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Unsung gold-rush hero to have his day

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The man many claim was the unsung hero and catalyst behind Otago's gold rush of the 1860s will be formally celebrated this year.

The life and times of Edward Peters, better known as "Black Peter", are well documented, but his early finds of workable gold at Glenore, between Milton and Lawrence, have been largely overlooked by historians, with Australian Gabriel Read having become the popular choice for the man who sparked the gold rush.

Mr Peters, who hailed from what is now known as Mumbai, India, struck gold at Glenore between 1858 and 1859 - a full two years before Read's famous find near Lawrence.

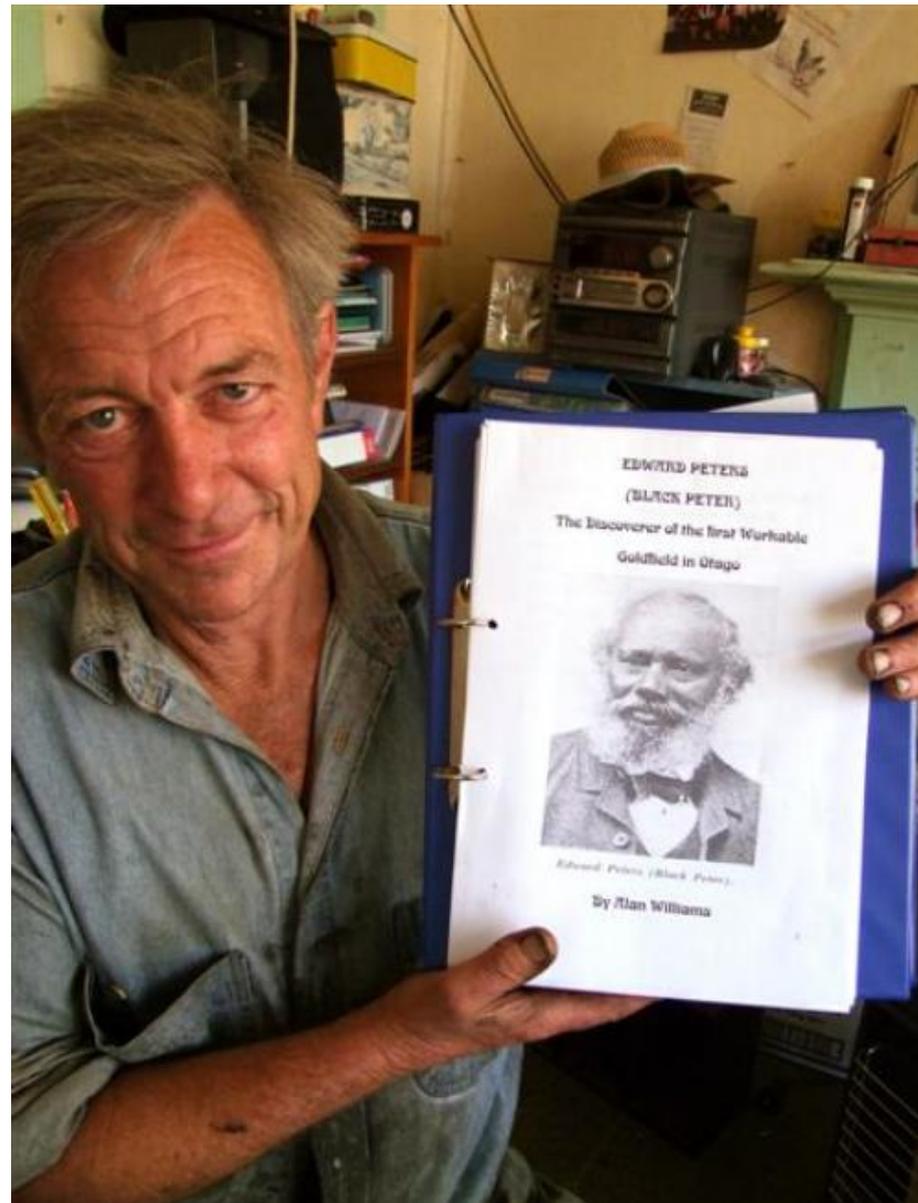
But Glenore resident Alan Williams hopes to help debunk that myth in April, when a monument celebrating Black Peter is unveiled and a book by Mr Williams launched by Governor-General Anand Satyanand, New Zealand's first Governor-General of Indian ancestry.

The celebrations will take place at the Mt Stuart Reserve and nearby Glenore river flat on Easter Saturday, April 12.

Mr Williams, who chairs the Glenore Manuka Trust, has had an enduring fascination with Mr Peters, who, he believes, has not received anywhere near the credit and recognition he deserves.

The trust was still organising events to be held around the occasion, but Mr Williams believed it would be a hugely historic day for the province.

"He [Mr Peters] never ever got the recognition, anything of note, so we are just helping put that right."



Glenore Manuka Trust chairman Alan Williams with an image of pioneering gold miner Edward Peters, whose contribution to the Otago gold rush will be celebrated in April. Photo by Glenn Conway.

Though Mr Peters is mentioned in historic literature around the time of the gold rush, racism and local politics at the time downplayed his findings.

His sample of gold, taken from Glenore, was used by chief surveyor J. T. Thomson to prove a "workable gold field" on the south branch of the Tokomairiro River.



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