

ALFRED HENRY WHITEHOUSE; A BOOTMAKER WHO  
BECAME A PIONEER OF NEW ZEALAND FILMS

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

## ALFRED HENRY WHITEHOUSE; A BOOTMAKER WHO BECAME A PIONEER OF NEW ZEALAND FILMS

**Abstract:** *In December 1880, Alfred Henry Whitehouse set himself up in business in Te Aroha as its 'Pioneer Bootmaker'. He had a very small involvement in local mining. As well as making boots and shoes, he tried to earn more money by erecting houses and being an agent, a clerk, and, very briefly, the town clerk. Actively involved in local politics, he was especially critical of the local newspaper and the domain board, sometimes being abrasive and tactless, as he could be in private life as well. More positively, he was active in sporting and especially social events, with a particular interest in music.*

*After leaving Te Aroha at the end of 1888, following the death of his first wife, Whitehouse was a commercial traveller for some years before holding public performances of the newest phonographs and of the early varieties of 'moving pictures'. Not only did he arrange exhibitions of imported short films, he made the first New Zealand ones, using another man as the cameraman. He toured his exhibitions all around the North Island, including in his programmes a variety of musical selections and other attractions. By 1910, facing increasing competition and with his advancing age, he gave up this occupation. Financially, it had been only a modest success, but it earned him an honoured place as a pioneer of the New Zealand film industry.*

### BOOTMAKER

Alfred Henry Whitehouse<sup>1</sup> was born in Birmingham, England, in 1856, the youngest son of Abel, a warehouseman, and Matilda, née Craddock.<sup>2</sup> His family arrived in Auckland on the 'John Duncan' in 1864 as members of the Albertland Settlement, afterwards settled at Matakohē, close to the Kaipara harbour.<sup>3</sup> By 1878 he was working as a bootmaker, and in 1879

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<sup>1</sup> For photograph, see *Observer*, 21 December 1895, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Marriage Certificate of Alfred Henry Whitehouse, 14 September 1897, 1897/1548; Death Certificate of Alfred Henry Whitehouse, 4 July 1929, 1929/2257, BDM; Clive Sowry, 'Alfred Henry Whitehouse', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. 2, 1870-1900 (Wellington, 1993), p. 574; *Thames Advertiser*, 8 November 1876, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Death Certificate of Alfred Henry Whitehouse, 4 July 1929 1929/2257, BDM; biography of Samuel Thomas Whitehouse, *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 885; *Thames*

had a boot and shoemaker's shop in Cambridge.<sup>4</sup> According to the *Descriptive Handbook to the Waikato*, published in 1880, he along with another man were 'the leading bootmakers' there, all their work being done 'in a manner that would not disgrace first-class city establishments'.<sup>5</sup>

Attracted by the gold rush at Te Aroha, he moved there late in 1880, applying for a business site on 4 December and taking out a miner's right three days later.<sup>6</sup> His eldest brother, Samuel Thomas,<sup>7</sup> also lived in Te Aroha from January to September 1881, working in partnership with a local builder and contractor.<sup>8</sup> Whitehouse proudly advertised that he was the 'Pioneer Bootmaker' of Te Aroha, but in late 1883, when the first Waiorongomai crushing was imminent, he announced that having 'given up his other business' he intended 'to devote his attention to mining matters' as a sharebroker.<sup>9</sup> One month after advertising the sale of all his boots and shoes because of 'giving up business', he returned to this trade in 'commodious new premises',<sup>10</sup> clearly not having made a success of sharebroking.

*Advertiser*, 17 February 1874, p. 2, 15 September 1876, p. 2, 8 November 1878, p. 2; 'Addresses Presented to Sir George Grey on his 74th Birthday, 14 April 1886, by European and Maori Residents of Auckland Province', p. 191, Grey New Zealand MS 275, Auckland Public Library.

<sup>4</sup> Notices of Intentions to Marry 1878, folio 169, Births Deaths and Marriages, BDM 20/23, ANZ-W; Marriage Certificate of Alfred Henry Whitehouse, 22 October 1878, 1878/1383; Birth Certificate of Clarence Craddock Whitehouse, 12 August 1879, 1769/8597, BDM; advertisement, *Waikato Mail and Midland Counties Farmers' Advocate*, 23 September 1880, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Descriptive Handbook to the Waikato* (Hamilton, 1880), p. 40.

<sup>6</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 25-26, no. 66, BBAV 11505/3a; Miner's Right no. 707, issued 7 December 1880, Miners' Rights Butt Book 1880, BBAV 11533/1f, ANZ-A.

<sup>7</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 15 September 1876, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 31 January 1881, p. 3, 17 May 1881, p. 2, 28 September 1881, p. 2; Harry Kenrick (Warden) to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 21 July 1881, Mines Department, MD 1, 82/11, ANZ-W; Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 14 October 1881, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 885.

<sup>9</sup> *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 9 June 1883, p. 3, 13 October 1883, pp. 2, 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 20 October 1883, p. 4, 1 December 1883, p. 3, 8 December 1883, p. 2.

## LAND AND BUILDINGS

Although he did not retain ownership of his first business site,<sup>11</sup> he acquired four more during his years in Te Aroha.<sup>12</sup> Some of this property enabled him to obtain financial assistance when needed, as when in 1883 he mortgaged part of one allotment to the Northern Boot and Shoe Manufacturing Company for £100.<sup>13</sup> Nine months later he mortgaged a similar area to the Thames Land Society for the same amount.<sup>14</sup> He also owned two residence sites in Lipseytown, as did his wife.<sup>15</sup> They erected a four-roomed house on one of her allotments, which was mortgaged to the Northern Boot and Shoe Manufacturing Company in 1884 because her husband owed this firm £87.<sup>16</sup> He built other houses, to provide additional income, as indicated in 1884, when he was sued in the Thames court for the sum of £9 19s 6d for wrongful conversion of furniture. The plaintiff deposed that his family had occupied ‘one of defendant’s houses’ and that goods had been seized because of unpaid rent. Whitehouse claimed ‘he had simply taken an inventory of the goods, and left them with the neighbour’, and when the plaintiff agreed to pay the rent his goods were returned.<sup>17</sup>

## INVOLVEMENT IN MINING

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<sup>11</sup> Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 25-26, no. 66, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>12</sup> Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 63-64, no. 13, folios 78-79, no. 24, folios 84-84, no. 37, folio 166, no. 96, folio 173, no. 131, BBAV 11505/3a; Rent Register 1881-1900, folios 48, 206, 269, 416, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>13</sup> Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mortgage dated 22 March 1883, Certified Instruments 1883, BBAV 11581/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>14</sup> Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mortgage dated 22 December 1883, Certified Instruments 1883, BBAV 11581/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>15</sup> Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 63-64, no. 13, BBAV 11505/3a; transfer dated 9 June 1886, Certified Instruments 1886, BBAV 11581/7a; Rent Register 1881-1900, folios 66, 111, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>16</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 September 1885, p.2; Te Aroha Borough Council, Rate Book 1888, [no pagination], Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; Te Aroha Warden’s Court, mortgage dated 30 September 1884, Certified Instruments 1884, BBAV 11581/5a, ANZ-A.

<sup>17</sup> Magistrate’s Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 17 May 1884, p. 3.

On 8 December 1880, Whitehead acquired his only interest in a Te Aroha claim, appropriately named the Cambridge, from whence he had just arrived.<sup>18</sup> He did attempt in 1881 to obtain the Who'd Have Thought It, but withdrew his plaint for forfeiture.<sup>19</sup> One year after Waiorongomai was established, Whitehouse purchased an allotment,<sup>20</sup> but did not settle there, selling it at an unrecorded date. He had small investments in four Waiorongomai claims, none of them gold producers.<sup>21</sup> A shareholder in two equally unsuccessful companies, in 1885 he was threatened with forfeiting his shares in one for failing to pay a call.<sup>22</sup> He retained sufficient interest in mining to participate in the formation of the Te Aroha Prospecting Committee two years later.<sup>23</sup>

### OTHER OCCUPATIONS

Apparently not seeing boot making as a lifelong career, he sought other ways to make a living, such as becoming an agent of the Australian Mutual Provident Society.<sup>24</sup> In January 1886, he applied, unsuccessfully, to be clerk of the Ohinemuri County Council.<sup>25</sup> The following year, after the election of the first town board, he combined boot making with office work, to the disgust of the *Te Aroha News*:

The Te Aroha Town Board have not commenced well by making their first public announcement with closed doors, and by appointing a man at fourteen shillings a week as town clerk, when another, having at least the recommendation of education and experience in the keeping of books, offered to do the work at eight shillings a week. To be sure it was commonly reported that

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<sup>18</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 199, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>19</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaint Book 1880-1898, 24/1881, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>20</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 15 October 1883, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 254, BBAV 11567/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 56, 57, 111, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

<sup>22</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 17 August 1882, p. 1132, 23 August 1883, p. 1214; *Te Aroha News*, 15 August 1885, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 3 December 1887, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 15 October 1887, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1886, p. 7.

certain parties had promised to appoint Mr Whitehouse in the event of their being themselves elected, but it is rather rough on the ratepayers to practically have to provide Mr Whitehouse with a pension to the extent of six shillings a week, although he may have worked hard in the interests of some of those returned.<sup>26</sup>

The voting for the position of town clerk did indeed reveal that the members of the board who claimed to represent the workers, and whose election he had assisted, had voted for him, but his offer to lease his vacant shop adjoining his shoemaker's shop as an office for the board was declined.<sup>27</sup> At the end of the year, as an economy measure, he was dismissed, a board member thenceforth doing the work for no charge.<sup>28</sup> Subsequently, 'some discussion took place regarding the manner in which the books had been kept by the late clerk, Mr Whitehouse, and the advisability of having the cash book and ledger written up afresh from the start; ultimately it being decided to let the matter stand over for the present'.<sup>29</sup> At the following meeting, these books were laid on the table for inspection, 'it having been found necessary to employ' another person 'to rewrite and post them from the start' because of 'the manner in which' Whitehouse had kept them.<sup>30</sup>

## POLITICS, MOSTLY LOCAL

Whitehouse had fallen out with the local newspaper before he became town clerk. In 1886, after a letter was not published, using the pseudonym 'Alpha' he sent this to the *Waikato Times* explaining that the *Te Aroha News* had refused to publish it and attacking its editorial policy:

It has been remarked that during all the trouble re the domain board management, that nothing has appeared in your columns in their defence. It has also been asserted as a reason, and I firmly believe it to be a true one, that no subject receives justice at your hands unless it agrees with your own views. This is a serious assertion, and as I fully endorse it, I give facts to show how myself and others holding this opinion have received this

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<sup>26</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 2 April 1887, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Town Board, *Te Aroha News*, 2 April 1887, pp. 2-3.

<sup>28</sup> Town Board, *Te Aroha News*, 3 December 1887, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Town Board, *Te Aroha News*, 24 December 1887, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Town Board, *Te Aroha News*, 7 January 1888, p. 2.

impression. First, your treatment of Mr W[illiam] A[rchibald] Murray, of Piako,<sup>31</sup> who some little time ago advanced his opinion on a matter of grave importance to each resident, viz the nature of land tenure in Te Aroha, which is undoubtedly as he asserted one reason for the slow progress of this district. But instead of allowing the subject to be ventilated, you immediately jumped upon him by denying that it was as he stated, and imputed personal motives to him in advancing the subject, (have you no personal interest in objecting to the advertising?) and then had to admit that [he was correct] in some instances more oppressive than he said, and followed this by refusing to publish his reply to your own personalities. Second, your suppression of all Police Court news recently, when, for reasons best known to yourself, it suited you, and the following week, to vent your spleen, refer to one of the defendants in a cowardly manner. If, Sir, you can suppress anything and everything which does not coincide with your notions, and are free to exhibit such an autocratic spirit in the management (?) of your journal, where, I ask, is the boasted freedom of the untrammelled Press?

He claimed the advertising revenue received from the domain board determined the newspaper's attitude to it. Should the paper change its policy, the public could use it as 'a medium of advocating their wishes, and matters of general interest would be discussed in a fair and impartial manner'. He charged it with publishing incomplete information about the board, adding that its 'former actions would prevent any one relying or depending on' its reports, which were 'detrimental to the interests of our district'.<sup>32</sup>

Another letter sent to the *Te Aroha News* at the end of the month and 'declined with thanks'<sup>33</sup> was subsequently published in the *Waikato Times*, under Whitehouse's name. He stated that his 'Alpha' letter had been 'the "first effusion" I have penned ever since the Aroha News had an existence and ... I claim the paternity of the article without any assistance from "friends" '. He had stated 'undeniable facts'. The *Te Aroha News* had published 'unwarranted inferences' hinting at the identity of 'Alpha', and 'had you been content to give a simple refusal' he would not have written again. 'But when from behind the bulwark of proprietary you throw out inferences when you had no reason to believe there was any shadow of the

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<sup>31</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from 'Alpha', *Waikato Times*, 21 October 1886, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 October 1886, p. 2.

truth to back them up' he had replied in self-defence.<sup>34</sup> A year later, when he was again in conflict with the *Te Aroha News*, the latter did not mention this apart from reprinting a paragraph from the *Observer*:

The "We" of the Te Aroha paper has been getting into hot water lately. Somebody wrote him a letter signed "Fair Play," which, instead of going into "your valuable columns," went into the waste basket. Thereupon sundry residents called an indignation meeting, at which a party by the name of Whitehouse was the moving spirit. A letter from the much abused editor was read at the meeting. Amongst other hard things set off by the scribe was:- "Allow me to inform you that I have not the slightest intention of being present at your meeting tonight, and can only attribute your attempt to interfere with the management of this journal to either gross ignorance or consummate impudence." No wonder they passed a resolution of an uncomplimentary nature to the "We."<sup>35</sup>

In February 1887, Whitehouse nominated three of the candidates who stood on behalf of the workers and seconded the nomination of another.<sup>36</sup> In the following month he convened an election meeting and proposed a motion of support for them, and on election day was a scrutineer.<sup>37</sup> In a by-election at the end of the year he was canvassing hard for election.<sup>38</sup> Although James Mills, a carpenter and future mayor,<sup>39</sup> stood down from the race to avoid competition for the workers' vote, of the three candidates Whitehouse received the least votes, 25; the highest score was 51.<sup>40</sup> Presumably in a trade-off with Mills, Whitehouse nominated him for the Te Aroha Riding of the county council.<sup>41</sup>

Shortly afterwards, he convened a 'well-attended public meeting' to express sympathy with Edward Quinn,<sup>42</sup> the former chairman of the town

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<sup>34</sup> Letter from A.H. Whitehouse, *Waikato Times*, 6 November 1886, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Observer*, n.d., reprinted in *Te Aroha News*, 15 October 1887, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> *Waikato Times*, 22 February 1887, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 5 March 1887, p. 3, 12 March 1887, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 8 March 1887, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 3 December 1887, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>40</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 10 December 1887, pp. 2, 3.

<sup>41</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 November 1887, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> See paper on his life.

board, for ‘the unjustifiable attack’ on him by the *Te Aroha News* (which chose not to report this gathering). Mills chaired the meeting, and asked him to move the first resolution:

Mr Whitehouse stated that at the request of a very large number of residents, who had felt deeply indignant at the malicious statements with reference to Mr Quinn that had occasionally appeared in the News, more especially in last Saturday’s issue, he had called the meeting, and at the same time had notified the person responsible for the articles complained of, of the object of the meeting and requested his attendance, but he felt deep regret that Mr [John] Ilott<sup>43</sup> [the editor] had thought fit to remain away.

His resolution expressing regret over ‘the unjust and uncalled for attack’ made on Quinn, thanked him for his work for the community, and regretted his departure from the district, was carried unanimously, followed by a vote of thanks to Whitehouse for calling the meeting.<sup>44</sup> The following year, Whitehouse was elected, on Mills’ nomination, to a committee that sought to create a borough, and he continued to support Mills politically.<sup>45</sup> His other involvement in local issues was his election in 1887 to a committee charged with obtaining a better system of land tenure, in the following year informing a public meeting about their progress.<sup>46</sup>

Although not a member of the Hot Springs Domain Board, like others he was a vocal critic of some of its policies. In August 1885, at a meeting of the Te Aroha Debating Club, he protested at its decision to give a soda water manufacturer sole right to the overflow water.<sup>47</sup> A correspondent commented: ‘Great talk about the overflow; the little shoemaker must look out, for if the warden and C. sit on him, they will crush him entirely’.<sup>48</sup> C. was Charles Ahier, who had acquired the rights to this water, and the correspondent was slyly commenting on his and the warden’s generous

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<sup>43</sup> See paper on the temperance movement in the Te Aroha district.

<sup>44</sup> Own Correspondent, ‘Public Meeting at Te Aroha’, *Thames Star*, 24 November 1887, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1888, p. 2, 15 September 1888, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 29 October 1887, p. 2, 5 September 1888, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 29 August 1885, pp. 2, 7.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Te Aroha Tickles’, *Observer*, 12 September 1885, p. 16.

proportions.<sup>49</sup> Despite Whitehouse's protests, Ahier and his partners retained the use of the water.<sup>50</sup> The following year, he protested to the government that board meetings were not open to the public.<sup>51</sup> He wanted members elected by residents rather than chosen by the government.<sup>52</sup> Shortly afterwards, when he tendered for the sale of tickets to the domain baths, his offer was declined.<sup>53</sup>

A shareholder in the Te Aroha Public Hall and Reading Room Company, floated in 1882, in the following year he became the hall's secretary.<sup>54</sup> In 1885, he nominated a candidate to the licensing bench and two years later again nominated him; nominated by him, Whitehouse was not elected, obtaining 16 votes compared with the highest scoring candidate's 35.<sup>55</sup> Elected to the library committee in 1886, he was re-elected in the following year.<sup>56</sup> His 24 votes for the school committee in 1884 were insufficient, and he also failed to win election three years later.<sup>57</sup> When the Loyal Orange Order established a lodge in 1884, he was its first secretary.<sup>58</sup> After concerns were raised about the lack of medical services, in 1887 he chaired a meeting of the friends of an unqualified doctor, Charles Cooper,<sup>59</sup> was elected to a committee to form a medical club with Cooper as their doctor, and became the first secretary of this Aroha and Ohinemuri Medical Club.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> See 'Thames Tittle Tattle' *Observer*, 8 April 1882, p. 54; C.T. Harris, *Settlement and Development of the Upper Thames Valley, 1887-1937* (Te Aroha, 1937), photograph facing p. 49.

<sup>50</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Agreements of 18 July 1885, 8 October 1885, Certified Instruments 1885, BBAV 11581/6a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 22 November 1884, p. 2, 25 July 1885, p. 2, Domain Board, 29 August 1885, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> A.H. Whitehouse to John Ballance, 9 October 1886, Tourist Department, TO 1, 1891/198, ANZ-W.

<sup>52</sup> *Waikato Times*, 21 October 1886, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> *Waikato Times*, 14 December 1886, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 41 no. 259, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 14 July 1883, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 14 February 1885, p. 2, 26 February 1887, p. 2, 5 March 1887, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 January 1886, p. 2, 29 January 1887, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1884, p. 7; 30 April 1887, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 January 1884, p. 7, 5 April 1884, p. 7.

<sup>59</sup> See paper on physical and mental health in the Te Aroha district.

<sup>60</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 July 1887, p. 2, 16 July 1887, p. 3.

In national politics he was a supporter of Sir George Grey.<sup>61</sup>

### SPORTING AND SOCIAL EVENTS

Whitehouse arranged and participated in sporting events. In December 1883 he was on the committee organizing the Boxing Day Sports, and came third in the 100 yards and 300 yards handicap races.<sup>62</sup> In the following year he was defeated in a footrace against one of the local publicans.<sup>63</sup> In August 1883 he played football against Thames, and in the following April was elected the club's secretary and treasurer and later that year played against Waiorongomai.<sup>64</sup> In 1886 he coxed a four-oared gig and rowed in the Amateur Four Oars race in the Te Aroha regatta.<sup>65</sup>

Whitehouse was a leading organizer of social events. With another shopkeeper, he arranged an Art Union for the Christmas party held in the hall in 1883.<sup>66</sup> In the following month he organized a dance.<sup>67</sup> In mid-1885, he was a member of the committee that established a roller skating rink in the hall, and in the following year conducted socials there every Tuesday night.<sup>68</sup> A particularly elaborate entertainment was held in July 1886:

A VARIED ENTERTAINMENT will be held in the Public Hall,  
Te Aroha, on TUESDAY NEXT, comprising Songs, Choruses,  
Duets (vocal and instrumental), Recitations etc., including the  
first Appearance of the Unrivalled  
AUTOMATIC WAXWORKS,  
with VENTRILOQUAL IMPERSONATIONS.  
Grand Finale, the Mirth-provoking Farce  
"OLD FELLOW";  
or  
SHAKESPEARE REMODELLED.  
To be followed by a DANCE. Holders of Front Seat Tickets Free.

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<sup>61</sup> 'Addresses Presented to Sir George Grey on his 74th Birthday', p. 191, Grey New Zealand MS 275, Auckland Public Library.

<sup>62</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 2, 29 December 1883, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 27 December 1884, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> *Thames Star*, 29 August 1883, p. 2, 26 April 1884, p. 2, 11 October 1884, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> *Waikato Times*, 21 October 1886, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 16 October 1886, p. 2, 13 November 1886, p. 2.

<sup>66</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 26 January 1884, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 27 June 1885, p. 2, 8 May 1886, p. 7.

Admission - Front Seats, 2s; Back, 1s; Dance only: Tickets, 2s.  
 A Treat in Store. Come All.  
 A.H. Whitehouse.<sup>69</sup>

The following year, he was described as the 'Conductor' of 'Skating, Dancing, and Music' at the hall on Thursday evenings.<sup>70</sup> Music was a particular enthusiasm, and in August 1881, for example, he lent his harmonium for the first service in the Wesleyan church.<sup>71</sup> Like other local musicians, he assisted several denominations, for example taking part in a concert to raise funds for the Catholic Church,<sup>72</sup> despite being a member of the Church of England.<sup>73</sup> He twice sang at Presbyterian socials.<sup>74</sup> From 1881 onwards he played for balls at Te Aroha and Waiorongomai; at a fancy dress one held at Waiorongomai he played both piano and cornet.<sup>75</sup> When it was first proposed, in 1882, that a brass band be formed, he was a member of its provisional committee, and later became its secretary.<sup>76</sup> After it disbanded, in 1886 he called a meeting of those interested in re-forming it, and to assist its fund-raising held Band Socials every Thursday evening.<sup>77</sup> Principal cornet player in the revived band of nine instrumentalists, he played the cornet solos.<sup>78</sup>

In 1883, in reporting a concert for the opening of the schoolhouse, the local newspaper mentioned that Whitehouse 'had a great deal to do with training the young vocalists, who acquitted themselves so creditably. To him in a great degree the musical success was attributable'.<sup>79</sup> At the beginning of the following year he was a member of a committee proposing to establish a choral society,<sup>80</sup> a stillborn venture. At socials, he contributed

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<sup>69</sup> Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 17 July 1886, p. 3.

<sup>70</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 July 1887, p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> *Waikato Times*, 11 August 1881, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 24 April 1886, p. 7.

<sup>73</sup> Death Certificate of Alfred Henry Whitehouse, 4 July 1929, 1929/2257, BDM.

<sup>74</sup> *Waikato Times*, 23 February 1883, p. 2, 29 May 1883, p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> *Waikato Times*, 19 November 1881, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 28 May 1887, p. 2, 4 April 1888, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 29 March 1882, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 27 September 1884, p. 7.

<sup>77</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 16 January 1886, p. 7, 23 October 1886, p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 18 August 1888, p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 26 January 1884, p. 2.

songs, in particular comic songs, as when he was one of a party from the Te Aroha Band of Hope, a temperance organization, which held a meeting at the nearby farming village of Shaftesbury. ‘Mr Whitehouse, who was in excellent voice, sang “Twinkling Stars,” and was greeted with much applause’.<sup>81</sup> As part of the celebrations to mark the opening of the Te Aroha Public Hall, he sang the sentimental ballad ‘What is Home Without a Mother?’<sup>82</sup> At a similar concert when the Waiorongomai Public Hall was opened, accompanied by a partner Whitehouse ‘caused much amusement by their renderings of the comic song (dressed in character) “Doctor Quack;” in response to an encore they re-appeared each bearing a large card, labelled “Waiorongomai” and “Te Aroha” respectively’, again causing ‘much amusement’ by singing about these settlements being Siamese twins.<sup>83</sup> In a Band of Hope entertainment a comic duet included ‘some local and very “hitting” verses’.<sup>84</sup>

A squabble over a promise that he did not fulfil once more revealed the more abrasive side of his nature. George Gapes,<sup>85</sup> manager of the K.I.D. Minstrels of Waiorongomai, at the end of a concert there announced that they had been promised the use of instruments but were ‘disappointed at the eleventh hour’. Whitehead responded that this statement was ‘deliberately false’, for Gapes, who presumptuously had presumed that he could use the band’s instruments, had been told that the band would consider his request, which it then declined. ‘It must be regretted that he allowed his petty temper to exhibit itself in the manner he did’; a man had told Whitehouse that his statement was in bad taste. ‘No one whose front was less than his would have asked’. Had the band been asked to participate, it would have; ‘but the tools without the workmen “thank you, no my dear”’. He had written to inform the public ‘in case the band do not consider it worth their while to reply to him’.<sup>86</sup>

Gapes responded that Whitehouse was the ‘*presumptuous liar* and not I’. He had asked Whitehouse for a loan of four instruments, thinking that he

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<sup>81</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 31 May 1884, p. 20.

<sup>82</sup> *Waikato Times*, 17 March 1883, p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 15 November 1884, p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 29 May 1886, p. 7.

<sup>85</sup> See *New Zealand Herald*, 11 April 1882, p. 5; *Te Aroha News*, 11 September 1886, p. 3, Piako County Council, 10 July 1889, p. 2; *Auckland Star*, 1 November 1889, p. 1; *Evening Post*, 21 April 1894, p. 2, 6 September 1907, p. 7.

<sup>86</sup> Letter from A.H. Whitehouse, *Te Aroha News*, 15 November 1884, p. 2.

was secretary of the band, and was told by his messenger that the instruments would be provided; when they did not arrive he asked again, and the real secretary refused to provide them. As the selection of music was in the programme, he had explained matters to the concertgoers. It was the first time that he had ever experienced such a refusal, ‘and I have to thank Mr Whitehouse for the fact, and of course *he tells the truth you know*, that it is presumptuous to ask a favour of the Te Aroha Brass Band’.<sup>87</sup> Whitehouse expressed pleasure that his letter had had the desired effect of exonerating the band, and claimed that Gapes was now attempted to ‘shuffle the *promise* on to my shoulders. The man who degrades himself by using such language’, on the basis of what a third party may have understood, was ‘quite beneath my notice, and only worthy of silent contempt’. After clarifying his version of events, he stated that he would take no further notice of Gapes, and apologized for replying ‘to an effusion so unworthy of your columns’.<sup>88</sup>

In an apparent reference to Whitehead and his tactlessness, nearly three years later the manager of the Southern Cross Comedy Company told the *Te Aroha News* that he had been informed ‘I should find the hall agent a queer fish, and my informant was not far wrong. Politeness is very cheap, a little common “ceevility” acts like grease to a wheel axle, but little W. sadly needs that essential to political popularity, to wit – tact’.<sup>89</sup>

### HIS FIRST FAMILY

Whitehouse might have remained at Te Aroha had it not been for the sudden death of his wife Eliza on 17 June 1888, after an illness lasting only 24 hours. She was the daughter of the Rev. John Davis, for a time a Baptist clergyman at Thames, and Emma, née Garfield; they had married in October 1878 when both were aged 23.<sup>90</sup> Eliza died at the age of 32, leaving two sons aged eight and seven, and three daughters aged three, two, and

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<sup>87</sup> Letter from George Gapes, *Te Aroha News*, 22 November 1884, p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> Letter from A.H. Whitehouse, *Te Aroha News*, 29 November 1884, p. 2.

<sup>89</sup> Letter from J.W. Barlow, *Te Aroha News*, 2 July 1887, p. 3.

<sup>90</sup> Marriage Certificate of Alfred Henry Whitehouse, 22 October 1879, 1879/1383; Birth Certificate of Clarence Craddock Whitehead, 12 August 1879, 1879/8597; Death Certificate of Eliza Whitehead, 17 June 1888, 1888/2052, BDM; *Thames Advertiser*, 8 November 1878, p. 2.

eight weeks.<sup>91</sup> Clarence Craddock was born in 1879, Henry Davis in August 1880, Charles John in November 1881, Lizzie Evelyn in July 1884, Daisy Irene in August 1885, and Lillie Matilda in April 1888.<sup>92</sup> Their third son had died in June 1882 of an attack of croup lasting one day, aged six months.<sup>93</sup>

During Eliza's illness, 'she was mostly unconscious',<sup>94</sup> and the suddenness of her decease prompted an inquest. Whitehouse informed the coroner that during their nine years of marriage 'his wife had been frequently ailing'. About 12 months previously, when out for a walk she had had a fit and after being unconscious for some time had managed to get home. There had been no further fits until her final ten days, when her sudden last illness began with a dreadful headache followed by a fit. He assured the coroner that 'he had always lived on the best of terms with his wife, who was of a very gentle nature'. As her doctor, Charles Cooper,<sup>95</sup> was at Paeroa, Mary Jane Heathcote, the wife of a builder,<sup>96</sup> came to assist at 4.15 in the morning. She described Whitehouse, in the notes of the inquest, as being 'a very kind husband', and in the newspaper report as 'a kind and good husband' with a 'frail and delicate' wife. Hannah Cocks, the wife of John Frederick, a local shopkeeper,<sup>97</sup> who had also nursed her, confirmed the state of her health and stated that the couple 'always lived on the best of terms'. Eliza 'dearly loved her husband, and had never made a complaint of being ill-treated'. Dr Alfred Wright, who had examined her the previous year when an 'attempt' had been made to insure her life, stated that he had

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<sup>91</sup> Death Certificate of Eliza Whitehead, 17 June 1888, 1888/2052, BDM.

<sup>92</sup> Birth Certificates of Clarence Craddock Whitehouse, 12 August 1879, 1879/8597; Henry Davis Whitehouse, 22 August 1880, 1880/9395; Charles John Whitehouse, 29 November 1881, 1881/11254; Lizzie Evelyn Whitehouse, 9 July 1884, 1884/9739; Daisy Irene Whitehouse, 31 August 1885, 1885/17946; Lillie Matilda Whitehouse, 27 April 1888, 1888/13419, BDM.

<sup>93</sup> Death Certificate of Charles John Whitehouse, 18 June 1882, 1882/2256, BDM; *Waikato Times*, 24 June 1882, p. 2.

<sup>94</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 20 June 1888, p. 2.

<sup>95</sup> See paper on physical and mental health in the Te Aroha district.

<sup>96</sup> See *Te Aroha News*, 28 February 1885, p. 2, Domain Board, 13 June 1885, p. 2, 26 February 1887, p. 2, 24 September 1908, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 June 1893, p. 19; *Thames Star*, 23 November 1898, p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> See *Te Aroha News*, 23 June 1883, p. 3, 25 April 1885, p. 2, advertisement, 7 November 1885, p. 7, 5 June 1886, p. 2, 28 March 1887, p. 2.

believed 'she would not live long' because of the state of her lungs. Wright had not been called to treat her in her last illness, and considered that, had she been given proper medical treatment, she would not have died.<sup>98</sup> The jury determined that death was due to 'natural causes'.<sup>99</sup> In a brief obituary, the *Te Aroha News* wrote that Eliza was 'highly respected' and 'by her kindly nature' had made 'many friends'.<sup>100</sup>

#### AFTER TE AROHA

Six months after Eliza's death, Whitehouse left Te Aroha. Although the *Te Aroha News* ignored his departure, the local correspondent for the *Waikato Times* gave a detailed account of his farewell and added his own praise:

One of our most useful workers for the advancement of the affairs of this town, Mr A.H. Whitehouse, has just left us to take up his abode in the Kaipara district. During his residence here, since the opening of the field, Mr Whitehouse has always taken an active interest in all matters tending towards the public good of the place, and has throughout shown pluck, energy and intelligence in enunciating his views. As a mark of the esteem in which he is held in Te Aroha, a number of gentlemen assembled at the Public Hall on Saturday evening to show in a substantial way their appreciation of him, and to express their regret in losing him from the district. Mr James Mills having been voted to the chair, addressing Mr Whitehouse, said, "I have much pleasure in performing the duty allotted to me to-night, viz, that of presenting you with a purse of sovereigns from your numerous admirers and co-workers on the occasion of your leaving the district. We all know the loyal and hearty manner in which you have aided with voice, pen, and purse, every movement having for its object, the benefit of your fellows and the advancement of the district, and it must be a source of consolation to you to know that the policy in local matters advocated by yourself, and those who have been association with you has made such rapid progress in the public mind, so much so that our opponents at the last election for Town Commissioners were simply nowhere having only received 82 votes out of a total recorded of 542, and I am sure I give utterance to the opinion of all our friends when I say

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<sup>98</sup> Inquest on Eliza Whitehouse, Justice Department, J 46 COR, 1888/366, ANZ-W; *Te Aroha News*, 20 June 1888, p. 2.

<sup>99</sup> Death Certificate of Eliza Whitehouse, 17 June 1888, 1888/2052, BDM.

<sup>100</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 20 June 1888, p. 2.

how much we shall miss you, and that we wish you health and prosperity in your new sphere, and trust that the progress of this district in the near future may be such that it will be to your advantage to return to us, with the assurance that you will receive a most heart welcome." Mr Whitehouse, who was evidently taken aback, replied as follows: "I need not refer to the surprise you have given me, but I must admit that you have made me feel proud, as I know that the expression you have given, emanates from feelings of respect. Not occupying a position that it would possible be any advantage for you to take such an action from a spirit of flattery, even if you have belonged to the class who would do so, therefore I know that you all at any rate believe me worthy of your esteem and respect, and I earnestly thank all for the way in which you have chosen to mark your appreciation of my efforts to do what I believed to be right whilst amongst you, and for the welfare of the place. With regard to myself and my future movements, I have seen no place which I can compare with Te Aroha, and it is with deep regret that I leave it, as I have spent the happiest hours of my life here, but also those most heavily laden with sorrow, and it is on this account that I think well to leave. Whether or not to return at some future day, I know not, but wherever I am I shall look back with pleasure and pride to the expressions of respect you have given voice to to-night, and it will always give me delight to hear that Te Aroha is progressing. He again thanked them sincerely.- Mr [Charles] Ahier [accountant, town clerk, and secretary of the domain board]<sup>101</sup> bore testimony to the high esteem Mr Whitehouse has been held, in remarking that a straighter man he could not conceive. - Mr [Nicholas] Cleary [a miner who had been a policeman]<sup>102</sup> and other speakers bore similar testimony, after which Mr Whitehouse briefly returned thanks for the good-will and wishes expressed by all.<sup>103</sup>

Four months later, when riding with his brother at Matakoho, Whitehouse fell from a horse, breaking a collarbone and dislocating a shoulder.<sup>104</sup> Shortly afterwards, he left the Kaipara district and travelled

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<sup>101</sup> See *Observer*, 'Thames Tittle Tattle', 8 April 1882, p. 54, 'Te Aroha', 4 July 1891, p. 18, sketch, 16 February 1895, p. 111; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 November 1893, p. 23; *Thames Advertiser*, 10 January 1895, p. 2.

<sup>102</sup> See *Thames Star*, 23 November 1880, p. 2, 12 February 1881, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 8 November 1882, p. 2, Te Aroha Correspondent, 8 October 1886, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, Warden's Court, 5 April 1884, p. 7, Ohinemuri County Council, 15 October 1887, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> *Waikato Times*, 25 December 1888, p. 2.

<sup>104</sup> *Waikato Times*, 25 April 1889, p. 2.

around the country taking orders for an Auckland tailor,<sup>105</sup> George McBride.<sup>106</sup> In late 1890, McBride advertised in the Tauranga newspaper:

TAILORING            TAILORING  
 OUR Mr A.H. Whitehouse is now visiting  
 Tauranga, Te Puke, Matata and Opotiki,  
 taking Xmas orders, having a large  
 variety of seasonable materials.  
 Patrons visited on word being left  
 at the Post Office.  
 GEO. McBRIDE,  
 Auckland.<sup>107</sup>

When he visited the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, 'he was welcomed by the great gathering of commercial travellers, was given a flag to represent New Zealand, and placed at the head of the procession'. He later recorded that 'amongst my most treasured souvenirs of travel is the commercial traveller's medal present to me by them'.<sup>108</sup> In 1897 he was still a commercial traveller, based in Auckland.<sup>109</sup>

#### PHONOGRAPH EXHIBITOR

In 1893, Whitehouse was the only New Zealand commercial traveller to attend the World's Fair, which resulted in him becoming a 'Phonograph Exhibitor'.<sup>110</sup> In October 1894, describing himself as 'exhibitor', he advertised an entertainment by the 'Phonograph and Vocal Combination Company' in Auckland:

Introducing, for the first time in New Zealand,  
 Young's  
 AUTOMATIC REPRODUCER,  
 or SOUND MAGNIFIER.

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<sup>105</sup> *Waikato Times*, 10 December 1889, p. 2.

<sup>106</sup> See *New Zealand Herald*, 11 March 1919, p. 8.

<sup>107</sup> Advertisement, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 12 November 1890, p. 3.

<sup>108</sup> Letter from A.H. Whitehouse, *Auckland Star*, 29 July 1908, p. 8.

<sup>109</sup> Marriage Certificate of Alfred Henry Whitehouse, 14 September 1897, 1897/1548, BDM; *Observer*, 9 October 1897, p. 8.

<sup>110</sup> A.H. Whitehouse to Sir George Grey, 14 May 1894, Grey New Zealand Letters, vol. 34, p. W 33, Auckland Public Library; *Observer*, 21 December 1895, p. 9.

Just arrived by the last 'Frisco mail.

This invention increases the volume of sound fully four fold. Each item distinctly heard in every part of the hall.

Monster programme. Splendid selections of Military, Orchestral, and String Bands; Cornet, Piano, Banjo, Mandolin, and Piccolo Solos; Songs by the leading professional artistes; Gladstone's magnificent Speech.

These performances were interspersed with songs from three singers, one of them being Whitehouse. In his one and only joke about admission charges, he gave these as one shilling for adults, 'Children, half-price; Babies, One Guinea'.<sup>111</sup> On the evening before the performance, Whitehouse played some of his records for reporters on 'Young's Automatic Reproducer', which he had imported from America. This machine 'enables the phonograph to be heard distinctly in a room or hall. The records were all given clearly and distinctly'. Assisted by a tenor, his entertainment would be 'a choice one of vocal items and records ... including a record of a speech by Mrs [Elizabeth] Yates,<sup>112</sup> Mayor of Onehunga, on "Women's Suffrage"'.<sup>113</sup> Shortly afterwards, he 'exhibited' an Edison Phonograph at the Hamilton Show,<sup>114</sup> and the following month the *Observer* wrote that Whitehouse, 'of phonograph fame', would take 'his famous phonograph (fitted with the new sound magnifier) to the Thames. We can promise our country cousins a treat'.<sup>115</sup>

Not content merely to use pre-recorded sound, earlier that year he had written to Sir George Grey, then in London, asking him to record 'a message to us New Zealanders which we can repeat for years to come' on the phonograph. 'I feel that by so doing you will confer a favour upon thousands who will hear my machine as well as granting an inestimable one to myself'. He enclosed the money needed to meet the cost of purchasing the cylinders and posting them to New Zealand, but Sir George declined his offer and returned the money.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 20 October 1894, p. 8.

<sup>112</sup> See *New Zealand Herald*, 9 September 1918, p. 4.

<sup>113</sup> *Auckland Star*, 20 October 1894, p. 4.

<sup>114</sup> *Waikato Times*, 25 October 1894, p. 10.

<sup>115</sup> *Observer*, 3 November 1894, p. 9.

<sup>116</sup> A.H. Whitehouse to Sir George Grey, 14 May 1894, with note by Grey, n.d., Grey New Zealand Letters, vol. 34, p. W 33, Auckland Public Library.

## EXHIBITING THE EARLIEST FILMS

On 29 November 1895, Whitehouse advertised New Zealand's first exhibition of Edison's kinetoscope,<sup>117</sup> which allowed a loop of four scenes to be viewed by one person at a time:<sup>118</sup>

THE CROWNING TRIUMPH OF  
PHOTOGRAPHIC ART,  
EDISON'S LATEST AND GREATEST  
ACHIEVEMENT,

**THE KINETOSCOPE.**

NOW ON VIEW AT BARTLERR'S STUDIO

(By the kind permission of Mr W.H. Bartlett).

Having just returned from a trip round the world (circling the globe in four months), taken solely for the purpose of bringing to New Zealand this emanation of genius.

THE KINETOSCOPE,

Which reproduces motions of any kind with startling reality. The First Series of Scenes includes:

The Barber's Shop

The Fire Rescue Scene

The Chinese Laundry

Annabelle's Graceful Butterfly Dance.

London Daily News, October 18, 1894:- It is a Living picture of a new order. A skirt dancer is seen among her flowing drapery, and she bends her knees, travels on her toes, and indulges in a giddy spin. It is just as one sees her on the stage.

Evening News and Post, October 24, 1894:- Go and see the kinetoscope before you are a day older.

London Morning Post, October 18, 1894:- The pictures are all perfect in themselves, are magnified in the machine, and illuminated by electric light.

All of which may be seen for ONE SHILLING.

A.H. WHITEHOUSE, EXHIBITOR.

Bartlett's Studio, Queen-street.<sup>119</sup>

(William Henry Bartlett, an 'Art Photographer', ran an Auckland studio from 1894 until 1924.)<sup>120</sup> The *Auckland Star* was most impressed:

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<sup>117</sup> For full details of the kinetoscope, see Wikipedia.

<sup>118</sup> Sowry, p. 574.

<sup>119</sup> Advertisement, *New Zealand Herald*, 29 November 1895, p. 8.

What is justly described as the “crowning triumph” of photographic art, the kinetoscope, Edison’s latest and greatest invention, is now on exhibition in Auckland. Several of these ingenious contrivances are now on view at Bartlett’s studio, Queen-street, Mr A.H. Whitehouse being the exhibitor. The kinetoscope reproduces motions of any kind with remarkable reality. The pictures are marvels of art, are magnified in the machine, and are illuminated by electric light. The first series of scenes include remarkably life-like pictures on work in the barber’s shop, the fire rescue, a Chinese laundry and a skirt dance. The skirt dance is a living picture of a new order, the graceful *danseuse* goes through her figures just as one sees her on the stage. The kinetoscope is a most remarkable invention, and all Aucklanders should see it.<sup>121</sup>

The *New Zealand Herald* provided more details:

The first series is a barber’s shop, a customer being lathered and shaved, another turning over the newspaper which he is perusing, two men shaking hands on meeting, etc. In the fire rescue scene, the fireman is seen mounting the ladder, the children in their nightdresses sliding down in the fire-escape, caught by the rescuer and passed into the arms of other firemen. The Chinese laundry, in which a policeman is in hot pursuit of John [Chinaman] is very amusing, as they bolt in and out of doors, and leap over partition walls with wondrous agility, the pigtail always ahead of the shako. But the most wondrous illusion of all, is Annabelle’s graceful butterfly dance, in which she performs skirt gyrations which would excite the envy of Mrs Sowerby’s pupils.<sup>122</sup> The illusions are achieved by 46 photographs passing the line of vision per second, or 1610 to the scene.<sup>123</sup>

In December, Whitehouse’s photograph in the *Observer* was captioned: ‘The introducer and exhibitor of Edison’s Kinetoscope’.<sup>124</sup> He described this

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<sup>120</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 318, 1020-1021, with examples of his art; *Auckland Star*, 19 July 1943, p. 4.

<sup>121</sup> *Auckland Star*, 30 November 1895, p. 2.

<sup>122</sup> See, for example, advertisement, *New Zealand Herald*, 31 May 1892, p. 5; advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 12 April 1906, p. 4.

<sup>123</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 4 December 1895, p. 5.

<sup>124</sup> *Observer*, 21 December 1895, p. 9.

invention as ‘Edison’s latest and greatest achievement’, and in a special notice to parents and teachers announced:

I have decided to exhibit the Kinetoscope to Children every day,  
except Saturday, at half-price – viz, Sixpence for four Scenes.  
It is educational. Let the little ones see it.<sup>125</sup>

Later Whitehouse introduced the kinetophone, ‘a combination of the kinetoscope and the phonograph, which enabled the viewer to see, for example, Annabelle dance the butterfly dance to music by the paragon Trio’.<sup>126</sup> When advertising the ‘Last Chance’ to see his kinetoscope, in mid-February, he stated that ‘the Band can be seen and heard’.<sup>127</sup>

When the Customs Department levied £40 on his kinetoscope and other machines because were ‘fancy goods and toys’, the *Observer* supported his protests, for he made his living from them.<sup>128</sup> When in the Thames district early in 1896 he displayed his kinetoscope, kinetophone, and phonograph, doing ‘a big business’ before travelling on to Paeroa.<sup>129</sup> To raise money for the Thames hospital he gave a free kinetoscope show to its patients but charged the public a shilling.<sup>130</sup> From February 1896 to January 1897 he toured the North Island with his machines.<sup>131</sup>

The Thames morning newspaper lauded his kinetoscope:

For a short period Thames people have an opportunity of seeing Edison’s most wonderful invention the Kinetoscope, Mr A.H. Whitehouse exhibiting the instrument in premises in Pollen street. The achievement of the kinetoscope is the reproduction of living movements, and so realistically does it do its work, and so vividly is every detail in connection therewith brought out that to witness any scenes through its agency is almost as good as having them before one first hand. The possibilities of the instrument are great, and it may not be many years before it is used in conjunction with the phonograph to such an extent as will enable us at the antipodes to obtain an adequate idea of all the great

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<sup>125</sup> Advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 9 December 1895, p. 4.

<sup>126</sup> Sowry, p. 574.

<sup>127</sup> Advertisement, *Observer*, 15 February 1896, p. 9.

<sup>128</sup> *Observer*, 15 February 1896, p. 7.

<sup>129</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 16 March 1896, p. 4, 3 April 1896, p. 2; *Observer*, 21 March 1896, p. 21.

<sup>130</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1896, p. 2.

<sup>131</sup> Sowry, p. 574.

happenings in the Old World - to actually see and hear what has taken place. This is truly a wonderful age, and perhaps no man has helped to make it so more than Thomas Alva Edison.

Mr Whitehouse has four scenes to put before his patrons, the best of which is a theatrical reproduction and to give an adequate conception of it the phonograph has been brought into requisition, and one not only sees every evolution in which thirty-four actors are engaged faithfully and well, but hears the music which accompanies their actions. A fire rescue is also a wonderful representation; first a burning building, with volumes of smoke rolling up, is seen, then the firemen with ladders in position, the hose playing upon the flames, and the rescue of occupants from the flames. Other pictures are a ladies' skirt dance and a burlesque scene in connection with a Chinese laundry and its occupiers. There were numerous visitors yesterday to the exhibition, and no doubt during Mr Whitehouse's stay a very large portion of the population will make a call so as to be able to say they have seen the kinetoscope.<sup>132</sup>

On 13 October 1896, at the Auckland Opera House, Charles Godfrey's Vaudeville Company gave the first presentation in New Zealand of the projecting kinematograph, 'whereby motion pictures were projected on a screen, enabling a large number of people to view a single exhibition of a film'.<sup>133</sup> After visiting Thomas Edison whilst on his way to Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee celebrations in London in June 1897, Whitehouse returned with Edison's projecting kinetoscope,<sup>134</sup> which with other new inventions he toured around country towns in the North Island for more than a decade. In September 1897, for instance, the Tauranga newspaper provided him with free publicity:

To-night Mr A.H. Whitehouse opens at the Theatre Royal with his most interesting, amusing as well as instructive Kinematograph and Phonograph entertainment. Among the novelties which will prove unusually attractive will be the New Zealand scenes, the first ever taken here and one of them, the Maori canoe hurdle race, has never been exhibited before the present trip in the Bay of Plenty, being only just completed. In the second part are some splendid scenes in connection with the Spanish-American war, one series lasting ten minutes; another

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<sup>132</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 29 February 1896, p. 3.

<sup>133</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 10 October 1896, p. 4; *Auckland Star*, 13 October 1896, p. 2, advertisement, p. 8; Sowry, p. 574.

<sup>134</sup> Sowry, p. 574.

depicts some of the largest of the American battleships in review. There is also an attack on a Spanish outpost by American soldiers and a battle scene culminating with the hoisting of the American flag over a captured fort. One of the prettiest of the Auckland Exhibition scenes is the Maypole dance at the opening by 50 children. Between each scene there is a selection by the loud-speaking concert phonograph and these vary from vocal to instrumental items of every sort, zylophone solo, whistling solo, minstrel chorus, comic songs, band music, etc, the whole forming an entertainment that is as good as it is unique.<sup>135</sup>

In October he showed a 'fine series of kinematograph pictures' in Auckland, and, should anyone doubt his being the pioneer, produced at letter from Edison, dated 20 May, stating that he had 'the first projecting kinetoscope of his (Edison's) design and manufacture that has been sent to New Zealand'. It would be operated with the aid of electric light for the first time.<sup>136</sup> Early the following month, he advertised the final night's performance in Auckland:

UNBOUNDED SUCCESS!  
 ENCORE AFTER ENCORE!  
 The most wonderful  
 KINEMATOGRAPH  
 AND PHONOGRAPH  
 Ever Exhibited by ELECTRIC LIGHT.  
 38 - PICTURES AND SONGS – 38.

The show included boat races at Henley and a 'Watermelon Eating Contest'.<sup>137</sup> Immediately afterwards he arranged to show the machine at the Auckland Show. 'Special arrangements have been made for darkening a large tent. The pictures will be shown by electric light'.<sup>138</sup>

He then took his kinematograph to the Tauranga Show: 'Nearly all the views were clear and distinct, while some were excellent'.<sup>139</sup> He advertised that his kinematograph was 'illuminated by ELECTRIC LIGHT', and that

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<sup>135</sup> *Bay of Plenty Times*, 25 September 1899, p. 2.

<sup>136</sup> *Auckland Star*, 28 October 1897, p. 4.

<sup>137</sup> Advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 8 November 1897, p. 8.

<sup>138</sup> *Auckland Star*, 10 November 1897, p. 4; advertisement, *Observer*, 13 November 1897, p. 17.

<sup>139</sup> Jinty Rorke, 'A.H. Whitehouse – An early film pioneer', *Historical Review – Bay of Plenty Journal of History*, vol. 32 no. 1 (May 1984), pp. 17-18.

it, and the phonograph, were ‘Edison’s latest and have never been exhibited in this town’, the entertainment lasting a ‘full two hours’.<sup>140</sup> The ‘full programme’ included ‘whirlpool rapids, Edison at work, a Henley eight-oared race, ‘Anna Bell Skirt Dance and Many Many More’.<sup>141</sup> One performance was ‘in trouble for a long time, there being some difficulty with the electric light’.<sup>142</sup> In the following month he took his kinematograph to Thames.<sup>143</sup> Three months later, he gave Tauranga residents a chance to see a ‘bumper programme’ provided by both his ‘electrical kinematograph and duplex phonograph’, the former with ‘added scenes’ and for the latter a record would be taken ‘of local artist singing and reproduced immediately’.<sup>144</sup> The local newspaper described him as being ‘thoroughly up in his work, while the machines are most perfect. A large number of new views will be shown, a consignment having just come to hand’.<sup>145</sup> It reported a good attendance. ‘The superiority of the electric light giving such lifelike reproductions secured at once the loudest approval from the audience, encores were demanded and acceded to. The Phonograph which is exceedingly loud and clear gave great satisfaction’.<sup>146</sup>

Whitehouse advertised that he had ‘the only electrical kinematograph and duplex phonograph’ in the country, and that the former, powered by its own engine and dynamo, produced 2,000 candle power of electric light.<sup>147</sup> When he took the kinetograph and his Orplén phonograph to Mercury Bay and Kuaotunu, a Coromandel newspaper reported that he was

well-known as an exhibitor, having been the first to introduce the Monograph in the Auckland District, and he brought the first kinoscope to New Zealand. He invariably travels with something worth showing, and in this fact lies the foundation of the success he has achieved as a public entertainer.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Advertisement, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 24 November 1897, p. 5.

<sup>141</sup> Advertisement, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 26 November 1897, p. 5.

<sup>142</sup> *Bay of Plenty Times*, 26 November 1897, p. 2.

<sup>143</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 10 December 1897, p. 2.

<sup>144</sup> Advertisement, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 14 March 1898, p. 3.

<sup>145</sup> *Bay of Plenty Times*, 11 March 1898, p. 2.

<sup>146</sup> *Bay of Plenty Times*, 14 March 1898, p. 2.

<sup>147</sup> Advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 9 April 1898, p. 8.

<sup>148</sup> *Coromandel County News*, 23 March 1898, p. 2.

When reporting he was taking his kinetoscope around the east coast, the *Observer* described 'the entertainment' as 'a first-class one in every respect'.<sup>149</sup> North of Auckland he obtained 'large and appreciative' audiences.<sup>150</sup> Before touring the Bay of Plenty in October 1898 he obtained a 'very large number of the latest scenes and phonographic selections' from Edison's laboratory, 'including magnificent extended films portraying the departure of a huge transport ship, several war scenes, some humorous, all bright and clear'. For his duplex concert phonograph he had acquired 'Edison's symphony band, comic and sentimental songs, Gaskin's "Killarney" etc, all loud and distinct'.<sup>151</sup> As usual, his advertisement emphasized the newest attractions: 'WHITEHOUSE is coming with the Latest Scenes obtainable on Kinematograph, and Newest Selections on Phonograph, Direct from Edison's Laboratory by ss. Moana, 'Frisco Mail.... Everything New'.<sup>152</sup> The *Bay of Plenty Times* described his show as being 'worth travelling miles to see'. He had imported 'a very large number of the latest scenes and photographic selections' from America, including 'magnificent extended films portraying the departure of a huge transport ship, several war scenes, some humorous, and all bright and clear'. He also recorded the Tauranga Brass band.<sup>153</sup>

#### FILM MAKER

By early 1898, as there were at least 12 other kinematograph machines travelling around the North Island, to counter this competition he decided to make his own moving pictures.<sup>154</sup> At Tauranga he announced that he had obtained 'the necessary plant for the manufacture of films for the kinematograph' from America.<sup>155</sup> Lacking 'the technical skill to operate the camera and develop the film', he was assisted by Bartlett.<sup>156</sup> On 1 December they filmed the opening of the Auckland Industrial and Mining Exhibition, which 'was screened at Bartlett's studio on Christmas Eve – the

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<sup>149</sup> *Observer*, 12 March 1898, p. 20.

<sup>150</sup> *Auckland Star*, 30 May 1898, p. 3.

<sup>151</sup> *Auckland Star*, 4 October 1898, p. 4.

<sup>152</sup> Advertisement, *Observer*, 12 March 1898, p. 8.

<sup>153</sup> Rorke, p. 18.

<sup>154</sup> Sowry, p. 574.

<sup>155</sup> Rorke, p. 18.

<sup>156</sup> Sowry, p. 574.

first screening of a New Zealand film'.<sup>157</sup> In the advertisement he described himself as the 'proprietor', not the filmmaker:

BARTLETT'S STUDIO VESTIBULE.  
TO-NIGHT! TO-NIGHT!  
FIRST KINEMATOGRAPH SCENE  
TAKEN AND REPRODUCED IN NEW ZEALAND  
Opening Auckland Exhibition.  
Newton Band, Mounted Guard, Governor  
and Lady Ranfurly, Monsignor Mc  
Donald, Crowd Entering Building.

The programme was repeated every 20 minutes, chairs being provided for 'ladies'.<sup>158</sup> Musical selections were provided on his duplex phonograph.<sup>159</sup> A few days later, when Whitehouse repeated this programme in Hamilton, the local newspaper reported that 'the views of the opening of the Auckland Exhibition were especially good' and noted that they were the first 'series of views taken in New Zealand' for this machine.<sup>160</sup> In mid-February 1899, he advertised two performances in Auckland before resuming his 'Northern Tour':

A COMPLEMENTARY KINEMATOGR-  
APH ENTERTAINMENT  
Tendered to the Performers of Maypole  
Dance....  
THE FIRST ANIMATED SCENES TAKEN IN AUCKLAND.

These included the opening of the Exhibition, Uhlan winning the Cup at Ellerslie, a maypole dance, 'And a Host of Others'. Promised two hours of 'Real Fun and Enjoyment', patrons were urged to 'Come Early and Secure a Seat before the crush arrives'.<sup>161</sup> The *Auckland Star* reported that 'the dancing of the Maypole by Mrs Osborne's pupils at the Auckland Exhibition' was filmed

by Mr W.H. Bartlett for Mr A.H. Whitehouse, who intends to  
accord the youthful performers an opportunity to see themselves

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<sup>157</sup> Sowry, p. 574.

<sup>158</sup> Advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 24 December 1898, p. 5.

<sup>159</sup> *Auckland Star*, 24 December 1898, p. 4.

<sup>160</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 29 December 1898, p. 2.

<sup>161</sup> Advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 14 February 1899, p. 8.

as others see them; also, other Auckland scenes, including the opening of the Exhibition, a Regatta scene, together with a monster programme of the latest life-like subjects from Edison's laboratory, interspersed with a variety of selections on the loud duplex phonograph. Mr Whitehouse's reputation as an entertainer is well known.<sup>162</sup>

Early in the year, Whitehouse 'began an extensive tour of the North Island with the first "Animated Pictures" taken in New Zealand'.<sup>163</sup> In September, Bay of Plenty audiences saw his film of the Governor's visit to the Auckland Exhibition, 'a splendid record of the procession showing the Governor's carriage, escort, bands, etc'. Particularly popular was a 'Maori Canoe Hurdle Race on the Waikato River, wherein were shown all the laughable and exciting features which invariably accompany this unusual form of sport'.<sup>164</sup> His 'New Zealand Scenes' were advertised as being the 'First ever taken in the Colony'.<sup>165</sup> Late in October, Whitehouse (Bartlett was not mentioned) filmed the opening ceremony of Maungatapu meeting house, taking 'two animated photographs of 1,250 pictures each of the haka and poi performances'.<sup>166</sup>

In early February 1900, he advertised the second appearance in Auckland of the theatrophone plus 'Whitehouse's Programme of Kinematograph scenes, including the only animated scenes taken in New Zealand'.<sup>167</sup> He then toured outside Auckland, at Thames again using the theatrophone, described as an enlarged phonograph that everyone in a large building could hear.<sup>168</sup> The *Te Aroha News*, in encouraging residents to attend his entertainment, describing him as 'the well-known exploiter of Edison's inventions', the latest one, the theatrophone, being a vast improvement on the phonograph. 'No doubt a bumper house will greet our old friend on his visit'.<sup>169</sup> To encourage attendance at the Te Aroha performance, it quoted a *New Zealand Herald* review:

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<sup>162</sup> *Auckland Star*, 14 February 1899, p. 4.

<sup>163</sup> Sowry, p. 574.

<sup>164</sup> Rorke, p. 19.

<sup>165</sup> Advertisement, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 13 September 1899, p. 3.

<sup>166</sup> Rorke, p. 19.

<sup>167</sup> Advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 6 February 1900, p. 8.

<sup>168</sup> *Thames Star*, 9 March 1900, p. 2.

<sup>169</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 10 March 1900, p. 2.

In the Opera House last night Mr A.H. Whitehouse had a successful opening performance with his theatrophone and kinematograph entertainment. The theatrophone is simply an improved and enlarged phonograph specially adapted for large buildings, and the selections given on the new instrument last night were sufficient proof that nothing so well adapted for public entertainment has yet been exhibited in Auckland. The instrument is distinctly heard all over the building, the words of the various solos being easily followed in every instance while in the orchestral pieces it sends forth a strong volume of sound, the effect being as nearly as possible the same as if the orchestra were in the building. The solo "The Heart Bowed Down" was loudly applauded, and other items which drew the special approval of the audience was a banjo solo, vocal trio from "Pinafore," and a comic song in Maori, followed by capital imitations of birds. The programme also includes cornet solo by Mr Treversi, Greymouth; vocal quartettes and orchestral marches. The kinematograph entertainment is exceedingly good, the views, including two taken at the departure of the second New Zealand contingent for South Africa, the opening of Auckland Exhibition, Regatta Day in Auckland, Ulan winning the Auckland Cup at Ellerslie, and a large number of comic views.<sup>170</sup>

Although the *Te Aroha News* anticipated a 'big crowd' attending,<sup>171</sup> only a 'fairly large audience witnessed the exceedingly good and interesting performance', with his eldest son 'manipulating the Kinematograph':

The opening picture thrown on the sheet by the Kinematograph was a sea beach view, with rollers breaking on the shore, while an occasional glimpse of a dog could be seen enjoying a bath in the spray; same being very realistic indeed. A great number of views were shown, interspersed by selections from the Theatrophone, those worth special mention are: Cornet solo by Mr Treversi, of Greymouth, which was beautifully rendered, causing great applause, also "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep," cornet and piccolo solo, Maori imitating different birds, and selections by a band, were clearly and sweetly produced, and were alone worth the money. The view pulling down the Spanish flag and replacing the Union Jack (lasting some twelve minutes), was watched with delight, the horses, etc, showing out to perfection; while those of the "New York fire brigade on duty at a burning building," "The Dining Table," and "The Man who had a drop too

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<sup>170</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 10 February 1900, p. 3, reprinted in *Te Aroha News*, 15 March 1900, p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 15 March 1900, p. 2.

much,” could not be surpassed. During the evening Mr A.H. Whitehouse effectively rendered the piece entitled “Bring the News to Mother,” Miss Batten, of Te Aroha, playing the accompaniment in a finished manner. The performance closed with a view of a Shirt Dance.<sup>172</sup>

In July 1900, he visited Onehunga, now as the (private) Zealandia Living Picture Company.

The well-known exhibitor, A.H. Whitehouse, has earned from the public and press of the colony the highest praise for his exhibitions. The above company have now secured his entire plant, both kinematograph and theatrophone, and, with commendable enterprise, have landed the latest war films, including films of the Contingent’s Departure from Auckland and Wellington, His Excellency Unfurling the Flag, Rough Riders Manoeuvring, etc. These, with a large collection of new films, including the World’s First Lady Mayor, delivering an impassioned speech, form a combination show of living pictures not to be surpassed in the colony.<sup>173</sup>

‘Touring and exhibiting films occupied Whitehouse’s energies more than production, but by mid-1900, when he left Auckland’ to travel to the Paris Exhibition, he had produced ten films.<sup>174</sup> He had unsuccessfully sought government support to take his films to this exhibition. The earliest surviving New Zealand film is his ‘The Departure of the Second Contingent for the Boer War’, filmed in January 1900.<sup>175</sup> His Zealandia Living Picture Company included this film in a July tour:

GRAND COMBINATION KINEMATO  
GRAPH SHOW.

Including the only Living Pictures of  
NZ Loyalty to the Empire – the Contingent’s Departure – Unfurling the Flags,  
etc etc. – The Very Latest Boer War  
Scenes In all over

50 – LIVING PICTURES – 50  
And the Marvellous THEATROPHONE.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 17 March 1900, p. 2.

<sup>173</sup> *Auckland Star*, 23 July 1900, p. 3.

<sup>174</sup> Sowry, p. 574.

<sup>175</sup> [www.filmarchive.org.nz](http://www.filmarchive.org.nz).

<sup>176</sup> Advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 9 July 1900, p. 8.

## NEW MACHINES, NEW FILMS, NEW ENTERTAINMENTS

In December 1900, the *Observer* reported that while overseas he had bought another Edison phonograph and more views, which were displayed during his country tour in the following year.<sup>177</sup> His January advertisement for the first appearance in Auckland of ‘Whitehouse’s Bio-chrono-scope’ did not stint on the superlatives:

This Machine was awarded the Grand Prix at the Paris  
Exhibition for Steadiness and absence of Vibrations.

HUGE PROGRAMME.

AN UNBROKEN SERIES OF  
LATEST STIRRING SCENES,  
LASTING 20 MINUTES.

Splendid Variety of Miscellaneous Items,  
including an ENCHANTING BALLET from the Alhambra,  
London.

Magnificent Series of Scenes of the Exhibition Buildings –  
Bridges, Moving Platforms in Life Motion,  
As a Panorama indescribably Grand,  
Interspersed with Selections on EDISON’S THEATROPHONE.<sup>178</sup>

The latter ‘secured the Gold Medal (only award) at the Exhibition’.<sup>179</sup> The *Auckland Star* reported that

An almost complete absence of vibration characterized the machine, and most of the pictures were clear and life-like. The pictures were mostly of a novel nature, and were greatly appreciated by the audience. The panoramic views of the Exhibition were interesting and instructive, and gave one a very clear idea of the buildings and the surroundings. One picture was taken from the river Seine, and another from the rolling platform. A number of miscellaneous living pictures were shown, most of which were new. The best was undoubtedly the ballet at the Alhambra Theatre, which was exceptionally clear. Another excellent picture was the operations of the Kansas fire brigade. A novel picture was one taken from a train going over Brooklyn Bridge. A series of war pictures were shown, including pictures of British generals, and these were received with the usual favour.

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<sup>177</sup> *Observer*, 1 December 1900, p. 7; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 24 June 1901, p. 2.

<sup>178</sup> Advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 14 January 1901, p. 8.

<sup>179</sup> Advertisement, *Observer*, 19 January 1901, p. 16.

The entertainment included a number of selections on the theatrophone, which were greatly appreciated.<sup>180</sup>

In advertising his tour he described the bio-chronoscope and the theatrophone as the 'latest Parisian specialities', 'Purchased Personally during my Visit to the Paris Exhibition'.<sup>181</sup> The biochronoscope, 'the latest development of animated picture machines', had 'secured the grand prix for projecting moving scenes with practically no vibration'.<sup>182</sup> He claimed to have 'the most extensive and varied programme of animated scenes ever shown in New Zealand', including Queen Victoria's funeral, a topical subject that helped to make his tour of country districts a great success.<sup>183</sup> The footage of the funeral comprised the 'complete procession, solemn, grand, impressive'.<sup>184</sup>

Everything shown on his tour was 'Absolutely New' and had been 'Purchased Personally during my Visit to the Paris Exhibition'. He had 'the most extensive and varied programme of animated scenes ever seen in New Zealand'.<sup>185</sup> According to the *Thames Star* the pictures were 'mostly of a novel nature', the 'panoramic views' of the Paris Exhibition being 'interesting and instructive', giving 'a very clear idea of the buildings and its surroundings'. Most of the 'miscellaneous pictures' were new.<sup>186</sup> Four days later, its fuller report listed the attractions of his 'bio-chrono-scope':

Mr A.H. Whitehouse opens in the Miners' Union Hall tomorrow with this most up-to-date and animated picture machine, which he selected from all its competitors at the Paris Exhibition. The machine has the special feature of running its scenes in an unbroken series, lasting from ten to twenty minutes each. A thrilling war set, commencing with the only animated picture taken in connection with the departure of our boys for South Africa; several phases of the life of a soldier, and concluding with an exciting representation of the rescue of a wounded comrade under heavy fire. The imposing pageant of the Queen's funeral,

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<sup>180</sup> *Auckland Star*, 16 January 1901, p. 2.

<sup>181</sup> Advertisement, *Observer*, 30 March 1901, p. 9.

<sup>182</sup> *Auckland Star*, 14 January 1904, p. 4.

<sup>183</sup> *Observer*, advertisement, 30 March 1901, p. 9, 6 April 1901, p. 9, 13 April 1901, p. 5, 4 May 1901, p. 5.

<sup>184</sup> Advertisement, *Observer*, 4 May 1901, p. 9.

<sup>185</sup> Advertisement, *Observer*, 9 March 1901, p. 9.

<sup>186</sup> *Thames Star*, 30 June 1901, p. 4.

just as it was seen at Hyde Park Corner on that memorable day, begins another series. A display of Maori canoe races and hakas, the diving horse, launch of the Oceanic, a magnificent panoramic series of the Paris Exhibition, the splendid buildings, the river Seine, with its passenger-laden ferry boats, the electric fountains and moving platform, all presented as if the audience were actually transported to the gay metropolis. Our King and Queen at the Chelsea Hospital, and a beautiful ballet from London's great music hall, the Alhambra, which introduces over 60 performers on the stage at once. The entertainment is enriched with musical selection of the theatrophone, and Mr Whitehouse's reputation is a sufficient guarantee of a thoroughly enjoyable evening.<sup>187</sup>

After the 'exhibition', it provided full details of it:

The Bio-chrono-scope is undoubtedly the best inanimate picture machine which has visited the Thames. Some of the pictures lasted, without intermission, fully a quarter of an hour. The views thrown upon the screen by means of this splendid machine were clear, and there was an absence of the flickering and changing of the light that spoils so many performances of a similar nature. One of the best shown last evening was the late Queen's funeral. The spectator is supposed to be standing at Hyde Park corner and each regiment of soldiers as it comes up wheels round and passes on. The Boer war pictures are also very good, showing the transport wagon drawn by mules, the war balloons, and the action of the disappearing guns. The trip on a motor car round the Paris Exhibition, showing the steamer launches on the river Seine and the moving platform, is one of the novelties of the programme. The comic pictures are all good. The new instrument, called the theatrophone, is very clear, the band selections, Maori love songs, and cornet solos, being heard with great distinctness.<sup>188</sup>

In August, Taranaki residents were left in no doubt of what he had on offer:

WHITEHOUSE IS COMING  
TARANAKI TOUR  
THE MARVELLOUS BIOCRONOSCOPE  
(DIRECT FROM THE PARIS EXHIBITION).  
The ONLY ANIMATED PICTURE Machine

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<sup>187</sup> *Thames Star*, 24 June 1901, p. 3.

<sup>188</sup> *Thames Star*, 26 June 1901, p. 3.

showing its Scenes in Unbroken Series  
 lasting 15 minutes each.  
 THUS GIVING THREE PROGRAMMES IN ONE.  
 Stirring War Series, Queen's Funeral, Pano-  
 rama of Paris Exhibition, Magnificent  
 Miscellaneous Items.  
 Theatrophone Selections –  
 - Two Hours' Enjoyment.<sup>189</sup>

After visiting Paris Whitehouse did not make any more films.<sup>190</sup> In 1902 he toured once more with his biochronoscope, having 'procured a portable electric plant, which will enable him to give a much larger, clearer, and steadier picture than previously'.<sup>191</sup> In Auckland, his programme 'comprised some excellent biochronoscope views, the pictures including some very amusing scenes illustrative of "What Happened to Jones." Some very fine theatrophone selections were given; one of the most successful was a song with beautiful violin obligato. Banjo, whistling and vocal selections were given, and were remarkably sweet and clear'.<sup>192</sup> As before, he dramatically advertised his arrival in country towns:

WHITEHOUSE IS COMING...  
 UNPARALLELED DISPLAY OF  
 LIVING SCENES.  
 LATEST INNOVATION.  
 LORD SANGER'S CIRCUS....  
 Grand, Beautiful, Entrancing.  
 3 PROGRAMMES IN ONE.  
 CHOICE THEATROPHONE  
 SELECTIONS.  
 We Challenge Competition and Laugh at  
 Comparison.  
 Our Name Always a Guarantee.<sup>193</sup>

He showed 'Coronation pictures, a very fine series' which included 'the principal features of the King's Coronation'.<sup>194</sup> These were 'illuminated by

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<sup>189</sup> Advertisement, *Observer*, 10 August 1901, p. 17.

<sup>190</sup> Sowry, p. 574.

<sup>191</sup> *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 1 October 1902, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 1 October 1902, p. 2.

<sup>192</sup> *Auckland Star*, 29 January 1902, p. 4.

<sup>193</sup> Advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 17 July 1902, p. 4.

<sup>194</sup> *Thames Star*, 1 October 1902, p. 2.

an arc lamp of 3000 candle power'.<sup>195</sup> He showed the coronation scenes 'as a complementary entertainment for the children of the Helping Hand Mission. The children were very well pleased with the pictures shown and were demonstrative in their applause'.<sup>196</sup>

Although this had been advertised as his 'Farewell Tour, after 9 years on the road', he returned again in the following year, with improved projection equipment.<sup>197</sup> He described himself as a 'Bioscope Exhibitor'.<sup>198</sup> In September an Otorohanga resident recording in his diary that his 'children went to Whitehouse's Biograph at night'.<sup>199</sup> By then Whitehouse did not include New Zealand-made films, his Bioscope and Star Variety Company only showing imported films:

Just Received –  
A HUGE REPERTOIRE OF LIVING  
SCENES,  
Direct from London and Paris.  
The Most Comprehensive and Brilliant Col-  
lection of all Latest Novelties in Animat-  
ed Pictures ever produced in New Zealand.  
EVERY SERIES NEW AND STARTLING.<sup>200</sup>

He informed the public that receiving his films from London using the parcel post system was much quicker and cheaper than the 'extortionate charges' of the usual freight system.<sup>201</sup> A year later, when his Biograph Company visited Thames, its entertainment included 'Professor' Kershaw, a conjurer, giving 'a clever exhibition of the mystic art'.<sup>202</sup> The *Thames Star* wrote that Whitehouse had 'gone to very great expense in bringing his show up to its present premier position'.<sup>203</sup> By then he had a variety of

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<sup>195</sup> *Auckland Star*, 1 October 1902, p. 8.

<sup>196</sup> *Auckland Star*, 24 October 1902, p. 2.

<sup>197</sup> Rorke, pp. 20-21.

<sup>198</sup> *Auckland Star*, advertisement, 29 February 1904, p. 2, Birth Notice, 16 March 1904, p. 8.

<sup>199</sup> George Thomas Wilkinson, diaries, entry for 19 September 1904, Waikato University Library.

<sup>200</sup> Advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 19 March 1904, p. 2.

<sup>201</sup> Letter from A.H. Whitehouse, *Auckland Star*, 25 March 1904, p. 2.

<sup>202</sup> *Thames Star*, 23 September 1905, p. 2.

<sup>203</sup> *Thames Star*, 25 September 1905, p. 2.

competitors.<sup>204</sup> For example, Charles Cooper's Musical Biograph Company visited Waihi in 1905 and 1906,<sup>205</sup> featuring artists depicting 'living scenes' that included an All Black match against Northern Ireland. The local newspaper wrote that the comic scenes were 'of a first-class order, conspicuous among them were an elopement in a motor car and "Why Smith Left Home" '.<sup>206</sup> Within days, Whitehouse was welcomed there by the local newspaper, which considered he should receive 'unusual favour' from the public:

Since his last visit improvements have been made to the bill of fare and Mr Whitehouse claims to have a brighter and better show than ever. A perusal of the advertisement published elsewhere indicates that patrons will be provided with a most attractive programme, included in which will be a series of pictures depicting the principal football matches between New Zealand and England. In the variety portion of the programme Miss Ellen Hart, balladist, will appear for the first time before a Waihi audience.

It quoted a review of her skills and of those of Charles Waud, 'baritone vocalist and humorist'. 'The football scenes, especially those depicting the Northumberland - New Zealand match, were received with great enthusiasm. There should be a crowded house'.<sup>207</sup> The advertisement promised that the entertainment was 'Brighter and Better than ever!' and included 'Thrillingly Realistic Picture Scenes from a Sailor's Life, embracing "The Ship on Fire" ', and the 'Comic Series, "A Modern Elopement" '.<sup>208</sup> In the following issue, the newspaper reported a large attendance:

The chief feature of the picture exhibits were those depicting the New Zealand footballers at work against Northumberland. In the match where Waihi's representative, Mr W. Cunningham, prominently figured, the audience, on recognizing him, cheered enthusiastically. Amongst some of the more interesting scenes thrown on the canvas were scenes from a sailor's life, a run-away match, and series of sea-coast pictures, all of which were clearly

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<sup>204</sup> For examples, see Rorke, pp. 21-22.

<sup>205</sup> Advertisements, *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, 26 July 1905, p. 3, 16 March 1906, p. 3, 25 August 1906, p. 3.

<sup>206</sup> *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, 8 March 1906, p. 2, 10 March 1906, p. 2.

<sup>207</sup> *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, 12 March 1906, p. 3.

<sup>208</sup> Advertisement, *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, 12 March 1906, p. 3.

defined. The portrayal of interesting pictures was supplemented by an attractive musical and variety programme provided by Miss Ellen Hart and Mr C. Waud. The former, who possesses a sweet soprano voice, received hearty applause for her contributions, which included an excellent rendering of "The Swallows." and "In the Cathedral." Mr Waud, baritone vocalist and humorist, fairly brought down the house with his comic renderings, and was recalled again and again. Miss Ruth Waugh, who played the accompaniments, is an accomplished pianiste, and her playing throughout was appreciated. During the evening Mr Whitehouse announced that as he had a spare evening he would give another entertainment to-night, when he would submit an entirely new programme, with the exception of the Northumberland football match.<sup>209</sup>

Three months later, he presented another bioscope and variety exhibition in Auckland. 'As there were a number of children present the comic scenes were greatly in favour'.<sup>210</sup>

When he visited Te Aroha in May 1908, he did not show any films, but on his last visit to Tauranga, in October, he provided a 'huge programme'.<sup>211</sup> Although he 'probably retired shortly afterwards as permanent picture theatres began to flourish', in April 1910 he still described himself as 'a cinematograph operator'.<sup>212</sup> As he turned 64 in 1910,<sup>213</sup> this was another reason for retiring. In February 1911, a sale of his household property included 'LIVING PICTURE FILMS, 5000ft; Pendant Saturator, Lenses, Condenser, and other Bioscope Accessories, Edison Standard Phonograph and Records.... Lot Lantern Slides'.<sup>214</sup> In March 1915, because he was leaving for San Francisco, he sold his household furniture along with an 'urban bioscope and limelight accessions, 1000ft living pictures', plus 'the Gaumont Bioscope complete travelling outfit, 1000ft living pictures'.<sup>215</sup>

## FINAL YEARS

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<sup>209</sup> *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, 13 March 1906, p. 3.

<sup>210</sup> *Auckland Star*, 8 June 1906, p. 2.

<sup>211</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 14 May 1908, p. 2; advertisement, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 21 October 1908, p. 2.

<sup>212</sup> Magistrate's Court, *Auckland Star*, 12 April 1910, p. 2; Sowry, p. 574.

<sup>213</sup> Death Certificate of Alfred Henry Whitehouse, 4 July 1929, 1929/2257, BDM.

<sup>214</sup> Advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 15 February 1911, p. 12.

<sup>215</sup> Advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 6 March 1915, p. 7.

In September 1897, at the age of 40, he married Ada Baker, aged 22, the daughter of Manfield Baker, a grocer, and Joanna, née Boyd.<sup>216</sup> Two sons and a daughter were born by his second wife: Clifton Manfield in July 1898, Raymond Wilfred in March 1900, and Rewa Ada in February 1904.<sup>217</sup> They lived in Auckland, where in 1906 he displayed his combative nature once more over the death of his ten-year-old niece, Elsie Rita, a daughter of Annie and Edward Craddock Whitehouse, and what he and others considered to be an unnecessary post mortem (because she had fallen from a train).<sup>218</sup> The target of his complaint was a popular doctor, James Frederick Carolan.<sup>219</sup>

At the time Dr Carolan, as a “friend of the family,” ordered the operation, which was considered (professionally) successful, though the child died. Shortly after this there was the unnecessary *post mortem* “to clear up an obscure point.” Now sir, the friend of the family, Dr Carolan, and Dr Porter have sent in their bills for £10 10s and £14 14s respectively. I ask are these legitimate charges to make upon a struggling settler whose outlay is already sufficiently great, to say nothing of the trouble in which he has been plunged? The accident happened on Monday. The child was dead on Thursday.<sup>220</sup>

Dr Carolan responded ‘at some length’:

Referring to the allusion to himself as “a friend of the family,” he caustically says:- “I am no friend of A.H. Whitehouse, although I have attended members of his family and he is known to be as the proprietor of a ‘travelling show.’” He then proceeds:- “ ‘Ordered’

<sup>216</sup> Marriage Certificate of Alfred Henry Whitehouse, 14 September 1897, 1897/1548, BDM; *Observer*, 9 October 1897, p. 8; for Ada’s year of birth, see Birth Certificate of Ada Baker, 1874/33166, BDM.

<sup>217</sup> Birth Certificates of Clifton Manfield Whitehouse, 7 July 1898, 1898/6929; Raymond Wilfred Whitehouse, 28 March 1900, 1900/8587; Rewa Ada Whitehouse, 27 February 1904, 1904/14576, BDM.

<sup>218</sup> Birth Certificate of Elsie Rita Whitehouse, 1896/1313; Death Certificate of Elsie Rita Whitehouse, 1906/3776, BDM; *New Zealand Herald*, 30 June 1906, p. 6; *Observer*, 7 July 1906, p. 2.

<sup>219</sup> See *Observer*, 31 January 1891, p. 6, 1 October 1898, p. 6, 28 March 1903, p. 4, 29 August 1908, p. 6; *Auckland Star*, 7 October 1930, p. 19.

<sup>220</sup> *Observer*, 18 August 1906, p. 16.

an operation! What authority has a medical man to ‘order’ an operation? Dr Harding Porter, who consulted with me, suggested the dangerous and difficult operation of trephining the skull to the mother of the child, *as a last resource*, and this Mrs E. Whitehouse agreed to without hesitation, and life was prolonged from Monday until the Thursday.

“The ‘unnecessary *post mortem*’ held by order of the Coroner, was ordered without my knowledge. I was not requested to be present, and pointed out to the Coroner, previous to the autopsy, that I was in a position to state the cause of death, but I think it only fit that the ‘friend of the family’ should not be censured for this! The charges are perfectly legitimate, and could be recovered in the S[tipendiary] M[agistrate’s] Court if necessary. They are in accordance with the recognized scale of fees. Moreover, the father of the child, Mr Edward Whitehouse, has expressed himself thoroughly satisfied with all arrangements and has thanked the doctors privately by letter and also by advertisement in the *Herald* newspaper.

Elsie’s mother had ‘absolutely refused to permit the child to be taken to the general Hospital, a place more suitable for a “struggling settler,” but begged me to remove the injured child to my residence’. Later, with her approval, Elsie was sent to a private hospital for ‘proper surgical nursing’.<sup>221</sup>

Two years later, he wrote to a newspaper ‘in condemnation of the objections being raised to a fitting reception of the American fleet’ and described his visit to the World’s Fair at Chicago.

The impression which was created on my mind on that visit, and was strengthened on two succeeding ones, is that Americans are essentially hospitable, kindly and manly, and as utterly unlike the revolver-loving desperado from Texas, so often depicted, as we are unlike the indigenous savage they, at the time I write of, imagined us to be.... Let us emulate them in the thoroughness of our welcome. I offer as a suggestion that huge kites bearing the word “Welcome” be floated at the North Head and over the harbour.<sup>222</sup>

In July 1909 Whitehouse decided to erect a ‘camerated’ concrete cottage at Clovernook, in Epsom.<sup>223</sup> Eight months later, he was sued by

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<sup>221</sup> *Observer*, 25 August 1906, p. 4.

<sup>222</sup> Letter from A.H. Whitehouse, *Auckland Star*, 29 July 1908, p. 8.

<sup>223</sup> *Auckland Star*, 20 August 1909, p. 4, Magistrate’s Court, 12 April 1910, p. 2.

Henry Leslie Friend, a merchant who supplied building materials,<sup>224</sup> and ‘the registered owner of the patent rights of building in camerated concrete’, for £38 6s 4d, being royalties, hire, and cost of material; Whitehouse made a counter-claim for £78.

The terms arranged were that defendant should pay a royalty of 10/ per 100 square feet. Defendant also hired certain plant and purchased material from the plaintiff. The counter-claim alleged that the defendant had been misled, in that it was represented to him that the cost would not be more than five per cent in excess of the cost of wood, or, at the most, ten per cent. It cost £191 to erect what could be done in wood for £103. Plaintiff denied misrepresentation, and said that if the cost was so much in excess of that of wood, it was owing to the fact that an architect was not employed by defendant.<sup>225</sup>

When the magistrate delivered his reserved judgment, the amounts claimed had been adjusted: Friend sought £32 6s 4d and Whitehouse, now referred to as a contractor rather than a cinematograph operator, sought £81 1s 8d.

It was admitted at the trial that there was a warranty given by the plaintiff, but all allegations of fraud were dropped.

The Magistrate held, however, that the warranty was intended to be little more than an expression of opinion. Further, the house had been scarcely a fair test of this opinion, in that there had been waste of time and some mismanagement in connection with its construction. There was, therefore, no evidence to show that the house could not, under proper conditions, have been built at a cost not exceeding 10 per cent more than the cost of a wooden structure.

Having thus blamed Whitehouse for the outcome, the magistrate gave judgment for Friend.<sup>226</sup>

In August 1910, after 13 years of marriage, after an illness lasting for nine days his second wife died from pneumonia, aged 36.<sup>227</sup> Two years later, Whitehouse published an In Memoriam notice: ‘In loving memory of

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<sup>224</sup> See advertisement, *Progress*, 1 May 1908, p. 244.

<sup>225</sup> Magistrate’s Court, *Auckland Star*, 12 April 1910, p. 2.

<sup>226</sup> Magistrate’s Court, *Auckland Star*, 4 May 1910, p. 9.

<sup>227</sup> Death Certificate of Ada Whitehouse, 14 August 1910, 1910/4147, BDM; Death Notice, *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 August 1910, p. 34.

Ada, wife of Alfred Henry Whitehouse, Epsom. “Piango la sua morte, e la mia vita,” August 4, 1910.<sup>228</sup> Ada, who had owned land and a building at Thames valued at £280 in 1905, left an estate of £308 15s 8d.<sup>229</sup>

Whitehouse continued to assist worthy causes. In April 1896 he held a ‘Phonographic and Vocal Entertainment’ in Thames for the Brunnerton Disaster Relief Fund.<sup>230</sup> In December 1914, when he relinquished ‘his protracted duties as honorary collector for the Provincial Schools and Children’s Help Fund’, which raised money for Belgium, he publicly acknowledged ‘the earnest and hearty assistance accorded by the teachers of the schools whose co-operation has so essentially helped to secure the magnificent results obtained’, £1,578 1s 8d, with more donations still to be received. ‘I can trace the total subscriptions of the school children of the Auckland Province amounting approximately in all to £2000’, he reported, ‘and I feel I owe this acknowledgement to the teachers, many of whom have added words of sympathy and encouragement which were much appreciated’.<sup>231</sup> When in San Francisco in July 1915 he donated to the Herald Hospital Ship Fund, and did so again when back in Auckland in the following June.<sup>232</sup>

In about 1919 Whitehouse moved into the Knox Home for Incurables at West Tamaki.<sup>233</sup> In 1921 his son Clarence Craddock died.<sup>234</sup> Whitehouse died in this home in 1929, aged 73, of long-standing heart degeneration leading to heart failure. His death certificate recorded his occupation as a ‘retired traveller’ whereas his probate described him, curiously, as a retired farmer; he estate was valued at £584 14s 6d.<sup>235</sup>

## CONCLUSION

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<sup>228</sup> In Memoriam Notice, *New Zealand Herald*, 14 August 1912, p. 1.

<sup>229</sup> Thames Borough, Valuation dated 1 April 1905, folio 32, Valuation Department, BBBC A150, no. 451; Probate of Ada Whitehouse, BBAE 1569/7690; Testamentary Register 1908-1911, folio 156, BBCB 4208/7, ANZ-A.

<sup>230</sup> *Thames Star*, 14 April 1896, p. 2.

<sup>231</sup> *Auckland Star*, 29 December 1914, p. 4.

<sup>232</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 20 July 1915, p. 9, 20 June 1916, p. 9.

<sup>233</sup> Sowry, p. 574.

<sup>234</sup> Death Certificate of Clarence Craddock Whitehouse, 1921/6075, BDM.

<sup>235</sup> Death Certificate of Alfred Henry Whitehouse, 4 July 1929, 1929/2257, BDM; Probate, BBAE 1570/1929, ANZ-A.

Whitehouse was an example of how men tried various ways of making money, in his case being quick to exploit the potential of new technology, possibly prompted by his earlier involvement in providing popular entertainments. After bringing the latest musical and cinematic inventions to New Zealand, by making brief films himself he was one of the pioneers of New Zealand's film industry.

*Appendix*

*Figure 1: A, Martin, 'Mr A.H. Whitehouse, The Introducer and Exhibitor of Edison's Kinetoscope', Observer, 21 December 1895, p. 9.*



*A. Martin, photo., Wanganui.*

**Mr A. H. Whitehouse**

**THE INTRODUCER AND EXHIBITOR OF EDISON'S KINETESCOPE**