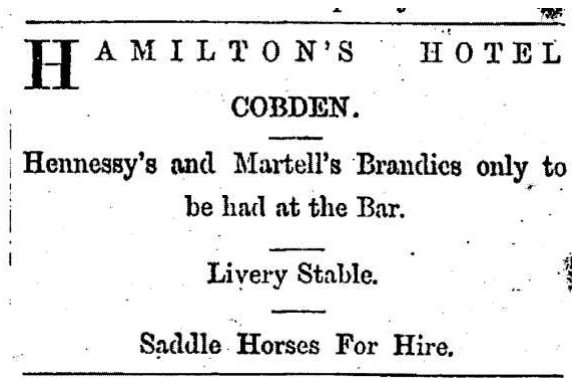


#### 4.2 HAMILTON'S STABLES AND HORSE HIRE 1865 to 1873

Taking advantage of his strategic location, John Hamilton started a significant horse hiring and sales business adjacent to the hotel from the time the hotel was established. There was a substantial demand for horses as a means of transporting men and their goods to the goldfields in the north and the Grey Valley.

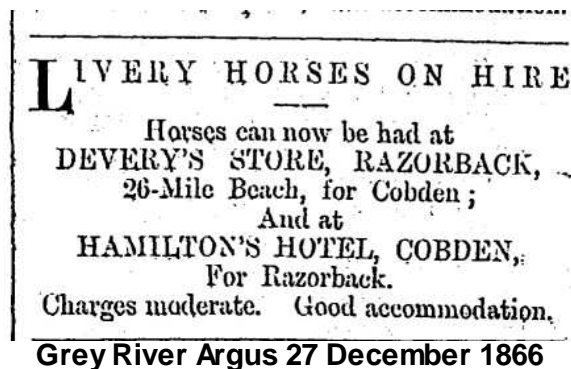
On 17 May 1866 John included mention of the Livery Stable and Saddle Horses for hire in a new advertisement for Hamilton's Hotel Cobden.



**Grey River Argus 17 May 1866 to 10 July 1866**

Hiring horses usually meant that the person hiring the horse in fact bought the horse. Most trips made were one way to the location of new gold finds. Whether the charge was for a one way or return hire there was always a chance that the horse would not be returned. This risk was reduced if there was a drop off place at the destination either owned by the owner of the horse or someone with whom he had an arrangement to receive his returned horses. These arrangements were usually for mutual benefit.

At this early stage, John appeared to have a monopoly on the horse hire activity. However the business was not immune from competition as it was early days and the West Coast was growing fast. Accordingly, John set up business relationships with others to ensure horses were returned. As an example, in 1866, he established an arrangement between Devery's Store, Razorback and his hotel at Cobden. The partnering arrangement increased the chances of horses being returned. The advertisement also highlighted "*good accommodation*." John was not going to miss any opportunity to advertise his hotel business as well.



Creating these relationships also helped to widen the number of destinations to which John could hire his horses. He progressively increased the number of destinations most of which were associated with the diggings.

In August 1867 John placed a new advertisement with the heading of *"Hamilton's Horse Hire Repository and Sale Yards"*. This advertised that horses could be hired for a much broader number of destinations including Charleston and the Buller. The timing corresponded with the establishment of the Post Office Hotel at Westport. As part of setting up the hotel, arrangements were made for livery stables and this would enable the hire of horses from Cobden and also for their prospective hire in the return direction.

**HAMILTON'S STABLES,  
COBDEN.**  
**HORSES ALWAYS ON HIRE.**  
Cobden to Canoe Creek.  
Cobden to Brighton  
Cobden to Ahaura  
Cobden to Twelve-mile.

**Grey River Argus 7 March 1867**

**HAMILTON'S HORSE REPOSITORY  
AND SALE YARDS, COBDEN.**  
**Horse Sales held Daily.**  
Hamilton's Livery and Bait Stables, Bright  
street, Cobden.  
Horses on hire daily for the Buller,  
Charleston, Fox's, and Canoe Creek, as also  
for Twelve-mile, Ahaura, &c.

**Grey River Argus 22 August 1867**

John Hamilton had a cosy monopoly in a strategically good location with a busy and growing passing trade to the diggings. However, in September 1868, a business operated by Rimmer & Forder at Brighton and Charleston opened a branch of their horse hire business at Cobden practically next door to John Hamilton. They were offering horses for hire to Brighton, Ahaura and Twelve Mile Landing at reduced rates. John Hamilton had not been putting prices in his advertisements but the 40s (2 pounds) for return hire to Ahaura would have been undercutting his rate.

L, **H O R S E S. H O R S E S.**

n- **RIMMER AND FORDER'S**  
 is Line of Saddle Hacks to Brighton,  
 a- Charleston, and Westport.  
 it R. and F. beg to intimate that they have  
 now opened a **BRANCH PLACE**  
 at **COBDEN**, where horses of the best  
 stamp can always be had at the following  
 Reduced Scale of Charges :—  
 Cobden to Brighton ... 50s.  
 Do. Twelve-Mile Landing... 20s.  
 Do. Ahaura ... 40s.  
 ly Stables—Robinson street, Cobden, next the  
 ch Blacksmith's.  
 of

Grey River Argus 26 September 1868

Within three months, a new advertisement from Hamilton's appeared which made it very clear that John had done a deal to remove the competition and had done it relatively quickly. These were all routes on which John was previously competing with Rimmer & Forders.

**BLACKSMITH'S.**

**HAMILTON'S HORSE REPOSITORY  
 AND SALE YARDS, COBDEN.**

**Horse Sales held Daily.**

**Hamilton's Livery and Bait Stables, Bright  
 street, Cobden.**

Having made arrangements with Messrs  
 Rimmer and Forder, of Brighton and  
 Charleston, he has opened a line of Saddle  
 Horses from Cobden to Canoe Creek,  
 Brighton, Charleston, and Westport, and  
 also to Twelve-mile, Ahaura, &c., &c,  
**AT REDUCED RATES.**

**COBDEN'S COSMOPOLITAN LINE**

Grey River Argus 10 December 1868

A further competitor appeared in March 1869 with the establishment of Ashton's Livery and Bait Stables in Boundary Street Greymouth. Edwin Ashton owned and operated Ashton's Family Hotel. Initially his focus was on the Hokitika route but on 3 June 1869 he announced a reduction of fares to Hokitika and *"also a reasonable reduction to other parts of Westland."* Bearing in

mind that John Hamilton's advertisements were already offering "AT REDUCED RATES"<sup>1</sup> there was no need for John to respond.

Unlike many others John did not usually advertise his prices. However, on 4 December 1869 Hamilton's produced an advertisement that quoted the fare for Cobden to Ahaura for the first time. It was One Pound each way which was the same fare that Rimmer & Forders advertised on 26 September 1868 meaning that the deal done with them had at least maintained prices at that level.

However, only a few days later there was a new offering of a reduction of half price for the return trip from Ahaura. This represented another means of helping to ensure the return of horses to Cobden. It also was an attempt to gain business from others.

From 17 March 1870 John advertised that 20 first class hacks had been landed from Wanganui "The finest ever landed in Greymouth."<sup>2</sup> It was also evident that John knew the editor well enough to obtain some editorial comment in the Grey River Argus to the effect "we believe the mob are the finest horses that ever were exported from that port."

On 28 April 1870 war broke out! Ashton's advertised a reduction in rates which simply matched Hamilton's but Ashton was now prepared to absorb the Greymouth Ferry Fee of a shilling. Being on the north side of the river, avoidance of this fee had provided John with a small competitive advantage. John responded on 14 May 1870, with a new advertisement cutting the fare to Ahaura to fifteen shillings.<sup>3</sup>

**TELEGRAPH LINE OF HORSES.**  
**REDUCTION OF FARES.**  
**E. A S H T O N ,**  
 Of Boundary Street, Greymouth,  
 And  
**ANTHONY MARLEY,**  
 Of Revell Street North, Hokitika,  
 Having made arrangements, are now prepared to supply first-class Saddle Horses at the following  
**REDUCED RATES :—**  
 To and from Hokitika, by return ticket - - - £1 10 0  
 Single fare, either way - - - 1 0 0  
 To and from Ahaura, by return ticket - - - 1 10 0  
 (Greymouth Ferry free.)  
 To Twelve-mile, No Town, Camptown, Red Jack's, Nelson Creek, Napoleon, and other distances at equally reduced fares. Greymouth Ferry free.  
 Buggies and Conveyances on hire.  
 Ladies' side-saddles.  
 Livery and Bait Stables.  
 Horse-feed always on hand for Sale.

Grey River Argus 28 April 1870

**REDUCTIONS TO SUIT THE TIMES.**  
**J O H N H A M I L T O N**  
 Now announces that the  
**FARE FROM COBDEN TO AHAURA**  
 IS  
**FIFTEEN SHILLINGS.**  
 Further additions have been made to the Stud, which is now the largest on the West Coast.  
**HAMILTON'S STABLES,**  
**COBDEN AND AHAURA.**

Grey River Argus 14 May 1870

<sup>1</sup> Grey River Argus 10 December 1868

<sup>2</sup> Grey River Argus 17 March 1870

<sup>3</sup> Grey River Argus 14 May 1870

In the next edition on 17 May 1870, Edwin Ashton cut his fare from Greymouth to Ahaura to ten shillings, with the comment "*To Suit Monopoly*".

NEW MANILLES AND JACKETS!!!  
**T O S U I T M O N O P O L Y .**  
EDWIN ASHTON now announces that,  
from date, the  
**FARE FROM GREYMOUTH TO AHAURA**  
Will be  
**T E N S H I L L I N G S .**

REDUCTIONS TO SUIT THE TIMES

Grey River Argus 17 May 1870

These changes were occurring so quickly that the usual advertisements with previous prices for both Ashton and John Hamilton were still appearing in the newspaper in the same columns. This may have meant that both had contracts for a given number of placements. The outcome was the promotion of conflicting rates.

John Hamilton immediately responded with "*Further Reductions of Fares to Meet the Times*" matching Ashton's fares from Cobden to Ahaura of ten shillings as well as reducing fares from Ahaura to Napoleon to ten shillings and introducing corresponding reductions to intermediate. These same advertisements were repeated till 31 May when Edwin Ashton's advertisement was removed.

**FURTHER REDUCTION OF FARES  
TO MEET THE TIMES.**

COBDEN to AHAURA—TEN SHILLINGS.  
AHAURA to NAPOLEON--TEN SHILLINGS.

A corresponding reduction to intermediate  
places, from.

**HAMILTON'S LIVERY STABLES,**  
Cobden, Camptown and Ahaura.

TELEGRAPH LINE OF HORSES

Grey River Argus 19 May 1870

EXTRAORDINARY REDUCTIONS OF FARES,  
**HAMILTON'S HOTEL,**  
COBDEN.

HAMILTON'S LINE OF SADDLE  
HORSES.

STATIONS—COBDEN, CAMPTOWN, AND  
AHAURA.

TRAVELLING FROM BUSINESS

Grey River Argus 4 June 1870

On 4 June 1870, a new advertisement for Hamilton's Hotel was placed with the main content referring to horses for hire. Both Ashton's and Hamilton's continued to run their advertisements during June. On 12 July John Hamilton stopped quoting fares in his advertisements and after 26 July 1870 stopped separately advertising the horse hire business but continued with the Hamilton's Hotel advertisement which also referred to the horse hire activity. By this time, Hamilton's Hotel was being advertised as a one of the chain of Gilmer Brothers' hotels but John ran his own advertisement for the hotel at the same time so it appears that the primary purpose of John's separate hotel advertisement was to highlight the horse hire business.

The price war was over with both businesses suffering and the winner had been the prospectors going to and from diggings.

We should not lose sight of the fact that at this time John was very busy establishing the new hotel at Ahaura and while this was not far away modern means of communication were not available to allow quick responses to the competitive situation that he was involved in.

Hamilton's Stables operated at Cobden until 1873 with its activities advertised in the hotel advertisement. As the Grey Valley developed horse stables had been opened at Ahaura in 1870 when the new hotel was established there and also at Camptown and by 1872 at Reefton by Gilmer Brothers.

On 2 April 1873 the business was moved to Chapel Street Greymouth, "*having made arrangements with Mr. Rae and completed the building of new stables*". Hokitika was added to the destinations for which horses could be hired. The business was henceforth operated under the partnership name of Gilmer Brothers.

**H**AMILTON'S STABLES

Chapel street, Greymouth.

NEW LINE OF SADDLE HORSES

Between

GREYMOUTH AND HOKITIKA.

GILMER BROTHERS

Having just completed their New Stables, and having made arrangements with Mr Rae, are now prepared to Let Saddle Horses, direct to and from Hokitika.

In thanking their many friends for their patronage, they trust that now, having re New Stables horses from Cobden to their they will receive a largely increased amount of support.

Horses can be procured at any time for the undermentioned places :—

Hokitika, Greymouth, Ahaura, Half-Ounce, Reefton, Lyell, and West-port.

Grey River Argus 2 April 1873

This move made sense from a number of perspectives. John had been early in the business and had captured early value. Competition had occurred and there were many new entrants to the horse hiring activity. These were leading to reduced prices and profits for everyone.

At the same time demand was falling as there were fewer people making their way to the diggings. The easy gold finds had been made by the individual but now companies were being formed to fund the acquisition of machines to obtain gold from reefs.

There was also continuing development of the Grey Valley and progressive improvement of the roads. This brought the mail coach service which provided a more suitable and preferable means of transport through the valley and to Hokitika. By 1873 these coaches were being operated by Gilmer Brothers from Greymouth up the Grey Valley to and from Reefton. Once again John Hamilton and his nephews were early in this new venture.