

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Retaining Wall and Wrought Iron Fence

Address

11 Vivian Street, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

This attractive stone retaining wall and wrought iron fence was likely erected in 1902 for then property owner Mr Hugh Baily; it was likely designed by noted New Plymouth architect Frank Messenger who designed extensive additions to the now-demolished house at this time. The wall has historic significance as a reminder that this was formerly a residential neighbourhood which by the early-1900s was home to some of New Plymouth's finest residential buildings; of which most have since been demolished. Construction of the wall is largely a consequence of late-nineteenth century street-lowering works and is a tangible reminder of the large-scale civic works program undertaken by the Borough Council in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. This is one of the best surviving examples of a stone retaining wall with associated wrought iron fence in New Plymouth and has technical value for the use of local Taranaki andesite. The wall retains a high degree of integrity and contributes positively to the character of the immediate streetscape.



Heritage Buildings Report

Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description Lot 1 DP 11268

District Plan Item/ Map No.

Heritage New Zealand List Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction Circa 1902

Principal Materials Taranaki andesite, wrought steel

Construction Professionals Frank Messenger (presumed architect)

History

Town Section 736 was purchased by William Dawson Webster, who also owned several neighbouring sections, from Frederick Alonzo Carrington in 1879. The property remained vacant for a number of years and it wasn't until about 1896-97 that Webster had a single-storey villa erected on the site. The 1896-97 rating book makes no mention of a house on Town Section 736 and unfortunately the rates books for 1897-1900 are presently missing. However, during April 1897 Webster advertised a new six-roomed cottage to let in Vivian Street and may refer to this property.¹ The present retaining wall was not erected at the same time as the house and is absent from a circa 1898 photograph of the property.²

In October 1900 Town Section 736 and house was purchased from Webster by accountant Hugh Baily.³ The Baily's initially resided in the single-storey villa, however in early 1902 commissioned noted New Plymouth architect Frank Messenger to design extensive additions to the house, which was at that stage less than a decade old. Frank Messenger was at the time the Baily's neighbour, residing in the house at present 17 Vivian Street, designed by Messenger and erected in 1899-1900.⁴ The additions completely altered the house and involved the addition of a second storey; a permit for this work was granted to Baily by the New Plymouth Borough Council on the 5th of April 1902 and had an estimated cost of £330.⁵

It seems highly likely that the present stone retaining wall and fence was constructed at the time of the 1902 additions, with Frank Messenger the probable architect. Messenger had earlier had a stone wall constructed at his own house at 17 Vivian Street and also designed the concrete and iron retaining wall and fence on the Vivian Street frontage of nearby St Mary's Church a year earlier. The villa on this property was replaced with four units in 1974, however, the stone retaining wall with wrought iron fence was retained.

¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 2 April 1897, page 3

² Detail from circa early-1898 view of Vivian Street looking south-east towards Marsland Hill, by George Herbert White. House still in single storey form and stone retaining wall yet to be constructed. Puke Ariki Collection, A.3.24

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

⁴ Crimp, Hamish, 'McAllum Residence, 17 Vivian Street (circa 1899-1900)', *Kete New Plymouth*, <http://ketenewplymouth.peoplesnetworknz.info/en/site>; accessed 08 March 2019.

⁵ NPBC Building Register Book 1902-22, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)



Heritage Buildings Report



Detail from circa early-1898 view of Vivian Street looking south-east towards Marsland Hill, by George Herbert White. House still in single storey form and stone retaining wall yet to be constructed. Puke Ariki Collection, A.3.24



Lower Carrington Street and Vivian Street from Powderham Street, New Plymouth, John Reginald Wall, circa 1930s. Puke Ariki Collection, PHO2015-0102

Reference Sources

See footnotes.

Heritage Buildings Report

Description

This retaining wall is located at the eastern end of Vivian Street on the fringe of New Plymouth's CBD. The area was settled early in New Plymouth's history and although the surrounding blocks still contain some interesting heritage buildings (notably St Mary's Cathedral), development pressures since the 1960s has seen the demolition and removal of many older buildings; including the original villa on this site.

The combination of sloping topography and street lowering and widening works saw a number of retaining walls constructed in the area during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Notable surviving examples in the vicinity include the andesite walls at 17 Vivian Street (circa 1899-1900), Sir Victor Davies Park (circa 1875), 73 Brougham Street (circa 1921), and the Brougham Street frontage of St Mary's Cathedral (1920); a concrete retaining wall with wrought fence also extends along the Vivian Street frontage of St Mary's (1901).

This retaining wall at 11 Vivian Street is principally constructed from stacked cut and rubble local Taranaki andesite, possibly obtained from nearby sources such as the Huatoki Stream or beachfront. Extending across much of the street frontage, the wall also extends a short distance towards the south-east at either end.

The entire wall is capped with a moulded cement coping, atop which is a wrought iron fence principally composed of vertical spindles through a single flat bar, with each spindle capped with a simple moulded fleur-de-lis. Extending a short distance towards the south-east, the wall terminates at a chamfered and capped concrete pilaster. Whilst in reasonable condition, several fleurs-de-lis have been lost.

Assessment:

Historical

This wall has historic significance as a reminder that this was formerly a residential neighbourhood which by the early-1900s was home to some of New Plymouth's finest residential buildings; of which most have since been demolished. Construction of the wall is largely a consequence of late-nineteenth century street-lowering works and is a tangible reminder of the large-scale civic works program undertaken by the Borough Council in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The wall is likely the work of noted New Plymouth architect Frank Messenger and demonstrates his wide-ranging architectural ability across a range of built structures.

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Importance to Community

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Architecture & Construction

This is one of the best surviving examples of an early-twentieth century stone retaining wall with associated wrought iron fence in New Plymouth and has technical value for the use of local Taranaki andesite.

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Setting and Context

Located on the front property boundary and facing busy Vivian Street, the wall is highly visible and contributes positively to the character of the immediate streetscape. The andesite retaining wall is one of several dating from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century in this part of the Huatoki Valley; notable examples including those at neighbouring 17 Vivian Street (circa 1899-1900) and the

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Heritage Buildings Report

former railway retaining wall in Sir Victor Davies Park opposite (circa 1875).

Archaeology

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Representativeness, rarity and integrity

This wall is representative of the types of andesite retaining walls erected around New Plymouth during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of which few now survive. The wall retains a high degree of integrity and its main form has changed little since first erected in the early-1900s.

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Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)

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