

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Pahitere Blockhouse (Former)

Address

16 Koru Road, Oakura



Statement of Significance

The former Pahitere Blockhouse has considerable heritage significance as a rare surviving blockhouse constructed during the turbulent Second Taranaki War (1863-66). The building also has significance for its long-standing association with prominent Omata families the Morris' and the Henschman's. Although the building has been relocated a short distance from its original position atop Pahitere Redoubt, it still retains a visual link to this site, and contributes positively to the historic character of the area.



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Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description Section 4 Oakura DIST

District Plan Item/ Map No.

Heritage New Zealand List Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction 1864

Principal Materials Wooden framing, weatherboard, corrugated steel

Construction Professionals Unknown

History

This building was constructed in 1864, and originally stood atop nearby Pahitere Redoubt as a blockhouse. Pahitere Redoubt was established by Military Settlers under the command of Captain Corbett in early March 1864, following the reoccupation of nearby St Andrews Redoubt.¹ An old pā called Pahitere was reshaped to accommodate the blockhouse, and primitive soldiers huts were dug into the eastern slope; initially soldiers were accommodated in tents on the central platform prior to construction of the blockhouse.²

The timber for Pahitere and other blockhouses was transported to New Plymouth from Auckland in early May 1864 aboard the government paddle steamer *Prince Alfred*. The first shipment was successfully landed on 5 May, with the steamer anchoring off Oakura, and the timber being taken ashore by surfboat.³ The *Prince Alfred* brought another shipment of timber on 23 May, although it could not be landed at Oakura, and was unloaded at New Plymouth instead.⁴ A letter to the Editor of the *Taranaki Herald* dated 16 June 1864 and signed 'Pahitere', stated that "within fourteen days the first blockhouse will be erected on our land, under Captain Corbett at Pahitere".⁵

Surveys of the Oakura Block commenced in early March 1865, being almost exactly a year after Pahitere was established; Pahitere and other redoubts providing protection for surveyors.⁶ The position declined in importance, and by July 1865 was occupied by just one man; the blockhouse and redoubt was taken over by local chief Ropata Ngarongomate in November 1866.⁷ In 1878, the settlers of nearby Koru Township and the surrounding district applied to the Taranaki Education Board to use the then unoccupied blockhouse as a school.⁸ However, as the land and blockhouse had been given to Ropata Ngarongomate it was unavailable for this purpose.⁹

¹ Prickett, Nigel, *Maori Fortifications of the Omata and Oakura Districts, Taranaki, 1980, Records of the Auckland Institute and Museum, Vol. 17, pp 1-48*

² *Taranaki Herald*, 5 March 1864, p.2

³ *Taranaki Herald*, 7 May 1864, p.2

⁴ *Taranaki Herald*, 28 May 1864, p.2

⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 25 June 1864, p.2

⁶ *Taranaki Herald*, 4 March 1865, p.2

⁷ Prickett, Nigel, *Maori Fortifications of the Omata and Oakura Districts, Taranaki, 1980, Records of the Auckland Institute and Museum, Vol. 17, pp 1-48*

⁸ *Taranaki Herald*, 11 June 1878, p.2

⁹ *Taranaki Herald*, 13 August 1878, p.2



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Pahitere blockhouse, Taranaki. Nicholl, Spencer Perceval Talbot, 1841-1908: Photograph albums. PA1-q-177-06-2. Alexander Turnbull Library.

The next chapter in the history of the blockhouse begins with the emigration of Frederick and Emily (nee Wareham) Morris, to New Zealand in 1879. The couple and their four children first arrived at Port Chalmers aboard the *Taranaki*, and then carried on to New Plymouth aboard the *Waitaki*, arriving on 5 January 1880.¹⁰ They stayed at New Plymouth for a short time, before settling at Tapuae, between New Plymouth and Oakura, in 1880 or 1881. Frederick purchased Section 4 of Oakura District, upon which the former Pahitere blockhouse stood, and is thought to have had the building shifted to its present position a short time later to become the family's first home.

In 1881, Frederick and his brother in law George Wareham, purchased a large tract of land on the north-side of the Koru Road intersection, which they successfully farmed together until mid-1888, when the partnership was dissolved, and Frederick purchased George's share of the farm.¹¹ The Wareham's had a substantial villa constructed on the property in 1883 (present 976 South Road), and Frederick and his family shifted from the old blockhouse to this home sometime in the second half of 1888. Frederick was deeply involved in the local community, being appointed chairman of the Oakura Road District in 1881, a member of the Omata Licensing Committee, and a member of the Taranaki County Council.¹²

Emily died in 1915, and Frederick remarried a widow named Alice Mary Kidd (nee Swanson), in 1916. By this time it seems the farm was largely managed by Frederick's sons, with Frederick and Mary living at both Hawera and New Plymouth.¹³ Frederick died in 1935, and is buried with Emily at Oakura Cemetery. The property was sold about 1939 to a Mr Allie Wood, who retained ownership until 1952, when it was sold to Mr H. E. (Buck) Henschman.¹⁴

Reference Sources

See footnotes.

¹⁰ Corbett, N. (1993). *Morris Family Tree: Tapuae 1880-1993*. Aries Print, New Plymouth

¹¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 23 July 1888, p.2

¹² *Taranaki Herald*, 3 August 1881, p.2

¹³ Corbett, N. (1993). *Morris Family Tree: Tapuae 1880-1993*. Aries Print, New Plymouth

¹⁴ Ibid.

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Description

The former Pahitere Blockhouse is located in a rural setting near the intersection of Koru and South Roads, between New Plymouth and Oakura. The highly intact former Pahitere Redoubt, the original location of the blockhouse, is situated across the Te Wawa stream gully to the south of the cottage. Despite being set-back from the boundary by a considerable distance, the blockhouse and redoubt are clearly visible from both road frontages.

The building is a single-storey, rectangular cottage in the distinctive Saltbox style. The gable is moderately pitched, with a corrugated steel roof replacing the original timber shingles. The framing includes large kauri beams, and the cottage still retains its original kauri weatherboards, although these have been covered with cement sheet on the side elevations. An addition to the rear of the original structure has necessitated some modification to the roofline.

A simple post and beam veranda of an unknown age runs the full length of the front of the cottage. Enclosed within the veranda is a front door and three twelve-light double-hung sashes; two on the eastern side of the door, and one on the western side. The windows and door were probably added when the cottage was relocated to this site.





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Assessment

Historical	This building has considerable heritage significance for its use as a blockhouse during the Second Taranaki War; an important period in Taranaki's history. The building also has significance for its long-standing association with prominent Omata families the Morris' and the Henchman's.	✓
Importance to Community	The building is highly valued by the community, especially by the descendants of Benjamin and Emily Morris, some of whom still live in the area.	✓
Architecture & Construction	The building is a good example of a simple Saltbox style cottage from the mid-Nineteenth Century. It has technical value as an early example of a pre-fabricated building originating from New Zealand.	✓
Setting and Context	The former Pahitere Blockhouse is located a short distance (190m) north of its original site on Pahitere Redoubt; this proximity enables a greater appreciation of the historical context of the building.	✓
Archaeology	As the building was relocated to its present site circa 1880, 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.	✓
Representativeness, rarity and integrity	This building is an extremely rare (possibly the only) surviving example of a blockhouse constructed in North Taranaki during the Second Taranaki War. The building is a representative example of the Colonial Government funded blockhouses of the period and retains a relatively high degree of integrity.	✓✓
Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓