

Brown, John Evans ^[1]

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by Frontis W. Johnston, 1979

Feb. 1827–9 July 1895

John Evans Brown, land developer, was born in Lewiston, Pa., the son of William



A postcard of Zealandia Castle. Image from the North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

^[2]John Brown (1803–84). He attended school in Wilmington, Del., and afterward studied medicine and law until ill health led him out of doors to Ohio and to North Carolina, where he became a surveyor. He moved to Buncombe County ^[3] with his father about 1843 but left in 1849 to join the gold rush to California. He returned to Asheville for a brief time in the fifties, but in 1856 he sailed from San Francisco for Australia, where he became a gold miner, sheep rancher, and businessman. In 1864 he moved to Canterbury, New Zealand, where he later settled. He was a member of the New Zealand General Assembly representing a district called Swannanoa and also Minister of Education, a position in which he did much to establish a system of free, compulsory education. He was a strong advocate of provincial federation, and actively interested in railroads. In 1858 he married Theresa Australia Peacock, an Australian by birth but the daughter of an English merchant and shipper of Sydney. She died in 1880 and in 1883 he married Mrs. Jane Emily Martin of Wellington, New Zealand. In 1884 he returned to North Carolina and in 1889 built Zealandia, a miniature of Moro Castle at Havana, on the crest of Beaumont, a mountain east of Asheville ^[4], where he resided until his death. He owned thousands of acres of land in the mountains of western North Carolina and in Tennessee, and Zebulon B. Vance ^[5] was his legal agent for the sale of about fifty thousand acres. Brown was buried in Riverside Cemetery, Asheville, survived by his widow and by five children of his first marriage: Maria, Vance, and Potter of Asheville, Katie E. Blood of Brooklyn, and Sidney Herbert of Boston. Two children had died in New Zealand.

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"Historic Zealandia Castle." (website). Festiva Hospitality Group. <http://zealandiacastle.com/index.php> [11] (accessed December 10, 2013).

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