

Initial Upload 22 December 2011

GREYMOUTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

On 8 September 1877 it was reported that Hamilton Gilmer would be nominated to stand for the Greymouth Borough Council.¹ He was to be one of four candidates for three councilors for the Middle Ward. As it happened one of the candidates, Dr. Patrick Smith, a surgeon, withdrew his nomination and the remaining candidates were duly elected.

BOROUGH OF GREYMOUTH.

 MIDDLE WARD.

 ANNUAL ELECTION.

I, the undersigned, John Arthur Whall, Returning Officer, do hereby give public notice that PATRICK SMITH, of Greymouth, surgeon, who was nominated on the 8th day of September instant, as a candidate for the office of Councillor for the above Ward, has (*in pursuance of the provisions of the Regulations of Local Elections Act, 1876*) THIS DAY, signed and delivered to me a paper stating that he RETIRES from the ELECTION for the said Ward.

And I do further in pursuance of the said Act, declare that in consequence of such retirement the following persons, namely—
 GEORGE GILMER,
 JOHN GRIFFITHS THOMAS,
 And
 FREDERICK WILLIAM LAHMAN
 have been duly elected as Councillors for the said ward.

Dated this 10th day of September, 1877.
 JOHN ARTHUR WHALL,
 Returning Officer.

Grey River Argus 11 September 1877

Hamilton's first council meeting was scheduled for 28 September which he was unable to attend because "*he was out of town*". On 1 October the charge against Harry Smith for stealing 100 Pounds from the Gilmer Brothers Hotel at Reefton was being heard in the Supreme Court at Nelson.²

¹ Grey River Argus 8 September 1877

² Nelson Evening Mail 2 October 1877

In his absence he was appointed to the Public Health Committee³. This was consistent with his current membership and long history on the Grey River Hospital Committee.

At the December meeting a ballot was taken to determine in what order each of the three members of each Ward would retire. Hamilton was drawn as the first to retire for his Middle Ward. He would be eligible to stand for re-election.

In February, the Premier, Sir George Grey accepted an invitation from the Mayor to visit Greymouth. The Council set up a Reception Committee to plan the visit. This did not include Hamilton Gilmer probably because he may have had a conflict of interest. The Premier lunched and stayed at the Gilmer Hotel. He received a number of deputations relating to local issues and visited the Coal Co. Mine at Brunnerton. In the evening there was a banquet in the Public Hall.

Hamilton Gilmer had a quiet time on the Borough Council. Apart from the first meeting he attended each later meeting. However, newspaper reports rarely mention his name in the discussion of agenda items. These reports were usually lengthy and comprehensive.

Nominations for election were due on 5 September 1878 and as Hamilton was to retire he was required to nominate. It was reported that he had nominated and later withdrew his nomination.⁴

This period of time as a member of Council is quite interesting. Hamilton Gilmer does not come across as one who throws his opinions around in meetings and in this respect his personality seems quite at variance with that of a person usually interested in local government politics. We now have formed the view of him as a quiet, “*behind the scenes*” influencer who succeeds in getting his way through the building a broad range of relationships very quietly and successfully and maintaining them over time. At his banquet prior to leaving for Wellington the words were he possesses “*a happy disposition for making friends wherever he goes*”. This could well mean that the cut and thrust of local politics did not suit his nature and he chose to leave

³ Grey River Argus 1 October 1877

⁴ Grey River Argus 6 September 1878