

Tylee Cottage



Location: Cnr Bell Street & Cameron Terrace, Queen's Park, Whanganui
Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga List Number: Nil

Physical Description: The building is a storey and a half steeply gabled, salt box roofed, Georgian box cottage. Consistent with the style, the cottage has a symmetrical front elevation of central front door, flanked by French doors with dormer windows above the French doors. A shallow bull nosed verandah extends the full width of the street elevation and is supported on simple timber posts with ornate brackets. The ground floor exterior walls facing the street are rendered with incised lines to imitate ashlar stonework, while the side walls are shiplap weatherboard. The cottage has a brick chimney on the east elevation centred on the gable.

Other known names: Tylee Cottage

Current Use: House, Wanganui Artists'-in-Residence home

Former Uses: Residence

Heritage Status: District Plan Class: Class C

Architectural Style: Georgian box cottage
Date of Construction: 1853

Register Item Number:

358

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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Materials: Cement render to the north elevation, timber weatherboards and joinery, corrugated steel roofing, brick chimney

Registered owner:

Legal Description:

History: Tylee House is a 1½ storey cottage dating to 1853. It is one of Wanganui's oldest buildings. It was built for John Thomas Tylee, who headed the commissariat (the department of the army supplying food and equipment) to the British troops who were garrisoned the York and Rutland stockades at that time.

Tylee, who was from Bath, emigrated with his wife, Mary Richett (nee Bowman) in 1849. They eventually settled at Parewanui (Bulls), where the Rev. Richard Taylor stayed at their new house in April 1850. At the time, Mary Tylee was only the second white woman to live in the Rangitikei. The Tylees and Taylors became good friends, with Rev. Taylor's son in due course marrying John Tylee's younger sister Edith.

In 1852, John Tylee sold the Parewanui farm and bought land in Wilson Street, Wanganui, adjacent to an area that at first became known as Tylee's Flat. Later this land was called 'Cook's Garden's' named after Capt James Cook. The Tylee family's cottage had duly been erected there in 1853, and four of the seven Tylee children were born there.

In addition to his role as commissariat for the British Army, he was also listed in the Wellington Gazette 1857-8 as having been appointed firstly Assistant Court Clerk, and Clerk of the Magistrate's Court at Wanganui. He sold the house in January 1865 and moved to Napier. There he became paymaster in one of the Imperial regiments. He later became Treasurer to the Hawkes Bay Provincial Government, and then Commissioner of Crown Lands. Other roles included the posts of Immigration Agent and Returning Officer under the General Government. He remained in the latter role until about two years before his death in 1884.¹ He was also awarded the New Zealand Medal for his services during the New Zealand Wars.

The next owner of the house was John Graham, and in 1867, it was occupied for a while by the Rev. John Elmslie, who was minister at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church from January 1867. The Elmslie family stayed there until the church's

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new manse was completed.

Doubtless a long stream of occupants have come and gone from this house since that time, however, the last occupier of the house certainly added to its history. Annoyed at some historically-minded person enquiring early one morning as to the origin of some holes in a wall, he stated in disgust that these had been bullet holes. So a myth grew a life of its own based on holes that had been left when the old telephone insulators were removed.ⁱⁱ

The cottage was presented to the Whanganui Historical Society in 1969, and after months of negotiations, a suitable new site for it was chosen. This was to be in Queen's Park, adjacent to the Whanganui Regional Museum. The plan was that the cottage would be open to the public and that it would be furnished to suit the early colonial period. However, at that stage, the donors suddenly changed their minds and withdrew the donation in order to turn it into their staff's luncheon canteen. This greatly disappointed the Historical Society and also members of the Tylee family who had made donations toward the cost of relocating and restoring the cottage. This was therefore its status as at 1974.ⁱⁱⁱ

By 1981, the cottage was run down, and by this time its owners, Reidrubber, were using it as a 'donko', and as a place to store their tyres. Only at that time did Reidrubber finally part with it – and was it finally moved to St. George's Gate to be part of an historical street project. However, that project was soon abandoned due to high costs. In 1982, the house was finally moved to its present site where it was restored under the supervision of architect Bruce Dickson, and builders Norm Hubbard and M. Pepper.^{iv}

In January 1986, it was re-opened as the Wanganui Artist-in-Residence home, with its first resident being photographer Laurence Aberhart, who was there for a year. Many others have since followed.^v

The cottage is noted for a beautiful kauri staircase leading to the upper floor, which has two garret bedrooms. The ground floor has another bedroom, along with a parlour, kitchen and bathroom.

Given its age, the house has undergone additions and alterations over the years, including modernising the kitchen and bathroom, altering the side

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windows, and the addition of an extension to provide a dining area off the kitchen. However, the house's original shingles remain in place beneath the roofing iron.^{vi}

A sketch of the house in its original situation in the latter 1950s, appears in Flora Spurdle's book *New Stories of Old Whanganui*, (p. 11), however, some details of its associated story are not correct.

Bibliography

Town Planning Department, Wanganui City Council, *Historic Places, Wanganui*, (Wanganui, 1978)

Spurdle, Flora, *New Stories of Old Whanganui*, (Wanganui, November 1958, this edition, 1959)

Whanganui Historical Society, *Historical Record*, (Wanganui, May 1974)

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

Architect/Designer: Unknown

History of changes: Relocated from Wilson St. in 1981 to St. George's Gate, and then to the present site in 1982.

Date Period: The cottage is one of Wanganui's earliest dating back to 1853.

Rarity / Special Features:

Integrity: The cottage although modified and relocated retains many elements of its original form.

Representativeness:

Context/Group Value: The context of the building has been lost due to its numerous relocations.

Diversity (Form and Features):

Fragility / Vulnerability: The building is not considered vulnerable largely due to its culturally important use as the home of the Wanganui "Artist in Residence".

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Summary of Significance:

Archaeological Qualities

The building has been relocated on numerous occasions and has been altered over time. The archaeological value is therefore questioned but in the event of future works NZ Historic Places Trust should be consulted prior to works commencing.

Architectural Qualities

The design, construction and materials are typical of the time. Alterations have occurred over time. Its restoration in 1982 was sympathetic.

Historic Qualities

The cottage embodies the history of the region starting with the Tylee family with their strong military connections through to Rev Emslie and others. Despite the unfortunate relocations of the building the building has been in almost constant use through to the present with its culturally significant present "Artist in Residence" use.

Cultural Qualities

The cottage has been valued by the community over time. This is indicated by the number of relocations in place of demolition. The current use of the building as the home of the Wanganui "Artist in Residence" contributes to the cultural wellbeing of the region and the country.

Reference Source:

Associated Pictures:

Date of Survey: 2012

Prepared by: Ian Bowman and Val Burr

ⁱ *Hawkes Bay Herald*, 18 March 1884, p. 2 (obituary)

ⁱⁱ Whanganui Historical Society, *Historical Record*, May 1974, p. 9

ⁱⁱⁱ Whanganui Historical Society, *Historical Record*, May 1974, p. 9

^{iv} Tylee Cottage, No. Q/12, in Wendy Pettigrew's Wanganui Heritage Study files, held at Wanganui District Council Archives

^v Wanganui Library: <http://www.wanganuilibrary.com/site/pages/heritage/queens-park-tour/tylee-cottage.php>

; Sarjeant Gallery: Tylee Cottage Artist-in Residence Programme:

<http://www.sarjeant.org.nz/site/pages/tylee.php>

^{vi} Town Planning Department, Wanganui City Council, *Historic Places, Wanganui*, (Wanganui, 1978), pp. 7-8