

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Address

25 Standish Street, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

25 Standish Street was one of four cottages (of which two now survive), constructed on Education Reserve land at the top of Standish Street during 1900-01 for William Dawson Webster, one of New Plymouth's most important nineteenth century businessmen. Construction of the house is associated with a historically important speculative building boom driven by a severe housing shortage in New Plymouth, which saw wealthier citizens commissioning builders to construct groups of cottages for occupation by members of the working class and people of lesser means. As a workers' dwelling, this building has the potential to offer valuable insights into the lives of a marginalised yet important societal group. This house is one of a pair of associated timber cottages of similar scale and constructed of similar materials, which, both individually, and as part of a pair, make a strong positive contribution to the character of the local streetscape. The house retains an unusually high degree of external integrity for a New Plymouth dwelling of this age and style.



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Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description Lot 2 DP 4023

District Plan Item/ Map No.

Heritage New Zealand List Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction Circa 1900-01

Principal Materials Wooden framing, weatherboard, corrugated steel

Construction Professionals Unknown

History

Early Section History

Town Sections 560-65 and 585-90 form part of the original Town of New Plymouth laid out by surveyor Frederick Alonzo Carrington in 1841. The sections in this block, along with many others in the surrounding area, were gazetted as Education Reserves in the mid-nineteenth century and originally administered by the Taranaki Education Board.¹ With the passing of the Education Act at the end of 1877, a separate board of commissioners, the Taranaki School Commissioners, was established to administer leases for Education Reserves in the District.² It is unclear who the sections in the block bounded by Standish Street, Barrett Street, Wallace Place and Frankley Road were initially leased to, however, during the 1880s, the lease for the property was acquired by William Dawson Webster.³

William Dawson Webster

The son of Mr James Webster, New Plymouth's first postmaster, William D. Webster was born on board the immigrant ship the Amelia Thompson on its journey to New Plymouth during 1840-41.⁴ Webster received his education at Beardsworth's school, the first school established at New Plymouth, before entering into business in 1862 with his brother, Mr Frederick Lewis Webster, as commission agents and general merchants.⁵ The firm later expanded their operations, buying ships, importing and exporting goods, and forming an agricultural agency and an auctioneering business.⁶

The firm traded under the name of Webster Bros until joining with Mr W. K. Hulke and continuing under the name of Messrs Webster & Hulke.⁷ It was during this time that Webster & Hulke commissioned the construction of New Plymouth's Egmont Steam Flour Mill (known today as 'The Mill'), in Powderham Street (c.1865-67). In 1880, William left the partnership of Messrs Webster & Hulke and entered into business on his own account as a shipping and general agent.⁸ He subsequently became the first New Plymouth representative of the Northern Steam Ship Company

¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 14 May 1878, page 2

² *Ibid.*

³ CT TN28/299, Land Information New Zealand (LINZ)

⁴ *Taranaki Daily News*, 1 May 1923, page 4

⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 9 January 1965, pages 6-9

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Taranaki Daily News*, 1 May 1923, page 4

⁸ *Taranaki Herald*, 12 January 1880, page 3

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and the Australian Mutual Provident Society.⁹ Webster remained prominent in New Plymouth business and social circles until his death on the 30th of April 1923, aged 83.¹⁰

The Present House

The Standish Street sections had remained vacant since Webster acquired the lease in the 1880s, and it wasn't until 1900 that Webster commissioned the construction of four cottages on the Standish Street frontage of the property. Whilst these buildings pre-date the recording of building permits, New Plymouth Borough Council rates books confirm that during the 1900-01 rating year, the value of the property was £18, with no houses noted as being present.¹¹ However, by the following 1901-02 rating year, the value of the property had increased to £70, and four houses are noted as being present; this likely puts the construction date at some time during 1900, or early-1901 at the latest.¹²

The construction of these four cottages is associated with a speculative building boom driven by a severe housing shortage in New Plymouth during the late 1890s and early 1900s. At this time, wealthier citizens commissioned builders to construct groups of cottages for occupation by members of the working class and people of lesser means; these houses were mostly rented out, although were occasionally sold. This was not the only group of speculative cottages commissioned by Webster around this time, with the group of villas at 24, 26 and 28 Fulford Street (located opposite Webster's home), being part of a group of houses erected during 1899-1900; these likely being designed by noted local architect Frank Messenger.¹³

It seems Webster constructed the Standish Street cottages with the express intention of selling them, as from March 1901 the property was advertised for sale, being described as "Education Reserve of 2½ acres with 4 new cottages of 4-rooms each, returning over £2 per week".¹⁴ Despite the advertisement appearing for several months, the cottages were not sold at this time and Webster retained possession.¹⁵ The four cottages were again listed for sale in September 1905, when several advertisements were placed listing for sale "4 cottages, ¼ acre each" on Standish Hill.¹⁶ This time the property sold, with the lease for the entire block purchased from Webster by Kaupokonui farmer John Nicholas Gamlin, who continued to rent out the houses.¹⁷

Early occupants of the cottages are not easily identified from street directories, with Standish Street not appearing in listings until 1907, and even then, the absence of street numbers makes it difficult to distinguish who is residing in which cottage. However, it is clear that tenants during these early years tended to be members of the working class and people of lesser means, with occupiers including labourers, carters, expressmen, and single females (often widowed).¹⁸ Turnover of tenants was also particularly high and is perhaps reflective of the precarious nature of work undertaken by, especially, young unskilled males. As a working-class dwelling, this building has the potential to offer valuable insights into the lives of a marginalised, yet important section of early-twentieth century society.

⁹ *Taranaki Daily News*, 1 May 1923, page 4

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ New Plymouth Borough Council Rating Book, 1900-01, NPDC Archives

¹² New Plymouth Borough Council Rating Book, 1901-02, NPDC Archives

¹³ Hamish Crimp, '24 Fulford Street (circa 1899-1901)', *Kete New Plymouth*, <http://ketenewplymouth.peoplesnetworknz.info/en/site>; accessed 29 May 2019.

¹⁴ *Taranaki Daily News*, 22 March 1901, page 3

¹⁵ CT TN28/299, LINZ

¹⁶ *Taranaki Herald*, 23 September 1905, page 1

¹⁷ CT TN72-200, LINZ

¹⁸ Stones Street Directories 1900-10; Wises Post Office Directories, 1911-1920



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A new 21-year lease for the property was granted to Gamlin from the 1st of October 1907.¹⁹ Gamlin attempted to sell the lease of the property during September 1909, advertising for sale “four good houses with 2½ acres of land, an ideal site for building, situated on Standish Hill”.²⁰ However, the lease didn’t sell in 1909, and the property was retained by Gamlin until early 1921, when the lease was purchased by James William Hayden and Edward Dingle as tenants in common.²¹

With New Plymouth experiencing rapid population growth and being in the midst of another severe housing shortage, Hayden and Dingle soon had the Standish Street property subdivided into nine allotments.²² Separate leases were soon issued to Hayden and Dingle for each of the new allotments, these being for eight years (the time remaining on the 21 year lease), and were back-dated to the 1st of October 1920.²³ During late-1921, the lease of allotment 2 of DP4023, on which the present house at 25 Standish Street is located, was transferred from Hayden and Dingle to railway employee Dennis Staunton.²⁴

It appears Staunton occupied the house himself for a few years before renting it out to joiner Thomas A. Johns.²⁵ A new 21-year lease for the property was granted to Leslie Cave from the 1st of October 1928.²⁶ Cave didn’t occupy the house himself and continued to rent it out. Occupants during the 1930s and 1940s included Mrs E. J. Dunn (1930); telegraphist Edwin R. Hope (1931); clerk William J. Berryman (1932-35); cabinetmaker Hylton Albert Dixon (1936-1942); and storeman James Grant (1943-).²⁷

During 1961, a deferred payment license was granted by the Crown to Mrs Audrey Margaret Perry.²⁸ A new certificate of title for the property was granted to Margaret Perry during 1980, with Mrs Perry retaining ownership until mid-1983, when the property was purchased by plant operator Colin John Temperton and his wife Deirdre Roberta Temperton.²⁹ The Temperton’s retained possession until 1992, when the property was purchased by real estate agent Paul Robert Trott, who sold the property to diving supervisor David Anderson the following year.³⁰ During 1994, the property was purchased by tutor Judith Frances Bell, who owned the house until 2001, when the property was purchased by Colin Michael Comber and Margaret Josephine Comber.³¹ The property was transferred to Buynhold Limited during 2008.³²

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ *Taranaki Daily News*, 8 September 1909, page 3

²¹ CT TN72-200, LINZ

²² DP4023, LINZ

²³ CT TN72-200, LINZ

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ *Wises Post Office Directory*, 1923-28

²⁶ CT TN72-200, LINZ

²⁷ *Wises Post Office Directory*, 1930-45

²⁸ CT TN 255/39, LINZ

²⁹ CT TNF1/815, LINZ

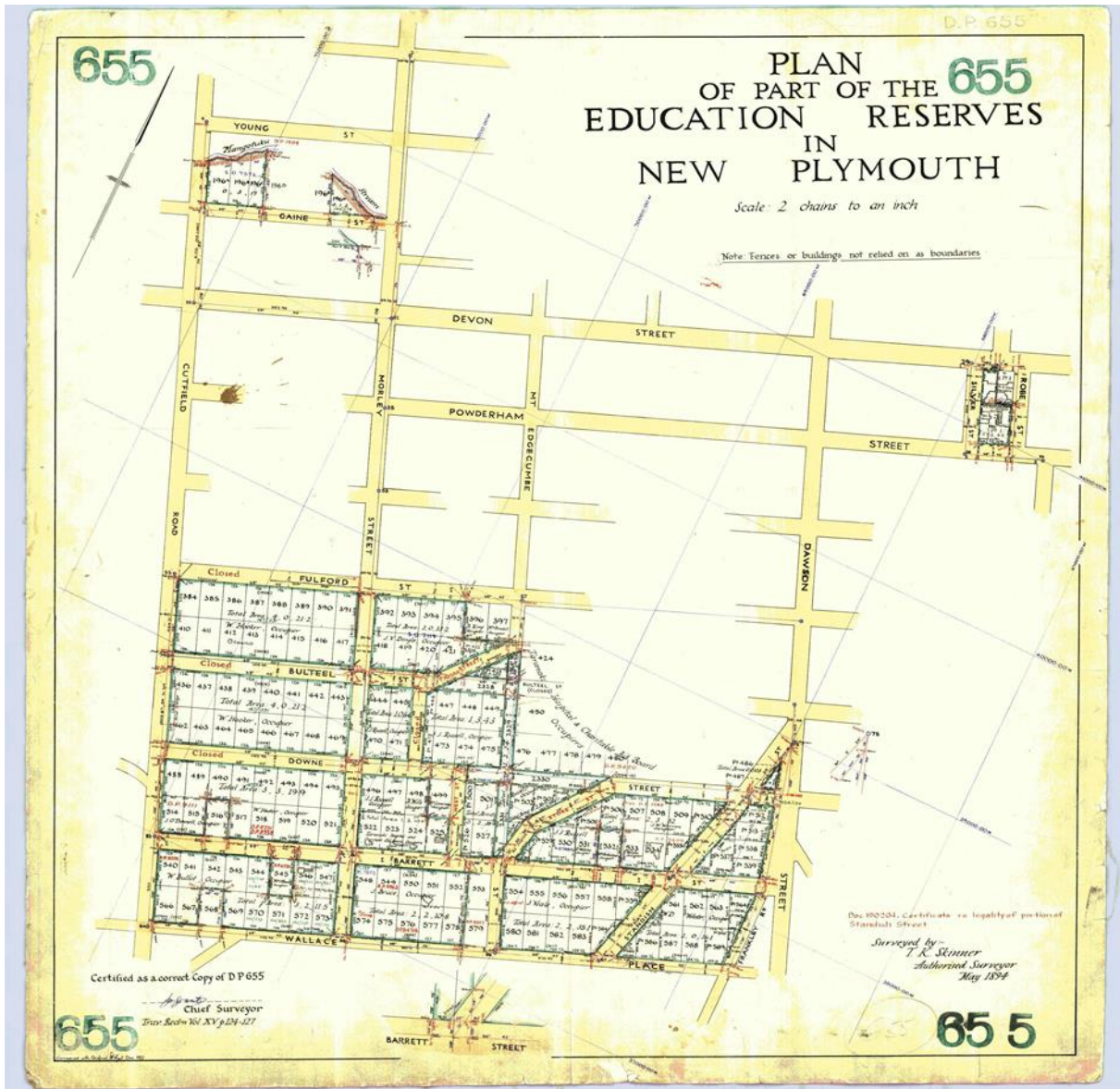
³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.



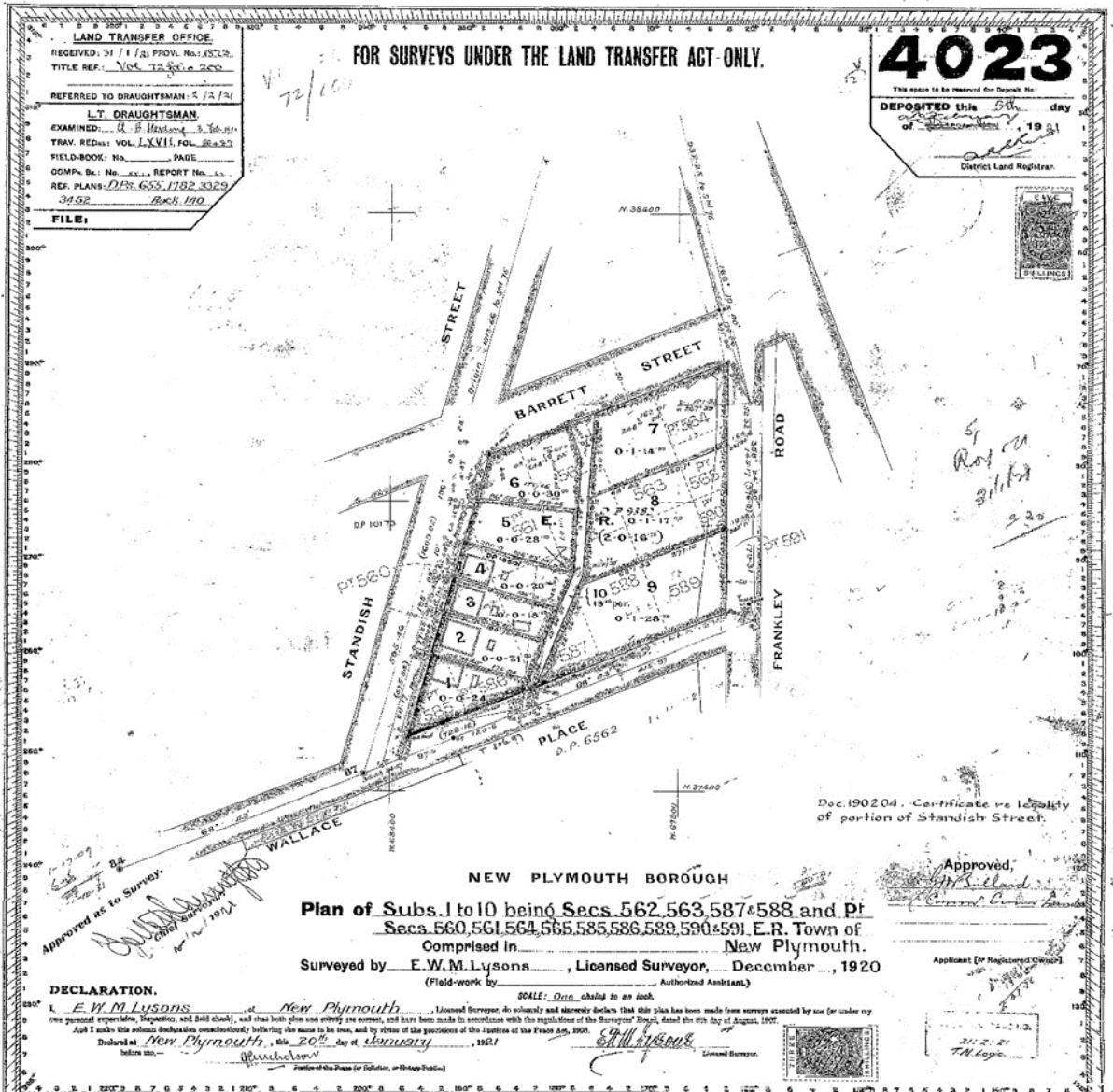
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DP655, LINZ



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DP4023, LINZ

Reference Sources

See footnotes.



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Description

This building is located on the eastern side of Standish Street in the New Plymouth suburb of Westtown. Located close to the site of New Plymouth’s former main hospital, this area contains a mix of older architecturally designed dwellings once occupied by medical professionals, and also a number of smaller cottages and bungalows. Whilst development pressures since the 1970s has resulted in an eclectic mix of architectural styles, the area still retains a sense of historical character now uncommon in New Plymouth.

This house has strong group value for its association with neighbouring 23 Standish Street, being the only other survivor of the original row of four cottages. 23 Standish Street is of a similar scale and constructed of similar materials to number 25 Standish Street, although of slightly different design, likely to break the monotony of the original row.

The main form of this building is a square-plan hipped-gable cottage with full-length front post-and-beam veranda and small rear lean-to. The single-storey dwelling is timber-framed and clad in plain horizontal weatherboards. The roof is sheathed in corrugated steel and a two-flue brick chimney with ceramic pots rises near the centre of the dwelling. The windows are predominantly four-light double-hung sashes, with the timber front door being panelled and glazed, with transom light above.

This dwelling is a representative example of the types of smaller cottages constructed for members of the working class around the turn of the twentieth century, and an increasingly uncommon example of a hipped-gable cottage in New Plymouth city.

Assessment:

Historical	This cottage has historic significance as one of a surviving pair of dwellings (of an original four) constructed for prominent New Plymouth businessman William Dawson Webster in 1900-01. The house is associated with a speculative boom driven by a severe housing shortage in New Plymouth during the late 1890s and early 1900s and has a long history of occupation by members of the marginalised and under-studied working class.	✓
Importance to Community	-	
Architecture & Construction	This building is a good example of a 1900s square-plan hipped-gabled cottage of a type once common in New Plymouth’s city.	✓
Setting and Context	This house has significance as one of a pair of associated timber cottages of similar scale and constructed of similar materials. Both individually, and as part of a pair, this building makes a strong positive contribution to the character of the local streetscape.	✓
Archaeology	-	
Representativeness, rarity and integrity	A representative example of the types of smaller timber cottages constructed and occupied by members of the working class around the turn of the twentieth century. The building is notable for its high degree of external integrity, the exterior, in particular the frontage, remaining virtually unaltered since its original construction 120 years ago.	✓



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

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