

Over the years, New Zealand historians have written voluminously about the New Zealand Company's first organised settlements at Port Nicholson, New Plymouth, Nelson, and elsewhere. Auckland's first organised settlement at Cornwallis beside the Manukau, on the other hand, has never been much more than a mere unregarded footnote attached to our nation's story. Understandably so, perhaps. It never amounted to much. This small community of Scots perched on the rugged, heavily bushed shoreline near Puponga Point, which juts out from the north shore of the Manukau harbour, seemed doomed from the outset, certainly from the moment that Governor Hobson decided some time during 1840 to place his capital on the northern side of the isthmus. The new capital which he created quickly became the port of entry to northern New Zealand. It was unthinkable that the shallow Manukau harbour with its treacherous sandbars could ever have been a serious rival to the Waitemata. But that was far less obvious in the later 1830s than it is to us today. We have to remember that, at that time, most of the Maori people in the region that we now call Auckland lived beside the Manukau. It seemed feasible, therefore, that the shore of the Manukau harbour could also provide the site of an organised white township. This was the hope, anyway, of the New Zealand and Manukau Land Company sponsored in Edinburgh in 1838 by a group of Scottish landed gentry.⁷¹

The Manukau Company developed as an offshoot of the much better known New Zealand Company. Even when it had a completely separate existence, the Manukau Company showed residual signs of the shared origin of these two colonising bodies. Each aimed to build up a substantial emigration fund from the sale of shares or land; each sold land orders whose 'sections' comprised a holding in the country and one town lot; each required, from those who were to be provided with free or assisted passages, evidence of good character and industrious habits.⁷²

The unusual origins of the Manukau scheme are to be found in a book generally regarded as the first historical survey of early New Zealand, A. S. Thomson's *The Story of New Zealand*.⁷³ Published in 1859, this book provided what Thomson claimed to be 'the secret history of this abortive Manukau settlement'. He maintained that his version was based on information provided by an unnamed settler, a 'gentleman' who (according to the author)