

Frederick Hamilton Spencer (1854 - 1932)

Frederick Hamilton Spencer's parents, the Reverend Seymour Mills Spencer and his wife Ellen, were American. They went to England in 1840 to train for work with the Māori, and arrived in Auckland in 1842 as Anglican missionaries. Their son Frederick was born on 14 November 1854 at Te Wairoa, Tarawera. His early education was stimulated by visitors such as Dr Hochstetter, Sir George Grey, and the Reverend John Kinder, who he accompanied to Lake Okataina as interpreter. This led to Frederick's enrolment at the Church of England Grammar School in Parnell, Auckland, where Kinder was headmaster.

After leaving school in 1870 Frederick worked on farms in the Bay of Plenty. In 1874 he joined the Armed Constabulary and while stationed at Waikaremoana climbed Panekiri Bluff and collected plants with Archdeacon William Leonard Williams. From 1876 to 1879 he studied for the ministry at Bishopdale Theological College, Nelson. As well as providing tuition in classical subjects, founder Bishop Suter engaged the medical superintendent of Nelson Hospital to lecture on botany, believing that it would train the students in analytical reasoning. At the beginning of his last year Spencer and a fellow student climbed Mt Arthur and collected plants on the Mt Arthur tableland. Spencer sent his collection to Thomas Kirk, and later accepted his invitation to call on him in Wellington.

In September 1879 Spencer graduated Bachelor of Theological Studies; he was ordained deacon and from then until 1892 was curate at Collingwood.

In 1880, during a visit to Westport, he and an associate botanised on the Denniston Plateau and on Mt Rochefort, where Spencer collected the gentian later named after him by Kirk. He then went north to Karamea where he gathered specimens of two further novelties.

During four years in England he was curate at Bishop Auckland (1882) and Lambeth (1883–84), was ordained priest and married in 1884, and also visited Sir Joseph Hooker at Kew. He returned to New Zealand parishes in Reefton and then Spring Creek, and in 1889 became the first vicar of the parish of Rotorua, where he made important collections of two rare orchids shared with Australia. After another nine months in England in 1891, and his resignation from Rotorua in 1895, he travelled throughout New Zealand and to England as the New Zealand agent for the British and Foreign Bible Society, from his home base at Whanganui. He also continued his botanical pursuits.

He retired to Remuera, Auckland around 1920, and three years later preached at the funeral service for his old friend Gilbert Mair in St Faith's Church, Ohinemutu, Rotorua. Spencer died at Auckland on 21 August 1932. In 1937 a window at St Faith's Church was dedicated "to the memory of the Reverend Seymour Mills Spencer, the Reverend Frederick Hamilton Spencer and the members of the Maori race who assisted them in their ministrations".

Gentianella spenceri

Gentians are worldwide, mainly alpine, annual or perennial herbs. The 30 or so New Zealand *Gentianella* species have deeply lobed corollas, mostly white, but sometimes veined or flushed with purple, and are usually among the last alpiners to flower. *Gentianella spenceri* is a rather stout biennial herb with a basal rosette, or sometimes a few together, of leathery dark-green leaves, and has a distinctive whorl of 5–7 large leafy bracts that surround the 1–3 tight clusters of flowers on each slender, upright stem. Subalpine to low alpine in the South Island from Northwest Nelson to Central Westland, in snow tussock-herbfield, it sometimes extends into scrub and open forest.

