



In Dunedin's Northern Cemetery stands a very grand granite memorial of the MacNeil family.

Hugh MacNeil founded the firm of Briscoes in New Zealand. He was born in Glasgow where he became an ironmonger with P & W McClellan, engineers. In 1853 he married Christina Allan. He was appointed Manager of the Melbourne branch of Briscoes, a British hardware firm, and he and his family sailed for Australia on *Young America* in February 1860.

After gold was discovered in Otago, Briscoes considered expanding to New Zealand. Hugh was sent there in 1862, and again in 1863, and eventually a Dunedin office was established, independent of Melbourne but under its supervision. By December 1863 Hugh was looking for suitable premises, and by February 1864 was doing business from a warehouse in Princes Street.

Briscoes prospered and so did Hugh. In 1868 he bought 'Woodhead' in Mornington, in 5 acres (2 ha) of ground overlooking the city. About a decade later he had the house replaced by a mansion. There he and Christina brought up their five children. Hugh was said to rule his household and employees with a firm hand, yet his employees remembered him with respect, and his children remembered a happy family life.

Though his main interest were his family and business he was a member of the Harbour Board, and an early director of the Union Steamship Company. In 1880 Hugh became a partner in Briscoes, and assumed managerial control of both New Zealand and Australian operations. In 1884 he lived in Sydney, but in 1885 retired to 'Woodhead'. He still travelled frequently. On his way home from a voyage to England he died in Sydney on 11 August 1900.