

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Cassell's Cottage

Address

99 Lemon Street, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

This small hipped-gable cottage is likely to be one of the oldest surviving dwellings in New Plymouth and was probably constructed during the 1840s-60s period. The cottage is representative of early working-class cottages constructed in New Plymouth and is the only hipped-gable workers' cottage to survive in New Plymouth city. Whilst the exterior of the cottage has been altered to a degree, its main structure has changed little since the late nineteenth century and the building still conveys a strong sense of historical authenticity.

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Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description	PT Section 1581 Town of New Plymouth
District Plan Item/ Map No.	
Heritage New Zealand List	Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction	circa 1840s-60s
Principal Materials	Wooden framing, weatherboard, corrugated steel
Construction Professionals	Unknown

History



Earliest known view of cottage taken between 1863-65, looking south from present Leach Street showing board and batten clad northern elevation; it appears the building originally comprised two cottages joined together. The 'Hen and Chickens' on Pendarves Street can be seen in the background. Alexander Turnbull Library, Spencer Percival Talbot Nicholl Album 2, PA1-q-177.

The early history of Town Section 1581 is somewhat unclear. A list of New Plymouth Town Section allocations dated 3 September 1842 notes the Plymouth Company as being allotted the section.¹ However, it seems the section was later allocated to Isaac Goodall, who by November 1855 is reported as being in arrears with his road rates for Town Section 1581.² Goodall is again reported as being in arrears with rates for the section in 1856 and 1857.³ It is unclear if Goodall ever lived on the section, or even in New Plymouth.

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

² *Taranaki Herald*, 21 November 1855, page 4

³ *Taranaki Herald*, 11 October 1856, page 4; *Taranaki Herald*, 28 March 1857, page 4

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The first entry in the Taranaki Land Deed Register for Town Section 1581 is for a mortgage from 'Nelson' to 'Wood' on 19 September 1857; it is possible the Nelson referred to in the transaction is Mr Christian Nelson. Little is known about the Nelson's, although Christian was appointed ferryman at the Waitara River in mid-1866, and it seems the family relocated to Waitara at this time.⁴ William Old may have acquired Town Section 1581 during the mid-1860s (possibly on Nelson's departure to Waitara), as he mortgaged the property in 1867, and again in 1868; he is also signatory to a reconveyance to 'Nelson' dated 1861.⁵ William Old received the Crown Grant for Town Section 1581 on 27 December 1869, although this was not recorded until 1882.⁶

William Old owned a farm near Lepperton, and it is entirely possible Old acquired the Lemon Street property during the conflict of the early 1860s, and on returning to his farm once hostilities had settled, rented-out the cottage. The cottage was certainly in existence by 1863-65, as it is clearly present in a photo taken by Spencer Percival Talbot Nicholl (of the 43rd Oxfordshire Light Infantry), during his time stationed in New Plymouth.⁷ By 1868, it seems Old had returned to Lepperton, as he claimed he was driven off a portion of his land by a local Māori named Horapapera who threatened to shoot him if he returned.⁸ It seems Old may have been exaggerating the threats, and his failure to attend two meetings with the accused drew strong public criticism.⁹ He is listed as residing at Manutahi in the 1872-73 edition of Wisers Street Directory.¹⁰



Detail from photograph of New Plymouth taken between late-1880 and late-1883, showing cottage before removal of rear hipped-gable section. Alexander Turnbull Library, Fred B. Butler Collection, PAColl-4127-01

⁴ *Taranaki Herald*, 21 July 1866, page 2

⁵ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

⁶ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

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⁸ *Taranaki Herald*, 17 October 1868, page 2

⁹ *Taranaki Herald*, 17 October 1868, page 2

¹⁰ Wisers Street Directory, 1872-73

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In June 1876, Alfred Chivers purchased the property from Old.¹¹ This purchase is noted in the 1875-76 New Plymouth Town Board rates book, with Old's name replaced by Chivers during 1876.¹² The property had a valuation of £18 that year, and the property being liable for the fire rate indicates a dwelling was present on the section at that time.¹³ Alfred had arrived in New Plymouth with his wife Susan in 1874 as part of the assisted emigration scheme.¹⁴ Alfred was to become the Borough Carter for many years, and the couple are thought to have lived in the cottage with their children until November 1884, when it was sold to Sarah Cassell.¹⁵

Little is known about Sarah Cassell, but she retained ownership of the cottage until her death in early 1908.¹⁶ Upon Cassell's death, Town Section 1581 was subdivided, and the western portion with the cottage was purchased by Charles Peapell.¹⁷ Soon after purchasing the property Peapell relocated to Whanganui, although he retained the Lemon Street property as a rental.¹⁸ In May 1920, Peapell sold the property to J. J. Cook, who soon on-sold the cottage to railway employee John J. Hanover in October of that year.¹⁹ The property title was issued to Hanover under the Land Transfer Act in 1928.



Detail from undated, circa early-mid 1890s image showing rear-hipped gable removed, and present lean-to in its place. Puke Ariki, A.3.297

¹¹ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

¹² New Plymouth Town Board Rating Book 1875-76, NPDC Archives

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *Taranaki Herald*, 27 June 1874, page 3

¹⁵ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

¹⁶ *Taranaki Herald*, 1 February 1908, page 2

¹⁷ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

¹⁸ *Taranaki Herald*, 10 October 1908, page 4

¹⁹ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

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Detail from image of New Plymouth from Fort Niger showing cottage in present form. *Supplement to the Auckland Weekly News*, 25 June 1898, page 2, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-18980625-2-2

Reference Sources See footnotes.

Description

This building is located in a city fringe street several blocks from New Plymouth's CBD, and just east of New Plymouth's main southern entrance on Eliot Street/SH3. This area was settled early in New Plymouth's history, and the surrounding blocks contain a number of dwellings constructed during the 1860s-70 period; including the 'Hen and Chickens' Historic Area on nearby Pendarves Street. Whilst development pressures since the 1970s have resulted in an eclectic mix of architectural styles, the area still retains a sense of historical character now uncommon in New Plymouth.

The building is a single-storey hipped cottage that is rectangular in form, with a lean-to at the rear. It seems that the cottage originally (at least as early as 1863-65) followed a double-hipped form comprising two board and batten clad cottages joined together. The rear gable appears to have been removed during the late 1880s or early 1890s, and the cottage in its current form, including the rear lean-to, is clearly identifiable in a photograph published in the *Auckland Weekly News* during September 1898.²⁰

The roof is sheathed in corrugated steel, although this was once clad in shingles. The front wall is clad in rusticated weatherboard, and now features a post and beam veranda and small addition projecting from the eastern side. A pair of three-light wooden casements are located on the western front wall and possibly replace the original twelve-light double-hung sashes characteristic of early New Plymouth cottages; however, casement windows were utilised on early New Plymouth dwellings, and closer

²⁰ *Supplement to the Auckland Weekly News*, 25 June 1898, page 2, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-18980625-2-2



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inspection of the present window joinery is required to confirm its age.

The remainder of the cottage is clad in battened cement board and includes wooden casement windows in a number of styles. The cottage was probably originally clad in either vertical board and battens or horizontal plain rough-sawn weatherboards; these may still exist under the present cladding. Rising from the rear western wall of the lean-to is a low brick chimney which was originally associated with the kitchen housed in the adjacent room. A further brick chimney, corbelled, and taller than that at the rear, is located on the eastern wall of the main structure.

Assessment:

Historical	This building principally has historic significance as a workers' cottage from the early period of organised European settlement in New Plymouth. The working class has until recently been largely silenced in the historical record, and this building offers valuable insights into the dwellings lived in by an under-studied, yet important societal group during the Nineteenth Century.	✓
Importance to Community	-	
Architecture & Construction	The hipped-gable form might offer some insight into Nineteenth Century building methods.	✓
Setting and Context	Located near the street frontage, this building contributes positively to the surrounding streetscape.	✓
Archaeology	As the cottage was constructed during the 1840s-60s, the property likely contains 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 the only surviving example of the once common hipped-gable workers cottages constructed during the early period of organised European Settlement in New Plymouth.	✓
Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓