

Built Heritage Inventory

Tram Shelter



Location: Opposite Aramoho Cemetery, Somme Parade, Whanganui
Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga List Number:

Physical Description: The shelter is a small, masonry, single storied rectangular planned, hipped roofed building with a wide opening facing the street. The exterior is designed in the Arts and Crafts style with half timber framing modelled in the render and with a stepped and raking timber beam over the opening, extending beyond the end walls forming a curved corbell. The interior has timber seating around the three solid walls.

Other known names: Aramoho Tram Terminus

Current Use: Bus Shelter

Former Uses: Tram shelter/Aramoho tram terminus

Heritage Status: District Plan Class: Class C, 2013

Architectural Style: Arts and Crafts **Date of Construction:** 1923?

Materials: painted cement render stucco, timber framing and corrugated steel roofing.

Registered owner:

Register Item Number:

330

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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Legal Description:

There are two bus shelters on Somme Parade, Aramoho, that date to Wanganui's tram days. The larger of the two former tram shelter sheds, the former Aramoho terminus, is opposite Aramoho Cemetery. The other shelter shed is opposite Field Street.

Trams operated in Wanganui from 1908. In 1915, an Upper Aramoho terminus was established at Quick Avenue, following the construction of an underpass through the abutment of the Aramoho Railway Bridge. The smaller of the two surviving shelter sheds is located on the 1915 section of line.

The decision in February 1914 to purchase what became the Aramoho Cemetery, cemented the decision to extend the Upper Aramoho tramline to that point – although it took until 1923 to reach it. The cemetery was declared open for burials in April 1914, but evidently did not receive any until January 1915.ⁱ

One of the selling points, in early 1914, for the purchase of what was to become Aramoho Cemetery, was the Upper Aramoho tramway extension, which (initially) was to reach within half a mile of the new cemetery. This helped counter some community opposition to the new cemetery site due to its distance from the centre of town.

The *Wanganui Chronicle* editorial of 5 February 1914 (p. 4), in supporting the Aramoho site, suggested that: *"When the Aramoho extension has been put in, (the borough trams) will run to within about half a mile of the cemetery, and, in time, no doubt, right up to the entrance. With the need will come the funeral car, already in vogue in other places. Meanwhile, the distance of the cemetery from town will probably lead to a convenient modification of funeral customs and procedure. The growing preference for what is now as private interment will be encouraged, and in the case of public funerals it will in all likelihood become the custom for mourners to assemble at the tramway terminus."*

Evidently it had been said that the Aramoho extension “*would not pay for axle grease*”, however, the number of people living in the locality and the presence of the new cemetery, suggested that: “*if it did not show a profit, it would at least be part of a profitable system...*” The trams would provide a cheap means for people to visit the cemetery, which was essential, as many people wished to do so frequently. “*The intention of the Council was (also) to beautify the cemetery as much as possible.*”ⁱⁱ

The tramway opened to Quick Avenue on 28 April 1915, and thereafter the First World War hindered future progress due to insufficient rolling stock and the need for an enlarged power plant to run the system. The Council – and in particular Cr. Gower - recognised that the need to extend the tramway to the cemetery was “*... the most urgent. Apart altogether from the question of revenue, it is, I think, a sacred duty to provide ready access to the cemetery, and this extension should be put in hand as soon as possible.*”ⁱⁱⁱ

However, it would not be until September 1923 that the tram extension opened to Aramoho Cemetery, and the same year the new powerhouse on Taupo Quay was completed and its generating equipment installed. It was commissioned in February 1924.^{iv}

In late 1919, the Council had authorised expenditure of £89,000 on a new steam-powered generating system as well as the track extension and additional rolling stock.^v This work will have allowed for the construction of the Aramoho Cemetery tram shelter.

Ron Alexander, author of *Wanganui Corporation Tramways, 1908-1950: a short history and pictorial record*, credits Aramoho Park – which is opposite the cemetery (thus behind the tram shelter) with being the reason funds had been allocated to extend the line to this point. However, the Council bought the park site in 1918^{vi}, and began developing it to be used for recreation and picnics during 1919. At this

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time also it was given the name 'Aramoho Park'. The presence of the new park brought up the prospect of extending the tram service to this point once again.^{vii} Doubtless, though, providing an attraction for the living was likely to help make the extension pay, more so than relying solely on those visiting the dead.

Alexander provides a limited amount of information on the tram shelter sheds on the Upper Aramoho tramline. He states that only the important stops where large numbers of passengers were likely to board, were provided with shelter sheds, and that on the Aramoho route, three of the six shelters were built of brick with a roughcast finish. The remaining three shelters were timber.

Alexander's book includes a photo of the front of the Aramoho Park/Cemetery shelter (p. 47), which has a sign above the roof that reads "Aramoho Terminus". He states that this building was one of the larger structures erected for waiting passengers, due to the site's close proximity to the cemetery and Aramoho Park. Another photo (p. 39) shows the town end of the building – which Alexander always names as the "Aramoho Park" terminus – complete with its now boarded over door and louvre window. These and the vent pipe connected to the back of the building, indicate that this was a toilet. However, it is not apparent whether or not the actual toilet is still present.

The book (p. 39) also shows the smaller shelter opposite Field Street in its original form – complete with an electricity inlet in the top of the roof for the shelter's front light. Since that time, its original roof covering has been replaced by corrugated iron. Perhaps this building is the older of the two, given that it served the section of track that opened in 1915.

Alexander (p. 11) writes that by the late 1940s, the state of the Aramoho track was so bad that two trams were withdrawn from it in early May 1950. Then on May 22nd the line was closed beyond Calver's Corner - the intersection of Somme Parade and Glasgow Street – and thus the

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subway through the Aramoho Railway Bridge and the track beyond, had become redundant. The Aramoho tram route ceased operating entirely on 22 July 1950. Wanganui's trams ceased operating altogether on 24 September 1950, being replaced by buses.

Amongst the recollections of former vicar at St. Laurence's Church, Harry Bowyer, and (1948-1953) in the church's history publication, is the following: *"One of the major changes as far as the community was concerned during our years in Aramoho was the disappearance of the trams. In those days, most families did not possess a car. Of course, trams were replaced by the much quieter buses. But once the rattling bouncing little trams went, Aramoho was different place. No resident had been out of range of the sound of the trams as they speed up and down Somme Parade from very early morning till late every night."* He added that, Frank Arnold, a long time vestryman at St. Laurence's Church, drove the last tram up and down Somme Parade on 3rd September 1950 – although this date conflicts with that provided by Alexander above, and has not been further researched.^{viii}

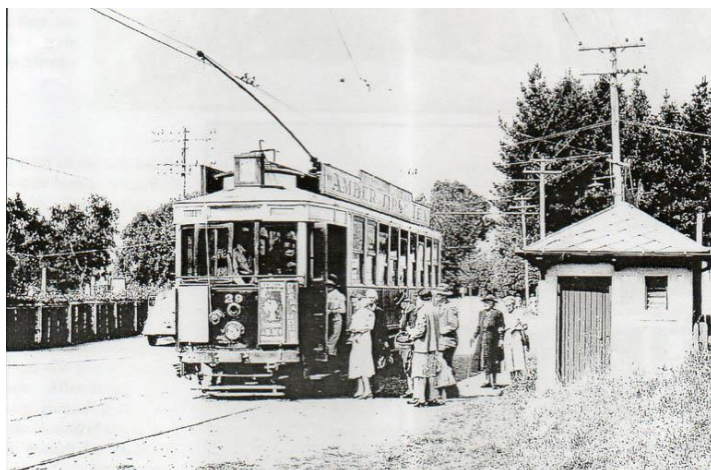
Still that was not the end of trams for Aramoho. Many of the unwanted tram bodies were placed at Aramoho Park and converted into holiday cabins. However, all were replaced by new cabins during the 1950s.^{ix}

The photos below are copied from Ron Alexander's *Wanganui Corporation Tramways, 1908-1950: a short history and pictorial record* (p. 39) and show the two surviving buildings with their original roof covering. Their original captions explain the scenes further.

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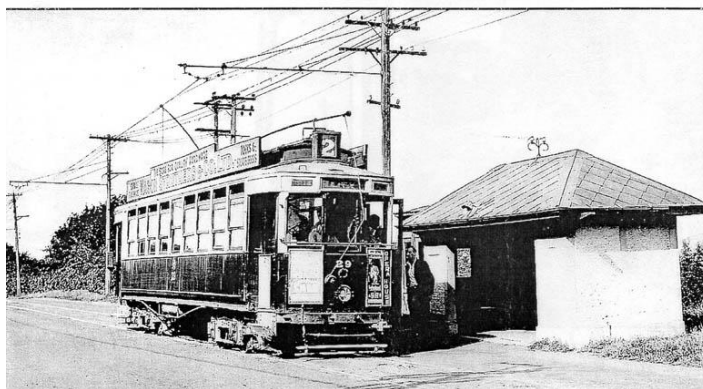


Left: Aramoho Park terminus was separated from the river by the park grounds. The presence of the Cemetery on the left of the picture probably accounts for most of the loadings to this stop. Passengers are boarding but the motorman has yet to change the trolley poles over for the return trip to the City.

Les Hostick

Wanganui Corporation Tramways

Upper Aramoho — Aramoho Park



Left: Car No. 29 loads passengers at the Field Street stop on Somme Parade, at the top of the dip at Aramoho School. The shelter shed at this stop survives today although the roof has been changed to iron. The boards on the roof of Car No. 29 carry advertising for Mason Struthers & Co, hardware merchants, while on the front apron movies and sales are advertised.

Les Hostick



Bibliography

Alexander, Ron, *Wanganui Corporation Tramways, 1908-1950: a short history and pictorial record* (Rangiora, 2006)

Venimore, Colin, *In the Steps of the Roasted Saint: A history of the Aramoho Parochial District* (Christ Church Parish, Wanganui, 1992)

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

Architect/Designer: Unknown

History of changes: 1923-1950 Tram shelter/Aramoho Tram terminus
1950-now Bus shelter

Date Period: 1923

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Rarity / Special Features:

Integrity: From a cursory visual inspection, the structure appears to be in a reasonable condition.

Representativeness: The shelter is a typical structure of the period throughout New Zealand and relates historically to the development of public transport.

Context/Group Value: The structure is one of at least two such shelters in Aramoho.

Diversity (Form and Features):

Fragility / Vulnerability: As a masonry building in close proximity to a major road it is potentially vulnerable to earthquake and vehicular damage.

Summary of Significance:

Architectural Qualities

Typically a simple unadorned utilitarian structure, this tram shelter has been elevated somewhat in its architectural treatment, having been designed in the Arts and Crafts style.

Historic Qualities

The shelter is associated with the development of the public transportation system in Wanganui, particularly the extension of the tramway to the Aramoho cemetery.

Technical Qualities

The small structure uses typical materials and construction techniques for the time.

Cultural Qualities

As can be seen in the recollections of Rev Bowyer, the tram system and access to the cemetery was of significant concern, so that the public who did not have private transport could visit the cemetery.

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Reference Source:

Associated Pictures:

Date of Survey: 2012

Prepared by: Ian Bowman

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- ⁱ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 11 April 1914, 4(7); Wanganui District Council webpage: <http://www.wanganui.govt.nz/Cemeteries/index.asp> First Funeral notice located *Wanganui Chronicle*, 26 January 1915, p. 4: R.F. Hall
- ⁱⁱ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 26 March 1915, p.4
- ⁱⁱⁱ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 20 September 1916, p. 6
- ^{iv} Ron Alexander, *Wanganui Corporation Tramways, 1908-1950: a short history and pictorial record* (Rangiora, 2006), pp. 9, 45 (Note that the power plant was possibly already generating in some form prior to the 23 February 1924 commissioning date – just as the Palmerston North Electric Power Station (also originally planned to operate trams) was generating in a limited way to the community for a few months before its November 1924 official opening. – Val Burr [also secretary of PNEPS Inc.], 26 January 2012)
- ^v Alexander, p. 10
- ^{vi} *Wanganui Chronicle*, 23 May 1918, p. 2. The purchase was for 5 acres and a cottage for £1,170.
- ^{vii} *Wanganui Chronicle*, 12 February 1919, p. 5
- ^{viii} Colin Venimore, *In the Steps of the Roasted Saint: A history of the Aramoho Parochial District* (Wanganui, 1992), p. 330-331
- ^{ix} Alexander, p. 46