

53 **EDWIN HARRIS**

1810 - 1895

*New Plymouth Under Seige - 40th Regiment,  
Marsland Hill, Taranaki, New Plymouth' - Circa 1860*

Watercolour and collage 35 x 56.5  
60,000 - 80.000

Edwin Harris has depicted this early view of New Plymouth from Marsland Hill stockade circa August 1860. In the foreground troops of the recently arrived 40th Regiment along with women and children are depicted in the vicinity of St Marys Church. The topography and buildings of the town are shown in easily recognizable detail. St Marys shows the western additions begun in 1859 and the partially completed stone wall. To the far right the trenches protecting the town can be seen. Near the coast to the right of Paritutu is Fort Murray, one of the military outposts which ringed the town at the time. Mount Elliot and the shipping signal station look out to sea directly beyond St Marys.

New Plymouth was reduced to a state of siege at the beginning of the first Taranaki War. Martial law was proclaimed. The settlers were driven into town, their homesteads burnt by the Maoris and it was necessary to constrict the occupied area of the settlement and to entrench the town.

Marsland Hill, the ancient Maori Pa, Pukaka, made an excellent headquarters and place of refuge in case of emergency. The hill overlooked the town and country for many miles and its position, just in the rear of the central settlement, made it a suitable site for a citadel and barracks.

Lieutenant Colonel Carey together with fifty men of the 40th Regiment, arrived off New Plymouth aboard the war steamer *HMS Victoria* on the evening of 3 August 1860. Their mission was to reinforce the garrison which numbered about twelve hundred men.

This recently discovered, and previously unknown watercolour, relates to two other views by Edwin Harris held in the Collections of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington and Puke Ariki, New Plymouth. The present picture is a significantly larger and more dramatic version containing much new and exciting detail. Set late afternoon, early evening, it shows the women and children of the settlement walking across the church yard and climbing the slope to spend the night within the safety of the stockade on Marsland Hill.

Edwin Harris is noted for his early views of New Plymouth and Nelson. He had some artistic training in England prior to arriving in New Zealand with his wife and family in 1841 aboard the *William Bryan*, the first of the Plymouth Company vessels to arrive in Taranaki. He worked briefly as a Surveyor for the Company and farmed a property in the vicinity of town. Following the outbreak of the first Taranaki War in 1860, the Harris family were evacuated to Nelson where they eventually settled. His daughter Emily Cumming Harris 1837 - 1925 was an award winning botanical artist.

Thanks for the assistance provided by Ron Lambert, Senior Researcher, Puke Ariki and District Libraries, New Plymouth.

