



## Heritage Buildings Report

**Site ID**

**Building/Site Name**

Thomas Sole's Cottage no.2

**Address**

253 Courtenay Street, New Plymouth



### Statement of Significance

This building is one of two neighbouring investment cottages constructed for early New Plymouth settler Thomas Sole about 1895-96. Thomas Sole arrived at New Plymouth with his family aboard the *Oriental* in 1841 and became a well-known and highly-respected member of the district. Along with neighbouring 251 Courtenay Street, this building is one of a rare pair of mid-1890s cottages in New Plymouth. Originally constructed as a workers' dwelling, this building has the potential to offer valuable insights into the lives of a marginalised, yet important societal group during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Although the cottage has been subjected to some modifications, it does largely retain its original form and structure, and is clearly recognisable as a nineteenth century cottage.



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## Legal Information and Heritage Status

**Legal Description** Lot 1 DP 5185

**District Plan Item/ Map No.**

**Heritage New Zealand List** Not listed

## Construction Information

**Date of Construction** Circa 1894

**Principal Materials** Wooden framing, weatherboard, corrugated steel

**Construction Professionals** Unknown

## History

This building is one of two neighbouring investment cottages constructed for early New Plymouth settler Thomas Sole about 1894. A list of New Plymouth Town Section allocations dated 3 September 1842 notes the Plymouth Company as being allotted Town Section 2054.<sup>1</sup> The early history of the section after this time is unclear, as the first record of the property in the Taranaki Land District Deeds Register doesn't occur until 1902.<sup>2</sup> However, Thomas Sole seems to have either purchased or leased the section prior to 1875, as he is listed as the ratepayer for Town Section 2054 (and neighbouring Town Section 2053), for the 1875-76 rating year.<sup>3</sup>

Thomas Sole was born at Kent and emigrated to New Plymouth in 1841 aboard the Plymouth Company's *Oriental*, accompanied by other members of the Sole-Foreman families.<sup>4</sup> Thomas married Sarah Devenish in 1855, and the couple had two children; Rosina and well known surveyor Thomas Gore Sole. Thomas Sole Senior initially farmed at Mangoraka, and then Mangorei, where he remained until the outbreak of the First Taranaki War, at which time he shifted into town.<sup>5</sup> Sole was a member of the first mounted corps formed, and also accompanied missionaries on their early travels to remote areas of the North Island.<sup>6</sup> Sole was in good health up until a short time before his death, when he caught a chill whilst working at his cottages; he passed away on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 1909, aged 81 years, and is buried in the nearby Te Henui Cemetery.<sup>7</sup>

It seems Town Section 2053 remained vacant for the first decade of Sole's ownership, and along with neighbouring sections, was presumably grazed. The 1894-95 New Plymouth Borough Council Rating Book lists Town Sections 2053, 2054, 2083 and 2084 together; all are without dwellings, and as at 1 April 1894 have a combined rateable value of £9.<sup>8</sup> The 1896-97 New Plymouth Borough Council Rating Book lists only Town Sections 2053 and 2054 together; this time the sections are noted as having 'two houses' on them and as at 1 April 1896 have a combined rateable value of £18.<sup>9</sup>

The absence of a rates book for 1895-96 makes narrowing down the construction date difficult,

<sup>1</sup> Reference to the Sections Comprising the Town of New Plymouth, New Zealand, 1842, Puke Ariki, ARC2001-365/5

<sup>2</sup> Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

<sup>3</sup> New Plymouth Town Board Rating Book 1875-76, NPDC Archives

<sup>4</sup> Taranaki Herald, 15 June 1909, page 3

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> New Plymouth Borough Council Rating Book 1894-95, NPDC Archives

<sup>9</sup> New Plymouth Borough Council Rating Book 1896-97, NPDC Archives



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although based on information contained in street directories, and accounting for collection and collation of information, a construction date of mid-late 1894 seems most likely. No persons are listed as residing on the left side of Courtenay Street between Hobson and Watson Streets during or before the 1894 edition of Stones Street Directories, but by the 1895 edition two persons are listed as residing at this location; painter James William Nash (probably 251 Courtenay Street), and a Miss Rosina Caldwell (probably this cottage).<sup>10</sup>

Both cottages were rented out by Sole, and occupants were mostly members of the working class and people of little means. The working class are an important, yet often forgotten group of late-nineteenth century settler society, and these cottages provide insights into the types of dwellings they occupied; once common, late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century workers cottages are now rare in New Plymouth. Compared to neighbouring 251 Courtenay Street which had a high turnover of occupants during its early decades, this cottage was occupied by Richard Birch since at least early-1896 until about late-1914.<sup>11</sup>

Thomas Sole retained ownership of the cottage until his death in 1909, when the property was conveyed to his daughter Rose Sole.<sup>12</sup> Rose retained ownership until December 1914, when it was purchased by New Plymouth plasterer Frederick William Schultz.<sup>13</sup> In September 1919, the property was sold to 'Bielawski'.<sup>14</sup> It seems Bielawski rented-out the cottage, as Schultz is still listed as the occupier until the 1923 edition of Wises Post Office Directory; thereafter the cottage is occupied by a number of different persons.

In 1930, Town Section 2054 was subdivided for then owner Annie Nichols.<sup>15</sup> To ensure adequate setback from the new boundary, it was noted that the present cottage was to be removed or the eastern wall cut back to the chimney within six months to give five feet of space between the house and the boundary.<sup>16</sup> The house clearly wasn't removed completely, but it does appear to have been cut back a short distance; although not right to the chimney.

### Reference Sources

See footnotes.

### Description

This single-storey cottage is located in the eastern New Plymouth suburb of Strandon, just a short distance from the CBD. The area was settled early in New Plymouth's history, and whilst development pressures since the 1970s have resulted in an eclectic mix of architectural styles, the area still retains a number of older dwellings that contribute to a sense of historical character now uncommon in New Plymouth.

The cottage is located near the front of a relatively level section and is highly visible from Courtenay Street. The frontage is mostly grassed, and a low concrete block wall runs across much of the street boundary. A driveway extends along the western boundary to provide access to a more recent dwelling constructed at the back of the section on the same property title.

To the immediate west of this dwelling sits the similarly scaled cottage at 51 Courtenay Street; constructed for the same owner at the same time. Such pairings of late-nineteenth century workers

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<sup>10</sup> Stones Street Directories, 1895-96

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 1899-1915

<sup>12</sup> Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> DP5181, Land Information New Zealand

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



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dwellings are now very rare in New Plymouth, and as a pair the houses have aesthetic value through their homogeneity of form.

The main form of the building is a single storey, timber-framed box cottage with rear lean-to. The front elevation is clad in rusticated weatherboard, whilst the less-visible side elevations which were likely originally clad in plain boarding, have been covered with fibre cement sheet for a number of years. A brick chimney finished with decorative dentil courses rises through the roof at the eastern end of the cottage.

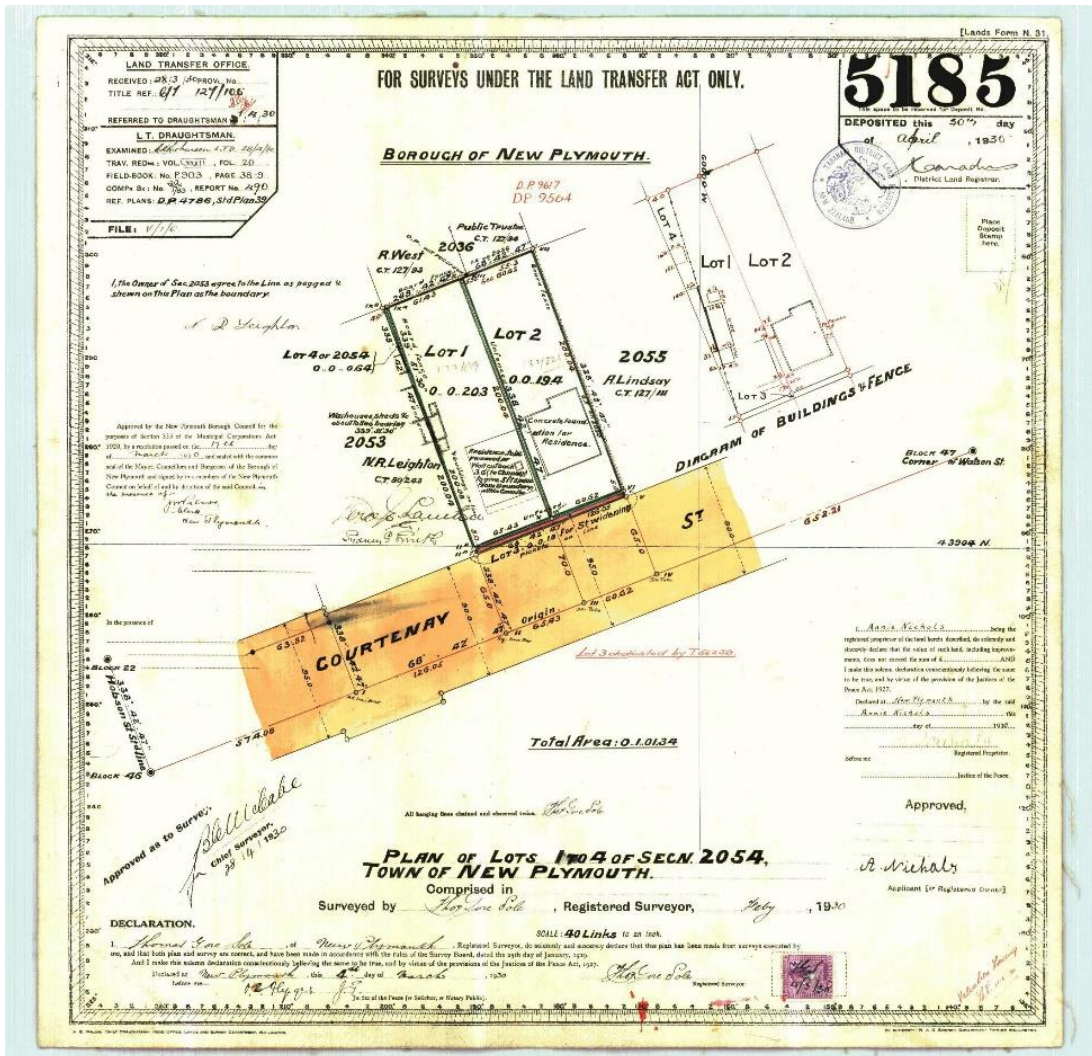
The front elevation was originally symmetrically composed, although this has been somewhat compromised by the cutting back of the eastern wall in 1930. Key features include a central multi-paned front entrance door beneath a more modern glazed entrance porch. Two four-light double-hung sashes finished with shallow timber hoods flank the main entranceway. Several circa 1950s style wooden casement windows have been incorporated in the western side wall at a later date.

### Assessment:

<b>Historical</b>	This building has historic significance as one of a pair of mid-1890s workers' dwellings constructed as investment properties for respected early New Plymouth Settler Thomas Sole. The working class has until recently been largely silenced in the historical record, and this building offers valuable insights into the types of dwellings lived in by an under-studied, yet important societal group during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.	✓
<b>Importance to Community</b>	Although the Sole connection is not widely known, a large number of proud Sole family descendants remain living in New Plymouth District.	✓
<b>Architecture &amp; Construction</b>	-	
<b>Setting and Context</b>	Together with neighbouring 251 Courtenay Street, this cottage is one of a pair of workers cottages of a similar style and scale that were constructed as rental properties for a local resident during the mid-1890s.	✓
<b>Archaeology</b>	As the cottage was constructed circa 1895-96, the property likely has archaeological evidence relating to pre-1900 human activity and has the potential to reveal information about the past through archaeological investigation.	✓
<b>Representativeness, rarity and integrity</b>	This building is representative of working-class dwellings constructed in New Plymouth during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries - of which few now remain. Although the cottage has been subjected to some modifications, it does largely retain its original form and structure, and is clearly recognisable as a nineteenth century cottage.	✓
<b>Meets threshold for listing</b> (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓



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DP5181, Land Information New Zealand