

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Address

294 Devon Street West, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

The original portion of this house was likely constructed during 1862-63 by carpenter Joe Corney and is associated with the historically important period following the cessation of major conflict of the Taranaki Wars of 1860-63. The front double-gabled portion was probably erected by builder Thomas Bond in 1878-79 and has architectural significance as one of the earliest (if not the earliest), surviving examples of the double gable style in New Plymouth. The building has been associated with a large number of persons over its more than 150-year history, including a number of members of the historically neglected working class; for a period during the 1910s the house also operated as a private maternity hospital. The house is one of a number of interesting older dwellings (including several erected pre-1900) to survive on the north side of Devon Street West between Morley Street and Cutfield Road, with the house making a positive contribution to the character of the local streetscape.



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Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description Lot A DP 1893

District Plan Item/ Map No.

Heritage New Zealand List Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction Circa 1862-63/ circa 1878-79/ circa 1890s

Principal Materials Wooden framing, weatherboard, corrugated steel

Construction Professionals Joe Corney (presumed builder original 1862-63 cottage); Thomas Bond (presumed builder for 1878-79 additions)

History

This house is located on Part Town Section 208 of the original Town of New Plymouth surveyed by Frederick Alonzo Carrington in 1841. The section was initially allocated to Frederick Ibbotson by the Plymouth Company in the 1840s, with the agents for the transaction being 'Brown & Goodall'.¹ It is unclear if Ibbotson ever occupied the property, but is noted as being in rates arrears for the property (and several other sections) during the mid-1850s.² In October 1862, the section was conveyed to builder Joseph (Joe) Corney who is thought to have constructed the original portion of the house soon after purchasing the property.³ This original dwelling comprised a simple gabled cottage (possibly with rear lean-to) sited parallel to the street; this was later repositioned to form part of the present eastern gable. The original cottage has significance as belonging to an important historical period during which settlers were beginning to rebuild beyond the confines of New Plymouth's cramped inner defences erected to protect the town during the Taranaki Wars (1860-63).

Joe Corney was born in Halifax, West Yorkshire, England in December 1839, and later emigrated to New Zealand aboard the *Euphemus*, arriving at Auckland in February 1857.⁴ Joe saw service during the Taranaki Wars as a member of the Taranaki Volunteers, being present at the significant Battle of Waireka in March 1860.⁵ He married miss Ruth Ratcliffe at New Plymouth in 1866 and the couple would go on to have nine children. Aside from his work as a builder, during the 1860s and early 1870s Corney was also overseer for Mr J. Watson's timber yard at the corner of Devon and Liardet Streets and was later employed at Henry Brown's sawmill at Hurworth.⁶ Brown's mill burnt down in 1874, and the following year Corney purchased 123 acres on Durham Road, near the newly established settlement of Inglewood.⁷ A hardworking settler, he established a small dairy factory on his property, and was engaged in building railway bridges on the Sentry Hill-Inglewood line.⁸ Joe Corney passed

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

² *Taranaki Herald*, 28 March 1857, page 4

³ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand; Taranaki Land Deed Registers (23518), c.1856 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

⁴ *Daily Southern Cross*, 13 February 1857, page 2

⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 27 August 1928, page 3

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

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away at his Durham Road residence in August 1928.⁹

As was common with speculative builds, Joe Corney only retained ownership of Town Section 208 for a few months until early 1863, when the property was purchased by Duncan Cameron.¹⁰ A boatsman who was involved in the lighterage business bringing goods to shore from boats anchored off the New Plymouth roadstead; Cameron seems to have been a well-respected local citizen.¹¹ Electoral rolls note Cameron owning property in Fulford Street during the 1850s, and is first associated with this property in an 1864 update to the Town of New Plymouth Electoral Roll. This update noted that Duncan Cameron owned freehold “house and land, Section No. 208, Devon-street, New Plymouth” and is the first concrete evidence of a house present on Town Section 208.¹² Whilst Cameron met the property qualification, it seems he was still ineligible to vote as he had “no occupation” and was subsequently removed from the roll.¹³ Duncan Cameron and his family only occupied the house for a short period, as on March 9th 1866, Cameron and his boat crew departed Taranaki for Timaru, they being engaged by the Provincial Government of Canterbury for boating operations there.¹⁴

By March 1866, the property was advertised for sale by solicitor William Halse and was described as “The Town Allotment No. 208, Devon-street, with the dwelling house thereon, belonging to Mr. Duncan Cameron”.¹⁵ The house appears to have been purchased by the ‘Bishop of New Zealand’ (who was the mortgagee for an 1863 mortgage), with Cameron being struck off the New Plymouth electoral roll in 1867 because his property had been sold.¹⁶ However, this conveyance, rather strangely, isn’t recorded until May 22nd 1869, just two days before Cameron lost his life in a surf boat accident at Timaru on May 24th.¹⁷ Cameron left a widow and four children, for whom a subscription was started by Timaru residents soon after.¹⁸

During August 1869, commission agent Clarence Rennell invited tenders for “shingling a house situated in Devon-street west, formerly in the occupation of Duncan Cameron”.¹⁹ At the same time, Rennell also advertised the house “formerly in the occupation of Mr D. Cameron” for let.²⁰ It is unclear who the house was let to, but several years later, in December 1874, the property was purchased by pavier Bernard McManus.²¹ McManus is first listed as residing in Devon Street in the 1875-76 edition of Wises Post Office Directory, being listed as residing on the Town Belt (unknown location) in the 1872-73 edition.²² A fire rate being levied during the 1875-76 rating year indicates a substantial structure was present on the section at the beginning of this rating period.²³

During December 1877, Town Section 208 “with four-roomed cottage thereon”, was advertised for sale by T. E. Hamerton on behalf of the Taranaki Land, Building & Investment Society.²⁴ The property doesn’t seem to have sold at this time, and it wasn’t October 1878, a few months after Bernard’s

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

¹¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 12 June 1869, page 2

¹² *Taranaki Herald*, 23 April 1864, page 5

¹³ *Taranaki Herald*, 14 May 1864, page 6

¹⁴ *Taranaki Herald*, 10 March 1866, page 2

¹⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 17 March 1866, page 1

¹⁶ *Taranaki Herald*, 11 May 1867, page 2

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

¹⁸ *Taranaki Herald*, 12 June 1869, page 2

¹⁹ *Taranaki Herald*, 7 August 1869, page 1

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

²² Wises Post Office Directories 1872-76

²³ New Plymouth Town Board Rating Roll 1875-76, NPDC Archives

²⁴ *Taranaki Herald*, 19 December 1877, page 3

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death, that Town Section 208 was conveyed to builder Thomas Bond.²⁵ The Bond's moved into the house soon after purchasing the property, with Mrs Bond advertising for a general servant at a Devon Street address during January 1879.²⁶ It seems likely that the front double-gabled portion of the house was constructed by Bond soon after purchasing the property, and certainly before 1880, as it is clearly present on Thomas Kingwell Skinner's 1880 map of New Plymouth.²⁷ In May 1889, there was a conveyance of equity from Bond to mortgagee W. H. Franklin, although it seems Bond may have continued to reside at the house.²⁸ In June 1892, Town Section 208 was conveyed to prominent lawyer Clement William Govett and it seems to have been rented out thereafter.²⁹ The rear portion of the eastern gable was likely constructed during Govett's period of ownership in the 1890s. Town Section 208 was subject to the Land Transfer Act in 1902; still in the possession of Mr Govett and occupied by Charles Rea and Thomas Arthur Berridge.³⁰



New Plymouth from below Barrett Street Hospital overlooking Morley Street, [Detail showing 294 Devon Street West], Unknown photographer, circa early-1900s, Puke Ariki, A.3.120

Govett retained ownership of the property until 1907, when it was purchased by dressmaker Miss Agnes French.³¹ Miss French occupied the house herself until 1913, when it was rented to Mrs Mary Charlotte Wildermoth following the death of her husband.³² Mrs Wildermoth soon opened a nursing/maternity hospital at the house, advertising during January 1914 that she had “resumed nursing and may be consulted at 254 Devon Street West”, which was the old street address for this property.³³ Miss French remained the owner, with Mrs Wildermoth the tenant, until 1919, when the property was purchased by Miss Emily Pearn and Miss Henrietta Smith as tenants in common; Emily's sister, Ella Pearn, contributed towards the purchase cost of the house and also seemingly resided at

²⁵ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

²⁶ *Taranaki Herald*, 4 January 1879, page 3

²⁷ Plan of New Plymouth, New Zealand, Thomas Kingwell Skinner, 1880, ARC2010-220, Puke Ariki

²⁸ Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *Taranaki Herald*, 27 October 1902, page 5

³¹ CT TN50/197, Land Information New Zealand

³² Wises Post Office Directories, 1913-19

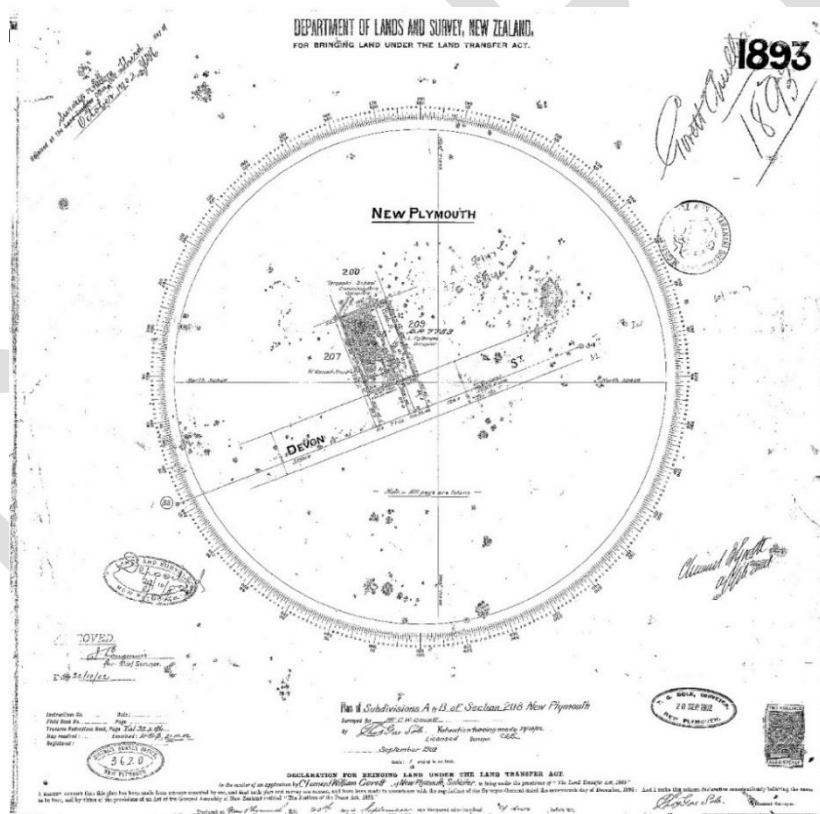
³³ *Taranaki Daily News*, 22 January 1914, page 1



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the address.³⁴ Upon Emily's death in 1924, Henrietta, Emily's "true friend", was appointed sole executrix of her will, with Henrietta and Ella given options as to retain or sell the house; if one only should want to stay then they must pay out the other to the sum of £250.³⁵ During March 1926, Emily's share was transferred to Henrietta, before ownership of the property was formally conveyed to Ella Pearn a few months later.³⁶

Ella resided at the house until 1935, when ownership of the property was transferred to accountant Walter Dillon Granville.³⁷ Whilst Granville only resided at the house for a few years, he retained ownership for the next fifteen years, renting the house first to Charles V. Mavor, and later to painter Eric V. Campbell.³⁸ In 1950, Granville sold the property to Ross Riley, who only retained ownership until 1953, when the property was purchased by Stanley William Sadler.³⁹ Only residing at the house for a few years, Sadler sold the property to railway foreman Patrick Dorgan in December 1955, who later sold the house to widow Mary Crook in 1960.⁴⁰ The house was replied in 1977 by builder and then owner Ivan Lamb.⁴¹ The property was sold in 1981 and 1988, before being purchased by the present owners in 1991.



DP1893, Land Information New Zealand

³⁴ CT TN50/197, Land Information New Zealand

³⁵ Emily Pearn, 1924, probate file including will, New Plymouth Probate Files, 1867-1981, Archives New Zealand (21954); Taranaki Land Deed Indexes (23516), c.1858 - c.1928, Archives New Zealand

³⁶ CT TN50/197, Land Information New Zealand

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Wises Post Office Directories, 1935-50

³⁹ CT TN50/197, Land Information New Zealand

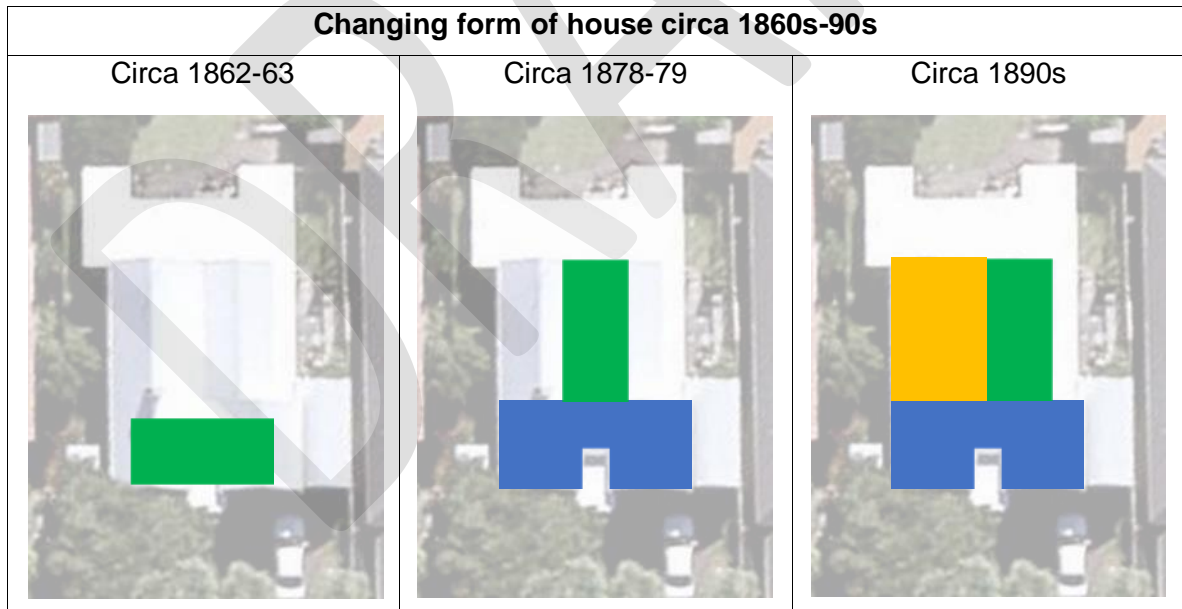
⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ NPDC Archives

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Plan of New Plymouth, New Zealand, [detail showing double-gable form of 294 Devon Street West on Town Section 208], Thomas Kingwell Skinner, 1880, Puke Ariki, ARC2010-220



Reference Sources

See footnotes.

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Description

This house is located on the western side of New Plymouth city, a short distance from the CBD. Whilst the area was settled early in New Plymouth's history, development pressures have seen the demolition and removal of many older residential properties in the area; especially on the south side of Devon Street West. However, the north side of Devon Street West between Morley Street and Cutfield Road is still predominantly residential and contains a number of interesting older dwellings, including several constructed pre-1900.

Although partially obscured by trees, the house is positioned close to the front property boundary and is visible from busy Devon Street West. Its bright colour scheme ensures it stands out from neighbouring dwellings and the house makes a positive contribution to the character of the local streetscape. The timber-framed building is clad in rusticated weatherboard and the roof is sheathed in mild corrugated steel; a two-flue brick chimney, corbelled at top, rises through the centre of the western gable. Although composed of an amalgam of additions, the building roughly follows the form of a centre-gutter double-bay villa.

The house was constructed in stages, the oldest portion likely being the rear portion of the eastern gable, which is lower in height and clad in plain boarding as opposed to rusticated weatherboard; timber shingles have been found on this portion during re-roofing. This portion likely formed part of the original 1862-63 cottage and was probably initially positioned parallel to Devon Street West. In circa 1878-79 the front double-gabled structure was probably erected, with the original cottage repositioned to the centre-rear of the new structure at this time. During the circa 1890s the rear portion of the western gable was added, with the original cottage portion also shifted to its present position at this time.

The main front elevation faces roughly south-east and incorporates two projecting flush bays with entrance porch inset at centre. Both bays are treated identically, the principal feature being a projecting angled bay window with standard front double-hung sash and a slender sash on each of the side returns. The lower portions of the bay window feature inset timber panels, the facings are heavily moulded, whilst the shallow bay eave incorporates a lightly moulded cornice. The boxed eaves feature gable-end returns, and the upper gable-end is finished with decorative bargeboards and a finial at the apex.

The front entrance door is located within a deep central porch, now extended beyond its original footprint and fitted with replica fretwork brackets. The entrance door is timber, with two solid lower panels and two upper curved glazed panels. The door is flanked by narrow timber panelled and curved glazed panels, with further glazed panels above. At the eastern end of the front elevation is a modern single car garage in sympathetic style; the gable end is finished with replica decorative bargeboards and a finial to match the principal gables.

The exposed wall of the rear eastern gable is clad in plain rough-sawn horizontal weatherboard and likely formed the frontage to the original 1862-63 cottage. The exposed wall of the western gable is clad in rusticated weatherboards and incorporates a number of double-hung sash windows. At the rear of the house there is a lean-to extension incorporating windows in a variety of styles.



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Assessment:

Historical	The original cottage portion erected circa 1862-63 is associated with an important historical period following the cessation of major conflict of the Taranaki Wars (1860-63), at which time settlers were beginning to rebuild beyond the confines of New Plymouth's cramped inner defences. The building has been associated with a large number of persons over its more than 150-year history, including a number of members of the historically neglected working class. Operating as a private maternity hospital under Mrs Wildermoth during the 1910s, the house is associated with a period in New Zealand's history during which many births occurred in such institutions.	✓
Importance to Community	For present New Plymouth residents whose ancestors were born here during its use a maternity hospital, this building provides a tangible link to an important event in their family histories.	✓
Architecture & Construction	This house has architectural significance as one of the earliest (if not the earliest), surviving examples of a double gable dwelling in New Plymouth. This style would later become popular during the 1900s as the double-gable villa gained prominence. The house is also a good example of how smaller early cottages were enlarged to cater to changing owner needs throughout the nineteenth century.	✓
Setting and Context	Located close to the street frontage this building makes a positive contribution to the character of the local streetscape. It is part of a cluster older residential properties located on north side of Devon Street West between Morley Street and Cutfield Road.	✓
Archaeology	As much of this dwelling was constructed prior to 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	The house largely retains its circa 1890s form, with additions such as the garage constructed in a complementary style.	✓
Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓