

ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVE

Interviewee: Murray MacMillan
Date recorded: 8.10.03
Interviewer: Anne Cook
Catalogue No: 9

TAPE 1.
Side A.

005

Details of naming of MT. PISA by SURVEYOR THOMPSON, pronounced 'pie-za.' 'It's PISA to us and anyone who's local.' The MAORI used to climb up the PACKSPUR and through the station's backblock. There is a CAMP SITE just down from hut; identified by NGAI TAHU.

023

The PASTORALISTS came before the MINERS, via the WAITAKI VALLEY. Mt. PISA originally part of the huge WANAKA STATION, owned by ROBERT WILKIN, then in 1859 ROBERT THOMPSON took up MT. PISA STATION. 'It really took in everything between the CLUTHA, the KAWARAU and the CARDRONA RIVERS; 152,000 acres.

032

ISADORE LOUGHMAN took over in 1868. Details of the two LOUGHMAN BROTHERS; still in contact with family today in CHRISTCHURCH. ORIGINAL HOMESTEAD BUILT in 1859, PRESENT HOMESTEAD BUILT in 1865. GOLDFIELDS ARTIST ALEXANDER HAMILTON did a WATER COLOUR PAINTING of MT. PISA HOMESTEAD in 1860's.

060

LOUGHMANS had RACE HORSES and traveled to race meetings far and wide. J.C. PARCELL'S BOOK, 'HEART OF THE DESERT' states that RACE MEETINGS were held at MT. PISA in 1872 and 1880's.

074

Pressure from MINERS for LAND. 'They took off an area as a commonage from LOWBURN back to CROMWELL away back in the early days and this would have satisfied quite a number of them.'

078

Explains there was little MINING in area until the CHINESE came in late 1880's, 1890's. Chinese names appeared in the Station's ledgers as COOKS and GARDENERS from that time. CHINESE wouldn't go underground to mine. Mentions remnants of HUTS on interviewer's property next door, (LOCHAR DOWNS)

104

RUN ABANDONED by LOUGHMAN'S in 1882, due to RABBITS. In 1887, STRONACH came as MANAGER. He was KILLED in FALL from a HORSE. MEDAL bought by STATION WORKERS and given to his widow. Next MANAGER was HENDRY, regarded as 'a better man drunk than most men are sober.'

125

RUN bought by COWIE NICOLLS, a MILITARY MAN, was in charge of the OTAGO GARRISON in DUNEDIN during WW1. Family still own KURIHIKA STATION near OAMARU. SOLD MT PISA to N.Z. GOVERNMENT around 1916 or 1917.

132

WILLIS SCAIFE MANAGED the property after HENDRY. SON, ARTHUR SCAIFE went to school from PISA. Managed it until he took over GLENDU STATION when his brothers were killed in the war.

136

Next MANAGER was PATTERSON, SON ERIC PATTERSON has passed on valuable information and photos.

148

MT. PISA RUN SUB-DIVIDED in FEB. 1924. GOVERNMENT attempted to destroy the RABBITS first WILLIAM MacMILLAN (MURRAY'S FATHER,) came to MT. PISA from CATTLE FLAT, where he earned 80 pounds a week from rabbit skins in Winter 1923.

176

Recalls STORY from a local historian that FATHER did not draw the run in the BALLOT. The man who did died the night after the ballot, 'his family didn't want anything to do with it, so it was put up again.'

185

PISA was DIVIDED INTO 12 RUNS between 8,000 and 16,000 acres. The HOMESTEAD BLOCK was 24,000 acres, wasn't supposed to go into the ballot. PATTERSON'S had assumed they would remain there. WILLIAM MacMILLAN took over 9,000 SHEEP, but dropped to 2,500 - 3,000 SHEEP by 1942 because of the rabbits.

200

Interviewer quotes passage from her book, 'THE GIBBSTON STORY,' about the SHEEP being DIVIDED among the NEW RUNS. STORY about damage caused to area called the BROAD SPUR after huge MOB being locked up there.

225

Explains MERINO SHEEP have always been run on the property. SCAIFE imported 10 MERINO RAMS from AUSTRALIA in 1906.

235

Details of attempts to rid land of RABBITS by different means. RHD 'has been a tremendous help and will continue to be, but not the silver bullet.'

273

Describes WILLIAM MacMILLAN coming from SCOTLAND to NASEBY in 1911 with 3 BROTHERS. FATHER, a GAME KEEPER, SHOT BY POACHERS. Returned to fight in the WAR, all survived. WILLIAM and DONALD (BROTHER,) were PARTNERS for 3-4 years until DONALD drew a block at GARSTON. Father married ABOUT 1925 or 1926. Remarried about 1940. FARMED UNTIL DEATH in 1961. 9,000 SHEEP carried at that time.

326

Recalls CHARACTERS including GEORDIE COOPER, a single man from the ORKNEY ISLANDS who lived in a hut up a gully. STORY about his DOG.

360

STORY about man named CLARKE, who fell and split stomach on a rock. He sewed himself up with a BOOT LACE, making holes with his BELT BUCKLE; walked down to CROMWELL HOSPITAL.

375

Mentions CHARACTERS remembered as a child - ALBIE MURPHY, TED PADGETT, WILF OLDS

383

The STATION had a STAFF of 15 or 16 ROWS OF HUTS when FATHER came to MT. PISA. Many buildings cut up, sold or demolished. WOOLSHED CUT UP Huge woolshed, but only 3 STANDS EVER USED. Part of it went to WAITIRI STATION

415

Remembers SWAGGERS coming up the drive when a child. Also HAWKERS. BOB BATES hawked FISH out of his old, red, open fire engine. 'The locals reckon you could follow the flies where ever he went.' GROCERIES came out on an old truck, lollies for the kids. BROWN EWINGS, from DUNEDIN came around SELLING CLOTHING

436

Recalls AS A CHILD 'There was ONLY ONE VEHICLE on the place and it never went anywhere very often.....it was a pretty special occasion to go to Cromwell' There were a lot of people coming and going

452

Remembers the big CATTLE DRIVES from ASPIRING and CATTLE FLAT, the HUNTER VALLEY. The cattle would be RAILED from CROMWELL. 'They seemed like huge mobs. as kids sometimes we'd be allowed to join them and ride along with them for a while on the pony'

465

Describes MUSTERING on PISA as a boy. 'It was all HORSES and WALKING of course.' Remembers mustering the WETHERS off the LOWBURN FACE in 1968 'We'd leave here at 1 o'clock in the morning and sometimes get in at 7 or 8 at night. They were BIG DAYS.' Still have the tradition of the FALL MUSTER, stay overnight in the hut out the back

509

Discusses HOLISTIC FARMING, has been given an insight into stock health, minerals, over use of top dressing, fertilizers etc. 'It was a turning point in our farming career.' STORY about old fellow mixing up a brew to counter a mineral imbalance. 'Thirty years later I found that brew and it's exactly what we're doing now. 'Thirty years I wasted!'

551

IRRIGATION always used on PISA, 'but not as you see now.' The whole of the TINWALD was used here for PRODUCING POWER and they irrigated all the way down with it. Oats and Hay grown

569

PISA IRRIGATION SCHEME went in the 50's to break up more land for RESETTLEMENT of SOLDIERS after WW2. 'That was another TURNING POINT in the valley.' Previously FATHER had LEASED all the nearby land down to the river for 17 pounds a year. Land worked more intensively. EXPERIMENTAL FARM on Interviewer's property trialed a variety of crops, even considered growing RICE.

END OF SIDE A

SIDE B

002

EDUCATION: STARTED SCHOOL in OCTOBER 1949 at CROMWELL. Recalls FIRST DAY, 'got the strap the second day there.' Can't remember the name of FIRST TEACHER, 'but she was a horrible wee lady!' Went to WAITAKI BOYS in 1958. Took the RAIL CAR to DUNEDIN, then caught the TRAIN to OAMARU. 'If you were lucky you'd get in the toilet when you'd learnt the story and you could keep your ticket and cash it in again.'

028

After LEAVING SCHOOL, worked in the PIGROOT at SHAG VALLEY. Went SHEARING, then did a MUSTERING RUN. Worked around GIBBSTON. After marrying, worked at CONE PEAK STATION. 'It was really great, it was probably some of the best years of my life. I loved that.' STORY about JACKIE COOKING for the CRUTCHERS. Mustered for JARDINES, EASTBURN, NEVILLE GOODGER, PETER ANDERSON and WILLY SANDERS. STORY about SHEEP going through MRS SCOTT'S GARDEN at KINROSS.

087

Returned home to MT. PISA in 1968. HORSES have always been important to him. Became interested in RODEO in 1961, influenced by GRANT MacMILLAN. Still a CHAMPION TEAM ROPER. Had 6-7 years on NATIONAL BODY.

127

Explains how the CAVALCADE originated. FLEUR SULLIVAN from CLYDE conceived the idea. Was TRAIL BOSS for many years. Bureaucracy threatening it continuing.

165

12 years sitting on the COMMUNITY BOARD. Many PISA PAST-OWNERS/MANAGERS were involved in COMMUNITY AFFAIRS. 'I feel you've got to put something back into the community.'

184

Comments on CHANGE in the area. Difficult period when CROMWELL was a hydro town and the COMMUNITY OF LOWBURN WAS TORN APART. 'It wasn't very nice, it wasn't a pleasant period.' Now entering a more POSITIVE ERA, it's very good for employment, for the community, equity has improved in a lot of properties, making use of land that was virtually worthless. The WINE being produced in the area is right up there amongst the WORLD'S BEST (PINOT WINE).

209

Recalls GRAHAM SYDNEY living at MT. PISA for 9 years. Were active protesting against the flooding of the valley. Mentions STAN COTTER'S HOUSE opposite which is one of SYDNEY'S most well-known works. 'He did some tremendous work while he was here, I say, some of his best work.'

END OF TAPE