

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Ambury Residence (Former)

Address

98 Liardet Street, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

This attractive double-bay transitional style residence was constructed for prominent New Plymouth businessman Walter Ambury in 1914. Ambury was a long-time partner in the well-known drapery firm Ambury Bros and was involved in local politics as a New Plymouth Borough Councillor. Since 1993 the house has been occupied by the Taranaki Young Peoples Trust, whose work with local youth is held in high regard by the community. Located on a small rise above street level, this house is an unusually well-proportioned example of the transitional style and retains a high degree of external integrity. It is one of a number of older buildings which contribute to the historical character of the area and provides visual interest on the route between New Plymouth's CBD and the main Liardet Street entrance to Pukekura Park.



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Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description Lot 1 DP 12231

District Plan Item/ Map No.

Heritage New Zealand List Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction 1914

Principal Materials Wooden framing, weatherboard, corrugated steel

Construction Professionals Original dwelling: unknown; 1924 additions: Walter Lewis Thompson (architect & builder)

History

The first house constructed on Town Section 1013 was erected in the 1850s or 1860s, probably for William Smith Atkinson, brother of four-time Premier of New Zealand Sir Harry Atkinson.¹ In mid-1912, this house was shifted westward to its present location at 11 Pendarves Street by then owner Clarice Allen Douglas, and the now vacant Part Town Section 1013 was subsequently sold to well-known New Plymouth businessman Walter Ambury.²

Walter Ambury was born in Cheltenham, England, in 1858, and as a young man became involved in the drapery trade; firstly at Bristol, and later in London.³ In 1883 he married Charity Ellen Hodges at Wells, Somerset, and the newly married couple soon emigrated to New Zealand aboard the *Northumberland*; arriving in Auckland on 18 March 1884.⁴ First settling in Auckland, Walter was again engaged in the drapery trade, first with Mr J. Rattray, and later with Smith & Caughey.⁵

In 1890, Ambury, along with fellow worker Mr Tring, relocated to New Plymouth and purchased the Devon Street shop lease and drapery stock of Walter Wright.⁶ The pair traded under the name Ambury & Tring until 1893, when the original partnership was dissolved, and Walter entered into a new partnership with his brother Arthur.⁷ The new partnership traded under the name Ambury Bros and appears to have been very successful, with their Devon Street store undergoing a large expansion in 1908.⁸ Ambury Bros was purchased by Whites, another well-known local drapery firm, in late-1922.⁹

A permit for the construction of the present double-bay transitional style house was granted by the Borough Council to Ambury on 7 July 1914; the estimated construction cost was £700.¹⁰ Although the permit register doesn't note the architect, given the integration of relatively advanced bungalow style features, it is assumed the house was the work of either Frank Messenger or Sanderson & Griffiths (James Sanderson & Horace Victor Griffiths).

¹ Hamish Crimp, '11 Pendarves Street (circa 1860s)', *Kete New Plymouth*, <http://ketenewplymouth.peoplesnetworknz.info/en/site>; accessed 18 January 2019.

² NPBC Building Register Book 1902-22, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)

³ Lilley, Chas, *The Ambury Story: 1733-2009* (New Plymouth: Chas Lilley, 2009).

⁴ *Auckland Star*, 18 March 1884, page 3

⁵ Lilley, Chas, *The Ambury Story: 1733-2009* (New Plymouth: Chas Lilley, 2009).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ NPBC Building Register Book 1902-22, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)



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The house was purchased by builder Walter Lewis Thompson in 1924, with the Ambury's relocating to Auckland soon after. The first permit granted to Thompson for works on the property was for the construction of a tool shed in December 1924.¹¹ More extensive works were undertaken a year later, with a permit for additions totalling £100 granted to Thompson on 21 December 1925. The later permit relates to the construction of the first-floor gable addition, with a copy of the original plans for this work held by NPDC.¹²

The building is presently owned by a local private family trust, having been originally donated to the City Council for the benefit of the townspeople. Since 1993 the building has been the home of the Taranaki Young People's Trust, who offer a range of support, advocacy and education services to the youth of Taranaki.¹³

Reference Sources

See footnotes.

Description

The former Ambury Residence is located in central New Plymouth, a few blocks south of Devon Street. To the immediate north is the imposing three-storied telephone exchange/Spark building (1982), to the rear is a mid-nineteenth century board and batten house (originally located on this site), and to the east, across Liardet Street, is the former New Plymouth Technical School completed in 1907. Located on a small rise above street level, a river stone faced concrete retaining wall and in-ground garage form the street-level frontage. The property has limited outdoor living space owing to the later subdivision of the property, with the garden originally incorporating the site of 100 Liardet Street, now occupied by commercial premises.

The house is probably best described as belonging to the transitional style common during the 1910s, with the main form of the building incorporating a wide NE-SW gable and several projecting gables. Whilst the main plan broadly follows that of a double-bay villa, the shallow-pitched gables, casements with fanlights, and exposed rafters gives the building an overtly 'bungalow' appearance. The wooden-framed building is clad in rusticated weatherboard, the roof sheathed in mild corrugated steel, and a double brick chimney with a single square chimney pot rises from the northern end of the main gable.

The symmetrically composed main front (north-eastern) elevation incorporates two projecting ground-floor gables, and a third centrally positioned first-floor gable. The ground-floor gable-ends are almost identical, the upper portion of each sheathed in fish-scale shingles, and a set of three casements with fanlights inset at centre. The lower side-hinged casements incorporate a large clear pane with a divided portion of eight mixed-colour squares above, whilst the top-hinged fanlights incorporate a single coloured pane. Above each window is a sloping bracketed hood sheathed with fish-scale shingles.

A sloping post and beam veranda links the projecting ground-floor bays. A low balustrade incorporating simple timber balusters fills the central and northern bays, with two slightly tapered wooden posts rising to the eaves featuring exposed rafters. Beneath the southern end of the veranda is a square bay window incorporating wooden casements and fanlights. The front four lower casements have been removed and replaced with an aluminium sliding door which now forms the main front entrance to the building. The original timber panelled and glazed front entrance door is located further to the north, with two further wooden glazed doors located on the inside gable walls providing extra access to the interior living spaces.

¹¹ NPBC Building Register Book 1922-27, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)

¹² NPDC Archives

¹³ Taranaki Young People's Trust, 'About Us', *Taranaki Young People's Trust*, <http://www.designshoretest.com/taranakiyoung/index.html>; accessed 18 January 2019.



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The first-floor gable, added in 1925, largely follows the style of the original house through the use of rusticated boarding, timber shingles, and exposed rafters. Much of the gable-end is occupied by a window with four side-hinged casements and top-hinged two-light patterned glass fanlights, finished with a bracketed hood sheathed with timber shingles.

Assessment:

Historical	This house has historic significance as the residence of Walter Ambury and his family from 1914 until 1924. Ambury was a long-time partner in the well-known drapery firm Ambury Bros and was involved in local politics as a New Plymouth Borough Councillor. The house was subsequently occupied by builder Walter Lewis Thompson.	✓
Importance to Community	Since 1993 the house has been occupied by the Taranaki Young Peoples Trust, whose work with local youth is held in high regard by the community.	✓
Architecture & Construction	This house is an unusually well-proportioned example of the transitional style common during the 1910s. Whilst the main plan broadly follows that of a double-bay villa, the shallow-pitched gables, casements with fanlights, and exposed rafters gives the building an overtly 'bungalow' appearance.	✓
Setting and Context	Located on a small rise above street level, this building makes a strong positive contribution to the character of the local streetscape. It is one of several dwellings which add interest to Liardet Street between the CBD and main entrance to Pukekura Park.	✓
Archaeology	-	
Representativeness, rarity and integrity	The building has been well-maintained, and consequently retains a high degree of integrity with many original external features surviving intact.	✓
Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓