

The Gocks first began planting kumara from spare kumara plants given by their neighbor, Hiko Raniera Wilson⁵. When black rot began to spread and devastated kumara crops⁶, the Gocks developed a disease-resistant strain of kumara, which is now known as Owairaka Red, and gifted them to kumara farmers across Northland. Owairaka Red is now the main commercial kumara crop grown in Aotearoa today.

1 Born 郭樂 Gock Moo Lok in 1928 in the village of Jook So Yuen, Joe fled a Japan-occupied China⁷ with his family in 1940. His father Gock Loy Fat established a market garden in Mangere⁸, which later became known as Kwong Sing.

2 Born 黃蕙娟 Wong Way Gin in 1933, Fay fled a Japan-occupied China⁷ with her mother can came to Aotearoa in 1941. Her family ran a fruit shop on Karangahape⁹ Road, Tāmaki Makaurau, where Fay began helping out in early teen years.

3 Joe and Fay met when Joe was delivering produce to Fay's family store. They married in 1956. Government restrictions didn't permit Chinese immigrants to own land or build houses back then, so they leased land and started their own growing business from a barn. Overtime, their business grew into the largest market garden in Mangere, all the while creating other horticultural innovations⁸.

4 The Kumara (番薯¹⁰), derived from the Māori word kūmara, is the Aotearoa sweet potato and one of the most important crops in the country. The kumara carries significant cultural value: way back in the 13th century, the Polynesian ancestors of Māori brought kumara with them as a food plant as they arrived in Aotearoa. It quickly became one of the most important food crops, where infrastructures such as pits and sheds were created for kumara storage. The Kumara even has its own god—Rongo⁹

5 The initial gift of the kumara led to a lasting friendship between the Gocks and the Wilsons. Joe says, "every time there is a wedding or a tangi (funeral) we go to the marae (the Māori meeting house)¹⁰ and they put us at the head table. They treat us well."

6 From 1947 into the 1950s, black rot¹¹ (*Ceratostomella fimbriata*) spread across kumara crops on the North Island¹², where almost all kumara were grown in Aotearoa. It was a fungal disease that rapidly devastated crops, and Northern farmers were scrambling to protect their tubers. Kumara was at the risk of getting completely wiped out by the deadly disease.

7 Also known as the Second China-Japan War, the Japanese Invasion of China was the largest Asian war in the 20th century, running from 1937–1945. Around 20 million people, mostly civilians, were killed.

8 The Gocks, among their many achievements, were the first to put product stickers on fruits and vegetables, the first to grow seedless watermelons in Aotearoa, and patented polystyrene boxes to export broccoli and rhubarb.

9 Rongomātāne¹³ is the custodian of the kumara and protector of crops. In Māori creation legends, Rongo was a son of Rangi (sky) and Papa (earth). When Rangi and Papa were separated to let daylight into the world, Papa took Rongo into her belly to hide until the storm passed. Symbols of Rongo were often placed in crop fields for a good harvest, and the first kumara were buried as an offering to Rongo.

10 番薯 (fān shǔ in Cantonese, fān shǔ in Mandarin) is the Chinese sweet potato. Both my parents are from Guangdong, the province where most Chinese market gardeners, and largely, Chinese immigrants, hail from. While my parents were not market gardeners, I remember growing up in my grandparents' house in Guangdong, where 番薯 was always a staple at breakfast. It was the most humble food, the only source of sustenance during famines of the past. Whether steamed plain in a bamboo steamer or fire-roasted from a street cart, the aroma alone carries a multitude of emotions billowing into my lungs. No matter where, the 番薯 and the kumara find themselves as extensions of memories and container of stories.

Joe¹ and Fay² Gock³ were two Chinese refugee— turned— farmers that saved the Kumara⁴

FIG. A

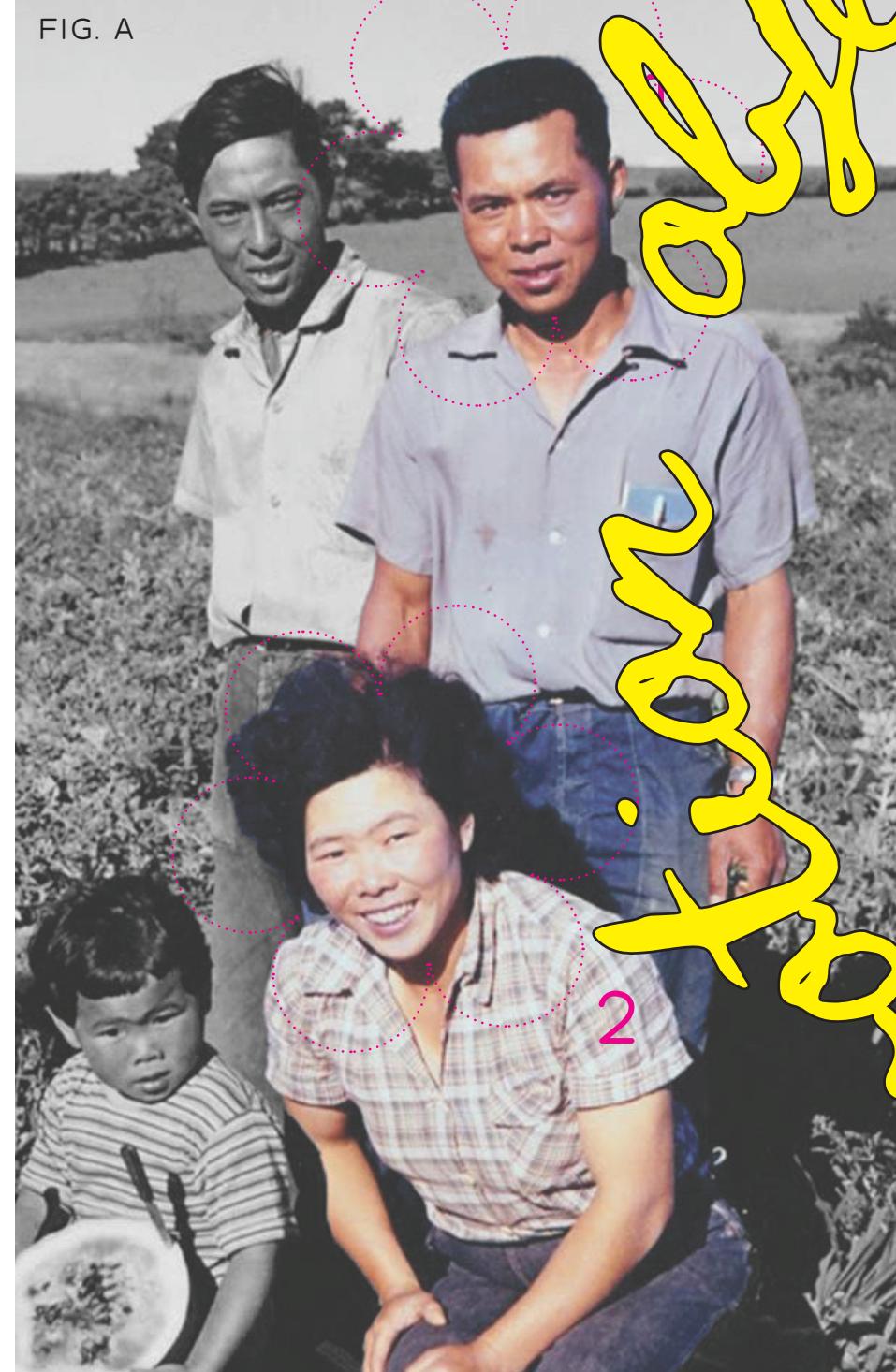


FIG. B A market garden on the south-eastern side of Māngere Mountain, 1956. Māngere was historically Aotearoa's largest district of Chinese market gardeners.

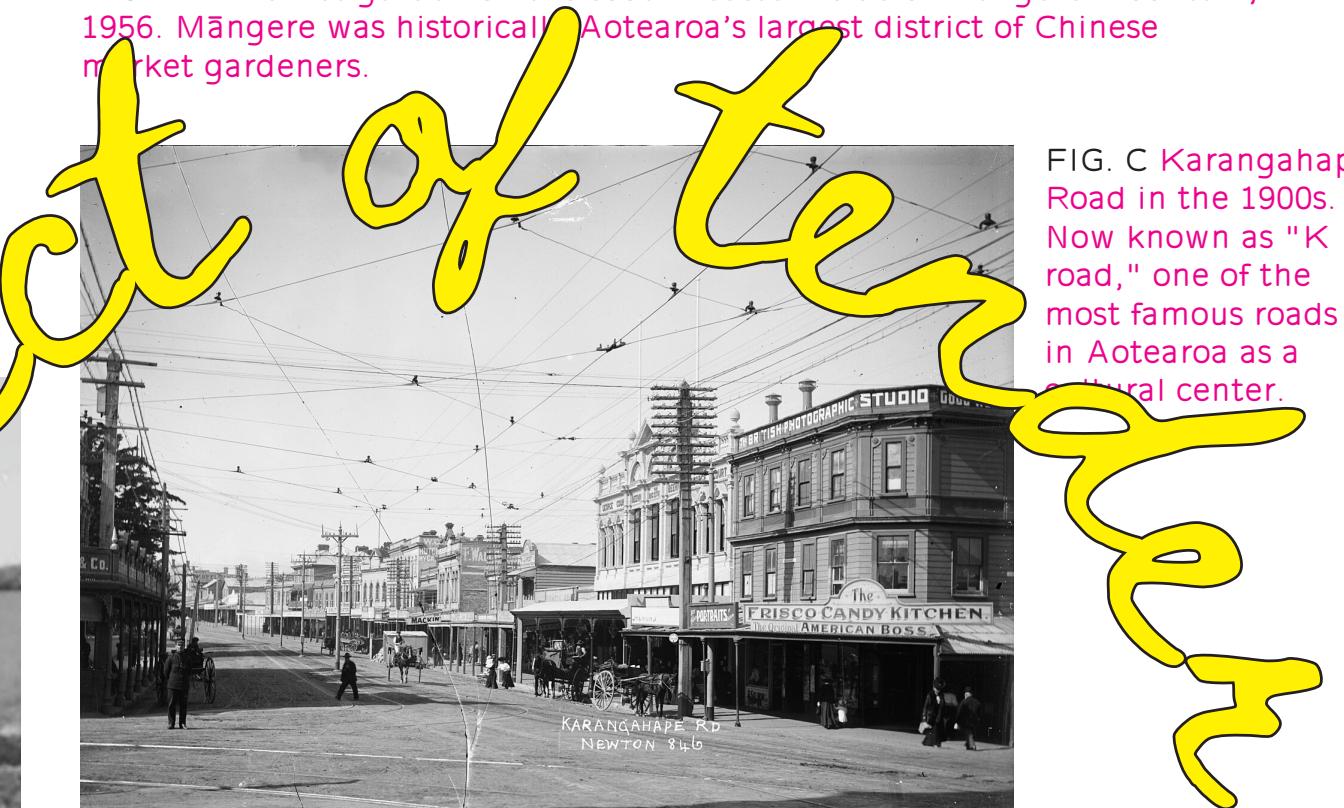


FIG. C Karangahape Road in the 1900s. Now known as "K road," one of the most famous roads in Aotearoa as a cultural center.



FIG. F Black Rot Disease Symptoms in a kumara



FIG. D A
carving of
Rongo,
the
Māori god of
kumara

FIG. G A page from the
Māori magazine *Te Ao
Hou* (The New World)
describing the impact
of black rot in kumara



FIG. E The Gocks
with the Māori Queen
Te Atairangikaahu at
the opening of new
Pukaki marae, 2004.

would be similar. The Department of Agriculture and Horticulture Division of the Māori Economic Sector of the North Island produced crops of kumara which were very popular, but economically constituted a fairly high percentage of their total production. Consequently, throughout the North Island and on numerous occasions exported to overseas markets.

Today it is estimated rapidly. With this in mind it is proposed to emphasize the need by growers to take every possible measure for propagational purposes and a strong recommendation is made to all farmers to do this especially where there is any suspicion that the disease may occur.

It is also recommended that owing to the ravages of Black Rot in kumara, the disease should be thoroughly sprayed especially where there is any suspicion that the disease may occur.

In the case of the Maori pits or store houses which are common in the Tauranga coastal area, the disease probably lurks to nearly blind losses unless the tubers are sprayed before being prepared for planting all introduced material.

On the other hand, selected tubers should be sprayed in 50% Dicloine (Phytos XL) at 1lb to 10lb per acre. This will give a thorough protection which have been dipped or thoroughly sprayed under the direction of the Māori Department.

It is strongly recommended that all Māori tubers should be sprayed before being planted and the foregoing notes endeavoured to exercise the very greatest care in this regard. It is the opinion of the author that all tubers should be sprayed in this case this will be thoroughly sprayed before being prepared for planting all introduced material.

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