

Dear Harold

Hope the 29th and the 18th
work for you! Best Kay

Friends of Mauriceville Inc. Newsletter #2

New Pacific Studio Mount Bruce, RD 1, Masterton, New Zealand: www.newpacificstudio.org

64-6-375-8441; fax (06)375-8461; email: newpacificstudio@xtra.co.nz

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Dear Friends of Mauriceville:

Keeping Our Masterton-Woodville Railway

Greetings from a chilly evening at New Pacific Studio Mt Bruce! This is an exciting time to be fighting to preserve our district's unique historic assets, including our buildings, our remaining forests, our cemeteries -- and our railways, once again under threat.

Just over 120 years ago, J. M. Geddis, author of *A Descriptive Sketch of New Zealand*, wrote: "Twelve miles beyond Masterton by rail lies the Scandinavian settlement of Mauriceville, planted in the midst of the forest out of which its site has been hewn. The railway line is open for four miles farther and it is being actively pushed on to Woodville, with which, ere long, it will connect, thus affording a direct alternative route to Napier. Meanwhile the existing gap is bridged by coaching through the Forty-Mile Bush."

Because of the difficult terrain of (then-forested) hills and rivers requiring extensive viaducts and bridges, the Wairarapa Wellington- Masterton -Woodville line took over two decades to construct. After tackling the Rimutaka Incline in the 1870s, its hardy builders, including many Scandinavians, reached Masterton in 1880, Eketahuna by 1889, and finally arrived in Woodville in 1897.

Closing lines, unfortunately, is a much faster process. In the 1950s, the government of the day closed down the old Incline railway, removed the track and sold the land. The Greytown to Woodside link soon closed too, as journalist Don Farmer pointed out recently in the *Wairarapa Times-Age*. To us now, sixty years later, the shortsightedness of these actions is evident. Railways, along with dairy farming and forestry, play a key role in the historical stories of our Wairarapa area, and should figure largely in the development of any future cultural tourism landscape.

The popularity of scenic railway excursions is a global trend, not just in the Taieri Gorge or the Napa Valley, but also in the Wairarapa. John Bovis, organiser of Steam Incorporated's popular Eketahuna Express excursions, which pass through Mauriceville, also has plans to bring back a Wellington-Wairarapa-Manawatu-Wellington loop. He needs time to grow this project, which would also benefit Mauriceville. The present government needs to think very hard before it dismantles a resource with a fascinating past and a tourist-oriented future. Kiwirail chief executive Jim Quinn says he encourages community planning. That needs time too. Don't pull up the lines just yet please, Mr Quinn.

(For a longer account of the railway's construction, see the 4-pp booklet by Mark Cole and Keith McGavin, 'Rails to Woodville', published for Wellington Branch, NZ Railway and Locomotive Society Inc. 15/8/63. In a future newsletter, we shall publish railway memories by our member Merv Lehmstedt.)



Our mission: to preserve the cultural heritage of the Mauriceville and Hastwell districts, and to encourage cultural exchanges among artists, writers and musicians in Scandinavia, Scotland and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Funding - Grants Received

At a FOM committee meeting held at Pukaha Mt Bruce at the end of September 2009 it was agreed to apply for grants for improved directional and heritage signage throughout the Mauriceville and Hastwell areas, as well as towards a series of brochures that form part of a Whispering Roads heritage trail project. We are delighted to announce that two grants of \$2,000 each have been received from Trust House Trust and from Eastern and Central Community Trust. Discussions about signage will take place in coming months.

The first brochure, *The Scandinavian Trail: Journeys between Wellington – Napier in the 1870s*, is currently being researched. It will begin on Matiu/Somes Island, first stop of the (2nd voyage) *England* immigrants arriving in March 1872, and continue at Old St. Pauls, where Danish architect C. J. Toxward added transepts to the original design, then follow the 1872-3 journeys of immigrants from the *England*, *Halcione* and *Forfarshire* across the Rimutakas to the Scandinavian Camp and on to Mauriceville and Hastwell, continuing to Eketahuna and Woodville. The Hawke's Bay Trail begins in Napier with the arrival of the *Hovding* and the *Ballarat* in mid-September 1872 and their 3-day journeys via Hastings, Te Aute, Waipawa and Waipukurau to their future homes in what became Norsewood, Dannevirke and surrounding districts. We hope to have the brochures available by the end of 2010.

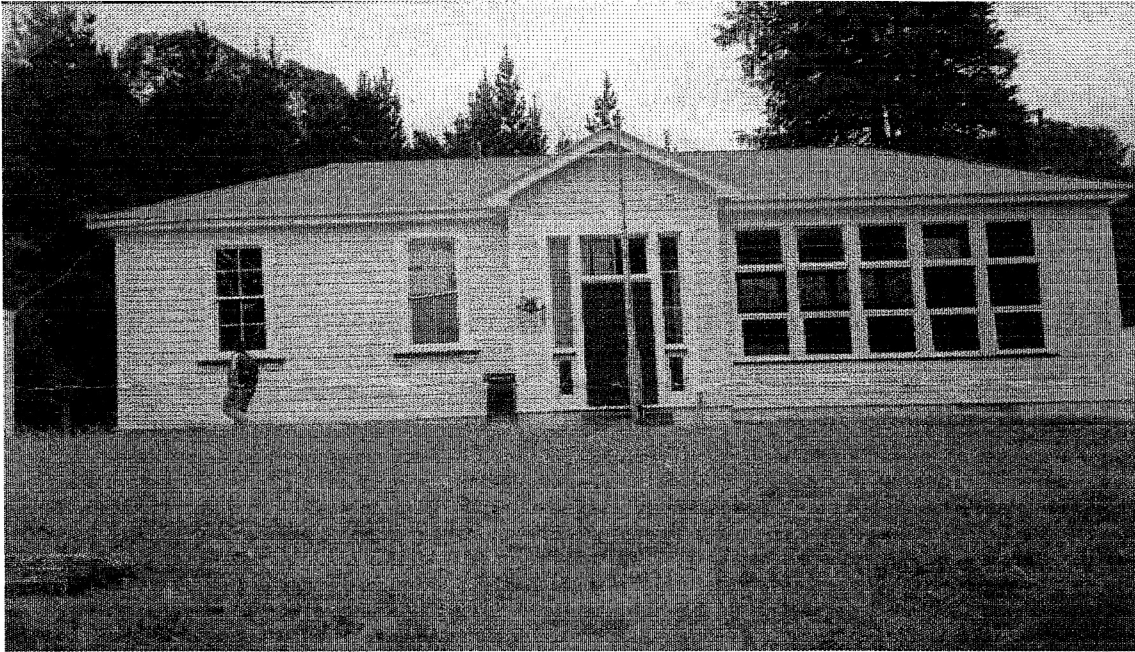
We look forward to consulting with everyone in the Mauriceville community about where signs –both directional signs and heritage notice boards- might go. A public meeting is tentatively planned for the Mauriceville Lutheran Church on **Monday 29 March at 7pm**. Phone 06 375 8441 for confirmation.



Update -Saving the Old Mauriceville West School

The Department of Conservation – Wellington Conservancy historian Richard Nester visited the old Mauriceville West School on Friday January 22, 2010, along with Ian Cheriton, a specialist conservation builder. In attendance were Willy Buick, Alan Stuart and Kay Flavell. Richard Nester identified three heritage structures on the site – the school building of 1886, an external open lunch room with low seating running around three sides, and an original cloakroom with tongue and groove walls, coat hooks, and trellis ventilation.

At the conclusion of the inspection, Mr Nester proposed that DOC would take over the interim repairs of school windows and repairs to spouting, if the community undertook to raise funds for a Conservation Report. Masterton District Council will be invited to support this work, as well as to upgrade access and maintenance of the early Mauriceville Cemetery above the school. Friends of Mauriceville will also apply to other trusts for supporting funds.



Second Mauriceville West School, opened 1886. Architect Thomas Turnbull. 2009 view.

Eketahuna Museum and Scandinavian Connections

On Sunday February 28, Eketahuna Carnival Day, Friends of Mauriceville held a display at the Eketahuna and Districts Museum in Bengston St. on Scandinavian Connections. It highlighted stories and photos supplied by the Anders Anderson family (from Helsingborg, Sweden to Eketahuna), the Jorgen Andersen and Mette Nielsen family (from Denmark to Mauriceville and later Eketahuna) and the Bengston families (from Sweden to Norsewood and Eketahuna). We hope to hold a more extensive display next year in connection with the Scandinavian Festival described below.

Scandinavian Festival in Norsewood, 25-27th February 2011

Planning continues for this festival, which is being organized by the Scandinavian Club of Manawatu Inc and Norsewood Promotions Inc, and convened by Jean Thompson of Palmerston North. Because Jean's ancestors have links with Dannevirke, Palmerston North, Newman and Hastwell, she is particularly keen on bringing together people and stories from all over the former 70 Mile Bush, as well as welcoming everyone of Scandinavian descent from all over New Zealand.

Interviews held, 2009 -2010

Our grateful thanks to the following for sharing their Mauriceville stories over the past year and more: Merv Lehmstedt, Gray Nelson, June Doyle, Bidge and Dawn Williams, Logan and Elaine Atkinson, Elmo and Heather Cheetham (see also Rosemary Allbrook, *The Heckler Heritage*. Private printed, 2003; *Family Tree and History of the descendants of the Late Buchanan and Amy (Daysh) and Kathleen (Stewart) for*

Buchanan Drysdale Family Reunion, June 2009; and Joseph and Jane Farrow, Family Tree Year 2000. Families within the district are custodians of priceless resources, including stories and photographs.

Scandinavian Visitors at NPS

In October 2009 we welcomed our first Norwegian artist in residence to New Pacific Studio – sculptor Kari Elise Mobeck, from Trondheim. Kari Elise and her husband, Johannes Sigurjonsson from Iceland, were fascinated to find themselves living in an area full of the reminders of 19th century Scandinavian settlement, and they posted many images of the Mauriceville North Norwegian Methodist Church on their Facebook site.

Recent visitors have included Torbjørn Greipsland, a Norwegian author with a special interest in immigrant Norwegian communities around the world; and two members of SENZ, Johanna Piatek and Tinni Linden from the Swedish Consulate in Wellington. Torbjørn enjoyed a tour of Mauriceville North Norwegian Methodist Church, Mauriceville West Lutheran Church, the Poet's House and Barn, the former Mauriceville West school and the old cemetery. We are fortunate to possess so many historic remains within a small area.

Membership

We now have around 50 members and still growing. Annual membership is \$10, and we thank all of you for your subscriptions and donations. Please pay to Ian Trass, Treasurer, 68 B York St., Masterton 5810 or deposit directly to Friends of Mauriceville Inc, National Bank of New Zealand, account 0689-0278183-00 *

Coming up: Second AGM

Sunday 18 April, 2010 Second Annual General Meeting at Pukaha Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre. 2.00pm, followed by car tour of Mauriceville sites. Hope to see you there!

Compiled by Kay Flavell, co-secretary 06 375-8441 email:newpacificstudio@xtra.co.nz



* should be 060689-0278183-00