

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Kebbell-Quilliam Residence (Former)

Address

59 Vivian Street, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

This attractive residence was constructed for senior Newton King employee George Mayo Kebbell in 1910, and was later occupied by James Henry Quilliam, of longstanding local law firm Govett & Quilliam. This building has an important place in the architectural history of New Plymouth and marks the beginning of the transition away from the traditional villa and towards the bungalow; an architectural style that would come to define New Plymouth's suburbs. Designed by Wellington-based architect Charles Forrest Bligh Livesay, this is the only known New Plymouth dwelling designed by an individual whose promising career was cut tragically short. Located in a highly visible position on a busy one-way street, and with a striking black and white colour scheme, this building makes a strong positive contribution to the character of the local streetscape. The exterior of this building remains much as it was when first constructed and retains many original architectural features.



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Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description Section 728 Town of New Plymouth

District Plan Item/ Map No.

Heritage New Zealand List Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction 1910

Principal Materials Wooden framing, weatherboard, corrugated steel

Construction Professionals Charles Forrest Bligh Livesay (architect)

History

In January 1910, Wellington architect Charles Forrest Bligh Livesay advertised for tenders for the erection of a house in Vivian Street, New Plymouth.¹ This house was to be constructed for New Plymouth accountant George Mayo Kebbell. George was born in 1875 and was the son of prominent Wellington citizen George Mayo Kebbell and his wife Jessie. He was educated at Wellington and Wanganui Colleges, and for some time worked for the Bank of New Zealand at several North Island branches, including at Stratford.² He married Miss Ivy Gertrude Cottier, the youngest daughter of well-known New Plymouth hotel proprietors William and Mary Jane Cottier, at St Mary's Church, on 23 December 1903.³ The couple had one child, George Mayo Kebbell, who was born on 15 August 1905 at New Plymouth.⁴

Kebbell purchased Town Section 728 from a Mr Goldwater in June 1910.⁵ At this time they were residing in the corner bay villa at present 14 Gilbert Street, designed for Kebbell by local architect James Sanderson in 1903.⁶ A month later, a permit for the construction of a 'bungalow' on this property was granted to Kebbell by the New Plymouth Borough Council, with Livesay noted as the architect, and the building having an estimated construction cost of £668.⁷ The Kebbell's seem to be residing at the house by October 1910, when Mrs Kebbell advertised for a young girl to assist in housework at a Vivian Street address.⁸

George worked for the large and successful New Plymouth firm of Newton King Ltd for over 22 years, and for a number of these occupied the position of chief accountant.⁹ He left this position in 1922 to take up farming on the Frankley Road, and on his departure was presented with "a pipe and a substantial cheque".¹⁰ It seems he was in ill health at the time, and hoped that a country life may help build up his health.¹¹ Soon after leaving his position at Newton King he sold the Vivian Street house

¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 14 January 1910, page 7

² *Taranaki Herald*, 14 October 1939, page 6

³ *Taranaki Herald*, 24 December 1903, page 5

⁴ *Taranaki Herald*, 16 August 1905, page 4

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

⁶ NPBC Building Register Book 1902-22, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Taranaki Herald*, 12 October 1910, page 1

⁹ *Stratford Evening Post*, 2 February 1922, page 5

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

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to lawyer James Henry Quilliam, of Govett & Quilliam; a local firm which is still in existence today.¹² The house remained in the Quilliam family for a number of decades before being converted into commercial premises, which was for many years occupied by valuers Hutchins and Dick; Taranaki Radiology relocated to the property in 2016.



View of house (centre-left) and surrounding area taken from the post office soon after completion – the modern bungalow style stands out amongst the extant cottages and villas of central New Plymouth. *The Weekly Graphic and New Zealand Mail*, 1 March 1911

Architect Charles Forrest Bligh Livesay

Charles Livesay was a talented architect, although much of his life is still shrouded in mystery. Charles was born in 1874 at Vetnor, on the Ise of Wight, and was the third child of John Gillett Livesay and his wife Sophia.¹³ Little is known about Charles' life before arriving in New Zealand in 1903, and unlike his father and grandfather, who were also architects, he doesn't appear to have qualified with the Royal Institute of British Architects.¹⁴ It seems his first visit to New Plymouth was in September 1903, whilst on a nationwide tour of the manufacture of dairy products.¹⁵

Nothing more is heard from Livesay until he reappears in Wellington in 1906, where he commenced practice as an architect. He designed at least 22 buildings whilst based in Wellington, primarily large bungalows, but also shops in Newtown, tram shelters in Miramar, and boating club premises and a tea kiosk at Seatoun.¹⁶ He also designed a few buildings outside of Wellington City, including a cottage at Trentham, a two-story department store at Upper Hutt, and a house in Marton; interestingly,

¹² Mew, Geoff & Humphris, Adrian. (2014). *Raupo to Deco: Wellington styles and architects, 1840-1940*. Steele Roberts, Wellington.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 15 September 1903, page 5

¹⁶ Mew & Humphris. (2014).

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as with 59 Vivian Street, these buildings were all commissioned in 1910.¹⁷

He appears to have moved to Nelson in 1914, and then his name doesn't surface until 1918, when he was accused of burning down his own home at Moutere with all his contents inside "as a method of wiping out the past" - it is currently unclear what he meant by this, although the article mentioned Livesay was arrested and was to be medically examined.¹⁸ Later in 1919, a typewriter was put up for auction in the estate of C. F. B. Livesay; although it is unclear if he died or was committed to an institution.¹⁹ Regardless, Livesay disappears from the record after 1919; an unfortunate end for such a talented architect.

Reference Sources

See footnotes.

Description

Located a short distance from New Plymouth's CBD, this building is highly visible from the busy one-way Vivian Street. The southern side of Vivian Street, on which this building is located, retains a locally significant grouping of circa 1900-1930 residential buildings, predominantly in the villa and bungalow styles. Opposite, the residential dwellings that formerly occupied the northern side of Vivian Street have largely been demolished or removed and replaced with commercial premises or carparking.

Set-back from the street, the front section of this property is part-grassed, and part-paved carpark. A low brick wall runs most of the length of the frontage, terminating at a single-car brick garage. Whilst the wall and garage are of an unknown age, they are likely near contemporaries with the house.

This home is probably best described as belonging to the transitional style with hints of the Arts and Crafts movement popular at the time. Although incorporating elements from both the villa and bungalow styles, the house is certainly more 'bungalow' than 'villa' and is significant as probably the first overtly bungalow style home constructed in New Plymouth. Most homes belonging to the transitional period, especially those in early 1910s New Plymouth, were more overtly 'villa' in appearance, and this building would have been a modern addition to New Plymouth's architecture at the time.

The house is rectangular in form and largely contained within the main east-west hipped gable. The roof is sheathed in corrugated steel, and the entire building is clad in plain horizontal weatherboard. The windows are all wooden casements, and most feature fanlights and divided panes; regrettably, some of the lower windows have recently been replaced by single panes.

The front elevation incorporates two asymmetrical gables sparingly decorated with substantial yet elegant eaves brackets. The eastern front gable incorporates a bow window with casements and fanlights, and a smaller four-light casement. The western front gable incorporates a set of casements with fanlights and is finished with a window hood. An entrance porch and later sun-room are located between the gables. The veranda brackets are in the same design as the gable-end eaves brackets, and the lower wall of the sun-room is clad in fish-scale shingles.

The western elevation incorporates a long porch glazed with divided wooden casements, a single pair of divided casements, and a remarkably modern brick chimney finished with stucco and a single ceramic chimney pot. The eastern elevation incorporates an additional gable, within the end of which is a flat-roofed entrance porch glazed with divided panes. A long row of small casements and a single small casement are also located on the eastern wall.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *Colonist*, 27 March 1918, page 4

¹⁹ *Colonist*, 4 April 1919, page 2



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Assessment:

Historical	This house was constructed for George Kebell, a key member of Newton King's staff for 22 years, and was later the residence of lawyer James Henry Quilliam, of longstanding New Plymouth law firm Govett & Quilliam. Designed by Wellington-based architect Charles Forrest Bligh Livesay, this is the only known New Plymouth dwelling designed by an individual whose promising career was cut tragically short.	✓
Importance to Community	-	
Architecture & Construction	An outstanding example of an early transitional style house with overt bungalow features; the first of its type in New Plymouth.	✓✓
Setting and Context	Located in a highly visible position on a busy one-way street, and with a striking black and white colour scheme, this building makes a strong positive contribution to the character of the local streetscape.	✓
Archaeology	-	
Representativeness, rarity and integrity	The exterior of this building remains much as it was when first constructed and retains many original architectural features. It is a rare example of an early transitional style house which is overtly bungalow in appearance.	✓
Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓