



## Heritage Buildings Report

**Site ID**

**Building/Site Name**

New Plymouth Technical School Technical Engineering Building  
(Former)

**Address**

99 Liardet Street, New Plymouth



### Statement of Significance

This large concrete building was constructed during 1916-17 and originally housed the Technical Engineering Department of the New Plymouth Technical School. The building has historical significance for its long association with technical education in New Plymouth and its construction is associated with a period of significant growth in popularity of technical education during the First World War years. Designed by Charles Howard Moore, who was later responsible for the design of the Taranaki Type Free Air Classroom, this building is one of his earliest substantial commissions for the Taranaki Education Board. Located in a highly visible position a short distance from central New Plymouth and near the main route between the CBD and Pukekura Park, this building is a significant element in the local streetscape. The building is part of an educational area located on St Michael's Square and which is strongly associated with the development and administration of education within Taranaki during the twentieth century. A locally uncommon example of a neo-Georgian influenced educational building from the 1910s, this building has some technical significance for its relatively early use of concrete construction methods.



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## Legal Information and Heritage Status

**Legal Description** PT Section 2 SO 13319

**District Plan Item/ Map No.**

**Heritage New Zealand List** Not listed

## Construction Information

**Date of Construction** 1916-17

**Principal Materials** Reinforced concrete, Jarrah beams, corrugated steel

**Construction Professionals** Charles Howard Moore (architect), Charlie Roebuck (builder)

## History

The New Plymouth Technical School was founded in 1903 and was one of a growing number of similar institutions opened across New Zealand during the early 1900s.<sup>1</sup> Classes were first held at New Plymouth Central School, before a new purpose-built brick building was opened on the Liardet Street site during 1907.<sup>2</sup> Initially offering mostly evening classes aimed at those entering the workforce straight after primary school, new day classes were soon added, offering an alternative to the more academic focused high school education.<sup>3</sup> Classes offered by the school included commercial and homecraft subjects for girls, building, engineering, electrical, chemistry and draughting for boys, along with core subjects such as English, science, bookkeeping and art.<sup>4</sup>

By early-1916, growing student numbers, including an increasing number of returned servicemen, was putting significant pressure on existing classroom facilities. The situation with the technical engineering class was particularly acute, with there being no space to store a large amount of recently acquired 'delicate' electrical apparatus.<sup>5</sup> As mid-year approached, teaching conditions at the school had become more chaotic, with classes now conducted at three locations; either the main building, the Whiteley Hall, or the Baptist Sunday School.<sup>6</sup> The recently acquired electrical equipment had to be stored in the plumbing room, whilst both the science and art classes were being used for a range of purposes for which they were never intended.<sup>7</sup> Whilst the Education Board recognised the need for additional accommodation, it was noted that money for additions was simply not available at the present time.<sup>8</sup>

However, two months later, during late-July, the Taranaki Education Board was advised by the Education Department that a grant of £1471, applied for some time earlier, was available for the extension of buildings at the school.<sup>9</sup> Whilst it was noted that this grant was originally designed to cover extensions to several buildings, the cost of building had risen considerably in the interim (owing

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<sup>1</sup> Insull, H. A. H., ed. *Beginnings, Struggles, Progress: A retrospect of the administration of the Taranaki Education Board, 1841-1971*. New Plymouth: Taranaki Education Board, 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Martin, Robin, Fenton, Christine, & Karena, Tonga. *40 Years: Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki*. New Plymouth: Western Institute of Technology, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 24 February 1916, page 3

<sup>6</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 25 May 1916, page 6

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 26 July 1916, page 4

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to the war) and the grant would only cover the erection of the new engineering building.<sup>10</sup> During mid-August 1916, tenders were advertised by Taranaki Education Board secretary P. S. Whitcombe for the construction of a technical engineering building in concrete or brick, with the architect being then Education Board overseer Charles Howard Moore.<sup>11</sup>

Moore became the Taranaki Education Board's overseer during 1909 and was formally appointed to the position of architect in 1920.<sup>12</sup> Moore was responsible for designing, building, and maintaining school buildings across Taranaki, and is probably best known for his development the 'Taranaki Type Open Air Classroom' during the 1920s.<sup>13</sup> The Taranaki Type Open Air Classroom was claimed to be an improvement on the 'Fendalton Type Open Air Classroom' and became the predominant design for Taranaki School classrooms from the mid-1920s until the late 1930s.<sup>14</sup> Moore held the position of Education Board architect until 1943.<sup>15</sup>

The contractor for the new Engineering Room was Charlie Roebuck, whose tender was accepted during late-August 1916. Charlie Roebuck was a well-known local builder, drainlayer, plasterer, and bricklayer, who also specialised in the construction of reinforced concrete buildings. A permit for the construction of the engineering workshop was granted to the Education Board by the New Plymouth Borough Council on 14th September 1916; the estimated value was noted as £1500.<sup>16</sup> By late-September 1916, it had been reported by Moore that the contractor had made a start with the work and that this was progressing satisfactorily.<sup>17</sup> The following month, it was reported that construction was progressing steadily, although wet weather had caused some delays; the ground floor walls were in position and the supports for the first floor were being laid by the end of the month.<sup>18</sup>

The building was ready to receive its roof by late November, by which time the concrete ground floor had been laid and an application had been made to the Education Department for a grant to cover the cost of wood blocks to be placed over the finished concrete floor.<sup>19</sup> By February 1917, work on the building was steadily proceeding towards a finish, with machinery beginning to be placed in position.<sup>20</sup> It appears the new building was in use by late March, although interior fitting-out continued for some months, much being carried out by students themselves.

Following legislative changes in 1927, the New Plymouth Technical School became the first technical college in New Zealand to merge its operations with the local high school, becoming the technical division of the New Plymouth Boys High School (NPBHS).<sup>21</sup> In 1972, the technical division of the NPBHS became the Taranaki Polytechnic, which operated from both Liardet Street and another city site until 1976, when the present campus was constructed at Welbourn.<sup>22</sup> Despite the shift, the technical engineering building remained in use for vocational education purposes until 1999, when the Taranaki Polytechnic, now the Western Institute of Technology (WITT), vacated the site.<sup>23</sup> The

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 14 August 1916, page 7

<sup>12</sup> Insull, H. A. H., ed. *Beginnings, Struggles, Progress: A retrospect of the administration of the Taranaki Education Board, 1841-1971*. New Plymouth: Taranaki Education Board, 1971.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> NPBC Building Register Book 1902-22, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)

<sup>17</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 28 September 1916, page 7

<sup>18</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 25 October 1916, page 6; *Taranaki Daily News*, 1 November 1916, page 4

<sup>19</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 22 November 1916, page 7

<sup>20</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 28 February 1917, page 4

<sup>21</sup> Martin, Robin, Fenton, Christine, & Karena, Tonga. *40 Years: Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki*. New Plymouth: Western Institute of Technology, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> *The Daily News*, 20 December 1999, page 4

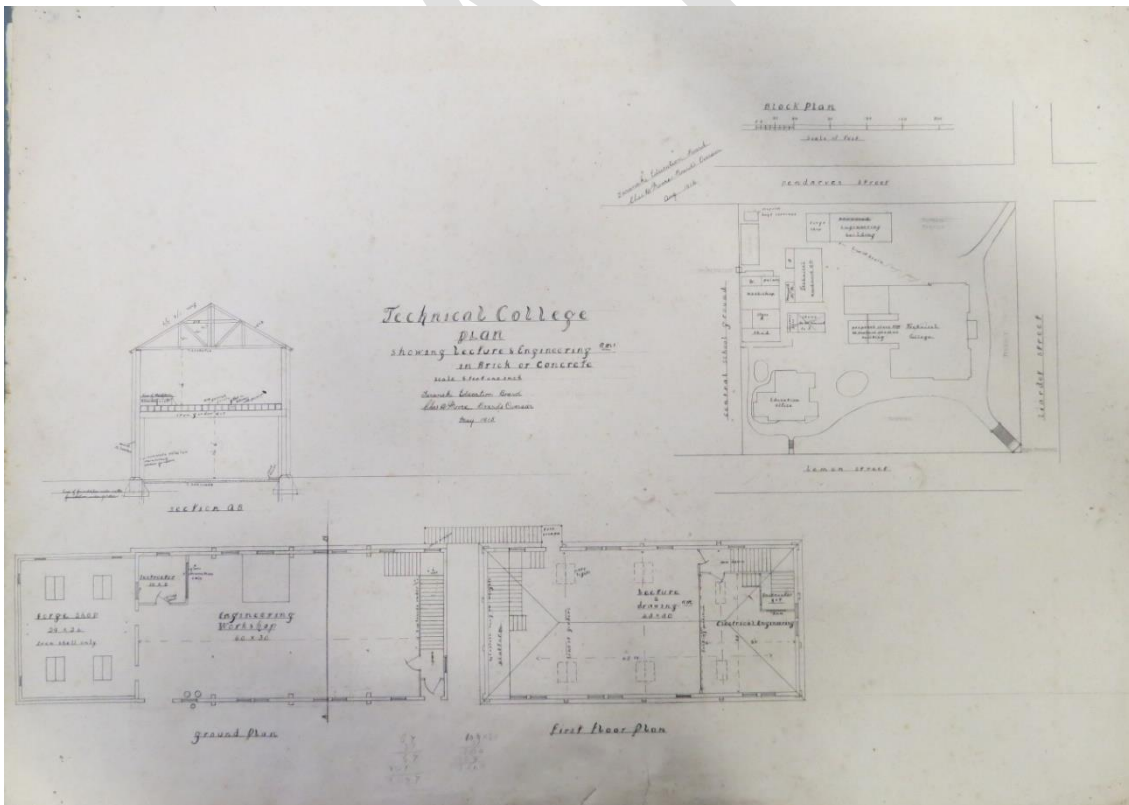


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building has latterly been used as a dance studio, first by Patten Dance Academy, and presently by LGS Dance.



1925 view of Technical College showing main building and engineering workshop, J. R. Wall, Puke Ariki, A.3.144



Technical College Plan Showing Lecture and Engineering Rooms in Brick or Concrete, Charles Howard Moore, August 1916, Puke Ariki, ARC2015-032

Reference Sources

See footnotes.

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## Description

The former Technical Engineering Building is located in central New Plymouth, a few blocks south of Devon Street, on the northern side of Pendarves Street, just east of Liardet Street. The building is part of an educational area located on St Michael's Square and which is strongly associated with the development and administration of education within Taranaki during the twentieth century. Significant buildings within this area include the now much modified former New Plymouth Technical School main building (1906-07), the former Taranaki Education Board Offices (1908/1921-22), and the New Plymouth Central School main building (1932).

The main form of the former Technical Engineering Building is a two-storied rectilinear structure of an imposing nature. The building is probably best described as belonging to the neo-Georgian style popular in New Zealand at the time, although, perhaps for practical reasons (this was after all constructed as an engineering workshop), lacks the symmetrical fenestration patterns usually associated with the style. Constructed principally of reinforced concrete, the building has a concrete ground floor, with timber first floor supported by heavy timber (Jarrah) beams, which are still visible inside; the timber-framed hipped-gable roof is sheathed in corrugated steel. The exterior concrete walls are plastered to reveal stonework, with the windows being a mixture of top and bottom-hinged divided timber casements.

The principal front elevation faces roughly north-west towards the main technical school building and is divided into five equal bays delineated by full-height lesenes or pilaster strips. The main entrance door is positioned within a recessed porch at the western end of the elevation, with an additional pair of double-doors located at the eastern end; the surrounds of both being stop-chamfered. Windows are asymmetrically arranged in singles and pairs and provide ample northern light to interior spaces.

The south-western elevation is fitted with a tall and slender divided casement (lighting the main entrance), with a central pair of divided casements at first floor level. As with the north-western elevation, the south-eastern elevation (fronting Pendarves Street) is divided into five equal bays delineated by full-height lesenes. The fenestration pattern is similarly chaotic, with windows asymmetrically arranged in singles and pairs; a first-floor door and associated timber stairs are located at the eastern end of the elevation. The north-eastern elevation incorporates a modern, central ground floor door, with the only other feature of note being the un-plastered gable outline of the former workshop building (originally abutting the engineering building).

## Assessment:

<b>Historical</b>	This building has historical significance for its long association with technical education in New Plymouth, with its construction associated with a period of significant growth in popularity of technical education during the First World War years. Designed by Charles Howard Moore (who was later responsible for the design of the Taranaki Type Free Air Classroom), this building is one of his earliest substantial commissions for the Taranaki Education Board.	✓
<b>Importance to Community</b>	Associated with vocational training until 1999, a considerable number of Taranaki trade professionals likely received their training within this building.	✓
<b>Architecture &amp; Construction</b>	A locally uncommon example of a neo-Georgian influenced educational building from the 1910s. The	✓



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	building has some technical significance for its relatively early use of concrete construction methods.	
<b>Setting and Context</b>	Located in a highly visible position a short distance from central New Plymouth and near the main route between the CBD and Pukekura Park, this building is a significant element in the local streetscape, especially when viewed from Pendarves Street. The building is part of an educational area located on St Michael's Square and which is strongly associated with the development and administration of education within Taranaki during the twentieth century. Significant buildings within this area include the now much modified former New Plymouth Technical School main building (1906-07), the former Taranaki Education Board Offices (1908/1921-22), and the New Plymouth Central School main building (1932).	✓
<b>Archaeology</b>	-	
<b>Representativeness, rarity and integrity</b>	Although subject to some exterior modifications, namely replacement of some joinery elements and loss of attached workshop buildings, the exterior of this building retains a relatively high degree of external integrity.	✓
<b>Meets threshold for listing</b> (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓

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