In the early twentieth century two New Zealanders, Charles Henry Poole and Wherahiko Rawei, joined an American travelling tent show called ‘Circuit Chautauqua’. Poole was a staunch Methodist and a—somewhat mediocre—politician in the New Zealand Parliament. Rawei was a seasoned ‘South Seas’ performer who also claimed to be a doctor and an evangelist. Americans wanted to know about life in the antipodes, and Poole and Rawei were only too happy to oblige. During a period which stretched over three decades, they entertained and educated small-town, rural audiences throughout the United States with lectures and stories about the exotic ‘wonderland’ of New Zealand. Their adventure is part of a wider history of cultural exchange between New Zealand and the United States which deserves further scholarly attention.

The travelling ‘Circuit Chautauqua’ shows were the product of the Chautauqua movement which had a strong rational recreation heritage.\(^1\) The ethos of self-improvement behind rational recreation appealed to aspirational citizens, and was expressed in other contemporary organisations such as the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), the Worker’s Educational Association (WEA), the Carnegie Corporation, events such as international exhibitions, and the

\(^1\) With the changes brought about by industrialisation, a greater distinction between work and ‘free time’ arose. This affected the working class, and in a paternalistic role the middle class advised the working classes to use their free time ‘rationally’, for self-improvement, rather than wasting it in ‘inertia or immodesty’. For further discussion about the influence of rational recreation see Caroline Daley, *Leisure & Pleasure: Reshaping & Revealing the New Zealand Body, 1900–1960*, (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003), 4–5; Caroline Daley, ‘Modernity, Consumption and Leisure’, in Giselle Byrnes, ed., *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press Australia and New Zealand, 2009), 427.
wider interest in the establishment of museums, libraries and societies for adult education. According to Caroline Daley, rational recreation was ‘a product of the Victorian era and a perfect complement to modernity’. For many, rational recreation also had a religious component. Nineteenth-century American culture was infused with evangelical Protestantism, and Chautauqua emerged in an environment where self-development and social reform were key moral and spiritual issues.

In 1874, between ten and fifteen thousand people attended the first National Sunday School Assembly on the shores of Lake Chautauqua, near Lake Erie, in western New York State. The assembly was initially focused on the education of Sunday School teachers, but a general education component gradually evolved. A visitor to Chautauqua might attend a lecture on politics, science or literature, brush up on home economics, learn a foreign language, browse in a book shop, pause to watch an amusing entertainer, or partake in physical education in the picturesque lakeside setting. The combination of leisure and moral instruction provided by the Chautauqua Assembly was emulated across America; by 1900, there were around two hundred Chautauqua Assemblies across 31 states. The subsequent development of a Chautauqua correspondence course resulted in the movement becoming a household name.

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4 Canning, 7.
7 The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC) was a correspondence learning programme, one of the first of its kind, which provided organised learning through a four-year correspondence course. Tapia, 26; James Dakin, ‘Chautauqua in New Zealand: An American Venture’, New Zealand Journal of Adult Learning 27 (1999): 5. Dakin gives 1878 as the date for the establishment of the CLSC.
Informative and engaging speakers were in high demand at these assemblies and ‘Circuit Chautauqua’ was developed to fulfil this need. The travelling tent show transported a coterie of speakers and entertainers to a number of towns on a fixed circuit, offering a week’s worth of ‘uplifting’ performances in each town. The arrival of the Chautauqua tent created a festive spirit each summer in small-town communities, and the movement appealed largely to rural, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant audiences. In line with the values expressed by rational recreationists, notions of ‘good citizenship’ were fostered; informative lecturers linked these rural communities to national and international affairs. Some of these speakers, such as Woodrow Wilson and William Jennings Bryan, were also politicians who used the Circuits to garner support.

Chautauqua was careful to distinguish its performances from other travelling shows which could be deemed less salubrious. The lecturers aimed to be edifying, and the live entertainment on offer was always wholesome, uplifting and ‘respectable’. In many ways, Circuit Chautauqua can be understood as a precursor to radio—it offered informative lectures and respectable entertainment to a wide ‘network’ audience, and was a valued means of communication and connection for rural areas. The movement began in the Midwest, was popular in Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, and was present in most US states. The number of Circuits increased from 555 in 1910, to more than nine thousand in 1921. After 1917, Canada, Australia and New Zealand hosted Circuits, with six visiting New Zealand between 1919 and 1924.

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10 Phelps, 188–90. John E. Tapia argued that the ‘Circuit’ idea paved the way for ‘modern forms of mass media’ which utilised ‘networking systems’. Tapia also noted that people involved with the Circuits often went on to work together in radio, film and television both behind the scenes and in the spotlight: John E. Tapia, Circuit Chautauqua, 207.
11 Canning, 26.
12 Ibid., 10.
While the New Zealand Circuits fall outside the scope of this article, it is important to note that Poole and Rawei represent one side of a cultural relationship between New Zealand and the United States that went both ways. Circuit Chautauqua performers travelled from America to New Zealand to entertain audiences throughout the country in the early interwar period, and New Zealanders also travelled to work on the US Circuits. Of the New Zealand performers who travelled to the US, Poole and Rawei were the most enduring and successful. Poole lectured in the United States immediately prior to, and then after, the Great War, and Rawei spent almost 30 years on the Circuits, in fact almost the entire length of the existence of the Circuit phenomenon, from 1900 to 1927.

Poole and Rawei’s American adventures deepen—or perhaps ‘widen’—our understanding of New Zealand’s past. In an article titled ‘The Far Side of the Search for Identity: Reconsidering New Zealand History’, Peter Gibbons proposed that New Zealand’s past could be better understood through a ‘world history’ approach which privileges networks of exchange, rather than ‘national identities and imperial loyalties’. Taking such an approach to Circuit Chautauqua...
qua reveals that the movement appealed to both Americans and New Zealanders—it was popular because it emphasised shared values, entertained, and linked small communities to both national and international affairs. The nature of the relationship between New Zealand and the United States is explored below, as we run away to join the Circuits with Poole and Rawei.

Charles Henry Poole was a New Zealand Liberal Party politician and a Member of Parliament for Auckland West from 1905–11 and from 1914–19. During this period he spent intervals in the US, and he continued this work into the 1920s. In 1912 Poole attended Chautauquas in the US for sixteen weeks during the Northern Hemisphere summer. He addressed between 250,000 and 300,000 people in a number of states, including Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, West Virginia, Kansas, Indiana and Missouri. Wherever he went he was met with an ‘insatiable desire’ to know about New Zealand, although ‘this desire went…side by side with a very general ignorance of even the position of New Zealand’. In early 1913 Poole was back in America speaking for the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and the National Lincoln Chautauqua Association. He was so popular that he was asked to commit to a twelve-week Chautauqua tour in the subsequent 1913 season.

In New Zealand, Poole was known for his deep Protestant faith and skill as a rhetorician. In 1906 the *New Zealand Free Lance* predicted that he would be a ‘powerful aid to himself and to New Zealand…his phrases are well-strung, and when he hits he hits hard for the glory of the Lord’. Poole had emigrated from Ireland to Melbourne, Australia, at age eleven and moved on to New Zealand in his twenties. He had a diverse employment background: after training in the jewellery trade, he went to sea as a deck officer and then became a probationer for the Methodist ministry. Then, after visiting the United States to investigate social problems, he returned to Auckland with ‘enough American accent to fit out six Mississippi skippers’. Poole entered national politics in 1905 and soon

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17 ‘The Late Mr C.H. Poole’, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates* (NZPD), Wellington, 1941, 259:19.
18 *Evening Post* (Wellington) (EP), 14 January 1913, 8.
19 *New Zealand Free Lance* (NZFL), 1 September 1906, 3.
20 David Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power 1891–1912*, (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988), 50; NZFL, 13 November 1909, 4. His place of birth is reported inconsistently, although he was definitely Irish. In his obituary, the Right Hon. Mr Fraser claimed that he was born in Queen’s County (now County Laois). ‘The Late Mr C.H. Poole’, 19.
21 Hamer, 50, 365; ‘The Late Mr C.H. Poole’, 19.
gained a reputation as a committed prohibitionist and an 'uncompromisingly independent Liberal'.

Prior to the outbreak of WWI the *Evening Post* reported that it was New Zealand’s reputation as a 'laboratory of social experiment' that attracted audiences in the United States to Poole’s Chautauqua lectures. According to Daniel T. Rodgers, between the 1870s and WWII America was ‘peculiarly’ open to political ideals and models from elsewhere. The extent to which government intervention in the economy was necessary for economic stability and social well-being was a hot topic, and New Zealand cultivated a reputation as a world leader in this debate. New Zealand’s Liberal government had passed a package of progressive reforms in the 1890s including a compulsory arbitration scheme, which set a groundbreaking precedent for government mediation in labour disputes. This scheme and other laws regarding female suffrage, old-age pensions, factory regulation and land taxes received considerable attention in the United States and Europe. Despite the ignorance that Poole detected regarding the geographical position of New Zealand, the country’s reputation for reform was such that he could make a name for himself on the Chautauqua Circuits as a ‘progressive pioneer’. The Chautauqua opportunity was a good one for Poole because his political career in New Zealand was not thriving. Evidence, such as the following cartoon from the *Observer* (Figure 1), suggests that Poole was not always respected

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as a politician. The cartoon implied that Poole’s religious beliefs caused him to be over-confident and pompous, and that the ‘Saintly Poole’ martyred himself flamboyantly for his causes, such as prohibition. It also noted Poole’s association with George Fowlds—primary facilitator of the New Zealand Chautauqua Circuits—another prohibitionist and politician who put his Protestant faith first.
While religious conviction was certainly not out of place in New Zealand politics, the Observer painted Poole as reactionary, a man who had a habit of making immature political decisions—scorning his enemies and attempting to humiliate them. It suggested that Poole was viewed as an opportunistic outsider, a ‘carpet-bagger’ who could switch sides and was perhaps more committed to America than to New Zealand.

In December 1908 the Observer taunted:

Sinless, stainless, spotless Poole,
of religious maxims full
Also full—or so says rumour—
Of a stale and sickly humour.
P’raps the folk of City West
Like an antiquated jest?
This fact we discern with ease,
They are easy folk to please.27

Poole might have been distrusted as a politician but his rhetorical skill and ‘religious maxims’ would serve him well on the Chautauqua Circuits where he made a living addressing thousands of people across the United States.

With his powerful masculine presence, oratorical and leadership skill, Methodist beliefs, and interest in social reform, Poole exemplified the values of ‘good citizenship’ which Chautauqua sought to cultivate. The Affiliated Lyceum and Chautauqua Association Incorporated produced a brochure for Poole’s lectures on their Circuit (Figure 2), and their treatment of Poole stands in stark contrast to the attitudes of the New Zealand press.28 The Circuit advertisers had their product marketing down to a fine art. A formal portrait was an important feature of the promotional materials for their lectures and in this image Poole was dressed for success. The image gave the impression that Poole was a ‘thinking man’ with opinions that needed to be heard.

The rest of the brochure cultivated New Zealand’s reputation for progressive reform. In line with their rational recreation ethos, Chautauqua’s commercial success was largely due to its effective combination of education and enter-

27 Observer, 18 December 1908, 11.
tainment. In this brochure a utopian image of New Zealand was created. New Zealand was ‘the Nation Without Strikes’, a ‘little country’ that played with the big boys and was ‘far ahead of the times in modern legislation’. Audiences could relax and enjoy the story of ‘the splendid development of this wonderful country’ which has ‘made the civilised world stand in awe’. By attending Poole’s

Figure 2: This formal portrait demonstrated that Poole possessed the requisite dignity and polish of a convincing Circuit orator—it certainly accorded him more respect than he had received in New Zealand.

lectures, audiences would be able to show their gratitude to the ‘big, brainy men of New Zealand’ who have aided the ‘march of progress’. The brochure was clearly aimed at an aspirational audience, and New Zealand’s reputation for progressive reform was carefully commodified.

With advertising to rival any twenty-first-century media-savvy politician, Poole’s presence inflated as the word count increased. Poole was a ‘man of affairs’, of ‘keen, brilliant mentality’, and ‘fascinating eloquence’. According to this brochure, Poole almost single-handedly brought civilisation to the land, transforming the ‘little island’ with its ‘fierce, blood-thirsty’ inhabitants into a ‘Wonderland’. Poole embodied the virtues of Anglo-Saxon citizenship and Protestant evangelism: he was a hard worker, a ‘sturdy pioneer’ and a visionary who helped to enlighten the country and bring religion and civilisation to the ‘South Seas’. As a result, ‘his efforts have been most generously rewarded’. By attending the lectures, audiences would be able to show their gratitude to Poole for his fine work. Evidently, New Zealanders and Americans shared a belief in colonisation and the ‘civilising’ process. On the Chautauqua Circuits New Zealand’s ‘life story’ made for an entertaining, edifying evening out.

In 1917 Poole was back in New Zealand, but the New Zealand Government showed no interest in his Chautauqua work. During one discussion in the House of Representatives, Poole noted: ‘the ignorance of some people with regard to New Zealand is very comical…I had an opportunity some years ago of speaking to nearly half a million people in the United States of America about New Zealand’. Prime Minister Massey quipped, ‘At one time?’ Poole replied ‘No; my voice is not big enough for that; but I spoke for forty weeks in twenty-five different States to scores of thousands of people, who remained interested to the last moment in what I had to say about this country.’ Poole stressed the need for the ‘aggressive’ and ‘spectacular’ promotion of New Zealand in areas otherwise ignorant of the country, but the House showed no interest in further

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid. With all this verbosity, audiences might have been left wondering what he was actually going to speak about. There is little insight given in the brochure, other than an indication that one of his lectures would be on ‘America and New Zealand’ in which Poole would comment on the ‘affairs of state’ in both countries.
Undoubtedly, Poole also shared a belief in Chautauqua’s commercial approach, as he became ‘a man of tremendous official influence’ on the Circuits—a factor he declined to mention in the House. Little is known about how Poole travelled, where his family stayed while he worked, or how much he earned, but he clearly developed a reputation. The *New Zealand Truth* reported on his ‘good wicket’ on the US Circuits: ‘He has been one Grand Booster for New Zealand over there his lectures proving so popular that he has gone on one circuit after another, always in demand’. Although American Chautauqua historian Charlotte Canning noted that the actual experience of Circuit life was often more ‘gruelling’ than ‘glamorous’ it seems that Poole enjoyed his Chautauqua work. George Fowlds, fellow New Zealand politician and Chautauqua enthusiast, wrote to Poole saying he was glad to hear of the good time Poole was having on the Circuits. He expressed his hope that it would set his family up well ‘financially and otherwise’ for the future.

In 1921 and 1922 Poole lectured on the Swarthmore Chautauqua Circuit in Pennsylvania (Figure 3). Other performers on the Circuit included the ‘Rich-Werno Company’ of impersonators and folk singers who had left a ‘trail of chuckles’ across America, and the snappy ‘Dunbar Quartet and Bell Ringers’ who apparently placed Swiss hand-bell ringing ‘among the arts’. Poole’s lecture, ‘Social

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34 *NZ Truth*, 28 July 1923, 6.
35 Canning, 14–15.

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Figure 3: The Swarthmore Circuit performers were a diverse and colourful bunch. Poole is located in the top left corner of this image.

[Source: ‘Swarthmore Chautauquas’, Publicity Brochure, 1921-22, Redpath Chautauqua Bureau Papers, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa.]
Redemption’, was the opening night act. The advertising noted that Poole was ‘considered one of the prominent figures in Parliament, holding positions on many of the more important committees’. He presented an analysis of New Zealand’s ‘progressive’, ‘modern laws’, but it was noted that the lecture, ‘while full of information and educational worth, will contain much of that spontaneous humour for which the Chautauqua platform in general, and this speaker in particular, is well known’.37 ‘Chancellor’ George H. Bradford, a popular lecturer who had also appeared on the first New Zealand Chautauqua Circuit in 1919 also spoke.38 This was a family show, and the Junior Chautauqua Stunt Party capped off the Circuit with some good wholesome educational fun.39

Circuit Chautauqua offered a clever combination of education and entertainment. American audiences were attracted to a carefully cultivated image of New Zealand as an exotic, remote land full of dangerous inhabitants who had been safely converted and civilised by progressive pioneers such as Poole. Chautauqua’s aspirational audiences were not given the opportunity to analyse the political intricacies of New Zealand’s progressive policies. Instead, Poole communicated a package of values and informed them about the colonisation of New Zealand in an entertaining and enjoyable manner.

Wherahiko Rawei also captivated audiences on the Chautauqua Circuits. Poole and Rawei’s paths may have crossed, but Rawei presented a contrasting image of New Zealand for American Chautauqua audiences. He played the exotic savage from the ‘Wonderland of New Zealand’—one who would have been thoroughly civilised by sturdy pioneers such as Poole. Rawei was portrayed as an example of the success of the Christian mission.40 While Poole told the story of New Zealand’s ‘splendid development’, Rawei showed American audiences that imperialism could be ‘fun’.

In America, Rawei entered a culture infused with racial politics. Chautauqua catered to a predominantly Anglo-Saxon audience and while Poole shared an identity with many Americans, the presence of Maori in ostensibly European environments immediately drew attention to their exoticism and ‘otherness’.

37 ‘Swarthmore Chautauquas’, Publicity Brochure, 1921–22, Redpath Chautauqua Bureau Papers, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa.
38 Ibid. Although there was little indication of the lecture content, it was noted that ‘the uplifting force of his splendid address is beyond expression’.
39 Ibid.
40 Canning, 86.
As Figure 4 demonstrates, Rawei’s appeal to American audiences was simple: here was an indigenous person who had been colonised, who had learned the traditions and religion of the colonisers and who had made the transition from supposed savagery to civilisation.

The history of Maori exhibiting their culture overseas predates Rawei, and the well-known cultural performer Makereti Papakura experienced similar curiosity about her ‘civilised’ status when she took a group of performers from New Zealand to the 1911 Festival of Empire at London’s Crystal Palace. Like Rawei, Makereti was in the unusual position of being fully educated in the cultural traditions of Maori and Pakeha, although Makereti, unlike Rawei, was of high birth. She was also accustomed to commodifying Maori culture for European audiences, and observers were attracted to her ability to move easily in English society. While Makereti’s story is quite well known, most recently the subject of a book-length study by Paul Diamond, Rawei’s past is relatively unknown.

Wherahiko or ‘Francis’ Rawei’s personal background is cited inconsistently. He was supposedly born in ‘Mangawhero-o-te-Au, a small Maori settlement beyond Pipiriki, on the Wanganui River’. It was reported that ‘except for his English parentage’ Rawei lived as ‘one of the Maoris; he spoke their language, and till he was thirteen years old he could not correctly frame a single sentence in English’. Elsewhere it was affirmed that he was actually of mixed race, and that the Maori he spoke about were his ‘mother’s people’. In 1893—before he had even stepped foot in the US—the Bruce Herald claimed that Rawei spoke good English with a slight ‘Yankee nasal twang’.

In the 1890s Rawei (Figure 4 below), and his wife Hine Taimoa, performed in New Zealand, Australia and England to raise awareness of what he referred to as ‘the Maori situation’. In England his ‘Gospel in Speech and Song’ was

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42 Ibid., 21–27.
43 Ibid., 101.
45 ‘The Land of the Maori’, Marlborough Express, 28 March 1899, 3.
46 Hawke’s Bay Herald, 26 June 1899, 3; Bruce Herald, 11 July 1893, 2.
47 Bruce Herald, 11 July 1893, 2.
endorsed by Premier Richard John Seddon. However, a reporter who attended Rawei’s lecture at Westminster Town Hall noted that despite his ‘frizzed hair and

Rawei was in New Zealand prior to 1893, he then commenced a lecturing tour in Australia in that year. He spent 1894 in New Zealand and then proceeded to England in 1895, returning to Australia in late 1897 and lecturing there throughout 1898. Tuapeka Times, 14 August 1895, 5; Otago Witness, 28 October 1897, 39; Otago Daily Times, 17 January 1899, p.5. A Maori Concert, 1896, Eph-A-MAORI-CONCERT-1896-01, ATL, Wellington.
blanket’, he ‘looks and talks very much like the ordinary semi-educated, and
demi-semi-cultured peripatetic evangelist’.49 The Star correspondent in London
reported that ‘New Zealand is a favourite theme with amateur performers’.50
Fortunately, Americans were also interested in New Zealand. Armed with his
Yankee accent, Rawei moved to the US in 1900 and soon made a name for
himself on the Chautauqua Circuits.

Contemporaries were intrigued by Rawei, and his self-promotion was so ef-
fective that historians have also been seduced. Charlotte Canning entertained
the notion that Rawei was a Maori orphan adopted by an English officer and
his wife who was then given the opportunity of an education, which he is said
to have continued at Rugby and Cambridge.51 This education presumably led
to his apparent status as ‘Doctor’ Wherahiko Rawei, although when the New
Zealand Free Lance discovered that he was being called ‘Doctor’ by the Grand
Rapids Press in Michigan, they asked, ‘If “Doctor”, why not “Bishop”?52

The Redpath Chautauqua Circuits—one of the most successful Chautauqua
bureaus—were Rawei’s main employer. They exhibited Rawei and his family
under the banner ‘From Cannibalism to Culture’. The advertisement for their
performance evoked the danger and excitement of savage life, which the
Raweis—a peaceful, happy and civilised (European sized) family of natives—
transcended (Figure 5). In addition to performing their musical act and singing
‘tribal’ songs in English, they were accompanied by a publicity film which showed
Rawei ‘transformed from South Sea savagery to a gentleman of Christian culture
and wonderful entertainment talents’.53 Rawei and his family were simultane-
ously exotic and Christian; John Tapia has argued that this framework enabled
audiences to validate their own culture whilst enjoying the safe exoticism of
another.54 Like Poole, the Raweis entertained and enticed American audiences
while endorsing the Anglo-Saxon belief in the civilising process. According to
Canning, Rawei must have believed that he was presenting ‘a positive model
of success through conversion, proving that community virtues and qualities

49 Timaru Herald, 12 March 1897, 2.
50 Auckland Star, 15 January 1896, 2.
51 Canning, 86.
Francis Rawei: Maori Culture on the Midwestern Chautauqua Circuit, 1900–
53 John E. Tapia, Circuit Chautauqua, 104.
54 Ibid., 104–5.
could be learned’. It is also likely that the Raweis believed in the commercial potential of this idea.

In 1906, Hine Taimoa, who was then living in Chicago, mocked the supposed civilised qualities of American culture in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. She stated

55 Canning, 88.
that her parents ‘fifty years ago were New Zealand cannibals’ who ‘captured their enemies and fattened them for slaughter, living in barbaric splendour’.

However, Mrs Rawei was nevertheless disappointed because ‘she desired that she and her husband should live among what she considered the freest and most enlightened people on earth’ but had found Chicago ‘worse and more uncivilised than her native country was when her parents and grandparents ate their fellow beings’. Chicago’s citizens obviously needed to pull their civilised socks up. The media-savvy Mrs Rawei capitalised on her unique cultural position and enjoyed generating controversy.

In 1910 the Chicago Daily Tribune published an article about Hine Taimoa entitled ‘Maori Suffragettes, Having Everything Else Their Own Way, Come to America to Learn the Fashions’. It showed illustrations of ‘typical’ scenes of Maori life, and Mr and Mrs Rawei in European dress. The text described Mrs Rawei’s visit to a dressmaking class in Chicago where she vouched for the opportunities available to women in Maori society, and also claimed to be learning the science of dressmaking in Chicago for missionary purposes; sewing was still being portrayed as a means of civilising poor Maori women in New Zealand. The other pupils were supposedly struck by her beauty, technical skill and ingenuity and the reporter posited that the Maori race were possibly descended from the Jewish race or one of the Egyptian tribes because they were such quick and able learners. Mrs Rawei used her willing audience, and their belief in the civilising process, to attain publicity for her family.

Like Poole, the Raweis were very popular on the Chautauqua Circuits, and American audiences loved their ‘exoticism’. Contracts show that, prior to the US involvement in World War One (WWI), the Raweis made extremely good money from their performances. In 1915 they were paid two hundred US dollars per week for ten weeks of performances. This would have the equivalent contemporary ‘purchasing power’ of approximately $4,500 per week.

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56 ‘Native New Zealand Woman Says Americans are Worse than Cannibals’, Chicago Daily Tribune (CDT), 23 September 1906, D13. cit. Evan Roberts. Rawei and Hine Taimoa (Emily Jean Sizemore) were married in January 1894 and they performed together on his subsequent lecturing tour in England. Otago Witness, 11 January 1894, 26.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

had to pay their own hotel bills, bus fares, carriage bills and expenses, but the Bureau covered some transport expenses. They performed ‘six regular programs and one matinee, if required, per week’. Although WWI had an impact on their income, their popularity continued into the 1920s.

In his examination of international exhibitions, Ewan Johnston argued that by 1915 the United States demonstrated an active colonising agenda at their exhibitions. After its success in the war against Spain in the late nineteenth century, the US acquired new overseas territories. Now that it had colonies, it entered the ‘world of colonial display’. This was a shift in notions of empire; American empire-building coalesced with an emerging commodity culture. Johnston argued that ‘the commodity fetish became an imperial fetish as well’. At the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, Maori culture was presented separately from the New Zealand pavilion; Maori were commodified with other indigenous people in an entertainment area called ‘the Zone’. Hawaiians, peoples from the Philippines, Native North Americans and Samoans were all exhibited in a similar fashion. Indigenous people became part of the ‘fun’ of empire-building. The interest in South Seas performers increased during the war and continued into the 1920s.

Ideas about the natural dominance of the Anglo-Saxon race were also woven into Chautauqua’s definition of ‘good citizenship’. John Tapia argued that the metaphor of the ‘Civilised Savage’ encapsulated the presentation of Black, Native American, and ‘South Seas’ performers (which included Hawaiian people) on the Circuits. While the Chautauqua Circuits had a reputation for supporting many progressive lecturers, including politicians, they were not a platform for black civil rights. According to Andrew Rieser, the movement was ‘lily-white to the core’. On the Chautauqua Circuits the Raweis worked within a framework

63 Ibid., 250–51.
64 Tapia, Circuit Chautauqua, 104, 127.
66 Tapia, Circuit Chautauqua, 103–04.
67 Rieser, 301–02.
which mediated their racial identity. As Figure 6 illustrates, indigenous peoples were not necessarily tied to a particular geographical region in the minds of the audiences, often an exotic ‘flavour’ was all that was required to entice audiences.

Figure 6: This entirely unconvincing picture of ‘South Seas’ life shows the Raweis in a stylised Native American canoe with an ineffective approach to propulsion and stability. The merest hint of adventure and exoticism was enough to pique the interest of audiences.

However, as Hine Taimoa’s publicity demonstrated, the Raweis also helped to shape their public image. In fact, Rawei presented himself as the authority on Polynesian culture at a time when the South Seas were a ‘fad’. In 1923, during the period of intensified American colonial activity, Rawei corresponded with Mr Ford Hicks, the manager of the Advertising Department for the Redpath Bureau, about his new performance. Hicks had asked Rawei what he would like his latest ‘offering’ to be called. Rawei appreciated this courtesy and suggested the title ‘A South Sea’ or ‘Polynesian Entertainment’. He continued:

Lecture is neither a popular, attractive, or correct title. Also I shall be so happy if you will feature me as a Highly Cultured and Gifted Polynesian Native Gentleman. This would be very much more appealing to Redpath clients than any statements that I am a kind of Reformed Savage etc. Such talk is not only absurd but I believe would keep any but carnival patrons and similar sensational folk from booking me. You will no doubt use the pictures of myself in native dress for they arrest attention and awaken curiosity, but please give the pictures of myself in European dress ‘as a cultured gentleman’ greater prominence.68

Rawei assured Hicks that this would result in ‘more extensive booking success’. He included a ‘hurriedly written sketch’ of his life to spice up the advertisement. Clearly, Rawei was involved in the image-making process; he cultivated a reputation as a respectable Chautauqua performer.69

In his work on Maori culture on display, Conal McCarthy argued that we must consider the agency of those being ‘displayed’.70 Although indigenous peoples were often exhibited in an exotic way for European audiences, and their temporal and spatial distance from the centre of civilisation emphasised, McCarthy suggested that Maori presented themselves in a contemporary way.71 Rawei was characterised by labels such as ‘Polynesian’ and ‘South Seas’, but he chose a patron whom he thought would present a more sophisticated performance, a performance in which he could be a ‘Highly Cultured and Gifted Polynesian Native Gentleman’. The Raweis were cultured and educated, and they knew their commercial appeal. Rawei’s agency is demonstrated by his savvy com-

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68 Mr Rawei to Mr Hicks, 15 November, 1923, Redpath Chautauqua Bureau Papers, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa. Emphasis in original.
69 A letter from 1924 showed that Rawei even obtained his own ‘South Seas’ scenery and curios. Mr Rawei to Mr Harrison, 16 January 1924, Redpath Chautauqua Bureau Papers, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa.
71 Ibid., 12.
mmercial eye. When it came to pay day, Rawei was a modern man.

In the 1920s Rawei took part in a new act called ‘Uncle Sam’s Samoan Islanders’. Like Poole, Rawei and his boosters stretched the truth about his credentials. Advertisements declared that Rawei had met and developed a friendship with Robert Louis Stevenson when he was in England in 1885. The advertisement for ‘Uncle Sam’s Samoan Islanders’ in the *Lyceum Magazine* in 1922 (Figure 7 over page) quoted Stevenson: ‘Wherahiko Rawei is a Polynesian raconteur who fascinates one with the witchery of his word paintings, so beware, lest he start you roaming o’er Southern Seas. Apart from this bad habit, he is a fine fellow, and one of my choice friends’. A report of one of these performances claimed that Rawei was born in New Zealand, and after completing his education at Eton and Cambridge he went to Samoa and ‘has devoted his life to missionary work in educating the natives’. Like Poole, Rawei changed his personal history to correspond with the perceived interests of his audiences. As the South Seas authority on Polynesian culture, Rawei could perform as either a Samoan missionary or a Maori.

In 1925 life changed suddenly for Rawei when he was involved in a car accident in Tennessee, after which the driver took flight, ‘heartlessly’ leaving Rawei ‘to bleed to death’ in a ‘lonely place’. The Redpath Bureau wrote to Rawei to express its concern. A telegram from a Dr R.L. Dossett to the Redpath Bureau described Rawei’s condition: ‘face badly lacerated both eyes blackened and left eye closed by swelling. General condition very weak because of loss of blood. He needs careful attention and nursing. I suggested that he go to his home for possibly a month or more before going back to his work’. Local

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72 After 1899 the US controlled Eastern Samoa and Germany controlled Western Samoa—until it was occupied by a New Zealand expeditionary force in 1914. At the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 Prime Minister William Massey accepted a mandate to govern Western Samoa under the League of Nations. R.M Burdon, *The New Dominion: A Social and Political History of New Zealand 1918–39* (Wellington: Reed, 1965), 25, 197.


74 *Knoxville Sentinel*, 3 June 1925 cit. in Roberts, ‘The Peripatetic Career’.

75 Mr Rawei to Mr Merrit Craft, 2 February 1925, Redpath Chautauqua Bureau Papers, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa.

76 Redpath Bureau to Mr Rawei, 13 January 1925, Redpath Chautauqua Bureau Papers, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa.

77 Dr R.L. Dossett to Redpath Bureau, 15 January 1925, Redpath Chautauqua Bureau Papers, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa.
people in Tullahoma organised a lawyer to track down the driver because they were ‘disgusted at his treatment’ of Rawei. The driver gave the lawyer $850 as compensation, but stopped payment of the cheque when he learned Rawei had left the state. Rawei expressed his disbelief at the ‘outrageous’ nature of
the case and asked his employers to do something to ‘punish such men’.

Rawei’s career did not revive after the accident, and it coincided with a reduction in the interest in South Seas performers. It seems that Rawei was employed in 1926, but in January 1927 he noted that ‘there is no real demand for my entertainment any longer existing here’. The popularity of the Chautauqua Circuits had begun to decline after WWI and this accelerated in the mid-to-late 1920s; the rising influence of radio also challenged the Circuits’ supremacy in rural areas. In October 1927 the Redpath Bureau sent the following correspondence from Rawei to the Redpath manager out to all offices with the header ‘Here is a letter that makes us very sad’:

I have been very ill since terminating my Chautauqua engagements, and have been holding on at Colorado Springs all these weeks in the hope that I would get better to fill my Fall engagements. It seems, however, this is not to be…Consequently with very great reluctance indeed, I am compelled to ask you to cancel my future engagements, for I am planning to return to my wife and grand children right away. I hope you will believe that I do this very much against my personal inclination. I think you have had long enough of faithful service from me to know perfectly well that this must be true. I want to thank you for something like 15 years of work.

In the United States, the Raweis worked within a ‘South Seas’ framework. Playing the ‘civilised savage’ got Rawei a job on the Chautauqua Circuits. Rawei knew that audiences enjoyed his exoticism and were curious about life in the ‘South Seas’, so he orchestrated an entertainment which appealed to

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78 Rawei to Mr Merrit Craft, 2 February 1925, Redpath Chautauqua Bureau Papers, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa.
79 Rawei to Mr Backman, 17 January 1927, Redpath Chautauqua Bureau Papers, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa.
80 During WWI the Chautauqua Circuits had been used by President Woodrow Wilson’s Committee of Public Information as a mouthpiece for wartime propaganda. After the war many people questioned the values that had been synonymous with the Chautauqua name. Furthermore, technological advances during WWI led to the spread of commercial network radio broadcasting in the United States after the war. Radio adopted a similar rational recreation ethos to the Chautauqua Circuits, but was able to reach its network audience more easily. See Greg Alan Phelps, ‘Popular Culture in Crisis: Circuit Chautauqua during the First World War’ PhD Thesis, University of Iowa, 1994, 106, 107, 182–183, 186–90. See also John E. Tapia, Circuit Chautauqua: From Rural Education to Popular Entertainment in Early Twentieth Century America (Jefferson, North Carolina and London, 1997), 207.
81 Backman to All Offices, 12 October 1927, Redpath Chautauqua Bureau Papers, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa.
their sensibilities whilst remaining safely respectable and ‘civilised’. In doing so Rawei enjoyed a long and successful career on the Circuits.

While historians have previously explored New Zealand’s ‘place in the world’ in the context of the British Empire and the Commonwealth, the presence of New Zealanders on the Chautauqua Circuits raises questions about the less-discussed relationship between New Zealand and the United States. Poole and Rawei were emissaries of New Zealand’s culture, veritable celebrities who entertained American audiences with stories of adventure and triumph in a remote and exotic land. They presented two related stories of New Zealand for Chautauqua audiences: Poole posed as the progressive pioneer—‘a man of tremendous official influence’ and Rawei was the exotic, colonised, ‘other’—the ‘Highly Cultured and Gifted Polynesian Native Gentleman’.

What did Poole and Rawei really think about their own country? These men were emissaries of New Zealand’s culture, but in making a living for themselves on the Chautauqua Circuits they had to navigate the tastes of their audiences, and emphasise the notion of ‘good citizenship’ which the Circuits sought to cultivate. Prioritising questions of national loyalty results in a distorted interpretation of what the Circuits were actually about, and how Poole and Rawei approached their work. While Chautauqua performances had to be relevant, respectable and edifying, the movement’s rational recreation ethos required performers to entertain as well as inform. Poole and Rawei endured because they knew how to put on a good show. I want to draw attention to the fact that, in doing so, they also participated in a wider conversation.

Poole and Rawei captivated their audiences with the drama of colonisation and they were successful because they brought shared values to life. Within the notion of ‘good citizenship’ they knew that it was the fundamental belief in Anglo-Saxon racial superiority, the importance of Christianity, and the overall ‘civilising’ ethos which many New Zealanders and Americans had in common. These values provided a common touchstone which enabled Poole (the Methodist politician) and Rawei (the Maori Evangelist) to build a rapport with their audiences. With this touchstone, cultural differences became safe, accessible and exciting aspects of their performances. Hine Taimoa knew she could attract attention with the claim that she had found Chicago ‘worse and more uncivilised than her native country was when her parents and grandparents ate
their fellow beings’. Poole and Rawei’s adventures reveal that an important cultural relationship existed between New Zealand and the United States; this relationship deserves further scholarly attention.

82 ‘Native New Zealand Woman Says Americans are Worse than Cannibals’, CDT, 23 September 1906, D13.