

Theodore Hickson



The story of Theodore is an interesting one. He was born in East Tamaki, Auckland on 3 September, 1850.

His life was spent as a Government Surveyor, Forester, Land Agent, adventurer, and inventor.

His father was Joseph Edward Hickson who was born 3 August 1829 in Gibraltar. His grandfather was Captain John Annesley Hickson, who came to New Zealand as part of the Fencibles (retired British Army personnel who settled in New Zealand as part time soldiers, in return for land and a homestead). Captain Hickson had many children (14 by our count) Joseph was the 5th child of Captain Hickson and his wife Elizabeth Pleasant Williams. Captain Hickson also [became a magistrate](#).

Theodore's mother was Ester Fairburn, the youngest daughter of William Thomas Fairburn and Sarah Tuckwell.

The Hickson's originally came from Blennerville in Co Kerry in Ireland, the same area as where the Benners were settled. Note that Blennerville was owned by the Blennerhasset family, who also had family members emigrate to New Zealand.

Joseph and his family returned to England in or around 1861, and they are noted in the [1861 Census](#) as living in Tottenham, Middlesex.

Theodore worked as a surveyor, forester, land agent, writer and inventor. His life was full of adventure.

[Read More](#)

Surveyor

[Map of Auckland City 1882](#) 1 of 4

[Map of Auckland City 1882](#) 2 of 4

[Map of Auckland City 1882](#) 3 of 4

[Map of Auckland City 1882](#) 4 of 4

He was a Member of the [Royal Society of New Zealand](#) .

Author

He wrote about his experiences, and many were published in the "Wide World Magazine". Click on the link below to read one such article.



[Lost in The Seventy Mile](#)

Theodore set up and managed a Real Estate business known as T W Hickson & Co. And in 1881 in the [Observer, Volume 2, Issue 36, 21 May 1881, Page 386](#)

Mr. T. W. Hickson, impelled by the exigencies of a rapidly increasing- business, has removed from his late address (South British Chambers), to more capacious offices in the building

hitherto occupied by Messrs. Hoffman and Sons.

The archives are full of advertisements in the newspapers advertised their "wares". In the [Observer, Volume 4, Issue 99, 5 August 1882](#)

:

*Mr **T. W. Hickson** and Co., with a desire to meet the requirements of the times, have started a new periodical, entitled "The North New Zealand Settler and Land Buyers' Guide," an agricultural journal and country settlers' paper, to be published monthly, containing original articles on farming, agriculture &c., interesting to farmers, owners and buyers of land ; — in fact a really very useful paper, and one likely to be extensively read. by settlers, farmers, and residents in the country.*

In the [Clutha Leader, Volume IX, Issue 482, 5 January 1883, Page 5](#)

We have received a copy of " The North New Zealand Settler and Land Buyer's Guide," a monthly agricultural journal published at Auckland by Messrs T W. Hickson and Co. The work is very well printed and contains a large amount of matter both instructive, and interesting to settlers. It is well worthy the support of the agricultural community. Tue charge, postage paid, is only 6s 6d per annum.

In 1886 Theodore was [appointed as a Forester](#) for the Southland District.

In the Evening Post, Volume CXIII, Issue 102, 30 April 1917, his work in mapping was described:

*Another quaint map is that of the city of Auckland, published by **T. W. Hickson**, surveyor, and dated 1882. In size, this map is positively gigantic, and with it's colouring presents a curiously kaleidoscopic appearance. Beneath the map proper is a city directory, a reference to which explains the queer squares, oblongs, triangles,- and quadrangles of blue, green, and terra-cotta, which represent not only the buildings, but the material they are composed of, and not only the buildings from the lowliest leanto to the churches, public buildings, etc., but also*

the fire plugs, fire bells, lamps, and letter-boxes. It is indeed a comprehensive document which Mr. Hickson achieved, and yet, not the least of its interest will lie in its blank spaces, most of them long since filled to overflowing.

Onehunga

There is a picture of Onehunga as surveyed by Theodore in 1851



[Click here](#) to see the same area today. Or [click here](#) to see them overlaid.

Inventions

Totalisator

Theodore was also an inventor and registered a number of patents. While living in New Zealand he developed an "automatic multiplex registering machine" capable of being used as a totalisator or for other purposes.

In **The Argus** newspaper of Melbourne in 1885 [they said](#) :

"The "Triumph Totalisator or Automatic Multiplex Registering Machine," exhibited by Mr Theodore Hickson, of Auckland, I pass by with reverential awe The late Mr Babbage would have comprehended it but it is beyond my ken I have heard, indeed, that something of the nature of a totalisator is used in the southern hemispheie for betting purposes; but how the totalisator can be utilised from the point of view of giving or taking the odds, is to me a mystery"

In the **Otago Daily Times** [it was written](#) :

*"The "Triumph totalisator or automatic multiplex registering machine," exhibited by Mr **Theodore Hickson**, of Auckland. I pass by with reverential awe. The late Mr Babbage would have comprehended it, but it is beyond my ken. I have heard, indeed that something of the nature of a totalisator is used in the .Southern hemisphere for betting purposes ; but how the totalisator can be utilised from the point of view of giving or taking odds, I know no more than I am acquainted with the mysteries of the consultations of "Adam liede." anil "Ada Mantua," who, now that the Melbourne Cup race is imminent, are tilling the country papers with advertisements offering unlimited numbers of " programmes "at 10s apiece. Whether the "consultations" of "Adam Bede" and "Ada Mantua" are gambling lotteries of the most impudent, kind, it is not just now my business to inquire."*

The **Manuawatu Standard** in 1886 also [chipped in](#) :

*Mr G A. Sala does not understand the totalisator. Referring to one which was exhibited recently at Wellington he says : The " Triumph Totalisator. or Automatic Multiplex Registering Machine," exhibited by Mr **Theodore Hickson**, of Auckland, I pass by with reverential, awe. The late Mr Babbage would have comprehended it, but it is beyond my ken. I have heard, indeed, that something of the nature of n totalisator is used, in the southern hemisphere for betting purposes, but how the totalisator can be from the point of view of giving 1 or taking the odds, is to me a mystery.*

In the [Otago Daily Times , Issue 7326, 8 August 1885, Page 2](#)

I have received a copy of a pamphlet on the Triumph" totalisator, giving a minute description of a new machine patented by Mr T W. Hickson, of the Phoenix Foundry, Auckland.

Handles

He moved to Melbourne [sometime around 1891](#) , where he [registered a design](#) with the United States Patent office for a "Combination Handle and Support for Cans and cases".

Tents

Some time after that he moved to New York where he [registered another design](#) for a "New and Useful Improvement for Tents".

In [The Sportsmen's Exposition of 1897](#) Rollin E. Smith wrote:

The New Zealand Mosquito Tent shown by T.W. Hickson of New York, is one of the most thoroughly useful and at certain seasons indispensable adjuncts to camping that has ever been offered to sportsmen.

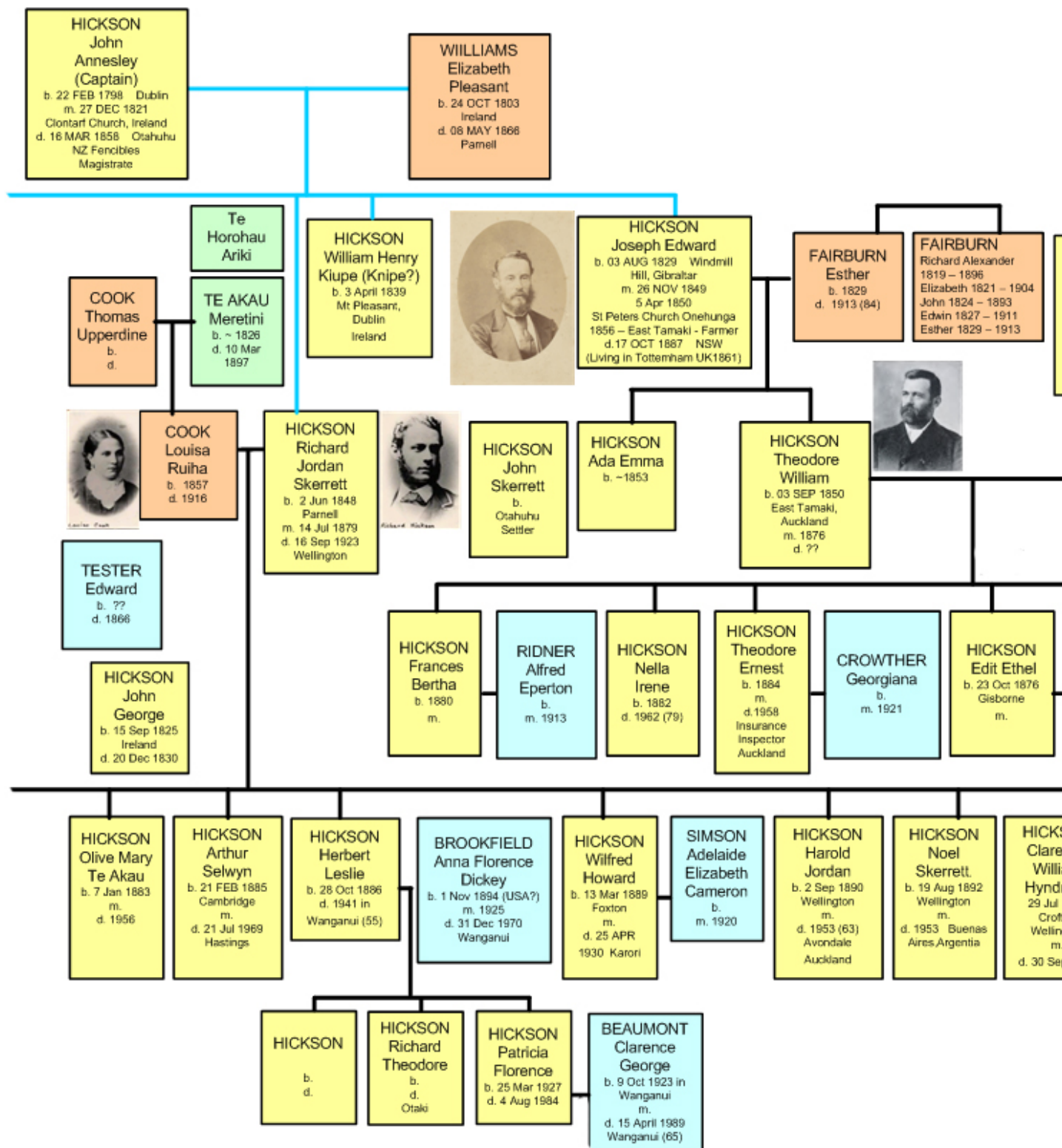
Author

Theodore also wrote about the conditions in New Zealand. In 1870 he wrote and published a 19 page book " [Progress without poverty : another solution of the land question ; or, the hell of poverty and the means of rescue from it](#) ". It was printed in Auckland by H. Brett at the Evening Star Office.

Family

Theodore and his wife had six children:

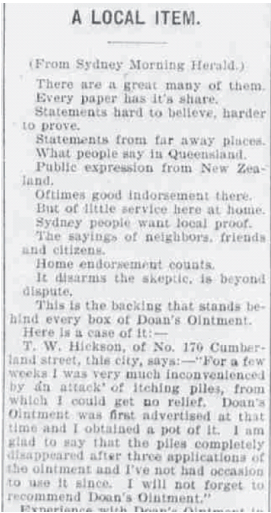
- Edit Ethel b. 23 Oct 1876 Gisborne
- Annesley Martin b. 1878 m.26 April 1916
- Frances Bertha b. 1880
- Nella Irene b. 1882 d. 1962 (79)
- Theodore Ernest b. 1884 m. d.1958 Insurance Inspector Auckland
- Lucy Kathleen Fanny b. 1886



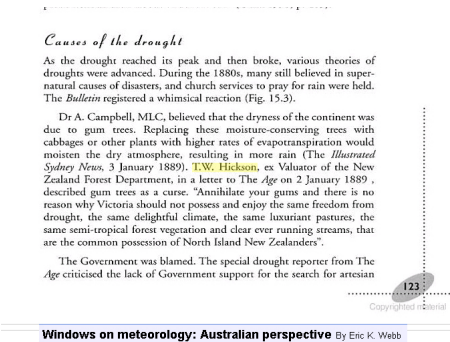
What happened to Theodore?

Despite the best of efforts to research further into his life, nothing has been seen or heard of Theodore much after that. In 1897 the Patent Records indicate he was living in New York. Then in 1898 we see him endorsing a medication for piles ... This was obtained from the Hawaiian

Gazette, 27 Sept 1898, but referring to the Sydney Morning Herald. We are following up Census records of the time. It shows the address 170 Cumberland St, Sydney, which is right in the CBD.



He is quoted in 1889 commenting on the Australian weather:



There is a [passenger list entry](#) for a T W Hickson (as he referred to himself in writings) in 1898 from New York to Southampton.

T W Hickson 27 abt 1871 7 Oct 1898 New York, New York, United States
Southampton, England

The age is wrong but could be a transcription error as Theodore would have been around 47 years at the time.

There are no death records in Australia, UK, NZ or the USA & Canada. However his adventurism, and interest in writing about such events may have lead him elsewhere in the world, and to an untimely demise.

