

## Heritage Buildings Report

**Site ID**

**Building/Site Name**

Parsons Cool Store

**Address**

Hakirau Street, Moturoa, New Plymouth



### Statement of Significance

The Parsons Store was constructed in 1957-59 following the decision to merge the cool store operations of both the Taranaki Producers' Freezing works (New Plymouth), and those of the West Coast Refrigerating Company (Patea), at Moturoa. Designed by noted Wellington architects King & Dawson, the Parson's Store is a significant example of the firm's industrial work, an outstanding example of mid-century Modernist architecture in New Plymouth, and a nationally significant example of a large mid-century Modernist industrial building. The incorporation of strong geometric elements in alignment with Modernist principles sets this building apart from other industrial storage buildings constructed at the time. This building 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, is well-maintained, situated in a highly visible location, and contributes positively to the historic industrial 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

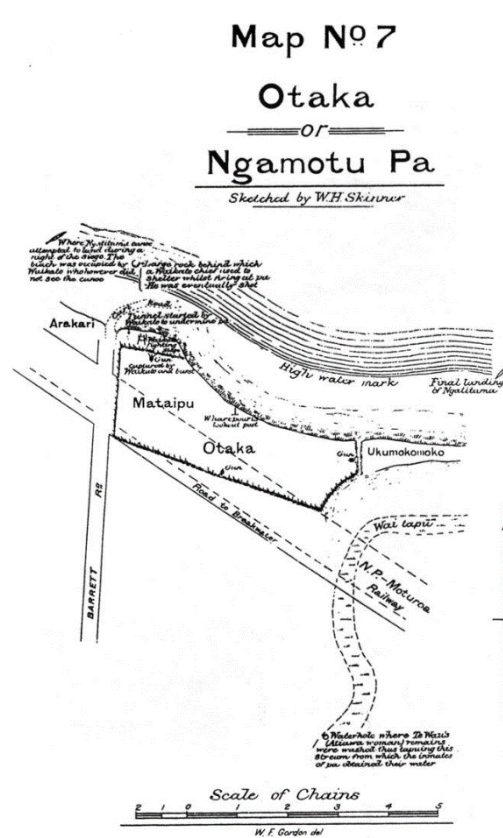
## Construction Information

**Date of Construction** 1957-59

**Principal Materials** Reinforced concrete, corrugated steel

**Construction Professionals** King and Dawson (architects), Roebuck Construction (contractors)

## 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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup> On the fourth day of the siege a surrender was proposed, but not accepted.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

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invaders; who possessed between three and four thousand muskets.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup> Following this unsuccessful assault, the invaders retreated, and began their long journey back to the Waikato.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup> Near this site hastily erected and somewhat primitive whare's were home to new settlers for their first months in the infant settlement.<sup>10</sup> The arrival of the Plymouth Company Settlers is commemorated at nearby Otaka/Pioneer Park, where the Pioneer Memorial was erected in 1911.<sup>11</sup> Also located at the park is the grave of paramount chief Poharama Te Whiti, who died in 1875.<sup>12</sup>

### Freezing Works History

The Taranaki Freezing Company Limited was first established on this site in 1895. 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.<sup>13</sup> The first wooden buildings on this site were erected of timber in 1895, but were destroyed by fire on 10 May 1904.<sup>14</sup> After it was decided to re-erect the works at Moturoa (there was some discussion of centralising operations in Wellington), a new building constructed of brick was complete by 28 October 1904.<sup>15</sup> 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. This included construction of a considerable number of now demolished brick stores during the 1910s and 1920s; the neighbouring Butter Store in 1936-37; and the Produce Stores in 1945-46 and 1951-52.

Aside from the Taranaki Producers' Freezing works in New Plymouth, the other co-operative freezing works in Taranaki were those of the West Coast Refrigerating Company, established at Patea in 1901.<sup>16</sup> A strong rivalry existed between the Patea and New Plymouth co-operatives, and was reflective of an intense division between north and south Taranaki that had existed since colonial times. The Producers' Freezing Works had been shipping butter and cheese direct from New Plymouth to England since 1917, however, size limitations at the Patea river port precluded the West Coast Refrigerating Company from making direct shipments of butter and cheese to international markets.<sup>17</sup> The situation at Patea necessitated the use of smaller coastal ships to take produce first

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

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

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 27 March 1911, page 7

<sup>12</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 20 October 1875, page 2

<sup>13</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 2 September 1901, page 2

<sup>14</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 10 May 1904, page 4

<sup>15</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 7 November 1904, page 3

<sup>16</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 23 March 1901, page 2

<sup>17</sup> *New Zealand Dairy Exporter*, 10 August 1959, page 33

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to Wellington, where it would then be transferred to larger ships for international transit.<sup>18</sup>

By the mid-late 1950s this arrangement was threatening the viability of the Patea works, and a decision was made to put aside long-standing intra-provincial rivalries, and to combine the cool store operations of both co-operatives at New Plymouth.<sup>19</sup> The implications of the merger were particularly serious, as it would see South Taranaki lose both its port and cool stores; however, both organisations were of the opinion that it was in the best long-term interests of the Taranaki dairy industry.<sup>20</sup> As part of this process, the West Coast Refrigerating Company became a full shareholder in the Taranaki Producer's works, with a view that at some point in the future a full merger between the two co-operatives would occur.<sup>21</sup>

The merging of operations would require considerable additional cold storage space at New Plymouth and noted architects King and Dawson were soon engaged to design a new store. Joseph Dawson first established his architecture practice at Wellington in 1906 and appointed his long-term employee Jack King as a partner in 1929.<sup>22</sup> The firm continued under the name Dawson and King until 1946, when the practice became King & Keith Cook in Association with J M Dawson.<sup>23</sup> Joseph Dawson's son, Eric, became a partner in 1948 and the practice became King, Cook and Dawson, and finally King and Dawson in the 1950s; a name which survives to this day.<sup>24</sup> King and Dawson (and the earlier King, Cook and Dawson), were involved in a number of projects in the Modernist style during the 1950s and 1960s. These were largely centred in the Wellington region and included the Lower Hutt Council Administration Building and Town Hall completed in 1957; the Wellington Cathedral of St Paul from 1959; and Oriental Bay's Freyberg Pool completed in 1963.



Parsons Store under construction, 22 August 1958. Detail from Whites Aviation aerial photograph, Whites Aviation Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, WA-47172-F.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Mew, Geoff & Adrian Humphris. (2014). *Raupo to Deco: Wellington Styles and Architects 1840 – 1940*. Steel Roberts Aotearoa, Wellington

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

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Foundation work for the new cool stores was commenced in April 1957, and first required draining the lagoon located on the site.<sup>25</sup> Water from the lagoon was used for cooling purposes and was refilled once construction was complete.<sup>26</sup> A permit for construction of the new store wasn't granted by the New Plymouth Borough Council until several months later on 24 October 1957.<sup>27</sup> The contractors for the building were the local firm Roebuck Construction, who completed the almost £300,000 project within the contract period of just over two years.<sup>28</sup> The new building was officially opened by the chairman of the Dairy Board, Mr A. Linton, on 14 July 1959, and named after Frank Parsons, chairman of the West Coast Refrigerating Company.<sup>29</sup> Parsons had dedicated much of his life to furthering the Taranaki dairy industry and had worked tirelessly to ensure the cool store merger eventuated.<sup>30</sup>

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.<sup>31</sup> This sale included both a monetary transaction, and the allocation of shares to Taranaki dairy companies using the stores.<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup> It was thus decided to sell the shares issued in 1981 back to the Dairy Board, and this was finalised on June 16<sup>th</sup> of that year.<sup>34</sup>

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.<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup> 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.

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<sup>25</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 14 July 1959, page 11

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, page 10

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Richards, George. (1995). *And Then There Was One: A history of the Taranaki dairy industry*. Kiwi Co-operative Dairies, Hawera

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Lind, Clive A. (2013). *Till the Cows Came Home: Inside the battles that built Fonterra*. Steele Roberts, Wellington

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.



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### Description

The Parsons Store 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. Significant buildings in this group include the 1936-37 Thomas Bates designed Butter Store, the 1904 Engine Room, and 1946-47 and 1951-52 three-storey Produce stores. The Parsons Store is constructed over a lagoon, with the reinforced concrete foundations extending deep below the water line.

A rectilinear structure of significant proportions, the Parsons Store is principally built from in-situ reinforced concrete. The building incorporates a number of features associated with the Modernist style popular during the 1950s and 1960s and is characterised by an overall simplicity of design and lack of elaborate decoration. There is an honest expression of key structural elements, and bold geometric shapes feature strongly; it is a radical departure from the design of the Produce Store, completed just three years earlier. The roof design is somewhat unusual, being principally mono-pitch sloping from west to east, but with the northern and southern sides sloping upwards; it was designed specifically to house extensive elevator mechanisms.

The main front elevation faces roughly south towards the New Plymouth-Marton Railway and Breakwater Road. An open loading bay intersected by structural columns stretches across much of the ground floor, with a wide sloping veranda roof extending forward of the main structure. A projecting framed central panel highlights the buildings only substantive decoration; three regular rows of five small rectangular glazed windows and two rows of four louvered vents, linked by a geometric grid of isogonal octagons in relief. A tall lift shaft and overrun rises from the eastern corner, whilst the sloping gable end and eastern lift housing are sheathed in mild corrugated steel.

The western side elevation of the lift shaft incorporates a regular row of four small square windows. The main wall of this elevation incorporates four pairs of small square fixed windows and a row of louvred vents in the roof space. The eastern elevation is clad in mild corrugated steel, with the external produce elevator housing beginning at first floor level and being supported by heavy steel brackets.

### Assessment:

#### Historical

The Parson's Store has considerable heritage significance for its long association with the Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works and Taranaki dairy industry, performing a key role in the storage of butter and other dairy products prior to international export. Construction of the Parson's Store was a direct result of the decision to merge north and south Taranaki cool storage operations at New Plymouth; a decision that would have significant and long reaching implications for the New Zealand dairy industry. Designed by noted Wellington architects King & Dawson, the Parson's Store is a significant example of the firm's industrial work.

✓

#### 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.

✓



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<b>Architecture &amp; Construction</b>	The Parsons Store is an outstanding example of mid-century Modernist architecture in New Plymouth, and a nationally significant example of a large mid-century Modernist industrial building. The incorporation of strong geometric elements in alignment with Modernist principles sets this building apart from other industrial storage buildings constructed at the time.	✓✓
<b>Setting and Context</b>	The Parson's Store 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 1904 Engine Room, 1936-37 Butter Store, and 1946-47 and 1951 three-storey Produce stores further west.	✓
<b>Archaeology</b>	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.	✓
<b>Representativeness, rarity and integrity</b>	The exterior of this building has been little altered and remains very much as it was when first constructed.	✓
<b>Meets threshold for listing</b> (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓

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