

## **NGĀ KERĒME WHENUA TAWHITO: Old Land Claims in the Whakatōhea Rohe**

**Matt Wynyard**

### **Research Summary**

This research was prepared by the Office of Treaty Settlements in consultation with Whakatōhea Pre-settlement Claims Trust to fill a gap in the existing historical literature on the relationship between the hapū of Whakatōhea and the Crown with respect to the issue of old land claims in the Whakatōhea rohe.

Old land claims refer to pre-Treaty of Waitangi land transactions which early Pākehā settlers later sought to transform into Crown land grants, scrip or cash. These transactions – including purchasing, gifting and conveyancing – were conducted prior to the introduction of a legal system based on British common law.

Four old land claims have been identified that involve Whakatōhea lands. These are: The Whitaker old land claim in Ōpōtiki; the Church Missionary Society (CMS) old land claim in Ōpōtiki; the Wilson, Stack and Brown old land claim in Ōpōtiki and the Black old land claim for Uretara Island in Ōhiwa Harbour.

Of these, only the Wilson, Stack and Brown claim and a small portion of the CMS old land claim were subsequently upheld by the authorities. The Wilson Stack and Brown old lands claim was related to the Pākihi block.

The 3,840 acre (1553 hectare) Pākihi block was sold by the rangatira Rangihaerepō (Te Ūpokorehe), Tītoko, Ake (Te Ūpokorehe), Ōkoki and Te Āporotanga (Ngāti Rua) to Rev. A. N. Brown and Messrs Stack and Wilson on 27 January 1840. Their motivation for doing so was likely to attract influential Pākehā into the region.

When the land was surveyed, it was found to contain some 11,470 acres (4,641 hectares) – 3,832 acres (1550 hectares) of which were granted to the purchasers and the remaining 7,638 acres went to the Crown. This was subsequently revised down to 6,641 acres.

In the 1940s the Myers Commission recognised that Māori should be compensated for surplus lands. Compensation of £4,648 14s was paid to the Whakatōhea Māori Trust Board. The surplus lands in the Ōpōtiki district were among the largest of all the blocks that later became the property of the Crown.

After raupatu Whakatōhea were left with very little land and were in a perilous position. With such a small area of land remaining to them, 6,641 acres (2,687 hectares) of flat coastal land would likely have made a significant difference to the wellbeing of the iwi.