

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Produce Store

Address

Hakirau Street, Moturoa, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

The Produce Store was constructed for the Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Company in two stages during 1945-46 and 1951-53. Designed by accomplished New Plymouth architect Thomas Herbert Bates, the Produce Store is a landmark building incorporating elements from a range of architectural styles. It has technical interest as a large multi-storey reinforced concrete industrial building utilising flat slab construction supported by mushroom columns. 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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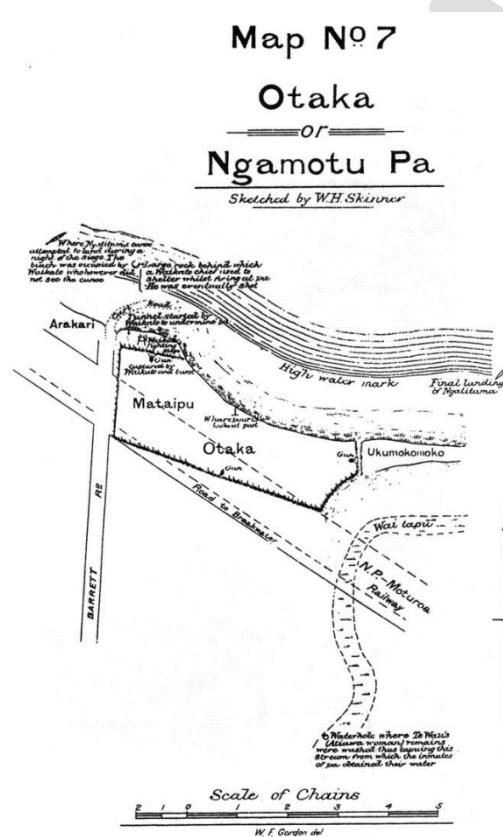
Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description Lot 1 DP 17360
District Plan Item/ Map No.
Heritage New Zealand List Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction 1945-46/1951-53
Principal Materials Reinforced concrete, corrugated steel
Construction Professionals Thomas Herbert Bates (architect), W. Williamson Construction Company (builders)

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.¹

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.²

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

¹ 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

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

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invaders; who possessed between three and four thousand muskets.⁶

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

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.⁹ Near this site hastily erected and somewhat primitive whare's were home to new settlers for their first months in the infant settlement.¹⁰ The arrival of the Plymouth Company Settlers is commemorated at nearby Otaka/Pioneer Park, where the Pioneer Memorial was erected in 1911.¹¹ Also located at the park is the grave of paramount chief Poharama Te Whiti, who died in 1875.¹²

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.¹³ The first wooden buildings on this site were erected of timber in 1895, but were destroyed by fire on 10 May 1904.¹⁴ 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 1904.¹⁵ 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 this included construction of a considerable number of now demolished brick stores during the 1910s and 1920s; the Butter Store in 1936-37; the present building in 1945-46 and 1951-53; and the Parsons Store in 1957-59. The only surviving portion of the 1904 building is the engine room to the immediate east of the Produce Stores.

Construction of the present building is the result of several factors including the need to replace aging infrastructure, a rapidly expanding local dairy industry fuelled by the commodity boom of the late-1930s to mid-1950s, and the expectation that extra storage space would be required to cope with a greater volume of products from South Taranaki.¹⁶ The first part of the building erected was the western portion, which was constructed as a replacement for a 1910s triple-gabled brick store that had reached the end of its useful life.¹⁷ The building was designed by the Company's architect, Thomas Herbert Bates, who had earlier designed the landmark Butter Store. Thomas Bates (1873-1954) was one of New Plymouth's foremost architects during the first half of the twentieth century and

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

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

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 27 March 1911, page 7

¹² *Taranaki Herald*, 20 October 1875, page 2

¹³ *Taranaki Herald*, 2 September 1901, page 2

¹⁴ *Taranaki Herald*, 10 May 1904, page 4

¹⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 7 November 1904, page 3

¹⁶ Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Company. (1951). *Golden Jubilee, 1901-1951*. New Plymouth: Avery Press

¹⁷ Ibid.



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was associated with a significant number of substantial commercial and residential buildings between 1916 and 1953. His first contract was the supervision of Everybody's Theatre (now the Mayfair) for Auckland architects Grierson and Aimer, shortly followed by a comparable role for Wellington architect Frederick de Jersey Clere for the AMP Building (now Peggy Gordon's). He soon established a practice in the city, where his work included large reinforced concrete commercial and industrial buildings, dairy factories, private dwellings predominantly in the English Domestic Revival style, and rarely, single-storey bungalows. His last commission was in 1952-53, being the refurbishment of the Criterion Hotel. He died in early 1954, aged 81, in a plane crash at Singapore Airport.

The successful tenderers for the construction of the first (western) building was the Christchurch based W. Williamson Construction Company, at a contract price of £48,689.¹⁸ A permit for the 'rebuilding of stores' was granted by the Borough Council to the Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Company on the 7th of February 1945.¹⁹ The building was designed with six large storage chambers with room for 93,000 boxes of butter or 31,000 crates of cheese.²⁰ The construction method utilised flat slabs supported by mushroom top columns and was touted as being the latest in earthquake resistant design.²¹ The use of mushroom columns also eliminated the need for horizontal beams, allowing for greater spans between columns and providing better airflow and enhanced cooling efficiency.²²

In 1950 it was decided to replace the now inefficient 1904 freezing chambers and erect a new store between the first portion of the Produce Store and the Engine Room. This new building would be almost identical in design, although slightly larger than 1944-46 portion; it was designed to store up to 100,000 boxes of butter or 33,000 crates of cheese.²³ A permit was granted to the Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Company on the 11th September 1951 for the construction of the cool store additions; W. Williamson Construction Company were once again the contractors, and the estimated construction cost was £105,000.²⁴ The significant cost of the building required the firm to increase its capital from £100,000 to £200,000.²⁵ The first lorry load of butter was delivered to the new store from the Bell Block Co-operative Dairy Factory on December 23rd 1953; the same day Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh arrived at Auckland to the start their royal tour of New Zealand.²⁶ When the Queen and Duke visited New Plymouth during early January 1953 the new 'Rundle Store', as it was then named, was used to store food for the royal visit.²⁷

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.²⁸ This sale included both a monetary transaction, and the allocation of shares to Taranaki dairy companies using the stores.²⁹ 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

¹⁸ *Taranaki Herald*, 25 August 1944, page 2

¹⁹ NPBC Building Register Book 1938-46, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)

²⁰ Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Company. (1951). *Golden Jubilee, 1901-1951*. New Plymouth: Avery Press

²¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 25 August 1944, page 2

²² Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Company. (1951). *Golden Jubilee, 1901-1951*. New Plymouth: Avery Press

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ NPBC Building Register Book 1950-54, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)

²⁵ Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Company. (1951). *Golden Jubilee, 1901-1951*. New Plymouth: Avery Press

²⁶ *Taranaki Herald*, 14 July 1959, page 10

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Richards, George. (1995). *And Then There Was One: A history of the Taranaki dairy industry*. Kiwi Co-operative Dairies, Hawera

²⁹ Ibid.

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Company, and the cool store share arrangement was now considered an anomaly in New Zealand.³⁰ It was thus decided to sell the shares issued in 1981 back to the Dairy Board, and this was finalised on June 16th of that year.³¹

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.³² 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.³³ 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.

Description

The Produce 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 1957-59 modernist style Parsons Store.

A structure of significant proportions, the building is comprised of two contiguous near identical sections constructed in 1945-46 (western portion) and 1951-53 (eastern portion). Principally constructed of in-situ reinforced concrete, the building utilises flat slab construction supported by mushroom top columns. The roof is mono-pitch but also incorporates five moderately pitched gables of differing sizes extending to the rear of the structure. Aside from some minor modifications, the exterior remains very much as it was when first built.

The building is somewhat of an amalgam of architectural styles from the early decades of the twentieth century and is strongly influenced by Bates' earlier Butter Store. Whilst more detailed than would generally be expected of an industrial storage building, the designs utilised are both few and simple; all expressed on a grand scale rarely seen in provincial New Zealand. The simple fluting on the pilasters are a nod to the art deco/Moderne style, the divided fixed timber casements are reminiscent of neo-Georgian fenestration patterns, the exposed structural beams reference industrial functionalist form, whilst dentil coursing is perhaps a remnant of stripped classicism.

The main front elevation faces roughly south-west towards the New Plymouth-Marton Railway and Breakwater Road. At ground floor level a wide enclosed loading bay with sloping corrugated steel-clad roof projects forward of the main structure. Much of this veranda pre-dates the present buildings, with the portion in front of the eastern building erected in 1904 as part of the original works and the portion in front of the western building constructed during the early-1910s as part of a three-bay gabled addition. The frontage of the loading bay is clad in rusticated weatherboards, with the now boarded-over window openings (once fitted with divided casements), still clearly visible.

The façade of each portion is rhythmically composed with four recessed bays divided by tall structural columns, central horizontal beam, with a strong dentil course at top. Slender simplified pilasters rise either side of the elevation and incorporate a simple fluted design at upper floor level; the central

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Lind, Clive A. (2013). *Till the Cows Came Home: Inside the battles that built Fonterra*. Steele Roberts, Wellington

³³ Ibid.



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designs remaining discrete. A central first-floor bay projects forward of the main structure on both portions, with wide simplified pilasters featuring simple fluted designs at upper floor level, rising either side of the bays. Each bay features also incorporates a regular row of twelve-light divided timber casements, with a corresponding trio of smaller four-light fixed timber casements below. The principal difference between the elevations is the lettering on the western portion. A wide, slightly recessed panel spanning the full length of the western parapet incorporates the words 'TARANAKI PRODUCERS' FREEZING WORKS COY. LTD.' in raised plaster lettering; whilst the words 'PRODUCE STORE' is incorporated within another recessed panel on the western projecting bay.

Assessment:

Historical	The Produce 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, cheese and other dairy products prior to international export. Designed by noted New Plymouth architect Thomas Herbert Bates, the Produce Store was likely his largest commission.	✓
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.	✓
Architecture & Construction	An attractive landmark building incorporating elements from a range of architectural styles. The Produce Store has technical interest as a large multi-storey reinforced concrete industrial building utilising flat slab construction supported by mushroom columns.	✓
Setting and Context	The Produce 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 1957-59 modernist style Parsons Store.	✓
Archaeology	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.	✓
Representativeness, rarity and integrity	The exterior of this building has been little altered and remains very much as it was when first constructed.	✓
Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓