



Heritage Buildings and Items Report

Site ID	145
Name	Commercial Building
Address	1 Kelly Street, Inglewood



Statement of Significance

The building at 1 Kelly Street is an important relic of Inglewood's birth as a town. Built in 1875, almost as soon the town was laid out, it may be the oldest commercial building left in the town. The building has been through three major phases of use – as a butcher's (1875-1910), lawyers' offices (1911-1984) and as a café (1995 to the present day). Over that time, it has been associated with important local figures, such as George and Herbert Curtis, who established the butcher's shop, and a series of lawyers and legal partnerships, including prominent New Plymouth firms who used the building as a branch office.

The major changes of use have led to alterations in fabric, most notably the street elevations, which were almost certainly changed from corrugated iron to timber cladding, with new joinery, in 1911. The distinctive verandah, although rebuilt at least once, is also an original or very early feature of the building. The building sits on a prominent street corner opposite the equally old Inglewood Railway Station (1876) and it forms an important nexus with that and the adjacent Inglewood Hotel (1905).

The building is a compact and modest commercial structure with a long rectangular plan, and a general Victorian/Edwardian character, most notable for its verandah that sweeps around the street corner, its steeply pitched roof and its fine timber joinery.



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Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description	Lot 1 DP 12190
Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga List Number	870
Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Category	2

Construction Information

Date of Construction	1875
Principal Materials	Timber, corrugated iron
Construction Professionals	<p>Frank Messenger (1863-1945) https://terangiaoaonunui.pukeariki.com/story-collections/taranaki-stories/frank-messenger-a-legacy-in-design</p> <p>William Percival (1856-1921)</p> <p>Percival was the first Mayor of Inglewood (first elected in 1905). Born in America but raised in the north of England, he came to New Zealand in 1888. He set up the architectural practice of Messrs Perry and Percival, Inglewood, which then became that of Messrs Percival and Messenger.¹</p>

History

The building at 1 Kelly Street may be the oldest commercial building still standing in Inglewood, having been constructed soon after the town was founded. It is a building with three distinct histories, as a butcher's, commercial premises and, most recently, a café.

The section was purchased by George Curtis, variously a farmer, cattle buyer and butcher, in June 1875,² the year that Inglewood was established. The town, which was laid out on the intersection of two major roads (now SH3 and 3A) in early 1875, was reached by rail the following year (the line from New Plymouth to Inglewood opened in November 1877). George Curtis must have constructed the building soon after taking occupation of the land. In January 1876, the *Taranaki Herald* sent a reporter on a journey overland through Taranaki. In his description of Inglewood he noted 'On the other side of Kelly-street is Mr. Curtis' butcher's shop - an iron building of considerable size.'³ This must refer to a cladding of corrugated galvanised steel on the building, later removed. By this time, according to the correspondent, there were '120 to 130 houses' in the township, which had been built in a clearing made in the dense bush.

George Newsham Curtis was born in Omata, the son of George Newsham Curtis snr. His brother Herbert Boomer Curtis joined him in Inglewood and together they set up the butcher's shop. Both brothers were listed as butchers in Inglewood in street directories from 1878-79,⁴ although the shop was clearly established prior to this. The site opposite the railway station was a prime location. The

¹ *Stratford Evening Post*, 25 July 1921, p.6

² TN2/287, LINZ

³ *Taranaki Herald*, 26 January 1876, p.2

⁴ *Wises New Zealand Street Directory*, 1878-79 -



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brothers were close and collaborated on various business ventures as Curtis Brothers, including the first shop in Stratford. Herbert also had a farm at Manaia.

At some point, the butcher's shop was turned over to Herbert because George was listed as a shopkeeper by the mid-1880s.⁵ In 1886, it was reported that 'Messrs. Curtis Brothers are building an addition to the premises in which they carry on their butchery business.'⁶ It is not known in which direction this extension was but it may have been on Matai Street (then Mountain Road). The shop had a residence attached to it and it is possible that the pitched roof building to the immediate south (set back from the road and now on a separate title) is that residence. The same article mentioned that the brothers were opening a drapery business in Inglewood, but it is not known where that business was located.

In July 1893, Herbert bought the property off George.⁷ By this time, he had 'leased his residence and butchery business to [Thomas] Waldrom'⁸ and went farming full-time, eventually building up a significant land-holding. He was later mayor of Inglewood Borough.

In 1896, Herbert Curtis leased the property to Abel Greiner and John Hook. In 1900, Emil Gernhoefer took over the business (there is no indication he took over the lease), and then bought the property outright from Herbert Curtis in 1904. Unfortunately, in 1906, Gernhoefer collapsed in the Inglewood Hotel and died. His widow Sarah, with seven mouths to feed, continued the business for the next two years, but in 1908 she put it on the market.⁹ The advertisement described the property as 1,113m² in extent, containing a 'butcher's shop, dwelling, and outbuildings', with a frontage of 55 metres on Kelly Street and 20 metres on Mountain [Matai] Road.

The property took a further two years to sell. The new owner was Joseph Gibbs. In 1911, he cut the property in half and sold the corner portion (including the shop and residence) to the legal firm of Weston & Weston. There is some question as to whether the changes undertaken at the time to convert the building into legal offices essentially created a new building. A newspaper report in January 1911 stated that 'Messrs. Weston and Weston have bought a piece of land at Gernhoeffer's (sic) corner and intend building offices there shortly'.¹⁰ A Christopher Aubrey painting (1896) may be the earliest image of the building and it confirms that the form of the building is largely the same as today. This suggests that Weston and Weston undertook a major renovation but kept the overall form of the building and its structure above the verandah. It is likely that this is when the corrugated steel cladding was removed, the building reclad with weatherboards and window joinery and the door on Kelly Street installed. The door on the corner may also have been added at this time.¹¹ A safe that is still in use (it actually sits on the adjoining property) may have been installed at this time. It adjoins a matching safe in the next property. A contemporary report (April 1911) referred to the architects as Percival and Messenger.¹² (Note: It's not clear if that refers to the well-known New Plymouth architect, Frank Messenger, or another Messenger).

Regardless of the work done by Weston and Weston, the building's age and provenance were clearly understood in Inglewood. In 1924, in a review of Inglewood's first 50 years, the *Taranaki Daily News*, in a reference to the building, noted that it was erected in 1875 and that it was one of a number of buildings still standing from that time.¹³

Thomas and Claude Weston operated offices in New Plymouth and Inglewood. The Inglewood office was initially managed by Henry Billing. Thomas Weston died in 1912, but the firm carried on,

⁵ *Wises New Zealand Street Directory*, 1885-86

⁶ *Taranaki Herald*, 21 April 1886, p.2

⁷ TN2/287, LINZ

⁸ *Taranaki Herald*, 24 January 1893, p.2

⁹ *Taranaki Daily News*, 11 July 1908, p.3

¹⁰ *Taranaki Herald*, 19 January 1911, p.4

¹¹ See footnote 20. Christopher Aubrey's 1896 painting shows no corner door.

¹² *Taranaki Herald*, 5 April 1911, p.7

¹³ *Taranaki Daily News*, 24 October 1924, p.29 (Supplement)



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albeit with different names as partners came and went (Weston and Billing, and then Weston, Ball and Grayling). Claude Weston later left the firm to practice in Auckland in 1931 and was appointed King's Counsel in 1934. He was also a Judge Advocate-General during World War II and a key figure in the formation of the National Party (he was the party's second president).

It's not clear that the firm was using the building anyway. In 1915, William Armstrong took over the management of the Inglewood office for Weston and Billing,¹⁴ but by 1920 he was no longer being advertised as the firm's local solicitor. In 1931, Weston and Billing was dissolved and Henry Billing set up two new partnerships. Charles Deem moved from New Plymouth to Inglewood to become the resident partner of the firm of Billing and Deem. It had 'taken over the legal practice of Mr. W. H. Armstrong',¹⁵ who had run into financial difficulties.¹⁶ At the same time, Billing also set up in partnership with Norman Little in New Plymouth to form Billing and Little.¹⁷ Throughout this period, the property was retained by the Weston family.

Claude Weston died in 1946 and, in 1949, the family sold the property to Walter Messenger and Leo Kohn.¹⁸ Messenger & Kohn was described as public accountants, company secretaries, insurance and commission agents.¹⁹ They had offices on the same property, but in the adjoining building, which presumably included the former Curtis dwelling. In 1951, a third of the property was transferred to Leo's brother Alick Kohn. After Leo Kohn's death in 1961, his share of this property was transferred to the two remaining parties. Following Alick Kohn's death in 1969, the property was aggregated in Walter Messenger's hands.²⁰ His firm changed names several times, ending up as Shepherd and Kohn.

In the early 1950s, Hamish Shearer, Charles Deem's nephew, joined him in partnership to form Deem and Shearer. Deem, a bachelor who lived in the Inglewood Hotel, died in 1955, leaving Hamish Shearer running the practice on his own at the age of 24.²¹ During his occupancy, there was another business – a veterinary clinic – occupying space at the rear of the building.²²

The property was still owned by Walter Messenger in 1977 when he subdivided it in two. This put the two offices on separate titles and the corner building was sold to Hamish Shearer's sons, Geoff and Terry, then both law students at Victoria University, in a deal organised by their father.²³ Geoff joined his father in practice in 1979. He recalls that the building still had a coal fire and a coal shed at the rear.²⁴ It continued to be occupied by Deem and Shearer until 1984 when the practice moved to the former Inglewood County Council building. Geoff Shearer went on to become a senior partner of the long-established Taranaki legal firm of Govett Quilliam. The new owners of the building were Sally Fabish and Janet Jackson, whose husbands renovated the building for a new purpose – Yvonne's Sun & Beauty clinic.²⁵

In 1994, the building began a new chapter in its history when it was bought by B.F.E. Ltd (Russell and Marguerite Boddington) who supported the conversion of the building to MacFarlane's Caffé, managed by the Boddingtons' daughter Kate and son-in-law Craig MacFarlane. Although there was considerable scepticism about this initiative, the café, which opened in 1995, was massively popular

¹⁴ *Taranaki Herald*, 7 October 1915, p.3

¹⁵ *Taranaki Daily News*, 3 November 1931, p.6

¹⁶ *Stratford Evening Post*, 29 October 1931, p.5

¹⁷ *Taranaki Daily News*, 8 December 1931, p.1

¹⁸ CT TN70/26, LINZ

¹⁹ *Wise's New Zealand Post Office Directory*, 1955

²⁰ CT TN70/26, LINZ

²¹ Pers. comm. Geoff Shearer to Michael Kelly, 9 July 2024

²² Ibid.

²³ CT TNE1/209, LINZ; pers. comm. Geoff Shearer to Michael Kelly

²⁴ Pers. comm. Geoff Shearer to Michael Kelly

²⁵ 'About Caffé Windsor', <https://caffewindsor.co.nz/about/> [retrieved 5 July 2024]



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with locals and visitors alike.²⁶ Craig MacFarlane went on to become a successful café and restaurant owner in New Plymouth and further afield.

In 2010, the building was purchased by Zac Scown and Kim Eichstaedt (with GQ Trustees) and they opened Caffé Windsor. The café continues, under new management, to this day. The building was purchased by Kelly Street Properties (Michael Longstaff and Karen Moratti) in 2023.

Apart from the change in the treatment of the two elevations, the other main feature of the building is its verandah, which has been through many iterations. The Aubrey painting from 1896 shows the verandah only on the front elevation.²⁷ It was extended to the side elevation by c.1910 and it is assumed that the gabled dormer above the Kelly Street entrance was built about that time. The verandah was removed from the Matai Street elevation by the 1950s (it was there in 1947²⁸) but was reinstated in the 1990s.

Reference Sources

See footnotes.

Description

This is a compact and modest old single-storey commercial building, set on a prominent corner site on a main road, opposite the railway station to the east and the Inglewood Hotel to the north, a setting that gives something of the flavour of the town as it was in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The form of the building is a simple gabled prism with a steeply pitched roof and a small lean-to at the rear that occupies the full extent of its site. It is essentially one room wide stretched out over a long narrow plot. A broad shallow-pitched verandah wraps the two exposed sides of the building, chamfered around the street corner and interrupted with a small gabled dormer at the centre of the side elevation. The combination of the steep roof, the breadth of the verandah and its low eave height makes these elements visually dominant (the verandah puts the walls into shadow). The design of the building indicates its Victorian origins in its straightforward form, its long and low proportions and in its verandah, with its abstracted screening and chamfered framing timbers. Features from its Edwardian reincarnation include the rusticated weatherboard cladding and the large double-hung windows, which, with their delicate joinery and glazing bars, are a particularly prominent feature that occupy virtually all of the wall at the east elevation and a significant proportion of the north wall, and the timber infill at the east gable end.

There are two entry points, one on the chamfered street corner, via a pair of glazed doors between fretwork brackets and stylised fluted timber pilasters, and the other through a handsome glazed entry door and surround with side lights and top lights, denoted by a small gabled dormer on the side street.

The interior is notable for its board and batten ceilings with fretwork ventilation roses, and for the large 'fireproof and burglar-proof' document safe.

²⁶ Pers. comm. Geoff Shearer to Michael Kelly

²⁷ 'Untitled, 1896', A96.982, Puke Ariki

²⁸ See WA-05600-F, 21 February 1947, Alexander Turnbull Library



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Assessment

Historical

Although the history of this building is relatively prosaic, its importance to Inglewood lies in its age and connection to the town's beginnings, along with its long period of use. The building has made its own contribution to Inglewood's commercial history, having had, primarily, three distinct phases of use over its life. It has connections with butchers and farmers George and Herbert Curtis, amongst the town's earliest settlers and also influential in the early history of Stratford. Herbert was later Mayor of Inglewood. The building was associated with a long list of lawyers who kept offices in Inglewood, including Weston and Weston and their successors. Claude Weston, a King's Counsel and a president of the National Party, owned the building for over 30 years. The building is also associated with Billing and Deem and Deem and Shearer, who had a long connection with Inglewood. As a café, it has been a remarkably successful business, much visited by locals and visitors alike. This has, in turn, lifted its public profile significantly.

✓

Architects Percival and Messenger, who did much work in Inglewood and further afield, are also associated with the building. They left their mark on this building through the changes made for Weston and Weston in 1911.

Importance to Community

A plaque on the building indicates its importance to the community, but its significance to Inglewood has been recognised since the first decades of the 20th century. The building's visibility as a place of heritage value has increased significantly since it became a café in 1995.

✓

Architecture and Technology

This is a compact and modest commercial structure with a long rectangular plan, and its Victorian / Edwardian character, notable for its broad verandah that sweeps around the street corner, its steeply pitched roof and its delicate timber joinery.

✓

Setting and Context

The building occupies a prominent corner shop on a main road, close to both the Inglewood Hotel and the railway station, both important features of the old town. Its immediate context is dominated by modern buildings.

✓

Archaeology

The property is an archaeological site as defined by the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. Information about the construction and use of the building could be uncovered by archaeological techniques.

✓

Representativeness, Rarity and Integrity

There is only a handful of buildings left that were directly connected with the founding of Inglewood and this is one of them. It may be the oldest commercial building still standing in the town. The building has been significantly altered over time and does not retain a

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great deal of fabric from its earliest years. However, the building's appearance does convey that accumulation of history and change.

Meets threshold for listing

(three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)

✓