

## Heritage Buildings Report

**Site ID**

**Building/Site Name**

McAllum Residence (Former) and Retaining Wall

**Address**

17 Vivian Street, New Plymouth



### Statement of Significance

The former McAllum Residence was originally designed by noted New Plymouth architect Frank Messenger as his private residence and was constructed during 1899-1900. Whilst Messenger and his wife Lucy only resided in the house for a short period until 1903, over the next two decades it was occupied by a number of prominent local citizens, including Francis William and Annie Maria Richmond (1903-06), accountant Thomas Kelsey (1906-08), and Dr Henry Blackburn Leatham (1915-19). The house was later home to the McAllum family for a significant period from 1919 until the early-1960s. An excellent example of a late-Victorian two-storied bay villa in the local vernacular, the design incorporates an intriguing smaller two-storied gable parallel to the main north-south gable, rendering the house somewhat of a transitional example between the corner bay villa and corner angle bay villa. It is the first example of a design that seems to have become popular with Messenger's wealthier clients and which Messenger used in several later commissions; most of which have since been demolished. Although the house has been subjected to later renovations, the exterior still retains a high degree of integrity and consequently the house conveys a strong sense of historical authenticity.



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### Legal Information and Heritage Status

**Legal Description** Lot 2 DP 10186

**District Plan Item/ Map No.**

**Heritage New Zealand List** Not listed

### Construction Information

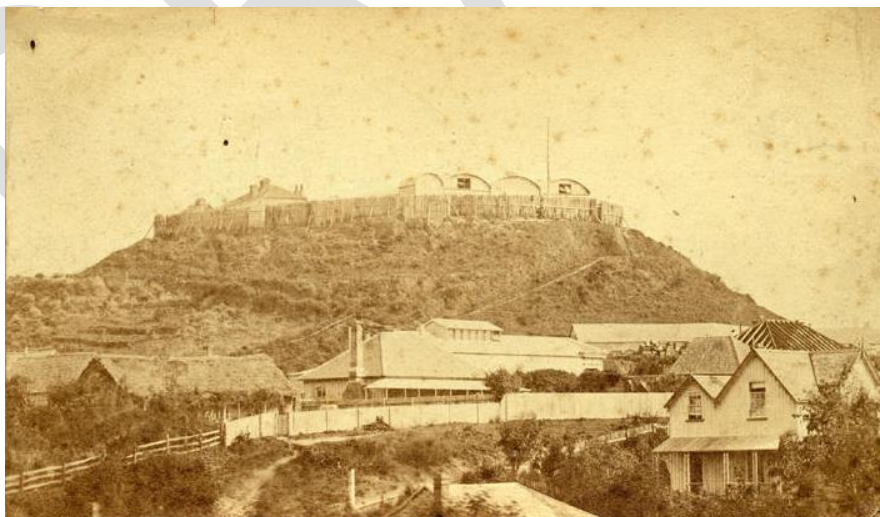
**Date of Construction** Circa 1899-1900

**Principal Materials** Wooden framing, weatherboard, corrugated steel

**Construction Professionals** Frank Messenger (architect for original villa) Robert Coleman (architect and builder for 1908 additions)

### History

Town Section 735 was acquired by well-known Taranaki surveyor Octavius Carrington in 1865.<sup>1</sup> The first house on the property (possibly pre-dating Carrington's ownership) had two distinct sections; a somewhat primitive structure (possibly of raupo) near the Vivian Street boundary, with a timber structure at rear.<sup>2</sup> The front portion seems to have been a temporary structure which was probably removed by the late-1860s, although the rear portion remained until at least 1880 and is indicated on T. K. Skinner's map of New Plymouth produced that year.<sup>3</sup> The rear portion was also later removed (probably during the 1880s), with rates books from at least 1887-88 onwards indicating a vacant section.<sup>4</sup> Octavius retained ownership of the vacant property until August 1898, when it was sold to Francis William Richmond, only to be purchased a year later, in August 1899, by Frank Messenger.<sup>5</sup>



Circa 1860s view looking south-east towards Marsland Hill with Barracks. The first house on Town Section 735 can be seen at extreme front-left with what looks like raupo roof. PHO2008-1865, Puke Ariki (PA)

<sup>1</sup> Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

<sup>2</sup> Circa 1860s view looking south-east towards Marsland Hill. Puke Ariki Collection, PHO2008-1865; Webster, Hartley, New Plymouth [looking north-east from Marsland Hill], Auckland Art Gallery, 1983/23/6

<sup>3</sup> Plan of New Plymouth, New Zealand, Thomas Kingwell Skinner, 1880, Puke Ariki Collection, ARC2010-220

<sup>4</sup> New Plymouth Borough Council Rating Book, 1887-88, NPDC Archives

<sup>5</sup> Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

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Francis John Messenger was born on 4 July 1865, the second son of William and Arabella, he would later become one of New Plymouth's most influential architects. Frank was educated in New Plymouth, and trained with local architect Henry J. T Edmonds, before moving to Melbourne, where he worked for Oakden and Kemp for ten years.<sup>6</sup> In 1891, Messenger married his second cousin Lucy Messenger, before returning to New Plymouth in 1893; he commenced practice in New Plymouth the following year.<sup>7</sup> Frank Messenger and Horace Victor Griffiths entered into partnership in 1917, with William Taylor joining in 1920.<sup>8</sup> This partnership ceased in 1930, with Messenger and Taylor forming a new partnership; Leonard Wolfe later joined in a partnership that would last up until Messenger's death on 11 October 1945.<sup>9</sup> Throughout his long career Messenger designed residential and commercial buildings in a variety of styles and made a significant contribution to New Plymouth's built environment.



Detail from circa early-1898 view of Vivian Street looking south-east towards Marsland Hill, by George Herbert White. Present house and stone retaining wall are yet to be constructed. A.3.24, Puke Ariki (PA)

Construction of the present house is likely to have commenced soon after Messenger purchased the section in mid-1899, as he first appears as living in this part of Brougham Street in the 1900 edition of Stone's Street Directory.<sup>10</sup> However, the house may not have been completed until later in 1900, with no house mentioned as being present at the start of the 1900-01 rating year (although it is noted for the 1901-02 rating year).<sup>11</sup> It is thought the split stone retaining wall of Taranaki andesite was constructed about the same time as the house and is yet to be constructed in a circa 1898 view of the property.<sup>12</sup> A number of buildings were designed by Messenger during his residence at this house and surviving examples which clearly illustrate his architectural skill include 46 Vivian Street (1901); Hinemoa Private Maternity Hospital, 240 Courtenay Street (1902); Bannister Residence, 113 Carrington Street (1902-03); St Mark's Church Lepperton (1901); Bacon's Building, 48 Devon Street

<sup>6</sup> Pritchard, Ian. (1994). *Frank Messenger, Architect: The work of a New Plymouth architect*. New Plymouth: Ian Pritchard.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Stone's Street Directory, 1910

<sup>11</sup> New Plymouth Borough Council Rating Books 1900-01 & 1901-02, NPDC Archives

<sup>12</sup> George Herbert White, Marsland Hill from Carrington Street, Puke Ariki Collection, A.3.24

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East (1901-02); and additions to the White Hart Hotel (1901). Frank and his wife lived in the home until late-1903, when they sold the house to Annie Richmond and shifted to their new home constructed at 'The Pines' estate, on the western bank of the Te Henui River at Strandon; this house was also designed by Messenger in a similar style and still exists at 219 Gill Street.<sup>13</sup>

Annie Maria Richmond (nee Bramley), was the wife of Francis William Richmond (who had previously owned the section during 1898-99). The son of Henry Robert Richmond, an early settler, lawyer and Taranaki Superintendent from 1863-69, Francis trained as an accountant and became involved in property speculation across the North Island as a partner in the firm of Messrs Watt, Lennon & Richmond. However, owing principally to two failed speculative property ventures near Maxwell and Hawera, Francis was declared bankrupt in 1905 and much of his assets were sold to cover his large debts.<sup>14</sup> Although the Vivian Street house was in Annie's name and safe from creditors (it being purchased with funds from her late father's estate), Annie listed the house for sale during February 1905.<sup>15</sup>

The sale advertisement referred to the house as 'Daddy Darwin's Dovecote'; the name probably referencing the children's book *Daddy Darwin's Dovecot*, written by Juliana Horatia Ewing in 1884.<sup>16</sup> *Daddy Darwin's Dovecot* is an instructive moral tale about a young orphan who is taken in as a servant, strives to do well through honestly and hard work, ultimately succeeding and inheriting his master's dovecot and doves.<sup>17</sup> A Dovecot (or Dovecote) is a raised structure designed to house domesticated pigeons or doves, with the term possibly applied to this house because of its complex massing and variety of nooks where birds may conceivably roost. The quirky 'dovcote' name doesn't appear to have stuck, with no further references found referring to the house by this name.

The bankruptcy case received much press interest, and with Francis' reputation in tatters, the Richmond's subsequently left New Plymouth for England during 1906. Although they returned to New Zealand aboard the *Corinthic* the following April, rather than returning to New Plymouth, they instead settled in Wellington, where they were to spend the remainder of their lives.<sup>18</sup> It took some time for the Vivian Street house to sell, and it wasn't until October 1906 that the property was purchased by Thomas Owen Kelsey, a prominent local accountant.<sup>19</sup>

Kelsey had relocated from the large villa at present 112 Gover Street, constructed in 1900 and which was also likely designed by Frank Messenger.<sup>20</sup> Soon after purchasing the Vivian Street property Kelsey commissioned well-known local builder Robert Coleman to make alterations to the house, with a permit granted to Kelsey by the Borough Council on October 13th 1906; estimated construction value £100.<sup>21</sup> Although not certain, it's probable this work entailed the construction of the rear NE-SW half-hipped gable (possibly just the first floor portion), which is somewhat disjunct from the front return gable roof.

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<sup>13</sup> Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand; Crimp, Hamish, 'Messenger House, 219 Gill Street (1903)', *Kete New Plymouth*, <http://ketenewplymouth.peoplesnetworknz.info/en/site>; accessed 13 December 2018.

<sup>14</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 8 August 1905, page 2

<sup>15</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 20 February 1905, page 3

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ewing Juliana Horatia. (1884). *Daddy Darwin's Dovecot: A country tale*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

<sup>18</sup> Passenger Lists, 1839-1973, Archives New Zealand

<sup>19</sup> Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

<sup>20</sup> Crimp, Hamish, '112 Gover Street (1900)', *Kete New Plymouth*, <http://ketenewplymouth.peoplesnetworknz.info/en/site>; accessed 20 February 2019.

<sup>21</sup> NPBC Building Register Book 1902-22, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)



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Kelsey died in 1908 and as per his will the house was held in trust as part of his deceased estate, the trustees being Charles Thomas Mills and Augustus Edward Watkins.<sup>22</sup> Although Thomas' will enabled Mrs Kelsey to remain in the house, she appears to have moved out soon after his death, with the house advertised for let in early-June 1908; it was described as "containing 9 rooms, bathroom, scullery, and wash-house, balcony, electric light, hot and cold water, fine view".<sup>23</sup> Newton King held a sale of Mrs Kelsey's furniture at the Freemason's Hall on June 16<sup>th</sup>, with the advertisement noting Mrs Kelsey was relocating to Wellington.<sup>24</sup>

Three years later, Town Section 735 'with comfortable and up-to-date seven-roomed residence thereon' was offered for sale at an auction held on the night of Wednesday September 13<sup>th</sup> 1911 to close Kelsey's Estate; although a number of Kelsey's other properties sold, this property did not and was retained by the Estate.<sup>25</sup> It was rented for a number of years, most notably to well-known local doctor Henry Blackburn Leatham between about 1915 and 1919.<sup>26</sup> Doctor Henry Leatham was one of Taranaki's most respected medical practitioners of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Although born in New Plymouth in 1857, he travelled to England to complete his medical studies at St Thomas' Hospital in London during the 1870s; he returned to New Zealand in 1879 aboard the *Wanganui*, on which he was appointed surgeon.<sup>27</sup>

His first appointment in New Zealand was a temporary role as chief surgeon at Wellington Hospital for a short period during early-1880, before returning to New Plymouth later that year.<sup>28</sup> He initially established a private practice in Devon Street, before relocating to a large house and practice at the corner of Liardet and Courtenay Streets in 1882 (present fire station site).<sup>29</sup> From the time he commenced practice in New Plymouth Leatham acted as consultant and honorary assistant to hospital surgeon and superintendent Dr O'Carroll.<sup>30</sup> In 1886 he was officially appointed an honorary surgeon on the New Plymouth Hospital staff, before being appointed deputy surgeon in 1895.<sup>31</sup> In 1896 Leatham became chief surgeon, before being promoted to superintendent in 1900.<sup>32</sup> He retired as superintendent in 1910, although remained at the hospital as radiologist; a position he held until his retirement in 1933 following 54 years on continuous hospital service.<sup>33</sup>

In October 1919, more than a decade after Kelsey's death, the house was finally sold to Charles Douglas McAllum with a sale of the Leatham's furniture held on September 24<sup>th</sup> 1919 on account of Dr Leatham 'giving up housekeeping'.<sup>34</sup> Little is known about the McAllum's, although Charles is listed as a commercial traveller in street directories. He served on the Western front during the First World War and in New Zealand during the Second World War (whilst aged in his fifties); his military personnel file notes his employers as Archibald Clark & Sons (WWI) and Ambler & Co Ltd, Auckland (WWII).<sup>35</sup> Charles married his first wife Eileen Marguerite Colman at Marton in 1915, however, she

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas Kelsey, 1908, probate file including will, New Plymouth Probate Files, 1867-1981, Archives New Zealand (21954)

<sup>23</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 8 June 1908, page 1

<sup>24</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 10 June 1908, page 7

<sup>25</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 12 September 1911, page 7

<sup>26</sup> Wises Post Office Directories, 1915-19

<sup>27</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 18 November 1939, page 8

<sup>28</sup> *Evening Post*, 6 March 1880, page 2

<sup>29</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 18 November 1939, page 8

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

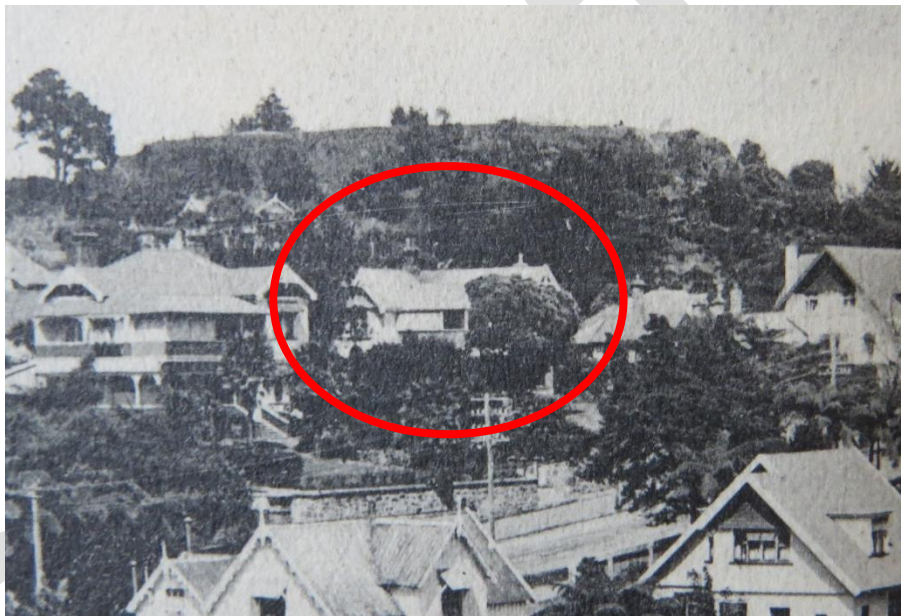
<sup>34</sup> Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand; *Taranaki Herald*, 23 September 1919, page 7

<sup>35</sup> McAllum, Charles Douglas - WWI 51606, WWII 804940 - Army, AABK Series 18805, Box36, Record 0360648, Archives New Zealand.

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passed away in 1920 and it wasn't until 1930 that he married his second wife Elma Francis Judd. Charles and Elma remained in the house until the 1960s, before relocating to a flat at nearby.

In 1965 alterations were made to the ground floor interior spaces for then owners Apartment Developments Ltd, who were responsible for the construction of the neighbouring flats at 21 Vivian Street on the site of the circa 1860s Trevarrian House. The renovation work at 17 Vivian Street involved the development of a Doctor's Surgery on the north-eastern side of the ground floor, with door openings blocked off and internal walls added at this time.<sup>36</sup> Apartment Developments Ltd were liquidated in 1970, with this property purchased by Thomas Henry Jagusch and St Leger Manning Reeves.<sup>37</sup> In 1981 the house was sold to E. L. and H. J. Peters, before being purchased by the present owners in 2001.<sup>38</sup> During 2010 a major renovation and restoration project was undertaken on the house, with the two-storey rear projecting gable (originally a single-storey lean-to) added at this time.



Circa 1920s view of 17 Vivian Street, looking south-west towards Marsland Hill from Carrington Street. From 'A Souvenir of New Plymouth: The Garden of New Zealand', published by the 'BK', Devon Street, New Plymouth.

### Reference Sources

See footnotes.

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<sup>36</sup> NPDC Archives

<sup>37</sup> CT TNC1/880

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

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## Description

The former McAllum Residence is located at the eastern end of Vivian Street on the fringe of New Plymouth's CBD. This area was settled early in New Plymouth's history and although the surrounding blocks still contain some interesting heritage buildings (notably St Mary's Cathedral), development pressures since the 1960s has seen the demolition and removal of many older buildings. The area is now home to an eclectic mix of architectural styles with a growing commercial presence.

The house is sited above street level owing to the lowering of Vivian Street in the late-nineteenth century to provide a shallower gradient on approach to the old Huatoki Stream bridge. A cutting along the front boundary is supported by a retaining wall incorporating both cut and rubble Taranaki andesite; above which mature plantings somewhat obscure the house from the street. The wall increases in height towards the east and continues a short distance along the north-eastern boundary beside the access steps for neighbouring 11 Vivian Street; of which also retains a similar andesite retaining wall constructed circa 1902. A driveway extends along the western boundary to a single car garage and carport at rear.

The main form of the building is a two-storey late-Victorian corner bay villa with a complex massing of gables on the northern elevations. Features such as shingling and strutting in the gable ends hints at the Queen Anne style, whilst limited horizontal boarding references the Eastern Stick style. The timber-framed structure is clad in horizontal weatherboards with the roof sheathed in mild corrugated steel. The house retains two brick chimneys' including a prominent single-flue chimney finished with dentil course and corbelling on the exterior of the south-western elevation, and a two-flue central chimney now fitted with a single stainless-steel flue.

The north-western elevation faces towards Vivian Street and incorporates a full-height projecting bay, beginning as a ground floor faceted bay and rising to a first-floor square bay. The ground floor incorporates a central sash with shingled hood and is flanked by a slender sash either side. The first-floor bay is supported by simple brackets with pendants and is fitted with a central pair of sashes. The shingled upper gable end is decorated with brackets, applied rosettes, and timbering with sunburst fretwork.

An intriguing smaller two-storied gable runs parallel to the main north-south gable and renders the house somewhat of a transitional example between the corner bay villa and corner angle bay villa. This is thought to be the first time Messenger incorporated this feature into his villa designs and it was later replicated in other commissions including the long since demolished Charles Emanuel Bellringer Villa in Devon Street East (1900-01), and the former Bannister Residence, which still stands at 113 Carrington Street (1902-03).

A return post and beam veranda with sloping roof and shingled balustrade wraps around the smaller gable and links the main bays. The timber panelled and glazed main entrance door is sited in the north-western face of the smaller gable, whilst a single slender window is positioned at first floor level above; the upper gable end is sheathed in fish-scale shingles. The north-eastern face of the smaller gable incorporates further window openings, whilst a timber panelled and glazed entrance door with clear and coloured glass provides access to the first-floor balcony.

The full-height north-eastern projecting bay is treated similarly to that on the north-western elevation, beginning as a ground floor faceted bay and rising to a first-floor square bay; again it is fitted with timber sashes and finished with simple brackets with pendants, shingled upper gable end, and timbering with sunburst fretwork.

The principle feature of the south-western elevation is the tall brick chimney; a prominent feature visible from the street frontage. A projecting two-storey lean-to is fitted with a (presumably) more recent fixed timber casement window incorporating geometric patterns, whilst a shallow first floor bay is supported by timber brackets identical to those on the main northern bays. The rear of the dwelling incorporates a NE-SW half-hipped gable (the 1906 addition) and a NW-SE gable added in 2010.



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Front gable and south-western side elevation



Looking west along andesite retaining wall





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### Assessment:

<b>Historical</b>	This house has historic significance for its occupation by a number of prominent local citizens during the first two decades of the twentieth century. These early occupants include noted local architect Frank Messenger (who designed the house), Francis William and Annie Maria Richmond, accountant Thomas Kelsey, and Dr Henry Blackburn Leatham; also significant is the long period of occupation by the McAllum family from 1919 until 1960s.	✓
<b>Importance to Community</b>	-	
<b>Architecture &amp; Construction</b>	An excellent example of a late-Victorian two-storied bay villa in the local vernacular. Incorporates an intriguing smaller two-storied gable parallel to one of the main gables, rendering the house somewhat of a transitional example between the corner bay villa and corner angle bay villa. The retaining wall has technical value for the use of local Taranaki andesite.	✓
<b>Setting and Context</b>	Situated on a prominent site overlooking New Plymouth's CBD, the house contributes positively to the surrounding streetscape. The andesite retaining wall is one of several dating from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century in this part of the Huatoki Valley; notable examples including those at neighbouring 11 Vivian Street (circa 1902) and the former railway retaining wall in Sir Victor Davies Park opposite (circa 1875).	✓
<b>Archaeology</b>	-	
<b>Representativeness, rarity and integrity</b>	A good and representative example of the types of two-storey villas constructed in New Plymouth during the late-1890s and early-1900s; of which many have since been demolished. Although subject to rear alterations, the exterior retains many original architectural features and the house consequently conveys a strong sense of historical authenticity. The andesite retaining wall along the front boundary is now a rare surviving example of its type in New Plymouth.	✓
<b>Meets threshold for listing</b> (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓