

*Deposition of James Elder, 12 November 1813*

(Copy)

Court House, Parramatta

Friday Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> 1813—

James Elder came this day before me the Reverend Samuel Marsden one of His Majesty's Justices of the peace, and being duly sworn Deposes That in the year 1800 he sailed from England as a Missionary for Otaheita in the Royal Adm[ira]l of 900 Tons commanded by Mr W<sup>m</sup> Wilson. The Royal Admiral had 300 Convicts on board for New South Wales. After leaving, the Prisoners at Port Jackson, the Royal Adm<sup>l</sup> proceeded to the Coast of New Zealand for Spars— and anchored in the mouth of the River Thames, where she lay at Anchor 9 weeks, during this period He saw sev[era]l<sup>l</sup> Natives defrauded by the Europeans — which brought on quarrels and were likely to lead to serious consequences. At this time there was also a vessel [f] lying in the River from Port Jackson trading with the Natives and remained the whole time the Royal Adm<sup>l</sup> were taking her Spars, The Deponent Says he never was on board this vessel, she had put in in great distress for refreshments and Stores and the Deponent heard that when the Natives had supplied them with Potatoes and other articles they were fired upon and drove out of the Ship, the Natives were very friendly disposed at that time towards the Eropeans [sic], and are very numerous in that part of New Zealand. He belives [sic] that not less than 10,000 had assembled together at one time during the time the Royal Adm<sup>l</sup> was there. The Natives had very numerous Cottages — ~~and it was one very~~ and formed a large village in which they lived, Potatoes were in the greatest abundance, The

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land was [f] very rich and fertile, and the Plains level, free from Timber and Underwood and extended further than the Eye could reach, a river running through the middle of the Plains, Himself and the Missionary with him, should not have hesitated to have taken their residence amongst them any more than amongst the Natives of Otaheita, The Natives were very kind and friendly to them during the time they Staid there. They found two Europeans there, who had staid with the Natives two years and Gave a very good account of them with being kind and peaceable, one of the Eropeans [sic] came away in the Royal Adm<sup>l</sup> but the other did not—

No person belonging to the Royal Adm<sup>l</sup> or the other vessel received any injury from the Natives tho they were dispersed in different parts Cutting Timber— [f] being ~~absent~~ distant from the Ship 30 Miles and upwards, 3 or 400 Natives were occasionally employed draging [sic] the Timber to the river and seemed very willing to render any assistance to Capt<sup>n</sup> Wilson—

In the year 1807, the Ship Gen<sup>l</sup> Wellesley Capt. Dalrymple Master touched at Otaheita [sic] in which Island he the Dep[onen]<sup>t</sup> had resided since the year 1801. Cap<sup>n</sup> Dalrymple proposed visiting the Palazeers [sic] and some other Islands about 300 miles from Otaheita to ascertain what quantities of Beech le Mar, and Pearl Sheels [sic] could be obtained and requested him to go with him as Interpreter and to this requisition. † He the Dep[onent] redily [sic] gave ~~my~~ his Consent as † He was anxious to know the population of the Islands and the disposition of the Natives. We [f] were Six Weeks among these Islands, and minutely explored nine of them, when we were finally leaving them coming

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past the end of one of them, called the Prince of Wales's Island, about Sunset, with a light breeze [sic] and the vessel under sail, 4 or 500 of the natives composed of men Women and Children came down on the beach to look at the Ship as she past [sic], the Captain Wantonly and barbarously and without the least provocation whatever as we had no Communication with this Island or the Natives fired five or six large Guns— amongst them laden with Grape Shot. † The Dep[onent] remonstrated with the Capt<sup>n</sup> before he fired the Gun, and endeavored [sic] to persuade him from such a Wanton Act of Cruelty and inhumanity but he paid no attention to ~~my~~ his remonstrance— [f] but observed that it was necessary to strike terror [sic] into the minds of these Natives and to convince them what Power we Possessed, perhaps he would have fired more Guns than the number already stated, had not one of his Sailors when loading a Gun which had not been Spunged [sic] had his arm blown off near his Shoulder, which occasioned his death. The Captain shewed no inclination to cease firing till the Sailor had lost his arm. A few months after some of the Natives of this Island visited Otaheita and informed ~~me~~ the Dep[onent] that several of the natives were killed and several wounded at the time Capt. Dalrymple fired so wantonly on them.

In the year 1808 the Seringapatam, a Ship [f] of 400 Tons, touched at Otaheita in distress and was bound for New South Wales eventually as he then stated, † Dep[onent] took ~~my~~ his Passage in her for Port Jackson after coming on the Coast of New Zealand and cruising for about 2 Months on the North Coast of that Island where there were 7 or 8 Ships more on the fishery from England. We

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put into the Bay of Islands in company with three other Ships for refreshments. The Ships lay there one Week during which time I Dep[onent] frequently saw Potatoes taken from the Natives to a considerable amount without the Natives being satisfied what they rece[ive]d [sic] in return, tho their demands were very small, I Dep[onent] also saw the sailors intice [sic] the natives down below as if they intended to give them something to eat and then strip them of their Garments and other [f] Curosities [sic], and when they complained Beat them severly [sic] and sent them ashore Strip'd and weeping, at that time the Natives of the Bay of Islands, were very friendly, and very ready to supply every refreshments to the ships in their power. I Dep[onent] was often surprised from the ill treatment He saw them receive, they did not raise [sic] and murder us all. I Dep[onent] have no doubt but that the Natives would be kind and attentive to the Crews of the Ships that put in there, if they were treated with any degree of common Justice honesty and civility, and that the Eropeans [sic] might live safely amongst them if they conducted themselves with propriety.

From ~~my~~ Dep[onent]'s long residence at Otaheita and from visiting the different Islands [f] I He have received undoubted Testimony that some Vessels trading among the South Sea Islands for the sole purpose of Gain had assisted one Party of Natives to destroy another, when this would promote the Interest of their Voyage. This practice is fraught with more ilconsequences to the Natives than any other act of Iniquity as it lays the foundation for Civil Wars amongst the Hylanders [sic] when the Vessels are gone from them & also endangers the lives of other unsuspecting Navagators [sic] who in future visit

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these Islands, and must totally preclude all safe commercial intercourse between them and other parts of the World.

James Elder

Sworn before me the

12<sup>th</sup> day of Nov<sup>r</sup> 1819

Samuel Marsden

J.P.