

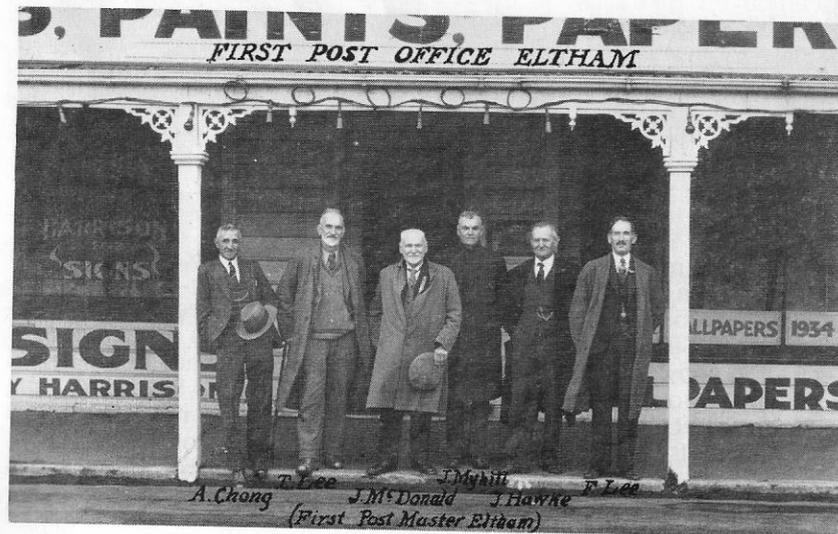
ELTHAM POST OFFICE

A Pub, a Railway Station and a General Store were all homes for the Eltham district's early Post Offices.

With the development of settlement at Mangawhero the first Post Office was established at Mr L. P. Price's Board House on 16 August 1880. Transport of mail at this time would have been by horseman.

With the arrival of the railway in 1881 a contract of £10 a year was granted to the publican to transport the mail from the rail flag station to Mangawhero. Later, this flag station became licensed and was known as the 'Sawmillers' Arms' — the position of Postmaster went to the succeeding owners of the hotel. They were: Mr G. Tish, 1 August 1881; and Mr John Inston, who assumed the position on 1 April 1882.

With the closing of the hotel the Post Office was transferred to Mr McDonald's Store in the Eltham Village Settlement. This store, the first to be established in the village, stood on the corner of Bridge and Railway Streets and has just been demolished. This was Eltham's first official Post Office and John McDonald, as Postmaster, was paid a salary of £5 per annum, the position previously being an honorary one. Mr McDonald's letter of appointment, dated October 1884, from the Chief Post Office in Wanganui advised of the transfer and further stated, 'You will be required to provide a posting box for letters and newspapers. It must be of easy access to the public and a key provided so that no-one but yourself shall



Eltham's first Post Office, McDonald's Store. Old identities gather during Eltham's 50th Jubilee 1934.

be able to clear it. You must provide yourself with a stock of stamps which must be obtained from this office. Purchases of £2 and upwards will enable you to a commission of two percent. You must see that all mails are sealed with wax, both received and despatched'. Management of the store and the position of Postmaster were passed on to Mr R. Aldridge who closed the business in November 1886. As Mr McDonald was unable to obtain a further immediate tenant, the Post Office was transferred across the road to Chew Chong's store.

Mr C. A. Wilkinson, the Store's Manager, became Postmaster — being only a lad at the time — and he was thought to be New Zealand's youngest Postmaster, a position he held for about three years. When he first started as Postmaster he received only £4 per annum, £1 less than the district's first Postmaster. But that did not worry him a bit, he stated, because he didn't touch a penny of it, his employer got it all. That, according to Mr Wilkinson, was a matter of 'no comment' because he pointed out there was nothing to spend money on in Eltham at that time.

On his leaving the store on 21 September 1889 to commence business on his own, the position was passed on to G. Arrowsmith, T. Ecclesfield and W. Allison in succession.

On Christmas Day 1890, the Post Office was transferred to the Railway Station and the Stationmaster, Charles Martin, became Postmaster. Martin upset local people when he told them there would be no more deliveries after hours — a very sore point with settlers who found it inconvenient to come into town in office hours. However, the rule didn't remain in force very long. The residents also were dissatisfied with the Post Office accommodation. Letters were delivered in a little porch that would barely hold four people, being some three by four feet in size. This porch contained a shelf for the convenience of those who wished to obtain a Money Order or write a telegram, both operations having to be performed in full view of those asking for letters. Anyone who was curious could, without the slightest effort, hear every message going out through the telephone.

In 1903, Mr John Searle, Publican of the Branch Hotel, made a gift of part of the hotel land specifically for a Post Office. When he offered the Bridge Street site there was some opposition from Eltham citizens. Many thought the Post Office should be built closer to the Railway Station on land close to the Courthouse. The people felt so strongly about the matter, that there was a deputation heard by the Minister of Public Works, the Honourable Hall Jones. The advocates of the Bridge Street site won their case.

When the Post Office building was officially opened on 12 September 1904, Mr F. H. Barnard, who came from Naseby, became Postmaster. A report on the new building stated that it was quaint and pleasing in appearance, the overhanging roof gave it an old-fashioned look but would add greatly to its chance of being destroyed by fire if any building in the vicinity caught fire. In fact the new Post Office was almost destroyed in this manner before its completion when a shop between the Post Office and Branch Hotel burnt to the ground.

In 1912 extensive additions were added complete with living quarters

and recently in 1958 intensive internal attention was given to the main business area.

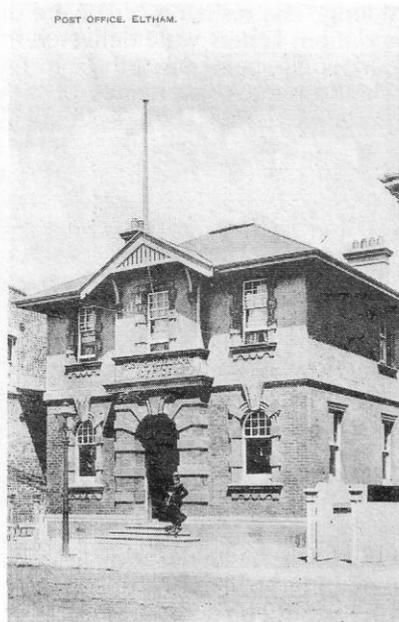
Now in 1984 Eltham's Post Office is 80 years old and is considered one of the oldest Post Offices in Taranaki. Although it was intended for a replacement to be built on the space in front of the new automatic telephone exchange, it is now considered highly likely to be rebuilt eventually on its present central position.

Telephone and Telegraph

Eltham's first telephone link with the outside world occurred in February 1886 with the connection of a line from McDonald's Store to the Hawera Telegraphic Office. This line was provided for the sole use of the Postmaster, Mr Aldridge, to telephone telegrams through to Hawera, being telegraphed on from there.

On transferring to the Railway Station a morse telegraph system was installed. On 4 December 1899 a telephone exchange opened with nine subscribers. This was also housed in the Railway Station Post Office. On transfer to the new Bridge Street Post Office, subscribers increased to 26. A satisfactory system of toll calls didn't really become effective until 1928 due to technical difficulties.

A new automatic telephone exchange came into action 30 October 1957. This exchange, built on the site of the old Athenaeum Hall by the Moore Construction Company of Eltham has a total of 1,500 available connections.



Eltham's Post Office for the past 80 years.



Eltham's old manual telephone exchange — upstairs in Eltham Post Office 1936-37.



Eltham Post Office Staff taken July 1909.
Back row: H. Tempero, C. Harrison, W. J. Jackson, C. A. Corder, A. E. Clark.

Middle row: F. H. Barnard (P.M.), F. K. Hyde.
Front Row: F. Shearer, J. Hornblow, R. McLeod.

ELTHAM CO-OPERATIVE DAIRY COMPANY

A group of Eltham settlers interested in forming a dairy factory met at Mr Kenah's building in October 1886. Extensive investigations prior to the meeting had been carried out regarding building and machinery requirements. The meeting reached a decision that a thorough canvas of the district should be undertaken regarding milk supplies before any definite plans could be acted on.

Meanwhile Chew Chong announced his decision to commence his riverside butter factory operations. This alternate option requiring no capital outlay by the struggling settlers was readily accepted. Many farmers profited greatly by consigning their milk to Chong's factory. One of the district's earliest settlers claimed he now received £2 1s 3d a week for his milk, this previously being only £1 5s 0d. But grumbling soon became evident, the farmers expecting higher prices for their milk. They considered 2d a gallon not adequate.

At a meeting held at the old town hall in May 1892, it was decided that serious consideration be given to the establishment of a co-operative factory. To counter the threat, Chew Chong offered to raise his price for milk to 2½d a gallon for a three-year supply, and on rejection of this, to 3d for five years. This new offer was favoured by many farmers and almost sounded the death knell of the proposed new factory.

However, the farmers, encouraged by Mr C. A. Wilkinson, decided to continue on in their own independent way and at a further public



The Eltham Dairy Company's first factory built on Mountain road — 1892.

meeting at Mr George Moir's premises on 14 May 1892, under the chairmanship of Mr N. Muir, the Eltham Co-operative Dairy Company came into being.

At the meeting an offer was received from Mr Chew Chong offering to sell his factory at a reasonable price, but it was decided to continue on with the new building with a view to commencing the manufacture of cheese. With the articles of association completed, the co-operative dairying venture was born. Directors elected were: J. Penny (Managing Director), J. H. Murray (Secretary), G. Moir, H. R. Bennett and J. Henwood. The nominal capital was £2,000 and every supplier had to become a guarantor to the Bank of New South Wales, Hawera, for the money borrowed. On Mountain road four acres of land were purchased from Mr W. G. White, for £170 and a small factory was constructed for £275. A cottage costing £90 was erected for Mr James Dawson, the factory manager. Out of his salary of £175 he was expected to pay the wages of any additional factory labour employed. Mr Murray's secretarial salary was set at £15.

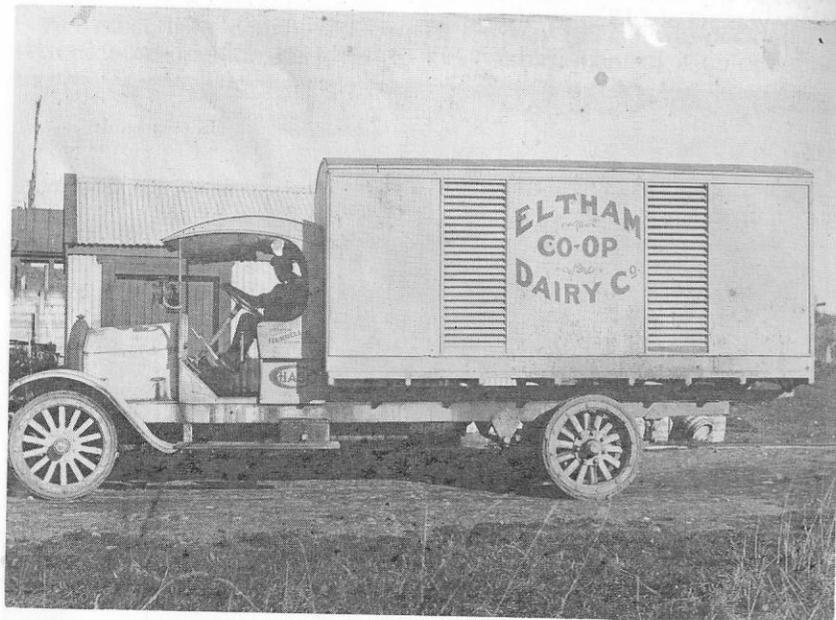


A window display of Eltham dairy produce — Southsea, England.

For the first year milk was paid for at the rate of 3½d per gallon and 77 tons of cheese were manufactured. This enabled a farmer with a 50-acre holding to realise about £50 a month. Advice was received that one of

the first shipments consigned by the "Arawa" to Glasgow sold for 54 shillings a cwt., only 4 shillings less than the best Scottish cheese — quite a feather in the cap of the new company.

A 320 gallon an hour capacity Burmeister and Wein separator was ordered in 1893 as butter proved to be more profitable early and late in the dairy season. In following seasons the output became so large that night shift had to be worked — an uneconomical arrangement so factory extensions were put in hand. When the new separator was installed the company made its first five tons of butter plus 133 tons of cheese. In 1899, 94 tons of butter were produced in addition to 63 tons of cheese. Butter continued to be the main product until the 1912-13 season. The creameries were then converted to the now more profitable cheese manufacture. From this time cheese manufacture steadily increased outstripping butter by a large margin.



Eltham Dairy Company truck in the 1920's — Ned Carlisle at the wheel.

Considerable expansion followed over the years as the company extended its operations. Creameries were built at Jerseydale and Te Roti in 1900 costing a total of £1,587. The expansion followed two years later with creameries at Rotokare, Rawhitiroa and Maata and with the building of three factories at Wingrove, Cheal and Hunter Roads.

Another large butter factory was constructed in 1909 at the end of Graves Street. This factory used its own power scheme utilising a water

race beginning from behind Hutton's and driving a power plant at the base of twin concrete shafts adjacent to the factory.

The cheese curing rooms built beside the railyards complete with rail sidings were constructed in 1918. The then Governor General, Lord Buxton, laid the foundation stone on 5 October 1912. These rooms were extended in 1918, the extra storage being necessary due to the lack of shipping during the First World War. Waihapa factory, also built in 1918, gave the company 11 Branches.

In August 1952 the company opened a milk sugar factory using whey, the by-product of cheese manufacture. Mr Gunner Berger of Sweden was appointed manager. Declining prices caused the venture to close in July 1958. With the building demolished and the plant sold, the site is now occupied by the milk powder plant.

Over the years the forms of transport used in consigning milk to the nearby factories underwent many changes. The horsedrawn dray resulted in many a tall story being told in later years of the races to the factory, the runaway horse leaving a trail of destruction of shattered dray fragments and strewn milk cans scattered down the road and of the larger waggon complete with brake that did not always hold. The horse that moved the cart forward with the can betwix't stage and dray, followed by the manager's critical sniff for quality in each can and the closely observed weighing. Careful examination of the test sheet posted in a nearby window caused many a critical judgement of a neighbour's farm management. Next around to the whey tank for the jealously converted fair share, for some held the privilege of a non-pig keeping supplier whey. Many a heated dispute raged when more than a just share should be taken. A factory hand stood by to see fair play. After catching up on all the latest news our worthy farmer, with a clatter of hooves and milk cans set off homeward bound.

Later the age of the motor lorry, often an old converted motorcar, especially necessitated by the commandeering of the more modern farm truck in war-time meant little change in the system. These old vehicles, the maintenance a god-send to the local garages, caused the proprietors to weep inwardly on the introduction of the milk tanker. And with the advent of bulk milk collection came a whole new reconstruction of the dairy industry — amalgamation.

Mr L. V. Lloyd who joined the Eltham Dairy Company in 1939 as Secretary, retired on the amalgamation, at that time filling the position of Secretary Manager.

Taranaki Dairy Company

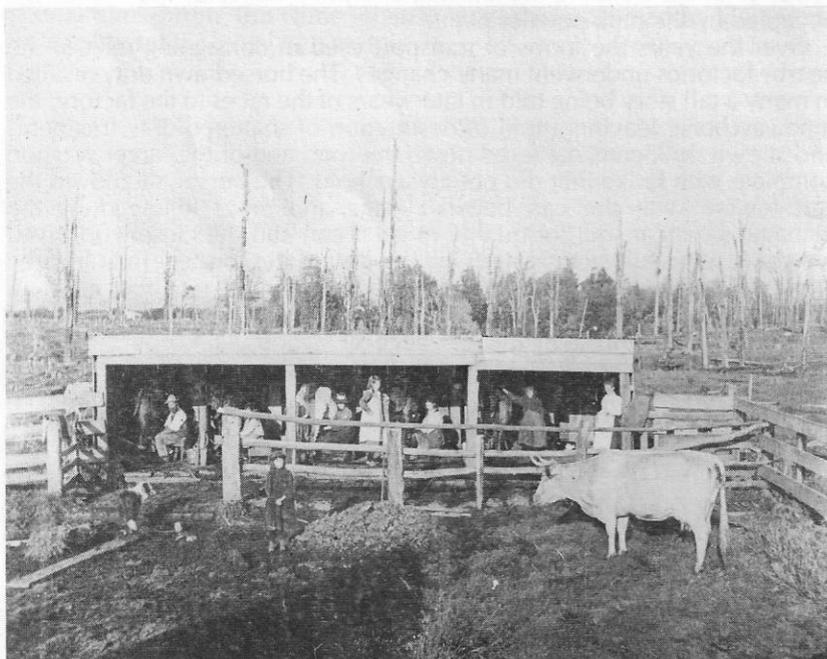
Due to the modernisation of transport, consolidation of companies took place to create greater efficiency and profitability. With the merger of Eltham, Stratford, Normanby and Cardiff Companies on 1 June 1965, the possibility for the construction of a modern milk drying powder plant became a reality.

This complex, utilising part of the old Collingwood Street curing rooms in Eltham, commenced production in 1966. Large storage buildings were erected either side of the plant and the old Wilkinson Bulk Store was purchased. A new modern workshop across the road serviced a fleet of

40 vehicles. A large modern laboratory next door, north of West Street, has also been constructed. The Eltham milk drying plant produced 11,090 tonnes of milk powder during the 1982-83 season.

Kiwi Dairy Company

A further amalgamation of companies took place on 1 June 1983, the Taranaki and the South Taranaki based Kiwi Company combining under the latter name. It is intended that all aspects of dairy goods manufactured will be concentrated at the Hawera-based Kiwi complex.



Family milking — a typical early central Taranaki milking shed and cow yard.

An Eltham settler tells us of a new, cheap and durable paint that he says would come into general use with the farmers if they once tried it. He says it is made as follows:

“Take eleven gallons of milk and mix up in it 3lb of the best cement. Add colouring matter to give it the desired tinge. Keep the mixture well stirred, to keep the cement from settling and paint in the ordinary way with a brush. Skimmed milk may be used, but whole milk is said to be better.”



Taranaki Dairy Company's spray powder factory, Collingwood Street.



I. J. Bridger's Cycle and Motor Store, Bridge Street

EARLY TOWN DEVELOPMENT



Mr R. A. Adams' first store on Bridge Street West.

The arrival of Mr G. W. Tayler in 1886 to open a drapery store in Bridge Street, opposite Chew Chong's premises assisted the slow early development of the township. Developing into a general store, this firm with the aid of packhorses, also supplied goods to the back country. Later, growth of business resulted in a larger two-storied store being built and the establishment of a small store at Mangamingi. Mr Adams and a partner, Mr A. T. Scrivener, eventually took control of this local business.

Mr C. A. Wilkinson, on reaching the age of 21, commenced business on his own behalf. In October 1889 he purchased Mrs Brown's Ngairi General Store adjoining the sawmill and a month later opened a 'cash basis' business in Eltham. Mr George Buckridge as a partner joined the venture which was located on the present entrance to Bridge Street east. Later Charles Wilkinson commenced business in Eltham on his own account, opening his 'Beehive Store' on a site adjoining the present Coronation Hotel.

Messrs. Adamson and Pease in 1889 took over Chew Chong's butchery which they had previously rented. This business was soon acquired by Messrs. Stanner Bros. who had their daily meat requirement railed from Hawera. In this store an armed renegade who terrorised the town for a

week, was captured by Constable Simpson with the assistance of Mr T. Stanners. The culprit was they conveyed by bullock waggon to the nearest lock-up at Stratford. Messrs. W. and D. Buckthought later also commenced a butcher's business on the Mountain road.

Chew Chong also operated a bakery and when two new baker's ovens opened in town a price war developed, a loaf of bread dropping from 7d to 5d.



C. A. Wilkinson's early store on Bridge Street.

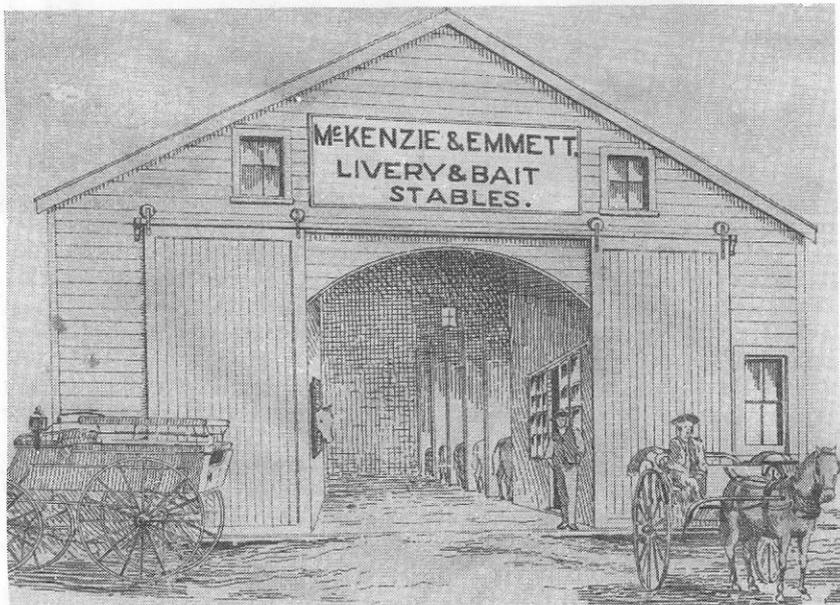
With the development of land and demand for stock, Messrs. Nolan and Tonks erected saleyards in 1886 on land next to the Eltham Hotel — a popular after sale meeting place.

The blacksmiths, essential members of the community until the advent of the motorcar, operated a number of forges about the Village. The first of these run by a Mr Williams opposite the railway station was taken over by George Moir when he closed his smithy on the Mountain road. Neilson's forge, which was located opposite the entrance to Chew Chong's riverside factory, was later relocated on the site of Wilkinson's old bulk store next to the railway yards. Heron and Thompson later operated this blacksmith's business.

Mr John Dudeck a blacksmith, horse-shoer and gunsmith conducted business on the corner of Bridge Street and North Street and later opened a forge at Rawhitiroa. On the Farmers' Co-op site another blacksmith's

shop, Young and Paddy Shibanan's was located, until it transferred across to the opposite side of Bridge Street. Burke's forge stood opposite the entrance to King Edward Street, and Fitch's later Retter's Eureka Carriage Works, was located in front of the present telephone exchange. A forge was also located at Briant's Coachbuilding Works on the Cornwall Street corner and later became a tyre re-treading plant in the motorcar age. Eltham's last blacksmith's business which was operated by Mr Reg Secker and located in the carpark beside the squash courts closed on 24 February 1961.

Three livery stables existed at one time. The Railway Stables were located at the rear of the Eltham Hotel and it was from here the Opunake Coach departed each day. A stable keeper here for a number of years was Mr Chas Gallie. The Coronation Stables in Bridge Street extended right through to Bourke Street adjoining the site of the present police station. A later smithy operated by Mr Bill Wilson also occupied this site. The Commercial Stables in High Street opposite Stanners Motors were operated by McKenzie and Emmett and, during the ownership of W. J. Garry, were destroyed by fire and re-built. The last owners of these stables were Fyfe and Paterson. A one-time stable manager was Mr Mick O'Halloran who for many years was a well-known cab driver.



McKenzie and Emmett's Livery and Bait Stables where conveyances were available at the shortest notice. Horses bought, sold or exchanged.

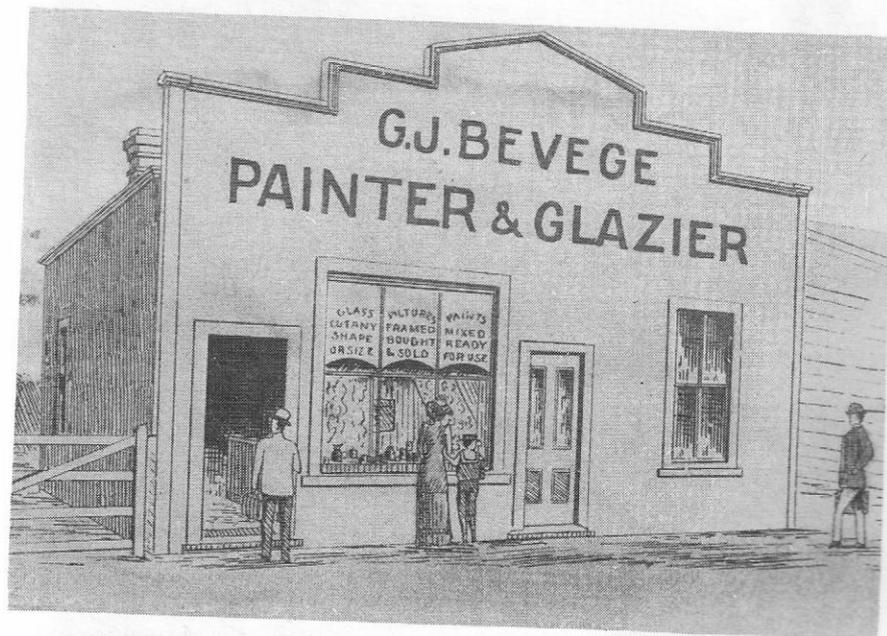
To meet the demand of the growing township, a string of timber yards sprang up along High Street from Chapman Road (King Edward Street) to Moir Street corner. Willy Bros. yard was located on the site of the present library and Page's Joinery stood opposite the Presbyterian church.

Mr D'Arcy Hamilton, former school headmaster, also opened a yard in this vicinity.

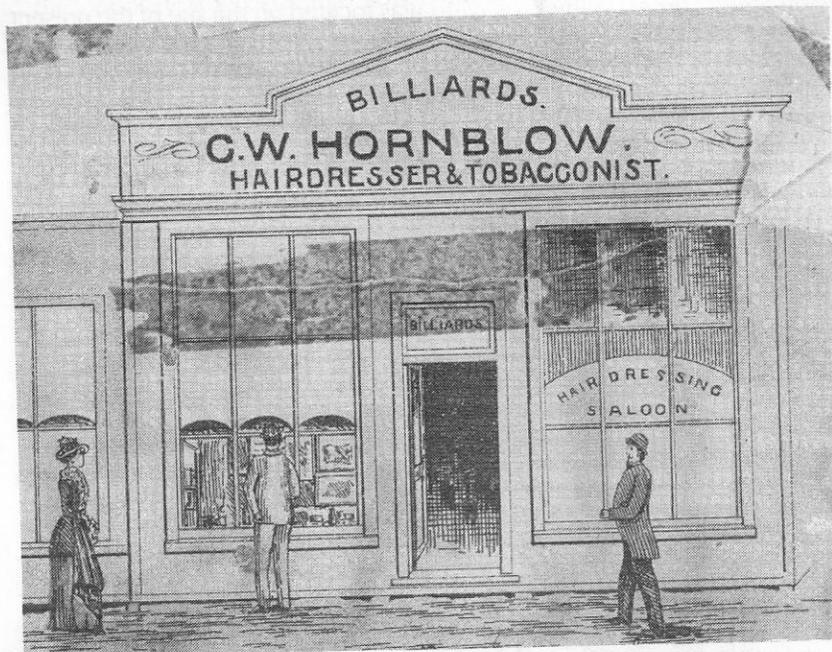
Some of the early shops included the Eltham Oil and Colour Store, a painter and paperhanger's shop opened by Mr Bevege. Tartalini's Hairdressers and Tobacconist's complete with a billiard room was later shifted to make room for the Post Office. It now serves as Murray's Joinery on High Street. The Eltham Hairdressing Saloon, previously owned by Mr Hornblow, offered hair cutting and shaving 'under the hands of a first class Artist from Auckland'.

Kemp's Cabinetmaker's shop was also shifted from Bridge Street to York Street, now flats, to make way for Wilkinson's new building. Saddler's shops were opened by Mr C. Meuli and Mr Fred Harvey. C. Thompson, a Wheelwright and Coachbuilder, offered vehicles 'guaranteed strong and durable enough for Taranaki roads'.

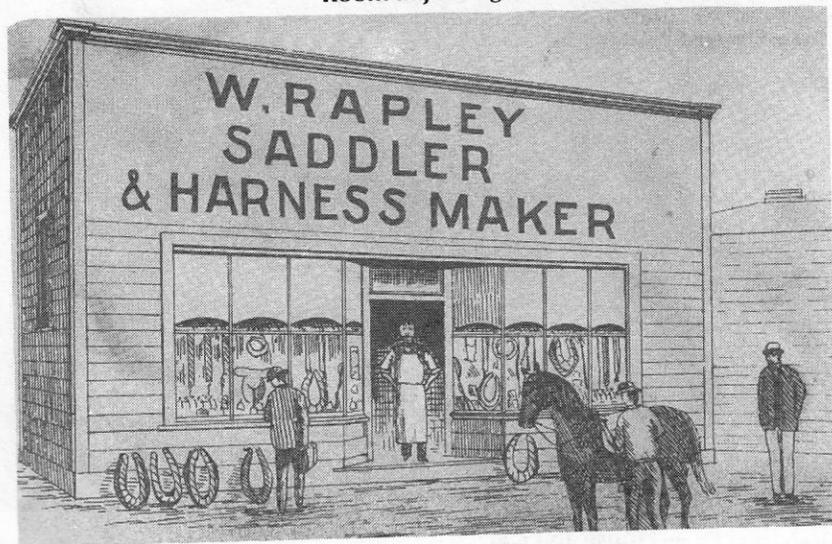
By 1895 the town had grown considerably and a meeting was called to set the hours of business. It was finally decided unanimously that Thursday should be observed as a half-holiday and that all business should close at 1 p.m. on that day. On other days they would close at 6 p.m. except Saturdays when they would close at 9.30 p.m.



C. J. Bevege — House and Carriage Painter, Glazier and Paperhanger.



C. W. Hornblow — Hairdresser and Tobacconist, First Class Billiard Room adjoining.



W. Rapley — Saddler and Harness Maker.

ELTHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Eltham Vigilance Committee

The Eltham township lying within the northern boundary of the Hawera County Council always felt their needs for roading and general services were badly neglected. A Vigilance committee with Mr G. W. Tayler and Mr Buckridge as Secretary was appointed by the citizens in 1891 to protect their interests. Representations were also made to Government departments drawing attention to the deficiencies of rail, postage and law and order services. In mid-January 1898, this committee was replaced by a newly formed Chamber of Commerce which took over the role of public watchdog.

Efforts to form a Borough Council were hampered by the lack of the required number of citizens so at a public meeting held on 29 May 1901 a number of farmers agreed that their properties be included within the Borough boundaries.

Eltham Borough Council

On 10 October 1901 a proclamation in the New Zealand Gazette constituted the Borough of Eltham. Immediately steps were taken to conduct a poll to elect a Mayor and Councillors. Bunting flew on election day, 31 October, and cabs and carriages were seen all day carrying voters to the polls. Lazy electors were given every encouragement by the two Mayoral candidates, Mr George Washington Tayler and Mr James



Eltham's first Borough Council.

Back row from left: J. W. Middleton (Town Clerk), T. Runciman, R. S. Allen, T. N. Blackhall, G. Fitch, H. Thompson.

Front row: G. Martin, H. P. H. Graves, G. W. Tayler (Mayor), W. H. McGarry, C. Potts

Boddie. Mr J. Middleton, local solicitor and the Returning Officer for the day, announced the results with Mr Tayler as Eltham's first Mayor, his rival Mr Boddie only 20 votes behind.

The nine Councillors elected from the 24 nominations were Messrs. W. H. McGarry, H. P. H. Graves, C. Martin, C. Potts, R. S. Allen, T. N. Blackhall, H. Thompson, G. Fitch and T. Runciman.

The newly elected Council met shortly afterwards on 4 November at the Bank Chambers and resolved to meet again in seven days to appoint a Town Clerk. At this meeting, Mr W. J. Tristram of Hawera was appointed to the position from 14 applicants, his salary being fixed at £120 a year.

The proposed expenditure until 31 March 1902 was estimated at £264 so until a rate could be struck, an application was made to Government for a £200 loan. With the Council now established, the business of forming bylaws began relating to the licensing of carters, stage coaches, pedlars, hawkers and milk vendors.

The problem of sanitation also arose. The Council resolved that a night-soil letter box be provided and affixed to the Borough Council Office. One ratepayer, possibly a zealous gardener, later necessitated the sending of a reminder notice, notifying him to leave his W.C. unlocked to enable the contractor to carry out his duty. Bicycle riding on the footpaths also prompted the appointment of Mr J. Stobues as the Borough Inspector of Nuisances. Registration fees for dogs were set at 2s6d for working dogs and 10s for others and Mr Hardy the Saddler, provided collars at £2.10s. per 100.

A rate of 1½d in the pound was struck in April 1902 based on a capital value system with the Borough being revalued on 1 April 1903.

A Borough foreman appointed in April 1902 received 7s a day plus a daily horse and dray allowance of 2s6d. Contracts were awarded to stone breakers at 3s6d a cubic yard to enable street improvements to be made.

In order to solve the need for Chambers in which to transact Municipal business, land was purchased on Bridge Street opposite the entrance to Cornwall Street. With the aid of a special Government subsidy, the old Bank of New Zealand premises were acquired for £150 and Page's Joinery Company's offer of £165 to remove the old building to the new site with the aid of bullock teams was accepted. Here the building was extensively renovated ready for the grand opening on Coronation Day, 9 August 1902. A procession took place led by 'The Band', followed by the Eltham Volunteer Rifles led by Captain James Boddie.

Now established in the new Borough Chambers, the Council deliberated the future development of the township, the drafting of further new bylaws, the formation of new streets and their upkeep, the problems of street lighting and the provision of a water and a drainage system.

Douglas Stewart, author and former literary editor for the Bulletin, is the son of an earlier Eltham solicitor, Alex Stewart. He was born and educated in Eltham and related his early day experiences in his two books 'The Seven Rivers' and 'Springtime in Taranaki', the latter first published this year. Douglas Stewart now resides in Sydney.



Eltham Borough Council's first Municipal Chambers, previously the first Bank of New Zealand removed from its original site. The Mayor, G. W. Taylor, centre.

Eltham's Street Lights

When out and about at night in early Eltham, the townspeople soon acquired the habit of carrying some form of illumination in order to avoid a tumble over the stumps. Either a hurricane lantern or a home-made bush lantern was carried. This latter was made simply by heating the base of a bottle and then plunging it into cold water, which generally snapped cleanly off. A candle placed into the inside neck of the bottle provided a good light, even in very windy conditions.

A number of street kerosene lights were placed in prominent positions about the village in 1898 and these were first lighted on the occasion of a visit of the Premier Richard Seddon. Steps were taken by the newly formed Borough Council to upgrade this street lighting by the addition of two new lights. The Council surfacemen were instructed to erect two 6" square rimu posts ready for the local tinsmiths, Brown and DeLauney to erect a pair of their locally-made lamps.

The village lamplighter, Mr Harry Marchant, however, took exception to this added burden to his duties and refused to service these new lamps, so the nightwatchman was requested to attend to them meantime. Lighting the lamps in wet windy weather, clambering up a ladder would have been far from an easy task, let alone having to extinguish them at a later hour.

In May 1902 tenders were called for the position of a new lamplighter to provide oil, glasses and to keep the lamps in repair, the lights to be lighted from sunset to 11 p.m. except on moonlight nights. The tender of Mr J. McNab was accepted at 35s a lamp per year for the village's dozen or so lights. A later lamplighter, Mr George Heaven, gave reason for Eltham's street lights to earn the hallowed title of 'The Lights of Heaven'.

In 1903 the Borough Council was offered an electric power scheme which involved harnessing the nearby Waingongoro River. This private concern required to hold the privileges of power supply for 21 years. The Council rejected the offer. They then investigated raising a loan to provide their own scheme, but a public poll opted for gas lighting instead. Controversy raged over the question of private or municipal ownership and several years elapsed before agreement was reached in favour of the Council proceeding.

The Municipal Gas Works, built in North Street with a £10,000 Government Loan were opened on 8 May 1911. Seven-and-a-half miles of gas mains were laid and a system for automatically lighting and extinguishing the street lights was installed at the works. At the time of opening, all the public lamps in Bridge Street and under the verandahs had been erected, the citizens admiring the soft white illumination in contrast to the dismal reddish-yellow light of the kerosene lamps.

Big improvements were yet to come as Eltham's citizens were responsible for the introduction of electricity to a large area of Taranaki with the formation of the Taranaki Electric Power Board.

Electric lighting was first switched on in Eltham on Saturday, 13 December 1924, and Bridge Street became a blazing whiteway. Hundreds of people lined the street shortly after 7 p.m. awaiting the revolutionary event. At 7.45 p.m. Eltham received its first flash of current and all the bulbs in the shops, ready switched on, blazed with light. The shopkeepers were exalted for at last the white light had arrived. Crowds peered into the windows to have a glance at what was described as 'Eltham's big Christmas present', for now the town could renounce its name of the worst lighted town in Taranaki.

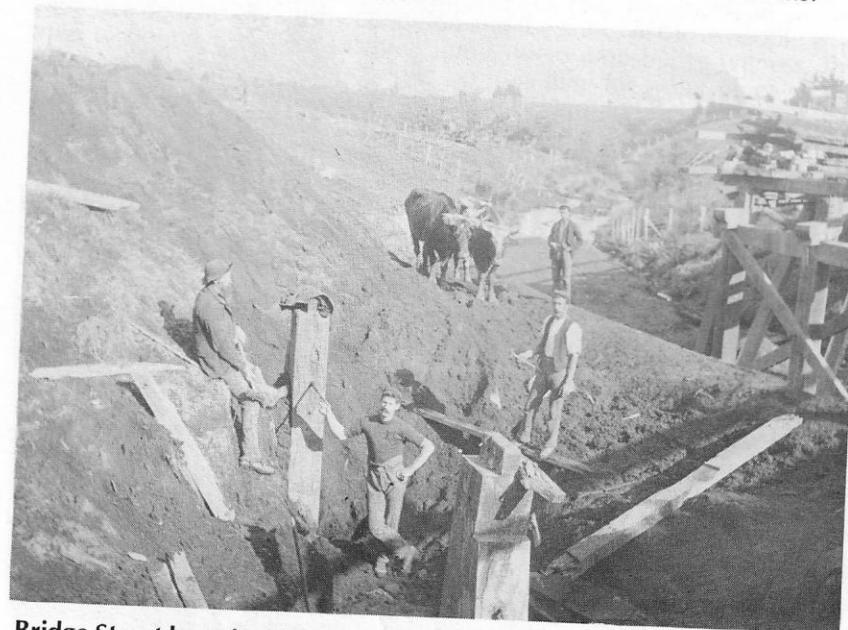
Although the street lights of Bridge Street were electrified, the old gas lights still burned that night with a mere sickly glow.

The Streets of Eltham

When the newly-formed Council took control, many of the town's streets were in a primitive condition, mere muddy or dusty tracks, depending upon the season. Over the years, after numerous protests, the Hawera County Council had made token efforts to metal Bridge Street. The steep approaches to the bridge became impossible for bullock-drawn waggons to navigate in winter conditions.

Further complaints proved successful, for in April 1897 the old wooden bridge was removed and work commenced on the building of a long concrete culvert. With this completed, a major earthworks contract began to fill the deep gully to form an easy grade on each side. This meant shifting an immense amount of spoil, mainly from the vicinity of the entrance to York Street where the Westpac Bank now stands and from

below the entrance to Cornwall Street. The bulk of this work had to be performed manually with pick and shovel and wheelbarrows, although it was relieved to an extent by the use of small trucks on wooden rails.

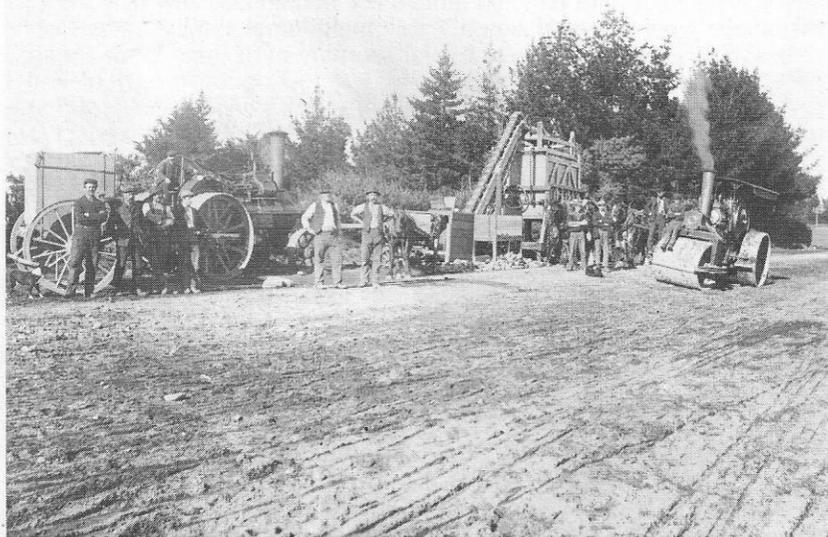


Bridge Street loses its identity — the removal of the bridge to make way for the new concrete culvert — 1897.

Even after this work, difficult conditions prevailed. In dry windy weather clouds of dust swept through the streets and in wet weather they were inches deep in mud, through which pedestrians had to pick their way when crossing from one side to the other. High Street was particularly bad. The long line of shops, with Bridge Street at a right angle, provided a perfect trap for dust which was piled inches deep in doorways.

Then Eltham led the way in New Zealand with the introduction of sealed Macadam roadway in this country. Mr C. A. Wilkinson, the originator of the project, first observed this method of roadmaking while on a visit to the United States in 1902. On his return to Eltham, the Borough Council, of which he was a member, was considering methods to solve the problems with its streets and he recommended the use of this method. The Council agreed to this suggestion and in February 1906 tenders were called for mixing and laying 2,000 cubic yards of tarred Macadam in Bridge Street between High and Railway Streets. High Street between London and King Edward Street was also included in the contract.

Work was delayed by rough weather which seriously delayed the arrival times of steamers carrying supplies of tar from Wellington. A



Sealing High Street 1906. High Street and Bridge Street became New Zealand's first sealed roadways.

foundation of 5" of pre-tarred road metal was laid and compacted upon the existing roadway on which was spread a 3" layer of similarly treated small stones and chips. The whole process was topped off with a good layer of sand.

On completion of the work in December, the results were considered very satisfactory, so the Council continued this progressive programme of street sealing.

Water and Drainage

With a rapidly growing population and a developing health hazard, an urgent need arose to provide a suitable water supply and drainage system.

A poll conducted on 10 February 1903 gave the Council support to apply for a Government loan of £16,000. Two weeks later Messrs Climie and Fairhall were appointed Engineers with instructions to have work commenced as soon as possible. Surveys were conducted and a water supply scheme to pipe water from an intake from the Waingongoro River near Finnerty Road was approved.

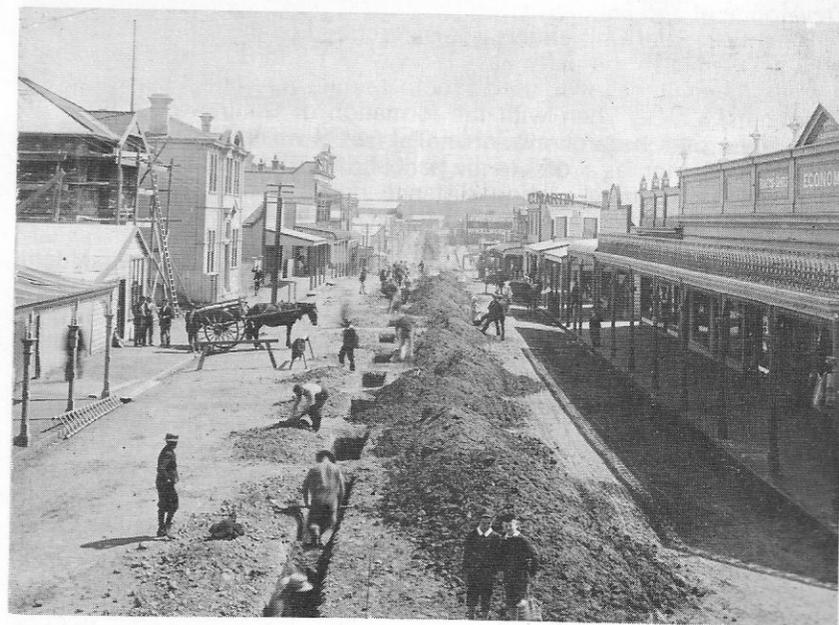
Supplies of pipe for the drainage began arriving in November but it was 1 March 1904 before the contractor Mr Sangster began opening up the first trenches in Bridge Street. In June contracts were let for the digging of drains, laying pipes and forming the headrace and tunnel.

The Eltham Argus soon reported:

"Those who are partial to wading in the mud had a great opportunity last week to indulge in their favourite amusement. The streets of Eltham were in a delightfully slushy condition and the antics of those people who tried to bound the street in three jumps were amusing to witness. The roads will shortly again be opened up, this time for water pipes so the highways will soon be worse than better. There appears to be singular fate that all road cuttings should be made in the depth of winter."

Complaints also became voiced on the dangers at night of unmarked open drains. One young lady had to be rescued on a dark night in King Edward Street from the depths of a drain. She was fortunately uninjured 'but her attire was hopelessly ruined'.

By October the Engineers reported that both the drainage scheme, complete with septic tanks, and the water schemes were complete and tested. The Premier Sir Joseph Ward who was invited to open Eltham's great transition from 'night cart to flushing toilets' was unable to attend so the grand event went unnoticed.



Opening up drains in Bridge Street for the drainage contract March 1904. Note the almost completed Post Office on left.

In 1908 further extensions to both drainage and water were carried out costing £4,600. Again in 1918 with Mr J. Sturrock appointed as Engineer a further £1,000 was spent on extensions to the drainage system.

A decision was made to replace the old 9" main with a larger 12" supply line and this work was completed in 1961. However, with the

building of the Taranaki Dairy Company's new milk powder factory in Collingwood Street, the old main was recommissioned, much of it having to be replaced. Further improvements to the intake occurred in 1974 with the addition of a million-gallon settling pond. A trunk main from Clifford Road and High Street now leads via Moir and Mill Streets to the Rennet Company. Here, connecting with the supply from Collingwood Street, the town has been provided with an effective ring main water supply system. Plans are now being prepared with the view to installing water storage tanks on the hilltop overlooking Eltham on High Street north to enable the provision of a good supply of filtered and treated water.

Extensive improvements have also been made to the town's drainage system. In 1977 oxidation ponds were excavated on land acquired in Castle Street replacing the town's outmoded septic tank system. Costing over a quarter of a million dollars, the ponds became fully operational in 1978. This scheme also included the addition of two pumping stations, one in Bridge Street west and the other in the vicinity of the Conway Road and North Street intersection.

Development and Subdivision

The township of Chislehurst as it is described on the survey maps, was only accessible in the early days by way of Clifford Road. The Settlers though, to reach the town, used a footpath utilising a fallen log across the Chislehurst Creek. Then with the formation of Collingwood Street an alternative route became available. This street was originally formed by Mr Bridger Senior, as access to the park and to other building sections he had sold, proceeding a short distance north of this. The street was extended through to Clifford Road when Messrs. C. A. and J. F. Pease acquired the land and commenced subdivision.

Stanners Street, named in honour of the Mayor Mr T. Stanners was opened in 1909. The land also owned by Messrs. Pease was made available. The completion of the section of Stanners Street which is now George Street was delayed until 1911 because of an objection raised by the Railway Department regarding a crossing. The problem was resolved by the Council undertaking to erect a subway or overhead crossing if necessary. In 1960 Stanners Street extension extended to Clifford Road when Mr Jack Stark developed this block of land for housing.

Bridge Street east came about as the result of a large fire in 1907 when 11 business premises were destroyed. It was thought to have originated in a sugar boiler's factory which stood approximately on the site of Wilkinson's building on Bridge Street corner. Driven by a very strong northerly wind, it swept down to a blacksmith's shop sited before the present Telephone Exchange.

Mr C. A. Wilkinson, aware of the need to develop this unused land, bought the block complete with houses blocking the access from Bedford Street. He then had the new street constructed, laying it down with tarred Macadam complete with concrete curbing and water channels. The Argus Printing Works became the first building constructed on the new street.

Over the years many other street improvements have taken place, a major project being in recent years, when the familiar feature of Eltham's



The site of Bridge Street East taken after the fire in 1907 from the Central Hotel verandah.

London Bridge disappeared. This white painted footbridge crossing the Mangawherawhera Stream in London Street was removed in 1973 to enable a culvert to be built and an extensive earthworks contract to take place. With the depression filled, it became possible to create a much-needed heavy traffic by-pass.

In 1965 considerable earthworks took place on Clifford Road in a road-straightening project to avoid the previous difficult loop. This scheme involved the construction of a wooden culvert, a new innovation developed by an Auckland firm.

In response to a need to provide further building sections, the Borough Council in September 1973 purchased a block of land on High Street from Mr J. Stark. Here, with the formation of two new streets, Chartwell Drive and Willowbrook, the town's latest major subdivision has taken place.

The Council in recent years has also taken an active role in the provision of Pensioner Flats. The first block erected in High Street in 1964 was followed by a second block consisting of four units in Willowbrook in 1974. A third complex of six separately constructed units, Skittrup Court, the site of an early bakehouse in London Street, was commenced in 1983.

In 1980 the opportunity was taken to transfer the Works Depot in York Street to the land purchased in Castle Street for the new drainage scheme.

The present Town Clerk is Mr Gordon Lawson and the Borough Engineer is Mr Gavin Dey.

The Rural Land Dispute

On 11 December 1973 33 urban landowners in the Borough of Eltham, due to the rating system, petitioned the Governor General to have 360 hectares of their land transferred to the Eltham County Council. As a result of the Borough objection to the transfer, several years of protracted negotiations took place.

The Local Government Commission to whom the case was referred, recommended that the matter be resolved by amalgamation of the two local bodies. No satisfactory conclusion could be arrived at.

The Borough Council in 1977 revised their rates in favour of the rural landholders but the petitioners, still dissatisfied, appealed to the Land Valuation Tribunal, where their case was rejected.

Mr H. B. Hadfield, Mayor of Kapiti in 1979, was appointed Conciliator and he brought forward a proposal to trade borough land on the east of town for county land north of Clifford Road. The county landowners showed no enthusiasm.

So on 30 December 1980 a proposal for boundary changes was made by the Local Bodies' Commission which in April of the following year resulted in a favourable poll from the affected borough landowners. With final approval given at the Commission hearing on 22 December 1981, an Order in Council on 1 April 1982 effectively altered the town's boundaries. From that date on 309 hectares, mainly to the east and south passed to the control of the Eltham County Council.

Under the terms of the Local Government Act there remained the question of the settlement of future maintenance of boundary roading and the apportioning of Borough liabilities, assets and loan debts. Considerable negotiation took place before a settlement was reached on 22 November 1983.

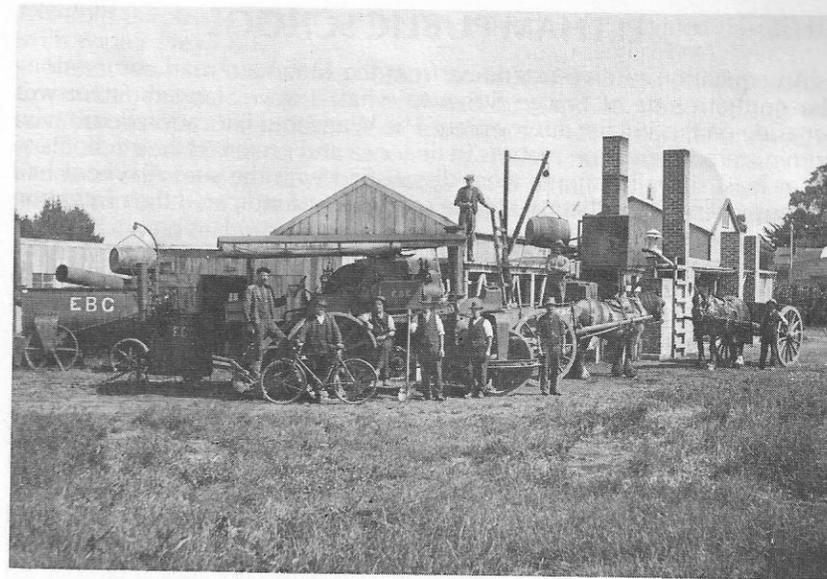
Eltham Cemetery

The Hawera County Council surveyed a cemetery reserve on the Anderson Road in October 1894. As King Edward Street was not cleared until about 1898, the first burial did not take place until this time. Friends dug the grave for it was not until 1898 that the Eltham Board of Trustees appointed Mr H. Marchant as grave digger.

In May 1904 the cemetery reserve was transferred to the control of the Eltham Borough Council and in 1945 the Eltham County Council assumed joint control.

Whenever Jim came to town he sometimes imbibed, not wisely, but too well, but early in the day laid in a good stock of sausages from Stanners Bros. butchery. He invariably made the same request, 'Put plenty of paper on Tom, 'cos I've got a long way to go'. This was true enough for he carried the sausages with him until he left for home, usually late at night.

On one occasion he rolled off his horse and fell asleep on the roadside with his just partly-covered package of sausages stowed away in his shirt. He must have tossed in his sleep and his package unwrapped, for when his mates found him, they panicked and sent for the doctor. Later they were relieved — his horse hadn't rolled on him at all.



Eltham Borough Council Outside Works Staff about 1920.
On platform: Amos Onions.
From left: T. Hodges, G. Cullen, H. Hastings, H. Cullen, G. Graves, L. Thompson.
In cart: V. Phillips, M. Halloran.



An Early Bridge Street scene.

ELTHAM PUBLIC SCHOOL

An education reserve extending from the Mountain road corner along the northern side of Bridge Street to what is now Stanners Street was set aside on the Village Survey plan. The Wanganui Education Board who administered education matters in this area and preferred their schools to be at least six miles apart, were dissatisfied with the site. A school had already been established at Ngaire so the Board indicated their intention to build further south at Mangawhero.

By this time early in 1885 the number of school-aged children at the village out-numbered those at the Mill by 43 to 15. Several rowdy meetings took place at Southey and Willy's where indignant townspeople argued the merits of this site with the satisfied mill workers. Ironically, most of the mill staff present at the meetings were not affected anyway being single men living in whares on the mill land.

Despite several approaches by settlers the Education Board members were quite adamant that their decision should stand so the £250 reserved for the school building was set aside until the settlers reached a mutual agreement.

In mid-1885 the parents of 30-40 children of school age in and around Eltham guaranteed payment of two shillings a child per week to enable a school to be opened on 22 June that year. This Education Board-aided school was only a pending arrangement until a permanent site could be agreed on.

Mr J. Kenah, a member of the Plymouth Brethren Church made available a private chapel on Bridge Street West as a temporary school and Mr F. McCarthy was entrusted with the education of the pupils. McCarthy, a cook at the sawmill, had earlier undertaken the schooling of the mill staff's children for a small weekly charge to augment his meagre regular income.

In mid-1886 a compromise was arrived at between the authorities and the settlers, vacant land midway between the disputed sites being purchased, adjoining the present Manual school on High Street.

Tenders were called for the new school buildings at the Board's October meeting. The small two-roomed school was completed by March 1887, and Mr T. D'Arcy Hamilton's appointment as Headmaster was announced on the 28th of that month. Miss Mary Brown was appointed infant mistress. The capacity of the school was limited to 50 pupils and any surplus was required to attend the nearby Ngaire School.

As no public hall existed in the village the school soon became the main public meeting place and dissatisfaction was voiced about its shape and size. The floor, built in terraces, ruled out all possibilities of any form of dancing — other than a haka or a 'breakdown' and seats were so arranged that it was impossible for an average adult to fold themselves up to sit on the seat.

However, the teachers rejoiced for they considered the types that attended dances were apt to use bad language, upset inkstands and desks or to scribble on or break slates.

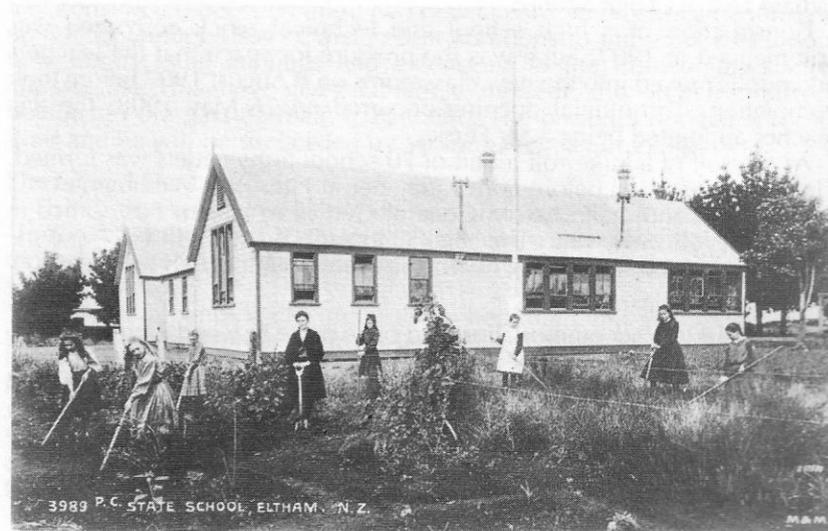
The school grounds at this time were still log strewn so the boys were encouraged for a financial consideration to cut firewood. This served a

two-fold purpose — it cleared the playgrounds and provided the teacher with winter firewood.

The school had only been open for four months when the School Committee made a plea for extended accommodation. During the summer months the endurance of teachers and pupils were strained in spite of the addition of classrooms in 1892 and 1900. In 1906 the situation became so desperate that Standard 5 and 6 classes were being taught in the town's Bandroom. The two High School classes used the Town Hall and technical classes were housed at the Mission Hall.

Mr Taliesin Thomas, headmaster for 30 of these early years, retiring in December 1922, saw some of his pupils rise to distinguished positions. Sir Ronald Syme became Camden Professor of Classical History, Oxford University — Amyas Connell became one of Britain's leading architectural consultants after winning Prix de Rome for Architecture — Roy Frethey was Manager of the Bank of New Zealand in London. Martin Donnelly became a world-renowned cricketer and Doug Stewart earned fame as Editor of the Sydney Bulletin.

Adjoining land extending back to York Street, purchased by the Education Board in 1910 made possible the construction of swimming baths. On 24 March the Chairman of the School Committee Mr J. U. Murray turned the first sod, the pool being opened 3 November 1910. Many past pupils will recall diving into their murky depths. The school horse paddock and saddle shed stood on the site of the present kindergarten catering for the mode of transport of a bygone age.



The first State School, High Street.



Eltham School pupils — about 1897.

Eltham District High School

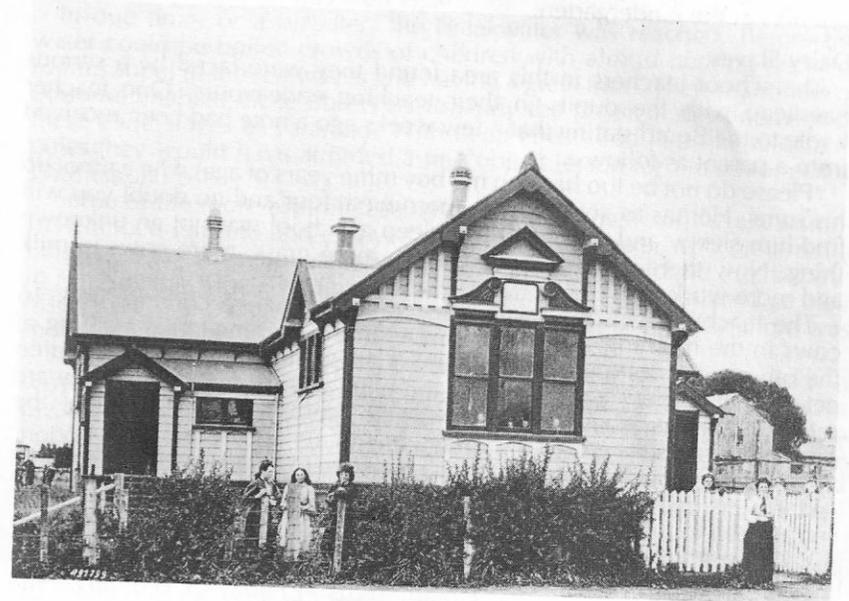
Construction of a high school and technical block combined was commenced in 1907. Such was the pressure for space that the teachers and pupils moved into the new classrooms on 8 August 1907 before their completion. The official opening occurred on 26 May 1908, the first teacher appointed being a Mr Furrrie.

As a result of a large roll a unit of 70 school army cadets was formed. The cadets paraded before Lord Kitchener at Hutt Park Wellington on 3 March 1910 and again before General Godley at Eltham Post Office in May of the following year. The High School closed down in 1917 and the pupils transferred to growing nearby Stratford District High School.

The Main School

By the 1920's accommodation had once more reached a critical stage necessitating the building of a new school on the present Conway Road site. This was opened on 28 May 1925 by Sir James Parr K.C.M.G. and Mr S. G. Smith, Chairman of the Taranaki Education Board. This block provided classrooms for the standards. An additional classroom block, Block B, was built at the rear of the school and opened 4 October 1957. Up to this time the school had become rather scattered with classes at the infant school music room and in a classroom at the manual school.

The infant block by now had become totally outmoded and after several years of agitation the infants moved on 11 September 1963 into their new school also behind the main school complex. A new assembly



Eltham District High School.

hall constructed between these two new classroom blocks came into use on 21 September 1964. Other recent additions to the school include a new library, staff facilities and extensions to the front of the earlier classrooms. This now gives Eltham a modern and attractive school obvious to the passing main road traffic. The present Principal is Mr R. Blair and he will be succeeded by Mr John Reynish in 1984.

The School Dental Clinic

This institution, feared by pupils, was known as 'The Murder House' or 'Torture Chamber' and originated in the eastern end of the main school. It moved later to a separate building on the south-east corner of the infant school grounds.

With the impending closure of this school the clinic was moved back to its present position at the main school and considerably enlarged.

Eltham Free Kindergarten

The first steps to establish a kindergarten in Eltham were taken in 1955 when a committee was formed to raise funds. This took seven years to achieve as the idea of pre-school education was not widely accepted in those days.

Tenders for building were called in 1962 and Mr Scotty McGrath was awarded the contract. The total cost of the building was £4,331 17s. Eltham's kindergarten opened on 11 February 1963 with Miss Dawn Spence as the Superintendent and Miss Margaret Martin as her assistant.

Mrs Val Kelly, the present superintendent was also one of the early teachers at the kindergarten.

Dairy Slaves

The school teachers in this area found they were faced by a serious handicap with the pupils in their teaching endeavours. One teacher wrote to the Board stating that a few weeks ago a note had been received from a parent as follows:

'Please do not be too hard on my boy (nine years of age) if he cannot do his sums. He has to get up every morning at four and no doubt you will find him sleepy and dull.' Falling asleep at school was not an unknown thing. Now there was more land clear, more grass, more cows to milk and more work.

The teacher went on, 'I know several cases where children milk 16 cows in the morning, the same number in the evening to say nothing of the other work done around the farm. On examination day the children get up half an hour earlier and by the time examinations begin they are more fit for bed than work.' It was not surprising that some of the examination results were abnormally low.

A school inspector stated that such a system of child slavery in the dairy industry is most deplorable and it is time acts of legislature were introduced to prevent such cruelty.

Eltham Argus — Friday 21 February 1908

ELTHAM SCHOOL PICNIC

At New Plymouth

Eltham was practically a deserted village yesterday, the occasion being the local school picnic. The local tradesmen having sanctioned a public holiday all the places of business were closed and there was a great exodus of Eltham people to the seaside. From an early hour in the morning people could be seen trooping to the railway station, some on foot, some in vehicles and a happy crowd gathered at the station. Shortly after the advertised hour of departure, half past seven, the train steamed off crowded with a shouting, happy crowd of youngsters accompanied by parents and guardians, sisters, cousins and aunts.

Over 600 passengers were packed away in carriages and trucks. The Eltham Brass Band accompanied the excursionists and played lively tunes on the railway journey, going and returning, on the beach and on board the steamer, and did much to add to the general enjoyment. As soon as the train moved off from the station the fearful news was circulated that the tea and sugar had been left behind. "Here was a pretty mess." This was a frightful shock to many. Strong men grew pale, women nearly fainted and for a little while the lives of the school committee were in danger. However, the chairman (Mr C. A. Wilkinson) is a resourceful man and prevented a massacre by issuing a bulletin to the effect that he had sent a marconigram to New Plymouth ordering a stock of tea and sugar to be at the breakwater when the train arrived. This strategic move saved the position. The men ceased ejaculating a word that rhymes with

gram, the ladies postponed their faints, the band struck up "Weep No More For Me" and all was well again.

In due time, or a bit after, the breakwater was reached. Before the water could be boiled crowds of children with almost nothing on were rolling about in the sea waves and having a great time. Their scantiness of costume enabled close observers to study the physical development of these child slaves of Taranaki. With deep chests and legs like telegraph poles they would have afforded a fine object lesson for the editor of the Wellington Post.

Some of the more aspiring, perspiring and energetic of the excursionists climbed Paritutu and enjoyed the exercise. Others, who preferred a little less vigorous enjoyment had some pleasant trips round the harbour in Mr Newton King's oil launch, which was very kindly placed at their disposal. Quite a large number spent their time in fishing, but there was more fishing than catching.

At 1 o'clock a move was made to the 'Takapuna' and very quickly a crowded steamer glided from the wharf and the excursionists had a pleasant two hours' cruise at sea. The water was smooth as a mill-pond so nobody had what Mark Twain once described as the "Oh My's". A large shark had been seen in the vicinity of the steamer but when the band began to play the shark disappeared — it was the big drum that scared him.

On the beach, after the sea trip, there were races. The married women's race was the event of the day. A big field faced the starter, and all seemed in the pink of condition. It was a fast sprint and the winner, Mrs Coates, passed the judge's soap box about a head in advance of the runner-up. The married men's race was a cake-walk for Jack Burke; he beat the pistol and his time smashed the watch.

After spending no end of a jolly time, drinking numberless cups of tea, eating piles of cake and sandwiches, a start was made for home. Eltham was reached a little before 9 p.m., everybody happy and contented and with their minds made up that the Eltham picnic is now established as an annual fixture and is bound to grow in importance.

The committee did their best in looking after the comfort of the excursionists. Mr Wilkinson had provided tents for the accommodations of the bathers, Mr Parrott and Mr T. Stanners assisted by others looked after the racing part of the programme, Mr Cattanach did a little quiet collecting for the school funds, and other members made themselves useful whenever they were required.

Amos was a man renowned for his mighty thirst. One night at a local pub a wager came about that he couldn't down, at one go, a gallon of the best ale on tap. The bet was accepted, but before being put to the test Amos disappeared to return a short time later. On being questioned on his absence he confessed to having had some doubts of his ability to fulfill his commitment. He had just slipped out the back for a quick but successful trial run with a gallon of water. He then proceeded to complete and win the wager — a man with a notable capacity.

THE HALLS OF ELTHAM

The Old Town Hall

A long-felt need in the Eltham village was filled in 1889 with the building of a Town Hall. Offers of land were made by Messrs. George Moir, Chew Chong and R. A. Adams, all in the main Railway Street area of town. Mr Adams' site was considered the most suitable so the other donors made equivalent cash contributions. Additional funds were soon subscribed, enough to enable the erection of a somewhat spartan hall for it was not until 1895 that interior linings could be added. At this time dressing rooms were added onto the rear of the hall, a stage taking their place inside. Now in this red painted, long, narrow, barn-like building, lighted by kerosene lamps, the settlers could hold the social functions that had long been neglected. Often after a concert in aid of some new club, organisation or church, the floor would be cleared away to enable dancing to continue into the early hours.

It was here, it is claimed, Eltham lost its major chance of advancement. Richard J. Seddon, Premier at the time, addressed a riotous political meeting after which, as he left the building, a rope stretched across the doorway felled the mighty statesman. Seddon's loss of dignity caused him to immediately order a new railway survey to Stratford from Whangamona, deleting the easier almost certain Eltham junction.

Later in competition with the Athenaeum Hall its popularity declined, and the hall was successively used as a Courthouse, a school, a boxing club and gymnasium and the final indignity, a hide and skin depot.

It was demolished in 1946 to make way for a carriers' depot, now a vacant section beside the Savage Club Hall.

Athenaeum Hall

The Athenaeum Hall, built in 1894 in High Street, stood on the site forward of the present Automatic Telephone Exchange. Built by shareholders and managed by Mr A. J. Canning it catered for the need of this developing part of the town. Similar to the Town Hall it was a long barn-like building with windows down either side. Interior illumination provided by big Rochester oil lamps also added to the smokey haze of the hall. At one end stood a narrow stage flanked by two dressing rooms. The curtains carried faded advertisements and above the stage the bold message cried out 'Floreat Elthama', the liberal translation being 'Eltham Will Flourish'.

As Mr H. J. Andrews described, 'The building was devoid of orchestral stalls, dress circle and Royal box, nor was there a pit, though a gallery of sorts existed. By legging-up, the lads climbed and sat upon the low-roofed ceiling of the ticket box and cloakrooms, on the walls of which they kicked their heels in thunderous applause which effectively removed the paint in a broad band across the full width of the hall. These efforts, backed by blasts of whistling were regarded as an enjoyable part of the evening's entertainment.

'In the hall's construction, amenities for social functions had not been overlooked. These facilities being housed beneath a lean-to roof at the rear of the stage. Prominent among them was a long ancient table and a

bricked-in copper above which hung a tap connected to a rainwater tank.'

Over the years the hall served for a variety of purposes, earlier for church services, the Territorials drilled here under Sergeant Major Olliphant 'Jumbo' Rowe during the Compulsory Military Training Scheme of 1911, became a Polling Booth, a picture hall and finally was used by the Pipe Band before its demolition in 1936.

Wilkinson's Picture Hall

A concrete building erected for Mr C. A. Wilkinson on the corner of Bedford and Bridge Streets opened as Eltham's first picture hall on Christmas Eve 1910. Power was supplied from a separate small building housing a generating plant and engine under the control of Mr Claude Carnross.

The public were impressed by the electric lights as they sat back in their comfortable seats, realising the days of smoky, smelly kerosene lights and back breaking chairs were gone forever.

The silent pictures shown by Mr Adam Pickering manning the projector were judged to be bright, educational and amusing, the audience being able to see how people lived in foreign countries. Suitable background music was played by Mrs A. Beesley alternating in tempo to suit the action.

Eltham's first feature film 'The Axeman's Carnival' produced for Mr Wilkinson created special interest recalling the 1911 event.

Skating also took place on various nights as an alternative to the picture programme. A specially laid floor attracted people from Hawera and Stratford especially on Carnival Night when the band played. An interesting mix-up sometimes occurred on a packed floor when the generating plant next door failed. The building eventually became incorporated into the Rennet Company complex and was destroyed in the major fire of 1957.

Wilkinson's Pictures. . .

Have you seen the Pictures? They are Perfect.
Electric Lighting Magnificent!

To-night! To-night!
AND MONDAY NIGHT.

PRICES OF ADMISSION:

Front Seats, 1s 6d; Second Seats, 1s; Children 6d,
when with adults. Reserved Seats, 2s (booking office,
Wilkinson's Store.

Doors open 7.20.

Commence 8 sharp.

Eltham Argos.

The Town Hall

With the opening up of Stanners Street in 1909 the opportunity was taken to secure a site to erect a larger more up-to-date Town Hall. In 1910 plans were submitted and on 13 October a tender of £3,200 was accepted from Messrs. Ryan and Sons of Manaia.

The first practical use of the Town Hall was made on 2 May 1911 when Eugene Ossipoff, "The Giant of Song" from the Moscow Grand Opera, made his appearance. The culture-starved citizens were so thrilled by his voice, it was reported, that they nearly rose from their seats.

An official opening took place five days later when the Hon. R. McKenzie, Minister of Lands reassured the self-conscious Eltham people that their population would soon grow enough to fill the large hall. And a vast improvement the hall was — its dress circle, stage with complete orchestra well and meeting hall to each side of the large auditorium made it a desirable town amenity. Theatre groups such as J. C. Williamson and noted artists appeared at the hall performing to packed houses.

Picture shows started in a small way when a travelling firm visited the town once a week. A portable generator and engine hammering away on the footpath outside provided power for the projector set up in the hall. The success of the silent movies prompted the Borough Council to start up in the business.

In April 1913 an engine and generator were mounted next door in the Gasworks showroom and a projector booth installed at the rear of the dress circle. Later, with the addition of a street balcony, the projector booth was moved outside.

One old identity of Eltham recalls laughing so much at the antics of Charlie Chaplin on the flickery screen that he lost his false teeth on the sawdust strewn floor.

With the advent of the 'Talkies' the Council decided to re-wire the hall and a pair of Zeiss Ikon projectors were installed. These projectors have served the theatre to this day, with lens adaptations to suit the modern wide screen.

Here on Saturday afternoon matinees, the youth of Eltham roared their applause as the thundering stage coach evaded the hoard of savage Red Indians, only for it to hurtle over the cliff edge at the end of the weekly serial. Then followed Hopalong Cassidy or Errol Flynn in his latest swashbuckling adventure.

In the projection booth, Mr Percy Shaw toiled in the heat. The odd break in the film brought catcalls and whistling and the odd thud and bang and the cry "Shorty's fallen off his box".

Earlier the theatre went under the name of the Regent, later to become the Civic until it closed when television began to provide home entertainment.

Various uses have been made of the hall over the years. It was used as a hospital during the influenza epidemic after World War I, for the many Town Balls, by Sports Clubs and for Winter Horticultural Shows.

In 1971 Mr H. Taylor was appointed Town Hall and Theatre Manager in an effort to upgrade the hall. During his four-year term in this capacity, considerable improvements were made with additional facilities and redecoration.

Now more than 70 years old, the Eltham Town Hall is one of only two remaining in Taranaki with a fly loft enabling it to provide for a major stage show.



Eltham's Municipal Chambers and Town Hall, Gas Showroom on the right.

The Eltham Maori Club Hall

The Eltham Maori Club for a number of years conducted an intensive fundraising campaign mainly by running 'Housie evenings' in the Town Hall.

A vacant section of land on York and London Streets was acquired and a large hall was erected in 1979. The building was officially opened on 26 October 1979 by the Mayor, Mr F. J. Taylor. The club intend that the use of the building will mainly be for the purpose of preserving Maori culture.

Paddy Marchant was in fine form in the auction rooms when a fine saucepan came up for sale. 'Now, what am I bid for this magnificent saucepan. Ladies and Gentlemen, who will start me off with one shilling and ninepence — right
one and nine — one and nine,
one and nine — one and nine.'

A little old lady leaned forward and exclaimed, 'But Mr Marchant, that pot's got a hole in the bottom!' Unabashed, without missing a breath, Paddy carried on:

'One and nine — one and nine,
one in yours and one in mine,
one and nine — one and nine.'

ELTHAM CHURCHES

The Mission Hall

Eltham's first church, the Mission Hall in London Street, first opened its doors to worshippers on a Sunday in February 1889. Built strictly as an undenominational church by volunteer labour, it served the various Protestant churches in the village for several years. Prior to this, services were held in private homes or at open-air camp meetings. One meeting in December 1886 in Eltham attracted 200 people arriving by train and horseback, to a bush clearing.

In later years with the building of other churches, the Mission Hall became no longer necessary. It served for some years as a classroom for both day and evening classes. Further uses were as a Store Room and quarters for the Loyal Orange Lodge before it was demolished in August 1962.

Methodist Church

The Rev. James Glover rode down on a horse from New Plymouth in May 1889 to conduct the first Primitive Methodist service at the Mission Hall. It was then decided to hold monthly meetings. In 1890, the Rev. W. C. Wood was appointed Minister, stationed in Eltham. The foundation stone for a Primitive Methodist Church laid by the Mayor of New Plymouth marked the commencement of a church building in October 1893. As it was built on a bank at the corner of Bridge and York Streets, steps were required to gain access. The builders of the Coronation Hotel bought this site about 1900, the Church being moved bodily to a corner on London and York Streets where services continued.

The Wesleyan Methodists, who up to this time had shared the Church, separated because their following had grown with the district's development. The Rev. C. A. Foston was appointed Home Missioner in 1901 and services were continued at the Mission and Athenaeum Halls. Having no fixed abode, they purchased a section on the corner of Bath and Moir Streets and held numerous 'working bees' to prepare a building site. With the establishing of an Eltham Circuit in 1904, a very energetic Rev. Godbehere was placed in charge. Although he was most enthusiastic about building a suitable church, he looked on the Moir Street site with disfavour. He persuaded the trustees to dispose of the section and purchase new land in King Edward Street.

A church was erected on this site in 1904 costing £388.

The original Methodist parsonage on the western side of the church was disposed of to the adjoining Taranaki Electric Power Board and a new residence on Bedford and King Edward Streets corner was occupied in August 1952.

During 1913 a union of the Wesleyan and the Primitive Methodists occurred, the latter group disposing of their church to the Foresters Lodge. The proceeds of the sale went towards building a hall behind the Wesleyan Church.

The effect of the motorcar is shown by the fact that early in the century, services were held at Ngaire, Mangatoki, Maata, Mangamingi and Omoana whereas in later years they were at Kaponga and Eltham only.

A notable figure in the church, Mr Bert Turner, served as organist for 63 years. With church union with the Presbyterian Church the last Methodist service was held on 25 January 1976 — the last Minister being Rev. Bill Abbott.

Last used as a combined church while renovations were being completed at Knox Church, the Wesleyan Church closed on 1 April 1979. The land was purchased by the N.Z. Rennet Company and the church building was shifted to Railway Street by the Eltham Savage Club.

Knox Presbyterian Church

Church services were held as early as 1892 in the homes of members, the Rev. Thomas McDonald of Hawera riding up to conduct meetings. Services were also held at the Mission Hall. Mr George Moir donated a site on the Mountain road for a church early in 1900. A building subscription list was opened on 17 April that year by a building committee headed by Mr James Boddie. With a sum of £108 raised, it enabled a start to be made on the church construction. The building was dedicated in February 1901. It had cost £480 and the Eltham congregation became a sanctioned charge in 1905, the Rev. M. A. Johnston becoming the first resident ordained minister.

After occupying several residences, an effort was made in 1919 to provide a suitable manse to cost £400. However, even in those days building costs soared, the completed house and site costing £2,300. Although of concrete construction this manse proved unsuitable and in 1966 it was sold and another better suited dwelling was purchased further north in High Street.

An apparent need for additional space to conduct Sunday School was met with the opening of a new hall on the occasion of the 50th Jubilee in 1951.



Knox Presbyterian Church, High Street.

Saint Mark's Co-operating Parish

On 5 August 1975 agreement was reached between Eltham's Methodist and Presbyterian Churches to form a co-operating parish. The resident Presbyterian Minister, the Rev. James Howat, remained in charge after the union came into effect on 1 February 1976. The Knox Presbyterian Church was retained and refurbished complete with a new foyer and was re-opened as Saint Mark's on Sunday 8 April 1979. The Rev. Rob Ferguson, appointed prior to the opening, is the present Minister.

Presbyterian Campsite

In March 1960 eight acres of land complete with an old house in Bridger Place were purchased by the church as a campsite. Considerable improvements have been carried out. These include a large hall, dormitories, kitchen and ablution block and a Caretaker's residence.

Set in an idyllic wood-riverside setting in a loop of the Waingongoro River, the campsite has proved a popular venue for school groups and organisations visiting the area.

Anglican All Saints' Church

At the conclusion of a church service at the Mission Hall in March 1895 a meeting was called to discuss ways and means of building a church. Mr George Buckridge offered a section on the Mountain road — now Head's Motor Garage. A canvas for funds began, the response was generous and by 1896 the plans were prepared and accepted. The foundation stone was laid on All Saints' Day 1896 from which the church derives its name. A meeting of parishioners called by Rev. N. D. Boyes of Stratford elected a vestry consisting of Messrs L. O. Paget, P. Potter, Allison, Mills, Pease and G. H. Buckridge. The church was free of debt when completed. On 3 July 1901 the separate Parochial District of Eltham was constituted and Mr McConnel became the first Vicar on 9 August.

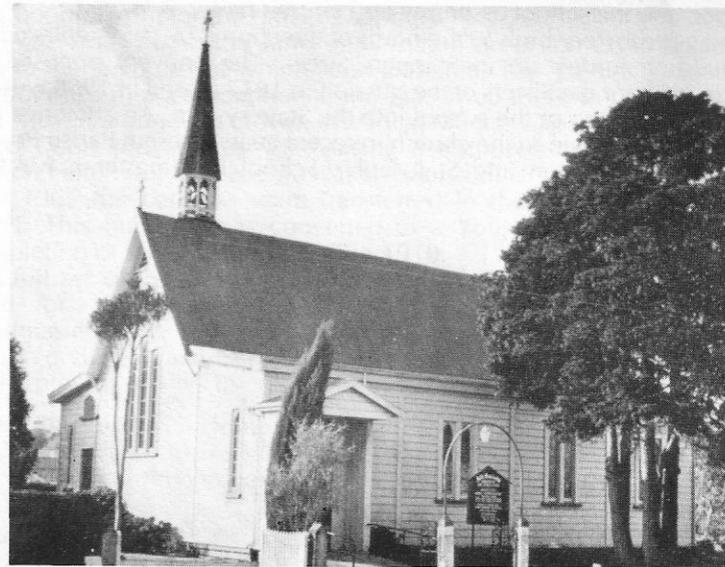
The section proved to be too small to allow enlargements of the church, which was transported to the King Edward Street site. After a short while the present church was built at a cost of £600, being consecrated on 13 January 1906. The old church became the Sunday School and Parish Hall. In May 1907 the Rev. G. W. Dent became Vicar and during his ministry, the north wing of the church was added and the present vicarage was built. In 1938 the church was elevated from that of a parochial district to that of a parish, the Rev. Wake being Vicar.

In 1946 during the ministry of Rev. T. C. Pearsons, the parish celebrated its fiftieth anniversary and a font was given by the Mother's Union. Further improvements to the church were carried out in 1950 under the Rev. L. M. King, the most notable being the addition of a south wing which incorporates the Memorial Chapel, a choir vestry and a roomy porch. Included in this, ten stained glass memorial windows have been installed.

The old church was demolished in July 1958 and a new parish hall, a spacious concrete structure was erected in its place. The dedication of the hall took place on 12 June 1959, 12 months after the turning of the

first sod. The ceremony was conducted by Rev. Rich, Assistant Bishop of the Wellington Diocese.

In May 1975 a decision was made to carry out major renovations to the exterior of the church, the walls were clad in brick, a new roof, spire and bell were fitted and an entrance-way was added to the western wall. The present Vicar is Archdeacon A. E. Duffy.



All Saints' Anglican Church.

Saint Joseph's Catholic Church

The first Catholic Church in Eltham was built in 1898 on the brow of a hill just west of Preston Street, the Rev. Father Powell of Hawera opened the church. No parish priest was stationed in Eltham until Father Daniel O'Shea came in 1903. He was succeeded shortly afterwards by Father Haire, the owner of two fine horses who continually rounded up his parishioners resulting in very few who missed Mass. He had a new church erected at Eltham, turning the first church/school into a school proper at which the Sisters of the Mission from Stratford taught. The Minister of Education at the time rewarded their efforts by making a free pass for their daily train to Eltham available. Two small cottages were built, one for the priest and one provided for the Sisters to stay in on wet nights.

On the death of Father Haire in 1911, Father Ainsworth assumed control for two years attacking and correcting the parish debt.

Father Cahill took charge in 1913 and he reassessed the situation. Although the property was desirable backing onto the park, a danger from shunting trains existed for the school children crossing the railway lines in Bridge Street. On the opening of Stanners Street he purchased two

and a half acres from Mr Tristram. In 1914 the two buildings were transported on wooden-wheeled trolleys towed by a traction engine via Collingwood and Stanners Streets to their new site. The church was then extended by 20 feet and a new porch was added.

With an increase in the school roll, a new school became necessary so in 1923 the present school was opened. The old original church/school then became the school assembly and church hall.

A new presbytery built to the north of the church in 1959 replaced the old building further up in Stanners Street. The convent opposite the church, built for the Sisters of the Mission in 1917 closed in 1968 with the gradual integration of the school into the State system. An attractive new front has been added to the church in recent years. Present Parish Priest is Rev. Father Stapleton and St Joseph's School headmaster is Mr John Ferrie.



Saint Joseph's Church being moved from Bridge Street to its new site in Stanners Street.

The Salvation Army

The first Salvation Army services in Eltham were conducted by officers who walked through from Hawera. These meetings were held in the Mission Hall and later in the Town Hall in Railway Street. In these times of hardship the Army soon gained a large following which required the Hall Committee to obtain extra seating to cope with the large crowds. Occasional visits were also made to Rawhitiroa when a small group walked out to brighten the lives of the settlers and mill staff.

Barracks built in London Street west of the present Masonic Lodge were opened on 30 July 1894. Captain Moore, the first resident officer, lived in a cottage at the rear. It was reported that the opening gave the small town an air of importance with the large influx of Captains, Lieutenants and Sergeant Majors.

At times the budget was very restrictive for on one Sunday night in 1896, after passing the hat around, the small amount of 7d was collected — a poor lookout for the officer's supplies.

On Saturday nights the Army gathered on street corners to preach and sing to the large crowd which soon gathered. The 'Lassies' jingled their tambourines in accompaniment and later used these to collect coins as they moved around the crowd. The local officer, Captain Dixon, in 1904 faced Court proceedings for causing a traffic obstruction outside the Branch Hotel, but the case was later dismissed.

In 1905 the barracks were transferred to their present site in York Street. This building was converted to a Young People's Hall on the completion of a new Church Hall in 1910.

A full set of instruments were purchased for the band in 1905. The band, for a considerable time in later years, was under the control of Bandmaster A. W. Towers. Due to declining support, the band a popular feature of the Salvation Army, has gone into recess.

The present officers in charge are Lieutenant and Mrs Haydn Rive.

Mercy Jenkins Boy's Home

As a memorial to his wife, Mercy who died in 1906, Thomas Hunt Jenkins erected this home for boys who had suffered the loss of one or



Official opening of the Mercy Jenkins Boys' Home — Boxing Day 1909.