

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Rahui Boarding House/Seaspray House (Former)

Address

13 Weymouth Street, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

Designed and constructed by well-known New Plymouth builder Frank Hartnell during 1913-14, this building was purpose-built as a boarding house. Known for many years as the Rahui Boarding House and later Seaspray House, the building has considerable historic significance for its more than 100-year use as an accommodation house, with its construction reflective of early twentieth century attitudes towards visitor accommodation in a regional New Zealand centre. The building transitioned from boarding house to private hotel during the 1920s, before later operating as a backpacker's; it was purchased by the Salvation Army Trust during 2015 for use as short term accommodation. A good and locally uncommon example of a two-storied double-bay villa from the 1910s, this building adds significant visual interest to the local streetscape and is part of an interesting group of two-storey heritage buildings located near the intersection of Hine and Weymouth Streets. Although subject to minor exterior modifications and the loss of some exterior detailing, the building still retains a relatively high degree of external integrity.



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Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description	PT Section 64 Town of New Plymouth
District Plan Item/ Map No.	
Heritage New Zealand List	Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction	1913-14
Principal Materials	Wooden framing, weatherboard, corrugated steel
Construction Professionals	George Hartnell (architect & builder)

History

During mid-1913, the southern portion of Town Section 64 was purchased by George Hartnell from Alice Gilmour (nee Teed), wife of property developer and later New Plymouth mayor, Everard Gilmour.¹ George Hartnell was a well-known local builder and was responsible for the construction of a large number of (predominantly single-storey) villas across New Plymouth during the late 1900s and early 1910s. At the time of Hartnell's purchase of the southern portion of Town Section 64, an old cottage was present on the property. It seems this cottage was constructed during the early-1890s and occupied by James Hooker and his wife Rachel (nee Lye), with rating rolls confirming the presence of a house on the property at least as early as 1894.² The cottage was removed during late-September 1913, with Hartnell & Co advertising for the removal a "5-roomed cottage" in Weymouth Street at this time.³

Construction of the present two-storied building appears to have commenced sometime during November 1913, with a permit for the construction of a 'boarding house' granted to Hartnell by the New Plymouth Borough Council on the 13th of November 1913; the building having an estimated construction value of £1800.⁴ The building appears to have been completed sometime during the early part of 1914, with the first advertisements advertising 'Rahui' Boarding House in Weymouth Street appearing during mid-May; the origin of the 'Rahui' name is presently unclear.⁵ The new building was described as being "fitted with every convenience" and within "easy distance of railway station, beach and baths"; Mrs Susan Whishaw was noted as the proprietress.⁶ Advertisements seem to indicate a range of guests were welcome at Rahui, including tourists, long-term boarders, and those seeking rest and recuperation.⁷

Following Mrs Whishaw's death on the 10th of September 1914 (aged 59 years), Mrs E. Golding took over as proprietress. The tariff at the time of Mrs Golding's takeover in December 1914 was 6s per day or 30s per week for casual boarders, and 22s 6d per week for permanent boarders.⁸ During April 1915, George Hartnell sold the Rahui Boarding House property to local confectioner Mr P. Singh, who only retained possession for a couple of years until December 1917, when the property was

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

² New Plymouth Borough Council Rating Book 1894--95, NPDC Archives

³ *Taranaki Herald*, 19 September 1913, page 1

⁴ NPBC Building Register Book 1902-22, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)

⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 16 May 1914, page 7

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *Taranaki Herald*, 18 July 1914, page 1; *Taranaki Herald*, 28 September 1914, page 7

⁸ *Taranaki Herald*, 7 December 1914, page 2; *Taranaki Herald*, 7 December 1914, page 7

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purchased by William Boccock.⁹ During early-June 1922, Boccock sold the property to a Mr Allen, who retained possession until April 1925, when the property was conveyed to Mrs Mary Ann Bradford (nee Beattie), the wife of Thomas Bradford, whom she married in 1911.¹⁰ Upon purchasing the property, Mrs Bradford took over from Mrs Golding as proprietress. On the 8th of May 1941, ownership of the property was transferred to Henry Richard, Victor Elliot and John Nicholson, before being promptly transferred (on the same day) to Elizabeth Winnifred Morris, the wife of carpenter Frederick Morris.¹¹

Ownership of the property was retained by Elizabeth Morris until October 1946, when it was transferred to Thomas Hugh Lawson.¹² Lawson remained the owner until June 1982, when ownership was transferred to land agent Edward Allen Wood.¹³ In 1991, ownership was transferred to roofer Kevin John Erickson and his wife Carolyn, who retained ownership until 2004, when the property was purchased by Fiona and Peter Methven.¹⁴ The property was transferred to Ann Gerard No 1 Limited later in 2004, before being purchased two years later during 2006 by Sarah Jane and Janine Ruth Barnett.¹⁵ Janine became the sole owner in 2009, and retained possession until mid-2015, when the property was acquired by the Salvation Army New Zealand Trust for use as short-term accomodation.¹⁶



Rahui Private Hotel circa 1930, Puke Ariki, LN1819: A.2a.40

Reference Sources

See footnotes.

⁹ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ CT TN124/81, Land Information New Zealand (LINZ)

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

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Description

Located a short distance west of New Plymouth's central city, the former Rahui Boarding House occupies a prominent position on the eastern side of Weymouth Street. This building is part of an interesting group of three two-storey timber villas located near the intersection of Hine and Weymouth Streets, which also includes the residences at 23 Hine Street (1908) and 12 Weymouth Street (1903); the Art Deco/Moderne style Reo Moana flats at 10 Weymouth Street (1938-39) are also an important element of the immediate area. Such groupings of older two-storey buildings are now very rare in New Plymouth and both individually and as part of a group these buildings make a strong positive contribution to the historic character of the area.

This building is significant as one of the last of the old villa style private boarding houses to be constructed in New Plymouth, and a now uncommon local example of such a building surviving in-situ. The main form of this building is a two-storey double-bay pyramidal villa. Timber framed and clad in scallop profile rusticated weatherboard, the building mostly retains its original window joinery, being predominantly double-hung timber sashes, with the roof sheathed in corrugated steel.

The symmetrically composed main front elevation faces roughly south-west and features two full-height projecting bays, beginning as a ground floor faceted bays and rising to first-floor square bays. The ground floor of these bays originally featured a pair of sashes at front, and a single sash on each of the side returns; the central hoods have since been removed, but the decorative sill boards remain. The original timber sashes have regrettably been replaced with incongruous aluminium joinery on the southern ground floor bay, and further replacement of the original timber sashes should be discouraged.

Curved timber brackets were originally fitted to the first-floor overhang, although only one now remains. At first floor level, two timber sashes are fitted to the front of each square bay. These are fitted with timber hoods above and decorative sill boards below. The upper gable end is finished with vertical board and batten cladding and incorporates arched timber moulding and a finial at the apex.

The ground and first-floor verandas were originally open, however, have since been enclosed to form additional living space. The central ground floor entrance door is a timber panelled and glazed affair, surrounded by further glazed panels at the sides and above; a small section of original timber fretwork with brackets survives above the entrance. A set of four timber casements with accompanying fanlights (fitted with green glass), are positioned either side of the main entrance, with a row of fixed glazed panels (again fitted with green glass), positioned above. The enclosed first-floor veranda has been partially clad in rusticated weatherboard and fitted with clear glazed timber casements.

On the north-eastern elevation, a regular row of five double-hung timber sashes with decorative sill boards are fitted to both the ground and first floors. The upper floor of the south-eastern elevation incorporates three double-hung timber sashes with sill boards, and a single double-hung sash with sill board at ground floor level. Three tall incongruous aluminium windows have been installed at ground floor level near the rear of this elevation.



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Assessment:

Historical	This building has considerable historic significance for its more than 100-year use as an accommodation house, with its construction reflective of early twentieth century attitudes towards visitor accommodation in a regional New Zealand centre. Its transition from boarding house to private hotel, and backpackers to Salvation Army accommodation, is reflective of changing accommodation patterns during the twentieth, and early twenty-first, centuries.	✓
Importance to Community	The history of this building as a former boarding house, private hotel, and more recently as a backpacker's, is relatively well-known amongst New Plymouth residents, with the building a recognisable local landmark.	✓
Architecture & Construction	This building is a good example of a two-storied double-bay villa from the 1910s.	✓
Setting and Context	With the house positioned close to the front property boundary, the building is highly visible to the public and adds significant visual interest to this section of Weymouth Street. This building is part of an interesting group of three two-storey timber villas located near the intersection of Hine and Weymouth Streets, which also includes the residences at 23 Hine Street (1908) and 12 Weymouth Street (1903). Such groupings of buildings are now very rare in New Plymouth and both individually and as part of a group these buildings make a strong positive contribution to the historic character of the area.	✓
Archaeology	-	
Representativeness, rarity and integrity	This building is a rare local example of a surviving villa style timber boarding house constructed during the 1910s. Although subject to minor exterior modifications (principally the limited replacement of some joinery elements), and the loss of some exterior detailing (window hoods and brackets), the exterior still retains a relatively high degree of overall integrity.	✓
Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓