

George Pirrit & Sons, Ironmongers.

By Neil Searle

GEO. PIRRIT

128 and 130, VICTORIA ST., AUCKLAND
(Just across Hobson-street).
Manufacturer of Heel and Toe Plates and

George was born in Lanarkshire, Scotland in 1863, travelled to New Zealand on the ship, Helenslee in 18.. George died in Auckland in 1948 aged 74. George played a big part in Aucklands local history as an Ironmonger at Pokeno, Henderson, and then Victoria St. in Auckland.

I have George Pirrit's Illustrated Catalogue No. 5. June, 1914. A price list of tools and hardware, named HARDWARE. "Farmers and tradesmen will be gratified to see the stock of work-saving and money-making implements displayed in this catalogue. In view of the progress of agricultural and construction development I commend the desirability of up-to-date equipment to those who wish to remain in the forefront of this great industry."

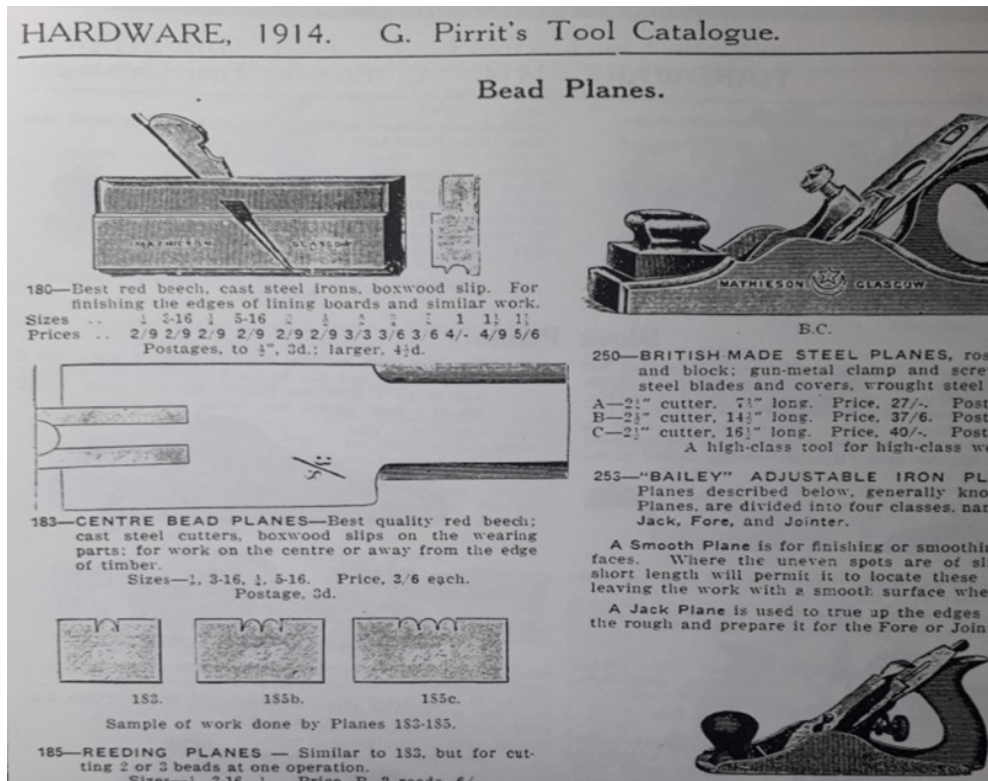


Fig.1. A part page from George Pirrit's Hardware 1914 catalogue (288 pages)

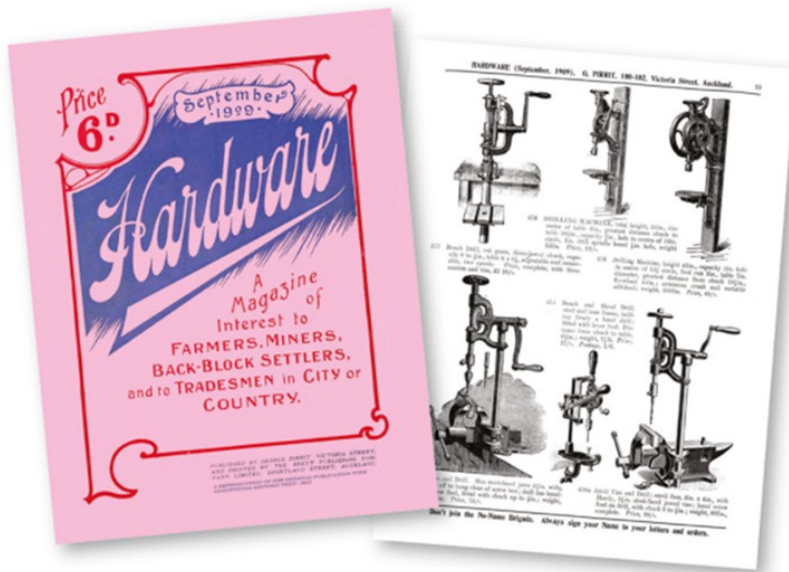


Fig.2. A supplementary magazine also named ‘Hardware’ around 30 pages,for the interest to farmers, miners, back-block settlers and tradesmen in city or country – was first published in 1906 by hardware retailer George Pirrit Junior modelled on the US Sears & Roebuck mail order model. (George Pirrit Junior was later KIA in Galipoli, WW1)

George established a factory for the manufacture of iron toe and heel plates off Razorback Road, Bombay In 1885, a year before this mill closed George moved to a new site in Henderson.



Fig.3. View of plaque at the site of Pirrit's dam and heel and toe plate factory off Razorback Road, Bombay. George owned 140 acres at Pokeno Hill. *“the very richest volcanic soil... plenty of water all the year and a 12 feet overshot water wheel, house and outbuildings..”* The property was for sale in 1884.

Business Notices.

TO THE BOOT TRADE.

I beg to intimate to my Customers and Friends that I have This Day disposed of my Heel Tip Manufacturing Business to Mr. W. Wilson, and to thank them for their patronage during the 30 years the business has been established.

GEORGE PIRRIE.

April 10, 1905.

Fig.4. 1905, The sale advert in the Auckland Star of the Henderson factory to W. Wilson.

Boot and shoe factories were set up in the 1870s. The government put a duty of one shilling a pair on imported boots from the 1860s, making them more expensive and therefore helping to encourage the local industry. But more boots were still imported than made locally – in 1880 about 500,000 compared with 280,000. New Zealand boots and shoes were generally rougher than imported ones, and were made for the lower end of the market.

By 1895 New Zealand had 65 boot and shoe factories, producing more than a million pairs annually.



Printed and Published by...

GEO. PIRRIE

128 and 130, VICTORIA ST., AUCKLAND
(Just across Hobson-street).

Manufacturer of Heel and Toe Plates and
Tips, Importer of Grindery, Shoemak-
ers' Tools and Requisites, Crockery,
Cutlery, and General Hardware.

Fig.5&6. Heel and toe plates. In Pirrie's 1914 catalogue, it is interesting to note that he has listed several makers of heel and toe plate manufacturers from the UK, namely, Blakey, Randall, Pax and Woodmilnes and does not have any mention of his own line of heel and toe plates.

It is fair to assume that George Pirrie made the toe and heel plates for existing shoe and boot makers in Auckland and around the country and probably supplied the many boot makers that were in almost every town at that time. A few of the boot factories in Auckland in the later part of the nineteenth

century were Trenwiths Boot Factory, Kapai Boot Factory, The Pioneer Boot Factory and Jeffries Boot Factory. There were forty-seven factories in operation by 1891 giving employment to almost 2000 people.



Fig.7. Date of image, 1893. Pirrit's Heel and Toe Plate Factory 1885-1906. Members of the Pirrit family are standing outside the family's heel and toe plate factory in Henderson. From left: Jean Pirrit, Jean Pirrit (jnr), Mrs. Jessie Pirrit holding Ruth Pirrit, George Pirrit (jnr), George Pirrit (snr).



Fig.8. View of a pulley and top of a drive shaft which was originally vertical but now bent over, being remains connected with the power source for Pirrit's Heel and Toe Plate factory, beside the Oratia Stream, Henderson.

T O L E T,
LARGE FACTORY,
With water power, close to Railway
Station, Henderson;
Suitable for flax mill.
Apply to
G. PIRRIT,
Victoria street, or at Henderson.

Fig.9. George Pirrit tried to let the factory prior to listing it for sale.



Fig.10. Location of Pirrits Mill and dam. Millbrook Road Reserve, Millbrook Road, Henderson.

Ref: Auckland Council, Schedule of historical heritage. Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections.
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