



Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Captain Rogers Cottage No. 3

Address

75 Eliot Street, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

This building principally has heritage significance as one of a row of four cottages (of which two survive) constructed for Captain Henry Rogers during 1879-1881. A native of Newfoundland, Rogers lived an extraordinary life as both a sea captain and gold miner. It was whilst engaged in gold prospecting in the American West that he was a member of a party of six who discovered the Alder Gulch claim, being the richest alluvial gold deposit ever discovered; this event and the subsequent influx of tens of thousands of people to the area led to the founding of Montana Territory, later to become Montana State. The building has strong contextual value as one of a pair of similar cottages constructed for Captain Rogers around the same time, and as part of a wider group of interesting heritage buildings along Lemon, Eliot and Pendarves Streets. It is a rare example of a hipped gable cottage from the 1870s-80s period in New Plymouth.



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Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description Lot 2 DP 6080

District Plan Item/ Map No.

Heritage New Zealand List Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction Circa 1879-80

Principal Materials Wooden framing, weatherboard, corrugated steel

Construction Professionals Unknown

History

Town Sections 1603, 1604, 1605, 1628, 1629, and 1630 were purchased by W. K. Hulke from grantee Charles Ibbotson in 1862.¹ By January 1876, the original six quarter acre sections had been subdivided into ten lots and were being advertised for sale by land agent William Courtney.² It seems likely Courtney was responsible for the subdivision, as ownership of the property was transferred to him in mid-1876.³ The sections didn't immediately sell, and it wasn't until early-1878 when the vacant lots 2-7, fronting Eliot Street, were conveyed to J. C. George, then to L. S. MacDonough, back to J. C. George, before finally being purchased by Captain Henry Rogers in mid-1879.⁴

Captain Henry Rogers is virtually unknown in New Plymouth, yet his life reads like an adventure novel. Little is known about his childhood, but he was born in Newfoundland (then a self-governing British Colony) about 1830, and during his youth he lived a seafaring life.⁵ In 1852 he travelled to Australia, where he was attracted by the lure of gold at the Victoria diggings. He remained in Australia until 1858, when he returned to Canada and joined the short-lived Fraser River rush in British Columbia.⁶ Rogers then moved south to prospect in the American West, and it was during this period that he was involved in the defining event of Montana Territory (Montana State from 1889); the discovery of the Alder Gulch claim.

Henry Rogers and the Alder Gulch Story

During 1861 Rogers was prospecting in the Salmon Creek District, and by autumn 1862, had joined the rush to new diggings alongside Grasshopper Creek, near the mining town of Bannock.⁷ In January 1863 Rogers attended a meeting arranged by a man named James Stuart, the intent being to organise an expedition into an area drained by the Yellowstone River for the purpose of discovering gold and establishing new town sites.⁸ Rogers determined to join the expedition, however, a proviso of the trip was that each man was required to have two good horses and one pack animal; as the group did not collectively possess enough animals to meet the requirement, it was suggested they

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

² *Taranaki Herald*, 15 January 1876, page 3

³ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 29 September 1905, page 5

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Forney, Gary R. (2009). *Discovery Men: The Fairweather Party and Montana's El Dorado*. Xlibris

⁸ Ibid.



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depart for the expedition early and meet a group of Indians to trade for horses.⁹

On the 4th of February 1863 Henry Rogers left Bannack as part of a group of eight men, led by William (Bill) Fairweather and also including Henry Edgar, George Orr, Barney Hughes, Mike Sweeney, Tom Cover and Lewis Simmons.¹⁰ After acquiring horses at Deer Lodge Valley, the group departed on March 23, bound for the mouth of the Beaverhead River; the point at which they believed they would meet up with James Stuart and the main expedition group, who would leave Bannack on the 9th of April.¹¹ However, the actual meeting point was to be the mouth of the Stinking Water (now the Ruby River) and with Fairwether terribly off course, the group was never to meet up with Stuart's expedition; despite later following their trail and even camping at the same sites.¹²

On May 1st Fairweather's party discovered a trail left by several hundred unshod horses; unmistakable signs that a large party of Indians were in the area.¹³ Whilst the night of May 1st passed uneventfully, early the following morning a large group of Crow Indians appeared in the surrounding hills, one member of the group with a knowledge of the language maintained a tenuous peace, but Harry and the rest of the group were now in the custody of the Indians and were led to their encampment.¹⁴ Whilst at the camp the group were made to enter the medicine lodge and on two occasions were to walk around the medicine bush.¹⁵ On the second occasion, Bill Fairweather very unwisely pulled the medicine bush out of the ground at hit the medicine man on the head with it.¹⁶ Quickly exiting the tent, the men were faced with a very angry crowd of Indians, some of whom were wanting their immediate death.¹⁷ A tenuous peace was once again reached, and the group was sent to the lodge of one of the principle chiefs, Red Bear, and were to stay there until a decision on their fate was decided.¹⁸ After spending an anxious night in the lodge they were advised in the morning that they were free to go, but must return west and not continue to follow their course down the Yellowstone River.¹⁹ When leaving the village, still apprehensive about their situation, Henry Edgar asked Harry Rogers what he thought the outcome of the group's situation would be; Harry simply replied "God is Good".²⁰

After leaving the camp the group made the decision to continue along the Yellowstone River, and by May 13th had decided to return to Bannack; but which route to take? Back down the Gallatin River or over to the Madison River?²¹ It was decided to head for the Madison in a decision that would change the course of not just their lives, but that of the entire of Montana.²² On May 26th the group encountered a small creek, followed its northerly course for a time, before making camp in the early afternoon.²³ After making preparations for the evening the group separated and began prospecting along the stream.²⁴ Whilst the other members of the group didn't reach bedrock, Fairweather and Harry Edgar found a piece of exposed rimrock from which each successive pan produced more gold

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

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than the one before.²⁵ The following day the men expanded their prospect area in order to gauge the extent of the discovery; by the end of the day Fairweather and Edgar had washed out about \$150 in gold dust, whilst Rogers and Sweeney a respectable \$18.²⁶

Early next morning the group staked two claims of one hundred feet each and also claims for their friends.²⁷ On May 28th the group departed Alder Gulch, which they had named after a nearby grove of Alder trees, for their return trip to Bannack.²⁸ Upon returning to Bannack, despite an agreement to keep the group's find at Alder Gulch secret, by the following morning it had become common knowledge and hundreds of miners were selling their claims, collecting their gear and preparing to move to the new discovery site.²⁹ Upon purchasing supplies, the original discovery group set out to return to their claims at the Alder Gulch; however they were followed by a large group which grew larger by each passing mile.³⁰ By the time the group of followers had reached more than three hundred persons it was decided to call a meeting where the discoverers agreed to show the group the gulch only if they respected their initial claims.³¹ Many of the crowd objected to this condition, namely because the discovery group wanted claims larger than the standard one hundred feet per miner.³² It wasn't until the discoverers had actually packed up their gear, turned around and started riding in the other direction that a member of the crowd caught up with the group and announced that they could have any size claim they desired.³³ On June 6th the now very large group reached Alder Gulch, and when announced that 'this was the creek' a stampede followed, with the entire area staked by late afternoon that day.³⁴

Soon after returning to the Gulch a heated argument occurred between the original discovery party regarding the distribution of the claims the original six discovery men had staked for heretofore undesignated 'friends'.³⁵ It seems Henry Rogers and fellow Canadian Mike Sweeney objected to discovery rights being given to George Orr, a member of the original party who was left to look after horses at the beginning of the expedition.³⁶ Henry and Mike soon separated from the group and established a formal partnership; on June 12th 1864 they claimed water rights on Spring Creek under this partnership.³⁷ Although each would extend their interests in mining at the Gulch, another member of the group, Harry Edgar, convinced both Henry Rogers and Mike Sweeney to establish a butchers shop to take advantage of the influx of miners.³⁸

On June 16th a claim was filed for 320 acres of land to be used as a town site. Originally to be called either Verona or Varina, the name Virginia City was eventually chosen, it being the second settlement in the Gulch.³⁹ Each member of the discovery party, including Rogers (or Rodgers), was recognised with a street named in their honour.⁴⁰ Virginia City was part of what became known as the "Fourteen Mile City" which ran the length of the gulch, and also included the towns of Junction City, Adobe Town, Nevada City, Central City, Montana, Bear Town, Highland, Pine Grove French Town, Hungry

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.



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Hollow, and Summit.⁴¹ The Alder Gulch discovery saw the influx of over 10,000 people within the first year and was the catalyst for the formation of Montana territory in May 1864, later to become the Montana State in 1889. The first territorial capital was Bannock, before later shifting to Virginia City where it remained until 1875. The Alder Gulch diggings were the richest gold placer deposits ever discovered, and in three years \$30,000,000 was taken from them, with \$10,000,000 taken out in the first year. Rogers and the other members of the party were later commemorated through the erection of a memorial at Virginia City, erected in 1928 on the spot of the first find.⁴²

Henry Rogers Return to Newfoundland

Although the exact date is unclear, Rogers appears to have departed Alder Gulch with the intention to return to Newfoundland by the summer of 1864. He left the Gulch with approximately \$40,000 in gold dust; a huge sum of money for 1864.⁴³ By January 1865 an issue of the *Montana Post* noted that all of the original discovery party had departed, fellow Canadians Harry Rogers and William Sweeney noted as having "...gone to Victoria's domains, their purses well filled, carrying with them the only thing in our country they did not despise".⁴⁴ On returning to Newfoundland Rogers used his new found wealth to purchase a vessel and again returned to sea.⁴⁵ However, during a ferocious gale in 1867 the vessel was driven ashore off the coast of Nova Scotia; as a result of the bankruptcy of his insurance agents following this event, Rogers would lose around £4000.⁴⁶ A short time later Rogers purchased a share in a copper mine, however, his health soon broke down and he went to England for treatment.⁴⁷ On his return to New Foundland he was a storekeeper for a time, but soon went back to England, and then on to Melbourne; where he stayed for just a short time before residing in Tasmania for a year.⁴⁸

Henry Rogers in New Zealand

Rogers moved to New Zealand in 1873, and first settled in Christchurch.⁴⁹ He had a large boarding house constructed on part of Town Reserve 55, corner of Hereford and Barbadoes Streets during 1874 or 1875, and this subsequently became known as Pacific House.⁵⁰ In 1877, the house was threatened by a fire that destroyed a neighbouring house, but was thankfully saved.⁵¹ In March 1878, the sixteen roomed property was advertised for sale on account of Mr Rogers leaving Christchurch.⁵² However, before the house was sold, another fire, this time originating from within the boarding house, completely destroyed the building on the night of 13 June 1878.⁵³ The following year, on April 10th 1879, Henry and his wife departed Lyttelton for New Plymouth aboard the *S.S. Wakatipu*; transferring to the *S.S. McGee* at Wellington, and arriving in New Plymouth the following day.⁵⁴

It's not known where the Rogers' resided immediately upon their arrival at New Plymouth, but construction of the first of his four hipped cottages likely commenced soon after purchasing the Eliot Street sections in July-August 1879. The first reference to Rogers constructing cottages in Eliot Street

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 29 September 1905, page 5

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ *Press*, 12 May 1874, page 4; *Lyttelton Times*, 9 March 1875, page 1

⁵¹ *Press*, 2 April 1877, page 2

⁵² *Press*, 6 March 1878, page 3

⁵³ *Press*, 14 June 1878, page 2

⁵⁴ *Lyttelton Times*, 12 April 1879, page 4; *Taranaki Herald*, 14 April 1879, page 2

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was at the October 1879 New Plymouth Borough Council Meeting, when it was reported that "...a Mr H. Rogers was erecting a number of cottages in Niger Terrace [eastern Pendarves Street], opposite Mr Hulke's, and as he wished to put up a fence in Elliot [sic] Street, he asked the Council to raise the footpath to its permanent level".⁵⁵ It's thought the cottages were constructed from north to south, with this cottage complete before the end of 1880, it being present on Thomas Kingwell's map of New Plymouth compiled during mid-late 1880.⁵⁶

During his time in New Plymouth, Rogers was actively involved in civic affairs, being a particularly outspoken critic on a range of issues, especially with regard to Borough Council expenditure.⁵⁷ During 1890 Rogers was once again involved in gold prospecting, this time at the head of the Awakino River north of New Plymouth, where a reef was found at a depth of three feet.⁵⁸ It is unclear if anything came of this venture.



Detail of pre-1895 view of rear of cottage (at centre) from Fort Niger. George Herbert White, *Photographic View Album of Taranaki, The Garden of New Zealand* (undated). C. O. Hawke, New Plymouth

⁵⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 8 October 1879, page 2

⁵⁶ Plan of New Plymouth, New Zealand, Thomas Kingwell Skinner, 1880, ARC2010-220, Puke Ariki

⁵⁷ *Taranaki Daily News*, 3 June 1902, page 2

⁵⁸ *Taranaki Herald*, 11 February 1890, page 2



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Henry died on September 29th 1905, and as per his will, the property passed to the trustees of his estate, with Selina permitted to live in the house until her death, which occurred in 1927.⁵⁹ Both this cottage and the now demolished cottage on the site of present 71 Eliot Street, were purchased by E. M. Langridge in August 1927.⁶⁰ Initially rented, ownership of the property was later transferred to Alfred Laurence Langridge, who subdivided the property in two during 1943, and lived in this cottage until his untimely death in 1951.⁶¹ Following his death, his wife Isobel continued to live in the house for a considerable period of time. The building has for some years been occupied by sign making business Taranaki Signs.

Reference Sources

See footnotes.

Description

This building is located on a prominent site on the eastern side of New Plymouth's main southern entrance on Eliot Street/SH3. This area was settled early in New Plymouth's history, and the surrounding blocks contain a number of pre-1900 dwellings. Whilst development pressures since the 1970s have resulted in an eclectic mix of architectural styles, the area still retains a sense of historical character now uncommon in New Plymouth.

Along with 77 Eliot Street, this building is one of a pair (of an original four) near identical cottages constructed along the eastern side of Eliot Street between Pendarves and Lemon Streets in 1879-81. These cottages are part of a larger group of interesting heritage buildings along Lemon, Eliot and Pendarves Streets, with the HNZ listed 'Hen and Chickens' Historic Area (1860s) also located nearby on Pendarves Street.

The main form of the building is a timber-framed square-plan hipped gabled cottage with a lean-to at rear. As was typical during the later decades of the nineteenth century, the elevation facing the street frontage is clad in rusticated weatherboard (an early use of rusticated boarding in New Plymouth), whilst the side and rear elevations are clad in cheaper plain rough-sawn horizontal boarding. The original window joinery, thought to have mostly been double-hung sashes, has been replaced with timber casements in a variety of styles; reinstating sash windows in a style similar to the originals would greatly enhance the historic and aesthetic appeal of the cottage.

The symmetrically composed main front elevation faces roughly south-west in Eliot Street. Behind an enclosed timber entrance porch with sloping roof in the centrally positioned main front entrance door. Either side this is flanked by three sets of circa 1930s style clear-glazed timber casements with corresponding fanlights. These replace the original sashes, the outlines of which can still be partially distinguished.

The south-eastern and north-western elevations are almost identical, each incorporating two pairs of circa 1960s style top-hinged casements. The rear elevation features a centrally positioned back door, with northern lean-to extension incorporating timber casements in a variety of styles.

⁵⁹ Henry Rogers, 1905, probate file including will, New Plymouth Probate Files, 1867-1981, Archives New Zealand (21954)

⁶⁰ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

⁶¹ NPDC Cemetery Search, <http://www.newplymouthnz.com/Residents/Facilities-and-Services/Cemeteries-and-Crematorium/Cemetery-Search>; Accessed 1 December 2018



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Assessment:

Historical	This building principally has historic significance for its association with Captain Henry Rogers who was a discoverer of the Alder Gulch claim, being the richest alluvial gold deposit ever discovered, and an event which would lead to the later founding of the US State of Montana.	✓✓
Importance to Community	-	
Architecture & Construction	A good example of a larger hipped gable cottage from the 1870s-80s period. The cottage has technical interest for the use of rusticated weatherboard on the front elevation, it being an uncommon cladding material in New Plymouth at this time.	✓
Setting and Context	Located on New Plymouth's main southern entranceway, this building is highly visible to passing motorists and pedestrians. The building has strong contextual value as one of a pair of similar cottages constructed for Captain Rogers around the same time, and as part of a wider group of interesting heritage buildings along Lemon, Eliot and Pendarves Streets.	✓
Archaeology	As this building was constructed circa 1879-80, the property likely has archaeological evidence relating to pre-1900 human activity and has the potential to reveal information about the past through archaeological investigation.	✓
Representativeness, rarity and integrity	Although subject to past modification, the building still retains much of its original fabric and exterior form. A rare example of a hipped gable cottage from the 1870s-80s period in New Plymouth.	✓
Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓