

Spillane Business History est 1869

Spillane 1869 onwards

In 1869 it all started for the Spillanes in South Canterbury. Mick Spillane took up a small farm near Pleasant Point and started a business line that continues to this day in the area. Mick had been a young immigrant to New Zealand from Ireland and quite likely a gold-miner prior to moving to Levels County.

In 1875 Mick sold the farm and took on the Arowhenua Hotel. He also got married that year to Mary and they went on to produce 12 sons, all born in Canterbury hotels. Mick purchased the hotel land from the Rhodes Brothers' estate in 1880.

From early on Mick showed a keen desire to look after his customers: in May 1879 a big flood of the Opihi River undermined the river-bank threatening to tip the hotel building into the river. At that time the hotel sat on the northwest side of the highway intersection. Mick quickly had a team together to tow the complete hotel across the road to the present hotel site to save the day. Lots of thirsty customers would have appreciated the effort.

Mick continued in the hotel industry by taking on the Royal Hotel in Timaru in 1882, then the Old Bank Hotel in 1885 and out to Geraldine at the Bush Hotel in 1888. Back he came to his Arowhenua Hotel in 1890 and remained there until retiring from the hotel trade in 1895.

Four of Mick's sons went on to work in a cycle, motorcycle and vehicle business that was started in Temuka in 1906. It was started by James and William Spillane and concentrated mainly on bicycles and motorbikes, with some work on agricultural machinery and cars. Later their brothers, George and John, worked for them as well and it was a busy enterprise prior to WW1. During WW1 three of the brothers went into the army with James remaining to hold the fort. After

the war it was only James running the business and he survived the thick and thin of the war and depression times. Joe, the son of James, started work at the bike shop in 1931, the middle of the great depression, at 5 bob a week. He took over the operation in 1938 on the death of his father. Again the business survived wartime pressures with the help of other Spillane family members while Joe was in the army. Post WW2 motorcycles were no longer sold and changes needed to be made to keep a good turnover. Home Appliances were added to the shop's mix.

From the 1950s, Joe's sons Jim and Des worked in the bike shop part-time getting a feel for the life of a serviceman working on a variety of bike and appliance products. Jim went around installing TV aerial systems in 1962 for his father's TV sales coinciding with the introduction of TV in Canterbury. This worked in well with Jim's new job as an apprentice electrician.

In January 1972, Peter Sullivan and Jim Spillane started Sullivan & Spillane Electrical Ltd in King St, Temuka, in the old Blakemores Drapery building. Peter and Jim had done market gardening around Temuka in their spare time in prior years to get the capital to start this venture. They operated a Retail Appliance showroom and an Electrical Contracting division. Joe Spillane was still operating his bike shop down the street and ran this until 1978 when he retired. Sullivan & Spillane grew steadily and in 1977 the Hilton Highway property was purchased providing a Timaru base for electrical and electronic sales and service.

Late 1979 Des Spillane came on the scene after having worked with the Civil Aviation Department in avionics and then Hewlett Packard in NZ and Germany on the new whizzy mini-computers. From this point, Sullivan & Spillane started doing Marine Electronic sales and service and this branch has grown in concert with the New Zealand fishing industry.

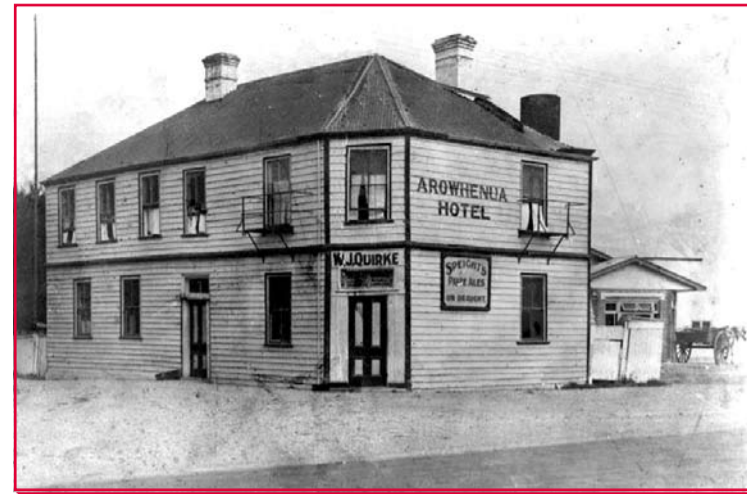
The Appliance Retail division continued in Timaru and Temuka until 1998 when operation of owner-operator appliance stores ceased to be economic and they were closed. Peter Sullivan exited the company at this time and the remaining partners were Jim and Des Spillane who operate the company to this day.

Sullivan & Spillane continues to offer Electrical Contracting, Heat Pump Sales, Appliance Service, and Marine and Industrial Electronic Sales and Service.

Sullivan & Spillane is proud of the quality of goods and service it provides to customers in South Canterbury and further afield, and equally proud of the long-term backup it has provided over the years.

Of the current staff of 21, apart from the owners, three of the staff are 20+ year 'lifers', these being Geoff Hand, Callum McDonald and Geoff Hill.

Sullivan & Spillane's main branch is still at 114 Hilton Highway, with the large Appliance Service



Old Arrowhenua Hotel in 1938 prior to demolition.



Sullivan & Spillane Electrical Temuka in 1973.



Sullivan & Spillane Hilton Highway today.

facility and Electromart at 6A Arthur St; the bulk store is situated in the company's heritage building in Commerce St, Temuka

We thank all customers of Sullivan & Spillane for their patronage over the last 37 years and also thank past customers of our earlier family entrepreneurs' businesses since 1869. Without the ongoing support of customers over the years we could not have progressed to where we are today.

Aoraki – South Canterbury is our home and our area, we love it here.

It is our Turangawaewae, and we thank our forebears for having the foresight to put down their roots in such a stunning area.



Spillane Bros Temuka in 1909



Jim Spillane



Sullivan & Spillane



Des Spillane