



Old Cottage Hospital, 1 Layard Street

1922

Use	Rest Home	Historic Value	3 out of 5
Materials		Architectural Value	1 out of 4
		Technical Value	- out of 2
NZHPT Registered	Not registered	Symbolic Value	1 out of 3
Valuation No	11970-244-00	Rarity	1 out of 2
Legal Description	Sec 1-9 Blk XI Town of Opunake	Townscape Value	1 out of 2
		Group Value	- out of 2
		Overall	
		Cultural Heritage Value	7 out of 20
Reference	L1		

Description

The Old Cottage Hospital is distinguished from a distance by its high hipped roof and the central feature of a wide gable marking the entrance. The building is finished in stucco (whether on concrete or timber framing is not presently known), with a concrete tile roof and aluminium windows (these latter materials not original). There is some modest embellishment in an otherwise plain and functional design in the eaves brackets and the curved brackets to the porch roof. Extensive changes have been made over time, with additions evident, while the front gate in stone and concrete appears to be original.

History

Before the end of the 19th century the Opunake Town Board looked into the possibility of getting a resident doctor and a cottage hospital because of the growing concern about the lack of medical services in Opunake area. In 1900, the Taranaki Hospital and Charitable Aid Board discussed the question of establishing hospitals in outlying places. The Opunake Town Board made an application for a hospital but the submission was turned down in favour of establishing facilities at Inglewood, Stratford and Eltham.

Although Opunake did not get a hospital, arrangements were made in 1905 for the purchase of an 'ambulance wagon' for the district. This ambulance was only ever used once in a medical capacity and was soon bought by a Mr A E Brunette who later turned it into a hearse.

It was not until 1913 that a further move was afoot to have a small cottage hospital erected. A meeting of both Maori and European residents showed enthusiasm but other demands were seen as more important and the funding was lost. Finally in 1918, the public rose to the occasion with many generous donations, and Opunake's dream of a small cottage hospital to care for both medical and maternity cases came nearer to reality. In mid 1919 a deputation from the Taranaki Hospital Board met with sixty Egmont County residents to discuss proposals for a twelve-bed cottage hospital, including a maternity ward. Around this time a Nursing Association had been formed in Opunake for the purpose of adding weight to the district's requests and resulting was a guarantee that a cottage hospital will be erected in Opunake as soon as possible. Plans presented to the Nursing Association in 1920 included a three-bed maternity ward with sterilising room, bathroom and toilets attached. There were also plans for two single-bed emergency wards, cooking facilities and nurses' accommodation.

The hospital was officially opened in 1922 for the cost of £4,472, but the Health Department would not permit use of the hospital for both medical and maternity patients, so it became a maternity hospital. The first Matron was Miss McFadgen, the District Nurse of that time.

The cottage hospital served its last maternity capacity in the early 1980s, but during that time the hospital was possibly the birthplace of many famous New Zealanders such as Graham Mourie, Peter Snell and Jim Bolger. The hospital was converted into a rest home, which is still operating today.

The plaque to the right of the main entrance says:

"This stone was laid by M Fraser ESQ Chairman, Taranaki Hospital Board, 27 January 1922".

Architect

Not known.

Builder

Not known.

Statement of Significance

The Old Cottage Hospital has long and close links with the local community as a maternity hospital and latterly as a rest home, and many people will feel an affinity for it. As the birthplace of very well-known New Zealanders (to be verified) and in particular of the man named New Zealand Sportsman of the Century, it has added historic and social value.

Architectural values are modest, but of interest because of the information that could be deduced about medical care in the 1920s from a study of its design. Purpose-built medical buildings that are more than 80 years old are rare anywhere in New Zealand.

Sources

Mickelson K (1989) *The Clearing: A History of Opunake*. Cadsonbury Publications. Christchurch

Date

June 2003