

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Mannix Villa (Former)

Address

284 Devon Street West, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

This building has historic significance as the residence of New Plymouth builder and architect James Thomas Mannix for a period of almost sixty years from 1899 until 1958. James designed this villa himself and whilst in residence here was responsible for many commissions, including a significant number associated with the Catholic faith. This house is representative of the high-quality architect-designed villas which were once common in New Plymouth's CBD fringe streets. Although subject to some modification, overall the building retains a high degree of integrity with many original external features surviving intact. Located close to the street frontage this building makes a positive contribution to the character of the local streetscape.

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Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description	PT Section 210 Town of New Plymouth
District Plan Item/ Map No.	
Heritage New Zealand List	Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction	1899
Principal Materials	Wooden framing, weatherboard, corrugated steel
Construction Professionals	James Thomas Mannix (presumed architect & builder)

History

This attractive villa residence was the home of James Thomas Mannix and his family for more than half a century. Hailing from Limerick, Ireland, James emigrated to New Zealand with his family during the 1870s. Born into a family of strong Catholic faith, James was involved with the Catholic Church at New Plymouth from a young age, often organising events such as picnics for local members to attend.¹ It appears James entered the building trade at New Plymouth during the late-1880s, setting up his own firm in 1892.² Mannix was held in high regard by the local community and after some persuasion from fellow citizens, stood at a local by-election in 1910, where he was elected a New Plymouth Borough Councillor.³ As a keen cricketer, James was associated with the New Plymouth Cricket Club for many years, later becoming a member of the Western Park Sports Ground Committee.

James married Monica Kathleen O'Connor in 1897, and two years later, during April 1899, purchased the then vacant New Plymouth Town Section 210 on which their family home was to be built.⁴ It seems construction commenced soon after purchase, with the current building clearly marked on DP1436, surveyed during February 1900.⁵ Given that James Mannix worked as both an architect and builder around this time, it seems likely that he was responsible for the design and construction of the house in the fashionable villa style.

Whilst in residence at the house Mannix designed a large number of buildings across Taranaki and the lower North Island. Many of these were associated with the Catholic Church and surviving examples include the Sacred Heart Church (1899) and Presbytery (1911) at Inglewood;⁶ the Ohura Catholic Church (1913);⁷ and the HNZ Category 1 listed Cathedral of the Holy Spirit at Palmerston North, on which he jointly worked with the distinguished Wellington firm of Clere & Williams, later Clere & Clere (1923-25).⁸ Other significant ecclesiastical commissions since demolished include a

¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 19 March 1896, page 2

² *Taranaki Herald*, 12 November 1902, page 5

³ *Taranaki Herald*, 23 November 1910, page 2

⁴ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

⁵ DP1436, Land Information New Zealand (LINZ)

⁶ Gooch, Mike, 'Sacred Heart Church, Inglewood (1899)', *Kete New Plymouth*,

<http://ketenewplymouth.peoplesnetworknz.info/en/site>; accessed 25 June 2019; Crimp, Hamish, 'Sacred Heart Presbytery (1911)', *Kete New Plymouth*, <http://ketenewplymouth.peoplesnetworknz.info/en/site>; accessed 25 June 2019.

⁷ *Taranaki Herald*, 18 March 1913, page 7

⁸ *Manawatu Times*, 30 April 1923, page 4

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convent school at Palmerston North (1915);⁹ a convent at Taihape (1922);¹⁰ and a convent school at Inglewood (1926).¹¹

Non-ecclesiastical buildings included the Morey & Son Building at 81 Devon Street West (1915);¹² the now much-altered former Empire Theatre at 31 Devon Street East (1911);¹³ several Taranaki hotels including the Opunake Hotel (1915) and another at Tariki (1910);¹⁴ private residences across Taranaki; and many other smaller commissions for commercial and residential alterations and extensions. As a builder Mannix was the successful tenderer for commissions by other competing local architects including Frank Messenger.¹⁵



November 1965 View of Mannix Villa, Mannix Family Collection, Puke Ariki, ARC2002-12

Ownership of the property was transferred to Monica during the 1920s, before being transferred back to James on upon her death on the 28th of February 1949.¹⁶ James continued to reside at the house until his death on December 6th 1958 at the age of 93 years, with ownership subsequently passing to his four children, Dorothy, Eileen, Mary and Brendon.¹⁷ Mary passed away in November 1959 and Brendon during January 1962, with Dorothy and Eileen retaining ownership until December 1965, when the property was purchased by New Plymouth milk vendor Robert Arnold Paul.¹⁸ The property remained in Paul's ownership until June 1973, when the house was purchased by Alexander Joseph McCullough and his wife Nada Anita McCullough.¹⁹

⁹ *Manawatu Standard*, 22 October 1915, page 8

¹⁰ *Manawatu Times*, 21 April 1922, page 8

¹¹ *Stratford Evening Post*, 22 February 1926, page 3

¹² Gooch, Mike, 'Morey & Son Building, 81-83 Devon Street West', *Kete New Plymouth*, <http://ketenewplymouth.peoplesnetworknz.info/en/site>; accessed 25 June 2019

¹³ Gooch, Mike, 'Empire Theatre/Millers Building (1911/1951)', *Kete New Plymouth*, <http://ketenewplymouth.peoplesnetworknz.info/en/site>; accessed 25 June 2019

¹⁴ *Taranaki Daily News*, 7 April 1910, page 1; *Taranaki Herald*, 23 April 1915, page 7

¹⁵ *Taranaki Daily News*, 10 December 1900, page 2

¹⁶ CT TN98/135, LINZ

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

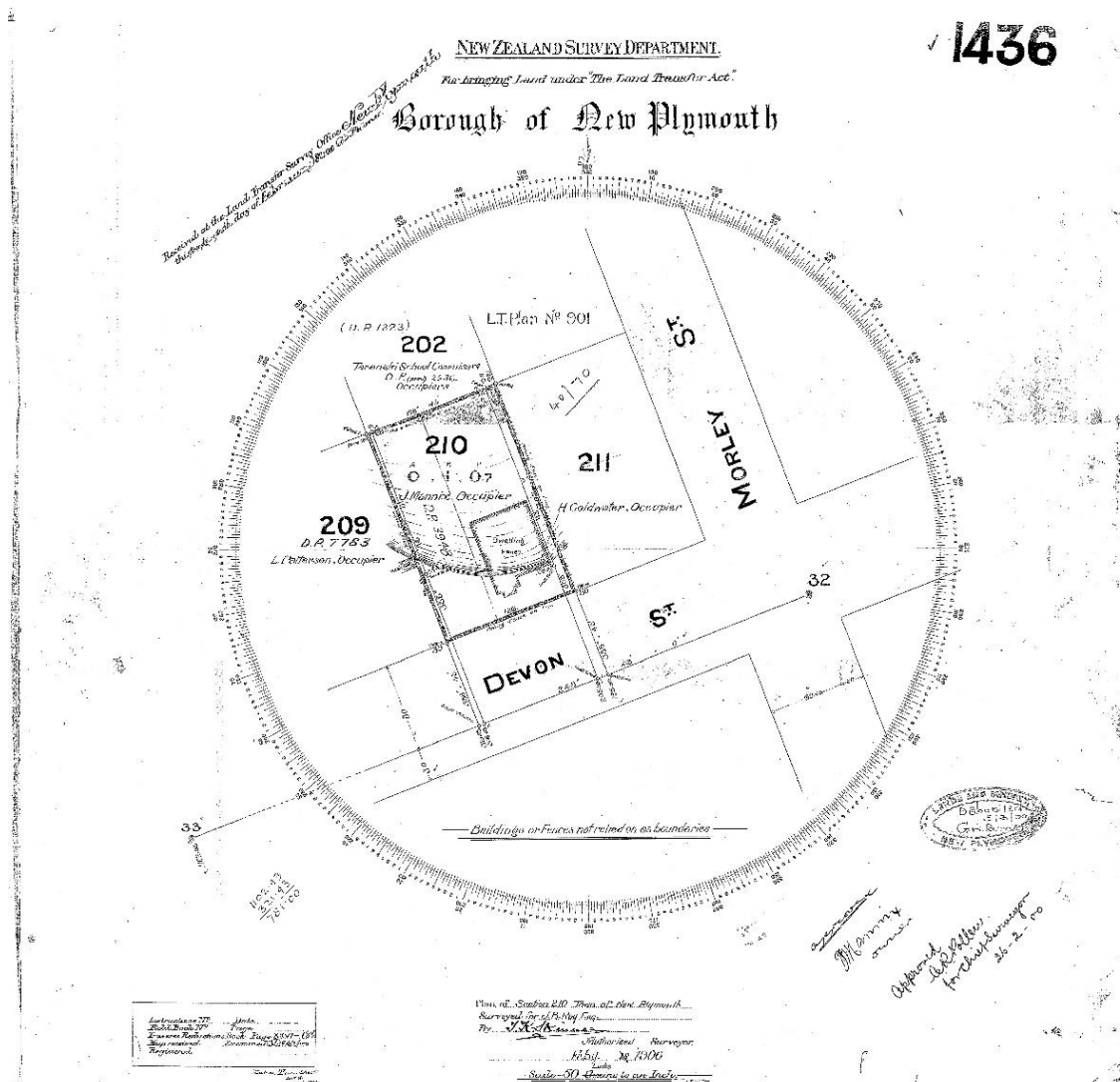
¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*



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The McCullough's sold the property to W. A. Julian & Company Ltd in May 1982, who retained possession 1984, when a power of sale clause contained within the mortgage was enacted and the property subsequently sold to Harold Ian Halford.²⁰ In 1985, ownership was conveyed to Welltest Holdings Ltd, before being transferred to Chris Hayden Drake in May 1992.²¹ Present owners Anthony and Arthur Drake acquired possession of the property in January 1995.²²



Reference Sources

See footnotes.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

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Description

The former Mannix Villa is located on the western side of New Plymouth city, a short distance from the CBD. Whilst this area was settled early in New Plymouth's history, development pressures have seen the demolition and removal of many older residential properties in the area; especially on the south side of Devon Street West. However, the north side of Devon Street West between Morley Street and Cutfield Road is still predominantly residential and contains a number of interesting older dwellings, including several constructed pre-1900.

Positioned close to the front property boundary, the house is visible from the busy intersection of Morley and Devon Streets and makes a positive contribution to the character of the local streetscape. The main form of the building is a centre-gutter single flush bay villa; following the natural contours of the sloping section the house rises from single-storey at the front to two-storey at rear. The timber-framed villa is clad in rusticated weatherboard and the roof is sheathed in mild corrugated steel; two brick chimneys were removed about 2011.

The main front elevation faces roughly south-east and incorporates a projecting flush bay fitted with detailed square bay window. Fitted to the front of the bay window is a wide central sash flanked either side by narrower sashes (Chicago style), with further narrow sashes on the side returns. The frames are stop-chamfered, each corner is fitted with an engaged column, the shallow bay eave is supported by slightly detailed timber brackets, and the roof is of a complex bullnose design. The main upper gable end is stepped-out, sheathed with alternating rows of plain and fish-scale timber shingles, and supported by slightly detailed wooden brackets. The lower bargeboards are decorated with carved rosettes and there is a finial (lower portion only) at the apex.

A post-and-beam veranda with concrete floor and bullnose roof extends from the main bay across the remainder of the frontage. Divided into four asymmetrical bays, the timber posts are stop-chamfered and feature simple fret-sawn brackets; the bay adjacent to the front door is enclosed with three divided timber casements incorporating clear patterned glass. The principal entrance door to the front elevation is timber, with a single solid panel to the bottom, and two glazed panels in patterned glass at the top. The door is flanked by narrow timber panelled and patterned glazed panels, with further glazed panels in matching patterned glass above; all frames are stop-chamfered. A single double-hung sash is centred further east beneath the veranda.

The upper-floor of the north-eastern elevation incorporates two original double-hung sashes with stop-chamfered frames, a multi-paned side-entrance door, later timber casement window, and a set of louvres at rear. Further sashes with stop-chamfered frames and a smaller casement are positioned on the south-western elevation. The upper floor of the rear elevation incorporates a single double-hung sash with further timber casements located to the east; timber casements of a variety of styles are fitted at ground-floor level.



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Assessment:

Historical	This building has historic significance as the residence of New Plymouth builder and architect James Thomas Mannix for a period of almost sixty years from 1899 until 1958. James designed this villa himself and whilst in residence here was responsible for many commissions, including a significant number associated with the Catholic faith. The house remained in the Mannix family until 1965.	✓
Importance to Community	-	
Architecture & Construction	A good example of a centre-gutter flush bay villa incorporating a number of architectural features associated with the style.	✓
Setting and Context	Located close to the street frontage this building makes a positive contribution to the character of the local streetscape. It is part of a cluster older residential properties located on north side of Devon Street West between Morley Street and Cutfield Road.	✓
Archaeology	-	
Representativeness, rarity and integrity	This house is representative of the high-quality architect-designed villas which were once common in New Plymouth's CBD fringe streets. Although subject to some modification, overall the building 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)		✓