

In Victorian times, not only was it practically obligatory for young ladies of any parental pretensions to learn to play the piano, but many others possessed and could play various instruments.

That included the diggers and others who came to the Thames goldfield following its opening on August 1, 1867, and by Christmas had increased the European population from a dozen or so traders to an estimated 5,000.

The first week saw the population up to 190 and rising fast. Later in August stores and restaurants appeared and the place rapidly became a typical mining camp. ("Thames 1867-1917, 50 Years a Goldfield," Thames Old Boys' Association.)

And there was soon entertainment. Prospector William Nicholl wrote in his autobiography, "Rose's free and easy soon got started and was a great attraction to me. I spent most of my time in it at night listening to songs and watching dancers. There were some great singers and dancers among them, and one could spend a pleasant night there." The singing and dancing naturally required instrumental music.

On August 29, 1867, Captain John Butt opened the Shortland Hotel, in temporary premises, the first on the field. Shortland was the first township or whatever, laid out at the southern end of present day Thames. Grahamstown was established months later at the northern end, the initial sale of sections being on May 16, 1868. At first Shortland had it all on its own, to cope with the tremendous surge of growth. (Thames 1867-1917). *Including of hotels and music.*

James Mackay, Civil Commissioner, who in effect organised the Thames goldfield reported a population of around 500 at the beginning of September, 1867.

Von Tempsky recorded when he came to Thames on September 15, that there were already "two or three dozen weatherboard houses and any number of tents scattered over the flat and the mouths of the gullies."

According to Von Tempsky, around September 26, there being a Hau Hau scare, Resident Magistrate Lawlor said he would enrol 300 special constables if necessary, and wanted Von Tempsky to take charge. But he was reluctant, the threat proved to be a rumour, and the miners who had gathered together were soon back at work. (A militia formation of some 300 would have required some kind of scratch band to march to.)

A week after this, Von Tempsky noted there were around 2,000 on the field.

According to "Thames 1867-1917," by Christmas there were 5,000 on the field, and a rush to Auckland for the holidays. But it said there were at least 500 miners for the New Year sports. (Which would mean music.) By that time there were 10 hotels, which gave free drinks to 500 miners as a "first footing" for the New Year 1868. Then there were four days of sports on a flat near the Hape Stream. First day had foot racing, vaulting, jumping etc. Second day saw horse racing till a dispute caused miners to put a rope across the course, and they spent the day skylarking. Third day had boat racing and a war dance. Fourth had tossing the caber and hurdle race. There were also Highland dances and hornpipe, according to the Southern Cross in Auckland. Which also mentioned that on the evening of the first day music and dancing went on till all hours.

(This indicates a carry over from music during the day, while Highland dances and hornpipes required their special kinds of music.)

During the greater part of 1868, before Grahamstown really got going, Shortland was pre-eminent, and at least scratch bands would appear to have been a feature, judging by a passage about Waihi in the Thames Advertiser at the end of June 1894, when the rising mining town of Waihi brought reminders. "On a bright starlight night, with the band playing lively music, the different shops all ablaze with lights, and numerous pedestrians moving around with lighted lanterns... a person could almost fancy himself moving in a place called Shortland.