



Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Butter Store

Address

Hakirau Street, Moturoa, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

Constructed in 1936-37 as a butter store for the New Plymouth Producers' Freezing Works, this four-storey building has stood the test of time to become a Moturoa landmark. Designed by accomplished New Plymouth architect Thomas Herbert Bates, the Butter Store is a particularly fine example of an industrial building principally influenced by the Art-Deco/Moderne style, but also incorporating neo-Georgian and functionalist features. 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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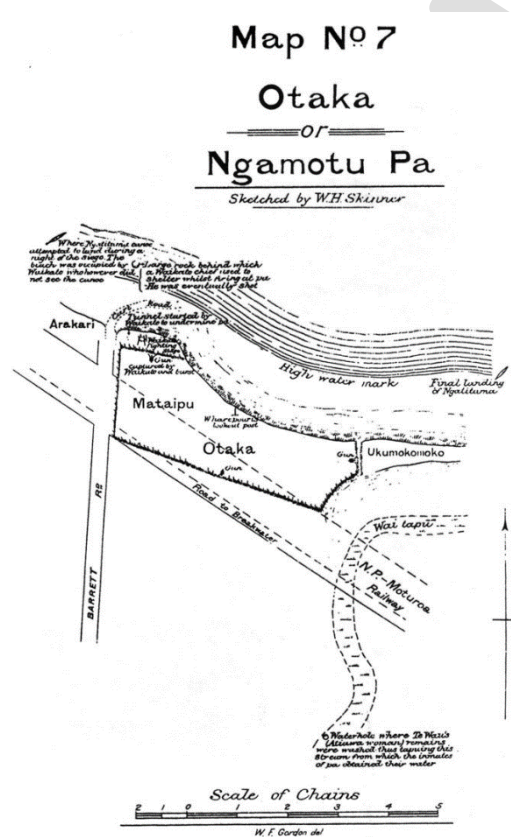
Legal Information and Heritage Status

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

Construction Information

Date of Construction 1936-37
Principal Materials Reinforced concrete, corrugated steel
Construction Professionals Thomas Herbert Bates (architect), Jones & Sandford Ltd (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.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. *History and Traditions of the Maoris of the West Coast North Island of New Zealand Prior to 1840*. New Plymouth: Polynesian Society, 1910.

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 wharves 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. Aside from the Butter Store, this included construction of a considerable number of now demolished brick stores during the 1910s and 1920s; the Produce Stores in 1945-46 and 1951-52; 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.

By the mid-1930s, with storage space again at a premium and butter forming an increasing proportion of the product handled by the co-operative, it was decided to erect the present Butter Store.¹⁶ The Company's architect, Thomas Herbert Bates, was instructed to prepare plans for the new store during late 1935 or early 1936.¹⁷ Thomas Bates (1873-1954) was one of New Plymouth's foremost architects during the first half of the twentieth century, and 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

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

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

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, 1951.

¹⁷ Ibid.

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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 building were New Plymouth firm Jones and Sandford; of which descendent joinery firm survives to this day.¹⁸ A permit was granted by the Borough Council to the Taranaki Producers' Freezing Works Company on the 18 August 1936, and the building had an estimated construction cost of £31,363.¹⁹ This building was the first major construction at the Works in which cork was used as the sole insulating material.²⁰ The additional cold storage space of the Butter Store, and heat extraction capacity of the 40,000 feet of expansion piping installed in the building, necessitated an expansion of the refrigerating plant.²¹ This saw the installation of 160 ton capacity, twin cylinder, two stage Brotherhood ammonia compressor, powered by a 250hp electric motor.²²

The building was officially opened by the Hon. W. Lee Martin, the Minister of Agriculture, on the morning of Monday 6 December 1937.²³ The opening was attended by about 150 dignitaries, and members of the dairy industry and business organisations, who had first made an inspection of the new building.²⁴ The Minister spoke of both the history and importance of the dairy industry in Taranaki, elaborating that:

*The development of the dairy industry is one of the greatest romances in the history of the Dominion. There have been other industries that have created glamour, the gold industry, for instance, but nothing has tended to stabilise the economic position of the Dominion so much as the dairy industry.*²⁵

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.²⁶ This sale included both a monetary transaction, and the allocation of shares to Taranaki dairy companies using the stores.²⁷ 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.²⁸ 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.²⁹

In 2001, an Act of Parliament was passed allowing the merger of New Zealand's two largest co-

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ NPBC Building Register Book 1933-37, Puke Ariki Archives (ARC2011-204)

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

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ *Taranaki Herald*, 6 December 1937, page 9

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Richards, George. *And Then There Was One: A history of the Taranaki dairy industry*. Hawera: Kiwi Co-operative Dairies, 1995.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

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operatives; the New Zealand Co-operative Dairy Company Ltd, and Kiwi Co-operative Dairies Ltd.³⁰ 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.³¹ 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 Butter 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. To the immediate east is the 1957-59 modernist style Parsons Store, whilst further to the west is the 1904 Engine Room, and 1946-47 and 1951-52 three-storey Produce stores. As a group, these buildings clearly illustrate the growth of the co-operative, both in terms of volume of goods handled, and of its economic importance.

A rectilinear structure of significant proportions, the building's size is somewhat disguised by its slenderness. Principally constructed of in-situ reinforced concrete, the building is finished with a Dutch gable roof sheathed in mild corrugated steel; the gable ends are treated as louvred ventilators. Aside from some minor modifications, the exterior remains very much as it was when first built.

The main front elevation faces roughly south-west, is stepped-down and projects slightly forward of the main structure. It is designed in a plain Art-Deco influenced style; although the fenestration pattern of three regular rows of divided fixed timber casements strongly references the neo-Georgian form. Two large simplified pilasters rise either side of the elevation and are fluted at upper floor level. A slightly recessed central panel on the parapet incorporates the words 'BUTTER STORE' in raised plaster lettering. A wide sloping veranda projects forward of the now enclosed loading bay.

The north-western and south-eastern side elevations are almost identical. Each is rhythmically composed with eight recessed bays divided by tall structural columns and featuring a strong dentil course at top. A wide, slightly recessed panel spanning the full length of the parapet incorporates the words 'TARANAKI PRODUCERS' FREEZING WORKS COY. LTD.' in raised plaster lettering. To the rear of the building is an attached stairwell and loading bay structure.

³⁰ Lind, Clive A. *Till the Cows Came Home: Inside the battles that built Fonterra*. Wellington: Steele Roberts, 2013.

³¹ Ibid.



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Assessment:

Historical	The Butter 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 grading and storage of butter prior to international export. Designed by noted New Plymouth architect Thomas Herbert Bates, the Butter Store is an important and somewhat uncommon large-scale example of his 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.	✓
Architecture & Construction	An attractive and well-proportioned landmark building principally influenced by the popular Art-Deco style, but also incorporating neo-Georgian and functionalist features. It has technical interest as a large multi-storey reinforced concrete industrial building.	✓
Setting and Context	The Butter 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 1957-59 modernist style Parsons Store to the immediate east, and the 1904 Engine Room and 1946-47 and 1951 three-storey Produce stores further west.	✓
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	A rare example in New Plymouth District of both a four-storey building and of a large industrial building from the 1930s. Aside from some minor modifications, the exterior of this building remains very much as it was when first constructed.	✓
Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓