

(2) Sargood, Son & Ewen Ltd.

1851

1926



"From small


beginnings—"



The Story of the Growth of one of  
New Zealand's most progressive Business Firms

## SARGOOD, SON & EWEN, Ltd., 1851-1926

*"It is the true office of history to represent the events themselves . . . and to leave the observations and conclusions thereupon to the liberty and faculty of every man's judgment."*—BACON.

 IN the Year of Grace, one thousand eight hundred and forty-nine, a sailing ship arrived in Melbourne. Over her side descended Frederick James Sargood, one of many others seeking the opportunity that a young country offered. Mr. F. J. Sargood began by starting a small drapery business. Two years later, he commenced business at 31, Flinders Street East as a Wholesale Soft Goods Warehouseman and Importer.

The business prospered with the swift colonial development of the day, and in 1852, the year famous to New Zealand as the year of the passing of the Constitution Act, the firm assumed the title of Sargood, King and Co., Warehousemen.

### The First Branch

It was at this time that Mr. J. A. Ewen, a member of the firm who had arrived in Melbourne in 1852, opened the first branch of the business in Bendigo. With a tent for his store, Mr. Ewen did thriving and exciting business, sleeping on the premises at night guarded by his bulldog and with his revolver under his pillow.

1845 to 1855 saw some of the most thrilling days of the great gold rush to Victoria, and at a time when lawyers were abandoning wigs and gowns, clerks, shop assistants, were leaving desk and counter, whole ship-crews were deserting, and even officers were taking French leave, to shoulder swag and shovel, Mr. Frederick

The first branch of the business, Bendigo. Opened by Mr. J. A. Ewen in 1852.



The first warehouse at 31 Flinders St., Melbourne, opened in 1851.



*Mr. Henry Tewsley, who was admitted to partnership in 1862.*

Thomas Sargood, son of Mr. F. J. Sargood, and afterwards Senator Sir F. T. Sargood, K.C.M.G., M.L.C., attracted by this great opportunity for sudden wealth, turned with thousands of his fellow men towards Victoria. After a period of prospecting he commenced gold buying, and finally rejoined the firm, now known as Sargood, King and Sargood, as a partner, the founder of the firm proceeding in 1858 to London in order to take charge of the buying establishment there.

It is of interest to note here the wide attention given by Mr. F. T. Sargood to the affairs of the country in which he was building up his business. For thirty years he was a keen Parliamentarian and member of the Legislative Council, greatly interesting himself in Military Defence, then under the volunteer system, and being the founder of the cadet movement in Australia.

## New Zealand is Linked Up

The Firm's next move was Mr. J. A. Ewen's departure for New Zealand in 1861 to survey the prospects of that country, and, if thought suitable, to establish a branch there. Mr. Ewen reported favourably and a year later Mr. F. T. Sargood visited New Zealand, and arranged for the erection of a warehouse in Stafford Street, Dunedin.

Mr. J. A. Ewen was admitted a partner in 1862, the firm being known as Sargood, Son and Ewen, Mr. Henry Tewsley being also admitted shortly afterwards to a partnership.

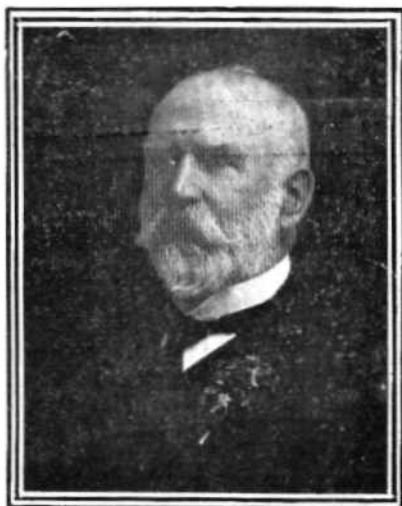


*Mr. Henry Young, who succeeded Mr. Henry Tewsley in 1879, taking charge of the New Zealand business.*

In 1868 Mr. Ewen went to England and took over the active management of the London House, and it was during this period that he also became Director of the London branch of The Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand and a London Director of the Bank of New Zealand. Mr. Ewen was particularly interested in the work of the Acclimatisation Society, and it was he who was responsible for bringing some of the first deer to New Zealand.

## On the Site of the First Church

Many people will remember with interest the old iron building which was brought out from England in sections and erected on Bell Hill as the first church in



*Mr. T. Finlayson was appointed Auckland manager in 1887, together with Mr. H. C. Tewsley.*

Dunedin. This was bought and used by Sargood, Son and Ewen as a boot and shoe factory, and, the business of the firm prospering, in 1875 a fine new warehouse of four stories and covering three-fifths of an acre was erected in Lower High Street, Dunedin.

This site had originally been part of the old beach and many Georgian coins were found during excavations evidently having in early days been dropped by landing parties from boats.

Upon the death of Mr. Tewsley in 1879, he was succeeded by Mr. Henry Young, one of the London buyers, who entered the firm and took charge of the New Zealand business. With the development in the North it was deemed wise to open a branch in Auckland. This step was taken in the year 1871 and followed by the erection of a new warehouse in Victoria Street West in 1883. Mr. John Ross, who had long been associated with the Dunedin warehouse, being admitted a partner and taking over the management.

## Operations Extended to Christchurch

Operations meanwhile had been extended to Christchurch, and a new warehouse was there built in 1886 and in the following year, upon Mr. Young's retirement, Mr. Ross removed to Dunedin, leaving as managers in Auckland, Mr. T. Finlayson, an old employee of the firm, and Mr. H. C. Tewsley, a son of the late partner.

In 1888, after purchasing and disposing of the stock of Messrs. Harcourt & Co., the business of Turnbull, Smith and Co. was acquired and a fully equipped warehouse established in Wellington, under the capable management of Mr. John Ross. Mr. Ross's civic activities

in Wellington will be long remembered, for it was he who was largely responsible for many civic improvements and progressive ideas, and one lasting testimony to his memory is the well-known Queen's Drive, encircling the harbour and bays outlying the city. Mr. Ross, one of others visioning this splendid road for the future, helped to initiate the campaign which enabled funds to be raised to carry out the work. To-day, the road is one long bitumen sweep, one of the sight seeing routes of Wellington. It was in this same year that the business of Messrs. Owen & Graham, of Auckland, was purchased.

## The Wellington Building

Owing to the growth of the business the present extensive premises were erected in Jervois Quay and Hunter Street, Wellington, during the years 1889/1890, whilst in the autumn of 1893, Sargood, Son and Ewen purchased the business of W. McArthur & Co., an old established firm, with headquarters in Auckland and branches in the southern towns of New Zealand.

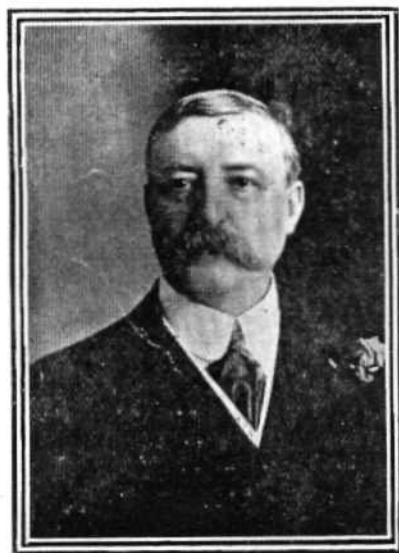
So near to the sea front was the Wellington block erected that piles had to be driven through the water and in one instance an obstinate pile was found to be imbedded firmly in the sea buried boiler of an old ship. As testimony to the thoroughness with which the architects did their work, it might be mentioned that even the formidable earthquake of 1906 failed to in any way disturb the solidity of the building, though pipes following the walls were curved into a line of waves.

Mr. P. R. Sargood came to Dunedin from London and Melbourne in 1891, taking charge of the Dunedin business and being admitted a partner in 1894, Mr. Ross removing to Wellington and becoming Senior Resident Partner in New Zealand.

In 1902, owing to ill health, Mr. John Ross was compelled to retire, and in the early days of 1903 both Sir F. T. Sargood and Mr. J. A. Ewen died. Mr. P. R. Sargood then took control of the business in New Zealand, his brother, Mr. W. E. Sargood joining the firm as partner in 1903, from which he retired three years later, Mr. Thomas Finlayson being admitted a partner in 1906, his headquarters being in Auckland.

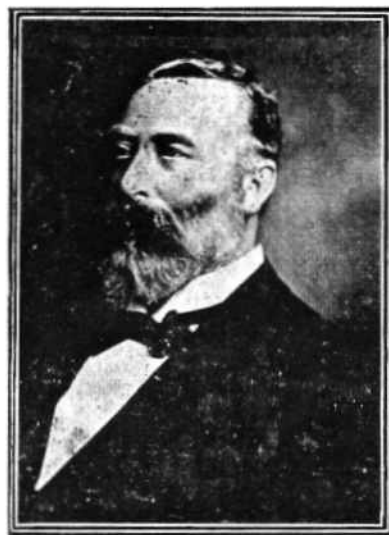
## A Limited Company

In 1907 the firm was converted into a Limited Com-



*Mr. H. C. Tewsley, who shared the managership of the Auckland business with Mr. T. Finlayson.*

*Mr. John Ross, who was, at different periods, manager of the Auckland and Dunedin branches, and finally of the Wellington business.*



pany, the first Directors being:—Mr. P. R. Sargood, Governing Director; Mr. Thomas Finlayson, Managing Director; and Messrs. H. C. Tewsley and Montague Laing, Directors.

Upon Mr. Finlayson's death in 1913, Mr. D. A. Ewen was appointed Managing Director, Mr. Tewsley having retired from the business a year earlier.

The present Directors of the Company are:—Mr. P. R. Sargood, Governing Director, and the two sons of the founder of the New Zealand business, Messrs. D. A. Ewen, Managing Director, and J. F. Ewen, Director in Auckland, also Mr. Montague Laing in London, and Mr. J. P. McGowan in Dunedin. Thus to-day, after 75 years of progress, 1851 to 1926, control is still held by the second and third generations of the founders.

The ramifications of the business are considerable, branches having been opened at Invercargill in 1882, Napier 1890, New Plymouth 1895, Nelson 1900, Wanganui 1906, Gisborne 1906. The Company also have sample rooms in all the leading towns in New Zealand and their travellers penetrate wherever there is a settlement.

The "STANDARD" Boot Factory forms an important activity of the concern. This factory was established in 1869 in Dunedin, on the site where the First Church now stands. The aim has always been to manufacture a sound, reliable class of footwear, the popularity of the "STANDARD" brand boots and shoes bearing witness to the success which has attended the Company's efforts.

## Onehunga Woollen Mills

In Dunedin also are Clothing, Shirt and Mantle Factories which supply the needs of the various departments in the warehouses, whilst an Underclothing Factory was purchased in Auckland during the year 1920. In 1919 the Onehunga Woollen Mills were purchased, and here again the policy has been to manufacture goods of high quality and first class finish.

The number of hands directly employed by the Company is 716 in New Zealand and it is interesting to note that the original Melbourne building measured 23ft. x 50ft., with a staff of ten employees—1150sq. ft. The present warehouse floor space is 147,350sq. ft.