

On 1st May 2006 Timaru will be 150 years old - 1856 to 2006

Parliament was first formed in 1854 and two years later the Government appointed Samuel Hewlings the task of surveying a town on the East Coast of New Zealand halfway between Akaroa and Port Chambers. Timaru's first town which was aptly named Government Town consisted of approx 300 acres South of North Street to Patiti point. It was boarded by a Town Belt now known as Craigie Avenue and State Highway One. All the streets were to have access to the beach. Below is an early 1875 map courtesy of the Timaru District Council and we have added some photos around the map to show you what it looks like today.



1 The original block of land

designated for a hospital was on the corner of North Street and Craigie Avenue.



2 There was no provision made for a school but Sacred Heart school now sits opposite the former hospital site. A Jail

was established just south of where Century pool is situated today. It is also believed the town was quite lawless and up to 10% of the population spent time in the local jail at some point during the year. The initial population was quiet small and the jail only held up to 20 inmates at any one time. Government Town as it was once known is still the home of the law today.



Timaru South School was established 25 years after Government Town and they will celebrate their 125 year jubilee this year. Samuel Hewlings named many of the Streets after Royalty such as, King 6, Queen 7, Princess 8, George 9, Edward 10, Charles 11 and William 12.



This is a young Government Town explorer 150 years on.



The Police Station and Court house of today.



Government Town is now known as Parkside but despite that it is still the home of the law.

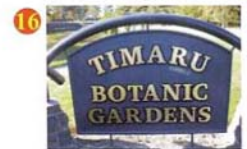


12 Flour Mills became the most popular industry in Government Town. Many of the buildings lie empty today.

14 High Street was to be the main Street and it was to link up with the Main North Road.



15 The site for the hospital on the corner of North Street and the Town Belt was not a favoured site with the locals and after much debate Timaru's Public Hospital was built on the present site at a cost of 443 pounds (\$886).



16 A recreation area was set aside for Government Town and this is now known as the Timaru Botanical Gardens.

On the 1st of May 1856 Timaru's first town was advertised in the New Zealand gazette as an official town and it was called Government Town. The next Timaru town to be surveyed was called Rhodes Town north of North Street and there was much rivalry between the two towns which is why the streets across North Street don't meet. There are no celebrations planned for Timaru's first official town because very few people are aware of it and those that are don't seem to care.