



To be restored



Original

## REYNOLDS, William Hunter

(1822–99).

Politician and businessman.

William Hunter Reynolds was born on 1 May 1822 at Chatham, Kent, the third son of Thomas Reynolds, and Marion, *née* Hunter. His father was a retired naval officer who owned large cork plantations in Spain and Portugal, and Reynolds lived at Oporto until 1828, when a revolution forced his family to move to Edinburgh. He was educated at Nicholson Street Academy and Fountain-Bridge School, Edinburgh, but in 1834 returned to Lisbon where he attended an English school. When this closed down he entered his father's business and, from 1842 until 1850, managed its London office. From 1847 onwards he also carried on his own business.

About this time Reynolds met James Macandrew, who later married his sister, and through him he became interested in the affairs of the Otago Association. In 1850 Macandrew and Reynolds brought the schooner *Titan* to New Zealand in cargo, arriving at Port Chalmers on 15 January 1851. While Macandrew set up their joint mercantile business in Dunedin, Reynolds took the *Titan* on a very successful trading voyage to San Francisco and Sydney. He continued in partnership with Macandrew until 1858, during which time he visited Melbourne twice and England once to induce settlers to come to Otago under Cargill's immigration scheme. On several occasions during the absence of W. H. Cutten from Dunedin he edited the *Otago Witness*. After he withdrew from Macandrew and Co., Reynolds built a large warehouse on land he had reclaimed at the foot of Jetty Street. He was an original trustee of the Savings Bank (1864–99), a director of the Colonial Bank until its amalgamation with the Bank of New Zealand, and was a director of the Westport Coal Co., the Perpetual Trustees Estate and Agency Co., and the *Otago Daily Times and Witness Co.* He also speculated in land and had holdings in so many districts that at one time he claimed to be eligible to vote for every member of the Provincial Council.

Between 1853 and 1899 Reynolds was continuously in political life. He served on the Otago Provincial Council through the entire provincial era, being on the executive eight times and Speaker from 1867 to 1870. From 1863 until 1878 he represented Otago constituencies in the House of Representatives and was a member of the Legislative Council from 1878 until his death. He was a Cabinet minister from 1873 until 1876, serving as Minister of Customs under Waterhouse, Fox, and Pollen; as Colonial Secretary under Vogel; and, from 1884 until 1887, as minister without portfolio in the Stout Ministry. In 1876 his colleagues strongly favoured Reynolds to succeed Sir Francis Dillon Bell as Speaker of the House of Representatives; but when Vogel opposed his candidature he stood down voluntarily and suggested that Fitzherbert be nominated instead. Although personally in favour of retaining the provincial system, Reynolds was astute enough to realise by 1875 that this had outlasted its usefulness. As a member of the ministry which introduced the Abolition Bill, he and C. C. Bowen agreed to follow the majority, provided Vogel would retain the land revenues for the respective provincial districts. At this, O'Rorke, who would have supported abolition if these funds had been vested in the Central Government for the benefit of the colony as a whole, resigned from the ministry in disgust.

As a politician, both local and colonial, Reynolds was not particularly impressive. He lacked a commanding personality and was a poor speaker. But he deservedly won strong support locally for his advocacy of political separation for the South Island, and by the late sixties was at the height of his popularity. His alliance with Vogel, however, cost him dear. Admittedly it led him to ministerial office, but this defection from his former principles brought down upon him the censure of his friends, and in the election of December 1875 for Dunedin City, he was heavily defeated. After a short term as member for Port Chalmers he welcomed the opportunity to pass the remainder of his political career in the Legislative Council.

Outside of his political and business interests Reynolds took little active part in Dunedin in local affairs and social life. However, as one of the principal architects of the Otago education system, he continued to be prominent in that field and was an early advocate of land endowments for educational purposes. He was a member of the Provincial Board of School Commissioners, the Board of Church Property Trustees, and the Otago University Council, and was a governor of the High Schools.

In 1856, at Dunedin, Reynolds married Rachel Selina (1838–1928), daughter of William Pinkerton. He died at Montecillo, Mornington, Dunedin, on 1 April 1899 survived by his widow, four sons, and five daughters.

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