

PALMERSTON ISLAND

# Palmerston Island

## Chronology

- 1774 16 June Discovered by Cook on his second voyage, and named in honour of Lord Palmerston, one of the Lords of the Admiralty. Did not land.
- 1777 13 April Visited by Cook on his third voyage. Landing made because food needed for cattle. Scurvy grass and young coconut palms collected, and on a second islet about 1200 coconuts were gathered. No water on either islet.
- 1791 21 May Pandora at, in search of mutineers from the Bounty. Found a yard and spar from the Bounty. Jollyboat lost with midshipman and four men.
- 1797 1 Apr. Missionary ship Duff, Capt. James Wilson, visited the island and gathered 530 coconuts. (Wilson's Cruise of the Duff, also ms. account in Hawaii's Papers, Supplement, M.L. A 1963, p. 598-9.)
- 1812 28 Oct. Deposition of Samuel E. Hoadley before Capt. M. Fodger on events at Palmerston and cruise of the Daphne. (N. S.W. - Col. Sec. - In-letters, 1813, p. 210-212).
- 1812 15 Dec. Affidavit of Hoadley before W. Henry on events at Palmerston and murder of Capt. Bearbeck. (N. S.W. - Col. Sec. - In-letters, 1813, p. 198-204)

1813 16 Nov. Affidavit of A. Hendricke on events at Palmerston and on cruise of the Daphne. (N.S.W. Col. Sec. - In-letters, 1813, p. 298-303.)

1830 14 June Voyage of Williams and Barff from Raiatea. Brief description of islet, and statement that they have been inhabited at no very distant period, as the coconuts evince, which have evidently been planted. Apparently did not land. (ms. M.L.A. 1636.)

1843 Nov. French corvette le Bucephale, on voyage from Marquesas to land missionaries at various Polynesian islands, passed Palmerston and made a hydrographic sketch. Two white men put out in a canoe, an Englishman (melatto), aged about 40, and an American in his thirties - said they had been left by different ships to get coconut oil. Each had a wife and two children on the island. (Pigeard, Ch. - Voyage dans l'Océanie Centrale sur la corvette Française le Bucephale. Paris, Bertrand, 1846, p. 11-16.)

c. 1850 Inhabited by four white men headed by Jeffrey Strickland, who subsequently left in a starving condition with one Capt. Bowler. (Information from Consul Exham, inclosed in Desp. no. 15 of J.B. Thurston, of 28 May 1888).

c. 1857 A man named Sweet placed on the island by Brander. In a letter to the Colonial Office, dated March 1868, Brander stated that since 1857 he had had an establishment there, composed of an overseer and from 10 to 15 natives of the Hervey group and Penrhyn's Island.

1860

Brander, by his agent Bowles, made a hog-breeding and beche-de-mer station on the island. (Disp. of J.B. Thurston, 10 Mar. 1890).

1862

William Marsters settled on Palmerston by agreement with Brander. (Some accounts have 1863). He died there in 1899, having been in continuous occupation.

1867 12 Sept.

J.C. Evans advised British Consul, Tahiti, that the Imperial Government had granted him lease of Palmerston, Suwarroa, and Dudosia. He wrote from the schooner Traveller at sea, towards Rarotonga. On 3 Oct. he added a postscript at Rarotonga, stating that the second vessel of his expedition, the cutter Spray, had been lost at Avarua. (M.L. Tahiti - In-letters, vol. 6).

1874

H.B. Sterndale's Memoranda on some of the South Sea Islands. (N. Z. - South Sea Islands - Papers, 1874).  
(Palmerston, p. 8).

1878 Sept.

Brander's vessel Marama visited Palmerston and Marsters handed over copra.

c. 1879

Visit of Rev. W. Wyatt Gill. Marsters had asked for a trained native teacher and evangelist. Account given by Gill in his Fortings from the Pacific. (London, R.T.S., 1885, p. 33-8).

1888 May

Marsters granted a five years lease at nominal rent of £5 per an. (Disp. of J.B. Thurston, High Commr. for Western Pacific 28 May, also Disp. of 17 Dec.)

1888 16 Apr. Argus (Melbourne), p. 7, carries report that the barque Queen's Island, which reached Newcastle on the 14th from San Francisco, had passed Palmerston, and a boat containing eight persons had put off to her. Marston (sic) had stated he ran away from the British barque Reflaman in Tahiti 25 years before.

A similar statement appeared in S.M. Herald of the same date.

~~Articles by H.B. Stensdale in Monthly Review vol. 2, 1890, Wellington, N.Z., Lyon & Blair. Reprinted from Auckland Weekly News.~~

1890 10 Mar. Report on objections by Mr. Darric of Tahiti to grant of lease of Palmerston to Marsters. Lease for 21 years at £25 per an. recommended. (Disp. of J.B. Thurston, 10 Mar. 1890).

1892 Marsters granted lease by British government as recommended.

1899 William Marsters died. Article on Marsters Family in Pacific Islands Yearbook (1956), states his son William succeeded him and ruled as a benevolent autocrat until his own death in . This is not correct.

1901 17 Aug. William (jin.) appealed by letter to the Governor of Fiji for help in settling dispute over who should possess the island. (Report of Resident Commr. Cook Islands, Col. W.G. Lydgeron)

1901 Col. Gudgeon visited the island, chose Masters' eldest son Joel to succeed him, and appointed him magistrate and agent for the Resident. (Report of Resident Commissioner).

1902 29 Jan. Prime Minister of N.Z. issued a warrant of appointment of Joel as Resident Agent, to act without salary.

1902 6 Apr. Gudgeon visited the island again, confirmed Joel in his post, and appointed John, Thomas, Andrew and Tereu Masters to the Council. (Report of Resident Commissioner).

1910/11 Cook Islands Annual Report (1910/11) states application has been made by Masters family for renewal of lease, which expires at end of 1912, and that the matter will receive favourable consideration when it comes up to be dealt with.

1912 Lease renewed for 21 years.

1927 "A day on Palmerston Island," by Lady Ferguson, wife of the Governor of N.Z., on a visit with her husband. (English Review, vol. 44<sup>Apr.</sup> 1927, pp. 451-7). Quoted at length in Melb. Argus 11.6.27.

1932 Lease renewed.

- 1933 June Resident Commissioner's visit - very heavy plantings of new coconut areas, etc., following hurricanes. (Cook Is. Ann. Rept., 1933/4).
- 1934/5 Brief history of Marsters' family's occupation of the island. Hurricane has again destroyed all coconuts and ground crops. (Cook Is. Ann. Rept., 1934/5).
- 1935/6 Further information on Marsters' family history. (Cook Is. Ann. Rept., 1935/6)
- 1940 Changed population figure in Ann. Rept. 1940-1.
- 1953 ~~License~~ <sup>License not</sup> renewed at end of 1953. (Word ~~and~~ license, not lease, used in Act following).
- 1954 Amendment of Cook Islands Act alters basis of occupation. (Cook Islands Amendment Act 1954 (amending Act of 1915):  
 Island vested in the native inhabitants as customary land, to be held by the native inhabitants and their descendants according to their native customs and usages, except for ten acres, including the site of the radio station and its ancillary buildings, the site of the water supply tanks and equipment, and the site of the schoolhouse, to be retained for administration purposes on the main islet and to be hereafter defined by the Native Land Court).
- (N. Z. Statutes, 1954, vol. 1 p. 93-4).

Given  
 date  
 of settle-  
 ment at  
 1862

PALMERSTON ISLAND

all photostated

(1) Affidavit of A. HENDRICKE re events at Palmerston and in course of Defence is in Col. Sec. in letters Bundle 7 (1813), ff 298-303 Dated 16.11.13

6 ff.

(2) Affidavit of Samuel E HOADLEY dated 15.12.12 before Mr Henry re events in Palmerston and murder of Captain Beaulock in Col. Sec. in letters Bundle 7 (1813), ff 198-204 7 ff.

(3) Deposition of Samuel E HOADLEY dated 28.10.12 before Mr Fudgey (Capt) in Defence re same events in Col. Sec. in letters Bundle 7 (1813), ff 210-2

3 ff.



PALMERSTON: MARSTERS CLAIM TO

William Marsters to Gov., Fiji, 6.1.88: I wish to apply to you through Mr. Exham, H.B.M. Consul at Rarotonga, about the possession of Palmerston Island, as I wish to claim it as my own, I have been on this island since 1864, and it is inhabited with all my own family. I was put here by Mr. John Brander of Tahiti to make cocoanut oil for him, for the first six years their vessels attended me regularly, but afterwards they left me for two and three years at a time without coming near, and in 1878 they ceased coming here altogether, and from 1878 until Sept. in 1887 I heard no more from Mr. Brander whence I received a letter from Mr. Darsie of Tahiti, which has married the late Mr. Brander's wife, stating that the island became his wife's property at Mr. Brander's death, also threatening to put the case in the hands of the French Government if I should not give the island up. When Mr. Brander left off coming to the island in 1878, there was only about five thousand cocoanut trees on the island, since that I have planted about two hundred thousand trees, which has been done by my own expenses, I wish to know if the British Government has given Mr. Brander any authority to possess the island, if not, I should like to register the island in my name, as I think it will be a great pity to drive my children away from the island as it is the only home they got, I should also wish to know if Mr. Darsie could drive me away from the island without paying for the improvements that I have done to it this last ten years. I hope that you will be able to let me know something of the rights of the island before long.

I remain your  
Obedient Servant,  
Wm. Marsters.

PALMERSTON: MARSTERS CLAIM TO

Ag. Consul Exham to Gov. Fiji, 1.2.88:

HM

~~William Marsters of Palmerston Island~~

Your Excellency,

I am requested by Mr. Wm. Marsters of Palmerston Island to write you on his behalf and to forward you a letter written by him. As your Excellency will see, Mr. Marsters has been on that island since 1864 and for nearly ten years has not been visited by any vessels belonging to either the late John Brander of Tahiti, or his executors. The late John Branders "Merchant of Tahiti" claim to Palmerston Island, arose as follows, about the year 1850 Palmerston was inhabited by four white men, headed by one "Jeffry Strickland" who employed themselves during Beche de Mer - Being in a starving condition they made arrangements with one Capt. Bowles, who sailed a vessel for Mr. J. Dunnet of Tahiti and which vessel called at the island, to hand over to the said Capt. Bowles all their rights and titles to the island in consideration of his giving them a free passage to Rarotonga which he accordingly did, some years after this Mr. Dunnet died and Capt. Bowles then Master of one of Mr. Branders vessels, gave his rights to Palmerston to Mr. Brander. Mr. Brander then in the year 1864 put Mr. Marsters on the island on the conditions, (purely verbal) that he made cocoanut oil and sold it to his vessels, and that Mr. Marsters received payment, at the market prices in the Hervey Group. Up to 1870 Mr. Brander sent regularly every six months to Palmerston and after that date till 1878, they have paid three visits, and from that time to the present, none of their vessels have called at the Island. In the meantime, Mr. Marsters has got a large family of children and grandchildren around him, and they have planted the whole of the islands in the lagoon with upwards of two hundred thousand nuts, which are to writers knowledge growing up fine trees, some already bearing nuts.

Last year Mr. Darsie who married the widow of the late John Brander hearing that Palmerston had become a most valuable property, set up a claim to the island on his wife's behalf and threatened to get the French Government to interfere and turn Mr. Marsters and his children off the island. Now in 1881 when on my way from England, I called at Wellington, N.Z, and had an interview with Sir Arthur Gordon, he told me distinctly that Mr. Brander had never registered Palmerston Island as his property as Sir Arthur Gordon said that at the request of Mr. J.T. Arundel (Houlder Bro. & Co.) he had made special enquiries on the subject. Should therefore this be the case (and I believe it is so) would your Excellency kindly register the island in Mr. William Marster's name, and any expenses incurred I will be happy to remit you at once. The island is in your jurisdiction being situated in 167° W longitude and 17°S Latitude and therefore out of the Pacific Station.

PALMERSTON: MARSTERS CLAIM TO (contd.)

If your Excellency should be unable to at once grant a register for the island, will you send some written authority to Mr. Marsters to hold the island until such time as a settlement can be made. I consider myself that Mrs. Darsie has no shadow of a claim, and that it has now only been raised when she heard the island was valuable, and when she expected that Mr. Marsters could not get any one to assist him.

The vessels of Messrs. Donald and Edenborough of Auckland N.Z. visit Mr. Marsters every six months taking his produce and supplying him with goods, and I think it a pity if the place should be allowed to fall into French hands. Any answer you ~~may~~ make to Mr. Marsters must be sent via Rarotonga, as I believe it is the only way of communicating with him.

I may add that there is a very large lagoon at Palmerston and that with a very small outlay, the entrance could be made wide enough and deep enough to allow any ship of war to enter.

I have &c.

R. Exham.  
Act. Consul.

PALMERSTON ISLAND: LEASE OF

Sec. to H.C. to Darsie, 1.8.89: With reference to your letter of the 13th October respecting the lease granted by the H.C. for the W. Pacific to Mr. Marsters of Palmerston Island, a copy of which letter has been received by the S.S. for the Colonies, I am directed to inform you that H.E. the H.C. for the W. Pac. is making enquiries with respect to the statements made by yourself and Mr. Marsters.

In the meantime I am to state that H.E. cannot admit in the sense in which you appear to use the expression that "Mr. John Brander took possession" of Palmerston Island at any time - for it was as much ~~by him~~ beyond his competence to do so as it was that of Geoffrey Strickland or other persons who had preceded him in so called possession. Nor does it appear that Mr. Brander or his representatives have, as you observe, continued to hold peaceable possession thereof, but that, on the contrary, whatever occupation of the island was effected by the late Mr. Brander it was actually none other than a temporary and unrecognised occupation, followed apparently by long years of abandonment.

The H.C. is fully satisfied that no Foreign Power has ever established or asserted any claim to the island in question, which lies within H.E.'s jurisdiction, and in granting a lease thereof to Mr. Marsters H.E. has taken a course the general effect of which will be maintained. You will therefore not be justified in using force to remove Mr. Marsters.

But if it can be shown to the satisfaction of the H.C. that there have been any misrepresentations made by Mr. Marsters, and that no practical abandonment has been made of the occupation of the island by Mr. Brander, H.E. will without hesitation consider what recognition should be accorded to the claim you advance, and would submit his views thereupon to H.M.'s Government.

H.E. has been informed that the agreement under which Mr. Marsters was put on Palmerston Island was a purely verbal one. Upon the other hand you state that there was a written agreement but that it cannot be found. The nature of the agreement can, then, only be deduced from the conduct of the parties to it. For this purpose H.E. will be glad to receive from you copies of any letters that passed between Mr. Brander and Mr. Marsters bearing upon the subject, together with statements of account &c.

The final statement of account between Mr. Brander and Mr. Marsters, a copy of which you have forwarded, is not consistent with the statements of Mr. Marsters; but rather the reverse. It shews that on the 9th Dec. 1876 a balance of at least \$/ 415.53 was due to Mr. Marsters, and the French Court appears to have found that the real balance was \$/ 471.85. The judgment of the Court was given on the 13th Oct. 1879. It would appear therefore that for at least two years there had been no transactions between Marsters and the firm of Brander

PALMERSTON ISLAND: LEASE OF (contd)

If Marsters had broken faith and illegally sold to other firms copra belonging to Mr. Brander, how is it explained that no claim was made against him in respect of such breach in the Court. H.E. is fully aware that Mr. Marsters, a British subject, resident outside of French territory, would not under ordinary circumstances be subject to the jurisdiction of the French Court; but in as much as Mr. Marsters voluntarily submitted to its jurisdiction by bringing before it an action for debt against the estate of Mr. Brander, the Court would not have been likely to feel any difficulty in ordering that the amount due to Mr. Marsters on the account for 1876 should be set off as part payment of any just claim the estate may have had against him in respect of breach of agreement during the years 1877, 78 & 79.

Mr. Marsters states that between 1870 & 1878 two and three years at a time elapsed without any of Mr. Brander's vessels touching at the island, and that in 1878 they ceased calling altogether.

The account forwarded by you is quite consistent with this statement. But if the statement is true it is inconsistent with the assumption that Mr. Brander and Mr. Marsters occupied at this time the respective positions of Master and Servant. It is stated that Mr. Marsters was to receive no wages, and was to be paid at a fixed rate for produce delivered to Mr. Brander. A failure to send vessels at reasonable intervals would be a breach of the contract on the part of Mr. Brander, and would indicate that he had abandoned whatever interest he may have had upon the island or upon Marster's settlement there.

It is contended by Mr. Marsters that since 1870 the island was practically and since 1878 totally, abandoned for business purposes by Mr. Brander and his representatives; and that he (Mr. Marsters) has very largely increased the value of the island by planting a large number of coconut trees and otherwise improved the value of his position and that of his family. On this assumption Mr. Marster's application has received the favourable consideration of H.M.'s Government.

I am to add in conclusion that the allotment of Palmerston Is. to Mrs. Darsie in the partition of Mr. Brander's estate, by the Court at Tahiti, however valuable as a proof of your being entitled to be considered as Mr. Brander's representative, in no way affects the position of Mr. Marsters who was not a party to the partition nor can it be held as creating a legal right which Mr. Brander himself had never enjoyed.

I have &c.  
 Wilfred Collet  
 Secretary.

PALMERSTON: LEASE OF

H.C. to Exham, 7.8.79 (really '89): I have the honour to inform you that a letter (of which I enclose a copy together with my reply) has been received from Mr. Darsie making claim to the island of Palmerston. Although Mr. Darsie's representations are deficient in proof of the justice of his claim it is necessary for me to make further enquiry into the case and I shall be glad of your assistance in obtaining the fullest information, both from Mr. Marsters and other sources that may be known to you.

In your letter to me of the 1st Feb. 1888 you state that the agreement was a purely verbal one. You will observe that Mr. Darsie has forwarded to me copy of an affidavit made by Mr. John Hart to the effect that Mr. Brander employed an overseer named Sweet at Palmerston; that Marsters was successor to Sweet and entered into a written agreement with Hart (who was acting on behalf of Brander) to serve the interests of Mr. Brander until removed. The agreement is said to be lost. I shall be glad to learn if - or to what extent - these statements are true.

I shall also be glad to receive copies of all correspondence and statements of account between Marsters and the firm of Brander; and to learn under what circumstances Marsters first sold the produce of Palmerston Is. to another firm; also whether he at any time when he had the opportunity of selling to Brander, or his representatives, refused to do so.

In the case of Mr. Marsters having delivered produce to other vessels than those of the firm of Brander during the interval between 1870 & 1876\*, I desire to know whether it was with Mr. Brander's consent or knowledge. How did Mr. Marsters obtain necessary stores during that period.

Mr. Darsie says that "numerous attempts have been made by me (him) to correspond with Marsters, but my (his) letters to him remain unanswered". I shall be glad to learn what letters have been received from Mr. Darsie by Marsters, and to be furnished with copies of them.

Mr. Marsters said that from 1878 till Sept. 1887, he heard no more from Mr. Brander, but from the statement forwarded by Mr. Darsie it would appear that in 1879 Marsters brought an action in the Court at Tahiti against Brander's estate for money due to him. I shall be glad to receive an explanation of this. ++

I have &c.

John B. Thurston.

\* It now appears that Marsters did not deliver produce to other vessels during this period. Brander's vessels called at long intervals but Brander had not then abandoned Marsters or the island. (Note to Enclosure 2 despatch No. of 11 March 1890).

++ Marsters evidently meant that no vessel from Brander called on him since 1878 which is correct (Note to Enclosure 3 Despatch No. of 1 March 1890).

PALMERSTON ISLAND

Darsie to Thurston, Tahiti, 13.9.89: Brander took hold and occupied an island uninhabited & belonging to no person or power & cont'd to hold peacefully until his death in 1877, when Marsters tried to appropriate deliberately and unlawfully.

As Brander's vessels received little or no produce decided in January 1879 to send 'Concordia' to bring Marsters to reason and make new agreement - lost on Scilly Island.

Numerous attempts to correspond verbally and by letter with Masters. M in position of servant or employee of Brander - vessels sent as often as required and ceased only when M broke faith and gave his produce to other people instead, as bound, to Brander. Capt. Vincent found very little oil to justify trip.

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Papeete, 17 July 1886

Mr William Masters  
Palmerston Island

Dear Sir.

I have been for a long time waiting an opportunity of writing to you on the subject of Palmerston Island, which as you are aware became the property of my wife (formerly Mrs Brander) in the division by the authorities here, of the estate of the late Mr John Brander, owner of Palmerston Island.

It is necessary for us to make a new arrangement in the form of a lease of the island from Mrs Darsie to yourself, if you wish to remain there, and I would thank you to forward me your propositions on the subject as early as possible, as I have had enquiries from others about it, and would like to hear from you before deciding what to do.

I may as well mention, that a report has reached me, to the effect that you intend claiming the island as your own, But I do not believe you would be guilty of such a thing. I will however be glad to have your denial thereto, as it was given to me as a fact.

I hope that this letter willsoon reach your hands and awaiting your reply.

I am, dear Sir,  
Yours truly  
George Darsie.

.....

Darsie to Masters, 24.8.87: no reply received and therefore seems that rumour is correct. "I have therefore to advise you that after giving a reasonable time for you to reply to this and make suitable propositions for the lease of the island which I can take into consideration, I will put the affair into the hands of the French Government, who will I am assured ~~and~~ take immediate steps to protect Mrs Darsie's interests, and having already waited more than a year I do not feel inclined to put it off much longer. Six months should be ample time to allow of your sending me a reply, I will therefore give that time."

.....

Palmerston Island  
September 13th 1888

G. Darsie Esqr.

Dear Sir.

In answer to your letter of June 16th also the former letters which I received about the ~~the~~ leasing of Palmerston Island I cannot see how you have any claim on the island, although I was put on here by one of Mr Brander's vessels. I never was paid any wages and for over 10 years Mr Brander's people never visited me, all the labour employed on the island has been paid by me, and when I arrived here in 1864 there were only cocoanuts on one island, whereas now all the islands in the lagoon are fully planted, all done by my own labour, further in the year 1865 when Jeffry Strickland came ~~over~~ back here, he claimed the island as his, and he sold to me some property on the island. I have applied to the High Commissioner of the Western Pacific for protection, and have received a protection paper from him.

I remain  
yours truly

William Masters.

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Extract of a letter from Mr Exham, Rarotonga to Mr G. Darsie, Tahiti, dated Rarotonga 29th September 1888.

"Our vessel having made a trip to Palmerston your letters were delivered in due course to Mr Masters, and I enclose you a letter Mr Masters sends and which letter was written by Capt. Harris of the 'Sandfly' and signed by Masters. Capt. Harris tells me that what he has written was simply the declaration of Masters and that Masters said that he would only leave his home where he had slaved with his family for over 20 years, when he was a dead man. However I know Masters better than anyone else and I know that he has a great deal of gratefulness in his character so if you wish I will



see if I cannot get him to agree to give Mrs Darsie a sum of money in return for the later Mr Brander having taken him there.

I know that Masters has always spoken most respectfully of Mrs Darsie and repeatedly acknowledged to me the obligation he was under to her, this is since the death of Mrs Brander, and I believe that you will get more out of Masters this way than by claiming the island. If therefore you give me an ~~undertaking~~ authority I will see what can be done and at the same time let me know what you would expect. For my part I think I might persuade Masters to give \$1000. You may perhaps think that Masters has authorized me to write you this, no such thing. I take this responsibility on myself as 1st I do not wish to see Masters in trouble & 2nd I consider it just that he should give some share of his gains to the people that helped him to get to Palmerston. ....

R. Exham."

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Anaa Nov. 12 1888

G. Darsie Esqre            Papeete

Dear Sir.

Yours of Oct 4th came to hand Nov 22nd & I take the first opportunity of sending back the copy of letter to Mr Masters, with my attested signature to it certifying delivery of the original by me to Mr Masters in Nov. 1867.

During that month I touched at Palmerston on my way to Samoa and Masters complained that vessels were not sent often enough to him, but found he had very little c.u. oil on hand - so gave him some provisions & trade & told him I would call again there on my return from Samoa, which I did, & took a quantity of oil from him, gave him more trade &c. & balanced his books - as agent in charge of the island for Mr J. Brander, giving him credit for the share he had on the oil & other produce he had collected (the books had not been balanced for a long time before) - Captains of vessels only having entered what they gave him or received from him) at the rates arranged in Tahiti when he was sent to take charge of the island. It was perfectly clear then that he was only in charge for Mr J. Brander - & Masters made no question about it. Were I in Tahiti & could look over some of my old books, I might be able to give you further particulars.

I remain, dear Sir,

Yours truly.

F.M. ~~Vinc~~ Vincent.

.....

List of Mr Brander's vessels having called at Palmerston Island and date of calling.

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1863 July Schooner 'Aorai' - this vessel took Masters to  
Palmerston Island.  
1864 September Brig 'Suerte'  
1865 December Schooner 'Annie Laurie'  
1866 August Schooner 'Aorai'  
1867 July Barque 'Ionia'  
1867 November Schooner 'Aorai'  
1868 January Schooner 'Aorai'  
1868 November Schooner 'Annie Laurie'  
1869 June Brig 'Alice'  
1869 September Schooner 'Annie Laurie'  
1870 May Schooner 'Annie Laurie'  
1871 May Brig 'Mahina'  
1872 November Brig 'Sir John Burgoyne'  
1873 June Schooner 'Marion'  
1875 January Schooner 'Venus'  
1875 December Schooner 'Venus'  
1876 August Schooner 'Venus'  
1876 December Schooner 'Venus' This schooner was lost on Aitutaki,  
thereby causing a delay in sending  
1878 September Barque 'Marama' another schooner.

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Mr Darsie

Dear Sir

Captain Hunter took charge of Palmerston Isd after my Father abandoned it in 1844, he held possession of it until he went to China. I do not remember any other person being on the Isd until Mr Brander took charge in 1857.

Yours truly  
J.W. Dunnett.

Oct 30 1879

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Mr Miller  
Dear Sir

As the Ownership of Palmerston Isd is disputed by M. Masters & Co I forward you 3 old Log Books to prove that a Mr Sweet was in charge for Mr Brander before Masters was landed by Captain Jno Hart in July 1863. I believe Captain Nissen took M. Sweet to Valpso.

Yours truly  
J.W. Dunnett.

Oct 30 1879

.....

Palmerston Sept 6th /78

Mrs T. Salmon Brander

Madam

The "Marama" having just arrived Captain Risdon has delivered to me your letter he has made an arrangement with me, that my order on you in favour of S.C.O. Co will be paid otherwise I would not have been able to let him have my Cobra as I should have had to let the S.C.O. Co have it to clear my debt with them for provisions, having been without one of your vessels for so many months.

All particulars Captain Risdon will be able to give you.

Hoping you will be able to let a vessel attend upon me oftener so as to give me provisions and take my produce.

I remain Madam  
Yours obediently  
W. Marsters.

(Note by Thurston: Shews that Marsters would have kept up the agreement if Brander's firm had sent any vessels which they did not. One started but was wrecked on the way and they never sent ~~it~~ again.)

Papeete 18 June 1878

Mr Wm Masters  
Palmerston Island

Sir

I received in due course your letter of 31st March last which has taken me by surprise.

You will have learnt before this that your draft has been refused since you hold no authority from me to issue such documents, and I can only hope, that you have got out of the scrape you have put yourself into, in some way or other, without sacrificing my interests.

As I cannot for a moment allow any one connected with my Establishment to overstep his power in a similar fashion, I am looking for some one to replace you in the island, but wish you to stay until I find a suitable person when you will have to come to Papeete to settle accounts.

The 'Vini' goes up to supply you with what provisions you may be in want of. As you have been over ~~1/2~~ in Rarotonga, you are perhaps aware that it is due to the loss of the 'Venus' that I have been prevented from giving you for awhile the usual call.

Trusting you may have collected a considerable lot of Coprah.

I remain  
Yours truly  
pp T. Salmon Vre Brander  
C. Coppenrath.

.....

Palmer ston March 31st 1878

Madame Ceve Brander T. Salmon

Madam

Having been short of provisions for some time and none of your vessels coming my way, I have drawn upon you at three days sight for \$522.74 in favor of the Societe Commerciale de l'Oceanie, which draft please honor and debit me in account (for provision from Loreley).

Yours truly  
W. Marsters,

.....

The proposed agreement between Mrs T. Salmon Vve. Brander and Marsters signed by the first party at Papeete on 22.1.79, provided that Masters shd work as Overseer of P. Is. without any fixed salary, his sole remuneration for his services to be the cocoanuts grown on the island. M to turn the coconuts (with the exception of the few required for the use of his family and the pigs) into copra which he must sell to B. B will buy all copra at  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cents per lb - quality to be equal to best Hervey Island. M to supply himself from B's trading vessels at invoice prices and nowhere else unless no visit for 4 months when he may buy necessaries he is urgently in want of. All other island produce to be sold to B at arranged prices. Agreement for 1 year and if not terminated for 2nd.

Note: the 'Concordia' by which this was sent was lost on Scilly Is. and papers retd to Tahiti.

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R. Exham to HC, 18.11.89: From the time I first met Masters in 1875 ~~at~~ always understood only a verbal agreement. Masters succeeded Sweet, who would not remain any longer in place. M was then living on Hervey Island. Brander paid M full value of his produce at  $2\frac{3}{4}$  per lb. which was then the same as paid in the Cook Group to all traders and natives.

M always considered bound in honour to give his produce to B's ships, and when left for 2 years without one he refused to sell elsewhere but took passage to Cook Group to find out what had happened and meeting one of B's ships at Aitutaki he went home in her.

In early part of 1879 schooner 'Hammonia', commanded and owned by Mr (?) Ellacott and chartered by the Societe Commercial de l'Oceanie went to P and M heard of Brander's death 2 years before.

M feeling himself abandoned by the successors to B sold produce to Ellacott and at the same time forwarded his a/c against Brander to the Societe C. de l'O. for collection ending by the estate having to pay \$471.85.

"In conclusion I may add that for the last two years Mr Darsie has done little else than lay claim to different properties in Tahiti and in all cases he has been defeated by law.

I consider that after the improvements made by Marsters & his family it would be a great wrong for to turn him out and give the Island over to a man that for ten years abandoned them and left them to get supplies where best they may and who now finding that during those ten years Masters has vastly improved the Islands lays a fictitious claim to the place".

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*On Palmerston see also HC to Darsie of 1.8.89 and 7.8.89.*

PALMERSTON ISLAND

2908 Jackson Street,  
San Francisco,  
9th December, 1891.

My Lord,

I received your letter of 17th April in due time and have by last Mail from Tahiti received a letter from Sir J.Thurston on the sunject of Palmerston Island.

I have been detained here longer than I intended staying on my way home to Scotland, through an accident to one of my children which will delay me until next spring.

As soon as I reach home I will do what is possible to obtain a revision of the decision re Palmerston Island, arrived at by Your Lordship and His Excellency Sir J. Thurston, as I cannot understand for what reason the man Masters, who was placed on Palmerston by Mr Brander to take charge of the Island for Mr Brander, has been put in possession by Her Majesty's Government and I hereby continue to protest against the acts of Her Majesty's Government and of Mr Masters.

I have, &c.  
George Darsie

The Secretary of State  
for the Colonies.

Forwarded by SS to HC under cover of No.2 of 4.2.92, without comment.

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Note: In the originals of letters on file in the Archives William Marsters / signs his name MARSTERS, not Masters.

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PALMERSTON ISLAND

In the originals of letters held in the Archives Marsters name is spelt MARSTERS, not Masters.

His Agent in 1892 was Goodwin and De Lisle of Wellington and Rarotonga.

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## COOK GROUP ISLAND FOR NATIVES

### Marsters' Descendants

Parliamentary Reporter WELLINGTON

All but ten acres of Palmerston Island in the Cook Group is to be vested in the native inhabitants, to be held by them according to their native customs and usages. Provision for this is made in the Cook Islands Amendment Bill.

Palmerston Island is at present all Crown land. It was originally settled by William Marsters in 1862, who held it under licence from the Crown. The last renewal expired on December 31, 1953. Under this licence, all buildings and other improvements erected by the licensee reverted to the Crown at the termination of the licence. The present inhabitants of the island are descendants of Marsters. The bill is retrospective to the end of last year. The ten acres set aside are for administration purposes.