

The German Connection with New Zealand in the Nineteenth Century

Between 1843 and 1914 at least ten thousand Germans came to New Zealand and formed the second largest immigrant group after the British. They came mainly from the North German areas of Mecklenburg, Hamburg, Bremen, Hannover, Hessen, Holstein and West Prussia.¹ The number of New Zealanders of German descent has been estimated at 200,000.²

Germans settled throughout New Zealand in the nineteenth century, but there were predominantly German-speaking settlements in most provinces, notably in Auckland, Hawkes Bay, Taranaki, Wellington, Nelson, Canterbury, and Southland.

The two best known of the former German-speaking settlements now are Upper Moutere, west of Nelson, and Puhoi, north of Auckland. Upper Moutere, originally called Sarau, was settled in 1843 by Germans from Mecklenburg, who introduced grape vines to the area. Upper Moutere has now informally reverted to its German name and is well-known for its wineries and the annual Sarau Festival. Puhoi was settled by German-speaking Bohemians in 1863 and is well known for its church, museum and traditional German Bohemian folk music and dance.

The best known traces are to be found on modern maps of New Zealand. An astounding number of New Zealand geographical names commemorate Germans and Austrians; in the South Island alone there are more than sixty geographical names that recall early German settlers or were named by early German settlers in honour of prominent Germans and Austrians. One of the key figures in this regard is the German geologist and director of the Canterbury Museum, Sir Julius von Haast, who named mountains, glaciers and rivers on the West Coast and in the Southern Alps after German and Austrian scientists

¹ James N. Bade, ed., *Eine Welt für sich*, Bremen, Edition Temmen 1998, pp. 12 und 49.

² James N. Bade, "Germans", in: *Settler and Migrant Peoples in New Zealand*, edited by Jock Philips, Auckland, David Bateman/Ministry of Culture and Heritage 2006, p. 152.

and dignitaries. Haast himself is immortalised in Haast township, but also in Haast Glacier, Mount Haast, Haast Pass, Haast Range, Haast River; it is because of him that we have the names Mount Goethe, Franz Josef Glacier, Liebig Range, Mount Dechen, Mount Haidinger, Mount Kinkel, Mount Petermann, and Mount Frederick and Mount William, which he named after Friedrich and Wilhelm, the sons of the German Emperor.³ Three more names commemorating the German presence in New Zealand have recently been approved by the New Zealand Geographic Board as a result of a submission following a conference we held in 2008 at the University of Auckland on the influence of German and Austrian scientists on the natural history of New Zealand. The three names are of geographical features on the Auckland Islands named by members of the German Expedition to the Auckland Islands in 1874/75 to observe the transit of Venus – Seeliger Creek, named after the Expedition's leader; Krone Creek, named after the Expedition's photographer; and Venus Valley, named after the planet they were observing.

These place names recall more than anything else the contribution of Germans and Austrians to the settlement and development of New Zealand.

³ See Bade, *Eine Welt für sich*, pp. 139-141. Additional information from Dr Sascha Nolden, Auckland, and Louise Cotterall, School of Environment, University of Auckland.