

Patea Mail May 11 1988

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR MEMORIAL LAMPSTAND

It was reported in the Historical Society's notes that the South African War Memorial Lampstand has been placed in position in front of the museum. It has now been replastered, painted and connected to the street lighting.

It is a striking adornment to this part of the town and a credit to those responsible for saving a part of our heritage which would otherwise have been in danger of being lost.

The job was supervised by Mr Doug Meyenberg who also designed and made the lamp bracket. He and Mr Charlie Hunt chipped off the old plaster. The lamp itself was donated by Mr Eric Gibson. The monument was put in position by Council staff. Mr Archie Clarkson did the plastering and painting. Mr Harry Fitzwater did the electric wiring and we are also indebted to Mr Graeme Phillips (Power Board) and Mr Bill Turner (District Council) for assistance and co-operation. The Patea RSA has generously undertaken to defray the cost of materials.

This monument has an unusual history, being unveiled in November 1900 it anticipated the conclusion of hostilities. A monument in Wanganui was unveiled in 1906, five years after the event. It was the only South African War Memorial to be built in South Taranaki.

At some stage of its existence the inscription became so delapidated that it was considered desirable to set a new plaque over the old one. When the War Memorial in the Memorial Park was built some years after World War II, this

plaque was removed and fixed on the new memorial. In some strange way this seems to have removed the tapu from the monument, rendering it no more worthy of respect than any other lamp post and expendable.

At the end of its useful life it was ignominiously uprooted from its position in the centre of the Triangle which it had dominated for 86 years. At this stage the Historical Society took an interest in its welfare and in the intervening time it has been renovated and installed in its new position.

Some interesting facts of its history are to be found in the Borough Council Minutes. At the meeting of June 6, 1900 a telegram from the Hon J. G. Ward, intimating that the Government would proclaim a holiday three days after peace had been declared and asking for united action in celebrating the event. The Mayor, Mr H. O. Clarke, stated that a public meeting had been called in this connection and therefore thought that the Council was not called upon to move in the matter.

At the next monthly meeting (July 2) a letter was received from the Peace Celebration Committee asking for a small contribution to celebration funds, which request the Council declined.

A further letter from the Peace Celebration Committee was received at the same meeting requesting the Council to allow a memorial lamp and fountain to be erected in the Triangle, and if consent given, will the Council undertake lighting the lamp

with oil until electricity is established?

The Committee also requested the Council to allow water from the reservoir to be laid on to the fountain and trough. The proposed fountain would have been a drinking fountain and the trough a horse drinking trough. On the motion of Crs Hunger and Williams it was resolved, "That this Council, in reply to the request of the Peace Celebration Committee to be allowed to erect a lamp, etc in the Triangle, are willing to undertake the lighting of the lamp there, but would suggest that a more suitable site might be selected at the junction of Egmont and Bedford Streets, but cannot consent to allow water from the reservoir to be laid on to the fountain and trough".

On October 29 a special meeting was held to fix the site for the erection of the Peace Memorial Lamp. The Chairman of the Peace Celebration Committee, Dr Gillon waited on the Council relative to the Committee's objection to the site already chosen by the Council. An amendment (Adams — Williams), "That the Council approve the site where the present foundation has been erected" was carried on a division of 6-4.

At the monthly meeting of December 3 the Mayor brought forward the question of a suitable reception to the returning Troopers and suggested that no entertainment be given until all had returned, but that an official welcome at the Railway Station be given to each as he returned.