

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Engine Room

Address

Hakirau Street, Moturoa, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

The dairy industry has been an important component of the Taranaki economy for over 130 years. This building is significant as one of the earliest surviving structures associated with the dairy industry in New Plymouth and is part of an important group of buildings associated with the development of the Taranaki dairy industry under the co-operative model over the last century. It is also a rare example of a large, early twentieth century industrial building in New Plymouth, and an uncommon example of a substantial brick building in New Plymouth. The building is well maintained, and being in a highly visible location, contributes positively to the historic character of the area.



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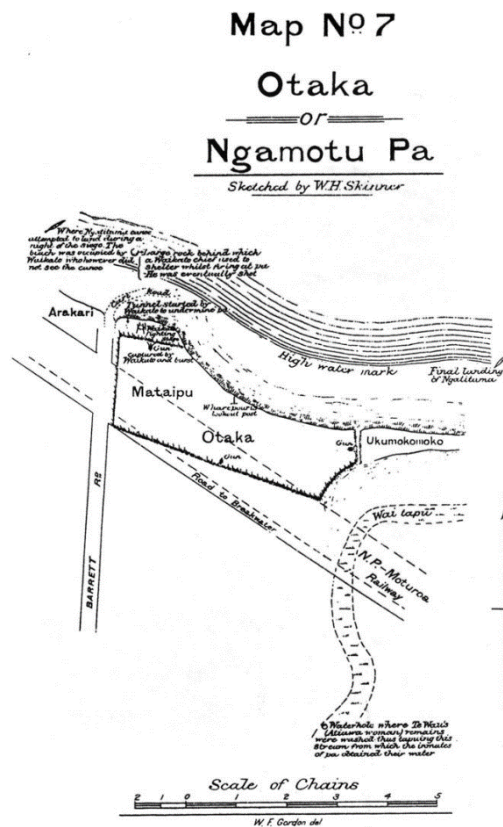
Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description Lot 1 DP 17360
District Plan Item/ Map No.
Heritage New Zealand List Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction 1904
Principal Materials Masonry, corrugated steel
Construction Professionals Walter Panton (architect), Messrs Pikett and Spencer (builders)

History



Early Site History

The present site of the Moturoa cool store buildings has a rich history stretching back to pre-European times. Prior to the establishment of the first Taranaki Freezing Company Works' on this site in 1895, the area was originally occupied by Otaka/Ngamotu pa; comprised of the small fishing villages of Otaka and Mataipu.¹

A significant event associated with the site is the besieging of the pa by Waikato tribes in February 1832. At this time, the pa was occupied by both resident and refugee Te Atiawa tribe members, and also a group of eight European traders and whalers under the leadership of John Love and Richard (Dicky) Barrett.²

Prior to the arrival of the Waikato war party, defences were hastily erected around the site, and three small old cannons (now held by Puke Ariki) were set up.³ On the fourth day of the siege a surrender was proposed, but not accepted.⁴ At one stage the schooner *Currency Lass* appeared in the roadstead, although on the advice of Love, who swam out to the vessel, it soon left.⁵ Whilst the Europeans had become fatigued and

anxious about their fate, a good trade was still carried-out with both Te Atiawa and the Waikato

¹ Smith, Stephenson Percy. (1910). *History and Traditions of the Maoris of the West Coast North Island of New Zealand Prior to 1840*. Polynesian Society, New Plymouth

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

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invaders; who possessed between three and four thousand muskets.⁶

After nearly three weeks, throughout which there had been a number of small skirmishes in which lives were lost on both sides, the invaders launched their final assault. Again, lives were lost on both sides, but the Waikato tribes suffered the greatest, losing a large number of their party, including several chiefs.⁷ Following this unsuccessful assault, the invaders retreated, and began their long journey back to the Waikato.⁸

A further historical site located nearby is the landing spot of the *William Bryan*, the first Plymouth Company settler ship to arrive at New Plymouth.⁹ Near this site hastily erected and somewhat primitive whare's were home to new settlers for their first months in the infant settlement.¹⁰ The arrival of the Plymouth Company Settlers is commemorated at nearby Otaka/Pioneer Park, where the Pioneer Memorial was erected in 1911.¹¹ Also located at the park is the grave of paramount chief Poharama Te Whiti, who died in 1875.¹²

Freezing Works History

In 1895, the Taranaki Freezing Company purchased a plot of land at Moturoa, being Part Section 812 (Prison Reserve), Grey District.¹³ This was to be the site of the Company's first freezing works, which were housed in a wooden building completed the following year.¹⁴ In 1901, the Taranaki Freezing Company became the Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Company Ltd, a co-operative engaged in the sorting, grading, and refrigeration of butter and cheese collected from dairy factories across North Taranaki.¹⁵ However, disaster soon struck the young co-operative, and on the morning of 10 May 1904, a large fire, originating in the factory's boiler room, completely destroyed the original wooden building.¹⁶ The fire was a huge blow for the burgeoning Taranaki dairy industry, although thankfully it occurred in the off-season, when milk production was low, and the factory was relatively empty; however, 4000 boxes of butter in the storeroom were still lost to the flames.¹⁷

Following the fire, it was suggested that the factory shouldn't be rebuilt at Moturoa - or indeed in Taranaki at all. Wellington based Mr David J. Nathan, wrote to the many Taranaki dairy factories, who were the owners of the Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works, suggesting that there would be great benefits for the entire New Zealand dairy industry if operations were centralised in Wellington.¹⁸ He suggested they should buy or lease premises on Waterloo Quay for the purpose.¹⁹ However, both the *Taranaki Herald* and *Taranaki Daily News*, along with many Taranaki residents, were fervently against this proposal, and there was ample discussion as to why it should not be proceeded with.²⁰ The proposal was thankfully not supported, and it was soon resolved to re-erect the factory in brick on the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Tullett, James Stuart. (1981). *The Industrious Heart: A History of New Plymouth*. New Plymouth City Council, New Plymouth

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 27 March 1911, page 7

¹² *Taranaki Herald*, 20 October 1875, page 2

¹³ SO716, Land Information New Zealand

¹⁴ *Taranaki Herald*, 2 July 1896, page 2

¹⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 2 September 1901, page 2

¹⁶ *Taranaki Herald*, 10 May 1904, page 4

¹⁷ *Taranaki Daily News*, 11 May 1904, page 2

¹⁸ *Taranaki Daily News*, 28 May 1904, page 2

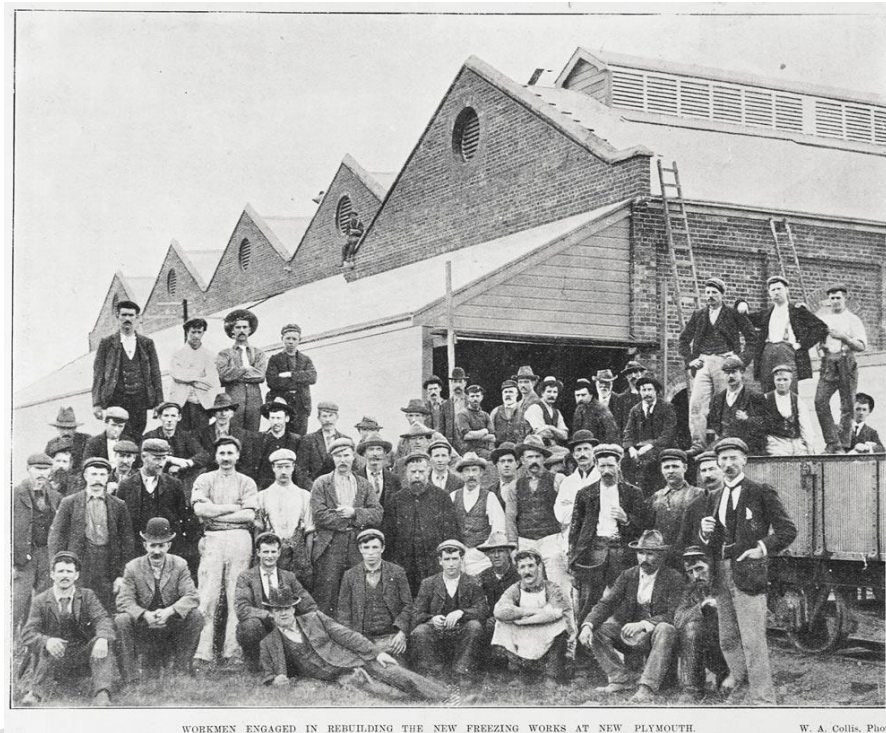
¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ *Taranaki Daily News*, 2 June 1904, page 2; *Taranaki Herald*, 2 June 1904, page 4; *Taranaki Herald*, 15 June 1904, page 3



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Moturoa site. By 1 June 1904, it was reported that plans were being prepared for the new factory by well-known dairy factory/freezing works architect Mr Walter Panton, of Timaru, and that tenders would be called for as soon as possible.²¹ The successful tender of Messrs Pikett and Spencer for the sum of £6907 was accepted on the 18th of June.²²



WORKMEN ENGAGED IN REBUILDING THE NEW FREEZING WORKS AT NEW PLYMOUTH.

W. A. Collis, Photo.

Proud workmen pose for a photo outside the almost complete building, Auckland Weekly News, 20 October 1904, page 4, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19041020-4-2

The new structure was slightly bigger than the old building, and had a large 60ft chimney on the eastern side (since demolished).²³ Construction continued day and night, with the first portion of the building complete by mid-September, and the entire building finished by the 28th of October - a remarkable achievement.²⁴ More than 250,000 bricks were used in the building's construction, and these were produced locally at the Waitara and Onaero kilns.²⁵ Joinery was supplied by the Sash and Door Company; plumbing was by the Griffiths Company; Kauri was obtained from the Kauri Timber Company; Red Pine (Rimu) from Taranaki, and Totara from Ashurst.²⁶ An interesting feature of the building was the insulation of the cool-rooms; pumice in a double-Kauri lining.²⁷

The ensuing decades saw a considerable increase in the amount of produce handled by the co-operative and was accompanied by a program of demolition and construction to ensure there was always adequate space available in which to store produce. Accordingly, in 1951, the freezing chambers of the 1904 building were demolished, and in their place the present three-storied structure

²¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 1 June 1904, page 3

²² *Taranaki Daily News*, 20 June 1904, page 2

²³ *Taranaki Herald*, 7 November 1904, page 3

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.



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erected.²⁸ The present building housed the works' boiler room, engine house, and ice room. It is the only surviving portion of the 1904 freezing works, and the oldest building in a group of structures associated with the Taranaki dairy industry for more than a century.

In 1981, the Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Cool Stores, by now a large complex of buildings constructed between 1904 and the 1970s, was sold to the New Zealand Dairy Board.²⁹ This sale included both a monetary transaction, and the allocation of shares to Taranaki dairy companies using the stores.³⁰ This ownership change also saw a change in name to the Taranaki Co-operative Cool Store. By 1994, the smaller dairy companies in Taranaki had merged to form the large Kiwi Dairy Company, and the cool store share arrangement was now considered an anomaly in New Zealand.³¹ It was thus decided to sell the shares issued in 1981 back to the Dairy Board, and this was finalised on June 16th of that year.³²

In 2001, an Act of Parliament was passed allowing the merger of New Zealand's two largest co-operatives; the New Zealand Co-operative Dairy Company Ltd, and Kiwi Co-operative Dairies Ltd.³³ The Act also saw the new company, Fonterra Co-operative Group Limited (Fonterra), take ownership of all the shares in the New Zealand Dairy Board, resulting in Fonterra becoming the owner of the Taranaki Co-operative Cool Store.³⁴ Fonterra retained ownership until June 2018, when the entire property was purchased by a New Plymouth consortium who plan to redevelop the site at the expiration of the current leases.

Reference Sources

See footnotes.

Description

The Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Engine Room is located in the western New Plymouth suburb of Moturoa, on a former sea-cliff above Ngamotu Beach, and close to Port Taranaki. The building is part of a group of structures associated with the development of the Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works over a period of almost one hundred years. The Engine Room provides an interesting contrast to other much larger structures in the group, including the neighbouring 1946-47 and 1951-52 three-storey stores to the immediate west, and the four-storey 1936 Butter Store, and 1957-59 modernist style Parsons Store to the east. As a group, these buildings clearly illustrate the growth of the co-operative, both in terms of volume of goods handled, and of its economic importance.

This simple, rectilinear building is constructed of load-bearing masonry supporting a pitched corrugated steel roof. The double brick walls are, somewhat unusually, laid in an English Garden Wall Bond (three rows of stretchers to one row of headers). Located between the three-storey 1951-52 Produce Store, and the single-storey 1970s store, only the front and rear elevations are visible, although a small alleyway runs along the eastern wall.

The frontage is unadorned, except for a distinctive round ventilator opening set in the centre of the gable. The opening is surrounded by three rowlock courses and was originally louvered; although these are now absent. The gable is finished with a stretcher course, and capped with coping of an unknown material, possibly cement. Doors are set at ground level and are largely hidden from view by the

²⁸ Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Company. (1951). *Golden Jubilee, 1901-1951*. Avery Press, New Plymouth

²⁹ Richards, George. (1995). *And Then There Was One: A history of the Taranaki dairy industry*. Kiwi Co-operative Dairies, Hawera

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

Lind, Clive A. (2013). *Till the Cows Came Home: Inside the battles that built Fonterra*. Steele Roberts, Wellington

³⁴ Ibid.



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partially enclosed post and beam veranda. This wooden veranda is original, and the outline of the original, eight-light window (now boarded-over), can still be distinguished at the centre of the rusticated weatherboard clad wall. The continuation of this veranda in front of the 1946-47 and 1951-52 Thomas Bates designed buildings to the west, is also a remnant of the 1904 building, and the boarded-up openings of the original windows can be similarly seen.

The rear elevation is almost identical to the front, being similarly unadorned, except for a ventilator opening, which is now filled with tongue and groove boards and fitted with a modern extraction vent. A low lean-to runs the length of the rear-elevation, part of which is possibly original.

Assessment:

Historical	The Engine Room is historically significant as the sole surviving portion of the 1904 Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works; reconstructed following a devastating fire that year. The building was designed by leading New Zealand freezing works architect Walter Panton. The dairy industry has been the mainstay of the Taranaki economy for over 130 years, and this building is significant as one of the earliest surviving structures associated with the dairy industry in New Plymouth.	✓
Importance to Community	Taranaki's dairy industry has, and continues to play, an important role in the provinces' sense of identity, with many people both directly and indirectly employed because of it.	✓
Architecture & Construction	The Engine Room is a good example of a simple, gabled industrial building from of the early 1900s period, and has technical interest through the use of locally produced bricks laid in an English Garden Wall Bond.	✓
Setting and Context	This building is part of a group of landmark structures associated with the development of the Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works over a period of almost one hundred years. Associated buildings include the neighbouring 1946-47 and 1951 three-storey Produce stores to the immediate west, and the four-storey 1936 Butter Store, and 1957-59 modernist style Parsons Store further to the east.	✓
Archaeology	Although the present buildings were all constructed post-1900, the immediate area has been the site of the freezing works since 1895 and was earlier the site of Otaka/Ngamotu pa.	✓
Representativeness, rarity and integrity	This building is a rare example of a relatively large, early-twentieth century industrial building in New Plymouth, and an uncommon example of a substantial brick building in New Plymouth. Whilst the four gables housing the freezing chambers have been demolished, the remaining gable retains a high degree of integrity.	✓
Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓