



Horse-drawn coaches were generally too bulky to import in large quantities, and from the mid-19th century they were made and serviced in New Zealand.

Some local coachbuilders made models especially designed for New Zealand conditions. The Auckland firm of Cousins and Cousins produced the speedy Auckland Roadster gig, the Waikato buggy and the Spring dray, ideal for transporting milk cans to creameries.

By 1916 there were 183 coachbuilders in New Zealand, employing an average of eight staff. However, this buoyant workshop industry was to be eliminated by the invention of the motor car.

The first cars imported into New Zealand did not immediately displace the horse and cart. However, by the mid-1920s New Zealand had the highest rate of vehicle ownership per capita outside the United States.

Highly trained coachbuilders tried to adapt their skills to the automotive assembly industry, and the government placed tariffs on imported cars to encourage local assembly. As vehicle technology advanced, the industry required a knowledge of motor engineering beyond the scope of local coachbuilders. Instead a panel beating industry, often staffed by former coachbuilders, developed to repair and service the steadily increasing numbers of automobiles in New Zealand.

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/workshop-industries/3?setlang=mi>

Coach Builders are exceedingly well represented industry in Dunedin is that of coach and carriage building. The show rooms of the various firms are a credit to the artistic taste of the proprietors. Every description of vehicle may be obtained, from the magnificent chariot to the humble but useful express, or from the four-horse drag to the farmer's light cart or hay waggon. The show rooms are well worthy of a visit; the workmanship and brilliancy of finish being quite equal to anything to be met with in either the Old World or America.

“A Brief Review of the Leading Industries” by Westley Overton, in: “Picturesque Dunedin: or Dunedin and its neighbourhood in 1890”

Hordern & White, Coachbuilders, operated the Dunedin Carriage Factory from Market Street, Dunedin. The business was founded in 1883 by Messrs Hordern, Bradshaw and White, but Bradshaw retired in 1890. The factory was on a quarter of an acre of land which soon became too small. One entered the premises through a large showroom stocked with a fine display of carriages and other vehicles.

The factory, a hive of industry was supplied with the latest machinery for planing, sawing and drilling, and four forges, all driven by a five horsepower gas engine.

There are also two boxing wheel machines, a plant for rubber-tyring, and a fine dust-proof painting room. Every style of vehicle is manufactured and about 30 men are employed. Items not procurable in New Zealand are imported from America and England. In March 1904 they were busy with electric cars (trams) for the Dunedin Corporation.

John Hordern was born in Manchester, England and came to New Zealand when two years of age. He learned his trade in Dunedin.

Cyclopaedia of New Zealand , Otago Provincial District

John Hordern died on 29 December 1918 aged 68 years, and is buried in Dunedin's Anderson Bay Cemetery, Dunedin, and recorded as “coachbuilder”. Interestingly, 13 years later, his son Frederick Thomas Hordern died at age 50 who is also buried in Andersons Bay Cemetery, is recorded as “panelbeater”.