

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Pukekura Park Superintendents' Residence (Former)

Address

25 Victoria Road, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

This building has considerable heritage significance for its use as the Pukekura Park superintendents' residence from 1930 until 1990. During this period the building was occupied three successive curators, Thomas Horton, John (Jack) Goodwin and George Fuller; each of whom were integral in developing Pukekura Park into the internationally renowned botanical attraction it is today. As internationally respected horticulturalists, the trio's influence also extended far beyond park boundaries, with all three men making enormous contributions to the wider field of horticulture within their respective areas of expertise. Architecturally, the former superintendents' residence is a good example of a single-storey timber bungalow in the local vernacular. Being well-maintained and retaining a high degree of integrity, the building is one of a number of heritage structures contributing to the special character of the wider Pukekura Park area.



Heritage Buildings Report

Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description Section 1161 Town of New Plymouth and Section 1162 Town of New Plymouth

District Plan Item/ Map No.

Heritage New Zealand List Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction 1930

Principal Materials Wooden framing, weatherboard, corrugated steel

Construction Professionals William Bruce Haylock (builder)

History

New Plymouth's Pukekura Park, originally known as the Recreation Ground (colloquially the 'Rec'), was established in 1875-76. It was the vision of local lawyer Robert Clinton Hughes, who in 1875, persuaded the Taranaki Provincial Government to purchase 12 hectares of wasteland near New Plymouth as a recreational reserve.¹ The new reserve was officially opened on 29 May 1876 and was celebrated with the planting of the first four trees on Cannon Hill, north of the present band rotunda.²

The first caretakers' cottage

Soon after the Recreation Grounds were established a caretakers' cottage was constructed near the site of the present dwelling on the Victoria Road boundary. It seems this first cottage was constructed by the Provincial Government, whose offer to build a caretakers' cottage was accepted by the Pukekura Park Board at their August 1875 meeting.³ The cottage is clearly indicated on a map of New Plymouth compiled by Thomas Kingwell Skinner in 1880.⁴ Interestingly, the first caretakers' cottage was constructed near the site of the Carrington Road Blockhouse, which was erected during March 1860 and seems to have survived until at least September 1875.⁵

The first cottage was originally occupied by early Recreation Ground caretakers', before becoming the residence of an assistant during the early-1900s.⁶ Following a donation from Mrs Alice Honeyfield in 1907, the old cottage was renovated and became the residence of then curator William Walter Smith until his resignation in late-1920.⁷ Following Smith's departure, the old cottage remained vacant and was not occupied by Thomas Horton following his appointment as curator in 1924. It seems Horton resided at his private New Plymouth residence until completion of the present superintendents' residence in 1930.

¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 3 August 1916, page 5

² *Ibid.*

³ *Taranaki Herald*, 11 August 1875, page 2

⁴ Plan of New Plymouth, New Zealand, Thomas Kingwell Skinner, 1880, ARC2010-220, Puke Ariki

⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 22 September 1875, page 2

⁶ *Taranaki Herald*, 27 May 1908, page 4

⁷ *Taranaki Herald*, 8 September 1908, page 2

Heritage Buildings Report

Construction of the present superintendents' residence

The first murmurings of the construction of a new superintendents' residence within Pukekura Park seem to be at the September 1925 meeting of the Pukekura Park Board, where a committee was established to look into the matter.⁸ In May 1927, the issue was again raised by the Board's chairman in his annual report. It was noted that a house in the park for the superintendent [Thomas Horton] was an absolute necessity as he felt sure that if the superintendent was housed there it would stop a great deal of the vandalism that was going on, as well as making life a good deal more comfortable for him.⁹ However, it seems no further action was taken with regard to the construction of the residence until early-1930, when it was decided that board members Frank Amooore, J. McLeod and G. M. Spence were to produce a report into the construction of a new residence for the Park Superintendent.¹⁰

At the February 11th meeting of the Pukekura Park Board, a subcommittee including Frank Amooore, Horace Victor Griffiths, Fred Parker, and Percy Stainton was set up to investigate the matter further and report back at a later meeting.¹¹ Correspondence was also received from the Borough Council agreeing to subsidise 10/- in the £ up to £400, to assist in construction of the residence.¹² The Victoria Road site, between the Board's existing cottage and the Park Tennis and Croquet Club's grounds was decided upon later in February, and authorisation given to Superintendent Horton enabling the removal of branches and whole trees on the house site.¹³

Three large pine trees (*Pinus radiata*) were initially felled; however this wasn't without controversy.¹⁴ When the Board was advised that these trees had been felled and the timber sold to the Sash and Door Company, 'Father of the Park' Robert Clinton Hughes made protest at the practice of cutting down trees, commenting that "[t]o cut down these glorious monarchs of the forest so ruthlessly is nothing short of a crime".¹⁵ A further six large pines growing on the slope below the house were felled during July 1930; the aim being to enable the Superintendent to watch over the park to improve security and discourage acts of vandalism.¹⁶ Whilst the hillside was soon replanted with native trees and shrubs, in August 1931, a deputation of 28 persons approached the Board and voiced their disapproval of the wholesale destruction of pine trees in the park.¹⁷

Tenders for construction of the superintendent's residence were called for in mid-May 1930.¹⁸ The Board accepted William Bruce Haylock's tender of £1080 on the 23rd of May, and Horton, Amooore and Haylock roughly marked out the house on June 9th.¹⁹ A permit for the construction of the house was granted by the Borough Council to the Pukekura Park Board on the 14th of June.²⁰ A copy of the original plans are held by NPDC, and although they are not signed, it seems likely that the building was designed by either builder and occasional architect Frank Amooore, or architect Horace Victor

⁸ *Taranaki Budget & Weekly Herald*, 28 September 1925, page 51

⁹ *Taranaki Herald*, 4 May 1927, page

¹⁰ Pukekura Park Committee, Puke Ariki, ARC2003-862/2

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Medway, David. "The Superintendent's new residence fuels a controversy". *The Magazine of the Friends of Pukekura Park* 5, no. 2 (June 2010): 3-6.

¹⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 15 April 1930, page ...

¹⁶ Medway, David. "The Superintendent's new residence fuels a controversy". *The Magazine of the Friends of Pukekura Park* 5, no. 2 (June 2010): 3-6.

¹⁷ *Taranaki Daily News*, 22 August 1931, page

¹⁸ *Taranaki Herald*, 14 May 1930, page 7.

¹⁹ Thomas Horton Work Diary, Puke Ariki, ARC 2003-860

²⁰ NPBC Building Register Book 1927-33, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)

Heritage Buildings Report

Griffiths; both of whom were Pukekura Park Board members at the time.²¹

On the 10th of September 1930, Horton was informed by the Board that he could live in the soon to be completed house rent free.²² He was also told that he could have the old cottage and take what material he wanted; Horton contracted Haylock to dismantle the old house for £5.²³ On the 13th of September, Frank Amooore gave Horton the keys to his new house, although he didn't move in until the 6th of October.²⁴

Thomas Horton

Thomas Horton was born in England in 1867 and emigrated to Canterbury with his parents aboard the *Crusader* in 1873.²⁵ After serving an apprenticeship under Mr. W. E. Ivory, nurseryman, he relocated to the North Island and was foreman for seven years at Mr. Goddard's nurseries, Havelock North.²⁶ He married his first wife, Sarah Lean Humphrey's, on November 6th 1888 at the Salvation Army Barracks in Hastings.²⁷ Following three years as manager of the Fernleigh Nurseries at Mangatainoka, he was made redundant.²⁸ Doing odd jobs for a time, Horton acquired two acres of land near the site of the proposed Pahiatua Railway Station in 1898, on which after much hard work he established 'Premier Nurseries'.²⁹

Once, whilst removing a six-foot Rimu stump on the property in preparation for building a greenhouse, he was spotted by Premier Richard Seddon, who was on a lecturing tour in the district.³⁰ Seddon asked his driver to let him out and he went over to Horton and asked him what he was doing, when Horton replied he was establishing a nursery Seddon wished him the best of luck.³¹ Three years later, when visiting the district again, Seddon invited Horton to meet with him.³² Coincidentally, the first crop of grapes in the greenhouse were just about ripe and Horton presented the first two bunches to Seddon, whom offered to assist Horton with anything if he ever needed it.³³ Seddon was true to his word, and whilst in Wellington on a trip of Australasia (whilst recuperating from a case of acute lumbago), Seddon invited Horton to have supper with him at Parliament House.³⁴ On hearing that Horton was interested in visiting the principal nurseries in Australia, Seddon arranged for Horton letters of introduction to all the State Premier's except Queensland; Horton was introduced as the 'leading horticulturalist of New Zealand'.³⁵

In 1903, Horton established a second nursery at Hastings, with the firm now offering more than four hundred thousand fruit and ornamental trees for sale; by 1904 the firm was employing 52 persons including 12 travelling salesman across Australasia.³⁶ 1904 was also the year of establishment of the NZ Nursery and Seedsman's Association, of which Horton was elected its first president.³⁷ In 1909

²¹ NPDC Archives, 625/25

²² Thomas Horton Work Diary, Puke Ariki, ARC 2003-860

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Horton, Ian. (2006). *Horton's Trees Grow*. Ian Horton, Hastings.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

Heritage Buildings Report

he arranged for the first trial shipment of Hawkes Bay apples to London via Melbourne in cool storage.³⁸ In 1914 Horton established trade with Argentina following a trip there the previous year.³⁹ However, the First World War saw a significant decline in demand for trees and caused considerable disruption to international trade routes.⁴⁰ When the government abandoned a scheme to assist returned servicemen establish orchards, Horton had to burn 2,300,000 fruit trees and subsequently gave up the nursery business.⁴¹

After relocating to the Nelson area for a couple of years, Horton accepted a position as curator at Pukekura Park in March 1924.⁴² During his time at Pukekura Park, Horton oversaw the development of the fernery (opened 1928); the filling and development of the Fred Parker Lawn; the removal of pines and the planting of natives along the Racecourse Walk; the vesting of Pukekura Park in the New Plymouth Borough Council in 1929; construction of the Tea House in 1931; incorporation of the Brooklands property into Pukekura Park in 1934; the planting of the Fillis Street gully; and the planting of a large stand of Kauri trees on Brooklands Road.⁴³ It was during his time at Pukekura Park that in 1931 Thomas Horton married his second wife, Miss May Russell Southcombe, with the couple residing in the present house until 1949, when Thomas retired as curator.⁴⁴

Jack Goodwin

From 1949 until 1966 The house was home to John (Jack) W. Goodwin and his family. Born in South Canterbury, Jack worked for the Christchurch City Council before his appointment as Pukekura Park curator in 1949.⁴⁵ Jack's role at Pukekura Park was to 'bring back the people' following a period of under-funding and neglect during the Second World War.⁴⁶ Despite an outstanding knowledge of plants and forward-thinking approach to parks management, his tenure at Pukekura Park was not without controversy and projects such as construction of the lower lake fountain saw calls to "have him sent back to the South Island".⁴⁷ Goodwin was instrumental in amalgamating numerous disparate committees to form an autonomous Parks & Reserves Department at the New Plymouth City Council, and was later appointed its Director, a position he held until 1977.⁴⁸

Outside Pukekura Park, Goodwin was advisor to Douglas Cook during the establishment of Eastwoodhill Arboretum at Gisborne from 1944-64, and from 1951-67, Honorary Superintendent of the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust.⁴⁹ At Pukeiti he was involved in the original survey, overall planning, development and layout, served on the executive committee and the board; he was elected a life member and in 2001, patron.⁵⁰ Goodwin was a member of more than twenty other organisations from aquatic to avian, being a member of the Royal Horticultural Society from 1950; in 1978 he was awarded their Veitch Memorial Medal, the rare, highest distinction given outside the U.K.⁵¹ From 1954 he was a member of the Int. Dendrology Soc. and established the N. Z. Chapter.⁵² He was also a

³⁸ Boyd, Mary Beatrice. (1984). *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings*. Victoria University Press, Wellington

³⁹ Horton, Ian. (2006). *Horton's Trees Grow*. Ian Horton, Hastings.

⁴⁰ *Taranaki Herald*, 8 November 1949, page 1

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Horton, Ian. (2006). *Horton's Trees Grow*. Ian Horton, Hastings.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ *Taranaki Herald*, 8 November 1949, page 1

⁴⁵ Fuller, George. "John William Goodwin: 13 February 1912 - 8 November 2005" *New Zealand Garden Journal* 9, no. 1 (2006): 22-24.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

Heritage Buildings Report

Founder Member and N. Z. Delegate of the Int. Federation of Parks.⁵³ In June 2003 Jack became a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for his services to horticulture. Jack Goodwin passed away at Napier during November 2005, aged 93 years.⁵⁴

George Fuller

George Fuller took the reins from Goodwin in 1966 and resided in the house from 1965 until 1990. Born in Auckland, George left school at age 15 and worked for the original Palmers nursery at Glen Eden.⁵⁵ His connection with New Plymouth began during the 1940s when he relocated to the city to take up a position with Duncan & Davies at Westown, which was at the time the largest nursey in the Southern Hemisphere.⁵⁶ Eager to learn more about orchids, in 1947 George took a job as a deckhand on a ship returning to England and on arrival started work at Sander's Nursery in St Alban's; the largest orchid nursery in the world.⁵⁷ Whilst at Sander's George helped stage a gold-medal winning exhibit for the Chelsea Flower Show, and was a student at London's prestigious Kew Garden's for more than two years.⁵⁸ During the 1950s George worked for Elektroflora in Sweden, before later helping establish a chrysanthemum nursery in Malta.⁵⁹

On his return to New Zealand, it was a chance meeting with avid New Plymouth gardener Fred Parker which began George's 'obsession' with Pukekura Park. Fred was wanting to donate his extensive orchid collection to Pukekura Park, however, wouldn't do so until there was a competent person to care for it.⁶⁰ Fitting the bill perfectly, George was soon given the job of inducting Fred's orchid collection into Pukekura Park and shifted into the Victoria Road cottage with his wife Doris and their children during early-1965.⁶¹ The following year, George was appointed Pukekura Park curator and although oversaw many park improvement works, it is perhaps his revolutionary approach to managing the parks' important botanical collections; especially the many large and old trees throughout Pukekura and Brooklands.

Whilst Fuller retired as curator in 1990, his passion for Pukekura Park remained strong, regularly lobbying NPDC on park issues. In 2009 he successfully campaigned to preserve more than two-dozen native trees that stood in the way of the council's new entrance to the Bowl of Brooklands; for his efforts he was named 2009 Taranaki Daily News Person of the Year.⁶² George was awarded an MBE for service to orchids and the community in 1990, and was also honoured as the patron of the Orchid Council of New Zealand; he passed away at New Plymouth during June 2015 aged 86 years.⁶³

Following George Fuller's retirement, the former Superintendents' Residence was occupied by parks staff and has latterly been rented to members of the public.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ *Taranaki Daily News*, 1 July 2009, page 11

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

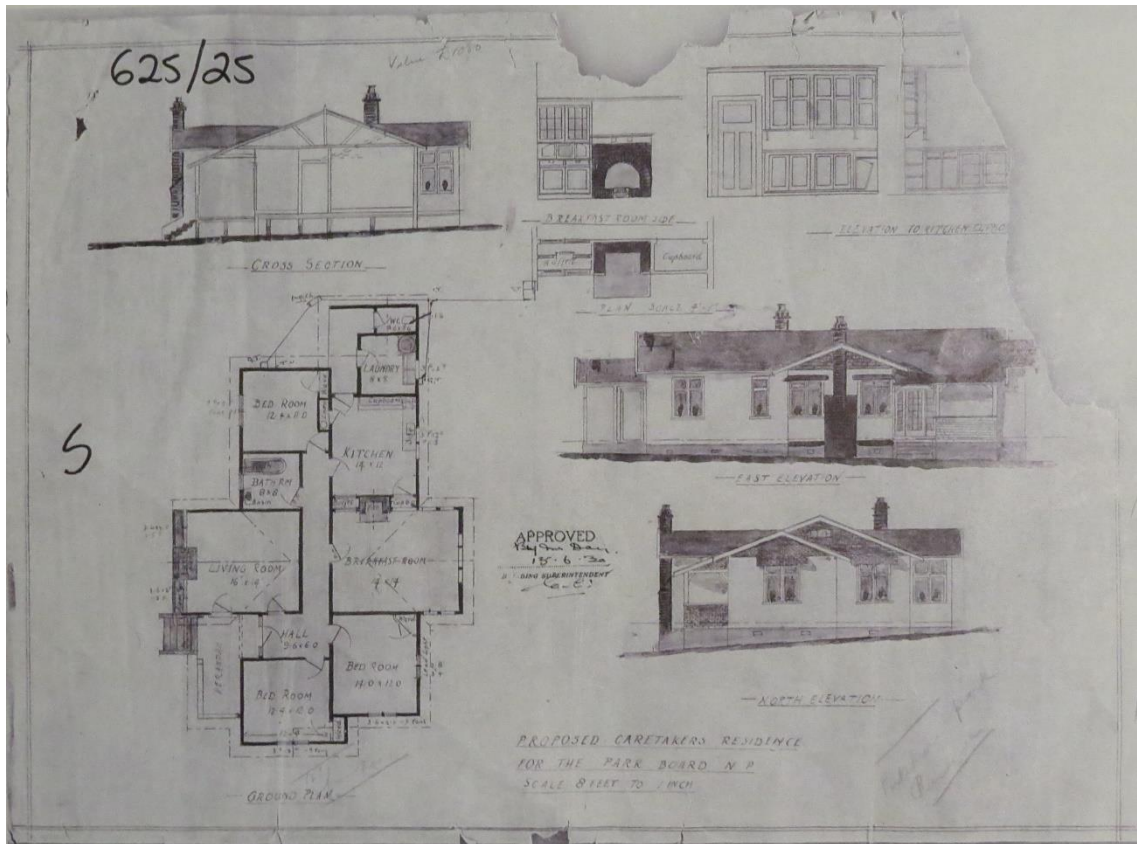
⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² *Taranaki Daily News*, 1 January 2010, page 1

⁶³ *Taranaki Daily News*, 22 June 2015, page 3



Heritage Buildings Report



'Proposed Caretakers Residence for the Park Board', NPDC Archives

Reference Sources

See footnotes.

Description

The former Pukekura Park superintendents' residence is located just inside the western boundary of Pukekura Park, between Victoria Road and a steep bank. The building is nestled amongst a setting of mature trees and is one of a number of built heritage features contributing to the special character of the wider Pukekura Park area.

To the south of the building is a small shed clad in corrugated steel and which is of a similar age to the main house; scrambling over this shed is an old grape vine likely planted by Thomas Horton sometime during his residence at the house. A recently constructed timber fence runs along much of the Victoria Road frontage, and aside from being of little architectural or aesthetic value, partially obscures the dwelling from public view.

Designed in the local bungalow vernacular, the main form of the house is a primary NW-SE gable with several smaller projecting gables. The walls are clad in bevel-back weatherboard, and the roof sheathed in corrugated steel. Typical of the bungalow style, the house incorporates features such as shingling and exposed rafters.

The principal north-eastern elevation faces towards Pukekura Park and incorporates a divided pane main entrance door fitted with patterned glass beneath a partially enclosed porch. An external brick

Heritage Buildings Report

chimney rises from the centre of the projecting gable and is flanked either side by a pair of timber casements with fanlights. Additional casements with fanlights are located further south.

On the north-western elevation, a pair of timber casements with fanlights and shingled hood with curved brackets are fitted to the centre of the projecting gable. A second identical pair of casements with shingled hood are incorporated into the western side of the main gable wall, the upper gable end is bell cast and corbelled with exposed purlins.

The south-western elevation features another projecting gable with timber casements incorporating fanlights and hoods on all three sides. Further north is a rectangular leaded window, whilst additional casements are situated to the south of the gable.

Assessment:

Historical	This building has considerable heritage significance for its use as the Pukekura Park superintendents' residence for a period of 60 years from 1930 until 1990. Successive occupiers and Pukekura Park curators Thomas Horton, John (Jack) Goodwin and George Fuller were not only integral characters in the development of Pukekura Park, but were also all internationally respected horticulturalists who made enormous contributions to the field of horticulture within their respective areas of expertise.	✓
Importance to Community	Although the history of the former curator's residence is little known, many of the Pukekura Park attractions most valued by both locals and visitors were developed by Horton, Goodwin and Fuller during the periods in which they called this house their home.	✓
Architecture & Construction	A good example of a single-storey timber bungalow in the local vernacular, with the bungalow style belonging to an important period in New Plymouth's architectural history.	✓
Setting and Context	The house is one of a number of features contributing to the special character of the wider Pukekura Park area.	✓
Archaeology	-	
Representativeness, rarity and integrity	The building retains a high degree of integrity, and the exterior remains much as it was when first constructed. It is representative of the single-storey timber bungalows constructed in New Plymouth during the 1920s and 1930s.	✓
Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓