s, but burnt down completely in the 1890s. It was rebuilt in 1900 and called the Commercial Hotel. The building we know today was re-named the Grand Hotel after the 1953 Royal Tour by Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, who stayed in the hotel with their entourage. The balcony from where the Queen waved to her subjects is still a feature of the hotel.

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