

Historic House To Be Demolished At New Plymouth

Associations with early days of town.

Something substantial of the history of New Plymouth is about to disappear with the demolition of the house at 6 Young Street. Once the hub of a small, busy community, then a picturesque relic, and now, for want of paint and a new iron roof, a somewhat dilapidated building, it has been purchased by Mr. George Taylor, who intends to replace it with a modern dwelling.

Despite its outward appearance, the old weather-boarded house contains material that is as sound as the day the place was built. There is no sign of decay in the tough exterior walls and the heavy timbering inside is of the kind that would outlast many of the houses being built to-day. Heart kauri shipped from the Auckland province was used when, more than 90 years ago, the place was constructed to the order of Mr. Richard Brown, who came from England in 1841 and was one of the settlement's earliest merchants. The fact that the roofing beams are locked and wedged with wood is an indication of the craftsmanship that went into the building.

Story About Barrett.

It is said that Richard Barrett, whaler and colonist, who had his boiling-down station at Moturoa long before the migration from England began, was carried to Mr. Brown's house one one occasion after he had been injured. That could not be confirmed last night, but it is a fact that the place was a centre for many comings and goings when sailing ships used the mouth of the Hukatoki River and Mount Eliot rose from the flat where the bus terminus is now situated. Mr. Brown married a Maori chieftainess, and the Maoris, regarding him and his wife as particular friends, frequented the locality.

In the middle distance of the settlement's history the house became noted as headquarters for carrying and cab services. Those were times when the cab driver was a very important person in the community, and it was therefore an event when on June 1, 1882, the following advertisement appeared in the Press:—

Cab! Cab! Cab!

H. Julian,

Having imported two new cabs, begs to announce that he will undertake all wedding and picnic parties at moderate rates. One cab always on the stand.

H. Julian, Young Street.

Cab Services.

Mr. Julian had purchased the property at 6 Young Street, and there he reared his family. The cobble paving up which the cabs used to trundle to the stables at the back of the house is still to be seen. In 1887 Mr. Julian took over the Royal Hotel, but the old house did not lose its identity with the town's transport. Mr. R. Jury, cab-proprietor, moving in. Twenty years ago, long after taxis had generally ousted horse-drawn vehicles, Mr. Jury still plied for fares at New Plymouth with the only cab then on the streets. Many of the older residents preferred that mode of conveyance and would have no truck with the new-fangled contraptions, although by that time taxis had been long-established among transport systems.

A peculiarity about the house at 6 Young Street is that two doors on the street frontage are perched from four to five feet above the footpath. The weather-boarding ends there, too, and, to conceal the nakedness of the under-structure, the gap has been faced with sheets of corrugated iron. The reason for the structural curiosity is that the street, once level with the bottom of the doors, was shorn down to improve the grade. At first the borough replanners were considerate enough to leave the house with a frontage of verdant turf 10 to 15 feet wide. Later, however, this, too, was sliced away for further street alterations, and the house, originally surrounded by a broad expanse of grass extending at the back to the Mangaotuku stream, was left queerly sited above the footpath.

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