

# Do you know York Terrace?

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New Plymouth's Tourist Promotion Officer

A short time ago we were conducting a group of Australian visitors on a trip around New Plymouth. As usual, numerous questions were asked, including one about the origin of five quaint houses in Pendarves St, near the foot of Eliot St hill. Unfortunately, I was at a loss. I did not know the full answer.

You know, our historic past plays an important part in the tourist industry — especially in a city the size of New Plymouth.

We can offer visitors every form of relaxing holiday, but we tend to overlook the idle potential that has been around for years.

## Early days

The five homes in Pendarves St have a delightful link with our early settlers.

Mr and Mrs Thomas Hirst and their children—Mary, Jane, Annis, Harriet and James—sailed from York, England to Auckland in the ship Gwallor (404 tons). They arrived in New Ply-

mouth by coastal schooner on 18th May, 1852.

Mr Hirst, a merchant by trade, brought with him the components of two houses, known as the "Round House" and the "Square House" which were erected together on a site facing Devon St near where Philipps Motors Ltd are now.

In 1855, however, the buildings were shifted back to face Courtenay St. They were demolished in 1938.

It is interesting to note that the steel-framed Round House was occupied by General Pratt, who used it as the Militia HQ during the Maori Wars.

The Round House was once the home of Jean Batten, the aviatrix, well known to Tarahaki people.

Thomas Hirst continued working as a warehouseman dealing in wool, and in the early 1860's he acquired the block of land now bounded by Cameron, Eliot and Pendarves Sts. In the centre of this block, he built himself a fine home, which is still standing today. He named it "Willowfields".

He decided to name his Pendarves St boundary York Terrace (in memory of his home town) and over a number of years built cottages for his married children, Mrs Mary Devonish, Mrs Jane Marshall, Mrs Annis Hamerton, Mrs Harriet Fookes and Mr James Hirst.

Mr James Hirst married Miss Bracken, and even to this day his home is known as Brackenhurst.



(From a drawing by Thelma de Lancy Green).

THE ROUND HOUSE, the early home of Mr and Mrs Thomas Hirst. Its counterpart, the Square House, was on the left. The linked houses were pulled down in 1938.

Thomas Hirst enjoyed having his family close at hand. All the homes were joined by a lane which ran along the back entrances. The little group were known throughout the flourishing New Plymouth Settlement as the "Hen and Chickens".

The home nearest Eliot St (originally that of Mrs Hamerton) became too small for the growing family and so an additional storey was added. This was later removed when the family numbers decreased.

People often stop to gaze through the established trees at these delightful

little homes. The imported slate roofs still exist on some of them.

I just wonder why the name of York Terrace has been dropped. Confusing to the postman, I suppose, but surely this small complication does not warrant a break with our historic past?

Visitors enjoy the unusual, and here we have a group of homes all linked together with the historic development of what is now the City of New Plymouth. Let us hope that the houses themselves will remain intact as a further reminder of our heritage.



THIS WAS YORK PLACE . . . the row of five identical houses in Pendarves St, near the Cameron St corner.