



THE BACK VIEW of the former Te Ara guest house, Devon St East, sometimes known as "The Ghost House" because of rumours that one of its rooms was haunted by a nun. In earlier days, when it served as a private home, the house is reported to have had a second balcony round the

top story. **LEFT:** One of the towering carved mantelpieces is examined by the New Plymouth land agent, Mr E. A. Wood, during an inspection with a Taranaki Herald team today. In advertising the building for sale last week, Mr Wood described the building as a castle.

... of spooks and seances

Stories of spooks and seances, hidden tunnels and other mysteries have been revived by an advertisement offering a "castle" for sale.

The "castle" is the former Te Ara Guest Lodge, Devon St East, which has 13 bedrooms in its main section and in outbuildings.

Some of the rooms, with their 18ft stud, would almost accommodate a modern house and its carved mantelpieces have the grace of a stately home.

Years ago children hurried past the house because of local gossip about ghosts appearing in the house and a spiritualist holding seances there.

But a former resident, Mr Harland Charters, disputes all the ghost stories. He lived in the house for about 14 years from 1945 and saw no sign of the nun rumoured to have haunted one of its rooms.

He said today he had inspected the buildings thoroughly and examined the grounds, but had seen no sign of an underground tunnel leading to the coast.

He understands the house was built by a dentist, a Mr Parker, 50 to 60 years ago. Mr Parker died in the 1920s, but his wife continued to live in the house, first with her daughter and later alone.

During the latter period she allowed the grounds to become rather run down, Mr Charters said, and this was probably when the ghost rumours spread.

The change to guest house was gradual. At first it was used as a reception centre for

weddings and similar events, he said.

The present owner is Mr P. R. Jefferies, who said legislation introduced after he bought the property three years ago forced him to cease using it as a guest house. Since then it had been subdivided into flats, in one of which he lived.

In fact he sleeps in the room where the nun's ghost is supposed to have appeared, but he has seen no sign of her.

