

First School Memorial



Location: Market Place, Taupo Quay, **Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga**
Bates Street, Moutoa Gardens, **List Number:** 2743
Whanganui

Physical Description: the memorial comprises a wide, low circular concrete wall with a central random rubble central plinth and planting between the two.

Other known names: Erroneously called 'School Memorial'

Current Use: Memorial

Former Uses: Memorial

Heritage Status: Heritage NZPT List **District Plan Class:** Class A Group
(Cat. 2)

Architectural Style: -

Date of Construction: 1900

Materials: concrete, shell rock

Registered owner:

Legal Description: Pt Res I Town of Wanganui (CT WN21/110), Wellington
Land District

Register Item Number:

22

Building Type:

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Recreation
- Institutional
- Agriculture
- Other

Significance:

- Archaeological
- Architectural
- Historic
- Scientific
- Technological
- Cultural

Thematic Context

- Early Settlement
- Residential
- Industry
- Agricultural
- Commerce
- Transport
- Civic/Admin
- Health
- Education
- Religion
- Recreation
- Community
- Memorials
- Military

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History: On 16 March 1977, an article by Wanganui historian, Athol Kirk, entitled 'Moutoa Gardens has monuments for all occasions', was published in the *Wanganui Chronicle*. Kirk outlined the various monuments, concluding with a seemingly mysterious one: *"Opposite the Maori Affairs Department in Moutoa Gardens is an unmarked cairn which was once a fountain. On this site Richard Matthews, a catechist who arrived with Rev. Mason in June 1840 opened the first school. This school was opened for Maori children but the children of the European settlers also attended. In 'Illustration to Adventure in New Zealand', published in 1845, there is a lithograph of Wanganui in 1841 which shows the school. For a city which is recognised as an educational centre, the site of the first school should be recognised."*

By 1982, when the Historic Places Trust registered this old fountain, the fountain itself had suddenly become the memorial to the school¹ – however, no evidence whatsoever was discovered during this study to suggest that it or its siting had anything to do with marking the site of the early school. Those planning the Gardens were, instead, looking forward, and plans were being made for aesthetic reasons. Nowadays the structure itself must be considered 'historic' in its own right as an original decorative feature of what was then called the Market Square Gardens. Given its fish, it was also once a very interactive feature that would have entranced many of its visitors in its early years.

Plans to develop what became Moutoa Gardens progressed only slowly. For example, in 1883, when the *Taranaki Herald* published an article on the 'Progress of Wanganui', they stated that: *"The Market Place is to be laid out as an ornamental ground when funds permit, and a picture of 'what is to be' may be seen in the dining room of the Rutland Hotel."*²

In mid-1899, the time had finally come for this transformation, and on 18 July 1899, the Mayor reported to the Wanganui Borough Council that Mr A. Gilmour had requested to *"be allowed to present the first seat for the embellishment of the Market Square Gardens. The Mayor stated that he intended to give a seat as well, and hoped the example would be followed by others. In this connection we may mention that lamps will be required for the gardens, and some of our*

¹ ID 2743 'School Memorial', NZ Historic Places Trust:

<http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=2743>

² *Taranaki Herald* article reprinted in the *Wanganui Herald*, 3 February 1883, p. 2

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citizens may feel inclined to donate something in this way instead of seats. Whatever is given will have the name of the donor attached to it on an iron plate. Flowering and other shrubs are also required, and any of our settlers who have such cannot do better than to bring them along, and so assist in the beautifying of the gardens.”³

By September 1899, people were writing to the newspapers contributing suggestions for the beautification of the Market Square. The name of the Gardens was also coming in for scrutiny. Suggestions were also being made to shift the Watt fountain there, with ‘Whipcord’ writing: *“I think the Fountain would look very well in a central position in the Square, and, with artesian water laid on, afford loungers a pure cooling beverage when such is needed. If my suggestion is not carried, can our City Fathers empower the police to make people move on from about the Fountain as they do from the footpaths around?”⁴*

By late December 1899, the Mayor was able to report that not a single flower had been missed from the new Market Square Gardens. It had also been *“decided to obtain two truck-loads of shell-rock for the construction of a fountain in the gardens.”⁵*

These two loads of shell-rock were destined to build the fountain under study here. However, it was not until August 1900 that the shell-rock fountain was finally placed in position, as had been *“sanctioned by the Borough Council some time ago.”* The work was done by the staff of bricklayer John Jones, who was then also installing the larger and better known second fountain at the gardens.⁶ Jones, who was later Mayor of Wanganui East, did the brickwork on *“practically all of (Wanganui’s) public institutions.”⁷*

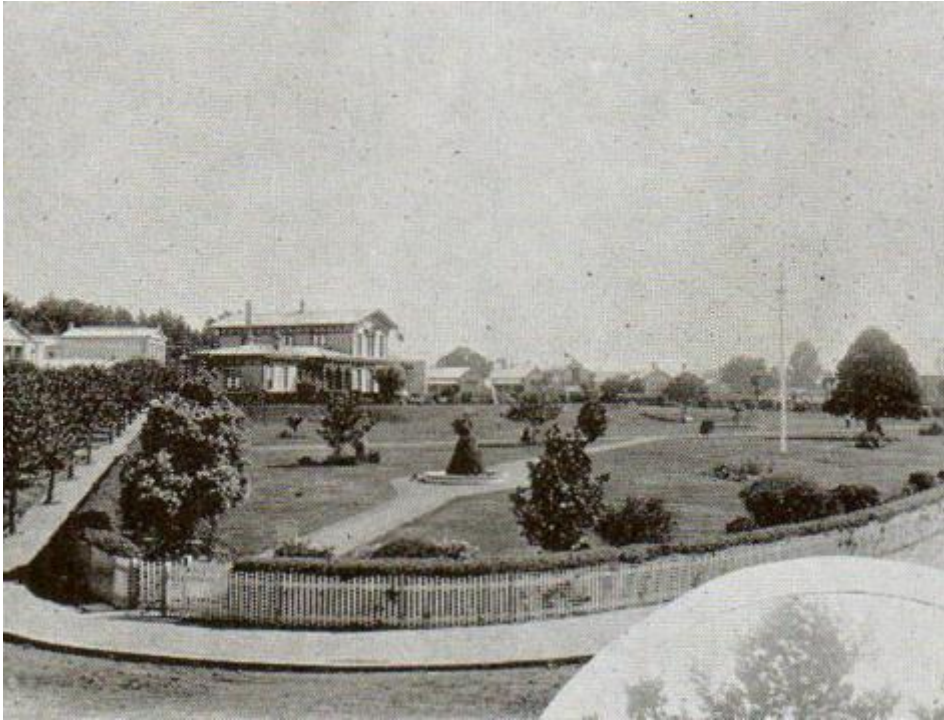
³ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 19 July 1899, p. 2

⁴ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 23 September 1899, p. 2

⁵ *Wanganui Herald*, 20 December 1899, p. 2

⁶ *Wanganui Herald*, 21 August 1900, p. 2

⁷ *Wanganui Chronicle* publication, *Pretty, Prosperous, Progressive: Wanganui, New Zealand: Its interests and facilities* (Wanganui, 1911), p. 65



The cairn fountain (centre) in its original form in about 1911. The zinc fountain is just visible in the distance to the left of the flagpole.⁸

Moutoa Gardens and its two fountains

On 8 May 1900, the Mayor, Alexander Hatrick, delivered a review of the previous financial year's work. In relation to the Market Square Gardens, this included:

"In accordance with the proposal of a year ago, these grounds have been laid out into pretty ornamental gardens, and their appearance today (it is only some nine months since they were taken in hand) reflect the greatest credit upon Mr Gilmour, our Foreman, and Mr Tuffin, the custodian, and the cordial thanks of the public are due to our townsman and ex-Mayor, Mr James Laird, for his valuable advice and guidance in planning and laying out these gardens. These grounds are a decided acquisition and attraction to our town, and a source of pleasure and pleasant resort for visitors and townspeople. The way in which the grounds and flowers are respected and protected by the public from injury is most pleasing and encouraging.

"The name 'Market Square Gardens' is quite inappropriate, and now that we have asked the Government to change the purpose for which the grounds were intended they should receive some more appropriate name. I sincerely trust that

⁸ Pretty, Prosperous, Progressive, p. 5

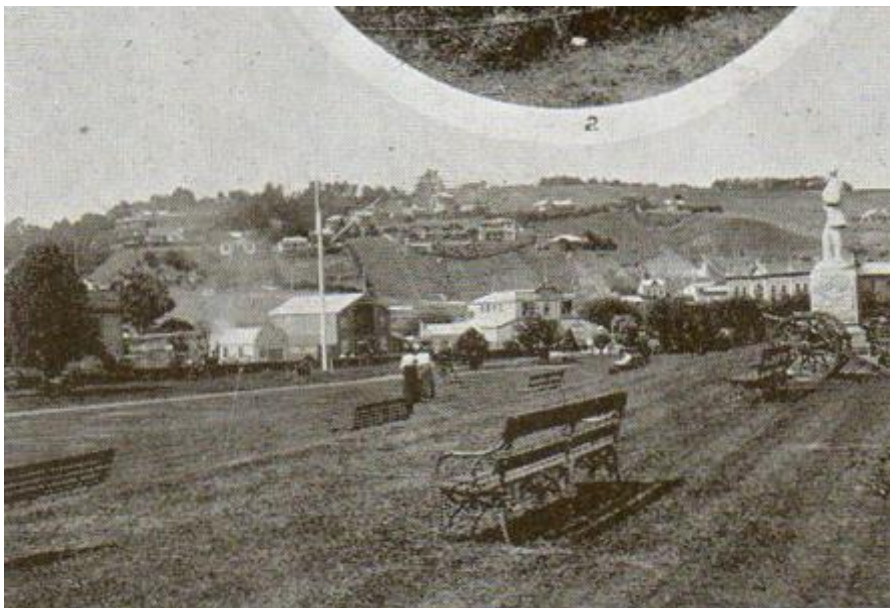
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*future Mayors and Councillors will not allow these grounds to fall into disorder.*⁹

At the same Council Meeting, Andrew Gilmour, Foreman of Works, reported that all the trees had been removed from the Market Square, and it had been “*laid out in grass and shrubs, picket fence erected, and walks and terraces made; eleven seats (had) been fixed, and the Ballance Monument removed from Queen’s Park to the Market Square. The fence around the Moutoa Monument has been removed and the guns placed on the terrace; also notice boards erected in different parts of the grounds.*”¹⁰



Moutoa Gardens, facing in the direction of the cairn fountain – which is just visible above the seat in the foreground. Note the pair of field guns alongside Ballance’s statue. The zinc fountain is out of sight on the left of this photo.¹¹

In mid-May 1900, Mr H.T Johns (a “*well-known builder and contractor*”¹²) came up with a proposal to erect a rather more impressive fountain in Market Square than the Borough Council’s planned humble shell-rock one. He wrote to both local newspapers and also included a copy of a letter he had received from a firm in Sydney. He had been able to obtain a quote to supply an embossed zinc

⁹ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 9 May 1900, p. 2

¹⁰ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 9 May 1900, p. 2. The *Wanganui Herald* of 19 May 1900 (p. 3) includes a letter from someone condemning the sudden reappearance of the Moutoa Monument’s iron fence “*decorating a private person’s property,*” while the monument’s two guns were now placed on either side of “*the statue of a private person.*”

¹¹ *Pretty, Prosperous, Progressive*, p. 5

¹² *Wanganui Chronicle*, 10 August 1900, p. 2

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fountain which was 11 feet high and 7 feet across the basin, for £22.10.0, which was less than half the catalogue price, plus delivery costs from Sydney. A photo of the fountain was placed on display in a local shop, and the manufacturer described it as being “a beautiful piece of workmanship and highly suitable for public gardens, parks and racecourses.”¹³ Fundraising then began, with the donations being regularly listed in the local newspapers – these being both in cash and kind. For example, John Jones offered to contribute the concrete work, and in due course he did this work.¹⁴ The Acclimatisation Society offered perch for the fountain ponds and another man was to seek some gold fish.¹⁵ Enthusiasm for the project included a collection made at the Garrison Band’s open-air performance, collection boxes in shops and opportunities for school children to subscribe.¹⁶ The daily comments that accompanied the donation tallies in the newspapers kept up the momentum.¹⁷ Mr Johns also requested that the Council subsidize the purchase, but it resolved to hold the matter over for the time being.¹⁸

By early June 1900, the Council was inquiring as to the durability of the metal in the fountain. Johns considered that ordinary lighter quality (zinc) could last 25 years with no sign of rust or decay. He added that he had now been promised £19.11.8, and that along with the promised concrete, gravel, carting and paint, meant the cost would be covered. The Council then granted £10 toward the cost of purchase.¹⁹ The *Wanganui Chronicle* of 10 August 1900 (p. 2) reported that the fountain had at last arrived and that it would “be a decided ornament to the gardens.”²⁰

The *Wanganui Herald* of 21 August 1900 (p. 2) reported that construction work was underway on both fountains, with “well-known” bricklayer, Mr Jones donating his time to work on the imported fountain, while also constructing the shell-rock fountain for the Council. Fish were being donated for the basins of the two fountains – the larger of the two basins being some 20 feet in diameter.

¹³ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 16 May 1900, p. 2; *Wanganui Herald*, 15 May 1900, p. 2

¹⁴ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 17 May 1900, p. 2

¹⁵ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 19 May 1900, p. 2

¹⁶ *Wanganui Herald*, 19 May 1900, p. 3

¹⁷ For example, *Wanganui Herald*, 23 May 1900, p. 1, 30 May 1900, p. 1

¹⁸ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 23 May 1900, p. 3

¹⁹ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 6 June 1900, p. 2

²⁰ See also *Wanganui Herald*, 9 August 1900, p. 3 (unpacking cases) & 22 October 1900, p. 2 (Wanganui gets an £8 refund relating to the importation cost)

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“The Gardens, with their handsome fountains, comfortable seats donated by the public, statuary and complete flagstaff, have made a beauty spot in our town which was twelve (months) back a decided eye-sore.” However, the custodian was complaining bitterly at the way townspeople were taking their dogs into the grounds, and some dogs were destroying plants. Springs were being put into the gates to try to *“counteract the carelessness of dog-owners.”*

In April 1901, the Council reported that the total cost of laying out Moutoa Gardens had not exceeded £400, and in addition to that seats, the two fountains and plants had been donated by the community.²¹

In April 1902, a second batch of silver and gold fish was donated for the fountains, and the public were being requested not to interfere with the fish.²² In January 1906, the *Wanganui Herald* reported an incident where a dog jumped into the water in one of the fountains and seized a goldfish - which it promptly ate – in front of its owner. *“The authorities will have to take steps to prohibit dogs being taken into the gardens if this sort of thing is permitted by the owners of canines.”*²³ In April 1908, some boys were spotted practicing the art of angling on the fish in the fountain,²⁴ and the matter was being placed in the hands of the police.

The point when this fountain became a garden was not discovered during this study. However, Athol Kirk’s comment above suggests that it long predated 1977.

The Zinc / ‘Protection in Adversity’ Fountain

H.T Johns’ zinc fountain was a major feature in the Gardens for many decades. However, toward the end it was past its best and its water flow had been reduced to a trickle. In an interview with sculptor, Joan Morrell, published in the *Wanganui Chronicle* of 11 April 2006, Morrell stated that she had thought about the state of the old (zinc) fountain and in due course had created from concrete the first ‘Protection in Adversity’ fountain statue to be placed in the old basin. Although concrete, the statue, which featured children, a cat and a dog beneath an umbrella, looked metallic. It was duly handed over in a ceremony to then-

²¹ *Wanganui Herald*, 17 April 1901, p. 2; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 19 April 1901, p. 1

²² *Wanganui Chronicle*, 9 April 1902, p. 2, 8 May 1902, p. 2

²³ *Wanganui Herald*, 15 January 1906, p. 4

²⁴ *Wanganui Herald*, 1 April 1908, p. 4

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Mayor, Reg Andrews (Mayor 1962-1974).

The concrete sculpture survived until 1995, at which time it was destroyed by distraught people during the Pakaitore occupation - immediately after 15-month-old toddler, Judge Darcey Hayes, accidentally drowned in the fountain's basin. The very low-sided basin – a design flaw appreciated in the present era, but not when it was constructed - was also filled with sand.²⁵

In due course, the Moutoa Gardens Historic Reserve Board commissioned Joan Morrell to produce a replacement statue, and on 21 December 2008, the present 'Protection in Adversity' statue was dedicated. Unlike its predecessor, 'Protection in Adversity Mk II' is made of bronze.²⁶

In 2012, this fountain is planted rather than filled with water. However, the original basin built in 1900 by the staff of John Jones' bricklaying business, remains.



This scene shows the imported zinc fountain at Moutoa Gardens very early in its life, with some of the donated seats and Ballance's statue (with its field guns) in the background. The concrete basin, which survives, was said in 1900 to be about 20 ft. in diameter, with the actual fountain standing 11 ft. high, while the upper basin was 7 feet across.²⁷

²⁵ Tino-rangatiratanga: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/tino-rangatiratanga/message/759>

²⁶ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 22 April 2006: <http://www.wanganuichronicle.co.nz/news/sculpture-looking-for-a-home/959774/>; also email 23 April 2012, Clive Aim, Wanganui District Council, to Val burr

²⁷ National Library of NZ: <http://beta.natlib.govt.nz/records/23098632>

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Bibliography

Wanganui Chronicle publication, *Pretty, Prosperous, Progressive: Wanganui, New Zealand: Its interests and facilities* (Wanganui, 1911)

Also newspapers and online articles as referred to in the footnotes.

Architect/Designer:

History of changes: Converted to a garden long before 1977

Date Period: 1900

Rarity / Special Features:

Integrity: The condition of the fountain is difficult to ascertain because of the extent of planting in the bowl.

Representativeness: The fountain is designed in a not uncommon form with a bowl and cairn.

Context/Group Value: This old fountain has an association with the other old fountain at Moutoa Gardens, in that the whole of this fountain and the basin of the other, were built at the same time, by the same people, as a community project.

Pakaitore/Moutoa Gardens is a place of deep significance to local Maori which has a number of highly significant memorials.

Diversity (Form and Features): The structure is partially constructed of local shellrock as is the Maori World War One memorial nearby.

Fragility / Vulnerability: As a monument in a public park, there is the potential for vandalism.

Summary of Significance:

Archaeological Qualities

The fountain was constructed at about 1900 and may be considered an archaeological site.

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Architectural Qualities

The fountain is a not untypical form of fountain design for the period and was constructed with a central cairn with water flowing from it into a large bowl.

Historic Qualities

The fountain is associated with former Wanganui Mayor John Jones, who was a bricklayer and who built it. The layout of the gardens was carried out by ex-Mayor James Laird and was, and still is, much appreciated by the local population. The fountain was one of two, the other being a zinc fountain, now gone. Both fountains originally had goldfish which local boys enjoyed catching with the local press showing much opprobrium at their antics.

Technical Qualities

The structure was built with local shellrock, local sandstone used in a number of monuments throughout Wanganui.

Cultural Qualities

Pakaitore/Moutoa Gardens is a place of great cultural significance to local Maori and Pakeha, which contains a number of very significant memorials.

Reference Source:

Associated Pictures:

Date of Survey: 2012

Prepared by: Ian Bowman and Val Burr