

UNIVERSITY TEACHING (1959-1979)

Upon resuming teaching in the fall of 1959, after a hiatus of nearly 40 years, I taught at Portland State College through the winter quarter and summer session of 1960. Fall quarter was skipped due to a planned trip to the Pacific in December. We spent the holidays with our son, John, and his family in Hawaii. The visit included a week on the Big Island of Hawaii where we stayed at Kilauea Military Camp on the rim of Kilauea Caldera, and were treated to a close look at recent volcanic activity. We returned to Oahu on January 4, 1961, and the next day I sailed for New Zealand.

Eight weeks were spent in an abbreviated study of New Zealand agricultural land use. Naturally the study was sketchy, but by hard work and long hours I was able to see all portions of the country, all of their types of agriculture, and to discuss the land problems with many people. I traveled over most of the government owned railways and bus lines (nearly 9,000 miles), 2,000 miles by car, 1,000 miles by plane, 300 miles by interisland ferries, and around 250 miles on foot. I practically lived on the trains and buses, using the sleepers on the trains as my hotel on many nights, even sitting up in the coaches when I could not get a berth. Since New Zealand's trains, railcars and buses normally had all seats taken every day by advance booking, I had to learn to book ahead, or I would find myself aboard with standing room only. Furthermore, since most of their railroad mileage is as crooked and winding as the famous crooked mining railways in Colorado, traveling even while seated was none too comfortable, and a lengthy standing trip was really tiring.

New Zealand was having some of the same problems we were experiencing in the United States. Highways were being built or had already been built paralleling most of the rail lines, usually only a few feet distant on the same federally owned rights-of-way. In spite of this duplication, however, their train and bus service was still running at capacity. Private cars were not yet seriously hurting their public transportation systems.

The handwriting was on the wall, however; sooner or later the private automobile would affect rail and bus traffic in the same way that it had in the United States. One main deterrent to car ownership of new fast cars was the price and the difficulty of owning one. Although the income of the New Zealander was about one-half to two-thirds

of the average income in the United States, European compacts cost about 50 percent more than they cost in the United States, and even more for most American cars. The government maintained an import duty of 40 percent and up on all cars imported, and required a special permit before one could plan to bring in a car. One result of this was that the average private car in New Zealand appeared to be around 15 years of age, and 30-year-old Model A Fords were an appreciable part of their cars then in use.

During my time in New Zealand I was fortunate to have been able to spend some time on several different types of farms, each of which was an example of good farming practice.

Farm No. 1: The original owner had been a pilot for the New Zealand Air Force in World War I. Upon his return to civilian life he obtained a grant of more than 600 acres of brush and timber land about 70 miles southeast of Auckland, not far from the present city of Morrinsville. The land was gently rolling to rolling, with deep loamy soil developed from volcanic ash, and a rather uniformly distributed annual rainfall of about 50 inches. The native vegetation which covered the tract included remnants of the partially burned/partly logged virgin forest, some second growth timber of the virgin species, some stands of shrubby invaders, a strong admixture of the native tree ferns, some grassy areas and considerable areas of bracken. The original tract had been divided into several farms, all still owned and operated by members and descendants of the initial owner family. Each of the currently operated farm units was slanted strongly toward dairying, but not one of these units had reached even close to its full potential of development. This situation typifies, in my opinion, most of New Zealand's more than 90,000 farms. Of the many farms I saw, I cannot recall even one which I would call fully developed to its potential. In other words, New Zealand could go far in increasing her agricultural output from the current level, and in addition, she still had millions of other acres which would ultimately become farmlands. It also appeared possible that many of her currently larger sheep runs would ultimately be divided into smaller farms with more intensive utilization of the land.

Farm No. 2: One 1,200 acre sheep run about 25 miles north of Wellington which I studied in some detail consisted mainly of steep hill slopes

with 40 to 70 percent gradient. It contained a few narrow valley areas and a few hilltops which were gently rolling, but they were the exception. In spite of the steep slopes, nearly all of this farm was in sown grasses and received its annual application of chemical fertilizer by plane. This was supplemented by manure dropped by the sheep (and some cattle) which grazed there the year round. Like most of New Zealand's farms, it was divided into many separate fenced paddocks (pastures). The livestock was rotated many times during the year from one paddock to another, so that overgrazing and excessive erosion seldom occurred. This farmer had one paddock which was being rehabilitated for a period of several months without grazing because it had been damaged by too much use in the recent past. Nearly all farmers in that area had their land sufficiently subdivided so they could easily remove one or two paddocks from the usual rotation cycle whenever such damage occurred. This particular 1,200 acre run had more nearly attained its maximum productivity than the farm described previously.

Farm No. 3: Located a few miles from Feilding, near Palmerston North, the farm consisted almost entirely of level land, and was one of the most highly developed farm units in New Zealand. Although it contained less than 100 acres, it was divided into nearly 20 paddocks. Except for the four paddocks used during the preceding month, all of the farm was "knee deep in clover," ready to be grazed in the scheduled rotation. The sheep and cattle on this farm appeared to be better than average in quality and breeding, and they also showed better care and were in better than average condition. The main products of this farm were lambs and beef for slaughter, and wool. The farm's operation was as modern as any I had ever seen anywhere. From what I saw of the land, the livestock, the operation of the farm, the standard of living in the home and what these folk were getting out of life, their setup equalled the best in farm living.

These three farms are examples of good farming at different stages in their development toward their full potential, each with much better than average management of the particular operation.

Although some New Zealand publications indicated that, except for Crown Lands (government lands not in designated reserves), no suitable land remained for agricultural development, it was my firm conviction that thousands of additional farms would be created on the then undeveloped lands.

In addition to those as yet unused lands which I felt would become farms, there was an enormous total acreage of undeveloped or partially developed land in existing farms which could become good farmland when the need for its full development became sufficiently urgent.

In addition to furthering my professional knowledge in New Zealand, I also had the pleasure of making friends with two brothers who are my distant relatives -- one at Dunedin (Fig. 88), the other at Auckland. Our respective ancestors, closely related, had emigrated from Scotland to America and to New Zealand over 100 years earlier.

The remainder of 1961 was involved with Portland State College where I participated in the Geography Workshop at Timothy Lake in August. Also during the summer we bought and moved to a 44 acre farm south of Portland, between Wilsonville and Lake Oswego -- a move made much easier by the collective efforts of the Portland State geographers and their families. The generous help of this group was repeated many times in the years that followed.

Late in the year I accepted an offer to teach at the University of Oregon in the winter quarter of 1962, filling in during the absence of Clyde Patton. In June I attended the annual meetings of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers at the University of Washington, and received the APCG Distinguished Service Award, presented to me by Arch Gerlach. I also managed to spend a few hours at the Seattle World's Fair.

Several months earlier I had accepted a Fulbright lecturing award, to begin at the University of Istanbul in October, 1962. We flew to Europe in early September, spent several weeks visiting in different parts of Europe, then, in a newly purchased Volkswagen, drove to Turkey via Austria, Yugoslavia and Greece. My lectures on soil and water conservation were divided between some 30 professors in the Forestry Institute of the University of Istanbul, and about 100 University seniors (Forestry majors). We took advantage of our location both at Christmas, when we spent a week in the Holy Land, and during the February break, when we drove several thousand miles along the Mediterranean and Aegean coasts (in company with my University interpreter), and thus escaped the snow and cold of Istanbul. Classes ended on May 22, and we had planned to fly eastward immediately, but a revolution on May 20, followed by martial law, prevented issuance of a promised permit to sell our car, and also delayed our departure until June 12. We drove to Rotterdam to ship our car home, then



Fig. 88. W.A. Rockie and his distant cousin, Owen G. Dickie, Dunedin, New Zealand, January 30, 1961.

late in June flew eastward to visit our older son, Dwain, and his family in Japan for several weeks; we also spent several days in the Matanuska Valley in Alaska renewing old friendships with Don Irwin and others.

Back at Portland I again helped with the Conservation Workshop at Timothy Lake in August, and in October taught Peace Corps classes for students going to Turkey.

Although it had not been planned, I was involved practically the entire year of 1964 lecturing in geography and conservation -- the winter quarter at Portland State College, the spring quarter at Central Washington State College at Ellensburg, the summer session at Portland State, and the fall quarter at Eastern Washington State College at Cheney. In May, Paul McGrew and I attended an official rededication of the Soil Conservation Experiment Station at Pullman, Washington, that we had jointly started in 1930. In mid-June I attended

the 50th anniversary of my university class at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

My teaching schedule in 1965 and 1966 was much lighter than in 1964. I lectured at Portland State College, and assisted in the Conservation Workshop at Timothy Lake in August. In December, 1966, Edith and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. I continued my part-time teaching at Portland State in 1967, and the first part of 1968. Concurrently, I began to expand my nonacademic activities in land development (buying rural tracts and dividing into small acreages for resale).

In late 1967 I received a call from Professor Chester Cole, Chairman of the Department of Geography at California State College, Fresno. Some years earlier I had promised him that I would spend a year as a visiting lecturer in his department. Chet said he had just discovered that I was approaching 80 years of age, and that the president

of his college did not approve visiting faculty members who were 80 years or older. He said that if I were going to give him a year, it would have to begin in September 1968. I sent him a resume, a tentative acceptance, and a month later he called with word that the president wanted a statement from my doctor regarding my health condition. So my doctor for 25 years wrote a very good health report on me, saying that I looked and acted like a man many years younger.

That year at Fresno marked the end of my full-time teaching. My affiliation with Portland State College continued, but on a very limited basis. I was named Adjunct Professor of Geography, and gave occasional lectures, participated in seminars, and attended the summer field camps which I greatly enjoyed (Fig. 89).

(Note: Rockie wrote nothing further for this monograph about his activities during the 1970's, so the closing portion of the monograph is provided by Larry Price.)



Fig. 89. W.A. Rockie, above Timberline Lodge, Mt. Hood, Oregon, August 1975.