



BY
THE MAORIES OF OTAGO
IN MEMORY OF
THEIR MINISTER
Rev. J. E. REIMENSCHNEIDER
WHO DIED 25. AUG. 1866.
IN THE 57th YEAR OF HIS AGE.

SOUND THE GREAT TRUMPET
UNTIL THE VOICES OF
THE DEAD AND LIVING IN ALL PLACES
OF THE WORLD SHALL FALL.

In the old cemetery in Port Chalmers there are many very early headstones. One of these always intrigues the reader.

Johann Friedrich Riemenschneider was a missionary originally from the German city of Bremen who worked for 20 years in Taranaki. In 1849 he married Katherine Garland, eldest daughter of Rev W Woon, Wesleyan Minister.

He was asked to leave the Taranaki parish after counseling peace to his flock in the war of 1860. He was then called as a teacher to Otakou by Dunedin's "Society for the elevation of the physical, social and moral condition of Maories".

The Society managed to pay some of his travel costs and most of his first quarterly stipend. After that, Riemenschneider had to live on the meager stipend of the North German Mission Society which had originally sent him to New Zealand. He established schools in Moeraki and Waikouaiti but in 1863 tendered his resignation to the Dunedin society, to continue working just for the North German Mission Society.

His parish stretched from Waitaki to Clutha, and he traveled through it tirelessly. His regular reports to Bremen show that he interpreted for his parishioners in court, helped settle disputes and acted as a doctor and midwife to his parishioners (he also delivered five of his own children) he spent considerable time and effort representing the interests of Maori with the Provincial Government.

In spite of frail health and scant resources, Riemenschneider achieved much. With his parishioners, and with some help from the Provincial Government, he built three churches. The first, in Moeraki, was consecrated on 21 December 1862, the second in Waikouaiti, on Good Friday 1863, and the third in Otakou on 27 December 1865.

Two of the churches were designed by Riemenschneider and he also built the interior furnishing such as the pulpit and communion table for the Otakou church. Although these furnishings have been carved and altered, they are still in the memorial church in Otakou.

When Riemenschneider died on 25 August, 1866, he was deeply mourned, and Maori friends collected money to provide a gravestone and railing for his grave in the port Chalmers old cemetery.