



# Heritage Buildings Report

**Site ID**

**Building/Site Name**

Davie House

**Address**

19 Robe Street, New Plymouth



## Statement of Significance

Davie House began life in 1910 as a villa residence for former New Plymouth Borough Councillor, architect, builder, undertaker and monumental mason William Francis Brooking. In 1927, noted New Plymouth architects Messenger, Griffiths and Taylor designed extensive alterations and additions in the English Domestic Revival style for the respected Dr Peter Cousin Davie and his wife Janet. Aside from Peter and Janet's extensive involvement in the New Plymouth community, Peter was a highly skilled doctor and surgeon who saw extensive service in both the First and Second World Wars, whilst Janet made history as the first female elected to the New Plymouth City Council in 1947. The house is located on a prominent corner near New Plymouth's CBD and retains a variety of interesting character features which ensures it contributes positively to the surrounding streetscape.



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## Legal Information and Heritage Status

**Legal Description** PT Lot 1 DP 4706

**District Plan Item/ Map No.**

**Heritage New Zealand List** Not listed

## Construction Information

**Date of Construction** 1910/1927

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

**Construction Professionals** William Francis Brooking; Messenger Griffiths and Taylor (architects), G. M. Bennett (builder)

## History

The history of Davie House begins with the conveyance of the vacant southern portion of Town Section 693 from the 'Father of New Plymouth', surveyor Frederick Alonzo Carrington, to New Plymouth architect William Francis Brooking on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1896.<sup>1</sup> William Brooking was born in London in 1844 and emigrated to New Zealand in 1855.<sup>2</sup> During the Taranaki Wars of the 1860s he served in the Militia and was a member of the Rifle Volunteers until 1881.<sup>3</sup> He was apprenticed to J. C. George as a builder and carpenter, before taking over George's business on the corner of Powderham and Brougham Streets in 1888.<sup>4</sup>

At various times Brooking worked as a builder, architect, undertaker and monumental mason. As an architect he designed a number of commercial and residential buildings including the now much modified shops at 93 & 95 Devon Street West (1891) and the Hasluck-Brodie Residence at 95 Belt Road (1901). Brooking served as a New Plymouth Borough Councillor from 1896 until his resignation ten years later in October 1906.<sup>5</sup> He was a director of the New Plymouth Sash and Door Company, the New Plymouth Investment and Loan Society and was Chairman of the St Mary's Church Trust Board.<sup>6</sup> Brooking was also a member of the De Burgh Adams Lodge, whose premises were located on the neighbouring section.<sup>7</sup>

For a number of years Brooking and his wife lived in a house at the western end of Vivian Street (present 115 Vivian Street), that he probably designed built himself the mid-1880s.<sup>8</sup> In 1910, Brooking had the original portion of the present house constructed as his new private residence. A permit was granted to Brooking by the Borough Council on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1910, Brooking was the architect, and his firm likely built the home, which had an estimated construction cost of £590.<sup>9</sup> William and his wife remained living in this house until his death on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1923, aged 79 years. Ownership of the property was then transferred to the Public Trustee, and subsequently conveyed to L. H. Taylor

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

<sup>2</sup> *Taranaki Budget and Weekly Herald*, 1 September 1923, page 45

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 27 April 1888, page 3

<sup>5</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 27 October 1906, page 2

<sup>6</sup> *Taranaki Budget and Weekly Herald*, 1 September 1923, page 45

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Hamish Crimp, 'W. F. Brooking Residence, 115 Vivian Street (circa 1881-1887)', *Kete New Plymouth*, <http://ketenewplymouth.peoplesnetworknz.info/en/site>; accessed 19 November 2018.

<sup>9</sup> NPBC Building Register Book 1902-22, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)

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in February 1924.<sup>10</sup> Soon after Taylor's purchase the house was rented to the newly married Peter and Anne Davie.



Davie House prior to 1927 additions. Detail from 1923 view of New Plymouth township with Devon Street in the foreground from NZI Building. Alexander Turnbull Library, PA6-196

Dr Peter Davie was born at Seadown, Timaru, to early settlers Robert and Ann Davie.<sup>11</sup> He completed his early education at Seadown Primary School, followed by Timaru Boys' High.<sup>12</sup> After completing a Bachelor of Science at the University of Otago he was a school teacher for a couple of years, before completing a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery at Edinburgh University.<sup>13</sup> He saw service with the Imperial forces during the First World War, before returning to Edinburgh to work at the Royal Infirmary under Sir John Fraser, where he attained both Fellowship of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons, and Membership of the Royal Colleges of Physicians.<sup>14</sup> Returning to New Zealand, he commenced practice in New Plymouth in 1923 and married Miss Janet Hogg Morrison in 1925. In 1938 he returned to Edinburgh to complete his Doctor of Medicine and in 1940 won admission to the Royal College of Physicians.<sup>15</sup>

He enlisted in the Second World War where he served first as senior medical officer to the 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade at Fiji, then held command of the 7<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, followed by a term as senior New Zealand Medical Officer aboard the hospital ship *Oranje* (at the time the world's largest and fastest hospital ship), before taking command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Ambulance at Awapuni.<sup>16</sup> He was also involved in the local community, being at various times president of the New Plymouth St John Ambulance Association, the New Plymouth Branch of the RSA, the New Plymouth Amateur Athletic Club, and the New Plymouth Branch of the Red Cross Society.<sup>17</sup> He was chief of the New Plymouth Caledonian Society, a brother of the Order of St John, and involved with the local branch of the YMCA.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

<sup>11</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 5 December 1949, page 3

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



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Not to be outdone by her husband, Janet Davie was an extraordinary woman in her own right. Born in Tasmania, she spent much of her childhood in Rarotonga before relocating to Wellington where she attended Wellington Girl's College.<sup>19</sup> Training to become a teacher, she taught at Dunedin for a period following the conclusion of the First World War.<sup>20</sup> Whilst at Dunedin she first became involved with the YWCA, serving first as a world council member which saw her attend meetings at Canada, Beirut, Geneva and Athens, before later becoming president of the New Zealand arm of the organisation.<sup>21</sup> She was also a founding member of the Soroptimists Club in New Plymouth and a member of the Women's Club.<sup>22</sup> However, perhaps her most significant achievement was being elected the first female member of the New Plymouth City Council for 1947-50; she served a second term in 1953-56.<sup>23</sup>

During 1924 or 1925 Dr. Peter Cousin Davie established his doctor's surgery in the house; initially renting the property from Taylor. The house is noted as Davie's surgery and residence from the 1925 edition of Wises Post Office Directory onwards.<sup>24</sup> In 1927, Davie purchased the house from Taylor and commissioned noted local architecture firm Messenger, Griffiths and Taylor (Frank Messenger, Horace Victor Griffiths & William Henry Taylor), to design extensive alterations to Brooking's original villa; the original plans for these alterations are now held by Puke Ariki.<sup>25</sup> A permit for this work was granted to Peter Davie by the New Plymouth Borough Council on 4th of May 1927, with G. M. Bennet listed as the builder, and an estimated construction cost being £900.<sup>26</sup> In 1946 Peter commissioned Jones and Sandford Ltd to design and build an extension to the surgery portion of the building; this is the small projecting hipped gable on the Robe Street frontage.<sup>27</sup>

The house remained both Peter's practice and home until his death at Timaru on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1949, aged 68 years.<sup>28</sup> Janet continued to live at the house and in 1950 commissioned Jones and Sandford to convert the property into two flats.<sup>29</sup> She subsequently remained living in a portion of the house until her death on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 1971, aged 72 years.<sup>30</sup> In 1986 the house was purchased by John Armstrong Ltd, who subsequently converted the then still residential property into commercial offices for their 'Budget' rental car franchise.<sup>31</sup> The building has been occupied by a variety of commercial tenants in the following decades and was rented by the Labour Party during the 2011 national election. A small retro antique shop opened in the former Robe Street surgery portion of the building during 2019.

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<sup>19</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 23 August 1971, page 3

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Wises Post Office Directory, 1925

<sup>25</sup> Plans of alterations and additions to the residence on the corner of Powderham and Robe Street for Dr. P. C. Davie. March 1927. Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2008-151)

<sup>26</sup> NPBC Building Register Book 1922-27, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)

<sup>27</sup> NPDC Archives

<sup>28</sup> NPDC Cemetery Search, <http://www.newplymouthnz.com/Residents/Facilities-and-Services/Cemeteries-and-Crematorium/Cemetery-Search>

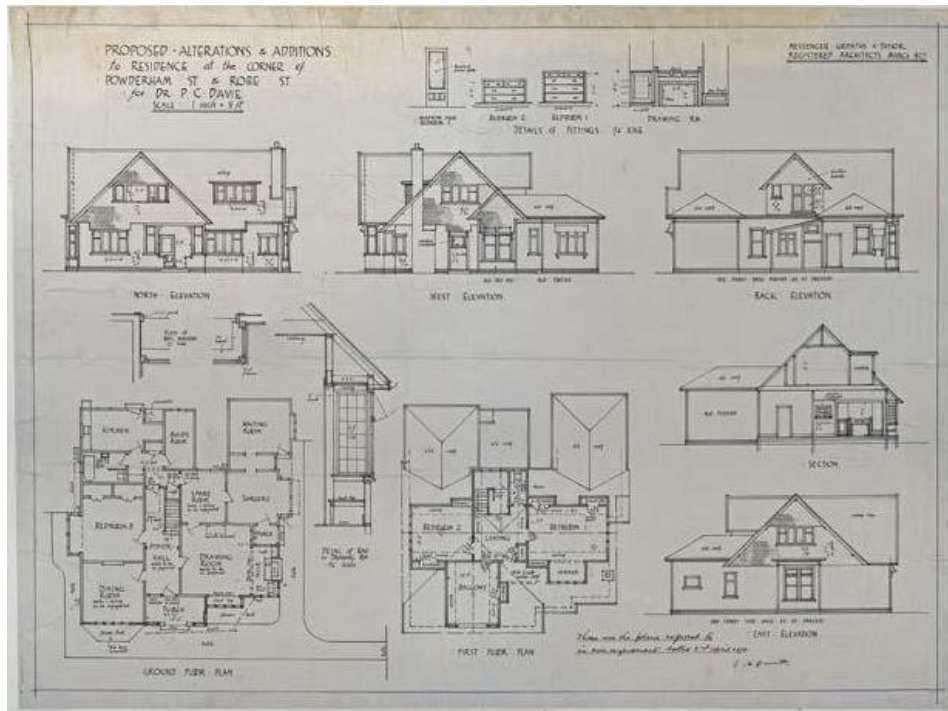
<sup>29</sup> NPDC Archives

<sup>30</sup> NPDC Cemetery Search, <http://www.newplymouthnz.com/Residents/Facilities-and-Services/Cemeteries-and-Crematorium/Cemetery-Search>

<sup>31</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 23, March 1987, page 2



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Plans of alterations and additions to the residence on the corner of Powderham and Robe Street for Dr. P. C. Davie. March 1927. Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2008-151)

### Reference Sources

See footnotes.

### Description

Davie House is located at the corner of Robe and Powderham Streets on the fringe of New Plymouth's Central Business District. It is sited on a small rise in a position highly visible to passing motorists and pedestrians and is one of only a few former residential buildings remaining in an area now dominated by more modern commercial buildings. The nearby former YWCA House, Chatsworth House, and Salvation Army Citadel and Young Peoples Hall provides some context, and together form an interesting group of buildings of similar age.

Brooking's original house was a typical corner bay villa, with hip roof, three projecting gables, bullnose veranda, and double-hung sash joinery. Messenger, Griffiths and Taylor's 1927 additions substantially altered both the buildings appearance and layout. In its current form, Davie House is principally a two-storied building in the English Domestic Revival style, although elements such as sash windows still hint at its villa origins.

The house follows an asymmetrical plan, with the main structure composed of two wide, intersecting gables, smaller projecting gables, and additions. The lower portion of the building is clad in a mixture of horizontal bevel-back and rusticated weatherboards, with the upper portion of the gable ends clad in wooden shingles. The roof is sheathed in corrugated steel, and a large brick chimney, finished with roughcast plaster, rises from the south-western wall.

The north-western (Powderham Street) elevation includes two entrances on the ground floor, the first being a more recent enclosed flat-roofed entrance porch with glazed French casements. The other entrance is a single door framed by tall casements; this is the original main entrance, although it has



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been enclosed with additional glazing at a later date. A square bay window with leaded casements is also situated hard against the front projecting gable wall. A row of leaded casements spans the width of the first-floor gable end, and a flat-roofed dormer fitted with leaded casements projects from the first-floor face of the main east-west gable.

The south-western (Robe Street) elevation is perhaps where the buildings' villa origins are most prominent. The main two-story gable end, fitted with a row of leaded casements, contrasts with the single-story projecting gable, still fitted with its 1910 double-hung sashes and clad in rusticated weatherboard. Whilst some attempt has been made to disguise this feature with the addition of a window hood clad in wooden shingles extending to the gable apex, it is still clearly identifiable as belonging to the villa style. Two additional entrance doors are located at the centre of this wall adjacent to the projecting gable. A peculiar single-story half-hipped gable clad in rusticated weatherboard projects from the southern end of this frontage and was added in 1946 as an addition to Davie's surgery.

The southern elevation of the building is a complex and unstructured amalgam of features incorporating various additions and alterations. The ground floor spaces date from the 1910 villa, and housed the washhouse, bathroom etc. A first-floor square 'box' addition has also been added at the eastern end. On the north-eastern elevation a square bay window with double hung sashes survives from the original villa, and above, a row of leaded casements is centred in the gable end.

### Assessment:

#### Historical

This house has historic significance as the former residence of builder, architect, undertaker, monumental mason and Borough Councillor William Francis Brooking, and subsequently as the residence and consulting rooms of the respected Dr Peter Cousin Blackley and his wife Janet. Aside from Peter and Janet's extensive involvement in the New Plymouth community, Peter was a highly skilled doctor and surgeon who saw extensive service in both the First and Second World Wars, whilst Janet made history as the first female elected to the New Plymouth City Council in 1947. Davie house is associated with capable local architects Messenger, Griffiths and Taylor, and to a lesser degree William Francis Brooking and Jones and Sandford Ltd.

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#### Importance to Community

-

#### Architecture & Construction

This building has technical value as a unique example of a single-storey villa converted into a two-storied English Domestic Revival style house.

✓

#### Setting and Context

Sited on a small rise in a highly visible CBD location, Davie House is one of only a few former residential buildings remaining in an area now dominated by more modern commercial buildings. The nearby former YWCA House, Chatsworth House, and Salvation Army Citadel and Young Peoples Hall provides some context, and together form an interesting group of buildings of similar age; this relationship is strengthened by Peter and Ann's extensive involvement in these organisations.

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<b>Archaeology</b>	-	
<b>Representativeness, rarity and integrity</b>	Representative of the larger architect designed English Domestic Revival style homes once common in this area, the exterior of the building retains a high degree of integrity and remains much as it was following the 1927 renovations.	✓
<b>Meets threshold for listing</b> (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓

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