

## Greytown: the oldest inland colonial town

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**ABSTRACT:** Greytown is the oldest town in the Wairarapa established under the Small Farms Association, and the oldest inland settlement of the British colonial era. In March 1854, at a meeting held in the Crown and Anchor Hotel in Wellington, 49 settlers selected town acres in Greytown. By the 1870s Greytown had its own newspaper, a school, a hospital and a flourishing retail and commercial base. In 1871 the Greytown Trust Act was passed and the town became a centre for farming, flax, and timber milling though it suffered from the regular flooding of the Waiohine river. Greytown became a borough in 1878 but stopped growing when the railway by-passed it. This paper explores the extant buildings from that period and issues around maintaining the Greytown Historic Heritage Precinct.

### Introduction

The Wairarapa is one of the earliest settled parts of New Zealand. There are signs of Māori settlement in the Palliser Bay area going back at least 800 years and possibly more than 1000. It is generally thought (with evidence from archaeological sites) that coastal areas around Palliser Bay and Cook Strait are among the longest inhabited areas of New Zealand. Early settlers were Waitaha, Ngāti Mamoe, and Ngāti Ira. However, Rangitāne and Ngāti Kahungunu are tangata whenua and the two principal iwi of the region. Buildings and sites recording past and present settlements remain.<sup>1</sup>

From about 1819, there was an acceleration in migrations of various iwi south. The introduction of the musket through contact with whalers and traders meant that skirmishes became an even more deadly business. As they moved south, Nga Puhī and Te Roroa were joined by Ngāti Toa leader Te Rauparaha. Ngāti Kahungunu

retreated to their Wairarapa lands from their settlements in Te Whanganui-a-Tara and the Hutt Valley, but even there were not safe from attack. In 1821, Ngāti Whatua pushed south. Rangitane people took refuge in the Puketoi and Tararua ranges, while Ngāti Kahungunu began a withdrawal to Nukutaurua on the Mahia Peninsula. Further incursions by Taranaki peoples – Te Ati Awa, Ngāti Tama and Ngāti Mutunga, caused further pressure and around 1833, a defeat of Ngāti Kahungunu by Ngāti Tama forces at Pehikatea, just south east of Greytown, essentially confirmed the return to Mahia.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the next decade, Ngāti Kahungunu sent raiding parties into the Wairarapa to maintain their position as tangata whenua and began a gradual return to their Wairarapa lands. Rangitāne also began a cautious return to their upper Wairarapa lands. So, in 1840 when the colonists were making their first incursions into the Wairarapa, Wairarapa Māori were returning from their exile on the East Coast to their ancestral

homelands in the Wairarapa. 15 years of neglect meant the villages needed to be rebuilt and new ground cleared for cultivation.

Pāpāwai marae near Greytown was established in the 1850s about the time of the town's European settlement. Local Māori sold land to the settlers including the Kuhangawariwari block for which land was reserved for the Māori township of Papawai. In 1855, a flour mill was erected by Māori financed by the sale of land and for a time the Anglican church opened a school, St Thomas (1860-64).

Hikurangi meeting house was opened in 1888. The Aotea meeting house and another building Te Waipounamu were built for the Māori Parliament which had sessions there in 1897 and 1898. The Aotea meeting house and Te Waipounamu were destroyed by gales in 1934. The marae lay derelict until a

<sup>1</sup> McIntyre *The Canoes of Kupe* p 21.

<sup>2</sup> Kernohan *Wairarapa Buildings* pp 25-26.

resurgence of pride in the 1980s saw the relocation and refurbishment of the Hikurangi meeting house and refurbishment of the palisade built around 1900 by Hamuera Tamahau Mahupuku with its figures facing inward to the marae as a symbol of peace.<sup>3</sup>

The history of colonial settlement is essentially one of farming. The southern Wairarapa was one of the earliest areas to be settled by British colonists. Access to the Wairarapa from Wellington was around the bottom of the North Island but later both road and rail links were made over and through the Remutaka range. Vast areas were subdivided into large stations, some of which still survive. The first small farming settlements were created on the west of the plain along the foothills of the Remutakas and Tararuas. Greytown and Masterton were established in 1854, to be followed soon after by Featherston and Carterton. Martinborough was established in the 1880s. By the 1870s Greytown had its own newspaper, a school, a hospital, and a flourishing retail and commercial base. In 1871, the Greytown Trust Act was passed and the town became a centre for farming, flax, and timber milling, though it suffered from

<sup>3</sup> Ballara "Mahupuku, Hamuera Tamahau" np.



**Figure 1:** Two storey premises with retail or commercial facilities on the ground floor with residential above

the regular flooding of the Waiohine river. Greytown became a borough in 1878 but stopped growing when the railway by-passed it.

I found that the houses of the majority of the inhabitants ... were in a style of genuine simplicity – a long, narrow but very large box; the sides fronting the street were about 8 feet in height and from 20 to 24 feet in length; they had a door in the middle and a window about 5 feet by 3 feet on each side of the door. The house was divided into two rooms ... and was frequently supplemented with the fashionable and useful lean-to, sometimes constructed at one end, but oftener in the rear of these truly convenient and comfortable colonial cottages.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Charles Carter quoted, Salmond *Old New Zealand Houses* p 73.

Today, the Main Street of Greytown has cottages and houses at its southern and northern extremities. In the centre are municipal and institutional buildings and retail and commercial premises. Typical of such retail and commercial places at the end of the nineteenth century were two-storey buildings with retail or commercial functions on the ground floor with residential above. The face to the street was often verandahed and parapetted to add status to the building.

Municipal and institutional buildings tended to the neo-Georgian, usually two storey with decorated symmetrical street front façades in timber to look like stone.

### Greytown Town Centre Heritage Precinct

The Wairarapa Combined District Plan provides protection for both the residential areas and the commercial area at the centre of the town. This paper focuses specifically on the heritage protection measures of the Greytown Town Centre Heritage Precinct. It does not address issues of the Greytown Residential Extension Historic Heritage Precinct. The town centre precinct is from Church Street in the south to Jellicoe Street in the north.

Within the town centre precinct are a number of historic heritage buildings. It is useful to note some of their heritage characteristics and later compare them with the assessment criteria and guidelines for the protection of heritage of the District Plan.

These include from Hastwell Street north on the eastern side of Main Street:

- \* The building at 115-117 Main St. was originally the Masonic Lodge. It was built around 1890 in West St. and was moved to this site by the Borough Council around 1980 for the Greytown Library. It has a strongly pedimented classical façade.



Figure 2: Greytown Town Hall (left), Emporos (former bank of New Zealand) (right).

- \* Cabbage tree cottage at 113 Main Street is a traditional 1860s cottage built for a daughter of Thomas Kempton, a founder of Greytown.
- \* At 109 Main Street, the 11-bed White Swan Hotel is the former New Zealand Railways Administration Building in Lower Hutt. The building was transported over the Remutakas on six very large trucks. A verandah and balcony were added to the frontage to soften the building's face to the street.
- \* Greytown Town Hall was built in 1907. The architects were Varnham and Rose. It is Greytown's third. Two earlier were destroyed by fire. The Town Hall exterior was renovated in 1974 with a new frontage that was somewhat unfortunate. This was rectified back closer to the original classic façade with balcony by a major refurbishment of the Hall in 2007 by Architecture Workshop.
- \* Greytown Town Square is a fabrication of architect Max Edridge. With the closure of Huka Village near Taupo in 1995, two buildings (colonial cottage in nature) from there were brought south and aligned with the frontage of the Town Hall to form a new town.
- \* 83 Main Street remains a substantial two storey neo-Georgian residence with commercial premises to the front ground floor. The large lemon tree to the side of the house is ascribed with saving many lives during the flu epidemic of 1918.
- \* At 79 Main Street is the former Foresters' Hall. Built in 1917-18, it served as a public hall and picture theatre for many years on

its original site at the corner of Kuratawhiti Street and West Street. It was moved to its present site in 1998 and converted to commercial premises at ground level and residential above.

- \* The BNZ building (now Emporos) at 75 Main Street was built by Thomas Wakelin, and probably designed by Joshua Charlesworth, in the late 1870s. The decorative design is a translation from masonry construction. The building has become an antique store and has been refurbished tastefully and in keeping with its neo-Georgian status and appearance.
- \* The Butcher's shop at 73 Main Street had its 1970s' style butterfly verandah roof replaced in the 1990s more authentically with a rolled-nose verandah. That has now been replaced with a less authentic looking balcony but still of nineteenth-century style and appearance.
- \* The first St Andrews Church was opened on this site in 1865. In 1879 it was moved back on the site to make way for the present building. The old church is in Cobblestones museum. The present church is in a simple gothic style and has been refurbished recently.

Though technically outside the heritage

precinct three further buildings from the 1870s are worth noting. The British Volunteer Hotel became the Greytown Arms Hotel, the Forrester's Arms Hotel, the Green Man and now Turkey Red. Established in the 1870s, the two-storey building advertised:

First Class accommodation and the comforts of home ... there are conveniences for every class of visitor ... a conveyance meets every train.

Rebuilt in 1899, much of the fabric of that building remains. Briarwood (formerly called Turkey Red) at 21 Main Street is reputedly Greytown's oldest commercial building and townhouse dating back to 1867. The Greytown Hotel (Top Pub) was established in the 1860s and may be the oldest in the area. Reputedly Charles Rooking Carter was involved with the build.

Returning now to the west side of Main Street we begin at:

- \* The Beard Building at 126 was built in the late 1870s. This building has been apparently in continuous use as legal offices to the present day. It features timber quoins and an articulated façade. It has been said the motive was to impart dignity to the building without being

accused of a frivolous waste of money. WG Beard is regarded as the founder of the present firm Wallerman, Cooke and McClure.

- \* The Working Mens' Club was established in 1877 and received its charter in 1881. The present building was designed by Trevor Daniell and opened in 1971. It is a large concrete-panelled building brought into scale by the use of four gable ends along the street frontage.
- \* The two-storeyed Borough Council Building at 110 Main Street was built in 1892 and is a unique example of "High Victorian" style. It is strongly articulated and richly decorated. It has a well-proportioned and decorated façade, pilasters with Corinthian capitals, heavily moulded string courses and cornices and a bracketed pediment all in imitation of stone construction.
- \* The Main Street Deli building is a landmark of Greytown. Located centrally, it is of a simple neo-Georgian form with retail premises at ground floor and residential premises above.
- \* Invest shop dates from 1873 but may have been built later as it references the stripped classical style of the 1920s rather than the Victorian or Edwardian. It is a

single storey brick building once home to the Permanent Investment and Loan Association.

- \* Wakefield Antiques was built in 1891 for DP Loasby (Mayor of Greytown, 1907-19) and known as the Premier Boot Warehouse. It also served as a general store. It is substantially unchanged except for modifications to the verandah when wooden posts replaced the original steel (or perhaps cast-iron). Wakefield Antiques has operated in the building since 1994.
- \* The Hub was created in 2015 out of a former supermarket. It houses an eclectic group of eateries. The modern design makes reference to the Invest building and uses materials and colour largely consistent with those of older buildings.
- \* The first building at 68 Main Street may have been a store owned by Myer Caselberg a past Mayor of Masterton. The store, one of a number of Caselberg's stores in the Wairarapa was built in 1865. That building was destroyed by fire in 1879. Its replacement served as the Wairarapa Farmers' Co-operative Association warehouse and shop until it too was destroyed by fire in 1900. Re-built again the replacement building

survived until 1942 when "the whole front of another W.F.C.A. store tumbled across the footpath and roadway and smashed a petrol pump in the process."<sup>5</sup> While some of the pre-1942 structure survives at the rear, the frontage at best reflects the 1942 re-construction.

- \* To the north of 68 Main Street is a single storey modern retail building of mono-pitch roofs and horizontally corrugated iron designed by Max Edridge in 2010.

The Sacred Heart Church at the corner of Main Street and Kuratawhiti Street was designed by Thomas Turnbull the pre-eminent private practice architect in Wellington by the turn of the century. It opened on Christmas Day 1880. It is gothic with a lantern belltower and in its original form is identical to St Joseph's Catholic Church in Tinui - now at Riversdale. In 1957, the former court house built in 1883 was moved across Kuratawhiti Street to double the seating although it divides the congregation into two groups.

So, characteristically, the historic heritage precinct contains a diverse range of buildings.

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<sup>5</sup> "1942 Earthquake: Other townships damaged" np.

The oldest date back to the 1860s but most are Victorian/Edwardian classic commercial in style or institutional neo-Georgian. Churches are neo-Gothic. Heights of buildings are of one or two storeys though stud heights are high by modern standards. Predominant materials are timber weatherboarding and corrugated iron roofs often pitched behind a road fronting decorative parapet. Windows are often double hung timber sash. Colours are largely subdued – often off-whites, browns and greens.

#### **District Plan Protection**

The Wairarapa Combined District Plan is where protection of heritage buildings is to be found. It is useful to review the criteria used in the District Plan to assess new buildings or alterations to buildings proposed to be built in the Greytown Town Centre Historic Heritage Precinct.

To summarise, the clauses in the Wairarapa Combined District Plan that in my opinion are particularly relevant to streetscape and heritage concerns are:

- \* Assessment Criteria
- \* criteria in 22.1.4 Historic Heritage Precinct;

- \* 35.1.6 Design Guidelines for New Construction; and
- \* the Greytown Town Centre Historic Heritage Precinct and Heritage Buildings Guideline.

The District Plan (under 22.1.3 Historic Heritage (including archaeological sites) and Sites Significance to Tangata Whenua)<sup>6</sup> notes:

- (v) Where additions, alterations or the erection of new buildings are proposed, the extent to which the proposals are consistent with the original period style, design and construction of other buildings in the precinct or area.
- (vi) The immediate or cumulative effects on local heritage of the alteration, addition or modification to the site or item.
- (x) Whether there are any adverse effects on the curtilage of the site.

22.1.4 Historic Heritage Precinct<sup>7</sup> notes:

- (i) The nature, form and extent of the proposed activity and the extent to which it is consistent with the environmental outcomes intended for the relevant precinct.
- (ii) Any measures proposed to protect or enhance the character of the street, including the implementation of any planting or landscaping.

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<sup>6</sup> Part C: Consent Process *Wairarapa Combined District Plan* pp 22-5 - 22-6 (emphasis added).

<sup>7</sup> Part C: Consent Process *Wairarapa Combined District Plan* p 22-6.

(iii) For sites within Greytown, Martinborough and Featherston, the extent to which the proposal is consistent with the principles of the South Wairarapa Town Centres Design Guide (Refer Appendix 8).

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35.1.6 Design Guidelines for New Construction<sup>8</sup> notes:

The intention of this guide is not always to require exact replicas of historic buildings and past architectural styles, but to encourage the use of design elements to enhance the character of the district and emphasise its historic attributes.

The design of new buildings in the town centres should be in harmony with the existing historic buildings.

Where decoration and architectural features are used, they should follow the characteristic forms and details of these existing buildings.

The guidelines then list architectural or building components recognised as essential elements to ensure the historic character of the town centre. These include roof and parapet forms, verandahs, windows and doors, scale, colour scheme and services.

In addition, there also exist the "Greytown Town Centre Historic Heritage Precinct and

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<sup>8</sup> Appendix 8: South Wairarapa Town Centres Design Guide, Part D Appendices *Wairarapa Combined District Plan* p 35-3.

Heritage Buildings Guideline"<sup>9</sup> that include:

The street facades of buildings are decorative, while the side walls are plainer, often in corrugated iron. Maintenance of heritage buildings should be consistent with the original and avoid the use of new materials (such as aluminium windows).

ADDING TO THE STREETScape The intention of the guide is not to require exact replicas of historic buildings with new developments but to encourage buildings that are sympathetic to the existing streetscape by drawing on the key elements of the heritage buildings that create the distinctive sense of place.

KEY ELEMENTS OF VICTORIAN BUILDINGS parapet wall with decorative cornice (roof hidden behind) decorative street facade with painted weatherboards side walls are plain and windows are tall rather than wide ... evenly spaced signage incorporated into and not dominant of façade.

BUILDING FORM & SCALE New additions or alterations to buildings on the street should respect the form and scale of existing heritage buildings. The vertical and horizontal modulations that were used on the facades of Victorian buildings help to establish their scale and create rhythm. Verandahs, bands of windows and decorative cornices were used to create horizontal modulation, visually providing a base, middle and top. Some buildings also have vertical modulation, achieved through the use of columns or pilasters which together

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<sup>9</sup> South Wairarapa District Council "Greytown Town Centre Historic Heritage Precinct and Heritage Buildings Guideline"

with the spacing of windows creates rhythm as an essentially unifying feature of the streetscape.

It is essentially these criteria that are applied by the District Council to assess at least the effects of any new buildings (or additions or alterations to buildings) on the heritage and townscape pattern of historic precincts. It is interesting to consider those buildings that stand within the heritage precinct that are possibly regarded as not heritage and how they "fit in" or otherwise. Specifically, the White Swan, the Working Mens Club, additions to the Town Hall, the Hub and the buildings at 64-66 Main Street.

Two recent applications for resource consents in South Wairarapa District Council indicate how the guidelines and assessment criteria may be considered. The two buildings are both commercial by definition. The first is a two-storey retail and office building designed for a site in central Featherston. It has been designed to look similar to its near neighbour across the main road, the Royal Hotel designed in 1893 in the Italianate Commercial Classic style. With some amendments this particular approach will reflect better the scale and form of nearby buildings.

The second application proposal is in Greytown. It eschews any obvious relationship to buildings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century but does use forms and materials that are arguably polite to the heritage and townscape within which it may well be placed. It is an honest attempt to not create a pastiche of what is already there in Main Street Greytown.

The intention of the guide is not to require exact replicas of historic buildings with new developments but to encourage buildings that are sympathetic to the existing streetscape by drawing on the key elements of the heritage buildings that create the distinctive sense of place.<sup>10</sup>

The challenge in any historic heritage precinct is to avoid Disneyland unless that is what you want. Greytown should not be a museum. Modern replicas, pastiches or versions of colonial buildings need to be handled with care. So too, modern interpretations and references need to be based on an understanding of history. They need to work with history but to design for the future in a

manner that reflects this age and aspirations as well as the significances of the past. We do not have to live in the past, nor replicate the past, but we can learn from it. To do this, awareness of our heritage needs to be raised and we need to be vigilant.

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<sup>10</sup> South Wairarapa District Council "Greytown Town Centre Historic Heritage Precinct and Heritage Buildings Guideline"

## REFERENCES

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