

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Neal Residence (Former)

Address

162 St Aubyn Street, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

This building has significance as a prominently positioned example of an English Domestic Revival style house retaining a high degree of external integrity. Constructed for long-time Taranaki Herald employee George Clarence Neal and his wife Mabel in 1921, the house was designed and built by local builder Charles Arnold. The house adds significant visual interest to the local streetscape, principally owing to its position hard against the St Aubyn Street/SH44 boundary; this being a legacy of street widening works undertaken during the 1960s. The house is a representative and relatively early example of the types of English Domestic Revival style houses constructed in New Plymouth during the 1920s, and also retains a relatively high degree of external integrity; the building being subjected to only minor exterior alterations throughout its nearly 100-year existence.



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Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description	PT Section 92 Town of New Plymouth
District Plan Item/ Map No.	
Heritage New Zealand List	Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction	1921
Principal Materials	Wooden framing, weatherboard, corrugated steel
Construction Professionals	Charles David Arnold (architect & builder)

History

This house was constructed for George Clarence Neal as his family home during 1921. Born at New Plymouth in 1875, George Neal was educated at Auckland and later entered the printing trade at Paeroa.¹ Upon returning to New Plymouth, Neal worked for the Taranaki Daily News, before joining the Taranaki Herald in 1897.² He was foreman of the jobbing department until 1904, and thereafter foreman of the press room; a position he held until his retirement in 1945.³ During his long employment at the Herald, Neal oversaw many changes in newspaper publication such as installation of the first rotary press in 1909 and the introduction of illustrations during the 1920s.⁴ Neal was also involved in the printing of the many special editions published during the two world wars which occurred during his time at the Herald.⁵ George Neal married Miss Mabel Taylor in 1900, with the couple having one child together, Kenneth Noonan Neal, who was born in 1904.

During November 1919, New Plymouth Town Section 92 was subdivided by then owner Miss Agnus M. Read, with a portion of the property fronting St Aubyn Street conveyed to Mabel Neal.⁶ However, it wasn't until more than a year later that planning began for the present house, with George Neal engaging local builder Charles David Arnold to design and build his family home on the site. A copy of the original plans, dated the 27th of June 1921, are held by NPDC and are signed by Arnold, indicating that he was the likely architect, although it is possible the design was copied from a plan book or similar.⁷ A permit for the construction of the house was granted to G. Neal by the New Plymouth Borough Council on the 28th of June 1921; the estimated construction value was noted as £1200 and the builder listed as Charles David Arnold.⁸

It is thought the present house was completed later in 1921, with the Neal's moving in soon after. George and Mabel resided at the home for the rest of their lives, George until his death during September 1953 and Mabel until her death during December 1959.⁹ Following Mabel's death, ownership of the property was transmitted to Eileen Neal of Palmerston North, she being the widow

¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 15 September 1953, page 2

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

⁷ NPDC Property File

⁸ NPBC Building Register Book 1902-22, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)

⁹ NPDC Cemetery Search, <http://www.newplymouthnz.com/Residents/Facilities-and-Services/Cemeteries-and-Crematorium/Cemetery-Search>; Accessed 14 August 2019

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of Kenneth Neal, who had passed away during 1954.¹⁰ During early-1961, the property was purchased by welder Arthur William Prout, although he only retained possession for a few months before selling the property to stereotyper Walter Strange Riley during December 1961.¹¹ It was during Riley's period of ownership that part of the property was taken to enable the widening of St Aubyn Street, resulting in the south-eastern side wall of the house being positioned hard against the street boundary.¹²

In December 1969, the property was purchased by Jackie Ewington and his wife Louisa as tenants in common.¹³ The Ewington's held ownership until May 1974, when the property was purchased by shorthand typist Shirley Anne Lawson.¹⁴ Shirley Lawson retained possession of the property until 1983, when the property was again sold.¹⁵ Further sales occurred in 1995 and 2005, before the property was purchased by the present owners in 2015.¹⁶



Detail showing 162 St Aubyn Street from photo of New Plymouth looking west from Devonport Flats, 1924, William Oakley, F B Butler/Crown Studios Collection, Te Papa, C.003416

¹⁰ CT TN124/75, Land Information New Zealand (LINZ)

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

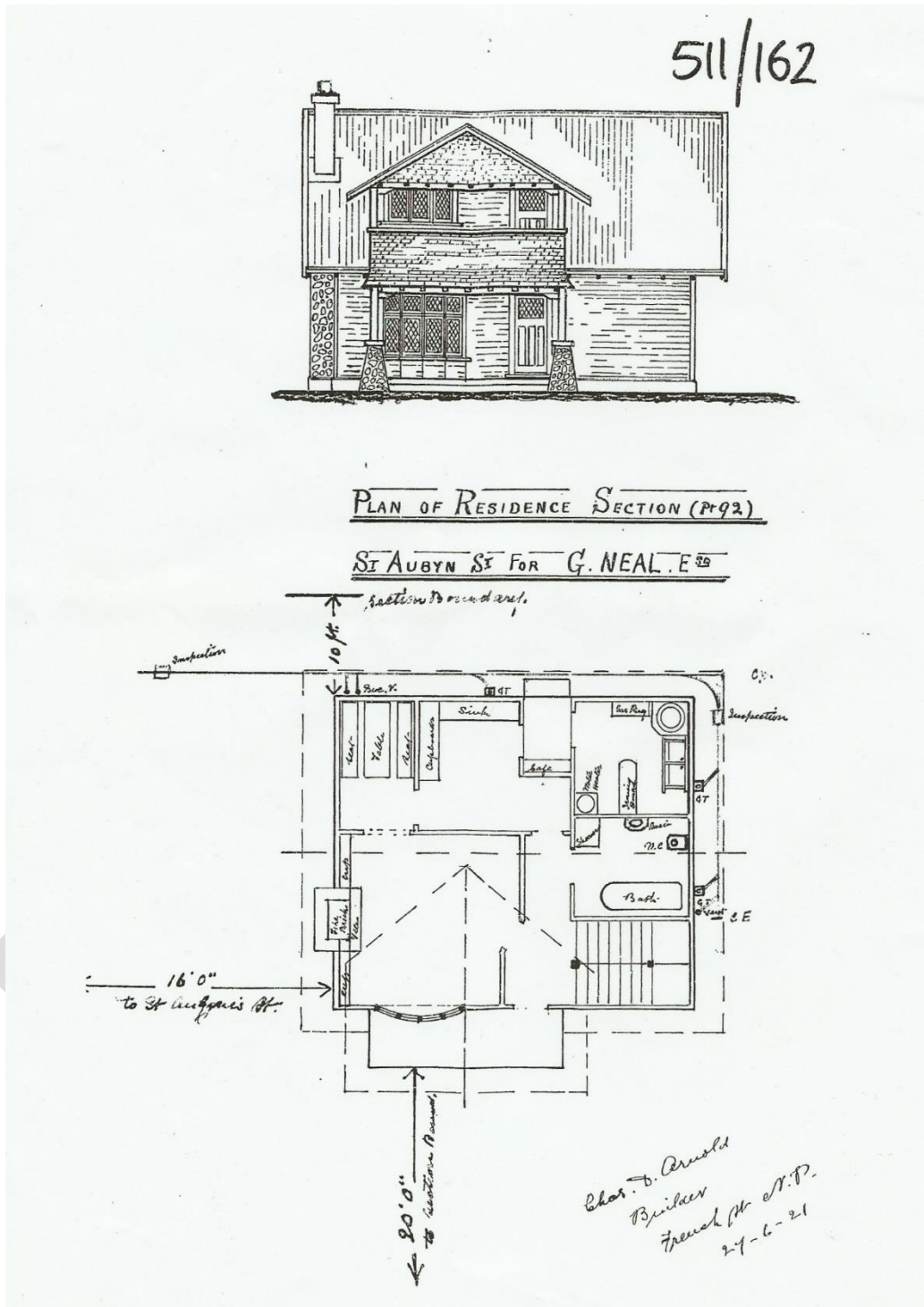
¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ CT TNG1/204, LINZ

¹⁶ Ibid.



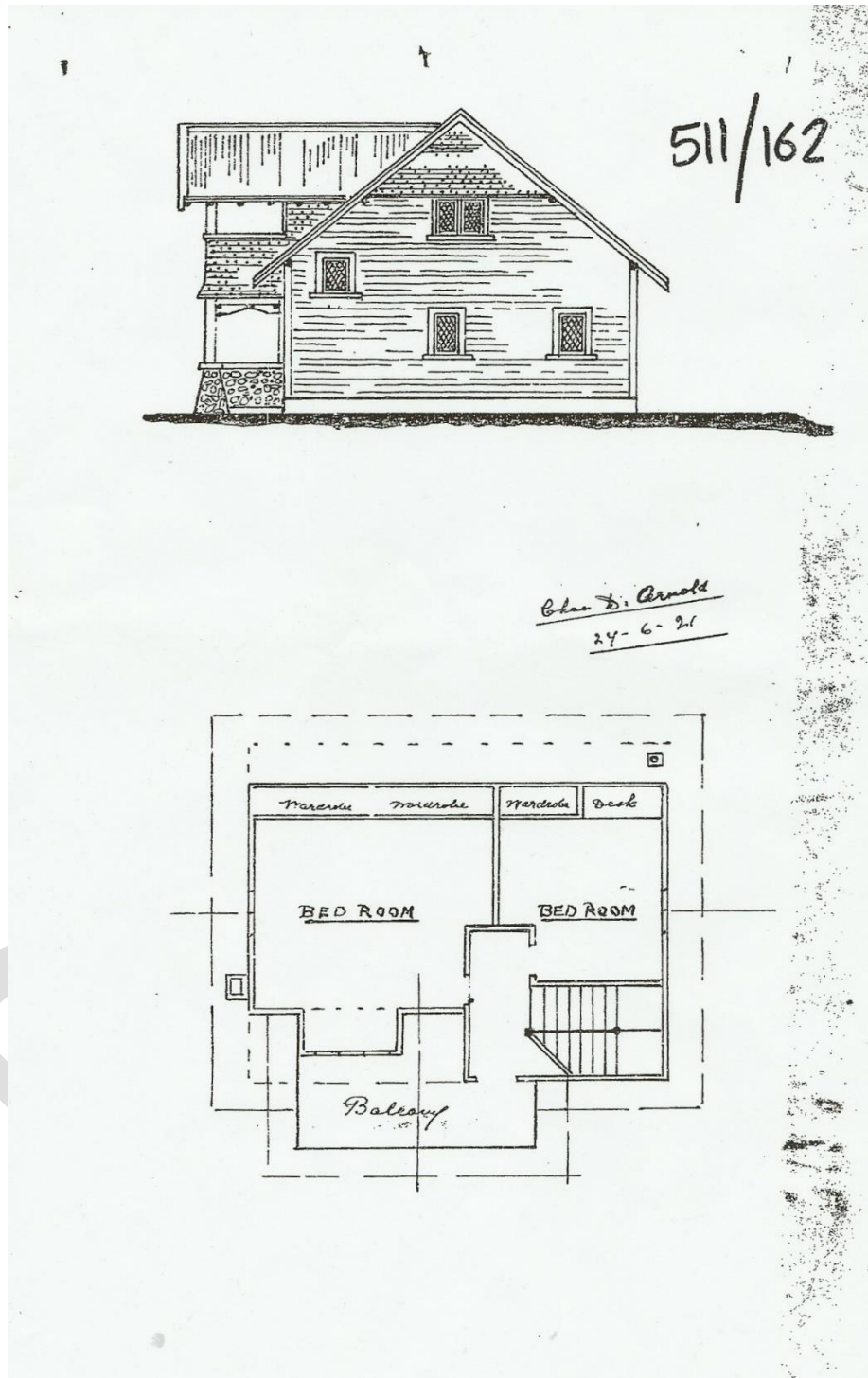
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Copy of original plans, Sheet 1, Charles David Arnold, 1921, NPDC Building File



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Copy of original plans, Sheet 2, Charles David Arnold, 1921, NPDC Building File



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Detail showing 162 St Aubyn Street from photo of New Plymouth looking west from Tasman Hotel/Richmond Estate – note the recent street widening with power poles yet to be shifted to their new positions, 16th February 1965, Whites Aviation, Alexander Turnbull Library, WA-63531-F

Reference Sources

See footnotes.

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Description

Located a short distance west of New Plymouth's central city, the former Neal Residence occupies a prominent position on the northern side of the busy St Aubyn Street/SH44. The house adds significant visual interest to the local streetscape, principally owing to its position hard against the St Aubyn Street boundary; this being a legacy of road widening works undertaken during the 1960s.

The building is a good example of a smaller English Domestic Revival style house in the local vernacular and retains a relatively high degree of external integrity. The main form of the building is a primary two-storey NW-SE gable with off-centre projecting gable on the north-eastern elevation. Timber framed and clad in horizontal bevel-back weatherboard, the steeply pitched roof is sheathed in corrugated steel. A prominent external chimney is positioned on the south-eastern elevation and is notable for its striking combination of river stone (buttress) and stucco plaster (stack) finishes.

The main front elevation, rather unusually for a house of this style, faces north-east and away from the street boundary; likely to take advantage of both the sun and sea views. The principal feature of this elevation is a full-height projecting gable incorporating ground floor entrance and first-floor sunroom. At ground floor level, the entrance porch incorporates a panelled and glazed timber entrance door and a bow window incorporating timber casements with fanlights; these being fitted with Tudor-style diamond leaded glass.

Heavy square timber posts sit atop concrete piers finished with river stones and provide structural support for the upper floor. The lower portion of the bell-cast first-floor wall is presently clad in horizontal boarding, this being a replacement for the original timber shingles. Clear glazed timber casements are fitted to the original sunroom, and although not shown on the original plans, these appear to have been added at the time of construction or very soon after and were in place by 1924. The shingled upper gable end is stepped out and corbelled, with exposed purlins and rafters fitted to the eaves of the moderately pitched roof.

The north-western side elevation incorporates several timber casements fitted with Tudor-style diamond leaded glass; an additional entrance provides access to a small modern deck. The south-eastern side elevation is fitted with four pairs of timber casements, a pair being positioned either side of the river stone chimney buttress. The upper gable end is bell-cast and finished with timber shingles; three exposed timber purlins extend from beneath the wide eaves. The south-western (rear) elevation incorporates a back-entrance door located within a small recess porch, along with two glazed timber casements; exposed rafters are present beneath the eaves.



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Assessment:

Historical	This building was the family home of George and Mabel Neal for many years, with George being one of the Taranaki Herald's longest serving workers, being employed by the firm for almost half a century.	✓
Importance to Community	-	
Architecture & Construction	A good and relatively early local example of the English Domestic Revival style in the local vernacular.	✓
Setting and Context	With the house positioned on the front property boundary, the building is highly visible to the public and adds significant visual interest to this section of the busy St Aubyn Street/SH44.	✓
Archaeology	-	
Representativeness, rarity and integrity	This house is a representative example of the types of English Domestic Revival style houses constructed in New Plymouth during the 1920s. The house retains a relatively high degree of external integrity.	✓
Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓

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